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WORLDS

of Cthulhu

The Magazine for
Call of Cthulhu

Issue 3

Malevolence

Cthulhu Dark Ages scenario set in Anglo-Saxon England

The House of Wisdom

A far flung centre of learning for Cthulhu Dark Ages

The Golden Scorpion

Gaslight or Twenties romp in search of long lost treasure

Sufficient Unto The Day

Modern day scenario about the dangers of over-reaching oneself

Disconnectia

Cthulhu Versus the Cell Phone

The 13th Olympian

Dangerous resurrection of an ancient cult

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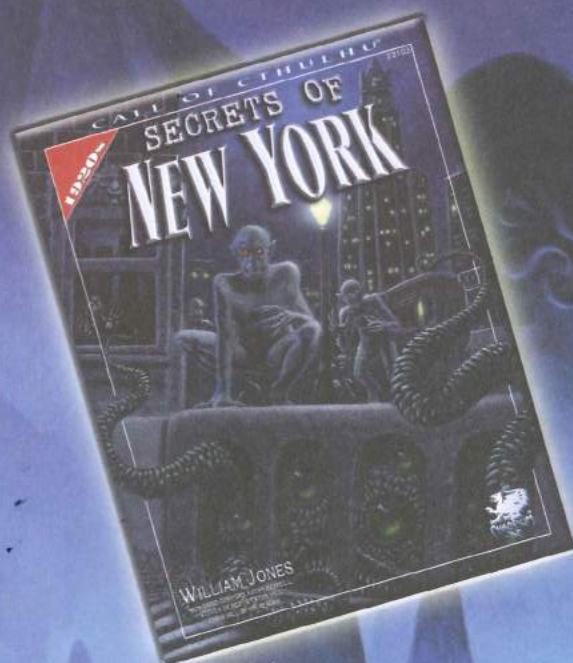
Professionally Speaking: the Debunker, Dark Ages: Averroigne, Keepers Corner, Directives from A Cell ... and so much more.

CALL of CTHULHU

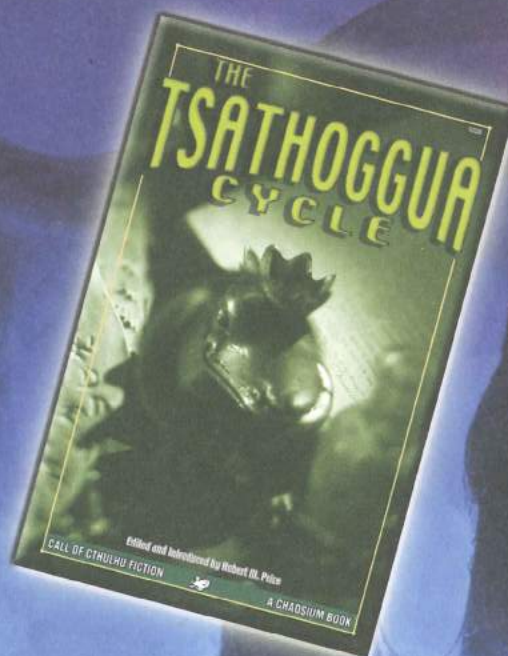
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Publisher: Pegasus Press, Strassheimer Str. 2,
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Chief Editor: Adam Crossingham

E-mail: adam.crossingham@worldsofcthulhu.com

Publishing Director: Frank Heller

E-mail: frank.heller@worldsofcthulhu.com

Associate Editors: Daniel Harms & William Jones

Authors: Richard Becker, Chad Bowser, Ben
Counter, Adam Crossingham, Dale Elvy, Momo
Evers, A. Scott Glancy, Daniel Harms, Frank
Heller, Wood Ingham, James Roth &
Steffen Schütte

Artists: Samar Ertsey, Marcio Fiorito, Koen
Goorickx, Marc Hermann, David Lee Ingersoll,
François Launet, Natalie Sandells & Hugh
Thomas

Artist Credit from issue 2: Marc Hermann

Handouts: Kostja Kleye

Maps: David Conyers, Thorsten Heine &
Wood Ingham

Comic Strip: François Launet

Translators: Hannes Kaiser, Calum McDonald &
Bill Walsh

Cover Artist: François Launet

Cover Conception & Design: Manfred Escher

Graphic Design: Manfred Escher (www.manicor.de)

Layout: Adam Crossingham

Proofreading: Wood Ingham

d20 Conversionist: Ken Finlayson. d20 Cthulhu
stats can be downloaded from our home page

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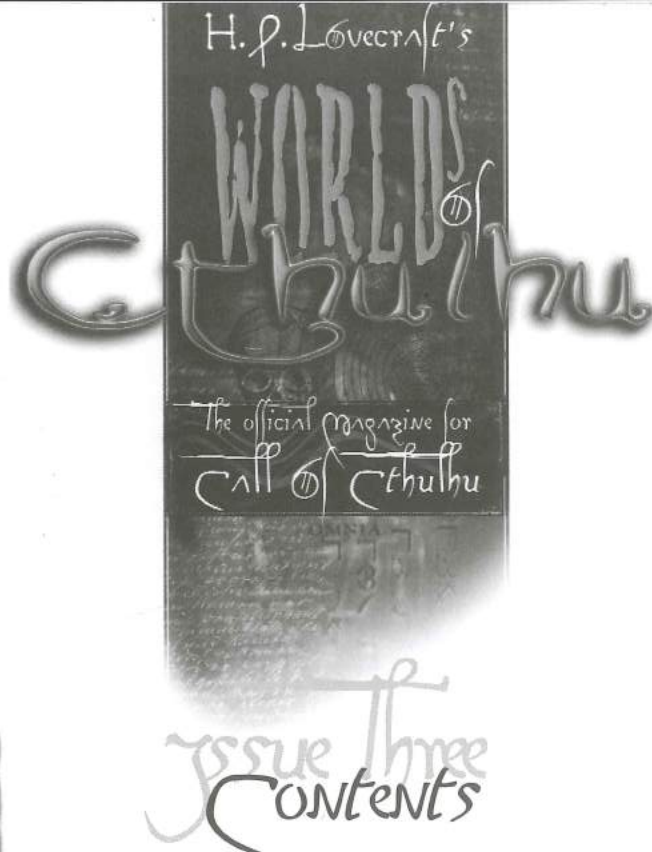
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E-mail: verlag@pegasus.de

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1920s: Classic period; CDA: Dark Ages; CoC: General;

d20: d20 Cthulhu; DG: Delta Green; Gas: Gaslight;

Now: Modern-day; SA: Strange Aeons

Handouts, maps and character sheets from this issue's scenarios
and articles can be downloaded from *Worlds of Cthulhu's*

web site at: <http://www.worldsofcthulhu.com>

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Welcome to issue 3 of *Worlds of Cthulhu*! Some naysayers said we'd never make it this far but we have. And we are better than ever.

I'm feeling like a teenager again with issue 3, full of new ideas and new hopes. In this issue we have a significant proportion of articles that are original to print, and not translations from *Worlds of Cthulhu*'s awesome German-language mother magazine, *Cthuloide Welten*. *Worlds of Cthulhu* takes its inspiration and spirit from *Cthuloide Welten*'s impressive heritage in terms of originality of material and high presentation standards, and aims to do the same in presenting the very best of new gaming articles and scenarios to *Call of Cthulhu*'s varied international audience. I hope future issues of *Worlds of Cthulhu* will carve their own way into the Cthulhu Mythos with our original articles and scenarios.

I'm proud to present three excellent scenarios in this issue set in the Dark Ages, the Wild West and the present day respectively. Malevolence is a nice and short excursion into Anglo-Saxon horror. Sufficient Unto the Day is probably the first treatment of Cyäegha in print, and damned good it is too. Frank Heller's Golden Scorpion is one of Frank's best – and he does again what he does best – doing to the players what every keeper wants to do.

I'm pleased that this issue's Averogne material is longer and more comprehensive than the last issue's material. With this issue's material we have published enough material to allow any competent keeper to get playing in Clark Ashton Smith's Averogne. We hope to finish up coverage in the next issue of *Worlds of Cthulhu*.

If you are inspired by, challenged by, or even depressed by any of the material in this issue then please join us and make *Worlds of Cthulhu* even better by submitting material. We are actively considering *Call of Cthulhu* material for Dark Ages, Gaslight, Twenties, Pulp, present day, *Delta Green* and other strange aeons. Our submission guidelines can be found on our website: www.worldsofcthulhu.com.

I saddened by the departure of Keith Herber as Chief Editor. Keith's vision defined *Worlds of Cthulhu*, and I hope to maintain and develop it in future issues. It has also been a pleasure to work with one of *Call of Cthulhu*'s greatest authors and editors. I have learnt a lot by working with an Old Master, and I wish Keith and his wife all the best for the future.

Mike Mearls, columnist of "Twenty Sides of Terror", has also left us for better shores. Mike has brought his mastery and understanding of the d20 system to our pages. This mastery has been rewarded with his current position at Wizards of the Coast. Twenty Sides of Terror will not be appearing in this issue, but as soon as we have found a columnist as equally talented as Mike, Twenty Sides of Terror will be back.

Adam Crossingham
Chief Editor

Worlds of Cthulhu #3 is an issue marked by change: Two valued members of our team have left us for different shores, and new authors have found their way to us, contributing to this issue. This issue presents a number of articles and adventures that will be completely novel even to readers who know our German-language mother magazine, *Cthuloide Welten*. It is good to see talented new people join us, and our pledge still stands: We're offering everyone an opportunity to contribute, because we believe every reader has some talent that could be beneficial to our magazine. We always welcome new contributors and encourage you to contact us via our webpage, www.worldsofcthulhu.com.

The two friends departing are Mike Mearls and Keith Herber.

Mike, who authored our column "Twenty Sides of Terror", has a new job at Wizards of the Coast that's keeping him busy. We wish him all the best! Since a new author for the column has not yet been found, "Twenty Sides of Terror" will not appear for a while. We will try to revive it sometime soon.

We are also saddened to relate that Keith Herber is heading for new shores. He was our Chief Editor in the first two issues, and it was an honor to work with him. His friendly demeanor, professional attitude, and profound knowledge of all things Lovecraftian will be especially missed. We thank Keith deeply and wish him well.

Nonetheless, as you can see, the magazine proceeds apace, thanks to Adam Crossingham, who has taken over the vacant chair of Chief Editor. Adam did a lot of editing and the layout for the first two issues already and has shaped the magazine for over a year now. Enough from me; go ahead and have a look at what we have to offer you this time!

Frank Heller
Publishing Director

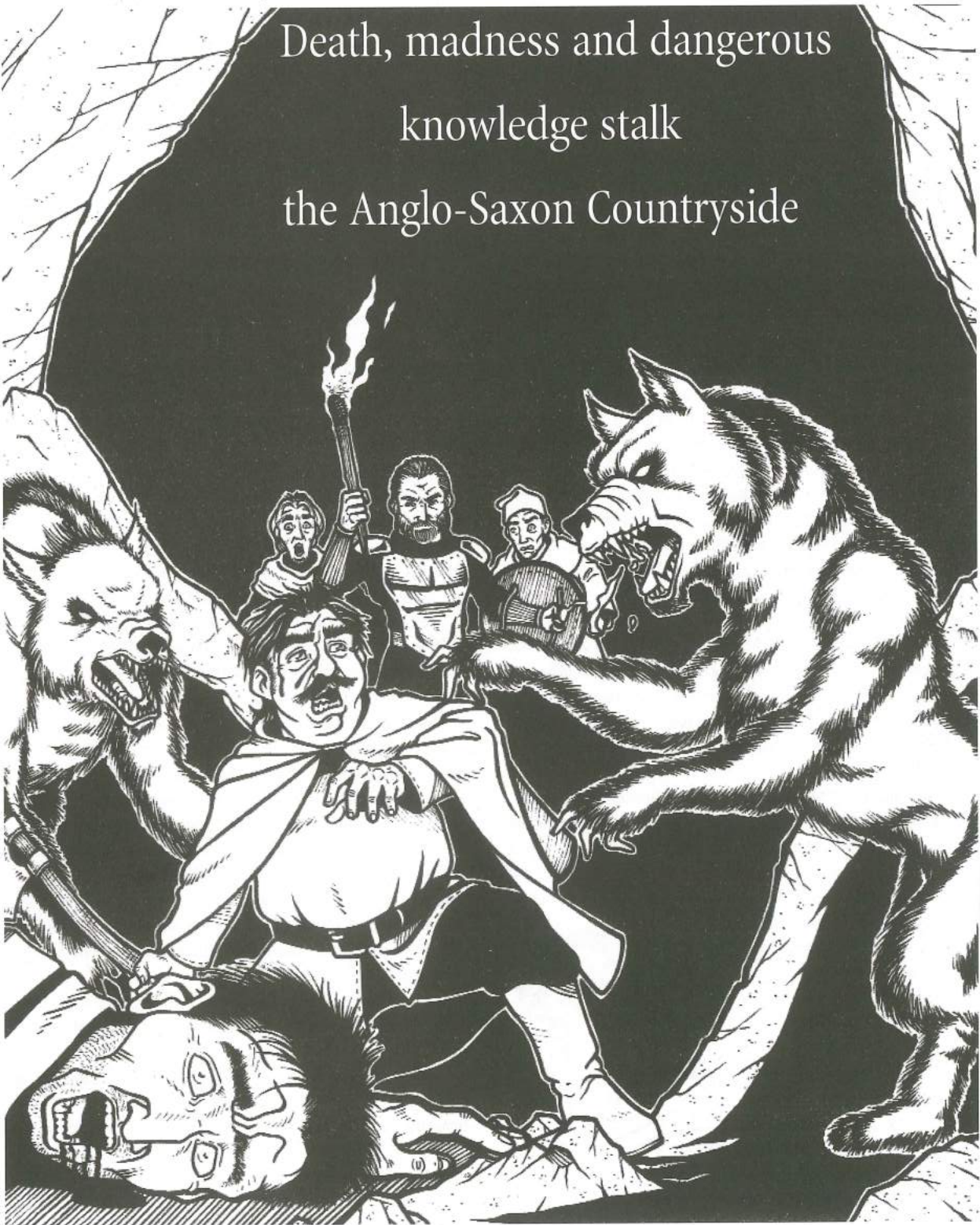


Cthulhu Dark Ages:

Malevolence

by Dale Elvy

Death, madness and dangerous
knowledge stalk
the Anglo-Saxon Countryside



Introduction

Malevolence is set in the year 1002 A.D. on the fictional Aldred Estate. Were such a place to exist, it might be found somewhere near Canterbury in the southeast of England. The Aldred Estate is a small, largely unremarkable part of Dark Ages England.

The adventure is intended for up to six characters with little or no knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos. It was designed to fit the three-hour time constraint of a tournament round. With some slight modifications or a slower pace, it could easily be adapted to fit within a single evening's play.

Keeper's Background

Bertwald Aldred is a young man of particularly vicious and cruel disposition. He is a changeling, the offspring of the Little Folk left in replacement for a human child. Unfortunately his "father," Ealdgar of Aldred, a thane in the service of King Edward, has long been blinded to the true nature of his only son and heir. The younger Aldred, fascinated with the dark arts, has devoted many years to secretly studying whatever dark materials he can lay his hands on, while maintaining the pretense of learning the skills of yeomanry.

Two years ago, whilst visiting London, Bertwald purchased a collection of old Roman scrolls concerning the history of the Romans in South England. Amongst these scrolls was the Praesida Finium, rolls of parchment describing terrible things the Romans discovered. In one, a crazed priest and a ritual slaughtered a town's inhabitants in a single night. Bertwald recognized the town as the site of the nearby monastery.

While able to read Latin, Bertwald is not a gifted scholar and eventually turned to Cartean, a young monk studying at the nearby abbey, for help deciphering the Praesida Finium. Cartean, the fourth son of a wealthy noble, disliked the life of religious devotion to which he had been forced, and so eagerly helped the younger Aldred with the scrolls.

The conspirators formed a pact to keep their work secret, spending nights in an old cave deep in the woods surrounding the Aldred lands. After almost a year of work, they finally learned the secrets of the scrolls. Bertwald, infatuated with the tales of the Little Folk who inhabited the ancient burial mounds near the Roman settlement, contacted the small colony of degenerate Serpentmen and struck a pact with them. As a relative, the serpentmen were happy to serve him, so long as Bertwald promised to search for the serpentmen's long-lost 'cup of power' where they could not venture. As is to be expected, Bertwald has made little effort to find the cup so he can maintain his allies for as long as possible. He



Cartean the Monk,
before his transformation

has also been taught the art of resurrection by the serpentmen, and is questioning the Roman occupants of the old graveyard as to the whereabouts of the cup of power.

Cartean, meanwhile, used the knowledge from the scrolls to uncover the chambers of the insane Roman priest, buried beneath the monastery. There, he discovered an ancient Celtic skull, fashioned into a chalice, but kept its discovery secret from Bertwald. Drinking fresh blood from this artifact gives him the power to become a werewolf. Exultant with this new power, Cartean recruited two other young monks who are dissatisfied with life at the abbey. As werewolves, they have roamed the woods at night preying on small animals for some weeks now.

Cartean, no longer entirely sane, is not satisfied with his new power. He wanted to perform a powerful blood ritual described in the Praesida Finium to summon a powerful ally. He put his plan to Bertwald, who promptly rejected it as dangerous and foolish. The conspirators quarreled and Cartean would have torn the younger Aldred apart were it not for the timely intervention of Bertwald's degenerate serpentmen allies.

Frustrated, Cartean returned to the abbey, determined to have his revenge on Bertwald. He began the ritual to summon Bugg-Shash, the creature described in the scrolls, but he and his monk acolytes were interrupted when the Abbot and other monks discovered the underground chamber and interrupted the pagan ceremony.

Furious at the disruption of his spell, Cartean turned into a werewolf and tore the terrified monks apart, hunting them through the abbey.

Unfortunately, Bugg-Shash, attracted by the partially completed ritual and the bloodshed, materialized in the underground chamber. In the absence of Cartean's intended victim (Bertwald), it turned its attention to the would-be summoners. Realizing the danger, Cartean and one of the other werewolf acolytes fled into the forest. The other was consumed by Bugg-Shash.

Bugg-Shash, meanwhile, has found itself confined to the summoning pentagram in the old Roman chamber. It intends to claim its ounce of flesh before returning to its alien lair by using its zombie minions to bring its intended victim to the chamber.

Meanwhile Bertwald, unaware of events at the abbey, is desperate to kill Cartean, but is unwilling to risk his Little Folk minions against the werewolf pack. The arrival of the investigators, a traveling party possibly with brave warriors, proves just the opportunity he's looking for to dispatch his former conspirator.

The investigators soon learn that not all is well on the Aldred Estate. Several villagers have recently died mysteriously, and there have been unwholesome occurrences in the local cemetery after dark. To make matters worse, a local boy has disappeared on the night of the investigators' arrival, and the villagers have seen large wolves prowling the woods.

A woodsman happened across an old cave deep in the forest and saw bones and flesh strewn about outside, as though the Devil himself had taken up residence.

Ealdgar, clearly upset by these tidings and by the increasingly panicked state of his villagers, intends to don his armor and investigate the cave with as many of the investigators as will accompany him, urged on by his son Bertwald, who hopes that the party will meet Cartean and slay him.

As the night draws on, Bugg-Shash grows increasingly impatient, sending the dismembered bodies of the monks to seek out Cartean and Bertwald, his summoner and his intended victim. Against this host of Mythos horrors, the investigators must unravel the truth and find a way to defeat the conspirators and the terrible darkness they have summoned.

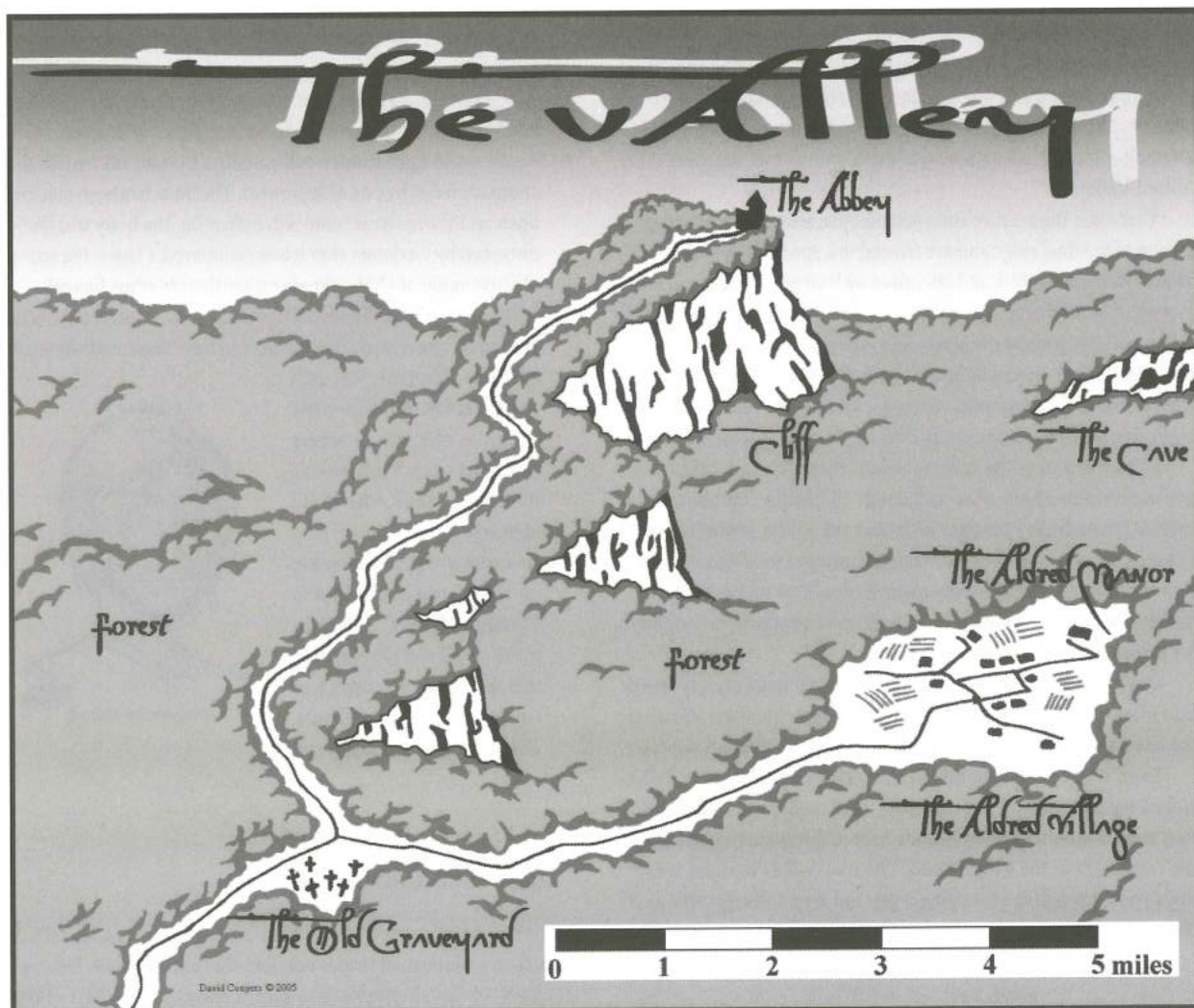
Involving the Investigators

The characters might be a loosely affiliated band of travelers, on their way to attend a celebration or event in London to celebrate recent victories of King Ethelred II over Danish invaders. When they seek shelter for the night, however, they find themselves drawn into events at the Aldred Manor, village and nearby abbey.

If you wish to include this scenario in an existing campaign, the investigators may comprise any group of travelers on the King's Road who are unfortunate enough to find themselves on the Aldred Estate at dusk.

Timeline of Events

- 16:20 The investigators arrive at the Aldred Estate and meet Bertwald in the Old Graveyard. (see 'The Old Graveyard' and 'Enter Bertwald')
- 17:10 The investigators arrive at the village of Aldred (see 'Aldred Manor')
- 17:15 The investigators reach the Aldred Manor and are greeted by Ealdgar.
- 18:00 An angry crowd gathers outside the manor.
- 18:30 Ealdgar and peasants leave to investigate the cave (see 'The Cave')
- 18:40 Little Folk enter the village (see 'Meanwhile, back at the Manor')
- 18:55 The party investigating the cave is attacked by a werewolf.
- 19:20 The party returns to the manor after investigating the cave (see 'Accusations at the Manor')
- 20:30 Ealdgar, Bertwald and the investigators leave to visit the abbey (see 'To the Abbey')
- 21:45 The party reaches the abbey and is attacked by Bugg-Shash's zombies



23:00 Bugg-Shash sends its zombie minions to attack the investigators at the manor. (see 'Bugg-Shash Comes Calling')

Setting Malevolence Elsewhere

The Keeper may wish to set Malevolence outside the bounds of Anglo-Saxon England to fit in with existing characters or to form a part of an ongoing campaign.

In this case Malevolence may easily be adapted to fit Otto III's Holy Roman Empire or the France of Robert the Pious. In either case the scenarios should be altered to fit within a geographic region formerly occupied and settled by the ancient Romans. This allows an enterprising keeper a large scope including much of Western Europe and the Mediterranean.

Opening Scene - The Road to London

The King's Road is a wide thoroughfare that cuts through the wild English countryside. Often treacherous, the road is sometimes little more than a dirt track winding through thick woods and isolated hamlets. As the road approaches the Aldred estate, it climbs steeply, weaving a serpentine path across the low hills that surround the Aldred Valley.

There is a moment of unexpected openness, as the investigators crest the final ridge and are treated to a spectacular view of the valley before them, thick and abundant with forest and rampant wild growth. A short distance away, they spy orderly fields of green and yellow, nestled amidst the seemingly endless woods. Smoke hangs low over a loose cluster of houses a short distance from the fields where distant figures work, carving orderly plow lines into fresh earth. The faint ring of axes can be heard, echoing around the valley.

At the far end of the valley, the late afternoon sun reflects the polished white stone of a collection of simple buildings - a monastery perhaps - perched high over the valley. In the last rays of the afternoon sun, all seems tranquil and serene. The investigators are saddle sore and weary from several days on the road, and likely welcome the opportunity to find more comfortable lodgings for the night.

Once the investigators crest the rise, they plunge rapidly down into wooded valley. Ancient, twisted trees surround them, filtering the late afternoon sun into a dappled tapestry of light and shadow.

Loud regular clacking fills the air as the horses' hooves strike stone beneath the carpet of dead leaves on the valley floor. An inspection reveals the smooth worn stone of an old Roman road running the same path as the King's Road. The road winds onward, weaving a path through the towering trees and wild undergrowth as it runs down the valley.

The Old Graveyard

Some 15 minutes' ride from the crest of the hill, the road passes the first clear sign of recent human habitation. A crude wooden fence surrounds a gentle rise, which has been cleared of trees and undergrowth.

Crude wooden markers and worn stone headstones are scattered around the clearing, marking it as the final resting place for former residents of the valley. The air around the graveyard is oddly still; even the birds, which were in full even-song only a moment before, fall silent.

Keeper's Note: This scene is the first opportunity to introduce an element of unease to the investigators. The old graveyard seems alien and foreboding, and every minute spent there seems an eternity. The investigators' horses will be able to scent the presence of Little Folk and will grow restless and jumpy.

The investigators may choose to dismount their horses to investigate the Old Graveyard. If they do so it is soon evident that there are a number of old graves that have been excavated some time in the past. At least six graves have been disturbed, with mounds of (now compact) dirt piled beside the open holes. The following information is also available following a thorough search of the graveyard.

- ♦ The graves are very old, perhaps even predating the Romans, although there are a number of Roman style headstones in the graveyard.
- ♦ The excavations are also old, at least a year or more. More than half the affected graves are pre-Saxon, possibly Roman
- ♦ A successful **Spot Hidden roll** reveals a human rib amidst the compacted dirt by one of the graves. The bone has been cracked open and the marrow removed, indicating the body was likely disturbed by predators after it was disinterred. (This is the action of scavenging of wild animals rather than Mythos forces).
- ♦ A half chance **Spot Hidden roll** reveals a number of recent tracks around the graveyard. These appear to have been made by small barefoot humans. A half chance **Track roll** follows the tracks to the woods where they disappear. It is from this direction that Bertwald appears.
- ♦ An investigator in possession of the above facts and a **Cthulhu Mythos** skill may make a skill roll to recall that this behavior is consistent with the presence of ghouls. This is, of course, a false lead.



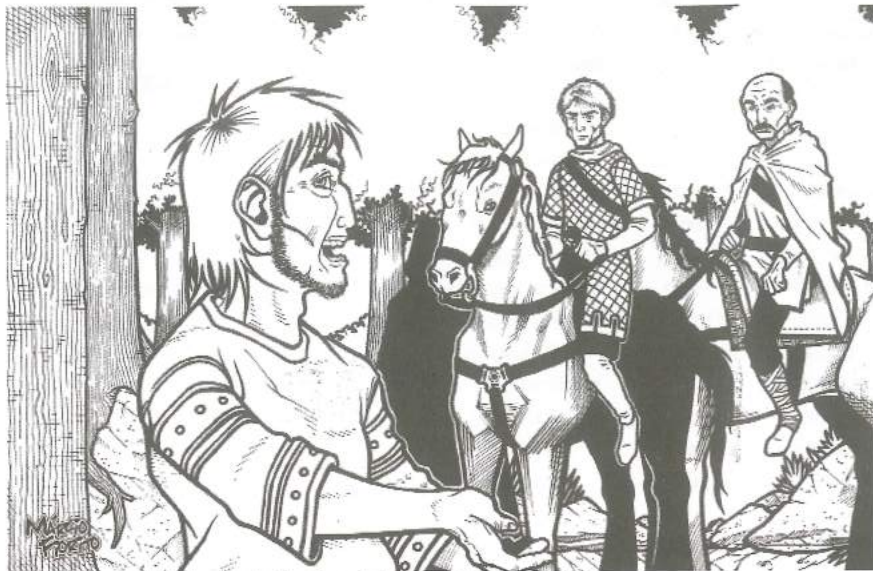
Bertwald of Aldred

Enter Bertwald

As the investigators survey the old graveyard, whether on horseback or on foot, a young man strides out from the nearby woods. He stops suddenly, obviously surprised to see the investigators. Bertwald is

no more than 20 years of age and has the lean, wiry disposition of someone not given to physical activities. His clothes mark him as a nobleman, although he looks pale and tired. He is also exceptionally ugly with a flat nose, straw-like hair and yellowed whites of his eyes.

Keeper's Note: Bertwald has just been communing with his serpentmen allies, although he will claim that he was merely out for a walk. Despite his prior conduct, he is a poor liar and, if questioned later in the scenario, may change his story.



Bertwald demands to know what the investigators are doing on his land

Bertwald will be suspicious at first, demanding to know who the investigators are and what they are doing on his father's land. However, by the time the investigators have finished explaining, he will have formulated the plan to use them to destroy his former collaborator and will become every inch the charming host. He will shamelessly flatter the investigators of good standing, and insist they enjoy the hospitality of his father, Ealdgar, that night.

Bertwald will then lead the investigators to his father's manor, making small talk with them. If asked, he will claim that the old graveyard was disturbed by grave robbers searching for Roman jewelry several years earlier. The investigators' horses become slightly spooked, which is noticeable to their riders with a successful **Ride roll**. It's as if there was something in the woods around them.

It soon becomes clear that the subject of the history of the valley is one dear to Bertwald's heart and he enthusiastically recounts the ancient stories. He tells the investigators that a small Roman settlement was once built on the side of the hill overlooking the valley. A small order of Benedictine monks now occupies the site. Some of the original ruins of the town still survive, built into the foundations of the monastery. The old Roman road leading to the abbey forks just before reaching the outskirts of the village.

Bertwald also eagerly recounts the reported destruction of the Roman town, a sudden violent event that took place in the space of a single bloody night. The legend that the town awoke some great sleeping evil is just a silly pagan myth, he jokes, but he can only wonder aloud at what event might have sent the town's priest into a murderous frenzy.

Aldred Manor

Another 30 minutes of travel from the old graveyard, the forest gives way to clear, open plowed fields. Here the village of Aldred huddles on the valley floor, surrounded by fields and encircled by woods. When the investigators arrive, the last of the evening sun is beginning to fade, replaced by the cool thin light of dusk. Several large

bonfires have been built by children at the main approaches to the village, lighting the muddy settlement with a hellish glow. Men and women struggle in from the fields, massaging sore muscles and swapping conversation. The air above the village is thick with smoke and the smell of cooking as the evening meal is prepared.

The village consists of two dozen simple wooden houses, clustered around a central pasture, on which the village animals graze. A simple wooden church with stone foundations near the center of the village is the largest and best constructed building of the settlement. The churchyard is noticeable for the two recent graves that have fresh earth and flowers piled on them.

Bertwald pays little attention to the village, barely acknowledging the curious looks of the peasants who stop to watch the investigators pass. If pressed, he will tell the investigators that the village consists of about 40 peasants, who are for the most part well behaved, but also liable to believe all manner of superstitious pagan nonsense. They have no priest in the village, so these errors are often uncorrected. If asked about the recent graves he will tell the investigators that two of the villagers recently died of a sudden illness. An investigator making a successful **Insight roll** may deduce that Bertwald knows more about the deaths than he is saying.

A perceptive investigator paying attention to the peasants will notice that Bertwald does not seem well liked in the village. Many villagers shake their heads or mutter angry words as the young noble passes. A **Spot Hidden roll** will also reveal a wooden platter of food and mug of milk left behind a house. An **Occult roll** will remind the investigator that such gifts are often left for the Little Folk.

A short distance from the village is Aldred Manor. It is a long stone building, built at the base of a low hill. The fields surrounding the manor are expansive and extremely well tended. A sturdy wooden stable has been built a short distance from the manor, and it is here that Bertwald leads them. News of the strangers arrival has preceded them, and a young, wide-eyed boy of no older than 12 waits anxiously to take their horses.

