

Prophecy

A Call Of Cthulhu Adventure

April 1895. London awaits with anticipation the latest masterpiece of the great Irish playwright, Mr Oscar Wilde. Those in theatre circles are certain that the play, Salome, will be the highlight of the year's social calendar. But all is not as it should be. Lord Alfred Douglas summons two companions from Oscar's youth and charges them to discover why the playwright feels himself close to death. In the St James theatre, actors rehearsing for the opening night of Salome begin to wonder whether the play, and the eccentric director Jonathan Ogilvie, are perhaps more than they seem. Disturbing details emerge regarding the play's origins, and both companions and actors begin to fear what will be prophesied on the opening night of Salome.

Part One: The Play is the Thing

"Prophecy" is a role-playing adaptation of a classic theatrical premise: the play-within-a-play. It could, perhaps, be termed a "play within a role-play". The play in question is Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, a disturbing and little understood piece of decadence literature dating from the mid-1890s. Artists of the decadence period, among whom Wilde was prominent, were concerned with freeing all creative expression from the restrictive confines of Victorian morality and traditional artistic forms. As Wilde wrote in the famous preface to his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all."

Oscar Wilde wrote *Salome* while he was strongly under the artistic influence of French Symbolist poets such as Baudelaire and Rimbaud. The play echoes these poets' search for heightened understanding through altered perception and extravagant verbal description. *Salome* was originally written in French and later translated into English, first by Alfred Douglas (Wilde's homosexual companion, affectionately known as Bosie), and later by Wilde himself.

Prophecy begins from the premise that Oscar Wilde, desperate to escape his decaying relationship with Bosie and searching for inspiration to complete his symbolist play, unwittingly contacted a greater source of decadence than even he could imagine. While reading little known poems and plays of the previous century, Wilde stumbled upon a copy of the *King in Yellow*, an incomprehensible narrative stamped with the mind-warping image of the Yellow Sign. The *King in Yellow* serves as an artistic conduit to Hastur the Unspeakable, a Great Old One of the Cthulhu mythos. Wilde unwisely read the play (there are no immoral books, after all...) and was infused with the spirit of the *King in Yellow*.

In the 24 hours that followed, Wilde wrote *Salome*, unaware that he was strengthening his connection to the *King in Yellow*. He presented his play to Bosie and asked him to make the English translation. Unsatisfied with the result, Wilde spurned Bosie and translated the play himself. Driven by an inexplicable compulsion to stage *Salome* as soon as possible, Wilde travelled to London and made arrangements to premiere the play at the St James's Theatre in the West End. Here he was met by up-and-coming young director Jonathan Ogilvie, who agreed to take charge of the production of *Salome*. Unknown to Wilde, Jonathan Ogilvie is a servant of the *King in Yellow* and is intent on using the first performance of *Salome* as a ritual of sufficient artistic depravity to summon his god's presence. The audience at the opening night performance, as well as some of the performers themselves, will serve as convenient sacrifices to satisfy the hunger of the Great Old One. The characters' ultimate goal is to thwart Jonathan Ogilvie and his inhuman master, and to restore sanity to one of Ireland's greatest playwrights.

The characters begin the scenario in two discreet groups. The guests (Halloway and Scarsdale) have received invitations to the opening night, provided to them by no less a person than Lord Alfred Douglas himself. The invitations were accompanied by handwritten requests for them to meet Lord Douglas

(Bosie) at a private club, three days before the opening night performance. The actors (Rose Vanburgh and Hugh

Vincent) are rehearsing Salome at the St James's theatre. Hugh will perform as Herod, while Rose takes the role of Salome herself. The first two scenes of the scenario involve each of these groups in turn, and provide all four characters with compelling reasons to take a personal interest in the first production of Salome. The Keeper should be at pains to ensure that the two players who are not directly participating in a scene are kept busy and interested. Suggestions as to what these players can do are provided at the beginning of each scene.

The condensed copy of Salome provided with this scenario is integral to the success of Prophecy as a Cthulhu adventure. The use of a script strengthens the theatrical feel of the action and provides players with "guidelines" within which to structure their actions. The script also adds a great deal of authenticity and atmosphere to the scenario. This is not to say that investigators shouldn't be allowed to improvise - on the contrary, their very lives may depend on their ability to break free of the script at critical junctures. As Keeper you should study the script carefully and familiarise yourself with the central characters and their lines. You should consider how the actions (staging) of the play would best be described in theatrical terms. Note that the copy of the script provided with the scenario contains event "markers" that the Keeper will use to direct actions during the final performance. These markers should be removed from any copy of the script that is given to the players.