A quick inspection reveals the stables to be large and well constructed, and well stocked with hay. Three horses are already tethered within, including a large war-horse. The young groom, despite his age and nervousness, is entirely competent. Bertwald urges the investigators inside, and seems to have little liking for

horses. The horses don't like Bertwald either, and are noticeably nervous near him.

To the Manor Born

The thane is waiting for the investigators in the main hall of the manor. He is a short, stocky man with a ruddy complexion. He looks



Thane Ealdgar of Aldred

to be in his late fifties, but remains muscular and trim despite his years. His son Bertwald looks nothing like him. Ealdgar will greet his guests warmly, clearly pleased at the prospect of having company for the evening. A gracious and charming host, Ealdgar will insist that the investigators spend the night and share the evening meal.

The manor consists of a single large hall, which serves as a dining area and sleeping quarters for the retainers and four domestic servants who live in the manor. At one end of the manor is a dais, with small panels that close off bedrooms for the lord and his son. Flanking the far wall of the hall from the dais are two doors, one the principal entrance and the other leading to a small kitchen, in which all meals are prepared. A hearth occupies the middle of the floor.

Outside, the Aldred estate is now shrouded in darkness. The only illumination is the flickering light of the bonfires which surround the village. Inside the manor, a great table has been set. Two shy girls bring platter after platter to set before the guests. There is little ceremony in the Aldred house; Ealdgar mutters a brief prayer of thanks, or asks an investigator cleric to do so. If the investigator takes too long, an **Insight roll** reveals fidgeting among those at the table. Once this is done, the meal is begun.

The majority of the fare is fresh roasted vegetables. When the news of the travelers first reached him, however, Ealdgar ordered several fowl slaughtered, so there is an abundance of white meat. During the meal, Ealdgar will keep up his good-natured banter, eager to learn news of the outside world. He also takes great pleasure in reminiscing about his days in the service of King Ethelred. Bertwald remains quiet and thoughtful during the meal.

An Angry Crowd

As the investigators eat, news spreads rapidly through the village. A small boy sent to collect firewood has not returned. A party of men searches the surrounding forest, but they spot a massive wolf (the monk Cartean) and flee back to the village in disarray. Fearful and angry, the villagers decide that something must be done at once and march to the manor house to demand that Ealdgar take action.

About half an hour into the meal, the investigators become aware of a disturbance outside: raised voices and the flicker of torches. At first Ealdgar and his son do not seem concerned, but a few moments later, a burly man (Sigbert) bursts in, muttering hasty apologies, and whispers rapidly to Ealdgar. Ealdgar listens gravely, then apologizes to his guests and follows the man outside. If the investigators seem reluctant, Bertwald encourages them to follow and listen.

Outside the Manor the entire population of the village has assembled. They mutter angrily amongst themselves, but when Ealdgar appears they hush and allow Calen the woodcutter to speak. Calen tells Ealdgar that Osric, the eight year old son of Penda, a field hand, has gone missing whilst gathering firewood. Several village men went looking for him, but when they entered the forest, they saw a giant wolf, as large as a horse, and fled back to the village.



Sigbert, Ealdgar's Overseer

At this point several villagers interrupt.

- ◆ Penda, the boy's father, is distraught and says that he is not afraid of the wolf. He will go to find his son.
- ◆ Another woodcutter, Eni, claims that while cutting wood two days ago, he happened across a large cave deep in the woods. Outside of the cave were blood and entrails. He thought a demon might live there, and promptly fled.

Keeper's Note: *This is the cave secretly used by Bertwald and Cartean*

- ◆ Sarah, the wife of one of the field hands, claims that she has seen witches abroad in the old cemetery after dark stealing the bodies of the dead. Several other women also claim to have seen this.

Keeper's Note: *These are Bertwald's Little Folk retrieving corpses to be resurrected and questioned by Bertwald.*

The villagers are clearly very frightened. Sigbert, the burly man who interrupted dinner, will try and keep order over proceedings. He is Ealdgar's man who oversees all work in the village, and the other villagers respect and fear him.

Ealdgar now agrees that he must act. He speaks calmly to the villagers, telling them that he will venture into the woods to try and find the boy. He will ask Eni to lead him to the cave, believing it to be the wolf's lair. He will ask for volunteers amongst the men of the village to take whatever weapons they can find and accompany him into the woods. Sigbert immediately volunteers himself, then chooses several other "volunteers" from amongst the assembled men.

Ealdgar will then go inside the manor and speak to the investigators. He will ask those capable of fighting to accompany him into



Penda the Farmhand



Eni the Woodcutter

the woods, as he is no longer as spry and agile as he once was. Bertwald does not volunteer to help. Ealdgar gives him a despairing look, and orders that his son should stay and protect the manor and remaining villagers until the wolf can be found.

The Fairer Sex

While it is not realistic that highborn female characters of the Dark Ages would be included on so potentially dangerous a mission, for the sake of gameplay (and equality), the Keeper may elect to have Ealdgar allow them to travel with the party with only a minimum of protest.



The angry crowd of villagers outside Ealdgar's manor

Spitting Up?

At this juncture there are three possibilities:

1. The investigators all accompany Ealdgar to investigate the cave. In this case, run 'The Cave' section immediately.
2. Some of the investigators go to the cave, while some remain in the manor. In this case run 'The Cave' section, then the 'Meanwhile back at the Manor' section.
3. All of the investigators remain at the manor. In this case run the 'Meanwhile back at the Manor' section immediately. Ealdgar and the peasants are slaughtered by Cartean as they investigate the wood. A single bloodstained villager returns to tell the horrific tale at the conclusion of the 'Meanwhile Back at the Manor' section.

The Cave

Preparations to venture into the wood are made in haste. The five peasant 'volunteers,' including Penda, Eni the woodcutter, and Sigbert, grab up pitchforks, axes, scythes and flaming torches. Ealdgar emerges from the manor having donned a helmet, mail byrnie, shield and a large sword. His appearance (and that of any investigators bearing arms) greatly cheers the villagers, and they shout encouragement and praise as the small band makes its way to the edge of the village.

All too soon the cheery light of the village bonfires is gone, and the party crosses the darkened fields into the thick tangle of woods. Amidst the twisted branches and towering trees, the false bravado of the group melts away. By the flickering light of torches, the inves-

tigators can only see a dozen or so feet ahead of them, and the shadows of the forest take on a frightening and alarming cast. Despite the efforts of Ealdgar and Sigbert to boost the men's spirits, the peasants grow more and more frightened as they venture further into the woods.

Keeper's Note: You should try and put the players on edge as much as possible during this phase of the game. Call for **Listen rolls** and **Spot Hidden rolls** often. Clarify the formation of the party to try to keep the players on edge and expecting an attack at any moment.

After 10 minutes of walking, one of the peasants can take it no more and he flees, ignoring Sigbert's curses and threats.

Ten minutes more bring the band to the small clearing around the cave. As the woodcutter said, bloody remains lie strewn about the clearing. Most of the remains seem to be the organs of animals, large and small. Partially gnawed bones are also in evidence, ground down by extremely large teeth. A successful **Spot Hidden roll** (half-chance for bad light) or **Track roll** if requested reveals massive dog or wolf tracks in the mud all around the clearing. A further **Track roll** shows many sets of prints leading into the cave and out from the clearing in different directions. This fresh evidence proves too much for another of the peasants, and he flees into the night.

The cave mouth is some eight feet in diameter. The interior is pitch black but smells strongly of wet animal fur. At this point the investigators should determine who among them will venture inside. Ealdgar will lead the way, along with the boy's father, but Sigbert and Eni are not eager to venture inside.

The hardy investigators who enter the cave soon find that the interior is not very large. Perhaps 20 feet from the entrance is a bundle of waterproof skins, surrounded by dozens of burnt-down candles. Within the skins are dozens of carefully bound old scrolls, written in Latin.

As the investigators inside the cave discover the scrolls, those outside the cave should make a **Listen roll**. Those who succeed hear a sudden burst of terrible, agonized screaming which is abruptly cut short, and must make a **Sanity roll**. Failure costs 1 **Sanity** point. The

Praesidia Finium

Otherwise known as 'Frontier Garrison', these parchment rolls detail what the author Lollius Urbicus knows about a confrontation between a centuria of legionaries and an entity called 'Yegg-Ha'. Urbicus goes on to detail more of what the Romans found in Second Century A.D. Britannia as the province slowly Romanized.

Urbicus records the horrors found on Hadrian's Wall, in the vast moorlands of the North (Yorkshire), in the gray hills overlooking the fortress of Isca (Caerleon), in a degenerate valley in the lands of the Dobunni (Goatswood and Exham Priory), and those worshipped at standing stones in the Far West. Urbicus also tells of patrols lost in the mists of Caledonia (Cannich) and the efforts of the Pictish resistance to drive the Romans out of the British Isles (including their propitiation of the Worms of the Earth).

The Keeper is encouraged to use the Praesidia Finium to drive future scenarios. The scrolls are a gazetteer of Mythos events in the late second century A.D. Whether these places are still plagued by the Mythos 800 years later is up to the Keeper, but it is highly likely. The ruse of wealth or power should be enough to motivate players to investigate further.

The soldiers who survived the encounter with Yegg-Ha formed a secret society named 'the 48' to prevent its return. The society may still exist in 1000 A.D. If it does, the investigators may cross the 48's path and be drawn into its machinations.

For statistics for this tome, see p. 95 of *Cthulhu Dark Ages*.

screaming comes from the direction in which the most recent peasant fled.

The investigators have only a few minutes to prepare before two massive wolves appear at the edge of the clearing, covered in fresh blood. If there are no investigators outside the cave or the Listen rolls are failed, the first that the investigators know of the attack is when the first werewolf attacks Eni.

The wolves are massive and unnatural, standing almost five feet tall at the shoulder, with terrible sharp fangs and eyes that gleam a hellish red. A Sanity roll is required from all who face the werewolves. Failure costs the combatant 1D3 Sanity points. One of the beasts will immediately attack in a frenzy, while the other, Cartean, watches on, staying at the edge of the clearing.

When running a werewolf combat, the Keeper should remember that the Fury spell (*Cthulhu Dark Ages*, p. 87) allows two attacks a round, and allows the caster to ignore major wound/shock effects. This allows the werewolf to keep on fighting. If the Keeper is using the weapon length optional rules (*Cthulhu Dark Ages*, p. 42) it is recommended that the werewolves rush their opponents, dodging the longer weapons, in order to close as quickly as possible and negating the advantage of longer weapons. The werewolves should take advantage of confined spaces (such as the cave) and other tactical

advantages which prevent opponents ganging up and overpowering them at all times.

If the party defeats the first werewolf, Cartean will slink away into the night. The werewolf's body will gradually transform into that of a ragged-looking young man (another Sanity roll to witness, costing 0/1D3 Sanity points) whom Ealdgar will identify as one of the monks from the nearby abbey.

Meanwhile, Back at the Manor

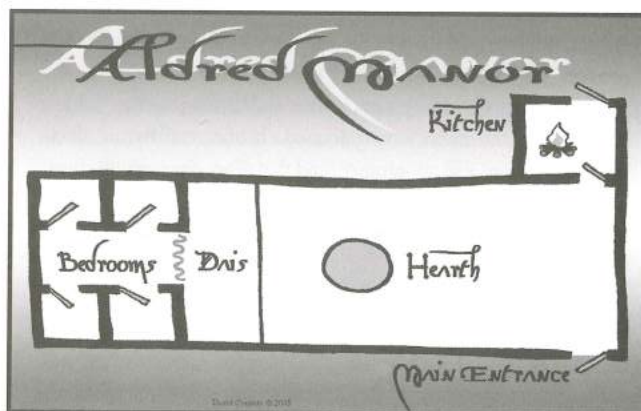
Bertwald has become increasingly agitated back at the manor, fearing that Cartean may try to strike at him at the manor, while the men are out investigating the cave. He is also afraid that Ealdgar may discover the scrolls in the cave and somehow deduce his involvement. To make matters worse, Bertwald's serpentmen allies have become increasingly restless and bold and have ventured to the outskirts of the village in search of the cup of power which they have sensed. It is they who encountered and killed young Osric in the woods earlier that evening.

The first that the investigators are aware of this is when they hear an earsplitting scream from the manor's kitchen. Inside, one of the cooks is staring, ashen faced, at the open door to the outside. She stammers that she saw a terrible creature there only a moment before. Investigators who rush to the door are permitted a **Spot Hidden** roll to spot a small figure, shuffling away into the night.

Pursuit is impossible in the moonless night, but investigators venturing outside alone may well find themselves face to face with a degenerate serpentman. A total of four Little Folk are terrorizing the village and the manor, prowling through the fields and rattling at doors and windows. Terrified peasants have barricaded themselves inside their houses praying that the monstrous menace will soon pass.

In the stables the horses rapidly become panicked when they scent the Little Folk on the night air. Tearing themselves free of their tethers, they crash through the stable doors, galloping into the woods. Any investigator hapless enough to be in the stables at the time must make a **Luck** roll or be trampled (for 4D6 damage). The Keeper might permit a **Ride** roll beforehand to suggest that the situation is unsafe.

The most likely course of action is for the investigators to shut themselves inside the manor and await the return of Ealdgar. Should any of the investigators decide to venture outside, they will be in



immediate danger of being attacked. Only in a single group that outnumbers the Little Folk and keeping the night at bay with flaming torches will the investigators remain unmolested.

Keeper's Note: This is another excellent opportunity to build atmosphere and unnerve the players. The Little Folk soon become fixated with the manor and they will rattle at the doors, tap at the thick window shutters, and even climb across the roof looking for a way inside. Glimpses of the Little Folk should result in a 1D6 Sanity point after a failed Sanity roll.

Throughout the serpentmen's incursion into the village, Bertwald has remained pensive, yet not as alarmed as might be expected. A successful **Insight** roll reveals that he is frustrated, rather than frightened by the appearance of the loathsome creatures. This is an odd reaction, and may arouse the investigators' suspicions.

For almost half an hour the Little Folk roam the village, before deciding to force entry into the manor. When they do, it is without warning. The kitchen door suddenly bursts open with alarming force, snapping the stout wooden bar used to secure it, and the serpentmen rush in hissing "give us the cup" and "where is the cup" in barbaric Anglo-Saxon. It is here that Bertwald confronts his wayward allies, commanding them to leave at once. To the investigators' surprise the Little Folk reluctantly comply, shuffling away into the night.

This should raise some questions about Bertwald and his motivations. Adding to the dramatic tension, it is recommended that the party investigating the cave return at this point.

If the investigators have ventured out into the village, or are not near the manor's kitchen the Keeper should contrive to have Bertwald venture out to speak to the serpentmen. Having an investigator see the end of such a meeting should yield the same result as the kitchen confrontation. If Bertwald has been killed or otherwise incapacitated, the serpentmen are scared away when the party sent to investigate the cave returns.

Accusations at the Manor

At this point in the adventure Bertwald should have done enough to arouse the suspicions of the investigators that he is in some way involved in the strange happenings in the valley. The evidence against him thus far is as follows:

- ♦ He was first seen at the site of an old graveyard where the graves had previously been disturbed. He may have later contradicted himself about the reason for his presence in the graveyard.



After interrogation, Bertwald confesses the "truth" to his father and audience

- ♦ He is not well liked by the villagers. If questioned, they will now reveal that he consorts with the Devil at night in the old graveyard. They also believe he was responsible for the two deaths in the village last week through an evil eye or something. They have no evidence of this, but Bertwald is indeed responsible, trying out his latent talents after the villagers accosted him in the woods.
- ♦ If pressed, the manor's servants will admit to having seen him creep out late at night almost every night for the last year.
- ♦ He is the only person in the village who can read and write, and therefore suspicious in light of the discovery of the old scrolls in the cave.
- ♦ He was not afraid of the Little Folk and was seen to communicate with them. They seem to obey him.
- ♦ He has always been an odd fellow, and has been since a child.

The sum of this evidence may well have been enough to convict a peasant in the Dark Ages, but Bertwald is the only son of Ealdgar, and he is reluctant to believe the worst about his son unless the investigators can mount a compelling argument. Ealdgar takes an extremely dim view of any investigator who takes it upon themselves to dispense justice.

Keeper's Note: Players should be encouraged to role-play this section, rather than rely upon skill rolls. However, in the interests of brevity the Keeper may elect to allow a single **Persuade skill** roll for the group.

A coherent summation of the above points, particularly with reference to Bertwald's involvement with the Little Folk, should convince Ealdgar that something is amiss with his son, something that he always suspected but never admitted to himself. When Ealdgar has heard enough, he will ask Bertwald for the truth.

Bertwald, who has listened to the accusations in sullen silence, decides on a new tactic to save his neck and try and do away with Cartean once and for all.

Bertwald's Story

Bertwald tearfully recounts how he fell under the sway of a monk named Cartean whilst studying at the abbey at the end of the valley almost a year ago. He claims that Cartean had a terrible thirst for dark knowledge and forced him to assist in his dark studies, which included the procurement of certain blasphemous scrolls. A few days ago, Bertwald claims that he told Cartean he wished to have no further part in his dark experiments. Cartean grew angry and cursed Bertwald, promising he would use the dark arts to summon a terrible monster to dispatch him. Terrified, Bertwald used what little he knew to ask the Little Folk to help protect him and the manor.

Ealdgar is satisfied with Bertwald's story. He immediately suggests that he and the investigators should travel to the abbey and inform the Abbot so that Cartean can face Christian justice without delay. A successful **Insight roll** will reveal that, while Bertwald's story contains truthful elements, it is far from the real truth.

Again the investigators must decide how to proceed.

1. All the investigators accompany Ealdgar and Bertwald to the Abbey. In this case run the 'To the Abbey' section immediately.
2. Some of the investigators accompany Ealdgar and Bertwald to the abbey while others remain at the manor. In this case run the 'To the Abbey' section first. You may wish to keep things lively for the remaining investigators by having the Little Folk return to the manor along the lines of the earlier 'Meanwhile, at the Manor' section.
3. None of the investigators wish to go to the abbey. After the encounter with the forest werewolf, Ealdgar believes it too risky to venture out alone and decides to visit the abbey in the morning. In this case run the 'Bugg-Shash Comes Calling' section immediately.

To the Abbey

If the investigators decide to investigate the abbey, Ealdgar will insist that Bertwald and any female investigators accompany him, as the manor is no longer safe.

The investigators may wish to spend some time preparing before the travel to the abbey. Investigators who can read and study the scrolls from the cave for 30 minutes or more can make a successful **Other Language (Latin) roll** and decipher the heavily annotated scrolls.

Optionally, if the investigators question Bertwald about the ritual Cartean planned to use, he will tell them that it was a complex ritual which required a blood sacrifice. At the

culmination of the ritual, a creature of utmost darkness would appear which, if not restrained in a pentagram of power, would seek its summoner as well as its intended victim.

Again the investigators foray out into the hostile night, with only flickering torchlight to fend off the pressing darkness. Fresh tracks around the village should immediately put them on edge, despite Bertwald's assurances that the Little Folk will not attack them.

To reach the abbey, the investigators must retrace their steps of earlier that afternoon and travel into the wood, back toward the old cemetery. As they enter the woods once more, they should again feel a deep foreboding sense of immanent danger. The faint rustling of small animals in the undergrowth should set the investigators on edge, with thoughts of degenerate serpentmen or ferocious werewolves creeping up on them.

Shortly before the old graveyard, the investigators find the partially buried stone of the old Roman road. Ealdgar tells them that the road winds up the side of the valley, ending at the abbey. In the darkness, following the old road is the safest way to reach the abbey.

The old road winds gradually up the valley side. Soon the investigators are above the tops of the great trees, which line the valley floor. In the faint moonlight, the valley looks deceptively calm and tranquil.

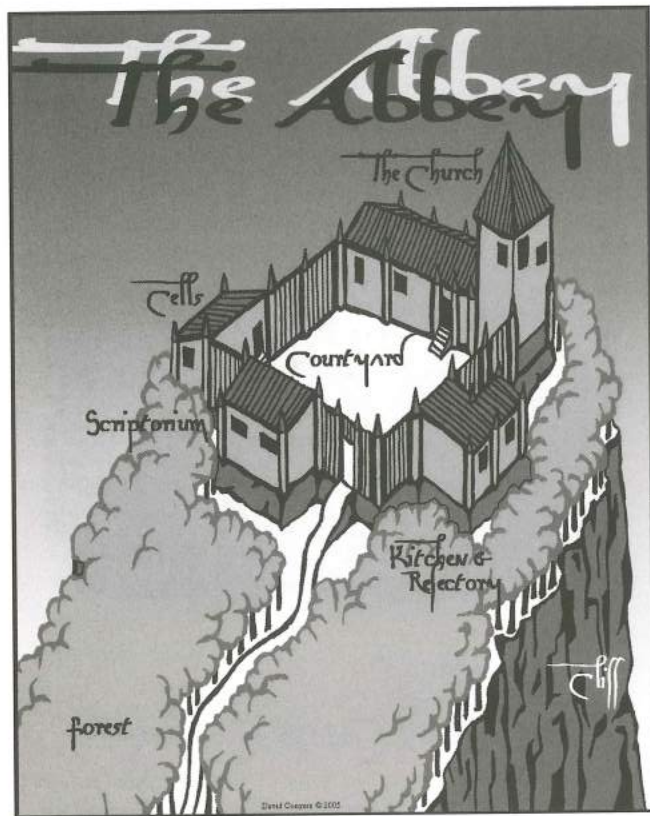
It takes nearly an hour for the investigators to reach the monastery. Although the path is not particularly steep, it maintains a steady gradient, and any investigators wearing armor or carrying large weapons soon become tired. At several points along the road, permit investigators a **Spot Hidden roll**. A successful roll means that the investigator briefly catches sight of a flash of gray amongst the trees in the valley below the path. A large wolf (Cartean) is shadowing them.

The Abbey

The Abbey consists of four large buildings and several outbuildings built on the side of the valley. The land on which it stands was once the site of an old Roman village. Much of the stone, which was used by the Romans, has been reused in the construction of the abbey.



At the Abbey Gates....



All is quiet as the investigators approach. There are no lights in any of the windows. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll at the entrance of the abbey will reveal a partially gnawed severed hand discarded beside the road. Its discovery causes a Sanity roll for the discoverer, who loses one Sanity point if they fail.

Inside the abbey large, bloody wolf paw prints crisscross the central courtyard between buildings, a testament to the bloody mayhem and slaughter that took place hours earlier.

The Church

The church is the largest and most elaborate building of the abbey and is built almost entirely of stone. Simple wooden pews lay strewn about, and blood is evident in large pools all around the interior. The altar has been smashed, and a seemingly random collection of partially gnawed human remains has been piled nearby. A closer inspection of the remains, which requires a Sanity roll (San loss 0/1) reveals to warriors, butchers or anyone with a successful **Medicine** or **Natural World** roll that at least three monks were killed here.

The Scriptorium

The scriptorium was the last part of the abbey to be attacked by the werewolves. Here the terrified monks tried to desperately bar the door against their monstrous brothers. Unfortunately, the door did not hold, and the monks inside were torn apart. More than a dozen bodies can be found inside this blood-smeared chamber. The Sanity point losses to those who fail a Sanity roll while viewing the massacre is 1D3 Sanity points. Investigators paying particular attention to the carnage, or making a successful **Spot Hidden** roll, will notice that the bodies have been smeared with a strange, clear ooze.

The Cells

The cells are small, spartan stone chambers with only a simple bedroll and a few personal items for each monk. The body of a monk, missing a leg, lies sprawled at the entrance to the cells. This was one of the Abbot's party, who confronted Cartean and his fellows in the secret chamber below and disrupted the ritual. He managed to climb up from the chamber, but succumbed to blood loss before he could reach the outside. Investigators paying particular attention to the body notice that it, too, has been smeared with a strange, clear ooze.

The monk has left a long bloody smear across the floor of the cells, which leads to a cell at the far end of the building, used for storage of tools. Here a hole in the floor leads to the secret chamber below where Bugg-Shash waits.

The Kitchens and Refectory

This building has a stone foundation, but has been built largely of timber felled from the valley below. Several monks were in the midst of preparing the daily meal when the werewolves smashed their way in. The mauled bodies of three monks can be found in the kitchen, whilst another two bodies are scattered around the refectory (another Sanity roll, Sanity point loss 0/1), with the torn remains of an illuminated Bible which was to be used for the meal reading. Investigators paying particular attention to the bodies, or making a successful **Spot Hidden** roll, will notice that again the bodies have been smeared with a strange, clear ooze.

Bugg-Shash Attacks

Once the investigators have entered the abbey, and spent some time surveying the carnage, Bugg-Shash makes its move. Although it is confined by the pentagram of summoning, it was able to use the bodies of the Abbot and the other slain monks in the secret chamber as zombie servants by covering them in a viscous slime that animates them to its will. In the hours since it has been summoned, it has had these zombie servants transfer slime to the other corpses in the abbey, so that it is able to attack with all of the slain monks.

Sensing that the victim it was summoned to slay is nearby, Bugg-Shash animates the monks, sending them after the investigators. The zombie monks will converge from all parts of the abbey (except the church) and from the surrounding forest for a concentrated assault, intending to grapple the investigators and drag them down to the secret chamber where Bugg-Shash waits.

Although Bertwald is the intended victim of the attack, the zombies do not distinguish, grasping at any living being with cold, dead fingers. The San cost to witness this terrifying zombie attack is 1/1D6 Sanity points. The only way to destroy the zombies is to hack them into pieces. Impaling weapons do one point of damage per attack, and a zombie is considered destroyed when its hit points are reduced to zero. Only if matters are going badly will Bertwald turn to his sorcerous abilities, but even these will be insufficient to save him.

A total of 12 zombies participate in the attack, dragging Bertwald (dead or alive) and any unfortunate investigators down into

Bugg-Shash's chamber. Investigators that try to flee find their path blocked by Cartean, who intends to see his former conspirator suffer the costly fate he has prepared, and who has no intention of leaving any witnesses to his crime.

Wily investigators may try to lead the zombies to Cartean. This is an effective tactic, as the zombies will happily grapple the enraged werewolf and drag him down to the secret chamber. The attacks ceases as soon as either Bertwald or Cartean reach the secret chamber.

Into the Secret Chamber

Investigators captured by the zombie monks are dumped uncere- moniously down into the secret chamber beneath the cells. The damage for this fall is 1D6 hit points and can be negated with a successful **Jump roll**. More zombies await the investigators below, including the Abbot, whose head dangles from his neck, held on by a thin strand of flesh.

In the center of the chamber is a pentagram, within which Bugg-Shash waits. It appears as a mass of blackness, dotted with eyes and countless mouths that sing an unearthly melody. The Sanity point cost to see and hear Bugg-Shash is 1D6/1D20. Investigators thrown down the hole will be grappled by a zombie and dragged close to the pentagram, but remain simply held captive until either Bertwald or Cartean are brought to the chamber.

At this point there are only a few options for investigators:

- ♦ Try to break free and escape. If the investigators can free themselves of the zombies' embrace, they might be able to make their way to where a single ladder stands. Evading subsequent zombie attacks and making a successful **Climb** are necessary to escape.
- ♦ Erase or damage the summoning pentagram. If the investigators erase or damage the pentagram, Bugg-Shash is freed. It will immediately dematerialize and move to engulf first Bertwald then Cartean. Once it has accomplished this it will return to its own realm, effectively ending the adventure.
- ♦ Attack Bugg-Shash who is impervious to physical attacks, but if attacked by a burning torch, or other form of fire, will take 1D6 points of damage per successful strike. Troublesome investigators will be enveloped by Bugg-Shash's kiss.
- ♦ Investigators succeeding in a **Spot Hidden roll** notice a yellowed skull, which has been fashioned into a chalice, half-filled with a dark liquid. If an investigator manages to break free from the zombies and drink from the cup, they will transform into a werewolf.

Once Bertwald or Cartean are brought into the chamber, Bugg-Shash will envelop them (1 Sanity point loss to those witnesses who fail their Sanity roll) and then return to its alien lair.

The Cup of Power

The Cup of Power is a powerful artifact dating back to first days of the Celtic peoples' occupation of the British Isles. Some of the invading tribes fell prey to original inhabitants' 'Old Ways'. The chalice is fashioned from the skull of an atavistic Serpent Man and has been blessed with the Little Folks' infamous Black Stone. It functions in a similar way to the Celtic Cauldron of Rebirth, but can perform many more functions - healing, resurrection, protection from harm, transformation, or cursing. It is currently stuck transforming the drinker into a werewolf. A short ceremony, three magic points and few words of power would be able to change its function.

Bugg-Shash Comes Calling

If the investigators choose not to investigate the abbey, Bugg-Shash will dispatch its zombie servants to seek out Bertwald and bring him to the secret chamber beneath the cells. The first the investigators will become aware of this is when one of the manor servants screams at the sight of the approaching zombies.

Twelve slime-covered zombie monks surround the manor and attack the inhabitants. The villagers, too terrified to leave their homes, offer no assistance. The zombies will eventually batter down every door or obstacle in their way and drag Bertwald, Ealdgar and the investigators to the secret chamber beneath the abbey as detailed above.

Investigators should be permitted several opportunities to escape their captors as they are dragged up the old Roman road, but again Cartean will intervene to remove any witnesses to his dark magic.

Conclusion

Throughout "Malevolence," the investigators can largely determine their level of involvement in the events at the Aldred Estate. Those who choose to combat Bugg-Shash and its zombie minions should be awarded with 1 point of sanity for each zombie destroyed and 10 sanity points for banishing Bugg-Shash back to its alien lair.

Destroying the werewolves earns 1D6 sanity apiece, whilst kind hearted or gullible investigators who manage to save Bertwald from his well-deserved fate may be awarded 1D3 Sanity points.

Further Scenario Seeds

Keepers wishing to expand the scope of Malevolence beyond the scenario presented may wish to consider the following possibilities.

- With Bertwald gone, the Little Folk must seek fresh assistance in their search for the cup of power. If the investigators keep the chalice, they will find the Little Folk dogging their tracks, gradually gaining numbers and boldness to take the chalice back by force. Experimenting with the chalice will likely leave the party full of werewolves, who will be hunted down and killed by people as holy and relentless against evil as the investigators should have been.
- If Cartean survives the adventure, he pursues the investigators, intent on removing all witnesses to his madness and choosing guile over brute force. A lone monk, naked and bedraggled, arrives in London (or the investigators' destination city) bearing terrible stories of the slaughter of his brothers by a band of traveling murderers. Can the investigators convince the local authorities of their innocence, or will they result to more devious methods of unmasking their accuser before it's too late?
- Investigators bitten by either of the werewolves may suddenly experience strange visions of battle and carnage elicited by a 'Wolf Shadow' seeking entry into their minds. Strange behavior caused by such visions might easily be viewed as demonic possession or worse by superstitious peasants or townsfolk, with dire consequences.
- What of the Praesida Finium? If such rare and valuable documents were to survive the adventure in the possession of the investigators, they would surely act as a magnet for any number of strange and unwholesome encounters for the bearers. Praesida Finium lists a number of sites of Mythos activity to which the Keeper could draw the investigators to by promise of gold or other reward.

NPC Statistics

Bertwald Aldred, age 26

Scheming son and changeling

STR 10	CON 12	SIZ 10	INT 15	POW 17
DEX 12	APP 04	EDU 14	SAN 62	HP 11

Damage Bonus: 0

Weapons: Small Knife (short) 25%, 1D4+db

Armor: None

Skills: Bargain 60%, Conceal 45%, Cthulhu Mythos 15%, Fast Talk 55%, Library Use 40%, Occult 45%, Other Language (Latin) 35%, Own Kingdom 30%, Potions 25%, Status 30%, Write (Latin) 40%.

Spells: Contact Little Folk, Curse (Characteristic), Resurrection, Shriveling.

Ealdgar of Aldred, age 43

Loyalthane and doting father

STR 15	CON 14	SIZ 16	INT 11	POW 12
DEX 13	APP 14	EDU 09	SAN 60	HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Long Sword (long) 60%, 1D8+db

Scramsax (short) 45%, 1D6+db

Armor: Chainmail byrnie 6 AP, Shield (large) 40%

Skills: Dodge 45%, Own Kingdom 65%, Ride Horse 60%, Status 50%, Heroic Speech 55%.

Sigbert, age 29

Overseer and local bully

STR 16	CON 12	SIZ 14	INT 08	POW 09
DEX 10	APP 07	EDU 07	SAN 45	HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Club (medium) 50%, 1D6+db

Skills: Insight 25%, Navigate 30%, Sneak 40%.

Penda, age 21

Anxious father and field-hand

STR 13	CON 15	SIZ 12	INT 10	POW 10
DEX 10	APP 13	EDU 06	SAN 50	HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Pitchfork (long) 40%, 1D8+db

Skills: Craft (farmer) 35%, Drive Horses 40%, Natural World 50%.

Eni, age 30

Woodcutter and forest guide

STR 17	CON 13	SIZ 12	INT 15	POW 11
DEX 13	APP 08	EDU 07	SAN 45	HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Wood Ax (medium) 70%, 1D8+2+db

Skills: Natural World 65%, Navigate 55%, Track 45%.

Cartean, age 22

Insane monk and werewolf

STR 15	CON 14	SIZ 16	INT 06*	POW 29*
DEX 16	APP 14	EDU 15	SAN 12	HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Bite (short) 70%, 1D8+db*

Armor: 1 point of hide*

Skills: Dodge 55%, Hide 60%, Sneak 70%, Track by smell 90%*

Spells: Fury, Body Warping, Summon Bugg-Shash

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3

* Abilities provided by wolf form.

Another Werewolf Acolyte

STR 16	CON 16	SIZ 17	INT 06*	POW 20*
DEX 14	APP 10	EDU 10	SAN 22	HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Bite (short) 60%, 1D8+db*

Armor: 1 point of hide*

Skills: Dodge 40%, Hide 60%, Sneak 60%, Track by smell 90%*

Spells: Fury, Body Warping

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3

* Abilities provided by wolf form.



A Few Good Men, from the Village

Char	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	11	14	10	15	09	12
CON	14	07	12	16	12	13
SIZ	13	12	16	17	08	10
INT	10	14	09	06	09	12
POW	15	11	10	09	11	14
DEX	12	16	08	10	15	09
APP	10	12	11	08	07	11
HP	14	10	14	17	10	12
DB	+0	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+0	+0

Weapons: Club (medium) 35%, 1D6+db, Ax (medium) 40%, 1D6+db, Pitchfork (long) 45%, 1D8+db.

Armor: None

Skills: Natural World 50%, Track 35%, Cower 60%.



A Horde of Little Folk, degenerate serpentmen

Char	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	09	14	12	09	10	11
CON	12	07	13	15	14	13
SIZ	07	11	12	12	09	07
INT	08	06	05	09	05	08
POW	16	13	10	09	15	10

DEX	14	11	09	10	12	14
HP	10	09	13	14	12	10
DB	-1D4	+1D4	+0	+0	+0	+0

Weapons: Claws (short) 55%, 1D4+db; Bite (short) 30%, 1D3+poison (POT=½ CON); Stone Club (medium) or Ax (medium) 45%, 1D6+1+db; Stone Knife (short) 35%, 1D4+db; Spear (long) 40%, 1D6+db; Thrown Spear 35%, 1D6+½db; Thrown Rock 65%, 1D4+½db

Armor: None

Skills: Climb 80%, Hide 85%, Sneak 80%

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6



An Onslaught of Slimy Zombie Monks

Char	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	18	16	15	12	17	14
CON	16	14	17	16	18	15
SIZ	12	14	10	09	11	09
DEX	05	07	09	04	07	10
HP	14	14	14	13	15	12
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+0	+1D4	+0

Weapons: Grapple (short) 50%, Special; Bite (short) 30%, 1D3

Armor: Impaling weapons do 1 point of damage per attack, immune to all others.

Skills: Obey Command 99%, Gruesome Squelch 60%

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6

Bugg-Shash, Great Old One

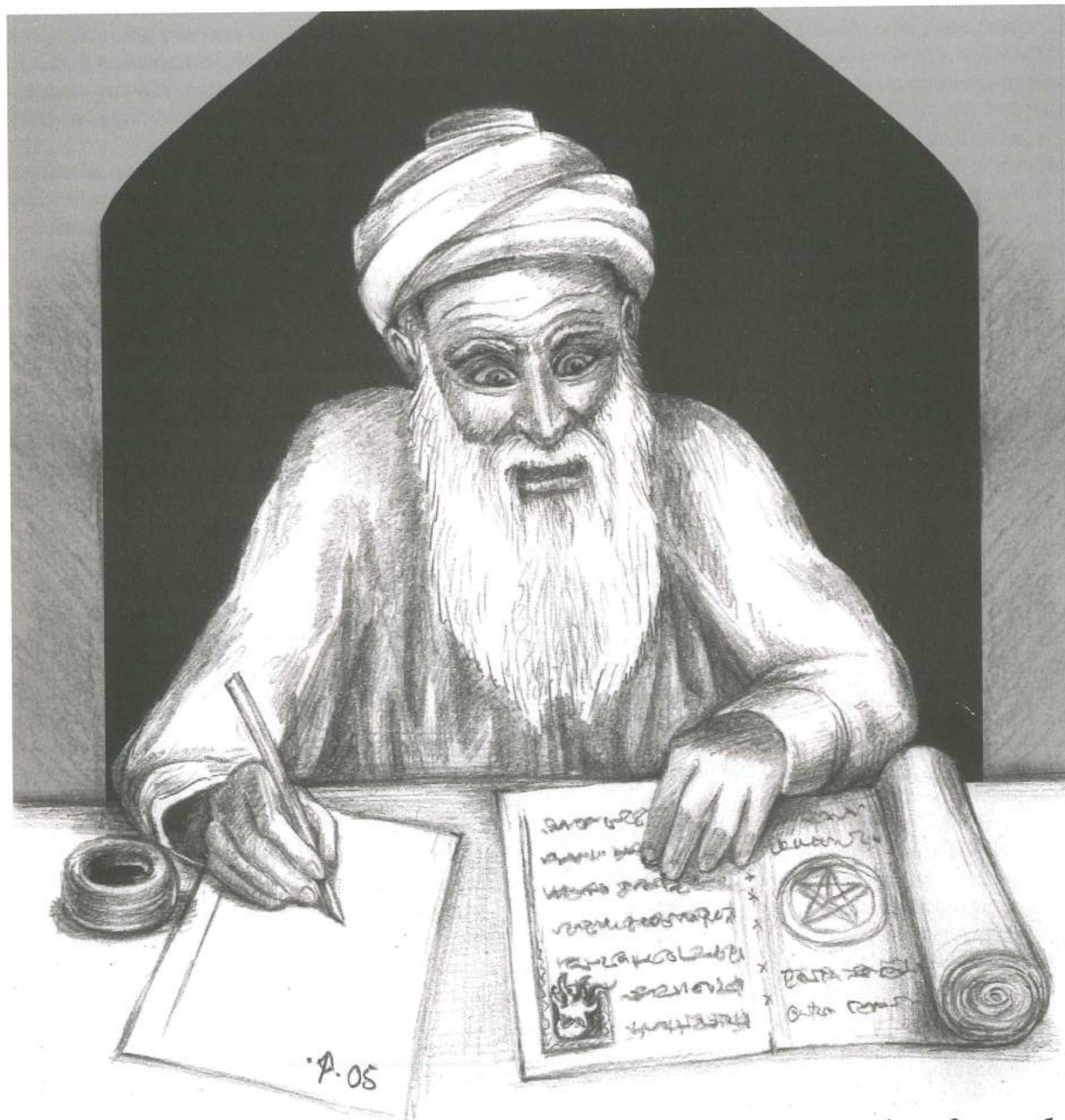
For statistics for this diety, see p. 121 of *Cthulhu Dark Ages*.



A beacon of light in the Dark Ages:

The House of Wisdom

by Chad Bowser



“The truth must be taken wherever it is to be found, whether it be in the past or among strange peoples.”

Al-Kindi, Baghdad. 801-873 A.D.

Imagine a time and place where the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake is a noble goal and men travel the known world searching for lost tomes to translate to advance their cumulative knowledge. Men toil endlessly translating works on every subject conceivable. Their studies in astronomy, chemistry, geography, mathematics, medicine, zoology and even alchemy and astrology remain unrivaled in their lifetimes and will be for centuries to come.

During the Dark Ages, such a place exists, but not in Rome, Aachen, or even Constantinople. Instead, these men live and work in Baghdad, capital of the Abbasid Empire, and are based out of the Bayt al-Hikma, or House of Wisdom. The House of Wisdom is both an impressive library and a center of learning where works are translated, books are copied, and research into new areas is conducted.

This article explores the House of Wisdom and interweaves its history with elements of the Mythos. In addition, keepers will find brief biographies of some famous translators, notes on integrating Western investigators into an Oriental city, and some scenario seeds a keeper can implement to broaden his Dark Ages world. At the same time, this article expands the world of Cthulhu Dark Ages both geographically and chronologically. Since the House of Wisdom was established around 850 A.D., this article will start there, even though it is a century prior to the traditional starting point of Cthulhu Dark Ages. It goes without saying that a keeper should change any date or other element necessary to suit his particular campaign needs.

For ease of reference, all dates are presented in the Gregorian format (A.D.) instead of the Islamic format, which is based on the date of the Hegira, 621 A.D. To convert a Gregorian date to an Islamic date, the quickest way is to simply subtract 621 from the Gregorian year.

Baghdad

Before one can enter the House of Wisdom, he must first enter the great city of Baghdad. Known as the 'Round City' because of the circular wall that encloses the central quarters of the city, Baghdad was founded in the 760s on the west bank of the Tigris and along a canal that empties into the Euphrates.

The name Baghdad is something of a mystery, but many believe it to be the name of the original Persian town that was supplanted by the relocation of the capital of the Empire. Al-Mansur, the Caliph who moved the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate from Damascus, chose the name Madinat al-Salam, or City of Peace, for his new city, but Baghdad stuck. Depending on whom is asked and their opinion of the city, the word Bagh-

dad derives either from a Persian phrase for 'God-given' or an Aramaic phrase for 'sheep enclosure.'

Even if Baghdad was once a home for woolly livestock, it has grown into an impressive city. The Round City, considered to be the city proper, is two miles in diameter and covers both banks of the Tigris. Wide streets, some as wide as 40 cubits (60 feet), traverse the city, dividing it into quarters. Each quarter is under the supervision of an overseer who manages the maintenance of the buildings, sanitation of the quarter and comfort of the citizens. Not only are the streets wide, but at night the major streets and public places are lit by lanterns. Outside the wall, the city continues for miles. In the expanse beyond the Round City are acres of bazaars, mosques, promenades, and businesses, as well as homes for those not wealthy enough to live inside the walls.

Unlike the Western cities to which investigators are accustomed, Baghdad's cosmopolitan nature and relative openness with regard to religion might be shocking. Many different nationalities and various sects of Muslims, Christians and Jews live in Baghdad and each is represented by an appointed consul. When decisions are made that affect the city as a whole, each consul represents his particular nationality in the negotiations. The city is not without strife, but the consuls are in place to ensure that the thorniest issues are dealt with before they bubble over into violence. It is not uncommon for a Muslim Caliph to have Christian physicians, Jewish astrologers and heathen military advisors.

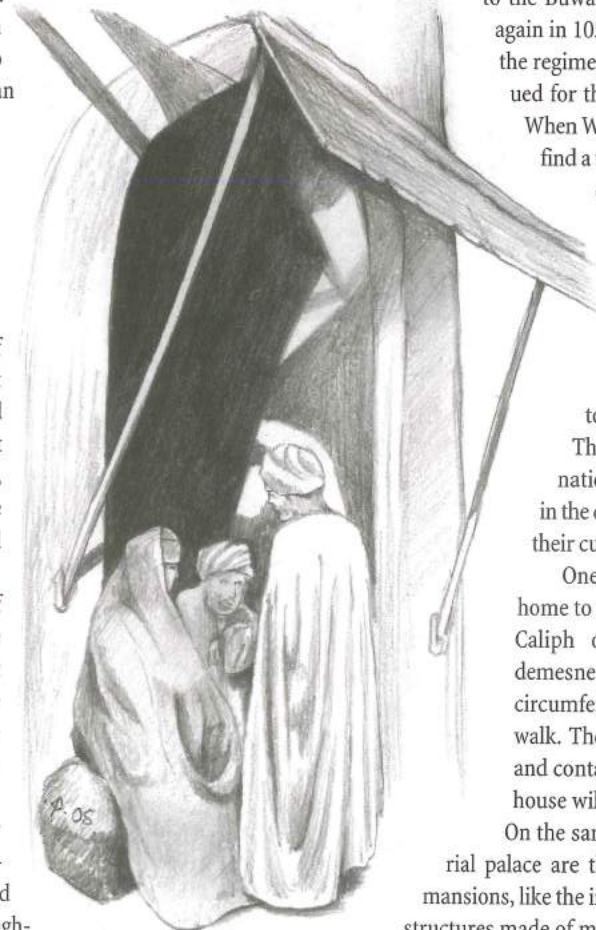
Despite relative internal equality, the city fell to the Buwayhids from Iran in 945, and fell again in 1055 to the Seljuk Turks. Even after the regime changes, daily functions continued for the most part as they always had. When Western investigators visit, they will find a teeming, thriving, and mysterious city regardless of who is in charge.

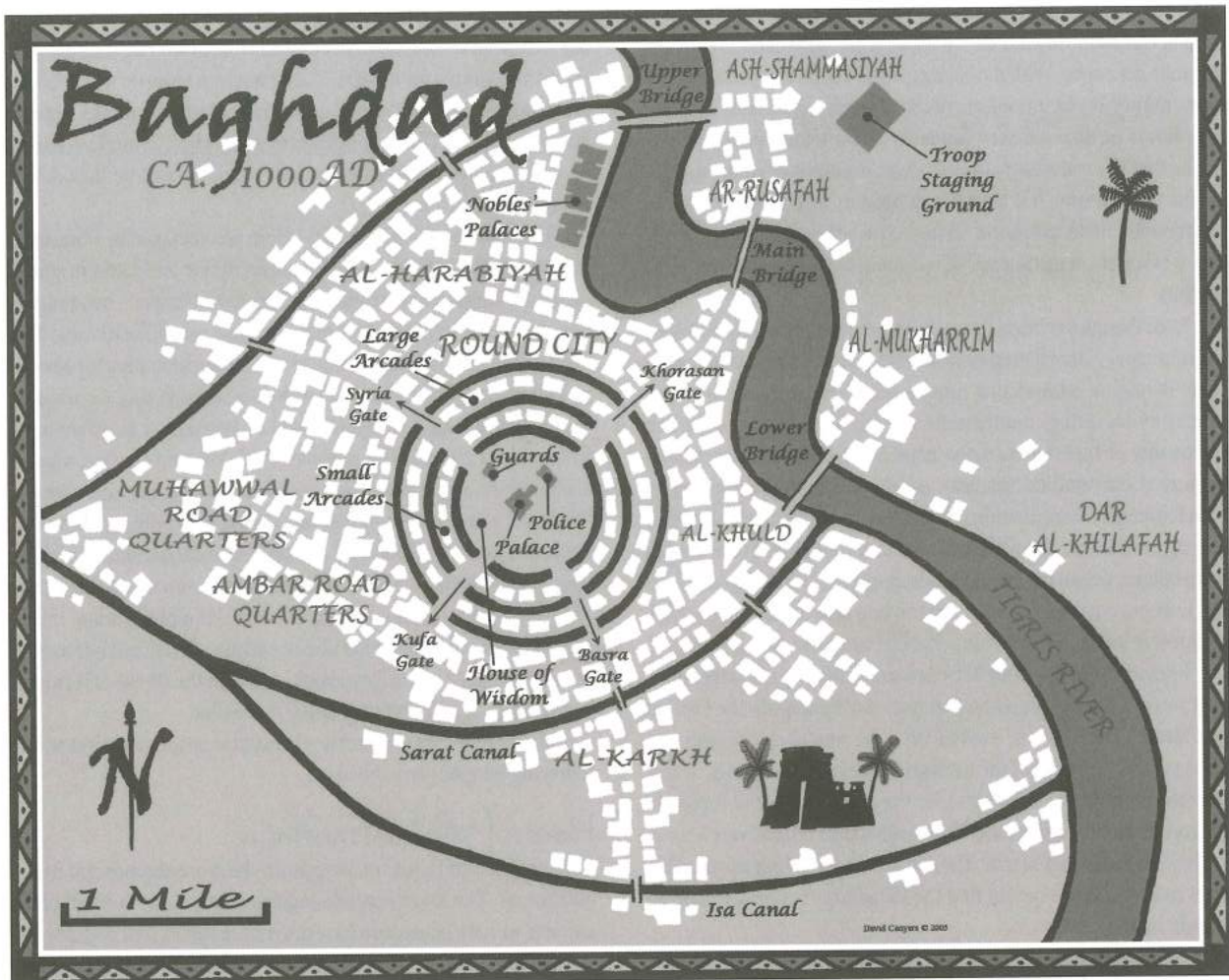
In the Eleventh Century, Baghdad has a population of between one and two million people and serves as a nexus of trade, connecting with routes to China, India and Byzantium.

This location brings in even more nationalities and languages than live in the city, and some of the visitors bring their cults and dark practices with them.

One quarter of the Round City is home to the royal palace, residence of the Caliph of the Abbasid Empire. The demesne is surrounded by a park with a circumference that takes several hours to walk. The park is enclosed by a low wall and contains a menagerie and aviary that house wild animals used for royal chases.

On the same side of the river as the imperial palace are the homes of the nobles. These mansions, like the imperial palace, are multi-storied structures made of marble, not base stone or stucco.





The House of Wisdom

In 830, the Caliph al-Ma'mun constructed the House of Wisdom in the palace quarter of the Round City for the high price of 200,000 dinars. The Caliph staffed the House of Wisdom with the best translators, mathematicians and scientists he could find. Each employee

was paid from the royal treasury. The best translators were paid a pound of gold per pound of book translated.

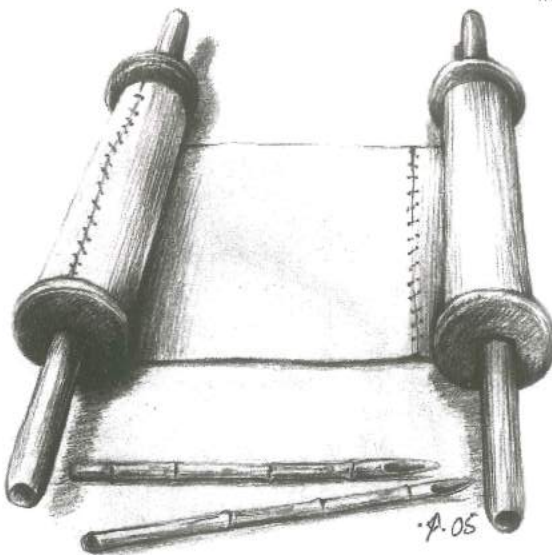
Unlike many government jobs, skill and training are required to join the House of Wisdom. In addition to knowing foreign languages, particularly Greek, Syriac and Pahlavi, many of the scientists are also accomplished mathe-

maticians, chemists, geographers, and astronomers. Uneducated family and friends of Baghdadi nobles will not be employed, even though the compensation makes the job highly desirable.

For a translator in the Bayt al-Hikma, there is no such thing as an average day. He may spend weeks translating a work from Greek or Latin into either Syriac or Arabic. The translation might then be handed off to copyists who produce the final copies enshrined in the House's massive library. Translations are typically done in a translator's cell, a small room about 13 feet square on the upper floors of the House. This cell contains a writing desk, copious supplies of ink and paper, reference works, and a makeshift bed in case the translator works too late.

When not preparing translations, a translator may travel to collect new works. To fund the expeditions, translators secure money from the royal treasury, or they take a commission from a wealthy noble who wants to add a book to his personal collection. The most common patrons are Muslim physicians. They pay very well to have the Greek works on medicine by Galen, Hippocrates and others translated into Syriac or Arabic. Even when a private individual commissions a translation, a copy of the final translation is placed in the library.

Translators travel to cities like Basra, Samarra, Jundayshapur, Damascus, Alexandria, and even as far as Constantinople to recover the Greek and Latin texts they are commissioned to find. There's no record of them visiting such far-flung places as Aachen, Koumbi-Saleh, or Winchester, but if rumors of a tantalizing book



point a translator toward one of those cities, he will do everything he can to get a copy. With the backing of the Caliph and private financiers, money is not an object. While abroad, translators use their own funds or discretionary funds from the treasury to purchase books that the translator stumbles across and finds interesting or useful. In this way, it is possible to bolster the House of Wisdom library with books tangential to the science the translators pursue, many of which, at the Keeper's discretion, have a connection to the Mythos.

Even though the translators pay homage to the Caliph and follow the same goal of translating ancient wisdom into modern languages, there is intense competition among them. Since translators earn money by accepting commissions and build reputations based on the quality of their work, many have no qualms about spreading rumors about another translator or, more commonly, the quality of that translator's translations. When the competition is really fierce among translators, one will try to convince the Caliph to execute his competitors. For an unwary investigator, particularly one from Western Europe, the House of Wisdom can be a nest of vipers where the slightest misstep can have him expelled from the city or worse.

Beyond all the infighting between competitive men, another force is at work. A small group of translators pay homage to the Persian god Mazda, known in the west as Tuzscha, and uses its power and prestige and the funds of the treasury to seek the knowledge necessary to summon the deity. At first, the cult thought the Sapiaientia Magorum was its ticket to ascension with the god. They were wrong, so they continue their search. The cult is not above thievery, murder, or even more vile crimes to find the knowledge necessary to bring Mazda to life.

The House of Wisdom itself is a two story structure with a courtyard, like many large buildings in Baghdad. The walls are covered in thick tapestries and floors have colorful carpets. Translators and

copyists work on the second floor while the ground floor houses the stacks and an area for readers. Unlike modern libraries where books are arranged in a predefined order on shelves, the books, scrolls, and papers in the House are stored in wall niches. Several books can be stored in the same niche using a system devised by the administrators of the House.

The stacks at the House of Wisdom are managed by librarians, a rarity in Western Europe. The Greek, Syriac and Latin originals are kept alongside the Arabic and Syriac translations, meaning an investigator need not know Arabic to make use of the library. If an investigator approaches the House of Wisdom searching for a book, he will not be allowed to wander the stacks browsing for what he wants. Instead, an investigator makes a request for a certain book from a librarian. A scribe retrieves the book, and the investigator is allowed to read it on the premises. It can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days to recover a book, depending on how well the scribe knows the library, how well the librarian likes the investigator, and whether a bribe is offered. A book cannot leave the House of Wisdom except in the custody of a translator or librarian. Investigators are free to transcribe a book and take the transcription with them, however. A select list of books found in the House of Wisdom, both historical and Mythos tainted, is nearby.

If a player wishes to create a translator as an investigator, the following template may be used:

House of Wisdom Translator

You range far and wide tracking down the most obscure and desirable tomes. You know several languages, can move through other cultures without pause, and have never been lost in your own library.

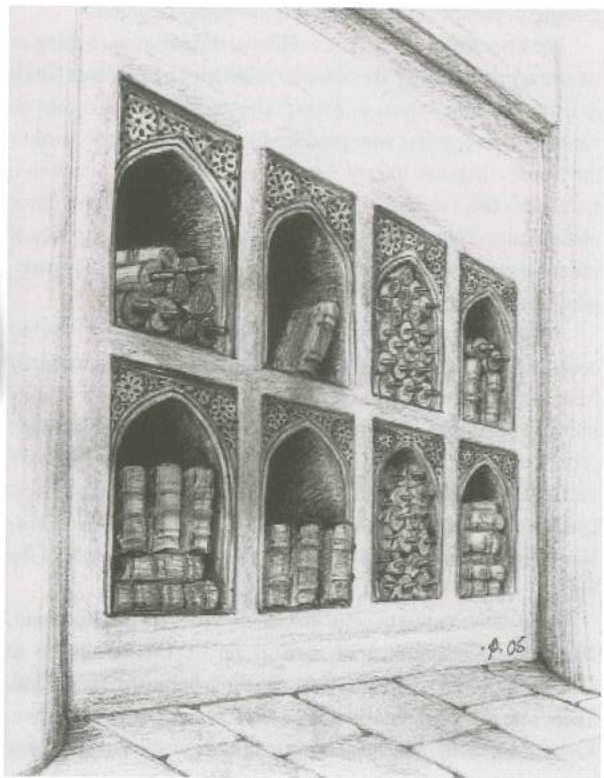
Skills: Library Use, Navigate, Other Kingdoms, Other Language(s) (Greek or Latin suggested, but others may be appropriate), Own Language, Persuade, Write Language and one skill as a personal specialty. (*May gain language bonus*)

Money: 1D4×100 dinars, plus writing equipment. Yearly income: 3,500 dinars.

Using the House of Wisdom

For a historian, the House of Wisdom is a fascinating example of the cultural and scholastic achievements of the Abbasids. For a keeper, the House of Wisdom can be an unending supply of plot hooks, colorful NPCs, and treacherous tomes.

A tough problem for many keepers will be integrating this material into an existing Cthulhu Dark Ages campaign. Most Dark Ages campaigns are centered on the Christian West because that is the region covered by the core Dark Ages book. One solution is to have the investigators encounter one of the translators in Europe and become intrigued by the stories they hear of the massive cities and impressive book collections. Alternatively, the investigators stumble across a reference to the Bayt al-Hikma in the accounts or stories of another Westerner and come to the conclusion that the resolution to their issue lies in the massive library of the House of Wisdom. The Oxford History of Medieval Europe by George Holmes is recom-



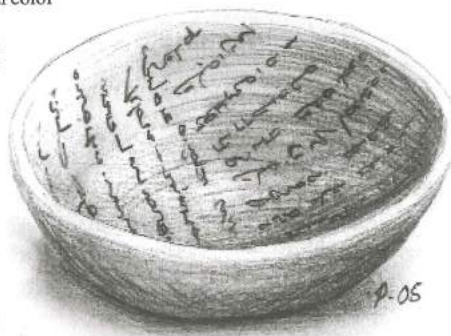
mended to keepers for information and local color on the long trip to Baghdad from Europe.

The House of Wisdom can take any of several roles in a keeper's campaign. The translators can be an asset to the investigators, providing clues when the players are stumped or translations when the investigators do not know a language. Care must be taken, though, to ensure that the House of Wisdom does not become a crutch for the investigators. If the investigators begin using the House of Wisdom as a search engine to look up every little fact, the translators should either charge fees or periodically get something wrong that leads the investigators down the wrong path and into a gaping maw. Those that survive may be more wary in the future.

Given the infighting and adversarial nature of the translators, the investigators may find themselves in a hostile environment where different factions of translators each believe the investigators are agents of the opposing faction. In this situation, the investigators find themselves stymied at every corner, unable to get solid answers from anyone. Only through perseverance, and perhaps a lot of money, can the investigators convince one of the sides that they're not working for the other.

Here are some scenario seeds to get keepers started.

Death in the Stacks: A prominent translator is found dead, and the work he was translating is missing. As far as anyone knows, it is a work on the proper veterinary care of livestock. Rumors soon circulate that the translator was working on a second book, the *Sapientia Magorum*, at the same time. No traces of that book can be found anywhere, either. Close examination of the translator's cell uncovers strange marks etched into the walls. Someone close to the Caliph suggests that those marks are the sigil of a cult of the Persian fire god Mazda. The partial translation is going to be used to summon Mazda, also known as Tulscha, during the cult's upcoming festival. Summoning Tulscha will be bad enough. Attempting it with a partial translation of the ritual may be downright fatal.

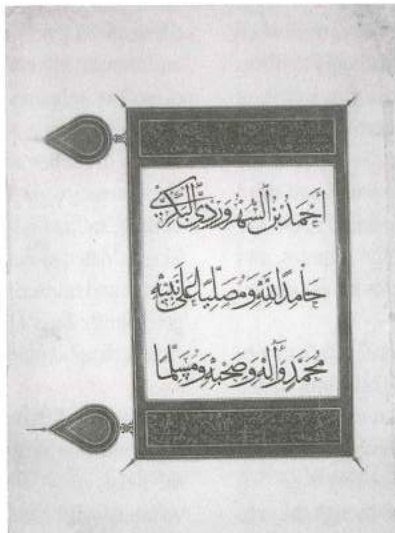


The Sands of Time: The investigators, translators for the House of Wisdom, are commissioned to recover and translate a previously unknown work rumored to be in the ruins of ancient Irem. A dangerous expedition through hostile deserts culminates in finding the sand-choked ruins of Irem – and a doorway to the Dreamlands. If the investigators hope to find the tome and receive their commission, they must journey to the realms of dream.

Where Did the Book Go?: While battling a Mythos threat, the investigators learn that they need a copy of *The Confessions of the Mad Monk Clithanus*, which can only be found in a library in Constantinople. When the investigators arrive, they learn that a delegation has just purchased the book and taken it back to Baghdad. The investigators then have to travel to Baghdad and find a way not only to gain access to the House of Wisdom, but also to convince the translator to let them read the book.

You're Not from Around Here, Are You?: After a long hard struggle, the investigators gain possession of the *al-Azif*. Loath to let it out of their sight, and afraid to burn it because of what the smoke might contain, the investigators are surprised when a swarthy man tracks them down and offers to buy the book. If they refuse, he ups the offer. Eventually, he accepts their answer and departs. Now, their steps are dogged by this man. When they least expect it, he appears and tries to take the book. Unless the investigators kill the man, he will keep returning to try to steal the book.

Library of Evil: The investigators are researching a threat in Europe when they learn that there is a library in Baghdad that is actively stockpiling every book pertaining to the Mythos it can locate. The investigators travel to Baghdad and visit the House of Wisdom. They must then decide if the House is truly a malignant threat or a powerful ally.



Ancient manuscripts produced at the House of Wisdom

Title	Language(s)	Author	Year A.D.	Sanity Loss	Mythos	Occult	Description
Al-Asrar	Persian	al-Razi	915	1D3/1D6	+0	+4	article
Athar-ul-Baqiya	Arabic/Syriac	al-Baruni	995	1D2/1D4	+4	+0	article
Book of Enoch	Hebrew/Syriac	unknown	100/789	none	+0	+4	KCv1 p.24
Confessions of the Mad Monk Clithanus	Latin/Syriac	Clithanus	400/874	1D6/2D6	+9	+0	CDA p.94
Cthaat Aquadingen	Latin/Arabic	unknown	1014/1043	1D8/2D8	+9	+0	CDA p.94
Daemonolorum	Latin/Arabic	unknown	200/835	1D4/1D8	+8	+0	CDA p.94
Kitab al-Azif	Arabic/Duriac/Greek	al-Azrad	730/760/950	1D10/2D10	+18	+0	CDA p.93
K. al-Hayawan vol. 8	Arabic/Syriac	al-Jahiz	853/853	1D3/1D6	+4	+0	article
K. al-Jabr wa-al-Muqabilah	Arabic	al-Khawarizmi	825	none	+0	+3	article
Liber Damnatus	Latin/Syriac	unknown	???/925	1D3/1D6	+6	+0	6eRB p.98
Natural History	Latin/Syriac/Arabic	Pliny	40/795/815	None	+0	+5	CI p.56
Occultus	Latin/Arabic	Heiriarchus	150/813	1D3/1D6	+4	+0	KCv1 p.81
Pharmakeutria	Greek/Syriac	Theocritus	310 B.C./879	1/1D3	+3	+3	CI p.56
Rasul al-Albarin	Arabic	ibn el-Badawi	900	1D6/2D6	+11	+0	KCv1 p.81
Sapientia Magorum	Greek/Latin/Arabic	Ostanes	95/95/877	1D6/2D6	+10	+0	CDA p.95
The Emerald Tablet	Phoenician/Arabic	Hermes Trismegistus	200/935	none	+0	+1	KCv1 p.26
The Three Codices	Latin/Arabic	unknown	400/963	1D8/2D8	+13	+0	CDA p.95

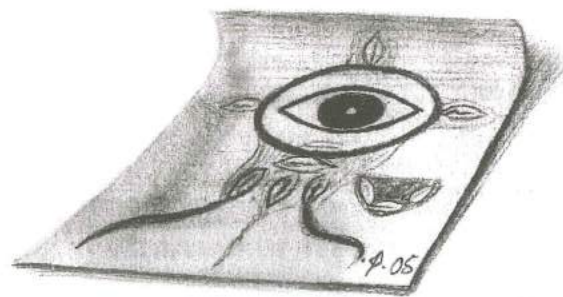
Key: 6eRB=6th edition rule book; CI=*Cthulhu Invictus* monograph; CDA=*Cthulhu Dark Ages*; KCv1=*Keeper's Companion* vol. 1

Select Tomes from The House of Wisdom

This list recounts the game stats for some of the books found in the House of Wisdom. Translations are on paper, but the original can be on a variety of different materials, including papyrus and parchment. Paper entered Baghdad from China in the Seventh Century, and a paper mill is built soon after. By the Tenth Century, paper is the writing material of choice.

Many of the columns are self-explanatory, with the exception of Language and Year. If there are two or more entries for the Language column, the first is the original language and subsequent entries are translations. Each language edition can be found in the House of Wisdom. The Year column is similar. The first entry is when the book was originally written, if known, and subsequent entries are the dates the translations were accepted into the House of Wisdom, which is not necessarily the year they were translated. If there are three entries for Language and three entries for Year, the first entries correspond to each other, as do the second and third entries. Tomes not documented in other Call of Cthulhu books are described after the library listing. All dates are approximates, and the Keeper should feel free to change them, if it suits his campaign.

Al-Asrar (The Secret): This dense volume outlines al-Razi's theory on alchemy. Most alchemists in the Caliphate use this tome as the starting point for their inquiries into alchemy. It contains the necessary procedures, equipment, and knowledge needed to conduct alchemical experiments. Of particular use to those looking to get rich quickly is the section on making objects appear as though they are made of gold, even though they are still only a base material.



Sanity Loss 1D3/1D6; *Cthulhu Mythos* +0 percentiles; Occult +4 percentiles; Potions +8 percentiles; study time 8 weeks/skim 16 hours.

Athar-ul-Baqiya (Vestiges of the Past): This work, written in Arabic and translated into Syriac at the same time, is an engaging account of various religious groups and cults from throughout the known world. The work does dip into the realm of the sinister when al-Baruni describes a small town on the Gulf of Aden that worships the Phoenician god Dagon and a cult in Constantinople that still pays homage to the Cult of Magna Mater. Disguised as a worshipper of Magna Mater, al-Baruni slipped inside the inner sanctum of the cult's temple and transcribed the prayers the acolytes use to summon their god. *Sanity Loss* 1D2/1D4; *Cthulhu Mythos* +4 percentiles; study time 4 days/ skim 8 hours.