You must also make it clear to players (especially those who are cast as the actors) that they are expected to read their script lines as if they were actually participating in a production of Salome. If the players' performances are flat, the scenario will be even flatter. It is also important to note that because of the inherently melodramatic nature of Salome, players need not be good actors to achieve the desired artistic effect. Encourage your players to abandon caution and enter into the spirit of the performance. Everything else should follow. Prophecy, like Salome, is three quarters atmosphere, one quarter content. It is up to the Keeper to ensure that the play is given the melodic, decadent and erotic expression that Oscar Wilde intended it to have.

Part Two: A Drink with Bosie

(Note: while Walter and Arthur are role-playing this scene, the players responsible for the actors should each be given a copy of the Salome script. This will give them time to read their lines before the dress rehearsal. Make sure that the Keeper's event markers have been removed from the copies of the script that the players receive!)

Walter Halloway and Arthur Scarsdale have both received handwritten invitations to meet Lord Alfred Douglas for dinner at a well-known West End gentleman's club, Pilkington's, on Wednesday 21 April. The notes mentioned that Lord Douglas would like to discuss the deteriorating health of his good friend, Mr Oscar Wilde. The notes go on to mention that Lord Douglas thought it prudent to confide in men who were familiar with Oscar's eccentricities, and who better than his Oxford tutor (Halloway) and a close personal friend of the Wilde family (Scarsdale)?

When the characters meet Lord Douglas (Bosie), he is nervously smoking a cigarette in a corner of the club. Four empty whiskey glasses are arranged on the table in front of him. It is clear from his demeanour that he is in a great deal of distress. When the characters approach he introduces himself and thanks them profusely for responding to his request at such short notice. He orders drinks and then immediately begins an account of his concerns regarding Oscar Wilde's health.

Apparently, ever since production began on the new play Salome, Oscar has been anything but his jovial and gregarious self. In fact, for the past week he has refused to see anyone except Jonathan Ogilvie, the director of the play. He has lost weight (very unusual for Oscar) and on the rare occasions that Bosie has seen him in public, he has appeared listless and devoid of any emotion. Bosie's attempts to call at his residence have all been rebuffed, and correspondence has been unanswered; until two days ago, when he received a short, badly written note from Oscar. Bosie is willing to read the note to the characters (see end

of this section). Both the contents and the manner of the letter suggest that Oscar Wilde is suffering some form of mental anguish. Unfortunately the characters have no direct means of confirming this assumption, as Wilde is not receiving callers. Bosie is hoping that Oscar will respond favourably to old academic and family friends, and that the characters will be able to determine the cause of his malady. Bosie suggests that the characters may be able to speak to Oscar if they approach him at the theatre: he sometimes visits St James's to oversee the production of Salome.

Bosie is prepared to discuss with the characters any other issues that may be of relevance to the present situation. If asked about his relationship to Oscar Wilde, he will say that they are good friends. If pressured on this point he will remain silent and refuse to speak on the matter any further. He will never be so crass as to mention that his relationship with Oscar might be anything other than friendship, but the characters should be able to deduce this without direct, embarrassing questions. Bosie will further suggest that if the characters have no success in speaking to Oscar at the theatre, they would be best advised to attend the opening night performance of Salome. It would be very difficult for Oscar to avoid them completely at a social event of this kind. In anticipation of such an eventuality, Bosie managed to secure the two tickets that he forwarded to the characters.

The characters are now free to discuss other matters with Bosie. They should be thorough: even the smallest piece of information may be of use in their subsequent investigations. If Bosie is questioned about the play itself, a brief look of distaste crosses his face. He admits that he has never liked the subject matter, and that he found the language and imagery of Salome to be garish, provocative and disturbing. He further mentions that Oscar had asked him to translate the play from French, but that his inherent dislike of the material prevented him from completing the project. He is not sure of where Oscar received his inspiration for the play, but he does remember that the text sprang in to being "almost overnight" - the entire play was written in under 24 hours. His own opinion is that Oscar condensed the works of numerous French poets to produce Salome.

If asked about the impending production, Bosie indicates that he was surprised that Oscar managed to secure the services of so many respected actors to perform in Salome. He suggests that it may have something to do with the brilliant young Jonathan Ogilvie directing the piece. Ogilvie has risen to prominence in theatre circles over the past months for his daring and often iconoclastic interpretations of traditional dramatic works. Ogilvie seemed very keen to undertake the project. In fact, he approached Oscar Wilde personally and asked to be placed in charge of the production. Once word got around that Ogilvie was directing, actors became far more interested in taking up parts in the play. As soon as conversation slows Bosie will excuse himself, saying that he is not feeling too well and would like to retire early. He will again thank the characters and urge them to call on Oscar as soon as possible. He will provide them with an address where he may be contacted, and will suggest that they meet him again at the St James's theatre on the opening night of Salome.

Oscar Wilde's letter:

My dear Bosie,

A thousand sincere apologies for my gross neglect of you over the past fortnight. I have been consumed with worry about the play, and have had little time for any other pursuits, or any of my friends.