Volume 8 of Kitab al-Hayawan (Book of Animals): Another book written in Arabic and immediately translated into Syriac to meet the needs of al-Jahiz's patron, the Kitab al-Hayawan is a seven-volume work for which the author was paid 5,000 dinars. Vague references are made to man-like creatures frequenting the graveyards

of Aleppo, but al-Jahiz does not elaborate. An eighth volume exists, hidden deep within the House of Wisdom by a scribe, Ibn Fahdlan, despite a royal decree to destroy it. In the eighth volume, al-Jahiz provides a detailed ecology of Baghdadi ghou society, including a map of the warrens that run under the city connecting the graveyards with the al-Hadi and al-Majd royal houses. Al-Jahiz discovered that these two families were closely linked with a clan of ghouls, and described the interrelations between the three, but when the nobles found out about his discovery, they had the Caliph quash the further transcription and translation of the eighth volume. *Sanity Loss 1D3/1D6; Cthulhu Mythos +4 percentiles; study time 15 weeks/skim 30 hours.*

Kitab Al-Jabr wa-al-Muqabilah, (Book on Balancing Equations): This book is Al-Khawarizmi's treatise on algebra. While not overtly Mythos oriented, intense study of the formulas are rumored to open new doors into strange vistas. *Sanity Loss none; Art (Quadrivium) +6 percentiles; Cthulhu Mythos +0 percentiles; Occult +3 percentiles; study time 12 weeks/skim 24 hours.*

Translators

Hundreds of translators work at the House of Wisdom at any given time. Investigators may encounter any one of these men in Baghdad, or during a translator's trip to collect books. These are the men who preserve the sciences of antiquity and passed their knowledge on to the world. Some of the more prominent translators and scientists are presented here.

Abu al-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973 – 1048):

An objective scholar, al-Biruni travels throughout the Middle East and India collecting information on the people he visits. His first major work, *Athar-ul-Baqiya* (Vestiges of the Past), is a treatise on the religious festivals of the Persians, Syrians, Greeks, Jews, Christians, Sabaeans, Zoroastrians, and Arabs.



Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (865 – c.925):

It is not clear whether al-Razi actually studies or works at the House of Wisdom, but he is a man investigators will be interested in meeting. A skilled physician, al-Razi firmly believes that organized religion is bad for society and prophets are merely 'old billy goats' leading the weak. When not writing polemics, al-Razi is one of the foremost Arabic thinkers on alchemy. He has translated several alchemical works, including *The Emerald Tablet*, a section of the *Book of the Secret of Creation*. Al-Razi's anti-religious stance has made him unpopular, but his medical and alchemical knowledge make him invaluable to the Caliphs.



Al-Khawarizmi (unknown – c.840): The most renowned mathematician in history, al-Khawarizmi's most famous work is *Al-Jabr wa-al-Muqabilah*, which is the foundation for algebra. Another contribution is the introduction of Hindi numerals, later known as Arabic numerals, into mathematics. In addition to his mathematics, al-Khawarizmi has created numerous astronomical and astrological charts in use by navigators, astronomers and astrologers.



Al-Masu'di (unknown – 957): A geographer of some renown, al-Masu'di traveled throughout India, China, and East Africa. His writings are a boon to any investigator journeying to the regions al-Masu'di visited; he covers geography, sociology, history and anthropology. Not only does he discuss how to reach a specific location and what the region is like, he also comments on social structure and religious practices. Like most geographers of his time, al-Masu'di prefers to write about the seamy side of the cultures he visits, making his works all the more valuable to investigators.

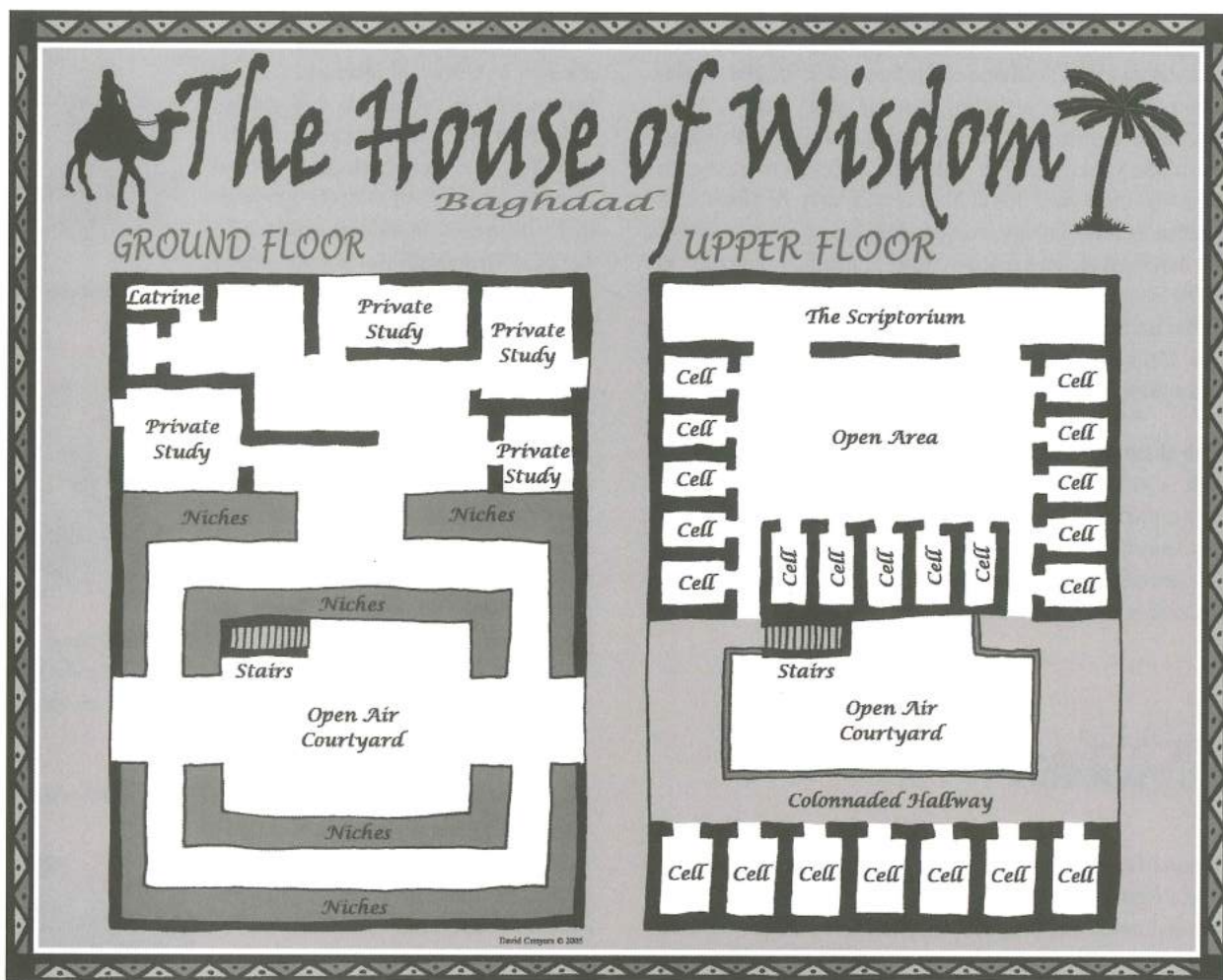


Banu Musa: These three brothers, Muhamad (c.810 – c.873), Ahmad (c.805 – c.873, and al-Hasan (c.810 – c.873), travel throughout the Mediterranean, going as far as Constantinople looking for ancient works on mathematics and mechanics. The sons of Musa ibn Shakir, a brigand turned court astrologer, the three boys were inducted into the House of Wisdom upon the death of their father. They are prolific translators specializing in mathematics, astrology and mechanics.



Hunayn ibn-Ishaq (809-877): Known to the Medieval West as John of Damascus, he is one of the most famous translators, as well as a Nestorian Christian of Assyrian descent. A talented physician and translator, ibn-Ishaq has served as personal physician to the caliphs and as administrator of the House of Wisdom. A traveler by nature, ibn-Ishaq collects manuscripts from Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and Palestine to translate from Syriac or Greek into Arabic. A consummate professional, ibn-Ishaq is never satisfied with a translation. After translating a work, he often translates it a second or third time, or retranslates the works of his predecessors and students, searching for the translation that comes closest to the original work.





Map Key

Ground floor:

- ♦ The latrine.
- ♦ Private study rooms. The House of Wisdom makes these rooms available, for a fee. Like the rest of the house, they are decorated in tapestries and rugs. The rooms vary in size, contain several tables and stools, and have thick wooden doors. It is not uncommon for the house to rent out individual tables in a room, instead of the entire room, so a party's privacy is not guaranteed, but it is more private than the open reading room, off of which these rooms open.
- ♦ The niches. Books are not stored on shelves, but in small wooden cubbyholes, or niches. As many books are put into a niche as will fit, and the organizational system is not immediately intuitive to someone not trained in the system used by the administrators. Each niche is approximately a foot to a side, and twelve niches stretch from floor to ceiling. Ladders are used to reach the upper niches.
- ♦ A set of stairs in the courtyard that is used to access the second floor.
- ♦ An open-air courtyard.

Upper floor:

- ♦ The Scriptorium. Table after table line this room, with copyists hunched over manuscripts, busily transcribing copies of the translators. Numerous windows are cut into the wall to provide light in addition to the lanterns on the tables.
- ♦ Cells. The cells are a series of private rooms for the translators to work on their translations and store their supplies. Heavy wooden doors afford a measure of privacy, and tapestries and carpets provide a measure of luxury. Each cell also has a window for natural lighting.
- ♦ An open area. During busy periods, extra tables are placed here for extra translators and copyists to work.
- ♦ Stairs to the lower level.
- ♦ A colonnaded hallway, open to the outside that rings the courtyard. Stars are cut into the ceiling to provide additional light.
- ♦ The courtyard.

Caliphs

The reigns of some Caliphs were nasty, brutish and short, while others ruled for 20 years or more. Here is a list of the Abbasid Caliphs

who ruled during the Dark Ages so that keepers can have the appropriate Caliph in the palace when the investigators visit.

Bibliography

Al-Mutawakkil	847 – 861
Al-Muntasir	861 – 862
Al-Musta'in	862 – 866
Al-Mu'tazz	866 – 869
Al-Muhtadi	869 – 870
Al-Mu'tamid	870 – 892
Al-Mu'tadid	892 – 902
Al-Muktafi	902 – 908
Al-Muqtadir	908 – 932
Al-Qahir	932 – 934
Al-Radi	934 – 940
Al-Muttaqi	940 – 944
Al-Mustakfi	944 – 946
Al-Muti	946 – 974
Al-Ta'i	974 – 991
Al-Qadir	991 – 1031
Al-Qa'im	1031 – 1075

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Translation and Transcribing: Rules for Cthulhu Dark Ages by DAN HARMS

Each book has a transcription and translation time equal to double its study time. (The translation should take longer, but the rules should take care of it.) Any such effort proceeds as follows:

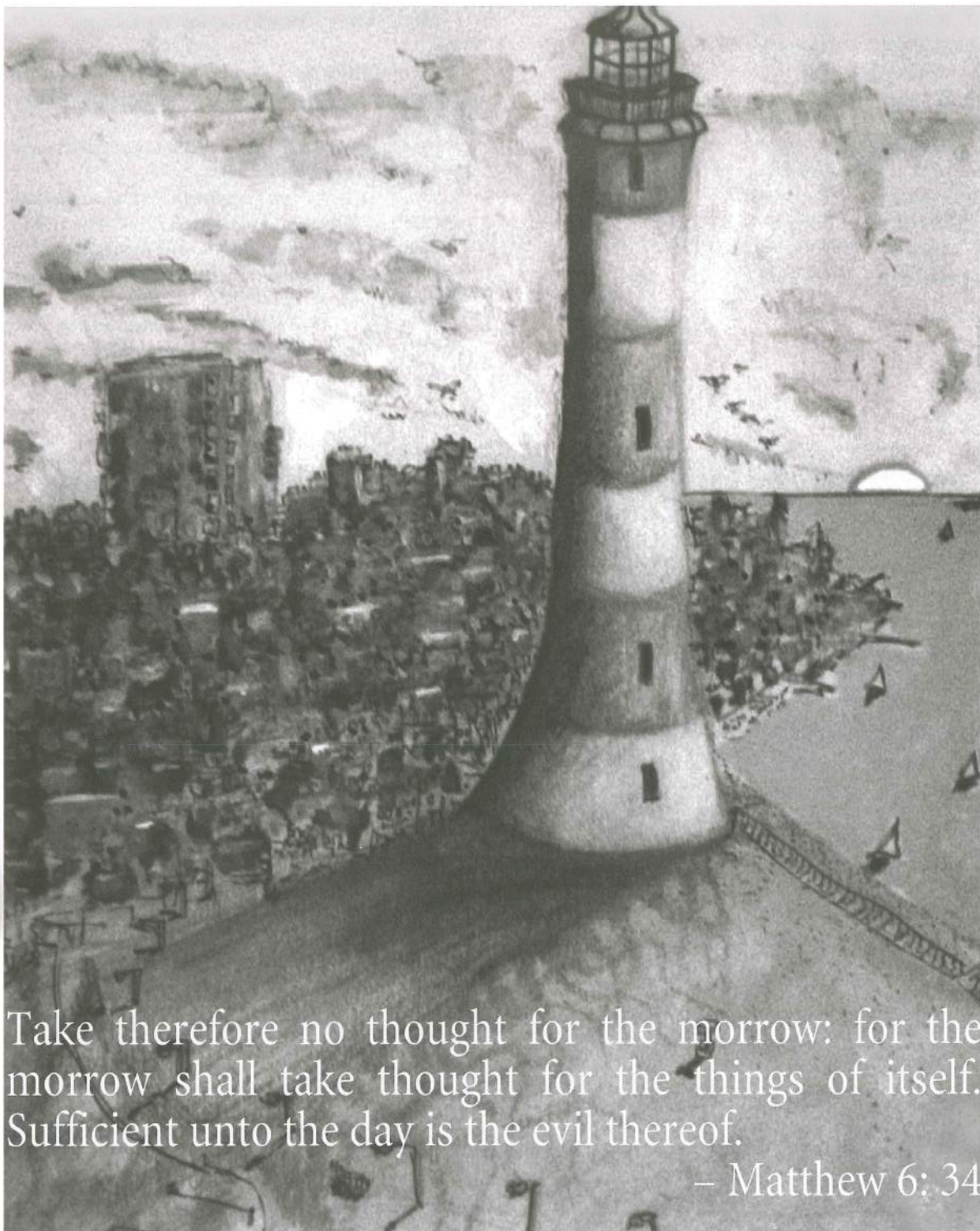
- Get the gist.** When beginning, the player makes a roll for the character in whatever skill or skills the tome increases. If that roll fails, the character will treat any failure on the rolls mentioned below as a fumble. They may make a decision based on that roll as to whether they will proceed with the translation. The character cannot attempt this roll again until their skill in the relevant area has increased.
- Make the rolls:** Once a week, the Keeper should make a secret roll for their task. For a simple transcription, only an appropriate Write Language roll is needed. For a translation, both an Other Language (original tongue) and a Write Language (new tongue) are required.
 - ♦ *Spectacular success* (1/10 skill), no failures: The scribe has done his task admirably. Subtract a week from the remaining time.
 - ♦ *All rolls succeed:* Part of the scribe's task is done. Subtract a week from the remaining time.
 - ♦ *One roll fails:* The scribe makes no progress, and he knows it. If he failed the "gist" roll, treat this as a fumble (see below).
 - ♦ *Both rolls fail (translation only):* The scribe is at an impasse. At the Keeper's option, the character may need to do more research on the topic (appropriate Library Use or skill roll after one week), gain new reference books, or (for the foolhardy in the House of Wisdom) ask a colleague's assistance. Of course, he could just gloss over the section and write it off as a loss. If he failed the "gist" roll, treat this as a fumble.
 - ♦ *Fumble (96-00):* A serious error has entered the text that affects its quality. The scribe is unaware of this. Keeper's discretion as to what has happened.
- Reap the benefits and losses:** If the character has not read the book, they receive the skill points and Sanity losses as if they had done so.
- Assess the results:** The Keeper should always degrade a book's benefits slightly for a translation. Then, they should decide what its final numbers should be, based upon the spectacular successes, botches, or sections omitted. Perhaps insightful comments have added to its value, or spells no longer work or have been dangerously altered. The Keeper should provide the player with the statistics for the book, minus any errors of which the scribe is unaware.



Cthulhu Now/Delta Green:

Sufficient Unto The Day

by Wood Ingham



Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

– Matthew 6: 34

This is a tale of tragic obsession for two or three modern-day investigators. Entry points have been offered for both Britons and Americans. Although not specifically designed for use with Pagan Publishing's *Delta Green* setting, it can easily be adapted, and notes for using this scenario with *Delta Green* can be found in a short appendix.

The theme of this scenario is the futility of over-reaching oneself when facing the incalculable forces of darkness. Men and women who face off against the horrors Outside learn all too soon that the best they can do is face and put down the small evils. It's still not yet time for the Great Old Ones to rise, and sometimes to attempt to avert a thing too soon can have terrible consequences.

Seek ye first

David Benjamin Sienkiewicz, an agent of the CIA, entered the United Kingdom three weeks ago. He adopted no alias and made no attempt to hide his entry into the country. The intelligence community in Britain was given no notice of his entry.

Having obtained an illegal handgun, Sienkiewicz went to ground in a downtrodden area of the city of Plymouth, and seems to be waiting for something. There are several groups of people who would like to know what he is waiting for.

The root of Sienkiewicz' apparent breakdown goes back to January 2002, when he found himself on assignment in Germany, in pursuit of one Shazan Amin Shah, an Islamic cleric and British citizen whose reputation for violent rhetoric and suspiciously peripatetic lifestyle had led the still-smarting intelligence community to regard him as a potential terrorist suspect. Having traced Shah to an apartment in Hamburg, Sienkiewicz arrived to find the man dead and the apartment ransacked. Investigating further, Sienkiewicz eventually found evidence to suggest that his quarry had fallen foul of what seemed like some unusual fringe religious movement. Following the clues, Sienkiewicz traced the group to what he deduced was their headquarters. Sienkiewicz himself doesn't remember what happened there – he appears to have blacked it out – but his director, on receiving the initial report on the scene from a CIA clean-up crew, recommended that Sienkiewicz be reprimanded for what he described as “an extreme and unnecessary display of force”. When the full file of evidence made its way to the CIA, however, no reprimand was served.

Shortly afterwards, the file was destroyed by an unknown person within the Agency.

One thing which did not make its way to Sienkiewicz' superiors was the large book, which, along with a large sheaf of papers, Sienkiewicz liberated from the home of the leader of the now-sanitized cult. Instead, for reasons which now seem unclear even to Sienkiewicz, he smuggled the book and papers back into the US, where he found a translator willing to work on retainer. Within six months, Sienkiewicz, having paid for the translation out of his own pocket, was in position of a Microsoft Word file containing

a full translation of the book, the title of which the translator had rendered *The Book of the Damned*, its author one Karaj Heinz Vogel. The sheaf of papers proved to contain a treatise on “Sleeping Places”, a densely-written collection of genealogies, and a number of pages, written in some untranslatable language, which annotations in German suggested were incantations of some sort.

The book described Cyäegha, an ancient god of some sort, called “the Eater of Dimensions”, “the Whistler from the Stars”, “the Waiting Dark” and “the Principle of Hate”, Who may or may not be dead, or sleeping beneath the ground, Whose seed was “widespread”, and Which, if awoken/returned to life/allowed to return above the ground, would eat the world.

The book explained that it was the work of the Seed of Cyäegha to return to the Sleeping Places, dislodge the Vaeyen, and rouse the Waiting Dark. The genealogies, Sienkiewicz realized, were an incomplete attempt at a catalogue of those Children of Cyäegha alive today.

Sienkiewicz, who, before his experience in Hamburg, wouldn't have credited any of what he was reading, went a little mad then.

Realizing that he had the means of doing something about these people, Sienkiewicz scoured government records, and, beginning in November 2002, began to track down all the living Americans – he reasoned that he had to start somewhere – whose names and ancestry appeared in the cult's genealogy. Sienkiewicz has since been responsible for the deaths of six people. The first four deaths were contrived as accidents, and were never connected with Sienkiewicz.

What the genealogies didn't contain was any explanation of the difference between the Children of Cyäegha who knew who they were and those who didn't: as far as the documents were concerned, these were the Inheritors of the Waiting Dark, who would await It in the Sleeping Places at the appointed time, who would join with It on the day of Its awakening, who would share in Its substance when It ate the world. And why would it say otherwise? And yet, the truth is that the Children who know who they are do everything they can to stop their kin from going to the Sleeping Places too soon, knowing full well that if the Waiting Dark is awakened too soon, nothing will happen. And so, their efforts are dedicated to tracking down the innocent children and awakening their knowledge of who they are (see the sidebar below).

Sienkiewicz' luck ran out with the fifth death, a 62-year old

accountant from Reno named Herbert Ramon. Even more problematic was Sienkiewicz' discovery, on further investigation of the available documents, that he had actually killed the wrong man, and that the Herbert Ramon he wanted had in fact died in 1976. Worse still was the fact that Herbert Ramon's death – from a bullet in the head – could not be put down to accident; the police in Nevada quickly mounted a murder investigation. With Ramon's death about to be connected to him, Sienkiewicz, tortured but still obsessed, traveled to New York in blatant violation of his last directive (he had been ordered to Langley), and, having tracked down a 23-year old woman named Anna Prior, shot her in the back of the head on a side-street in Manhattan in broad daylight (with two witnesses). Within three hours of this, he had fled



“an extreme and unnecessary display of force” the country.

Led by the bad dreams which plague him every night, and clues gleaned from the documents he stole from the cult, Sienkiewicz decided that he should wait near one of the Sleeping Places of Cyäegha, an area in Plymouth named Rosy Cross, and there attempt to stop the rising of the God when the chance presented itself, since, he reasoned, they would come to him anyway. The cult's document suggested that Rosy Cross, as somehow "new", would be the first of the Sleeping places to be visited. He decided to sit and wait for the Children to come to him.

Again, Sienkiewicz missed the point – he's unaware of how closely the cult is watching the lost Children, and doesn't get that the Children who know who they are won't be gathering there any time soon. However, in one of life's many ironies, Sienkiewicz has actually ensured that he will have a victim, in the form of Graham Dworkin, a New York musician, unaware of his heritage, whose compulsion to go to the Sleeping Places would have been checked, had it not been for Sienkiewicz. Anna Prior was the real deal, a cultist through and through, and she was well on the way to meeting and turning Dworkin, stopping him from trying to awaken the Great Old One.

Except that she was shot.

So no one's stopping Dworkin.

Sienkiewicz' actions have made matters much, much worse. First, the patchy nature of the translated documents in Sienkiewicz' possession have led him to believe that there is one and only one cult of Cyäegha, dedicated to the raising of the Great Old One. In fact, there are two. One worships the God, and does indeed seek Its rising... but not yet. At present, it simply seeks to gather together the lost Children of Cyäegha and guard the Sleeping Places until such time as the Stars Are Right, and the conditions finally favor the Great Old One's rising. What Sienkiewicz fails to understand – and, given his experience in Hamburg, wouldn't believe anyway – is that this cult simply seeks to survive until such time as they are needed to awaken Cyäegha. When he ran across them in Hamburg, they considered him a threat and over-reacted.

The other cult exists in each of the Sleeping Places, and is comprised of people local to those areas. Most of the time, they don't even know they're in the cult; when certain conditions occur, they gather in a dream-state, driven by a subconscious urge, and perform a rite intended to keep Cyäegha imprisoned. The rite itself has no actual

effect, and yet they still go through these motions, somehow only knowing that they must do it, victims of a bleak cosmic joke. In the day or so before the rite, this cult can be very dangerous – should the wards guarding the sleep of Cyäegha be threatened, they will attempt to murder anyone who gets in their way.

Sienkiewicz, is unaware, therefore, that the incantation in which he pins his hopes, described as being intended "to confound and dismay those who gather at the Sleeping Places", is not a spell to stop their ceremony working. It's the spell to raise Cyäegha.

The investigators are asked to find out what Sienkiewicz is doing. Will they gain a better grasp of the situation than the troubled CIA man? Or will they make things worse still?

Investigators' Briefing Version One (MI-5)

In this version of the set-up, the investigators are junior agents of MI-5. Called to Crownhill police station by an MI-5 handler named Alison Frobisher, a well-dressed and brisk woman in her early forties, they are given the situation as MI-5 understands it.

MI-5 was aware from practically the moment of his arrival three weeks ago that David Benjamin Sienkiewicz had entered the UK, and is frankly foxed by his actions.

Within three days he had traveled to the South-Western port of Plymouth. Parts of Plymouth are quite popular holiday destinations; but a derelict house in a terraced street on the edge of Devonport is not the kind of place a man on holiday would normally want to stay; likewise, people on holiday don't normally make an effort to obtain illegal handguns within a few days of their arrival.

Sienkiewicz, well-known to MI-5, having worked as a CIA liaison to MI-5 between 1997 and 1999, provided British Intelligence with a conundrum. His actions made no sense whatsoever. Why should a CIA agent be holed up in a house in Plymouth?

Sorry, What Did You Say That Name Was?

Cthuloid names are a bitch to pronounce, and quite rightly, since they were not created with human tongues in mind. There are several ways to say the names of Cyäegha and Its servants, the Nagaäe and Vaeyen, none of which are right. Being inconsistent can be confusing. But since confusion is what we're all about, that's just fine. Feel free to use any or all of these alternative pronunciations, when the Waiting Dark and Its minions come up in conversation.

Cyäegha

kee-ya-EH-gah

see-ya-EH-gah

kee-YAH-egah (the author's preferred pronunciation)

see-YAH-egah

Nagaäe

nag-ah-AH-yeh (the author's preferred pronunciation)

NAG-ay-AH-yeh

Vaeyen

v-EYE-yen

v-eye-YEN (author's preferred pronunciation)

vah-AY-yen

VEE-yen

vee-YEN

VAY-yen

vay-YEN

The Children of Cyäegha

It had always been there; It thought at those times when It was able to think at all, those short periods of consciousness between eternally seeming periods of what could only be sleep or non-existence, and maybe It died each time and was reborn, if It could die at all, which It didn't know either. Then It tried to think of itself, and It knew that It had a name, which was Cyäegha, which told It nothing about Itself except that It did exist. It just was, It couldn't be touched in Its somewhere place which was nowhere, but neither could It touch other things.

It could be called evil, if evil would have had a rational meaning to Its existence, which it hadn't. Rather Cyäegha was something beyond the man-made laws of good or evil, a natural force, or a natural happening like a wood-fire or a tornado, or a storm, or just plain death, something to which no artificial laws apply. ... And at those times when It was awake, fully awake, It hated as only something can hate which is beyond good or evil. Its whole consciousness became that hate, because it was the only thing It could do.

— Eddy Bertin, *Darkness, My Name Is*

When studying the Great Old Ones, there is an unfortunate and dangerous tendency to anthropomorphize them, and to imagine them as capable of understanding human thought and emotion, or to imagine them as material, animal beings. Few of the Great Old Ones are as difficult to describe in these terms as Cyäegha, the Waiting Dark, the Principle of Hate, the Whistler from the Stars, the Eater of Dimensions. In the few Mythos tomes which mention It, the Waiting Dark is portrayed as one huge floating eye, red or green, surrounded by tentacles. The stunning inaccuracy of this description could, I suppose, be credited to redactors who either failed to understand the accounts they read, or who deliberately tried to present the Great Old One in terms that did not match up to the nightmares that tormented them.

The Waiting Dark exists in a state of permanent paradox: as a cosmic Principle of Hate, its existence is abstract and subtle; as the sleeping kin of Mighty Cthulhu, Cyäegha is tied to the fabric and weather of the Earth, and has a reality-wrenching effect on Its surroundings when awakened and fully manifest. As one of the Great Old Ones, it arrived on this planet with Great Cthulhu millions of years ago, and yet Its existence as an abstract Principle meant that It was already here. Cyäegha commands, so the accounts tell us, an unimaginable font of cosmic knowledge, and yet is, for all intents and purposes, mindless. Cyäegha is entirely alien, and yet partly exists in a strain of human DNA. Cyäegha is served by two groups of creatures which both serve It faithfully, and yet which constantly war against each other. Cyäegha is present in all of these apparent contradictions, and yet none adequately express what the Waiting Dark is.

The closest we can come to reaching some sort of understanding lies in knowing the Children of Cyäegha. For at some point in the past, about 4,000 years ago, a distant figure in human terms, an eye blink in the perception of the Great Old Ones, a fragment of the Waiting Dark became disseminated through a strain of human DNA originating in central Europe. The few texts which mention this phenomenon don't actually explain how this could happen, and are contradictory: the Liyuhh claims that humans interbred with the Nagaäe, but the same work later on speaks of "the seed that bore the remnants of Hyperborea". Meanwhile, *Von Denen Verdammten* tells that the Nagaäe are the "issue of man and Cyäegha", and doesn't give any explanation at all as to why so many humans should carry part of the Great Old One inside themselves. As far as Vogel is concerned, they just do.

Whatever its origin, what it means is that most Caucasians alive today have some sort of genetic connection with Cyäegha. Some, however, mainly through happenstance, retain a large enough proportion of Cyäegha's substance in their DNA that they can be thought of as the Children of Cyäegha.

There's no need to tell more, I think. You don't have to ask me how I know all this, because now you know too. There's an affinity between us, which I recognized immediately, or else I would never have spoken to you. The seed of Cyäegha is widespread.

— Eddy Bertin, *Darkness, My Name Is*

Many human Children of Cyäegha know exactly what they are. Every single one of these is either in a psychiatric institution or part of a cult which has existed since the first Child of Cyäegha was born. Members of this cult share dreams with the Waiting Dark, and await the time when the Stars are Right, and Cyäegha is destined to rise. The cult and the Children of Cyäegha are cognate.

Unlike many of the Great Old Ones' cults, the Children of Cyäegha who know who they are do not strive to bring their gods back now, aware that it is futile to bring about a Great Old One's rising for more than a brief moment until such time as the current cycle has ended and the Strange Aeons dawn, allowing the Great Old Ones to rise and walk again. When such a time occurs, the Children of Cyäegha will hasten to the half-dozen or so European sites where Cyäegha's material form can be accessed, and there will join again with their parent in madness and destruction. They have no choice in the matter. Until then, the cult exists, watching over those places holy to the Waiting Dark, seeking out lost Children and executing those who come too close to discovering the secret of the Children. Some join other cults of the Old Ones, distinguishing themselves from their fellow cultists through their patience and sense of peace with what they are. This is not to say that they're not vicious and insane; they are certainly not loath to resort to murder and summoning of the Nagaäe to rid themselves of those they deem to be a danger to them.

Every so often, through an accident of genetics, of rare recessive genes coming into contact, a Child of Cyäegha is born with no knowledge of his or her heritage. At some point around adulthood, the Child will start having dreams, and will attempt to find his or her way to one of the places where the Waiting Dark can be found. Most of these people are intercepted by the watchful cult. When two Children of Cyäegha meet, there is a mutual recognition; within a few minutes of conversation with a Child who knows his heritage, an unaware Child's memories will be awakened. Once awakened to his or her true knowledge, a Child of Cyäegha will willingly join the cult, feeling as if he or she has come home.

Sometimes, though, the Children of Cyäegha don't manage to turn back one of their unaware kin before he or she makes it to one of the Sleeping Places, breaks the Elder Sign, and calls Cyäegha to waken. The last time this happened was in Germany, in 1976. The Waiting Dark rose for a brief time and ate the world, before reality inevitably snapped back into place and time restored itself enough that time continued once more. The consequences were still madness and death for many. Since then, the Children have watched the Sleeping Places more closely, and have since found every lost Child who has attempted to reach the Waiting Dark's presence.

Those Children of Cyäegha who know who they are avoid going to the Sleeping Places, since the genetic imperative to call Cyäegha to awaken is all but irresistible while there. When the time is right, and only then, will they call Cyäegha to wakefulness. Should the need arise for something to be done at one of the Sleeping Places, they will hire dupes in an attempt to guard the sanctity of the Waiting Dark's rest.

The Vaeyen, the Nagaäe and the Elder Sign

This drawing here was much more than just a being with aspects of a vulture and a bat; the thing was partly human or seemed so at first sight, but no longer when one looked closely at its details. The eyes were cold and fishy, all four of them and placed sideways on the head. The body itself had scales; the five arms were long and spidery, covered with hair or thorns. The hands, each possessing a different number of fingers, were clumps of veined flesh, the fingers nail-less and looking more like small twisting tentacles. The lower part of the body had explicit male and female sexual organs, but obscenely oversized ones. It stood on two feet, ending in birdlike claws. The creature held two of its "arms" in front of it. In one it held the nude and seemingly unconscious body of a woman, from whose back bat wings sprouted. In the other outstretched tentacle-arm it had a toad-like being with oversized bulging eyes and two forked tongues.

— Eddy Bertin, *Darkness, My Name Is*



Given the enthusiasm of the Nagaäe to affect Cyäegha's escape, commentators have been prone to make the mistake of assuming that the Elder Sign which keeps Cyäegha sleeping, and the Vaeyen, whose statues which compose it, are servants of the Elder Gods.

Actually, the five Vaeyen (sometimes: "Vaeyens"), who never manifest in their true forms, remaining as small stone statue forms, each about four or five inches (10-13cm) tall. Each statue remains on the points of an Elder Sign. The Vaeyen serve Cyäegha just as surely as the Nagaäe do. The misconception arises from the observation of the Elder Sign, and the erroneous human tendency to somehow think that the Elder Gods are somehow on "our side", and opposed to the Outer Gods and the Great Old Ones, which they aren't, so much as they are in a state of tension, or balance. They constitute representations of the cosmic order in the same way that the Outer Gods and Great Old Ones do; they're just a different aspect of the same universe.

The *Liyuhh*, a rare German translation of the *R'Lyeh Text*, gives the names of the Vaeyen as the Black Light, the White Fire which is Blacker than Night, the White Dark which is more Red than the Fire, the Winged Woman, and the Green Moon.

Were Cyäegha to rise before Its allotted time, Its rampage across space and time will inevitably be frustrated. Hence, the Vaeyen guard against this occurrence. If one of the Vaeyen is moved, the Elder Sign will be broken, and the words that waken Cyäegha will once again be effective. Humans – including the Children of Cyäegha – can touch and move the Vaeyen quite easily. However, the Nagaäe can neither touch nor approach the Vaeyen. They desire Cyäegha's Rising, and don't truly comprehend the nature of the Waiting Dark's imprisonment, any more than Cyäegha Itself does (the Nagaäe, incidentally, can't touch or harm the Children of Cyäegha, either. Or maybe they can and simply won't – the difference makes no odds). The Nagaäe are all too willing to heed the summons of the Children of Cyäegha, and often serve as the means by which the cult rids itself of its enemies.

Karaj Heinz Vogel's original *Von Denen Verdammten* tells that when the Stars are Right, the Vaeyen will assume their true forms and, moving, break the Sign of their own volition. That day will come eventually. Until then, the Vaeyen wait.

Discreet inquiries made via usual channels met with nothing other than a suggestion that Sienkiewicz was best left alone. By the way, where was he right now?

One astute MI-5 analyst suggested the possibility that Sienkiewicz was not in fact there in any official capacity, and that the CIA – who were, it appeared, quite interested in Sienkiewicz' movements themselves – had no more idea of what he was doing than MI-5 had. This made the questions raised that much more frustrating. What was Sienkiewicz doing? What did he want? Why would someone as highly trained as Sienkiewicz be so very, very careless?

The investigators are the next group of people assigned to watch Sienkiewicz. It will be their job to find out, if they can, exactly what he is doing in the UK.

The investigators are shown a photo of Sienkiewicz (a heavy-set, clean-cut, dark-haired man) and a map of the area in which Sienkiewicz has confined himself. Their objective, it is explained, is to gather enough information to figure out exactly what Sienkiewicz is doing. This done, they are then to contact London for further instructions. They will be given surveillance equipment (including a couple of audio and video bugs, a camera with a telephoto lens and a night scope, a video camera with IR capability, microphone equipment) and issued with handguns, although it is stressed that these are solely for their own protection, and that they are not to approach Sienkiewicz under any circumstance. Nor are they to engage him or attempt to apprehend him, unless he should directly attack them, which, unless they screw up badly, he shouldn't do, right?

Right?

This is the part where the investigators nod enthusiastically.

A resident of the street on which Sienkiewicz is holed up works, it turns out, at Crownhill Police Station (HQ of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary). His name is Kenneth Humphries, and he works in the Crownhill Radio Workshop, which, as the investigators know, is the place where maintenance on radios for the Police, Fire, and Ambulance services is carried out. Although basically just the bloke in the overall who tinkers with radios in police cars, Humphries is nonetheless rated as a low-level Civil Servant, and thus has signed the Official Secrets Act as part of his job.

He's been told that the investigators are plain-clothes officers from the Metropolitan Police, and that they're attempting to track down an American suspected of an unspecified (as in "none of your business, Ken") felony in London. His home is at their disposal; meanwhile, he and his wife have been instructed to act normally.

The investigators are expected to arrive in Plymouth tomorrow morning.

Information:

MI-5's files on David Benjamin Sienkiewicz
British investigators will, if they have their heads screwed on, probably want to spend the time before they go to Rosy Cross checking out MI-5's files on Sienkiewicz.

A **Library Use** roll or two should reveal that Sienkiewicz' time in the UK (January 1997, through to the end of May 1999) was not a particularly happy one. He did not get on with his counterparts in British Intelligence, and was not afraid to let them know that he thought them (and these are the more polite adjectives) arrogant, parochial, careless, clueless, and a "bunch of clowns"; his counterparts found these criticisms a bit rich, coming as they did from an agent of the CIA. For their part, they considered Sienkiewicz to be intrusive and domineering. Reports on morale reveal that many of the British agents who had to work with Sienkiewicz referred to him as "the cowboy" behind his back (although even if they'd said it to his face, it's unlikely that he'd have realized just how insulting this particular term is for a Briton). Sienkiewicz made no secret of his dislike of Britain – the food, the weather, the people, the cramped roads, the working environment – and expressed on a number of occasions his fervent wish never to come back, if he could help it, to anyone who would listen, and quite a few people who wouldn't.



Investigators Briefing Version Two (GA)

In this version of the scenario, the investigators are agents of the CIA, and possibly connected with *Delta Green* (see the appendix). They are called to London, where they are briefed by Sandra Bowers, a brisk, smartly-dressed woman in her forties. She apprises the agents of what the CIA knows in a matter-of-fact fashion:

- David Benjamin ("Ben") Sienkiewicz, age 34, native of New York City, is an agent of the CIA. He went AWOL a few weeks ago.
- He's at large in the UK, and appears to be holed up in an empty terraced house in the city of Plymouth. He's armed.
- Recently, he appears to have cracked. He murdered two unconnected people (a 62-year old man in Reno and a 23-year old woman in New York), seemingly for no reason, and then immediately left the country.

The investigators are charged with finding out what Sienkiewicz is up to. They're given access to a car (or two cars if there are more than two investigators; American investigators are expected to have "you want me to drive that?" reactions to the sub-compact Ford Fiesta and/or Nissan Micra they'll be issued with), and a small amount of surveillance equipment (a camera, some recording equipment, a couple of bugs). They'll also be given handguns if they really want them; however, because the British Government does not know that they are here, it won't be recommended, and it will be stressed that should they be caught by the British authorities, their presence in the

UK will be denied by the CIA. If they don't carry guns, their presence will still be denied by the CIA, but at least they'll be less obviously "illegals".

They are, at any rate, on a fact-finding assignment only. They are not to approach or directly to engage Sienkiewicz under any circumstance. When they have gathered enough information on Sienkiewicz' intentions, they are to report back to their CIA contact in the US Embassy, and to withdraw. They've been found lodgings in an upstairs flat (apartment) in Fisher Park Road, a street near where Sienkiewicz was last seen hiding out.

They're given a couple of days to do background research, should they need to.

Information:

CIA files on Sienkiewicz, his victims, and that Islamic cleric

American investigators might seek to find out more about Sienkiewicz' victims, and about his past record. They will be allowed a couple of days to get acquainted with the files, should they feel the need to, but their access to information will be limited, since they're not at home.

These were Ben Sienkiewicz' last two victims (the CIA don't even know about the first four):

- Herbert Ramon, 62-years old, divorced accountant, resident in Reno. No children, one brother, deceased (cancer). No criminal record. No record of any previous association with David Benjamin Sienkiewicz. He had never been to New York.
- Anna Prior, 23-years old, graduate student (CUNY, majored in Medieval Metaphysics), single, no children. Parents alive in Manhattan, no siblings. No criminal record. No record of any previous association with David Benjamin Sienkiewicz. She had never been to Reno.

Researching Sienkiewicz' previous record includes an incomplete file on his first significant misstep: his early reports on his pursuit of Shazan Amin Shah and his report of his discovery of Shah's body are readily available as part of Sienkiewicz' file. However, apart from an order from Sienkiewicz' director, recommending that Sienkiewicz be censured for the extreme force used in a fire fight, connected with the Shah case, which left eight German nationals dead, the documents are incomplete and no longer exist anywhere. No record of any black marks can be found in Sienkiewicz' personnel file. Investigators trying to dig further will be first politely asked what bearing this has on the case, and then reminded what they are supposed to be doing. However hard they try, they'll be unable to uncover any more information from this avenue: the files no longer exist, and there is no record of their destruction. The CIA operative whose name appears on the existing Hamburg report, one Peter Wynne, is, it turns out, dead.

American investigators seeking out information on Shazan Amin Shah will find that he was a 39-year old British Muslim of Bangladeshi parentage, a respected cleric, and that he indeed had a reputation as a man not afraid to express extremist views (the CIA's file on him includes a newspaper clipping from the British newspaper The Guardian, dated September 13th, 2001, where he is quoted in a sidebar of several comments from British Muslims as saying "America has humiliated the rest of the world for too long. Justice has come to

America." Shah's constant movements from 1997 onwards, as well as his apparent efforts to obtain illegal firearms, led both MI-5 and the CIA to consider him a security risk.

The CIA files won't contain any real conclusions as to whether Shazan Amin Shah was involved with terrorism or not. If the investigators are determined to follow this one through, however, you shouldn't be afraid to let them. Presumably, with a few **Library Use**, **Credit Rating** and **Persuade** rolls, it should be just about possible to find Shah's family (among the Bangladeshi community in Swansea, South Wales) and mosque (the Uplands Islamic Center, also in Swansea). If they have enough time, it's conceivable that they can get a plane to Cardiff and rent a car to drive to Swansea. The journey should take about two and a half hours, in total.

Assuming that they can find anyone in Swansea who will talk to them (and this should be hard enough), the most they will be able to find out is that Shazan Amin Shah was a well-loved and popular member of the community. No one will be willing to say a bad word against him, although only a few of the people in Shah's community will privately hold the same extreme political views, no one will be willing to discuss Shah's politics. Shazan's wife, Farhana Shah, will in particular be extremely reluctant to talk about her late husband, especially to the Americans she blames for his death.

Convincing the local mosque elders that the investigators are on the level should boil down to more than just dice rolls. Threats don't work – America holds no fear for you when Allah is on your side – and Americans are distrusted by many Britons, particularly the Muslims.

Still, good, sensitive role-playing should be rewarded, and if – and only if – you feel the players deserve it, one of the mosque elders, a quiet, reserved man of 60 named Syed Ali Uddin, might reveal that in late 1997, Shah apparently confided in him that he had stumbled upon a "horror"; there really were ghûls, he said, and other things of which he would not speak. Shah began to seek several unusual books (the mosque elder won't know details, other than to say that he saw some pages and those concerned "abominations in Allah's eyes") and left, apparently inspired by verses in the Qu'ran to face these horrors and defeat them in the name of faith and justice.

How he ended up dead in a hotel in Hamburg a few years later is anyone's guess.

Shazan Amin Shah's Crusade

No one will be able to find out the extent to which Shazan Amin Shah managed to combat manifestations of the Mythos across Europe, and the success with which he met over the next five years, his faith never wavering once. With the aid of several Muslims across Europe, Shah managed to fight the good fight against manifestations of the Things Outside for four years, just because he believed that it was the right thing to do.

Although not alone in his extreme political views, it was his movements and his procurement of weapons which ironically led the intelligence agencies of the US, the UK and Europe to flag him as a prime terror suspect.

The irony is that he never even knew that his investigations in Hamburg had frightened a Cult of Cyäegha into taking extreme action.

There may yet be Muslims in various cities across Europe who knew and aided Shazan Amin Shah. Who they are and where they are is beyond the scope of this adventure.

Investigators' Briefing Version Three (Civilians)

This is probably the easiest version of the briefing to slot into a regular Cthulhu Now campaign.

The investigators, whether British or American, are contacted by a middle-aged American couple named Bill and Rose Prior, who explain that they are trying to find the truth about the death of their daughter, Anna, who was murdered in New York about a month ago.

US investigators will be met face-to-face; British investigators will be taken on by telephone and e-mail.

Bill, a plump, bespectacled man with graying hair and a serious but likable manner, will tell the investigators that their daughter Anna, an only child, was murdered by a gunman in the street. The police, he says, told them that she was an innocent casualty in what must have been a gang-related shooting (investigators who somehow manage to gain access to the NYPD files will find that yes, the police really do think this, since it's what they've been ordered to record in their files by the CIA). Bill and Rose are not convinced. Why was she singled out? Why did the gunman shoot her in the back of the head? That doesn't sound like an innocent caught in the crossfire. They know that Anna, a grad student in Medieval Metaphysics at CUNY, had been following unusual avenues of study.

Emphasize the word "unusual", and pause at this point. When pressed, Bill will say, "the occult."

She was, Bill explains, on to something. What, he doesn't understand. Having found Anna's notes, Bill and Rose know that on the night she was killed, she had been seeking out a man named Graham Dworkin. They are convinced that Graham Dworkin holds the key to Anna's murder. Their daughter's notes led them to conclude that Anna wanted to stop Dworkin doing something, and that Dworkin was, if not responsible for her death, somehow involved.

Bill and Rose had hired a private detective, who managed to find out who the Graham Dworkin from Anna's notes was, and discovered that he had traveled to the United Kingdom. The detective was unwilling to follow him, to the UK, meaning that the Priors had to hire other agents.

The investigators will be furnished with a photograph of Dworkin (a tall, thin man with long, dark hair). He is, the private detective's notes will confirm, 28-years old, and a professional violinist,

born in Bangor, Maine. Both of his parents died of natural causes – they had Graham late in life and were of advanced years. Dworkin has no criminal record and there's frankly nothing in his family history to suggest that he might be the kind of man who would kill a young woman by shooting her in the back of the head.

If the investigators remark that it all seems a bit far-fetched and tenuous, Bill will admit that yes, it does, but that even the most tenuous hunch would be enough. He begs the investigators to put his mind, and Rose's, at rest.

If they decide to contact the detective, they should find him easily enough (Bill and Rose will readily give them his telephone number, if asked and they're given a reasonably plausible reason, like, for example, the necessity of comparing notes). His name is Bryan Damick, a clean-cut, friendly, good-looking man in his thirties. Damick is about as decent and honest as private detectives get. He'll basically re-iterate what the Priors have already said, although he'll add that it just seemed crazy that they were willing to pay so much for so little information. He wasn't going to go to the UK for a wild goose chase, and that all this occult stuff was way outside of his field. Business is just fine for him right now, and he is frankly more comfortable taking money from people to follow their unfaithful spouses or teenage children.

The Priors will pay for all travel and expenses, and will supply a handsome retainer (in the order of a couple thousand US Dollars).

Anna's Notes

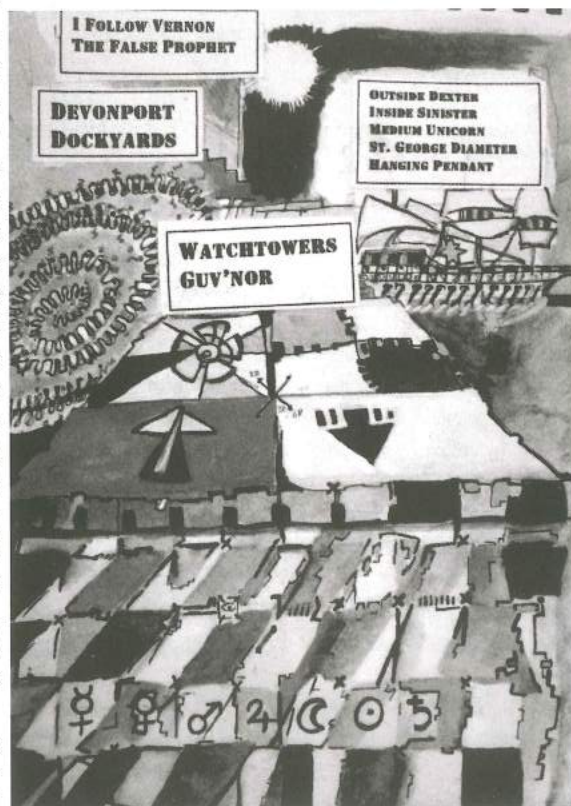
The investigators will be supplied with Anna's notes. They include genealogical data pointing to Dworkin and a number of notes, which basically conclude, in neat handwriting, that "Dworkin will bring It to wakefulness".

A page of very odd arithmetical calculations (which a **Mathematics** roll will reveal to be made using assumptions completely in defiance of standard arithmetic – at one point, even

assuming that $2+4=3$) gives the precise date for when Dworkin was likely to travel (which, incidentally, matches the date given in the detective's notes for Dworkin's actual date and time of travel).

Anna's notes also include a precise location for "The Sleeping Place" in terms of latitude and longitude; a couple of printouts from multimap.com of these co-ordinates show a number of streets in Plymouth, centering on Rosy Cross Park Road.

Investigators who have read *Cultes Des Goules*, the *R'Lyeh Text* or *De Vermis Mysteriis*, and who make a **Cthulhu Mythos** roll will realize that Anna believed that Dworkin was traveling to this place because it is a place of power and that it appears that Dworkin intends to awaken a God – which one is unclear. Investigators who make this realization lose 1/1D3 Sanity points. If they make their roll and they've read the *R'Lyeh Text*, *Cultes Des Goules* or *de Vermis Mysteriis*.



*But if Anna Prior was a Child of Cyäegha,
then that means...*

Yes, that's right. Bill and Rose Prior are Children of Cyäegha, just as their daughter was. Because they carry the same genetic imperative common to all of their kind, they cannot go to the Sleeping Place themselves without being forced to attempt to awaken Cyäegha; therefore, they need to take someone else on. The information they have given to the investigators shouldn't show anything suspicious about them, nor should independent investigations of the Priors show anything other than a rich and successful family. Bill runs a law firm; Rose owns a small chain of fashion boutiques in Manhattan, specializing in stylish clothing for older ladies. While they do sometimes receive telephone calls from other members of the cults, they are careful not to keep any incriminating records. Even if they're caught out, there's little they can do. Isolated from the cult, they don't really have the means to do anything other than to research genealogy and track down the Lost Children.

What might happen

By the time that the investigators arrive, Ben Sienkiewicz has noticed the arrival of Graham Dworkin on the Rosy Cross Park Road. Sienkiewicz is squatting in Number 39; Dworkin is renting Number 28. He is confused at the young man's behavior, but suspects that Dworkin is the one. If he becomes aware that the investigators are on the scene – depending on how efficient they are, he might not – he'll be thrown into a state of confusion. After the unfortunate death of Herbert Ramon, he doesn't want to make another mistake.

Dworkin doesn't have a clue why he's here (see his description, below); Sienkiewicz, meanwhile, knows what's going on, but has an incomplete understanding of it.

The investigators may find them allied with Sienkiewicz; they may find themselves allied with Dworkin. They may find that Sienkiewicz changes his mind and tries to kill them instead.

On the first day, unless the investigators change things, Dworkin will go for a long, circuitous walk around the district and return home; Sienkiewicz will shadow him.

At midnight after either the first or the second day (depending on when the keeper thinks it appropriate), the topography of the district changes, and an extra street appears (see *Drake Park Road*, below). The Sleeping Place is on this street. Approximately half of the people of the area are members of the local cult dedicated to keeping Cyäegha asleep.

From this point on, what happens depends upon what the investigators do; each of the following statements is only true if the investigators have not made it impossible.

Dworkin will attempt to enter one of the houses on the new road, in which one of the Vaeyen is kept, and will attempt to take it away. Alternatively, one of the investigators might move it.

Sienkiewicz will try to stop the Vaeyen being moved. However, given his confusion at the appearance of the new street, it's likely that

he won't twig where the Vaeyen are until one of them has been moved and it's too late.

If one of the Vaeyen has been moved, the members of the cult, who, now that Drake Park Road has appeared, know who they are, will instinctively zero in on whoever has the Vaeyen and try to murder them (see *Up, Late*, below).

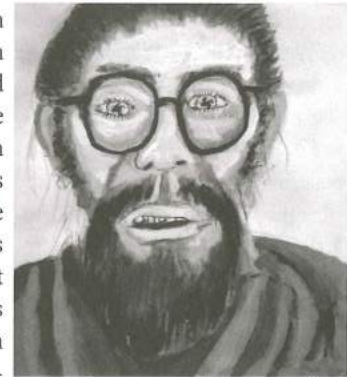
24 hours after the street has appeared, the members of the cult will file out on to Drake Park Road and perform their ritual (see *The Ceremony*, below).

If Sienkiewicz is able to, he will attempt to perform what he thinks is the counter-ritual, and which is in fact the spell to awaken Cyäegha. If Dworkin is capable, he will be drawn out into one of the houses on the street, which is infested with the Nagaäe which guard him, and he too will attempt to cast the same summoning spell.

If Cyäegha is awakened, either by Dworkin, Sienkiewicz, or the investigators, all hell breaks loose, nearly everyone dies, and the Waiting Dark eats the world, before time resets itself (see *The Way We Weren't*, below) back to the moment before Drake Park Road appeared.

Graham Dworkin

A tall, thin, saturnine man with long dark hair, Graham Dworkin wears shirts and black trousers. In the cold, he wears a black overcoat with brass buttons. Dworkin is friendly and seems a nice enough chap, although he is currently not quite sure what he's doing here. He has recurring dreams of a green moon, which shines malevolently down on him, and he feels drawn to this God-forsaken place. When role-playing Dworkin, play up the sense of confusion he feels. He's at the center of something big, but he doesn't know what it is. He knows that if he just follows it to the end, he'll find out.



The Nagaäe refuse to harm Graham. They stand aside for him and anyone within a few feet of him.

If Graham Dworkin is not prevented from doing so, he will:

- ♦ move one of the Vaeyen, although he won't necessarily know what he's doing;
- ♦ find himself sitting in a house full of Nagaäe on the night of the ceremony, chanting the spell to Call Cyäegha.

Ben Sienkiewicz

David Benjamin Sienkiewicz is a big man in his mid-thirties, clean cut and heavy-set, with dark hair and dark eyes. He wears jeans and sweaters, under a functional anorak. He says very little. He is both paranoid and obsessed with stopping the Children of Cyäegha. His paranoia may be his undoing: he knows that Something Terrible is coming, but is convinced that no other sane person could possibly understand. If someone actually approaches him and shows that they know the Truth, he will gratefully accept their help, although he will accept nothing less than being in charge. His manner is caustic, and he is contemptuous towards the British, considering them to be a nation of reactionary idiots. If he himself is being followed by the inves-



tigators and he notices, Sienkiewicz may suspect that the investigators are in fact followers of the Great Old One – his opinion of the British authorities is so low that he can't imagine that they've even noticed where he is, while he thinks he has evaded his former masters in the CIA.

If Ben Sienkiewicz is not prevented from doing so, he will:

- ♦ shadow the person or persons he suspects to be Children of Cyäegha, remaining hidden and making no contact unless approached (it's likely that the first thing he'll be seen doing will be shadowing Graham Dworkin);
- ♦ attempt to kill the person or persons he has concluded to be Children of Cyäegha;
- ♦ attempt to prevent what he thinks is the raising of Cyäegha using the incantation he learned from his collection of documents, possibly inadvertently summoning Cyäegha.

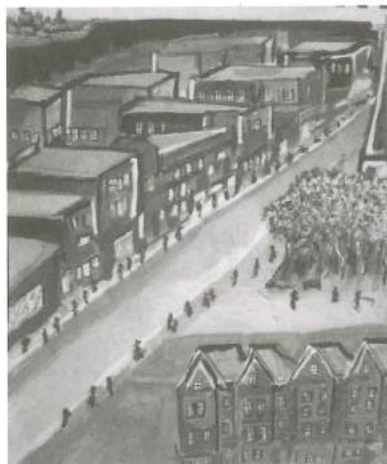
Rosy Cross

Let's not weep for their evil deeds, but their lack of imagination.

– Nick Cave

Plymouth, and Rosy Cross

Plymouth is a city of some 350,000 people, situated on the Southern side of the South-Western peninsula. It has a long tradition of being a military town (it boasts station points for the Army, Navy and Royal Marines), and until quite recently its economy was dependent upon Devonport Dockyard.



Plymouth: 350,000 people

With the decline of the dockyards in the Seventies and Eighties, Plymouth hit upon hard times. By the end of the Eighties, Plymouth's new chief industry had become the tourist trade, based around Plymouth's long and romantic history (Plymouth was the home of Sir Francis Drake, became a strategic point in the Civil War, and was the starting point of the Pilgrim

Fathers, for example). The tourist industry certainly brought the money back into Plymouth, but the combination of fewer jobs and the concen-

tration of funds led to Plymouth developing sharply-defined areas of rich and poor, where the affluent were very affluent, and the poor, very poor.

Plymouth also has a long tradition of Masonic involvement in its commerce. Unlike many other cities, the Masonic influence is actually quite open (see the large and richly-appointed Masonic Hall in Devonport); hence all the places with names such as Stonehouse and Rosy Cross.

In the poorer parts of Plymouth, the air smells of salt, piss and stale cigarettes, and the sky and streets are the same shade of gray. There's no respite at night: the pale lights block out the stars. Everything is pale and cracked and decaying. The few patches of grass are a poor excuse for green, struggle under the weight of the cold, the foul air and the litter that chokes everything, the coke cans, cigarette butts and the dog shit. Maybe if it snowed, the winter would be different, but it hardly ever snows here, and then only grudgingly, an inch or two, turned by midday into gray-brown slush.



Salt, piss and stale cigarettes

And down in North Prospect, where every street's got a burnt-out car on bricks in front of one of the houses, because no one in the council would dare to come and take it away, the old shuffle around in arrogance, finding people to hate for their perceived lack of morals, their politics, their color, their sex, their age, the town they came from, making and breaking alliances with the people on their street, as if it mattered. And the young wander in their tracksuits, sucking on their cigarettes and chasing down anyone who comes into their territory. The place used to be called Swilly, because of the pig farms. Back in the Sixties, the council thought that changing the name might help. They still call it Swilly.

There are a lot of places like this in Britain: impoverished, filthy, dying. Plymouth isn't unique, and like so many old towns with histories of blood, the streets have a memory of hate drawn from ancient battles still being fought in the souls of the people. In the richer places, out in Mannamead, Plymstock, Ivybridge, they don't have this: flowers and trees grow freely and people live in a clean, pretty kind of place they fondly remember when they go away and never come back. But in the older, poorer parts of Plymouth, in Devonport, in Peverell, in Stonehouse, in Swilly, the land remembers the Blitz, the Depression, the workhouses, a legacy of violence and crime and hate and poverty going back to the Civil War and beyond.

Map 1 (the first map I, I mean)

When the investigators arrive in Rosy Cross, show them Map 1, and let them look at it for a bit (but don't let them take it – this bit is important). Point out the numbered areas to them. These are:

1. Rosy Cross Primary School: A small school, with some 160 pupils in seven classes, it serves most of the area. None of the teachers live nearby.
2. The Gallows Oak Free House: A pub, its sign showing a tree with a man hanging from one of its branches. Locals are left unmolested; however, it's best to be able to handle yourself if you're not a local (for example, if you're American or from London), since the place will go silent the moment you walk in, if you're not local. Things tend to go downhill from there. There are two bars, a lounge bar and a public bar. You only go in the lounge bar if you've earned the right to do so. Both sides of the pub have snooker tables and TVs, which are usually showing the football when a match is on. The barman is a large, muscular, tattooed man called William Wright. He's recently been released after serving three years of a five year sentence for Grievous Bodily Harm.
3. Rosy Cross Electrical: A shop selling electrical goods: washing machines, cookers, fridges, and the like. Run by Mike Bridger, who lives in the much nicer area of Mannamead. Bridger, a genial middle-aged man, wishes his shop was elsewhere. His assistants (three women of ages 45, 40 and 33) are local. Bridger is scared of them, as he is of his delivery man, Gary, who drives the van.
4. Rosy Cross Corner: A newsagent and off-license next to a hairdresser.
5. Waterloo Garage: A fairly decent workshop. There are a lot of old cars in this area, and so Brian Benson, the owner, is usually busy.
6. Tony Steen Motors: A used car showroom. Tony Steen, whose home is in Plymstock, is the fourth person to have owned the place in two years. At the rate his business is going downhill, he's unlikely to own it for more than about another three months.
7. Tesco Supermarket: One of the bigger employers in the area, this is basically the same as any other supermarket of its kind.

The main road on which the action is likely to take place is Rosy Cross Park Road – the investigators should figure out quite early on that Sienkiewicz is holed up in Number 39. The rest of the streets are pretty much the same: terraced houses, not in the greatest of shape. Several houses on each street will be unoccupied, with boarded up or broken windows. This is a neighborhood on the skids. When describing the state of the area, lay it on thick, emphasizing the dirt, the way the drains smell, the cigarette ends in the gutter, the harshness of the air. The roads are in a terrible state, too, cracked and full of pot holes. Gaunt-faced kids who should be in school swear at you or chuck stones if you can't give them a light. Each of the Park Roads has a back lane, access to garages and/or back yards can be gained via the lane.

The lanes are cobbled, and although there are street lamps, most of them don't work. Nevertheless, at night, the lights of the city bleach the sky a sort of washed-out purple gray color. You can't see the stars here; you only see the moon on clear nights.

This isn't the worst area of Plymouth, by any means, but it's not the best.

The action here should be happening at some time in late January or early February. The sky is permanently a uniform steel gray. There is no precipitation, no rain no snow, of any kind, although there's a fair coating of frost over everything, and black ice on the roads. Every morning, a grit lorry passes through the streets, one by one, scattering grit-salt on the tarmac. Stress how cold it is, how the foul-smelling air bites at their skin and tightens it over their cheekbones, how everything feels hard and icy. Gloves, hats and overcoats are more or less mandatory, although residents of the area get by just wearing coats. They seem to be immune to the cold, although they'll complain vociferously about it.

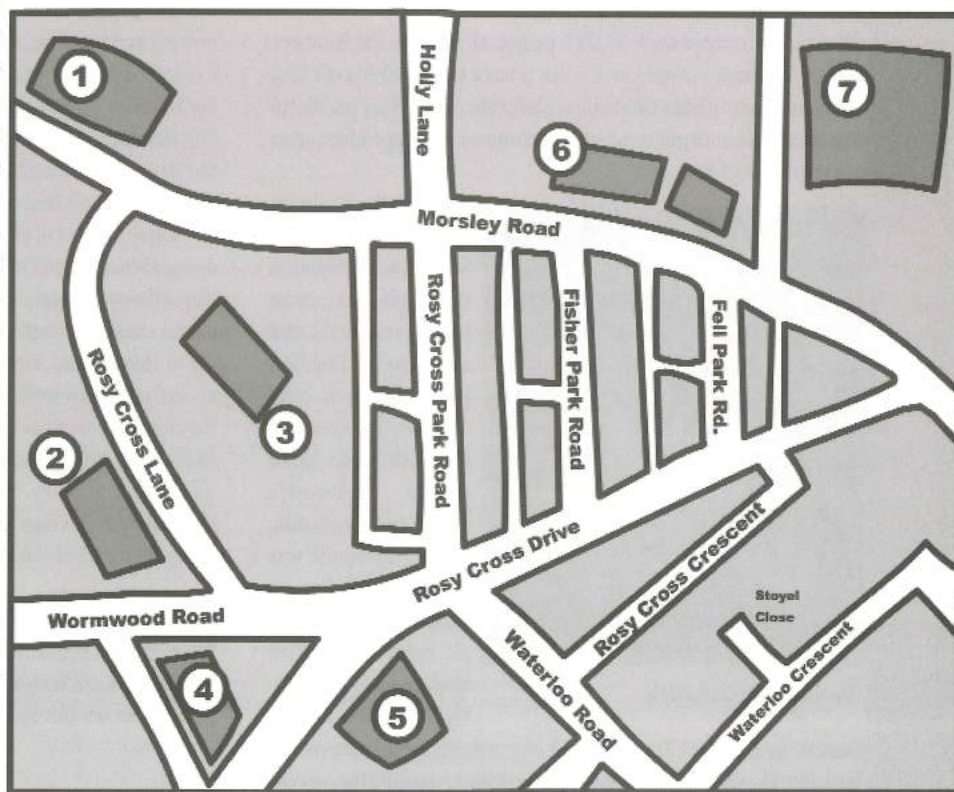
Ken Humphries

British investigators with MI-5 will find themselves installed in the front upstairs bedroom in the home of radio technician Ken Humphries. Civilian investigators might also find themselves approached by Ken, who, unlike most of the inhabitants of the street, is curious and friendly. He lived in London for a few years in the late Sixties, and although he moved back to Plymouth when his father died, his travels have left him significantly more open-minded than most of his neighbors. Or his wife.

Spend some time developing Ken, if you can. It'll make it all the more poignant if he is killed.

Humphries is 59-years old, gray haired, bespectacled and possessed of an ample gut. He's a good natured bloke, altruistic and friendly, with a gentle demeanor. He's the kind of chap who his neighbors say would "do anythin' fer anyone", which makes him pretty popular on the street, although he wasn't born there, having moved there with his wife and two daughters in 1976.

Map 1: Rosy Cross and environs



Ken's not a particularly happy man; he tends to see the worst possible outcome in a situation. He's not very well, either. He gave up smoking a couple years ago because of a heart scare. He suffers from chronic bronchitis and angina, and the ruddy shade of his cheeks is more a product of his blood pressure than his standard of living. Life's not been easy on Ken.

Ken lives with his wife, Ann. They love each other very much, but Ann, a fierce woman with a demeanor and shape not unlike that of an enraged goose, is as unpopular on the street as Ken is popular, mainly due to her amazing ability to conceive and hold grudges at the most insignificant provocation. Ann is slightly paranoid, and holds a mild conviction that several people on the street (especially Beryl Smith, from Number 22) are out to get her. Still, her paranoia does mean that she knows everyone on the street, and if asked, she will be a fount of information.

Ken doesn't drink much, unlike most of the men of the area, and normally avoids the Gallows Tree, although sometimes his nephew Mike will take him there, where they will play a few rounds of snooker. The nearest he gets to a smile is this sort of half-smile, half look of relief.

Ann believes herself to be a good cook, but in fact manifestly isn't. Everything is overcooked and overloaded with fat. She doesn't particularly make a good cup of tea either – Ann's cups of tea tend to be both stewed and far too milky. Ann will frequently offer the investigators meals and cups of tea while Ken is at work; if told to go away, she will immediately take a strong dislike to the investigator who was so rude, and will be consistently rude to that investigator from then on.

That Crucial First Impression

Given that there's likely to be a fair amount of "have you seen this man?" photograph waving, the investigators are likely to interact with some of the locals.

The people of Rosy Cross who have been born here (about half of the inhabitants of the street) maintain an attitude which is as incomprehensible to Londoners as it is to Americans. Essentially, their natural pride at being poor manifests itself as hostility towards most outsiders, and towards each other. People whose homes are truly squalid pride themselves on their cleanliness ("I tries hard, I does, and I'm never dirty"); people with wrecked marriages pride themselves on their family unity.

There's an intense sense of competition with their neighbors. Investigators who hold a conversation with any local for any length of time will invariably be asked to agree with a disparaging comment made about another resident of the street. Ann Humphries is a favorite target, Ken less so (although he does often receive a backhanded compliment: "I don't know how he copes with 'er, I really don't," says Pam Cunningham from Number 15. "He must be some sorta saint or somethen").