I have been out-of-sorts recently, as you are no doubt aware, and I fear that my health begins to desert me when I most need strength and fortitude. The physicians tell me that it is nervous tension, but I am not so sure. As the days pass I feel overcome by a pervasive sense of dread, such as I have never experienced before. I find myself drawn to, yet at the same time repulsed by, the work of art that is nearing completion in the St James's theatre. Ogilvie is by all accounts directing superbly, but I cannot escape the worm of disquiet that gnaws on my sensibilities.

I hope you understand why I cannot see you at present and why, indeed, I cannot bring myself to see any person. I beg that you understand, and forgive me.

Always yours,

Oscar.

Part Three: Dress Rehearsal

(Note: For the first section of this scene, the players of Halloway and Scarsdale should each be given a copy of the Salome script to read over. Their characters will become involved later in the scene. Make sure that the event markers have been erased from the scripts before they are given to the players)

Following the meeting with Bosie, the events of the scenario shift immediately to the following day (Thursday 22 April), at the St James's theatre. All those involved with the production of Salome have been rehearsing for the past 3 hours. The players are taking a short break between sections of the play. The director, Jonathan Ogilvie, is earnestly discussing an aspect of decor with the backstage team. The entire theatre has an air of excitement that only occurs when a masterful dramatic piece is nearing completion. Rose Vanburgh and Hugh Vincent's players should be provided with the following background information:

1. They have been rehearsing hard for the past four weeks. The play will undoubtedly be one of the most impressive London has ever seen.
2. Jonathan Ogilvie is obviously a perfectionist, but his numerous demands are sometimes ridiculous, even for professional actors. He seems driven to succeed at all costs.
3. All the players have meshed perfectly with the production: it sometimes seems as if they really are their Salome characters.
4. None of the players have seen very much of Oscar Wilde. On the few occasions that he has stopped by, he has spoken exclusively to Ogilvie. He has never watched a rehearsal.

The Keeper, as Jonathan Ogilvie, should now run the players through a short rehearsal of some portions of the play. Pick any section you think is appropriate and have the players read their characters' lines as they would in the real performance. You should "fill in" for the other characters at this time. At some point during the rehearsal, the players will see Oscar Wilde enter the theatre and take a seat near the back of the hall. He will wait until the rehearsal is over and will then approach Jonathan Ogilvie and draw him aside for conversation. Wilde has a document with him that the players will recognise as a recent draft of Salome. Ogilvie carries a black leather notebook with a strange symbol on the cover. Whenever Wilde indicates something in his text, Ogilvie seems to consult the notebook and then shake his head. Although the players will not be able to hear what is being said, they will notice that Wilde is extremely upset. He gesticulates often and his entire stance speaks of barely suppressed rage. Ogilvie, by contrast, seems relaxed and unconcerned. Suddenly Wilde calms completely, turns and walks slowly towards the theatre exit. Ogilvie returns to conclude the rehearsal, a smile briefly flickering across his face.

The players have unknowingly witnessed the power of the Cthulhu mythos. Wilde has made a last, desperate attempt to replace the existing material in Salome with work that is more of his own creation, and less derivative of The King in Yellow. Ogilvie's notebook is, of course, a copy of said King in Yellow (French edition, 1875, if someone gets a chance to look at it). The cover is embossed with an image of the dread Yellow Sign, which causes anyone who observes it closely to become immediately disoriented and lose 0/1d6 sanity points. If a character somehow manages to read the entire play (this is not recommended) s/he loses 1d4/1d6+2 sanity points. Ogilvie's intentions depend on keeping Wilde under control, so he has used a Dominate spell to compel poor Oscar to return home and forget about his visit to the theatre. The play will continue to pay homage to the Unspeakable lord of Aldebaran.

As Oscar Wilde leaves the theatre, Halloway and Scarsdale arrive, intent on speaking to him regarding his recent behaviour and his letter to Bosie. Unfortunately, they will find him under the influence of a mythos

spell and quite incoherent. He will briefly lecture the two on the cathartic properties of indulgence and the artifice of poetry, before proclaiming ill health and staggering home. He will not answer any more questions. If the characters remain at the theatre they have an excellent opportunity to meet Rose Vanburgh, Hugh Vincent and Jonathan Ogilvie. Allow the two actors to introduce themselves and the players to initiate any conversation they feel is appropriate. Ogilvie remains in the background as much as possible. If he is asked about Oscar's condition, he says that Mr Wilde is nervous and overcome by the stresses of a demanding schedule. He will then excuse himself and leave the theatre.