And yet, if attacked by outsiders, the locals will close ranks and unleash a stream of vituperation. On the whole, the best way to get on the right side of a resident of Rosy Cross is to acknowledge her superiority in intelligence, moral propriety and cleanliness.

The middle classes are loathed with a passion as "snobs"; on the other hand, no one really knows what to think of the rich. Nobody's ever met anyone really rich. The locals are staunchly Royalist. The most sustained opprobrium is reserved for the successful people, those

who managed to escape this mess of a place: "Who does he think he is? Think he's better than us, does he?"

Everybody plays the National Lottery. Pam Harris in Number 17 runs a lottery syndicate. Like most areas on the poorer side of Plymouth, few people leave, and many families have lived in the same houses for generations.

Plymouth, until recently, was practically devoid of an ethnic community. Foreigners and ethnic minorities are, because of this, generally approached with curiosity, since the only real contact most of the locals have with foreigners is through the TV, and newspapers like the Daily Mail (aspirational reading around here – most people take the Sun). So, apart from asylum seekers and "gypsies", on the whole foreigners and ethnic minorities are treated the same way: as generally benevolent until proven otherwise, but as, on the whole, both funny and stupid. They laugh at Americans. They have funny accents.

In a place like this, people from London are just as much outsiders as any American. And yet, there are already two Americans on the street.

Some Inhabitants of Rosy Cross Park Road

There are 42 houses on Rosy Cross Park Road. Numbers 3, 16, 21 and 34 are derelict and unoccupied; Number 39 should be unoccupied, but isn't. Here are some sample inhabitants of the street.

Number 6: Jan, Steve and Krystal Moran. Jan and Steve married as teenagers, two years after Krystal was born. Jan and Steve are both 32-years old; Krystal is 17. Steve is a big man who works as a nightclub bouncer at a nightclub on Union Street in the Town. Jan is overweight and has permed blonde hair. She wears too much make-up. They still love each other deeply. Their daughter, Krystal, is doing A-Levels at John Kitto Community College and is actually quite bright, although she prefers skipping college and smoking joints at the moment. She wears sportswear and chunky gold jewelry. Her bleach-blond hair is usually tied right back. All three of the Morans are members of the cult.

Number 7: Stan Butcher. Stan is 83-years old and a bachelor. He owns a vintage Triumph roadster from 1956, which would be worth quite a bit of money if it wasn't in such an appalling state. He has terrible bronchitis, but still smokes roll-ups. He uses old pieces of newspaper in place of handkerchiefs. He's nosy and irascible. He isn't, however, part of the cult – he was born in Swilly.

Number 10: William Wright. 44-years old, owner and barman of the Gallows Oak, Bill Wright is tall, heavily tattooed and possessed of a truly impressive beer gut. He spent some time in prison for Grievous Bodily Harm. He's generally hostile and vicious towards outsiders, even when Drake Park Road isn't there. He was married, with three children, but everyone on the street knows that his wife entered a refuge a couple of years ago, being, so the rumors go, unable to take being beaten every other night. There's a court order in action which prevents him from going within 200 yards of her. Wright is the high priest of the cult. His stats can be found at the end of the scenario.

Number 14: Ken and Ann Humphries.

Number 15: Pam and Jim Cunningham. Jim, a big jovial man of 38 years, is a window cleaner, while Pam, a short, round, dark-haired woman of 40, works as a cleaner at Rosy Cross Primary School. Pam was born here, and is a member of the cult. Jim, however,

originally comes from Saltash and is not. They have two daughters, Carly (14) and Jo-Ann (10).

Number 17: Pam and Tom Harris. Both 43-years old, Pam and Tom resemble nothing more than praying mantises as they try to muscle in to every aspect of local gossip. They're both members of the cult.

Number 19: Mr. and Mrs. Morsley. No one knows what Mrs. Morsley's first name is, although Mr. Morsley is called Sid. Both are in their high eighties. Both are members of the cult.

Number 22: John and Beryl Smith. Both in their early fifties, John and Beryl are do-gooders. They attend a local Baptist church and are often seen going from door to door on the street collecting for some charity or another. As do-gooders, they're not popular on the street, the most common accusation being "They thinks they'm better than us, they does." They're not part of the cult. When the cultists file past, the Browns' curtains will twitch with disapproval.

Number 28: This house is rented by Graham Dworkin.

Number 31: Brian and Linda Benson, and their teenage son Brad. Brian (38) runs the local garage. He's balding, scruffy and quite a nice chap; Linda (35), his wife is tall, thin and quite attractive for her age. She's been sleeping with William Wright. Everybody on the street knows this. The conjecture is that Brian does too, but is too scared of Wright to do anything about it. Brad is 18 and is responsible for most of the burglaries that happen on other streets. He doesn't, however, rob anyone on his own street. All of the Bensons are part of the cult.

Number 35: Phil Noden (33), his partner Sharon Cleves (29), and their children Kylie and Jason Cleves (8 and 6). Phil, a tall man who spends a lot of time on the weights, is on Job-Seekers' Allowance (but hasn't declared his work as a bar man at a pub in Ham), while Sharon works at Tesco. Their children are not under any kind of control. Phil is part of the cult; Sharon is not.

Number 39: Apparently empty, this is the house in which Ben Sienkiewicz is hiding out.

Sienkiewicz' Digs

Every morning, Sienkiewicz goes out and breaks into someone's house. There he takes a shower, and then leaves the house exactly as he found it. No one has yet noticed that they've had any unin-
vited guests.

Breaking into Sienkiewicz' digs while he's out reveals a dust-laden house with no furniture. The fireplaces are boarded up. In the front downstairs room is a small camp: a stove, some tins of food, and a backpack. In the rucksack, there's a well-thumbed document, printed one sided on about 300 sheets of American Letter-sized paper, comb-bound in plastic covers. The front page, which dives straight in to the text at the top, bears at the beginning the title *Book of the Damned*; Karaj Heinz Vogel.

Investigators with cameras won't have time to photograph more than a few pages of the book (particularly when they're supposed to



Sienkiewicz' Digs

be setting up bugs). If they steal it, they're in for a great deal of trouble, as Sienkiewicz, immediately noticing it's gone will go to extreme – and murderous – lengths to get it back.

There's also a box of 9mm bullets, and apart from clothing, a wash bag and a bed roll, that's it, apart from a small Bible, King James Version.

There's a bookmark; the Bible falls open at the marked page, on which can be found Matthew 6: 25-34.

- ²⁵ Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?
- ²⁶ Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?
- ²⁷ Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?
- ²⁸ And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
- ²⁹ And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- ³⁰ Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?
- ³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
- ³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
- ³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
- ³⁴ Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

For more information on the *Book of the Damned*, see the Statistics section at the end of the scenario.

Sienkiewicz, unless the investigators have been very thorough indeed (successful **Sneak** and **Conceal** rolls, or, if you're using *Delta Green*, **Tradecraft** rolls), will notice that someone has been in his digs. If he then succeeds in a **Spot Hidden** roll, he'll find any bugs or cameras left by MI-5 investigators, and disable them in moments.



Uninvited guest

Drake Park Road

By this point, the players should have established that Ben Sienkiewicz is following Graham Dworkin, although there should be no plausible reason why. Sienkiewicz will also be aware that he is being followed, and should be currently figuring out who it is he's supposed to be killing.

The Other Map

At midnight after either the first or second day, something shifts in the fabric of reality, and another street appears between Rosy Cross Park Road and Rosy Cross Lane.

The investigators, of course, won't necessarily notice this. No one does. As far as everyone is concerned, the road has always been there, will always be there. When they next ask to see the map, simply show them the other Map 1, with the extra street. They should not think that there is anything wrong straight away. If they notice that it's a

different map, just say that no, the street was always here, and that this is the same map. Should they check street maps, GPS etc., the street will be there as if it always was. The players, of course, will notice. The investigators won't necessarily realize that anything has changed, unless they make an *Idea* roll. Residents, however, will look at you as if you're mad if you try to tell them that this street wasn't here yesterday.



Interstitial Drake Park Road

Interstitial Terrain

...I say to myself, then – when it's quiet and late at night, like it is now – that our whole world, everything we think of as nice and normal and sane, is like a big leather ball filled with air. Only in some places, the leather's scuffed almost down to nothing. Places where... where the barriers are thinner... And I say to myself, wouldn't it be a day if whatever was left just... rubbed away?"

–Stephen King, *Crouch End*

Although all common sense rebels against the very idea, the earth on which we stand is not solid. Distances are fluid; places change before our eyes. In the crowded countries of Western Europe, there are places which change when certain circumstances occur, or which only exist when approached from a certain directions, or which appear out of nowhere when it's time for them to do so. Nowhere is this as common as it is in England.

Interstitial half-places like Drake Park Road often exist in areas with a history of hatred, or decadence, or bloodshed, or poverty. The streets have a memory, and like a few other places in Britain, there are older things beneath, behind, surrounding Rosy Cross which feed off the hate. Concrete and tarmac and streetlights aren't constant things. Sometimes they change. Sometimes the maps change themselves when no one's looking. And it's at times like that when all it needs is a push in the right place. All it needs is a movement, a few words, and it could all be over.

Not all of the half-places are fixed or permanent. Some will only be there for a while, or re-appear a finite number of times. Others, on the other hand, fully appear and become part of the "normal" world as we recognize it.

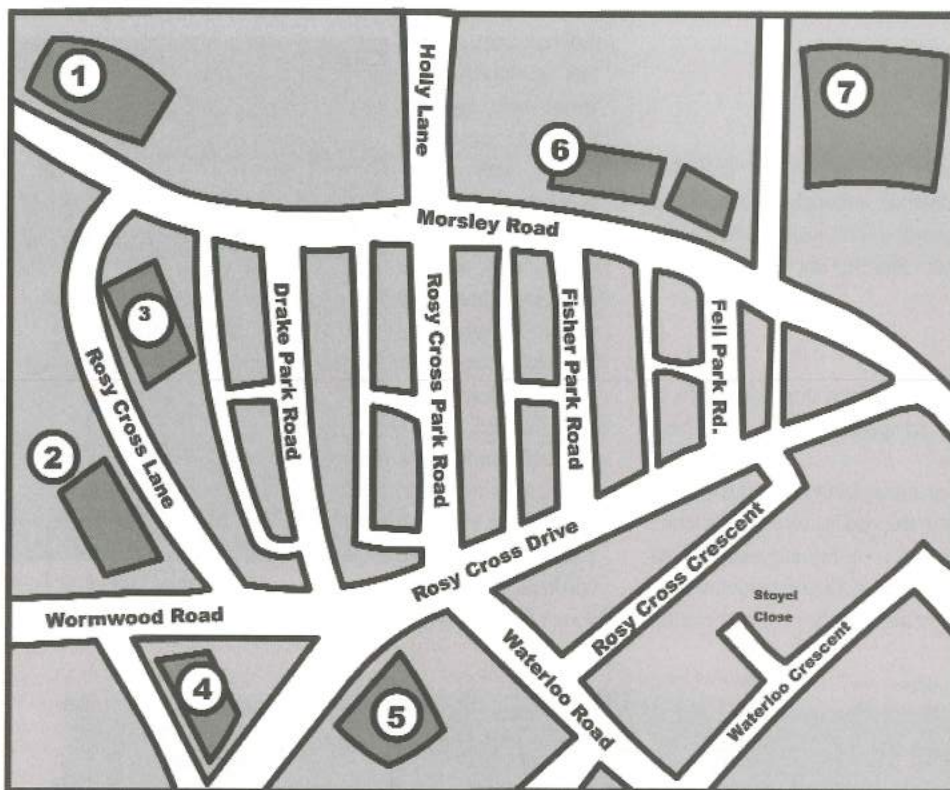
Often, the half-places will mimic or caricature the buildings – and sometimes the inhabitants – of the surrounding area, for example Crouch End Town [sic] in London. Given their origins, it should stand as no surprise that these places are universally sinister in character. Most of them in fact exist under the influence of cosmic Principles which are often personified as Great Old Ones or Outer Gods by scholars of the Mythos: Hastur, Cyäegha, Yog-Sothoth, Shub-Niggurath, Azathoth.

Few of these interstitial places are ever written about. Those which lurk behind corners (again, like Crouch End Town) or which overlap themselves onto scenery which is already there (like the many phantom villages in England) are the stuff of rumor and fear. Few like to talk about them; those who do are shunned or (uneasily) laughed at or shouted down.

On the other hand, the places which nudge the landscape around them to either side and take a definite, solid location are simply never noticed. For the day or two they exist, they were always there – memories, maps and history books alike change to accommodate the alteration in the fabric of reality, and when they disappear again, people forget they ever existed and will look at you like you're quite mad if you try to tell them otherwise.

Since the Second World War, the half-places have been increasing in number. The very few people who both know and dare to speculate have suggested that maybe soon, they'll replace the world, and no one will notice.

Drake Park Road has only actually been in semi-existence since 1976, the last time that Cyäegha stirred, on occasion which, although it didn't signal the end, did cause several of these interstitial places to appear. On those occasions when it erupts into our dimension, those people who were born there are affected as if it had always been there, and as if they had always been part of the cult which exists there.



The Other Map 1: Rosy Cross and environs

If the investigators have had the chance to talk to any of the locals, they might notice a change in the demeanor of the people. All of a sudden, they walk with a spring in their step. They greet each other in the street. They have a light in their eyes.

Nearly everyone on the street is in the local cult of Cyäegha. On one night a year, they perform a mock-sacrifice (tonight it'll be Krystal, the 17-year old daughter of Jan and Steve Moran who live in Number 6) and say a rite to keep the Waiting Dark in Its place, and then they go home, and the street vanishes again.

This doesn't extend to Ken Humphries and his wife, incidentally. Like about half of the people living in Rosy Cross, they weren't born here, and they're not part of the cult. They know about what happens, and they don't talk about it. They just keep out of it. Like everyone else, they completely forget it happens the following morning when the street vanishes.

Likewise, the ceremonial robes and daggers held by most of the street's inhabitants appear in their wardrobes when the extra street appears and vanish when the street vanishes.

The investigators, Dworkin and Sienkiewicz are the only people who will have noticed the change. Sienkiewicz will be freaked out – he's sure that there's a reckoning on its way. Dworkin, meanwhile, is intrigued and excited, although he couldn't tell you why.

On Drake Park Road

Investigators venturing onto Drake Park Road find themselves on a street which mimics the squalor and dilapidation of the nearby roads, only much more so. Every single house is derelict, and apparently uninhabited, the gutters are choked with litter. Windows are broken or boarded up, often with faded, ripped curtains hanging skew from inside them. The air smells stale. It feels as if in the corners of the filthy,

cracked windows, there are faces, eyes, watching, but when you turn to look, there's nothing there.

The investigators may choose to go inside one of the houses. They're universally dingy and moldy inside, but all of them are fully furnished inside, as if suddenly abandoned years ago and left to decay. Investigators who enter the houses before Dworkin does and who make a **Spot Hidden** roll will notice a small statue in the first house they go into, which is vulturine in form. This is a Vaeyen. It may be sitting on a mantelpiece, or in a dingy shelf unit surrounded by cracked porcelain dolls. If Dworkin is with the investigators and they don't notice it, he will, pick it up and show it to them. "It looks familiar somehow", he says.

The sky above this street is utterly gray, and casts even less light than it does on the other parts of the district.

Investigators who make an *Idea* roll will lose 1/1D6 Sanity points, as it dawns on them that this street shouldn't be here.

Cyäegha could be said to slumber under this street, if it could be said that It truly exists in a place. Drake Park Road is one of the Sleeping Places. Four of the Vaeyen can be found in houses on either side of the street; one is buried under the tarmac in the middle of the road, quite near one end. Together, they stand on the points of an Elder Sign. Moving them breaks the Elder Sign, which allows the Nagaäe to stir (they will be active within minutes) and permits the calling of Cyäegha to be effective. The only way to restore the sign is to replace the Vaeyen in exactly the position it was in before, and then to cast a new Elder Sign spell on the street.

A few minutes after the Vaeyen is moved and the Elder Sign is broken, a freezing, howling wind will blast through the street, its provenance and sound so sudden and unnatural that getting caught in it costs 0/1D3 Sanity points. And as the events of the next few minutes unfold, it begins to snow, heavily.

Investigators caught outside will, as



Snow falls heavily in Drake Park Road

Up, Late

The local Cultists of Cyäegha will instinctively know if a vaeyen has been moved. And while in their rite their normal sacrificial victim is no such thing, if the Vaeyen have been disturbed, they believe that they really do need a sacrifice. Hence, they are not afraid to commit murder. They believe that by taking a head for the Waiting Dark, they can propitiate the Dark God and keep It sleeping.

They're wrong, of course. Anyone who is left alone and in possession on a vaeyen is in terrible danger. The cultists aren't particularly bright or accurate, however: they might just as easily murder someone else by mistake.



The cultists always kill by beheading their victim and nailing their victim hand and foot to a wall, upside down, allowing the body's blood to drain. Why this should be is unclear. They'll take any severed heads away, using them in their rituals later that day. People who get in the way often die in the same way.

If the Investigators find a victim of the cult who was killed in this way, they'll lose 1/1D4+1 Sanity points. The first thing they'll notice is the smell of blood – blood will be everywhere. Then they'll see the corpses. Don't hold back from describing them.

If it was one of the characters who moved the Vaeyen, at any plausible point at which he is separated from the others, have him black out, only to awaken kneeling next to the corpse of one of the cult's victims (possibly Ken Humphries, Sienkiewicz or any other NPC with which the Investigator has been seen), holding the murder weapon. Sanity point loss for this is 1D3/1D8.

No one taught the cult this stuff. If you were born here, you know all this when the extra street appears. If you weren't, you don't. Why the cultists' consensual reality should form itself around a belief which is in fact entirely untrue should not be resolved. It's a cosmic joke, no more than another example of how ordinary humans are no more than puppets for the Dark Gods.

the snow falls heavily, see things – dark, hunched shapes, diving around corners, climbing over walls, opening manhole covers and slithering in, diving under the snow. Investigators who make **Spot Hidden** rolls will catch a glimpse of deformed, inhuman bodies, multiple arms, scaled translucent skin, and will lose 0/1D4 Sanity points. These are the first of the Nagaäe, awakened and hankering for the Wait-

ing Dark to rise and absorb them into Itself again. They won't attack anyone, yet.

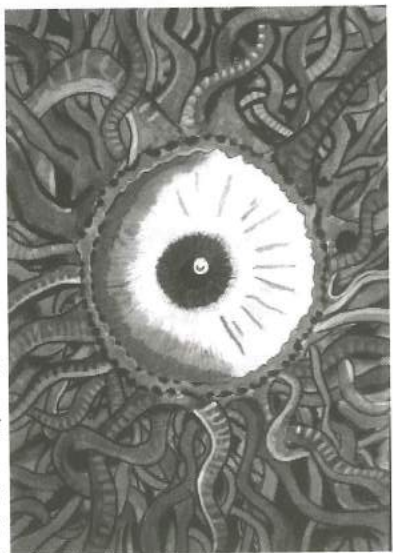
God is in the House

It continues to snow all day. By the time it goes dark, at 4:00 p.m., there's about three feet of snow, covering everything. Shortly after dusk, the blizzard stops.

Investigators who venture outside during the day find themselves watched. If they go on to Drake Park Road again, they'll find themselves watched. The snow is a lot deeper, and very difficult to walk in. They'll see trails left by something large and multi-legged (loss of 1 Sanity point if an *Idea* roll succeeds), and in the buildings, there are definitely eyes watching them.

Should the investigators enter any of the houses on Drake Park Road after the Vaeyen has been moved, they'll be attacked by one of the Nagaäe. Concentrate on the speed and surprise of its assault, its eyes, the tongues, the four grasping hands, the foul breath, which smells of ammonia and rotting flesh. If it is wounded in any way, it will retreat. If they follow the creature, they'll come across a normal but dilapidated kitchen with a huge hole in its floor, the linoleum fringed with what looks like purplish black burns. Any investigators stupid enough to look down into the hole will see darkness which extends a mile or more down, and, as they watch, the opening of a huge, malevolent green eye, which turns on the watching investigators with a psychic wave of unspeakable malice (a cost of 1/1D10 Sanity points). If the investigator makes his SAN roll, before turning away, he'll see a number of hunched, multi-legged creatures, silhouetted against the green moonlike eye of the God, emerge from side tunnels, and begin to crawl up towards the kitchen.

There are about half a dozen houses like this, with a sink-hole leading down to the bowels of Cyäegha's non-space. After dark, these houses will be literally crawling with hundreds of waiting Nagaäe, stacked on the floor, hanging from walls and ceiling, ready for the calling of the Waiting Dark. Anyone who enters one of these houses from about two hours after dark has a very



A huge, malevolent green eye

good chance of being torn to pieces in the space of seconds.

If the investigators have got hold of Sienkiewicz' copy of *Book of the Damned*, they'll only have time to take in most of Sienkiewicz' annotations on the book, which gives a fair précis of what it's about (Sanity point loss as for skimming – 1D6), and will definitely spot the incantation "to confound and dismay the rites of those who gather at the Sleeping Place", since it's the most heavily annotated section,

marked by Sienkiewicz in handwriting which, by this point, is tortured, almost illegible.

The words "the way," "hope" and "stop IT rising" can be distinguished. Investigators should have a chance to learn the spell if they take the bait: if Sienkiewicz is alive and allied with the investigators, he will encourage them to do so and aid him in the incantation.

Tonight's the Night

If Ann and Ken are alive and well and the characters are in their home, Ann will look out of the window at about half past six, and comment in a matter-of-fact fashion, "they'm at it again."

Outside, making rather unsteady progress in the snow, about half of the people of Rosy Cross Park Road and its parallel streets begin to process towards the Sleeping Place, where they will make obeisance to the Waiting Dark. All of them are hooded, their features impossible to see.



Faces dreamy and calm

The high priest, hooded, is William Wright, landlord of The Gallows Oak, who holds before him in reverent hands a huge ceremonial knife. Directly behind him is a smaller figure – young Krystal Moran, completely unaffected by the cold, despite being naked beneath her robes. The investigators will, of course, be unable to see who these people are for now.

Outside, it's a full moon. The moonlight

makes everything look pale and sick.

The cultists are in a trance, so focused on their rite that they'll ignore anything short of actual physical disruption of the ritual, to which they'll respond with furious violence.

The Ceremony

Should the investigators pay attention to the ceremony, they'll come in at the point where Krystal Moran removes her robe, and lies down, naked, on the snow, in a trance.

The cultists will be arranged in a semi-circle, about three rows deep, so the rite should be clearly visible from the bottom end of the street (the open side of the circle).

If the cult murdered someone earlier today, Wright will produce from the cloth bag he holds, the head or heads of the murdered, and will proceed to slice it or them open (if more than one, he produces and slices open each in turn), spattering the immobile girl with blood and brains.

The cultists stop chanting, and Wright begins the liturgy. It goes like this:

Celebrant: Ph'nglui mglw'afhn Cthulhu R'Lyehhgand gah'ln fhtagn. Yr et Dho-Hna Ephrai Nmagl'n nagoghnaath, Iä! Shub-Niggura'pwai Feyadia gnl!

All: Ph'nglui mglw'afhn Cthulhu R'Lyehhgand gah'ln fhtagn. Yr et Dho-Hna Ephrai Nmagl'n nagoghnaath, Iä! Shub-Niggura'pwai Feyadia gnl!

Celebrant: Accept our offer, Great Old One, Ancient Slumberer in the caves of Darkness, Nameless One from Beyond the Wall of Sleep, Stalker between timeless stars and the spaces between the stars, Dreamer of the second night:

All: Rgth'll R'Liyuhai tec djivvai!

Celebrant: By the Names of Tyr Fharle and the Thing with Three Faces, accept our humble gift, and sleep, oh Thou Great One, slumber beneath us and let us be, protected by the five Vaeyens from Your Wrath, hear us, Waiting Dark, and let us be, by Your Black Light and the White Fire, by the White Dark which is blacker than night, and the Green Moon and the Winged Woman!

If at any point the players interrupt you, saying they've heard enough, without having heard the part about begging the God to sleep, well, that's too bad. If they hear the whole liturgy and the players haven't twigged what its purpose is, allow them an *Idea* roll.

If the locals are allowed to finish, the cultists all hold their positions, join in again with the first Xothic chant quoted above, and repeat it until midnight. Then the girl is helped up, the heads discarded, and everybody goes home. The Nagaäe retreat under the earth, not because of the cultists' chant, which is impotent, but because the conditions for the rebirth of the Waiting Dark have not been fulfilled.

Investigators who eschew incantations and who attempt to break up the ceremony do not risk awakening Cyäegha, but they do face about 120 people who are not themselves. They're all unarmed, but it's likely that this won't matter, as over a hundred working class Britons of all ages crowd over the investigators and tear them to pieces with their bare hands.

Raise Your Hands Up to the Sky...

If Dworkin, Sienkiewicz, or (God help us) the investigators manage to complete the Call Cyäegha spell, the Nagaäe swarm out of the buildings and fall upon the cultists.

A green mist clouds the moon. Then, a hole opens in the street, about 20 yards from the open side of the locals' circle. It opens upwards – stones and chunks of tarmac fall up into the sky, as, from the ground, tendrils of darkness reach up into the air. The snow turns a purplish black and melts away around the hole, spreading about



A curious malevolence

20 yards along the street; anyone standing on the black, melting snow, human or Nagaäe alike, instantly blackens and melts into nothing in the space of a second, from the outside in, leaving no trace. Investigators who see people die in this way lose 1/1D10+1 Sanity points.

A rift opens around the green, malevolent moon, which looks down on Rosy Cross with a new malevolence and Cyäegha stands revealed. Anyone still in the region loses 1D10/1D100 Sanity points.

As Cyäegha stands there, revealed, tentacles of solid, slimy blackness reach down and begin to mutilate, crush and tear apart the cultists and the feasting, exultant Nagaäe in a variety of ways which suggest intelligent, curious malice, like a bright little boy, pulling legs off insects. Some are brushed by tentacles and collapse as their insides explode; others are skewered into the ground, others combust, eaten by black fire.

If Sienkiewicz is here, the investigators witness him falling to his knees and screaming, his mind finally shattered, seconds before a tentacle reduces him to a smear on the tarmac. If Dworkin is present, he'll walk out into the street, unharmed in the midst of the carnage, and look up into the sky, uncomprehendingly. Then he'll scream as the substance of his body elongates, withers, and blackens, before being drawn upwards into the substance of Cyäegha.

Other tentacles rip the roofs and upper floors from houses and pick out the inhabitants one by one, for no purpose other than malice.

There are many ways to die: the teeth of the Nagaäe, the whim of Cyäegha. Even if they somehow manage to get away, they perish



No Time/Space Time Reasserts Itself

with the rest of the population of Europe, as Cyäegha grows and grows, before expanding to engulf the planet. After gracing much of the world with a night of horror, madness and death, the Great Old One expands into the stars, before reaching the court of Azathoth, at which point the order of No-Time/Space-Time reasserts itself, and Cyäegha is forced to return to Its grave.

The Why We Weren't

As Cyäegha returns to Its imprisonment, the state of things before It arose is restored. Time reverts to the way it was the moment before the street appeared. There are, however, certain imperfections in time-space. Things aren't exactly the same.

Although people killed during the existence of Drake Park Road are alive, things will be slightly wrong. Anyone beheaded by the cult will have a scar around their neck which they can't explain. Likewise, many of those who were killed by the Great Old One will have huge scars or other things they can explain. Those whose SAN was reduced to zero lose 1D20 Sanity points as they awaken, screaming, into the remade world. Others killed by the God before their minds were completely liquefied lose 1D10 Sanity points. Investigators who fail a Luck roll and then succeed in an Idea roll remember it all; other-

wise, the whole thing fades. They just know that there's something wrong. This time round, Drake Park Road does not appear.

It might be a good idea to keep copies of your players' character sheets, and give them back copies of their characters as they were when the street appeared, only with reduced SAN scores.

If Dworkin was the one who summoned Cyäegha, he is not returned. In the split-second between 11:59 and midnight, he simply blinks out of existence, to reappear in a few years' time, when next Drake Park Road appears, as the one permanent resident of the interstitial street. This new Dworkin will know exactly who he is, and will ensure that the Vaeyen will not be moved, and that the Waiting Dark will continue to wait until Its time to rise.

Many of those who died as a result of the Great Old One's wrath will be permanently insane. Sienkiewicz will have gone completely mad; depending on what works better for you, he could simply go catatonic, or he could go into a psychotic and suicidal frenzy, where he screams his lungs out in the middle of the street before blowing his brains out.

For intents and purposes, Dworkin is gone for now. There is no sign of him. He will never be found.

If Cyäegha Doesn't Rise

If Cyäegha doesn't rise, and the rite finishes, everyone leaves the street. Drake Park Road vanishes at midnight. Everyone forgets it was ever there, apart from those who realized that it shouldn't have been there, who remember its existence. Anyone left on the street, living or dead, when the street vanishes, disappears with the street, and will never be seen again. If Sienkiewicz dies on the street, the investigators will have to try to explain where his body is to skeptical superiors.

It's Rorschach and Prozac and Everything is Groovy

That's more or less it. Close the scenario by asking questions of the investigators: will Drake Park Road rise again? What to do with Sienkiewicz' book? How do they explain the strange scars, and Sienkiewicz' suicide? If Graham Dworkin vanished, where did he go? Sienkiewicz' copy of the *Book of the Damned* might answer some questions, but will raise many more.

Investigators who managed to avert the rising of Cyäegha gain 1D20 Sanity points. Otherwise, there are no real SAN gains for this scenario.

Appendix: Delta Green

It should be fairly easy for keepers using the *Delta Green* setting to slot this into their campaigns. Investigators who are agents of *Delta Green* could be maneuvered into a position where they are asked to take this case by superiors who are in the conspiracy; after their briefing from Sandra Bowers, a group of *Delta Green* agents will be given further information via a secure telephone call from their usual handler, or from some nameless cut-out or another.

Sienkiewicz was not a member of *Delta Green* – it was unanimously decided by those *Delta Green* members in the know that he was simply too erratic. However, it was clear he was on to something

(Peter Wynne, the senior CIA agent who destroyed the records of what happened in Hamburg was a now-deceased agent of *Delta Green*), and so, *Delta Green* has been watching Sienkiewicz closely for some time.

Alternatively, American agents not connected with *Delta Green* who survive and who behave in an appropriate manner may be approached by *Delta Green* as new recruits.

The British paranormal agency, PISCES, does not know why Sienkiewicz is here, nor do they know or care about the appearance of Drake Park Road (all but a very few people don't realize it isn't anything other than perfectly normal, and no one in London cares about what happens in the working class areas of provincial towns, anyway). However, there will likely be enough paranormal phenomena by the time the investigators are done to arouse PISCES' interest. Depending on how the investigators behave, they could be asked to join PISCES... or end up incarcerated on Magonia.

NPC Statistics

David Benjamin "Ben" Sienkiewicz Rogue CIA Agent, age 34

STR 14	CON 16	SIZ 16	INT 13	POW 12
DEX 17	APP 13	EDU 16	SAN 12	HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 08%, Dodge 69%, Drive Auto 55%, Fast Talk 45%, First Aid 40%, Hide 55%, Listen 65%, Locksmith 20%, Sneak 50%, Spot Hidden 88%, Tradecraft* 60%

*If not using the *Delta Green* setting, ignore this skill

Languages: English 85% (own), German 40%

Attacks: Fist 88%, 1D3+db

.38 Automatic Pistol 80%, 1D10

Spells: Call Cyäegha (although Sienkiewicz is unaware that this is what it is, and in fact believes that it does the opposite).

Mythos Books: *The Book of The Damned*

This comb-bound print-out is a translation of Karaj Heinz Vogel's original *Von Denen Verdammten*. Like the original, it's mostly about Cyäegha, the Vaeyen, the Nagaäe, the Sleeping Places and the Great Old Ones in general, although all of the spells have been garbled or lost in the translation, and some information has been mistranslated. This version does, however, contain the documents liberated from the Hamburg cult, including the genealogies, and a spell to "confound and dismay those who gather at the Sleeping Places", actually a version of the spell Call Cyäegha.

Sanity point loss 1D6/2D6; **average 10 weeks to study and comprehend, 1 week to skim; Cthulhu Mythos +7%.**

Spells: Call Cyäegha.

Nagaäe

See the *Keeper's Companion* 2, page 132-134 for Nagaäe statistics.

Graham Dworkin

Musician and Unwitting Child of Cyäegha, age 28

STR 10	CON 11	SIZ 12	INT 16	POW 18
DEX 16	APP 11	EDU 16	SAN 68	HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Skills: Credit Rating 35%, Persuade 45%, Play Violin 72%, Sneak 30%

Languages: English 80% (own)

Attacks: Fist 50%, 1D3+db

Spells: Call Cyäegha (although Dworkin doesn't have a clue that he knows it, until it's time to cast it)

Ken Humphries

Radio Technician, age 58

STR 09	CON 08	SIZ 14	INT 13	POW 10
DEX 12	APP 12	EDU 13	SAN 47	HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Skills: Fix Radios 65%, Keep Mouth Shut 98%

Languages: English 65% (own)

Attacks: None.

Ann Humphries

Paranoid Housewife, age 53

STR 07	CON 11	SIZ 13	INT 10	POW 11
DEX 13	APP 12	EDU 09	SAN 50	HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Skills: Cook 05%, Conceive Grudge 88%, Gossip 67%

Languages: English 45% (own)

Attacks: None.