The four characters now have an ideal opportunity to "compare notes" and discuss Oscar Wilde and Salome. They should be allowed to pursue whatever avenues they wish, within reason. The opening night performance is in a day's time, enough opportunity to visit Bosie, make preparations for meeting at the theatre, or whatever else they feel is appropriate. Regardless of what they decide, they are unable to see Oscar Wilde again. He remains in his residence and refuses to accept callers. If any of the characters decide to follow Ogilvie they will be disappointed. At this critical point in his schemes, he maintains a scrupulously clean public and private life.

Part Four: Opening Night

Salome opens at the St James's theatre on Friday 23 April 1895. A light rain covers London, but seems unlikely to dampen enthusiasm for Mr Oscar Wilde's latest dramatic masterpiece. The performance is scheduled to commence at seven in the evening, and carriages begin to arrive as early as five in the afternoon. The performers have been at the theatre since early that morning.

Halloway and Scarsdale can arrive at whatever time suits them, but early seating is advisable as the theatre is expected to be full to capacity. Once they enter the foyer of the St James's and divest themselves of their coats and umbrellas, they will be able to mingle with the upper crust and avant-garde of contemporary London society. The Keeper can introduce whatever memorable (or forgettable) theatre-going characters are deemed appropriate. A few suggestions would be: the jaded society woman with her manicured poodle; the retired officer unsure of whether he should be attending an obviously "blasphemous and unpatriotic" piece of work by that "Irish scallywag"; the pretentious young artist holding forth on topics ranging from symbolism to socialism; and many others. Great opportunities for role-playing exist even before the performance begins. The only people the characters will not be able to meet are Oscar Wilde and Bosie. They are nowhere to be seen.

Backstage, the crew is putting the final touches to costumes and sets. Actors are nervously reviewing lines and Jonathan Ogilvie moves from one to the other with words of encouragement. He seems excited almost to the point of hysteria, but the characters have no way of knowing that this is more due to the impending appearance of the King in Yellow than the performance of Salome. If a character pays particular attention to Ogilvie (successful Spot Hidden roll) just before the curtain goes up, he will be seen to remove a thin, dull-bladed knife from his rehearsal bag and place it in his belt. This is an enchanted blade that he will use to summon a dimensional shambler during the performance. The characters will not know this, of course, although there is bound to be speculation why Ogilvie would need a knife.

The curtains open and the performance begins at quarter past seven. Exactly how the play proceeds is left in the hands of the Keeper. It is suggested that the participating characters read their own lines as they arise, with the two players who are not directly involved reading the parts of Jokanaan and Herodias. The Keeper should read the smaller parts (the page of Herodias and the young Syrian). The Keeper must also co-ordinate activities on stage and in the audience to match the flow of the performance. The Keeper's copy of the Salome script is marked with event numbers in square brackets. Events occur as the dialogue they are linked to is spoken. Where necessary the Keeper should briefly interrupt the reading of the play to describe what characters may see or hear.

How do I get out of this play?

Once the play passes Event C, it becomes extremely difficult for performers to divert from their rehearsed lines and actions. This is an effect of the powerful summoning spell that Jonathan Ogilvie has cast. In order to do or say something that is not part of *Salome*, performers have to make a successful POW x 1 roll. If they fail, they are compelled to continue playing out the script, as rehearsed, for at least the next 2 minutes. Even if they do break free they have to check again every minute. Failure means they return to the words and actions set out in the play. Any external intrusion on the play (shaking a character, breaking the scenery, etc.) immediately grants performers a POW x 3 roll to break free of their rehearsed actions.

The events of the performance, in order, are:

A. A successful Listen roll by either Halloway or Scarsdale detects a disturbance near a back entrance to the theatre. If either turns to look, he will see Oscar Wilde entering the theatre and standing against a back wall.

B. The characters in the audience notice that all extraneous noises, even the casual ones associated with large crowds, have disappeared. Only the play can be heard.

C. If Rose Vanburgh makes a successful Spot Hidden roll, she will see Ogilvie in the wings near the front of the stage. He has a knife in his hands and seems to be watching the audience intently.

Note: from this point on the performance begins to develop its own, hell-bent momentum. If any of the performers wish to act out of character they have to make the required POW x 1 roll to do so (see above). Characters in the audience are only constrained from action by their sense of decorum.

D. Characters in the audience who make a successful Listen roll hear a fluttering somewhere in the auditorium (loose papers perhaps?). They also feel cool, musty air washing over them.

E. Characters on stage can make an Idea roll (INT x 5). If they succeed, they realise that the blood seeping from the body of the young Syrian is very real. His body also seems very dead. They must immediately make a Sanity roll or lose 1/1d6 sanity points.

F. Characters in the audience begin to notice an unpleasant odour of cloying sweetness. They hear more rustling near the back of the theatre. If they turn to look, they see, only for a moment, a pale, cadaverous form staring back at them out of the shadows. Sanity roll or lose 1d3 sanity points.

G. Characters in the audience hear more movement near the back of the theatre; suddenly there is a indrawn exclamation and a sound like the snapping of bone. Small droplets of moisture land on the characters' faces. If they smell or taste it, they realise it is blood (lose 1/1d6 sanity).

H. Characters on stage may make a Spot Hidden roll. If they succeed, they see Ogilvie holding the knife aloft and chanting something under his breath. (He is summoning a dimensional shambler into the cistern. For the purposes of this scenario the spell costs him 5 magic points and is successful).

I. As the executioner enters the cistern the dimensional shambler attacks and dismembers both him and the unfortunate Miles Jamieson who is playing Jokanaan. Characters on stage can hear strangled screams and the rending of flesh. Characters in the audience can hear the same with a successful Listen roll. Anyone who hears this loses 1/1d3 sanity points.

J. The dimensional shambler emerges from the cistern, bearing the grotesquely mutilated head of Miles Jamieson on a silver platter. The shambler presents the head to Rose Vanburgh and then disappears. Poor Rose loses 1d6/2d6 sanity points. Screams can be heard from the front of the audience (and the back, where the Avatar of Hastur is gratefully gorging itself on sacrifices).

K. The lights on stage begin to flicker and then die. A thick atmosphere of dread and death falls on the theatre. Members of the audience run screaming in all directions. The King in Yellow can be seen gliding between the terror-stricken people. Blood slicks the theatre floor.

L. Ogilvie can clearly be seen completing his incantation and smearing blood on his sacrificial knife.

M. The actors playing the soldiers, maddened by terror, crush Rose Vanburgh beneath their shields and then flee from the theatre. The King in Yellow finishes feeding and, pleased with Ogilvie's efforts, transports him (and itself) to another dimension. The characters are left among the dead, the dying and the insane. The curtains close on the first and last production of Salome.

Obviously the characters will want to interrupt events before they reach this advanced stage. Most likely this will involve the characters in the audience attempting to disrupt the performance and/or trying to dispel the King in Yellow. Ogilvie will actively try to prevent interruptions of the play and will target meddling characters with a Song of Hastur spell. Bringing the play to a halt before its apocalyptic conclusion is one way of dispelling the King in Yellow. The other is to overpower or kill Ogilvie himself. Either of these actions will break the tenuous link that allows the King in Yellow to remain in this dimension, and the Avatar will return to its own plane in a shower of bloody fragments. Attacking the Avatar itself is an exercise in futility, but foolhardy characters should be allowed to sacrifice themselves in this way if they so wish.

Mr. Wilde has the last word

If the Keeper would like Oscar Wilde to play a more proactive role as the performance progresses, the following is suggested:

At some point between Event F and Event G, Wilde begins to move through the audience towards the stage (Spot Hidden rolls from characters in the audience to notice this). He is carrying a slim leather-bound notebook with him: observant characters may recognise this as Ogilvie's copy of the King in Yellow. As he moves down the aisles, Wilde tears pages from the book and throws them into the audience. He also mouths a string of curses and other denigrations regarding the book, the play and the director. Characters are left with no doubt that he is insane. When he reaches the base of the stage he hurls what is left of the book at the performers. Besides enraging Ogilvie, this action has the fortunate consequence of granting the performers a POW x 3 roll to break free of their rehearsed lines. Ogilvie immediately attacks Wilde with a Song of Hastur spell, which should provide the characters with some leeway in which to act courageously.

Part Five: Finale

The aftermath of the performance depends on whether Ogilvie is thwarted or not. If he manages his translocation, characters will be left to drag the dead from the theatre and the stage. Life, it seems, is ephemeral before the power of art. If the worst of the apocalypse is avoided, the characters nevertheless have much to do with healing the injured and providing solace to the insane.

After the events of April Oscar Wilde retires from public life for the next five years. Bosie ends his friendship with Oscar, only to return four years later and accuse Oscar of sodomy. Oscar Wilde is convicted and spends two years in prison. The Times does not review Salome in its morning edition.

STATISTICS:

Investigators:

Due to space considerations, only the background information for each investigator is provided. The

Keeper should assign statistics and skills as appropriate.

Walter Halloway

You are a respected Oxford Don, recently elevated to the chair of Slade Professor in the Department of Classical Studies. Your personal interests include the Greek tragedians, the Latin poets and (though you do not often admit it) the work of William Blake. Perhaps it was your Blakean sympathies that attracted you to Oscar Wilde. You can clearly remember his first week at Oxford, as he strutted around the hallowed grounds dressed like a foppish Renaissance pirate. His clothing may have been extravagant, but his critical sense, you later discovered, was as good as any you had ever encountered. You spent many profitable hours discussing drama, poetry and artistic theory with young Mr Wilde. You have followed his subsequent career with interest (if not always with approval) and you look forward to viewing his new play. Trust Oscar to choose a topic guaranteed to enrage the conservative sensibility!