William Wright

Intimidating Barman and Sometime High Priest, Age 44

STR 16	CON 16	SIZ 17	INT 09	POW 10
DEX 11	APP 09	EDU 09	SAN 50	HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Skills: Glare Menacingly 78%, Pull Pints 68%

Languages: English 45% (own)

Attacks: Fist 78%, 1D3+db

Knife 50%, 1D6+db

Six Average Inhabitants of Rosy Cross Park Road and Thereabouts

No.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sex	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age	36	50	55	32	64	67
STR	14	09	10	10	08	06
CON	14	09	10	13	07	07
SIZ	16	13	12	11	11	09
INT	10	11	12	10	13	10
POW	10	10	10	11	09	10
DEX	12	12	12	14	09	06
SAN	50	50	50	55	40	44
DB	+1D4	+0	+0	+0	+0	-1D4
HP	15	11	11	12	09	08

Skills: Go Silent When Strangers Appear 88%, Gossip 55%, Patronize Strangers 74%, Smoke Cigarette Aggressively 64%

Attacks: None, or Bare Hands 50%, 1D3+db



Cthulhu Now:

Disconnection

by Darren MacLennan



"...after all, you have ventured miles away from civilization – hospitals, telephones...POLICE..." – *Elijah C. Skuggs, in the movie "Freaked"*

The bane of any modern-day *Call of Cthulhu* game is the cellular phone. Much of the horror of *Call of Cthulhu* derives from the sense of isolation from the outside world. When you can access the outside world and all of its goodies with the press of a few buttons, that sense of isolation goes away. The cell phone makes it easy for team members to keep in contact with each other, no matter what their situation may be. It's even possible for one member to sit at home with his reference materials, consulting information in ancient tomes as the field members communicate their findings to him. A PC team can summon waves of reinforcements just by calling the police.

As a keeper, your options for fixing this problem are limited. You can play the "there's no signal" card, of course, but that's increasingly hard to do in an era where cellular companies are expanding their network coverage and stab each other to get your business. It feels like a cop-out, and it's annoying to players, who want to confront the Mythos with the latest technological tools. Taking them away makes the players feel as if they're only allowed to play in the modern day when it's convenient for the Keeper. However it's certainly appropriate to deny coverage in the middle of nowhere. Just check the networks' coverage on the Internet to find out where you can do it, and sometimes you will be surprised just how quickly the network signal dies away from civilization.

There's an easy fix to this problem. It involves taking the cell phone out of the "player aid" category and putting it into the "free license for the Keeper to screw with the players" category (not that you needed one before). The Mythos is seeping into the real world, and it's not limiting itself to ancient tomes and creatures lurking in isolated areas. It's creeping into the world like poison gas, and as time goes on, its effects will worsen.

So, with that in mind, here are a number of scenarios that you can spring on your investigators when they decide that it's time to call for outside help.

A note: it's important that these events happen only after the players have been anywhere near anything involving the Mythos – artifacts, monsters, lairs, that kind of thing. It's more difficult to justify the weirder effects if they stick to a relatively normal area, and it makes it more difficult for these events to have impact. These tactics might also be useful to disrupt the peaceful side of an investigator's life – getting the call when asleep in bed, or at a family picnic. The TV show *Millennium* made great use of this sort of thing.



Adjacent Channel Interference

Whoever is on the other end of the line can't hear what the caller is saying – they consistently interrupt whatever the caller's saying to complain about the background noise. As the call progresses, the recipient starts shouting so that they can be heard over the noise, and then hangs up when the noise becomes too loud. There's nothing present to which the investigator can attribute the noise. If they call back, the other person screams about how loud the noise is and hangs up. If the investigator calls back after that, there's no answer. Later on, they find out that their cell phone has been blocked from calling that number.

Finally, if the player calls back again, the number has been unblocked. They hear the recipient say "Hello? OWWWW! JESUS! STOP! I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY! STOP! PLEASE STOP!" and then scream. That's followed by the noise of what sounds like a big cup of coffee being dropped alongside the cell phone. Somebody in the background says something like "Oh. God! Tell me those aren't brains?" The phone's picked up, then there's a brief scream of pain from somebody else – and the line goes dead.

Or the call goes through just fine. The character makes contact with his outside buddy, and the outside buddy does what he needs to do. From that point onwards, the buddy is never seen without his cell phone to his ear, although he never talks – he just listens. If anybody asks to whom he's talking, he simply smiles and indicates that he's listening to somebody that he's happy to be hearing from. A few weeks later, he's found on the street, his brains leaking through the suppurating wound where his ear used to be. His cell phone is nearby. If anybody listens, all they hear is a series of quiet whistling noises that sound disturbingly like words. If they're going to make them out, though, they're going to have to listen for a while. Maybe the buddy left behind some notes in his house? They'll take some aspirin for the earache; but this call is important dammit.

Perhaps the recipient of the call keeps mishearing important words – instead of 14th and Green, it's 16th and Ford. Numbers are transcribed incorrectly, details are dropped, and the recipient seems to be listening to an entirely different conversation. The recipient eventually gets frustrated and hangs up. Or maybe the recipient on the other end keeps the conversation going after the caller has hung up – there's still somebody on the other end, after all, and they're describing this interesting theory about how the world is going to end...

Maybe the recipient starts accusing the caller of using nonsense words instead of real words, getting more irritated as the conversation progresses. And as the caller listens, those words start creeping into the recipient's speech as well – words like phn'glui and fhtagn and Yog-Sothoth. Neither side is actually speaking those words, but they're showing up in the conversation just the same...

Start screwing with the cell phones themselves. As the investigator pops open his cell phone, he realizes that the numeric keypad on his cell phone has been reversed. Where it once ran 1-9 from top to bottom, it now runs 9-1 from top to bottom. Was it always like that? When did it change?

The cell phone's ring tone changes slightly – some of the notes are no longer in tune. It starts going off at inappropriate times, with-

out somebody calling. And the ring tone's starting to sound familiar, like the cry of a whippoorwill...



Attention

During a routine investigation of a suspect's house, one of the investigators drops his cell phone. He doesn't realize that he's done so until he finds it ten minutes later. It's been cleanly disassembled into its component parts, which are neatly spaced along the floor like an exploded technical diagram. A closer examination reveals that some of the components haven't been disassembled, but cut cleanly apart. The edges are razor sharp. There's no evidence of what did this.

It doesn't stop there, of course. As time passes, more bits of technology disappear from the possession of the investigator, only to show up disassembled at a later date. At first, it's small stuff. A pen shows up neatly disassembled, the parts laid out along an invisible axis on a desk. Later, it's a pocket calculator, with the brass wires of the circuit boards laid with precision next to the boards themselves.

It starts to grow. The next week, it's a radio, a toaster, the radio in the investigator's car. Then, late at night, he finds a mouse disassembled in exactly the same way, its parts intermingled with the remains of the investigator's printer. The next night, it's a chipmunk, arranged next to the disassembled space heater. A successful INT×3 roll reveals that whatever is disassembling these items now understands the difference between flesh and metal.

Soon, larger objects are affected. The refrigerator disappears, only to show up in a field a few miles away. The neighbor's dog shows up there tomorrow. Then it's clothing, arranged in another empty space in the rough shape of a man, as if something is trying to understand the relationship between a man and his clothes.

The investigator can escape this before he finds himself disassembled and neatly arranged across the countryside. If he divests himself of every possession that he has, leaves his house and his car, and lives like that for a week or so, whatever is after him will lose track of him. Otherwise, he'll be dissected and arranged just like everything else in his life.

What's doing it? Maybe it's the result of a spell. Maybe it's an alien entity exploring a world whose borders are finally thin enough for it to enter. Maybe it's just the Mythos, the rules of an alien world applying themselves to a place that used to be rational.

Maybe an investigator's call proceeds as normal, but the recipient isn't the person that the caller wanted to dial. Instead, they sound vaguely confused, as if they just woke up and aren't sure where they are. As the conversation progresses, the level of confusion grows. The recipient says they are engulfed in a dark mist of some sort, but they can't report on where they are, or even what their name is. Their signal begins to break up, full sentences degenerating into sentence fragments and half-completed thoughts. Noises in the background grow louder and louder. With a successful INT×2 roll, the investigator realizes that he's talking to the personality of a person who died nearby, preserved on the electromagnetic spectrum and slowly breaking apart, like an iceberg in a dark sea.



Handoff

These are all things that make it easy for the Keeper to screw with the telephone in terms of the Mythos interfering with its original context. The cell phone isn't working as it should because whatever meaning humanity can generate is overwhelmed by the Mythos and its terrible purpose.

Let's look at it from another perspective. The investigators come face to face with a cult or manifestation of the Mythos, are discovered, and now need to get the hell away. They decide that the police would add some much needed firepower. The cell phone works just fine. The police show up.

What happens then shows some of the problems of being an investigator. John Tynes, in *d20 Call of Cthulhu*, compared the Mythos to the effects of plutonium. Making a cell phone call to an outside agency, no matter how benign, involves hacking off a big hunk of plutonium and throwing it at some innocent government agency without warning.

For instance, police officers have an immensely stressful job. You don't go to work at the local office hoping that you don't see a dead body or get into a gunfight that day. When you're a cop, those are real possibilities. As a result, the police have a larger load of stress

than, say, the local antiquarian, and may have lost some SAN just by coming face to face with the horror of what normal humans can do to each other.

Do they form mental scar tissue to cope? Sure. But that scar tissue is designed to deal with a world where evil takes the form of a dimwitted husband explaining why he had to bust his wife upside the head, rather than watching the alien form of a byakhee claw its way out of an abandoned barn. In purely mechanical terms, a police officer's SAN is probably five or six points below where it should be, just from a few good shocks sustained throughout his career. And that means that cops will be less prepared for the rigors of meeting with the Mythos – they're seeing the end result of the investigation, rather than the slow buildup that the investigators encountered.

In the short term, it means that they may snap a lot easier. In the long term, the results may be much more serious.

Let's say that you bring in a couple of cops to help you out. Sure, they're nice and friendly when they arrive on scene, right up until the monster shows up. They help you drive it off – but now they're in on the secret. They just found out that the human race is doomed, and that alien monsters exist that threaten the human race. (There's enough free-floating anxiety in the society to make the connection between the monsters and the destruction of the human race. You don't need a weatherman to see which way the wind blows.) Now, they think that you have some way of getting out of it, some way to save their lives and their families. They think that you know your way out of this situation, because you were involved with it before the cops showed up – some spell, or secret knowledge that'll protect them from a horrible fate. They're not going to believe that you don't know anything. You have to. You were involved.

You think that ordinary cops are a pain? Try dealing with men who are trying to save their families from a horrific fate and imagine how far they'll go. Now, put the full force of the law behind them, set them against the investigators whenever things get slow, and watch as the investigators find themselves trying to resolve a nearly insoluble problem. Do they kill the cops? Allow them to investigate something that will drive them mad?

For that matter, what happens when a cultist shows up on the cops' doorsteps with a plan to save the cops and their families? All that they have to do is to help the cultist out with a problem involving these annoying vigilantes who think that they can stop the rightful return of the Great Old Ones, and that's no big thing. After all, they are breaking the law.

There's also no guarantee that the cops are on the side of the investigators, either. They won't necessarily be on the side of the cultists, but they have decided that it's more useful to simply stay out of the weirdness altogether. The investigators place a panicked phone call, only to have the sheriff come on the line and regretfully explain that there's absolutely nothing that they can do to help them out of this situation. In fact, if the investigators manage to make it away, the local deputies on the outskirts of the event site have standing orders to shoot them down if they make it out. They have the same orders for the cultists, too, so it's not personal. They're just staying out of it.

Or consider the dispatchers. The investigators make a 911 call near the site of a cultist ritual. Two months later, they find the trailer where the cultists have made their lair and realize that they've been fighting the relatives of the dispatcher who took their initial call.

They've got the recording of the investigator's call on the most expensive audio equipment that they could afford, with the investigator's voice digitally softened and the weird chanting in the background amplified. And they've got it right in the middle of the room where they've been killing all of the neighborhood stray cats. And underneath the Cthulhu effigy – the one made out of cat bones and Sculpey – there's a picture of one of the investigators. They took it from the other room, the one where they have most of the investigator's life detailed out in photographs and Internet search result printouts. They have a different name for that investigator: The Opener of the Way. They're very happy that the investigator showed them this. Thank you for your call.



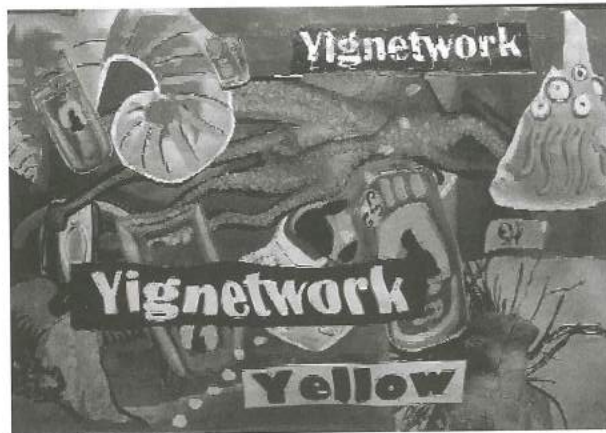
Another thing to keep in mind is the distracting nature of cell phones. The instinct with a cell phone is to filter out the rest of the world while you talk into it. People cover their other ear, hunch over, and focus on the conversation. A keeper is within his rights to have something if it makes its **Sneak roll**, sneak up on the investigator while he's busy explaining the situation to the other end of the line. (As a matter of fact, "something's touching your shoulder" is a great way to end a tense conversation. You get to decide what that something is.)

Think of how much personal information you have on your cell phone. At a minimum, you've probably got most of your friends programmed into your cell phone, along with your relatives and maybe the local pizza place. Imagine delivering all of that information gift-wrapped to the cultist who thinks that you're getting too nosy. It's possible to Google up a map to somebody's house by simply typing his full home phone number into the search box, so imagine how much trouble a wily cultist can cause with that information.

Now your cell phone is missing. Did you drop it here? Or did you drop it back when you were burgling that makeshift temple in the basement of the supermarket? Do the investigators want to break in again in order to find the cell phone that they might have dropped inside? Do they have enough time? The problem can be eliminated

by buying a disposable cell phone, but will the investigators think of that without your prompting?

The cell phone is a two-way device. The breaking-and-entering equipment list in the *d20 Call of Cthulhu* rules mentions a cell phone specifically set to vibrate. Let's say that the investigator forgets to switch his cell phone to vibrate before he goes in. It's a little too unfair to have the cell phone suddenly start playing its "Shaddap Ya Face" ringtone at the exact moment that it'll cause the investigators the most harm, but it's worth having it going off when the investigators are able to escape, or when it'll lead to an exciting plot development. Seek the plot twist, not the total party kill.



Termination Charges

The Keeper can use the cell phone as a way to ratchet up the fear on the other end of the line. Perhaps the investigators are communicating with each other while they explore a haunted house. One of them abruptly stops talking while he's right in the middle of the sentence – but the line is still open. A successful **Listen** roll reveals the noise of footsteps softly treading across a room, but nothing more. When the others find him again, he's simply standing in the middle of the room, his cell phone still at his ear, staring at the weird door on the far side of the room. It just finishes closing as the investigators step inside. The mute investigator won't be able to explain what happened until he's out of the asylum – in other words, indefinitely insane – but something happened. Do they want to open the door? Or is it opening again, even now?

Imagine that cultists capture on the investigator on the other end. They've got a direct link to the other investigators, another investigator at their mercy – it's not much of a stretch for them to start torturing the investigator and broadcasting his screams over the open line. It doesn't have to be particularly inventive, or to have a particular point; they're just letting the other investigators know what they're in for. Listening to the wife and daughter cultists repeatedly and methodically slamming a rock onto the hand of their buddy, with the same flat energy as they'd use ironing clothes, is going to be worth a few Sanity points to the average investigator. Dumb cultists might do this from a stationary location. Smart cultists will do it on the move to avoid signal triangulation.

As a matter of fact, it's also worth screwing with investigators in ways that relate to the above effects. Even if the investigator doesn't listen until his buddy's hand is mush, he's still going to be hearing that wet whap-whap-whap in his head for a long time afterwards. The phone rings later that night, around three o'clock. The investigator answers. It's just silence, until the investigator says anything. Then he hears his buddy pleading for the investigator to come get him, and in the background, growing louder – whap-whap-whap-whap-whap... It's not a dream. Maybe it stops abruptly. Maybe it resolves into the flat droning that the phone makes when you keep the receiver off the cradle long enough. Maybe it was just an auditory hallucination.

The next time that the investigator picks up a phone – any phone – he can hear that noise in the background. Maybe his cell phone rings, and he picks it up in time to hear one of the knuckles snap in his ear. (Nobody else heard it ring. As a matter of fact, if anybody else listens, it's silent.) Maybe even a broken cell phone makes the noise, distorted by the phone's shattered speaker. Maybe phones ring as the investigator walks past. Maybe the sound starts creeping in at the edges whenever the investigator isn't paying attention; in the rhythmic thump of an unbalanced washing machine, or the bouncing of a kid's ball.

How does the investigator get rid of it? One solution involves a rock, a flat space, two hours of bringing it down on the same hand that the original victim lost, and a visit to the hospital afterwards. Maybe that'll stop it. Maybe. Or did the investigator crush the wrong hand?

As an alternative, the investigator can find the body of the victim. After all, that ghost has been on his back ever since he hung up the phone. He's got to find the body first – caught in a fallen tree on the riverbank, two miles downstream of where it was dumped, accessible only by walking down the banks. Then he's got to bring the body back for a proper burial. When the corpse reaches up and gently strokes the ear of the investigator with its mangled hand, just before yanking him into the freezing waters of the river – well, the stats for the zombie in the back of the rule book aren't there just for fun.

It's entirely possible that your players will complain when you start using these methods to thwart their use of cell phones. That's entirely understandable, but they're missing the point. The removal of the cell phone as an investigator tool isn't to make them dependent on Stone Age technology. It's to reinforce the fact that the Mythos is creeping in everywhere, not confined to ancient ruins or creepy houses. If they're rendered helpless by the loss of their technology, then they were probably relying on it too much in the first place, assuming the comforts of modern life would save them from the worst horrors on earth.

If all of the above doesn't work, just tell them that their cell phone isn't working. After all that, they'll probably be glad.

(Thanks go to Chris DeMarais, Jason Sartin and rpg.net's forum members for encouragement and editing.)



Cthulhu Wild West:

The Golden Scorpion

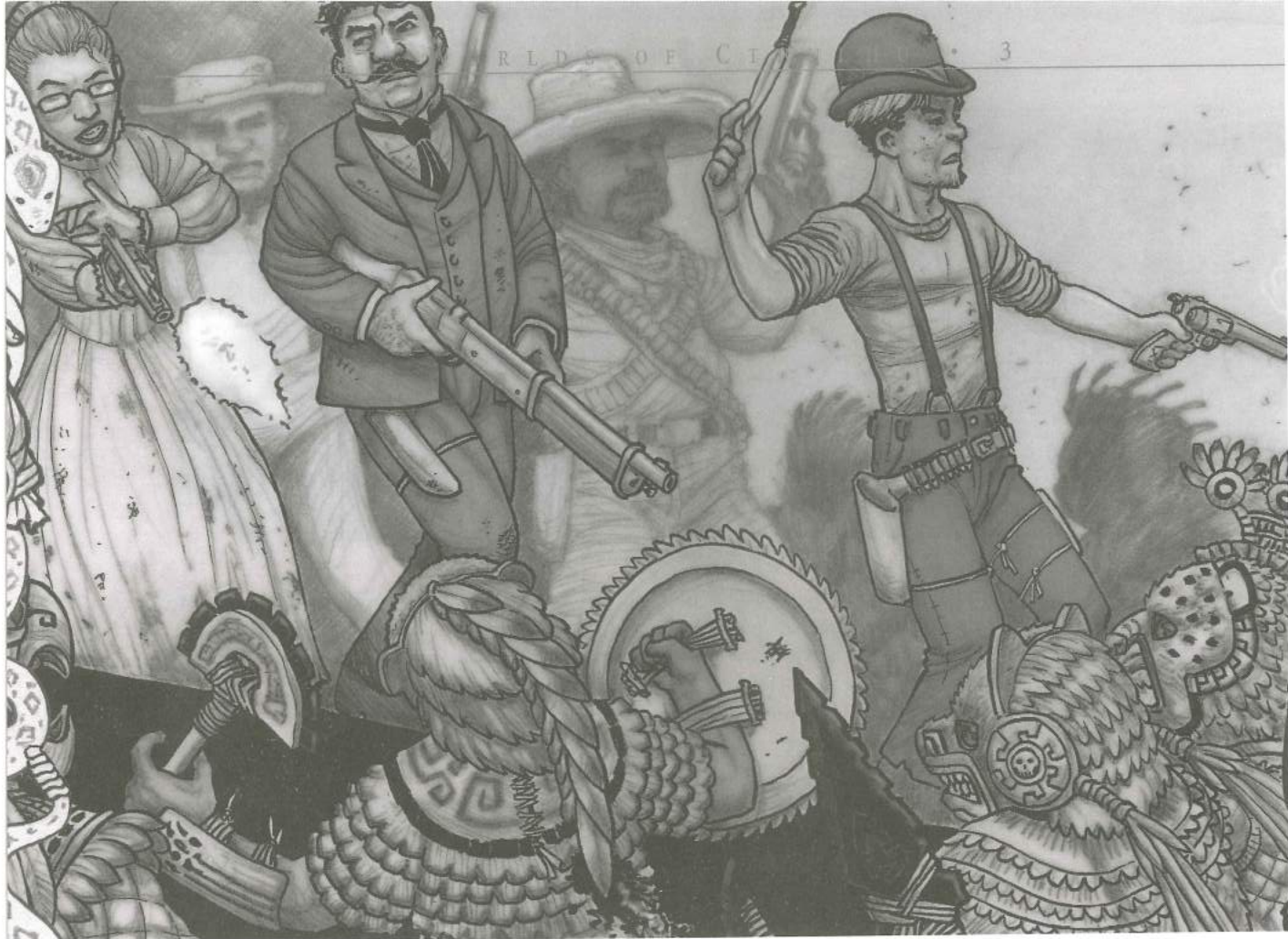
Heat. Sweltering heat. The sun beats down unrelentingly on red cliffs. Only a few prickly agaves cast slender shadows. Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda squats here, his strength gone. His swollen tongue fills his dry mouth like cotton. His breathing is feeble and rasping. His lips have cracked. A filthy bandage is wrapped around his arm. The Indian's horribly jagged obsidian sword had torn the length of it open; his body has already begun the process of decomposing. He reeks. The Don begins to realize that his blasted search for the legendary golden scorpion will cost him his life.

A little way off, Rodrigo Tiburón del Arroyo converses with the few other men left. The conquistadors long ago discarded their iron breastplates and high, morion helmets. They're not suitable for this heat, anyway. Finally, they nod and one approaches Don Felipe, his nicked-up sword scraping out of its scabbard. Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda draws back but can wrest nothing more than a gurgle from his parched throat. As the shadow of the soldier's arm falls over him, he closes his eyes. The coup de grâce... does not fall. "Your arm has to come off, Don Felipe," the conquistador mutters, almost more to himself. Don Felipe feels them grab him and lay him on his back. Someone jams a piece of wood between his teeth and ties off

his arm at the shoulder. When the sword cuts into his arm, the pain almost robs him of his senses. Bones crunch as the conquistador tries to free his twisted sword. The dented blade didn't sever the arm! Two more blows are necessary, but the Don doesn't feel them. Merciful unconsciousness takes him.

foreword

"The Golden Scorpion" is an adventure written primarily for the "Wild West" setting presented in *Worlds of Cthulhu* issue 2. In particular, it is a sequel to the introductory scenario, "The Hunt for Kid Richter" at the end of the "Wild West" article. "The Golden Scorpion" can, however, be played independently of "Kid Richter." More on that later. "The Golden Scorpion" is written, moreover, so that it can be run without significant changes in an 1890s or 1920s setting. Specifics on these modifications may be found in the box nearby.



by Frank Heller

translated by Bill Walsh

Introduction

The background to this adventure is played out in the short introductory scenario "The Hunt for Kid Richter," in *Worlds of Cthulhu* issue 2. At its opening, the characters may not have been acquainted. They were united in the effort to run Kid Richter to ground and make him pay for his crimes. The Kid and his gang bit the dust in a shoot-out at Old Ben's Claim. The characters not only came into possession of large quantities of stolen gold, but they also may have claimed some hefty bounties. And most important of all, they found the upper third of an old treasure map with Spanish inscriptions. They might have learned of the other two thirds' location(s) from the dying Kid, or the Keeper might have had other plans for getting the map fragments into their hands.

In "The Hunt for Kid Richter," it was recommended to play a few additional adventures, in the course of which the characters come into possession of the missing two pieces of the map. If the Keeper

"The Golden Scorpion" in the 1890s or 1920s

This adventure is largely not conceived as a Western in the narrow sense, so it lends itself easily to being converted into a Gaslight or Roaring Twenties setting.

In the 1890s, the characters, presumably Victorian Britons, have set out for New Mexico. Their motive is clear: they are in possession of the treasure map showing the trail to the legendary Golden Scorpion and wish to retrieve it. The adventure can take place without changes, other than that the characters will at first surely be exposed to severe mockery as "greenhorns." It might even be very refreshing to play distinguished Englishmen and -women in the "barbaric" wilderness of New Mexico.

In the 1920s, the scenario may also be run with almost no changes. New Mexico is perhaps not quite so backward. The first automobiles rumble down the still-bad roads. The encounter with the Russian grand duke must be changed (not least because Russia is no longer a monarchy at that point). The characters therefore meet someone else who's hunting the last free Apaches. With regard to the Apaches, no changes need to be made. Almost all of the Apaches were rounded up and brought into reservations in the 1880s (the most famous, Geronimo, and his people were brought to Florida, for example), but there remained a few Indians who continued to live wild and free in the old fashion. The last free Apaches were shot dead by a mob in 1935. In this adventure, therefore, the characters encounter a group of Apaches, still living undiscovered and unfettered.

The Treasure Map

The upper left corner reads: "I am Rodrigo Álvarez Tiburón del Arroyo, conquistador in the name of His Majesty, King Phillip III of Spain, who declares the following: on the twenty-third of June in the year of Our Lord 1601, after overcoming many terrible tribulations and dangers, I, along with thirty-two valiant companions, discovered the secret valley where the brave Indians have hidden their most important goods. This map records the way to the immense treasures, of which the most impressive is the so-called scorpion of gold. It is a pagan idol of gold, decorated with the most precious stones."

The individual entries on the map read, from top to bottom, "Spring of the Blessed Virgin Mary," "Dead Man's Valley," "Pueblo of Ghosts," "Don Felipe's Grave," "Dry Creek," "Eagle Rock," "Ravine of Echoes," "Temple of the Golden Scorpion."

The map is printed in the appendix as Scorpion Handout 1. A color version of the map is downloadable from our website at www.worldsofctulhu.com.

doesn't care to do this, then he can proceed from the premise that Kid Richter and two members of his gang each had a piece of the map on them when the characters killed them, so that the characters immediately come into possession of the complete map. If the Keeper doesn't have "The Hunt for Kid Richter" available, or doesn't care to play it, the characters can come across the map in a different fashion. The same is true for a keeper running a game in the 1890s or 1920s. Perhaps the pieces are found in the possession of a secretive cult or hidden in the grave of a Spanish nobleman that they come across in an investigation.

The starting point of this adventure is unambiguous in any case: the characters possess all three pieces of the treasure map. They now know the way to the Temple of the Golden Scorpion which is supposed to contain additional treasures beyond its eponym. The starting point is obviously Ojo de la Santísima Virgen María, a town with the lyrical name "Spring of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The characters should be able to locate a town of that name in southern New Mexico. If the Keeper cares to, he can make the search for the town an obstacle; particularly in the 1890s or 1920s, extensive library researches may be necessary. In the Wild West, in any case, the characters may be allowed to know of the town, because "The Hunt for Kid Richter" took place right in the same area. The Kid wasn't holed up there entirely by chance...

In the 1890s and the 1920s, the characters will surely undertake some **Library Use** rolls before they betake themselves to the starting point of their treasure hunt. Other than its location, there's very little information about Ojo. Apparently the town was founded circa

1600 by the Spanish. There is a spring there that yields fresh water even during times of drought and was therefore attractive as a location for a settlement. Its "colonization" began with a fountain and a chapel. Since then a small town has grown up around them. It is left to the Keeper's discretion whether the characters may learn anything about the Golden Scorpion. This strange artifact's secrets will be revealed later in the adventure. Ideally, in order to surprise the players and to not rob them of suspense early on, nothing more can be learned than it's an objet de culte, a legendary gold statue at least a foot high, adorned with precious stones. The Spanish first heard of the treasures supposedly hidden in the mountains in the northern Aztec Empire only some 80 years after the Empire was brought down. In the Spring of 1601, the Spanish nobleman Rodrigo Álvarez Tiburón del Arroyo set out with 32 men to find the temple complex lost in the haze of legend. It is said that years later, he returned to Spain without his men or any riches. The sources are



The Golden Scorpion as Campaign Backstory

The story of the Golden Scorpion is best playable as a single adventure, but it is suitable as the background to a campaign. The saga around the idol presents a closed story, a frame for an entire set of adventures, from beginning to end.

The characters become acquainted in "The Hunt for Kid Richter," finding the first part of the treasure map. Thereafter, they stay together in order to find the other pieces of the map, which quest may expand as far as the Keeper likes.

Once they have the three pieces of the map together, they will get themselves to Ojo, and the events of this adventure follow. After the characters have the Golden Scorpion in hand, they all have only a single year to live. During this year, the Keeper can intersperse his own adventures which could have something to do with the strange properties and side effects of the Scorpion (see appendix). After the year is up, the campaign finale takes place (presented here as Part Two of this adventure) which, as the author wrote it, ends with the demise of all the characters.

silent as to whether he actually found the temple complex and the Golden Scorpion as well as to what happened to his men.

The Characters

At the beginning of the adventure, the characters arrive in the tiny town of Ojo de la Santísima Virgen María in southern New Mexico, very near the Mexican border. They've brought the three pieces of the map (or at least a copy) with them and want to set out on their search for the Temple of the Golden Scorpion. This treasure hunt also offers a convincing motive for a group of disparate characters (for example, an Indian scout, a bounty hunter, and a prostitute) to stay together, even if one could assume they wouldn't do so under ordinary circumstances. Maybe each one of them has a single piece of the map and only together will they have a chance at finding the treasure. In such a case, the Keeper may enjoy playing out the characters' mutual mistrust and their attempts to outsmart each other.

It is very advantageous in this adventure to have at least one character who can speak and read Spanish.

The Golden Scorpion

It comes from a time when the Earth was largely overgrown by steaming jungles; from a time when scaly beings in various shapes ruled our planet; from a time when the Serpent People were the most intelligent life form under the Sun. They lived in gorgeous, unimaginable cities and enjoyed barely conceivable wealth and amenities. Man was nothing more than a furred monkey in a tree. Some time later he would develop enough that the Serpent People would use him as a slave. And some day in the far, far future, man would celebrate his apparent victory in seizing reign over the world... But none of this was foreseeable at the height of the Serpent People's power. They were adept in all varieties of occult secrets and their sorcerers knew rituals that have long vanished into oblivion beneath the dust of time. Their technical skill, mated with their magical skill, enabled them to create a number of bizarre and incomprehensible magical objects which still exist out of the sight of present-day humans. They created artifacts to use as weapons but also objects like the Golden Scorpion which enabled them to travel through time and space. The Scorpion's abilities are described in detail in the appendix.

Traditionally, the Serpent People honored Yig as their god. They built great temple complexes to him, frequently out of a strange, greasy blackish-green stone. These magical artifacts partially endowed the Serpent People with powers normally associated with gods. Nyarlathotep, whose goal since the dawn of ages has been to spread suffering and insanity (amusing himself in the process), found such powerful artifacts abhorrent, unless they were in the hands of his own followers. He kept sending Hunting Horrors to seize the Serpent People's magical contrivances. At first, the Serpent People could do nothing to stop him. What can even the most powerful sorcerer do to oppose the works of an alien god-like being?

In barely decipherable chronicles scattered here and there in collapsed catacombs, underneath crumbling ruins deep in the jungles of South and Central America, it is recorded in the long-forgotten language of the Serpent People that it was Yig himself who revealed the secret to protection from the influence of Nyarlathotep. All that was necessary to inscribe certain symbols into structures, preventing Nyarlathotep from seeing into the buildings and discovering where the artifacts that interested him were hidden.

In fact, the Serpent Peoples' major buildings were always decorated with a continuous series of reliefs running around their bases, always repeating a particular graphic element, a triskelion that seems to turn like a wheel. The Hyperborean wizard Eibon later rediscovered this symbol for humanity, and it is named after him. The abominable Necronomicon calls it the "Sign of Eibon". In combination with a particular spell of the Serpent People, the sign bars Nyarlathotep from seeing into a building. Of course, the spell for the necessary enchantment ritual has long been

forgotten. The sign alone has no particular protective effect. Today, only the spell called "Eibon's Wheel of Mist" is known; it uses the power of the Sign of Eibon in connection with a different, less effective magical ritual.

The Hunting Horrors no longer threatened the Serpent People, but their kingdom soon came to an end at the hands of the apes who had climbed down from the trees, had learned to walk upright, and had relatively

quickly built their own kingdoms – Lemuria, Mu, Hyperborea, and the legendary Atlantis. The Serpent People had passed the zenith of their powers, and from then on the mammals set out on their victorious conquest of the earth, or rather their apparent conquest, because as the few immortal sorcerers of the Serpent People who still abide in the humid ruins know, when the stars are right, the Great Old Ones shall return. And man will learn with horror what a nullity he truly is.

The Serpent People sent their most important magical treasures to the most remote locations when they saw the end of their rule approaching. One of these was the Golden Scorpion. The artifact was brought into a temple in an inaccessible mountainous region, more specifically, the mountains of today's northern Mexico. The Serpent People disappeared, the temple crumbled, but the Signs of Eibon lost none of their power. So the Golden Scorpion still slumbers on in the depths of its temple, hidden from Nyarlathotep's gaze.