Rose Vanburgh

You have had your education in the most difficult of schools: the London theatre. There was never really any doubt that you would follow the trade of actress. It has sometimes been glamorous and rewarding, but it has always been difficult and demanding. You spent four years in the less respected London theatres before your big break came when you were cast in a Bernard Shaw play on the West End. Since then you have been approached to appear in several contemporary pieces, but perhaps none as challenging as *Salome*. The play itself is brilliant, a perfect blend of ancient history and modern overabundance. You are convinced that playing the title role will make you the most sought-after actress in England. The rest of the cast is as good as one could hope for and the director, Jonathan Ogilvie, is highly regarded in theatre and literary circles. Assistance of this kind makes it that much easier to achieve your ambitions.

Arthur Scarsdale

The son of a wealthy landowner, you have never wanted for anything in your life. In fact, you take many things for granted. But is privilege not, after all, the right of the British aristocracy? Is it not the aristocracy who defend the Empire and its civilized principles? You never much liked Oscar Wilde as a person, but he was a good drinking companion and he introduced you to some interesting people in the literary circles. In fact, your current opium supplier is a man you met at one of Oscar's parties. You don't regard yourself as addicted to the stuff, but you do like to smoke it fairly often. It calms the nerves and sharpens the intellect. Oscar's new play is apparently causing quite a stink among the intelligentsia of London. Some say it is bound to be brilliant, others dismiss it as nothing better than pornography. You're keen to attend the opening night: it will provide you with a conversation piece for many gatherings to come.

Hugh Vincent

You have had a long and distinguished career in the British theatre. You have seen it grow from humble beginnings, fraught with suspicion and persecution, to the powerful institution it is today. You welcome the introduction of new talent such as Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, but at the same time you are nostalgic for the great plays of old: Shakespeare, Sophocles, the Medieval Mysteries. You suspect that although the theatre may go from strength to strength, the classic productions will always be overshadowed by gaudier, more modern pieces. Despite your classical bias, Wilde's *Salome* has won your grudging admiration. The man has chosen a topic that few would dare to consider and from it he has crafted a masterpiece. You suspect, however, that the writing has taken a lot out of Mr Wilde. At the few rehearsals he did attend he seemed listless and weak, a man old before his time.

The Characters

Oscar Wilde, playwright

STR: 12
DEX: 10
INT: 18
CON: 9
APP: 9
POW: 16
SIZ: 15
EDU: 23
Hits: 12
Sanity: 37

Art: 85%
Credit Rating 61%
Cthulhu Mythos: 8%
Dodge: 27%
Fast Talk: 91%
History: 67%
Library Use: 90%
Natural History: 44%
Occult: 39%
Persuade: 87%
Psychology: 55%
Spot Hidden: 42%
Other skills at 35%

Oscar Wilde is a large, shabbily dressed dilettante with features that are best described as "homely". Despite his appearance he is a superb and celebrated speaker, much in demand in London social circles. His recent experience with the King in Yellow and Salome has left him visibly drained of vitality. He shambles from place to place, and can hardly manage more than a whisper when spoken to.

The King in Yellow, Avatar of Hastur the Unspeakable

[No statistics required]

The King in Yellow is human seeming, clad in tattered yellow rags and wearing the Pallid Mask. The rags are extensions of the entity's flesh, and the Mask covers horrible pseudopods that can attach to a target and drain POW. The King can cause paroxysms of fear by gazing at a target. The target must make a POW x2 roll or lose 1d6 sanity points per round. Further information concerning the Avatar is provided in the main text, and in the 5th edition Call of Cthulhu rulebook, pages 111-112.

Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie), young aristocrat and companion to Oscar Wilde

STR: 9
DEX: 15
INT: 14
CON: 10
APP: 15
POW: 11
SIZ: 10
EDU: 19
Hits: 10
Sanity: 64

Art: 41%
Credit Rating 72%
Dodge: 38%
Fast Talk: 54%
History: 34%
Library Use: 50%
Natural History: 39%
Occult: 10%
Persuade: 44%
Psychology: 37%
Spot Hidden: 40%
Know London: 65%
Drive Carriage: 50%

Lord Alfred Douglas is a sallow but good-looking Englishman in his early twenties. He is obviously a recent product of the better public schools, and still dresses in the Eton "boater hat" fashion. His manners and accent are impeccable, although he does drink a little too much when under stress.

Jonathan Ogilvie, Avant-garde director and servant of the King in Yellow

STR: 10
DEX: 15
INT: 17
CON: 12
APP: 14
POW: 18
SIZ: 11
EDU: 21
Hits: 12
Sanity: 0

Art: 80%
Credit Rating 55%
Cthulhu Mythos: 31%
Dodge: 44%
Fast Talk: 78%
History: 42%
Natural History: 22%
Occult: 56%
Persuade: 63%
Psychology: 40%
Sing: 60%
Spot Hidden: 70%
Throw: 38%
Knife: 56%
Handgun: 35%
Other skills at 35%

Spells: Summon/Bind Dimensional Shambler, Dominate, Song of Hastur

Jonathan Ogilvie's appearance is anything but conventional, but even his extraordinary looks do little to betray his inner depravity. He is hopelessly insane and will use any means available to achieve his ends.

The Thing in the Cistern: A Dimensional Shambler

STR: 19
DEX: 10
INT: 7
CON: 17
APP: 1
POW: 10
SIZ: 19
Hits: 18

Damage Bonus +1d6

Claw 35% (1d8+1d6), two attacks per round.

Sanity loss to see a dimensional shambler: 0/1d10

“... A gigantic, blasphemous form of a thing not wholly ape and not wholly insect. Its hide hangs loosely upon its frame, and its dead-eyed rudiment of a head sways drunkenly from side to side. Its forepaws are extended, with talons spread wide...”

Jonathan Ogilvie conjures the shambler into the cistern to ensure that his second and third sacrifices (Miles Jamieson and the executioner) are suitably despatched to glorify the King in Yellow. The shambler then takes the place of the executioner in Salome (see main text).

SALOME

A Tragedy in One Act

Translated from the French of Oscar Wilde by Lord Alfred Douglas

The persons of the play:

Herod Antipas, Tetrach of Judea
Jokanaan, the Prophet
Herodias, Wife of the Tetrach
Salome, daughter of Herodias
The Young Syrian, Captain of the Guard
The Page of Herodias
Namaan, the Executioner
Soldiers and Slaves

SCENE: A great terrace in the Palace of Herod, set above the banqueting-hall. Some soldiers are leaning on the balcony. To the right is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall of green bronze. Moonlight.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: How Beautiful is the Princess Salome tonight!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS: Look at the moon! How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb She is like a dead woman. You would fancy she was looking for dead things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly ... How beautiful is the Princess Salome tonight!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS: You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in that fashion. Something terrible may happen.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN: After me shall come another mightier than I. When he cometh, the solitary places shall be glad. They shall blossom like the lily. The eyes of the blind shall see the day; the ears of the deaf shall be opened.

FIRST SOLDIER: Make him silent. He is always saying ridiculous things.

[EVENT A]

SECOND SOLDIER: No, no. He is a holy man. He is very gentle, too.

FIRST SOLDIER: Who is he?

SECOND SOLDIER: A prophet.

FIRST SOLDIER: What is his name?

SECOND SOLDIER: Jokanaan.

[Enter Salome]

SALOME: I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrach look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. In truth, yes I know it.

[Enter A Slave]

SLAVE: Princess, the Tetrach prays you to return to the feast.

SALOME: I will not go back.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN: Rejoice not thou, land of Palestine, because the rod of him who smote you is broken. For the seed of the serpent shall come forth from a basilisk, and that which is born shall devour the birds.

[EVENT B]

SALOME: Who was that who cried out?

SECOND SOLDIER: The Prophet, Princess.

SALOME: This prophet, is he an old man?

SECOND SOLDIER: No Princess, he is quite a young man.

SALOME: What a strange voice! I will speak with him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: I fear it is impossible Princess. The Tetrach does not want anyone to speak to him.

SALOME: I will speak with him. Bring forth the Prophet.

SOLDIERS: We dare not, Princess.

SALOME: [looking at the Young Syrian] You will do this for me, will you not Narraboth? You know that you will do this thing for me. And tomorrow when I pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at you through the muslin veils. I will look at you, Narraboth, it may be that I will smile at you.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: Let the Prophet come forth ... The Princess Salome desires to see him!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS: Oh! How strange the moon looks. You would think it was the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud.

[EVENT C]

[The prophet comes out of the cistern. Salome looks at him and steps slowly back]

SALOME: How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is chaste as the moon is. His flesh must be cool like ivory. I would look closer at him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: Do not stay here, Princess. I pray you do not stay here.

JOKANAAN: Who is this woman who is looking at me? I would not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids? I know not who she is. I do not wish to know who she is.

SALOME: I am Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judea.

JOKANAAN: Back! Daughter of Babylon!

SALOME: Speak again, Jokanaan. Thy voice is wine to me.

JOKANAAN: Get thee behind me! I hear in this place the beating of the wings of death!

[EVENT D]

SALOME: Jokanaan, I am amorous of thy body! Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains, like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judea and come down into the valleys. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of the doves who haunt the temples and are fed by priests. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth ... Let me kiss thy mouth.

JOKANAAN: Never, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: Princess, do not speak such words to him!

SALOME: I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: Princess, do not speak such things. I cannot suffer them ... Princess, Princess ... Ah!

[The Young Syrian kills himself and falls between Salome and Jokanaan. Jokanaan turns and goes down into the cistern]

[EVENT E]

SALOME: I will kiss thy mouth Jokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

[Enter Herod, Herodias and all the Court]

HEROD: Where is Salome? Where is the Princess? Why did she not return to the banquet as I commanded her? There she is!

HERODIAS: You must not look at her. You are always looking at her.

HEROD: The moon has a strange look tonight. She is like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked, too. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky ... Pour forth my wine. Salome, come drink a little wine with me.

SALOME: I am not thirsty, Tetrach.

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN: Lo! The time is come! That which I foretold has come to pass.

HERODIAS: Bid him be silent. I will not listen to his voice. This man is forever vomiting insults.

HEROD: Do you not see your daughter, how pale she is?

HERODIAS: What is it to you if she is pale or not?

HEROD: Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS: You must not look at her.

[EVENT F]

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN: In that day the sun shall become black like the sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall be like blood, and the stars of the heavens shall fall upon the earth!

HEROD: Dance for me, Salome.

SALOME: I do not desire to dance, Tetrach.

HEROD: Salome, daughter of Herodias, dance for me.

HERODIAS: Do not dance, my daughter.

HEROD: Dance for me, I beseech you. If you dance for me you may ask of me what you will, and I will give it to you, even unto half the kingdom.

SALOME: Will you indeed give me whatsoever I ask, Tetrach?

HEROD: Everything, even half the kingdom.

SALOME: You swear it, Tetrach?

HEROD: I swear it, Salome.

HERODIAS: My daughter, do not dance!

HEROD: Ah! Look at the moon, she has become red as blood. The prophet prophesied truly. Did he not prophesy that the moon would become red as blood?

THE VOICE OF JOKANAAN: Who is this who cometh from Edom, who shineth in the beauty of his garments, who walketh mighty in his greatness? Why is thy raiment stained with scarlet?

[EVENT G]

HERODIAS: Let us go within. The voice of that man maddens me.

HEROD: I will not go in until she has danced. Salome, dance for me.

SALOME: I am ready Tetrach.

[Salome dances the dance of the seven veils]

HEROD: Ah! Wonderful! Wonderful! Come near, Salome, come near that I may give you your reward. What wouldst thou have?

SALOME: I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger...

HEROD: [laughing] In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What would you have in a silver charger?

SALOME: The head of Jokanaan.

HERODIAS: Ah! That is well said, my daughter.

HEROD: No, no Salome. Do not ask me that.

SALOME: You have sworn, Herod. Do not forget that you have sworn an oath.

HEROD: I know it. But I pray you, Salome, ask of me something else. Ask of me half of my kingdom, and I will give it to you. But do not ask of me what you have asked.

SALOME: I ask of you the head of Jokanaan.

HEROD: You are not listening. You are not listening. Suffer me to speak Salome. Listen. I have jewels hidden in this place - jewels that even your mother has not seen...

SALOME: The head of Jokanaan.

HEROD: Let her be given what she asks! Of truth she is her mother's child.

[EVENT H]

[The Executioner enters the cistern]

SALOME: [she leans over the cistern and listens] There is no sound. I hear nothing. Why does he not cry out, this man? If a man sought to kill me, I would cry out ... I would struggle. No, I hear nothing. There is a silence, a terrible silence.

[EVENT I]

[EVENT J]

[The Executioner comes forth from the cistern, bearing on a silver shield the head of Jokanaan. Salome seizes it. Herod hides his face with his cloak. Herodias smiles and begins to fan herself]

SALOME: Ah! Thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. Well, I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. But wherefore does thou not look at me, Jokanaan? Thine eyes that were so terrible, so full of scorn, are shut now. Ah! Wherefore didst thou not look at me, Jokanaan? If thou hadst seen me thou would have loved me. I saw thee Jokanaan, and I loved thee. I love thee only ... I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body. I was chaste, and thou didst fill my veins with fire.

HEROD: She is monstrous, thy daughter. In truth, what she has done is a great crime.

HERODIAS: I approve of what my daughter has done. And I will stay here now.

HEROD: [rising] I will not stay here. Surely some terrible thing will befall. Put out the torches. I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the torches! Hide the moon! Let us hide ourselves in our palace. I begin to be afraid.

[EVENT K]

[The slaves put out the torches. A great black cloud crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes very dark. The Tetrach begins to climb the staircase]

THE VOICE OF SALOME: [EVENT L] Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan. There was a bitter taste on my mouth. Was it the taste of blood? But perchance it was the taste of love? They say that love hath a bitter taste ... But what of that? I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan.

[A moonbeam falls on Salome, covering her with light]

HEROD: [turning round and seeing Salome] Kill that woman!

[EVENT M]

[The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judea]