Humans spread like cockroaches, and soon there was almost no place left on earth that hadn't passed beneath their feet. And so it transpired around the year 1300 A.D. that the forebears of the Aztecs, migrating from the north, happened accidentally upon the hidden valley and with it the ancient temple of the Serpent People. On its ruins, they built their own temple dedicated to their chief, who was later deified as Huitzilopochtli. He became the chief god of México – Tenochtitlan, the Aztecs' capital, founded sometime later when they moved south. But in this protected valley, a small colony always remained. In the old ruins, the Aztecs found subterranean passages and rooms that they converted to their own purposes. They found one hall of deadly traps which they could never overcome. They calculated where they believed the end of tunnel must lie and



dug a narrow tunnel down from behind. In this fashion, they found a treasure chamber in which, among many other precious items, they found a golden scorpion. Of course they couldn't know that what they'd found was an unbelievably valuable, non-magical copy of a greater original, and that this was a false treasure chamber designed to divert robbers from the real treasure, which lay further in the depths of the Serpent People's complex. The real Scorpion can only be found by discovering a secret passage and figuring out how the complicated access mechanism works. The Aztecs dismissed the mechanism as some sort of game or gimmick, never recognizing that it was a puzzle to be solved.

They left the riches in the false treasure chamber, since they were well-protected by the corridor of traps. They recorded their find in one of their books, a codex. The authentic Golden Scorpion still remains where it has lain for millennia, deep in the catacombs under the temple.



The Aztecs' rule proved short. In 1519 A.D., white, bearded men appeared on the coast in floating houses of wood. Their leader was called Cortés, and many Aztecs believed that he was the god Quetzalcoatl returned, since he was always described as white and bearded, and his return was prophesied for the exact year 1519. Only much too late did the Aztecs' priest-emperor recognize the true nature of the threat, and their empire lay in ruins within the year. The Spaniards snatched up all the treasure they could get their hands on. But the Golden Scorpion remained hidden.

Around the year 1600, the Spanish nobleman Rodrigo Álvarez Tiburón del Arroyo was approached by a tall, very dark-skinned man of almost Egyptian appearance, dressed in the traditional costume



Tiburón del Arroyo and his Expedition

of the Aztecs. Smiling secretly, the man handed him an Aztec codex. It appeared to be a pagan text that had escaped the thorough book-burnings of the

Inquisition. The Aztecs had no alphabet, but rather used pictograms which leant themselves to relatively easy interpretation, as the pictograms usually denoted exactly what was depicted. This picture-writing would almost certainly have evolved as Egyptian hieroglyphs did, from pictograms to increasingly abstract symbols standing for particular sounds.

Whatever the difficulties, Rodrigo Álvarez Tiburón del Arroyo deciphered the codex. It told the story of the Aztecs' discovery of the hidden temple and their building a new temple atop it. Most importantly, incomprehensible amounts of treasure were depicted on every page. Tiburón del Arroyo inquired about the drawings, and finally by interrogating some stubborn Indians, he succeeded in learning where the hidden valley lay. He set out with his friend Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda, a priest named Don Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada, and 30 more men, all conquistadors, to retrieve the treasures described in the book. His particular goal was the Golden Scorpion, drawn in the codex. After many tribulations, he discovered the remote, difficult-to-reach valley on June 23, 1601. And found Aztecs living as they had for hundreds of years, with no knowledge of what had happened to the empire in the south. The Spanish attacked the surprised Indians, who defended themselves doggedly but had to surrender in the end. Only 20 Spaniards survived, six of them severely wounded. Among them was Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda, whose arm had been torn open by a macuahuitl, a two-handed, paddle-shaped sword-club edged with razor-sharp obsidian blades. More than 80 Aztec corpses lay shot or lacerated, strewn across the valley. The Spaniards then descended into the temple to look for the expected treasures. But many of the gold-mad conquistadors died in the Serpent People's traps, deep in the temple. They found neither the tunnel dug by the Aztecs to the false treasure chamber, nor the secret door to the passage to the real Golden Scorpion, which the Aztecs had never opened. Tiburón del Arroyo must have seen that he had come so far, only to fail. Too many of his men had died in the traps. Not far from his goal – the false treasure chamber – he and his remaining men turned around and headed back for the daylight.

When the Aztecs saw only 12 Spaniards emerge, their courage returned and they attacked. Their firearms and steel armor didn't save many of the Europeans, who were put to flight. Two of them were struck down, two were captured by the Aztecs, and only Tiburón del Arroyo, the severely wounded Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda, the priest, and five soldiers made it out of the valley.



They headed north, because they knew that they'd never make it back through the mountains to the south. Don Felipe's condition

worsened steadily. His infected and suppurating arm had to be amputated as described in the opening scene. He nonetheless died, weakened from blood loss, not long after. His comrades buried him, but they were plagued by thirst, having no water. In the summer heat on the barren mountains, they could find nothing to drink. In a valley that Tiburón del Arroyo later dubbed "Dead Man's Valley," the last of the soldiers died in a hell of heat produced by the hot sun's reflection off the stone walls of the valley. The creek that had flowed through the valley had just dried up for the summer. Only Tiburón del Arroyo and the priest, Don Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada, reached the far end of the valley, finding a fresh, bubbling spring.

They prayed in thanks to the Mother of God and named the spring for her, whom they claimed to have seen there. The priest, Don Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada, later returned to the spot to erect a chapel and build a fountain for the spring. He named the spot "Ojo de la Santísima Virgen María," and a little town soon grew up around it. Tiburón del Arroyo, on the other hand, drew up a map showing the way to the hidden valley, for he planned to return with more men and try again. His drastically worsening health, however, forced him to return to Spain. He tore the map in three pieces, entrusting one to each of his three sons on his death bed. It is this same map that the characters now hold in their hands. And it is now incumbent upon them to force the hidden temple to reveal its secrets – and discover the real Golden Scorpion.

Part 1: On the Trail of the Golden Scorpion Ojo de la Santísima Virgen María

In the following, it's assumed that the adventure takes place during a hot summer some time in the 1870s (or 1890s, or 1920s). The brutal heat, the dust, and the sweat are important atmospheric elements for this adventure. Of course, the Keeper is free to move the adventure into another time of year, keeping in mind the necessity of altering the weather conditions stated in the text.



Ojo de la Santísima Virgen María, usually called "Ojo" ("spring") for short, is a small town with perhaps 250 inhabitants.

Soundtrack

For adventures with a Western flair, there's really only one composer to consider: Ennio Morricone. For a Mexican flair, evoking heat, dust, and cactuses, the soundtracks to *Il Mercenario* (*A Professional Gun or The Mercenary*) and *Two Mules for Sister Sarah* (*Gli Avvoltoi hanno Fame*) are particularly excellent. They're not always easy to find, but can generally be found on the Internet, sometimes at Amazon.com, sometimes at specialty retailers like www.moviegrooves.com and www.moviemusic.com.

It has a clear Spanish influence, like many towns in the mountains of southern New Mexico. The Mexican border lies only a few miles south of the town, running dead straight from east to west. The characters will cross the border in the course of the adventure, though presumably without noticing it. Ojo is composed of a main street and a few cross streets. The houses are all white-washed adobe buildings, built of sun-baked mud bricks. In the middle of town, the steeple of the obviously old town church rises above the flat roofs of the adobe houses. This is the very chapel that Father Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada had built next to the life-saving spring in 1602-3. The villagers, mostly of Mexican and Indian descent, make their living from livestock and a little farming.

There is a cantina in the town, which simply bears the name "Cantina." They serve whiskey, beer, tequila, chili, and tortillas. A few grimy rooms are available for rent. Presumably the characters will set up camp here before traveling further.

The characters can stock up on equipment at the local general store. In any case, they should take enough water – which any local will tell them, if they ask about essential provisions. Anyone who doesn't know their way through the mountains and doesn't have enough water is lost.

There are two things that the characters should not overlook:

- ♦ The opportunity to learn about the route they plan to take
- ♦ The old church

Visiting the church will likely occur to them, given that it appears on the treasure map. In fact, the church looks exactly like the one on the map. Nothing has changed here. Moreover, anyone planning to head out into unknown territory is always well-advised to get information and suggestions from the local inhabitants.

Rumors and Information

Because of considerations of space, rumors and information are simply listed here. The Keeper should use the characters' time in Ojo to set the stage for the adventure to come. He can attune the players to the atmosphere: the omnipresent dust swirling around, the reddish stone of the mountain, the barrenness of the surrounding landscape (there's only green down there in the valley, where the livestock is pastured), and the constant, nerve-wracking chirping of crickets. The Mexican siesta-mentality, the almost tedious coziness of the life here. Rough, unshaven Mexicans with prominent mustaches and massive sombreros also contribute to the cantina's atmosphere. Greenhorns amongst the characters (particularly in a Gaslight campaign) are regarded with appropriate looks and

commentary. Thin young boys drive scrawny donkeys with sticks through the street between the blinding white, square houses, or throw rocks at a stray dog. In the heat of midday, no one leaves the shadows. The characters can learn the following information by role-playing encounters with the inhabitants of Ojo.



1. Dangers Along the Way

If the characters ask about dangers on the route south, they'll be enthusiastically informed about them. The only way through the mountains south of Ojo is through Dead Man's Valley ("Valle del

muerto"). All the other routes are far too dangerous. The valley is so called because it can become extremely hot there. Many old graves there testify that any number of travelers have succumbed to the heat.

Above all, everyone warns the characters about the Apaches. Yes, this is Apache country. And the savage warriors will not hesitate to attack travelers without warning, kill them, and loot their bodies. You can't negotiate with them, the characters are told repeatedly. The Apaches are said to be nothing more than cruel bandits, thieves, and murderers, without the slightest scruple. Particularly vicious is a tall Apache who wears a blood-red bandanna and is called Red Knife. The only thing, the characters are told, that dissuades the Apaches is traveling in large, armed groups, because the Apaches are said to be cowardly, only attacking weak opponents. Also, if attacked, they should fight as fiercely as possible; sometimes the Apaches retreat. Fleeing is generally out of the question, as the Apaches tend to attack from ambushes, cutting off all avenues of retreat. It is also said that occasionally you can buy your life from the Apaches, but they will leave you with not much more than your underwear.

The Apaches: fiction and reality

The spread of European settlers moving westwards at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century encroached on Apache lands. The Apache were traditionally a nomadic people who subsisted on the buffalo but also farmed to small degree. Accustomed to their desert environment, the Apache were also known as fierce warriors who savagely protected their territory. Pushed away from the buffalo's grazing lands, the Apache were forced to raid for food. With the white man's arrival, there were suddenly many wonderful things that the Apaches did not have and very much wanted: rifles, horses, livestock, fancy clothing, and much more. The Apaches regularly raided farms and robbed stagecoaches on both sides of the border. If the Mexican army chased them after a raid in Mexico, they would simply cross back into the U.S. Similarly, if the U.S. Army was on their tail, they'd just cross the border into Mexico. The settlers' trails to California were soon moved north because of the constant Indian attacks. The Apaches ranged far outside of their mountain homes on their raids, sometimes hundreds of miles, ideally striking in lightning raids and disappearing without a trace. They knew their native mountains on both sides of the border like no one else. It was almost impossible to follow them and search them out among the cliffs. The U.S. Army learned this lesson painfully, only achieving small successes against the warlike tribe by hiring Apaches as scouts. They learned that to catch an Apache, you needed an Apache. Serious successes were only achieved after treaties were made with Mexico which allowed each nation's troops to pursue fleeing Apaches onto the other's territory. By 1868 most Apache tribes were confined to reservations, one tribe continued resistance until 1872. After that only isolated groups of Apache raiders continued. Only when the wildest, most feared, and probably cruelest Apache chieftain, Geronimo, was captured and relocated to a reservation in Florida, in 1886, did the age of Apache attacks come to an end. A Cthulhu Wild West adventure, probably playing out in the 1870s, takes place right in the middle of the period of the most brutal attacks. In the 1890s or 1920s, the attacks gradually fell to virtually nothing. Nevertheless, it is at least possible to run across a group of Apaches still living in the wild that had not been moved to a reservation, as happens in this adventure. As said, the mountains were extremely inaccessible, making it impossible to ferret out all the Apaches' hideouts. Geronimo was never captured, but turned himself in. If the Apaches hadn't consented to relocation, it would have probably taken decades to find them all in the mountains.



Geronimo, the most famous Apache warrior, and his people

2. The Pueblo of Ghosts

If the characters ask about the "Pueblo of Ghosts" drawn on the map, they'll learn that this does in fact still exist. It sits at the southern exit of Dead Man's Valley and guards the passage to the south. It's supposed to be haunted. The Indians who lived there are said to have all suddenly disappeared one day, and no one knows what happened to them. They must be dead, because people keep seeing translucent shapes of Indians accusingly gesticulating at them. The inhabitants of Ojo know that it's unlucky to even stare at the pueblo too long, in case it wakes the ghosts and summons them up. A traveler should bow his head, make the sign of the cross, and pray as he rides along the pueblo.

The route to the south is almost never used, by the way. Even though it's the shortest route to Mexico, it's also one of the most rugged. But the characters have no other choice, if they want to find the Temple of the Golden Scorpion.

3. Eagle Rock

No one in Ojo knows of an Eagle Rock. If the Keeper wants, a drunken fat guy who bums shot after shot of tequila will claim to know such a rock. Of course, it proves not to be the one they're looking for.

4. The ancient temple

No one knows anything about it. Except for the Pueblo of Ghosts and some other pueblos high up in the mountains, there aren't any known Indian structures in the area.

5. Recent events

If the characters ask in general after recent events in town, they'll hear lots of trivial village gossip and gruesomely embellished reports of Apache raids. Eventually, though, someone will mention the very strange gringo who came through town a few days ago. He was a bearded giant with snow-white hair. He and two servants camped on the edge of town, loading and unloading a covered wagon. He asked extensively about Apaches in the cantina and wanted to know where he could find them. When pressed, he said he was a Russian prince. He claimed he was in the American West for the first time and wanted to show his friends back home an Indian scalp as a special trophy. The townspeople considered him loco, because everyone knows that you can't hunt an Apache. But they don't really care. The Russian is already dead, in their opinion. If asked, they will mention that he took the same route that the characters are planning to use, through Dead Man's Valley. If the Keeper so desires, he can arouse fears in the players that the Russian could really be on the trail of the Golden Scorpion, by having a villager mention that the Russian had asked about Indian temple ruins. In any case, this isn't true. The characters will meet the Russian prince soon enough.



The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Spring

The chapel looks its age. In comparison to the surrounding buildings, it looks powerful and is, in addition, the only stone structure in the town. Its interior is a comfortably cool refuge from the heat outside. The church is richly decorated with frescos. The high ceiling is bedecked by a very artfully portrayed firmament. Padre Pedro, the Catholic priest, is an old man with a bald pate and jet-black eyebrows that have almost grown over his gray eyes. His gaze seems to penetrate one's soul. Each character who meets him has the feeling that the padre knows his most intimate secrets.

If asked, the padre, whose posture is slightly bent, can report that the church was built in the years 1602-3. Rodrigo Álvarez Tiburón del Arroyo financed its construction which was directed by a priest named Don Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada, who became the church's first pastor. The reason was that the two were half dead of thirst and knew the end was nigh when they reached this area, already delirious. Then a woman, shining white, of unearthly beauty appeared to them, indicating a stone next to her. Suddenly, clear spring water bubbled out of the rock. The woman in white then disappeared. This vision seems to have been an apparition of the Virgin



Mary, after whom they named the spring, upon which they built a fountain. True or not, both men were saved.

Padre Pedro can also report, if it comes up, that in Dead Man's Valley, you can find the final resting places of more Spaniards who didn't make it to the spring. The graves can still be seen today; it is a traditional duty of the parish priest to care for them, and the ground has been sanctified. The question of what the Spaniards were doing in this area in the first place, Padre Pedro cannot answer. Besides, the characters likely already know. If the characters ask if the two survivors had any treasures with them, Padre Pedro shrugs. He knows nothing about it, and the church's chronicle is also silent on the topic.

The church's frescos are principally concerned with the Virgin Mary and her miraculous appearance is also depicted. She is pointing to a stone out of which water flows. Two men kneel before the Virgin and pray, while the Blessed Mother indicates the spring that's flowing next to her.

The spring is right next to the church. It is now surrounded by a walled spring house. The cool water is clear and sweet. It comes directly out of the mountains.

Departure

The route takes the characters southwest into the mountains. They follow a creek bed, dry in the summer heat. It is the same arroyo that dried out in 1601, along which Tiburón del Arroyo and Don Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada's five companions died of thirst.

Dead Man's Valley (Valle del Muerto)

This canyon, enclosed by blank stone, is dominated by an unusual heat. Not only is the sun hot, but the stone walls reflect the extreme heat back, escalating it. The stream bed on the canyon floor has been dried out for a very long time. It's almost unbearable, given that the air barely moves. Sweat flows off travelers in streams, soaking their clothes until it evaporates. Without a head covering, sun stroke comes quickly.



A small area on the edge of the canyon is fenced off with an iron gate. In this tiny cemetery are the graves of the five conquistadors who didn't make it to the spring. They collapsed here in the blistering canyon and were buried some time later. If the characters open the graves, they find the Spaniards' mummified corpses (0/1D2 Sanity points to view). The dry heat has dried out the corpses, preventing decay. Parchment-like drawn lips expose grin-

ning teeth; their arms are thin, crooked, and covered by leathery skin. They wear only the remains of light clothing. Apparently all items of value were removed from the dead men before their interment. The characters will find no clues to help them on their search.

The Pueblo of Ghosts (Pueblo de los fantasmas)

Dead Man's Valley leads to a pass to the other side of the mountain range. Up here a refreshing wind blows, and because of the altitude, it's significantly cooler. To the right, massive peaks loom and further up, like an eagle's nest in the cliff wall, square buildings can be recognized: an Indian pueblo! It is the Pueblo of Ghosts indicated on the characters' map. The conquistadors made camp here during their flight and experienced its eerie character. The characters can follow suit, or they can leave the ruins alone and climb up to the plateau. In any case, the mountain crossing has already taken so much time, that darkness is descending and the characters will not be able to get much further today.



The climb up to the pueblo is arduous and not without danger. A number of steep slopes above sharp stones must be scaled (four **Climb** rolls, failure requiring a **Jump** roll to avoid 1D2 HP damage, which can be cuts, bruises, or sprains). Arriving above, the characters stand at the foot of high walls of light-colored stone. Up close, they look much more impressive than from down below. Ruin is the prominent impression. It is obvious that no one has lived here for a very long time. With another **Climb** roll (failure requires a **Jump** roll to avoid 1D3 HP damage), they can scale the walls and reach the interior. The small square houses built next to and on top of each other are all empty. If anyone digs around, they find some old pot shards, but nothing more. Only the kiva, the ritual chamber dug into the plateau floor and accessible by a hole in its roof, is interesting. The original ladder is long gone, so the characters will have to lower themselves down from the pueblo's courtyard on a rope, for example. A good lamp is nice to have, because with one the adventurers can find the astonishingly well-executed charcoal drawings Indians left on the wall. Along with all sorts of spiral designs and stylized figures is a unique image that will have meaning for the characters and which can be discovered with a **Spot Hidden** roll. Ranks of warriors with shields and spears are advancing. In the background, a step pyramid can be recognized. The warriors appear to wear some sort of headdress – they're apparently not whites. With a **History** roll or a halved **Know** roll, the characters know that North Ameri-

can Indian tribes did not conduct war with infantry coordinated in such a fashion. The step pyramid, in addition, is an important clue to the identity of the army: they are apparently warriors from a Mesoamerican people. It's impossible to tell whether they're supposed to be Chichimecs, Huastecans, Totonacs, Tlaxcalans, or even Aztecs. There's also no way to date the drawings. Such tests only became available and reliable after the 1920s.

The pueblo bears its name for a reason: if the characters stay overnight, they will sleep badly. They will be tormented by nightmares in which the horrible screams of Indian men, women, and children ring in their ears. Muscular men with repulsive, inhuman faces drag the Indians forward and sacrifice them with stone knives on the altar of a blood-thirsty idol. Ecstatic priests raise their still-beating hearts triumphantly up to the sun which beats down mercilessly, seemingly robbing the dreamer of all his strength. Each dreamer – all the characters have the same dream – loses 0/1D3 Sanity points and wakes up bathed in sweat, only to find himself in the middle of a bloody battle again. The sun has not yet crept over the horizon, so only a gray stripe of sky illuminates the scene that plays out around the characters. Half-translucent Indians, apparently the former occupants of the pueblo, are driven together by strange beings that have scary, evilly deformed faces atop muscular human bodies. Some sort of horns rise up out of their heads, but the characters have a hard time making them out because of the figures' insubstantiality and haziness. With a difficult (halved) **Spot Hidden** roll, the characters can recognize that the deformed faces are in reality grotesque masks. The event plays out without sounds, but the defeated Indians clearly weep and cling to each other. The apparition ends when the Pueblo Indians are led away by their bizarre attackers. The characters lose 1/1D6 Sanity points again.

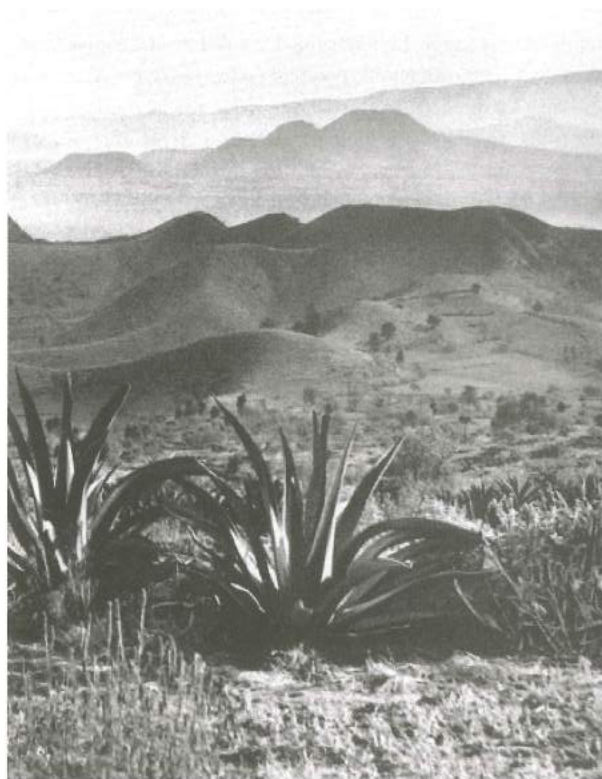
Every day at sunrise the tragedy plays out again, repeating an event of many centuries ago. The Indians could no longer defend themselves from the encroachments of the Aztecs, who kept conducting raids for plunder from their hidden valley, mainly to capture human material that could be sacrificed on the altar of Huitzilopochtli. On one fateful day, the Aztecs took the pueblo and slaughtered the entire people in a single, day-long ceremony on their sacrificial altar.

The Aztecs believed that blood was the food of the gods, without which they could not live. In order for Huitzilopochtli, god of the sun, to have sufficient nourishment for the battle he fought daily with the night, he had to have sufficient blood sacrificed to him.

The characters cannot set anything right at the moment; they have no ability to exorcise the haunting. Sooner or later they will set off to the south, leaving behind the mountain range and heading across the plateau toward the next peak.

Don Felipe's Tomb (Tumba de Don Felipe)

The next landmark on Tiburón del Arroyo's map is the grave of Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda, who died not long after the amputation of his wounded, infected arm. The conquistadors buried him there under a pile of stones. Later, Don Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada, the first priest in Ojo de la Virgen, had a small mausoleum built for his fallen companion, resembling the one drawn on the map. By means of the distinctive rock formation, the characters may recog-



nize with an *Idea* roll that they must be in the vicinity of the grave. With a **Spot Hidden** roll, they can locate it. The tomb is a derelict stone mausoleum surmounted by a weathered cross. Inside is a small, empty room with an engraved stone slab in the floor. It reads: Aquí yace Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda, luchador de su majestad el rey Felipe III. Murió como vivió, bravo y impetuoso. Qué El Señor le bendiga y proteja.

Anyone with a successful **Spanish** roll can translate this as: Here lies Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda, fighter for His Majesty, King Felipe III. He died as he lived, brave and spirited. May the Lord bless and keep him. If the characters lift the slab (SIZ 15 vs. the combined STR of at most two characters on the Resistance Table), they – once again – encounter a mummified corpse (0/1D2 Sanity points). With an *Idea* roll, it quickly becomes obvious that the dead man is missing an arm. A **Medicine** or a halved **First Aid** roll reveals that there is no new ossification at the end of the stump, so it can be deduced that Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda must have died shortly after the amputation. At the dead man's side lies a rusty, but nevertheless valuable sword. His clothes and boots are also well-preserved. If the characters lift the body, they discover a crumbling leather bag beneath him. (They might notice the bag without lifting the corpse with a **Spot Hidden** roll. But if they really want to get at the bag, there's no way around touching the corpse.) The leather satchel contains an old Spanish Bible and some pages with drawings, obviously in an Indian style. **Anthropology** or **Archaeology** rolls allow a character to conclude that the style is very similar to, though not completely congruent with, Aztec art. Otherwise, the characters will have to rely on halved *Know* rolls, which lead them to believe that the drawings are Aztec.

These drawings are leaves from the codex that the Egyptian-looking man passed on to Tiburón del Arroyo and which finally allowed him to take up the quest for the Golden Scorpion. These pages show how the Aztecs apparently came out of the north, pushed into a

mountainous region, found a ruined or half-finished temple there, then built their own temple pyramid on top of the ruins. In every drawing, a stylized scorpion, obviously made of gold, is drawn under the ruins. The dots on it symbolize inlaid jewels. Moreover, it can be seen that many more riches are arrayed around it. That is all they convey. The following pages, which could perhaps relate more about the Aztecs' fate or the location of the temple, are missing. The page of the Aztec codex can be found in the appendix as Scorpion Hand-out 2.

Along the Dry Creek Bed (Arroyo seco)



As indicated on the map, a dry creek bed runs near the tomb of Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda. According to the map, if it is followed, it will lead to the neighborhood of Eagle Rock, the next landmark. If the characters have been moving at a normal pace, they make an unusual discovery late in the afternoon on the second day. Someone has erected a sumptuous tent in the middle of the riverbed. It is manifestly roomy, circular, and possesses an awning over its entry. Three riding horses and six draft horses are tied up next to it. A large covered wagon stands nearby.



Prince Boris II Ivanov



Red Knife



Red Knife's warband

The characters have found the Russian prince who is hunting Apaches and who they might fear is also on the trail of the Golden Scorpion. Boris II Ivanov receives the characters enthusiastically in his tent, surrounded by pure luxury. A Persian carpet covers the ground, and the characters are served tea from a silver samovar. The cups are also made of silver, and the prince smells of perfume. Ivanov is 6' 3" tall, broad-shouldered, with a widening beard, paw-like hands, and a booming laugh that seems to threaten to bring down the tent around them. He speaks English with a broad Russian accent that the Keeper should attempt to imitate. The characters and their host are attended by two servants, Sergei and Vladimir, both silent and discreet companions.

No one has any idea that Red Knife and his Apaches are already in the immediate vicinity...

Prince Boris acts heartily and hospitably. He's never actually heard of a golden scorpion. He's here to experience the Wild West first hand, which to him includes shooting an Indian, a particularly wild Apache, if possible. To his great regret, he hasn't seen a one, but he'll proudly show the characters the buffalo rifle with silver fittings, custom made for him, with which he hopes to "put a bullet

An Explanation of the Aztec Codex for the Keeper

The Keeper should only allow the characters to learn the following information if one of them possesses a significant Archaeology skill or is otherwise acquainted with Aztec pictograms. Otherwise, the players have to guess. The Keeper can, of course, use *Idea* rolls to deliver hints.

The footprints in the first picture from the Aztec codex tell of a tribe that's otherwise unnamed, which has wandered from the north into a mountainous area. The cacao-plant glyph with all its attributes signifies "south." The eagle on the right-hand mountain may give the players the idea that it has to do with Eagle Rock on the treasure map. The year-glyph "2-Reed" above the left mountain stands for the year 1351 A.D. The two dotted circles indicate the "two" in "2-Reed." The glyph above it represents an apparatus for starting fires, and symbolizes the beginning of a new Aztec "century" (they were 52 years long, with four cycles of 13 years). The migration, therefore, took place at the beginning of this new "century."

The second image relates that the tribe settled around a temple ruin, as is symbolized by the six houses. The name-glyphs of the founding members of the tribe are illegible. In the mountain under the temple ruins is a treasure hoard represented by the most important artifact: a golden scorpion. The rest of the treasure is listed in the fourth picture.

The third picture tells the story of the Aztecs' rebuilding a temple on the old foundations, with the usual horrific ceremonies of sacrifice. The shield with eagle feathers and spears above the temple symbolizes the Aztecs' power. The year-glyph 7-Stone Knife corresponds roughly to the year 1356, five years after the tribe's arrival.

In the fourth picture, the contents of the treasure are listed, connected by a line to the scorpion under the temple. In this notation, dots count for "one," little flags for "20." Therefore, besides the golden scorpion, the treasure consisted of 20 richly decorated shields, 40 great mantles, eight crystal skulls, and seven boxes whose contents the Keeper can determine. As required by the Keeper's plot needs, there may also have been additional treasures listed on the following, missing pages of the codex.

in a redskin's hide." He will dismiss any moral objections the characters might have. To him, Indians aren't actually people.

Unbeknownst to the prince, however, a small group of Apaches has been trailing him ever since he entered the mountains. He hasn't noticed them at all, which is not surprising given the Apaches' mastery of camouflage. They have been waiting for an opportune moment to strike, and now believe that it has come, since the prince is preoccupied with visitors. Their primary target is the Russian's horses. They've slowly sneaked close, using the many boulders for cover. They're in the process of cutting the horses loose (the characters' as well) when Sergei comes out of the tent and notices the theft. The characters will first notice something wrong when Sergei

values are even, he has a 50% chance of catching the Apache. If the Apache's skill is greater, the pursuer's chance is 50% minus the difference in skills. If the pursuer's is greater, then his chance to catch him is 50% plus the difference. An example: Weird Zeke's Ride is 60%, and he's chasing an Apache with a 80%. Zeke's chance of catching him is $50 - [80 - 60 = 20] = 30\%$. If Zeke had an 80%, he'd have a 50% chance. If he had an 85%, his chance would be $50 + [85 - 80 = 5] = 55\%$.

If a character actually catches an Apache, the Keeper should play it out dramatically, for example, having the character leap on to the Apache's horse, tackling both of them to the ground where the fight really begins.



comes staggering back into the tent, gurgling and spitting blood, an arrow through his throat. In a few blinks of an eye, he's dead.

Presumably now all hell breaks loose. Instead of being saddened by the death of his servant, the excited prince roars "Indians!" and storms out of the tent with his buffalo rifle. Vladimir follows him, gripping a revolver – only to immediately tumble backwards into the tent with an arrow in his chest. He lives for only a few more breaths. In the meantime, Grand Duke Boris kneels next to the tent, calmly sighting his rifle at the Apaches. The characters presumably assist him.

The attackers are Red Knife, the Apache chief, and four of his men, all experienced warriors. Two of the warriors are in the process of making off with the horses which, as said, include the characters'. In eight rounds, they will each jump on a horse and ride off with the rest in tow. In order to enable them to do so, the other three Indians try and keep Prince Boris and the characters pinned down. Should it become apparent that their plan – nab the horses in a surprise attack – will fail, the remaining Apaches flee, on horseback if possible, on foot if necessary. The characters are at liberty to shoot at the fleeing Apaches, though the Keeper must take into account the effect of the steadily increasing range on their chances to hit. The fleeing Indians can only be caught on horseback. If they've fled on foot, this is no problem. If they have fled on horseback, the characters' chance of success is determined by their Ride skills. The difference between the Ride skill of an Apache and the Ride skill of a character chasing him determines the pursuer's chance of success. If their

The Apaches' priority is to kill the Russian, who will presumably not survive. They only shoot at the characters in the second place. The Keeper will likely want to keep in mind that plenty of deadly dangers lie ahead of the treasure hunters.

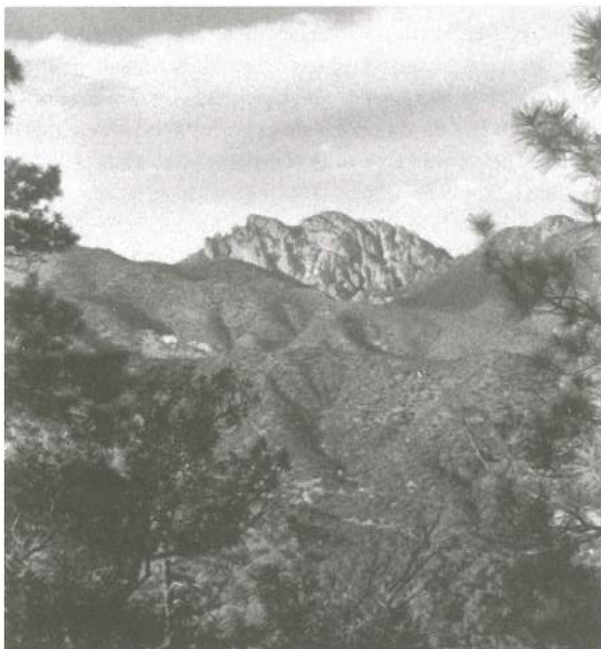
One way or the other, the Prince's Indian hunt is over. If he survives, he happily returns to Ojo with his scalps. The characters continue further south. Statistics and additional information for all the combatants may be found in the appendix. The four warriors can possess the statistics of a typical Apache.

If the characters manage to capture an Apache, they may pump him for information. If asked about a temple in a secret valley, the Apache's fierce countenance becomes swamped with fear. He knows that evil spirits come from there and carry Apaches away. They are never seen again. He knows the way to the valley, but he refuses to go there. The characters will find it anyway. The "evil spirits" are Aztec warriors with masks. The Apaches are kidnapped, like the Pueblo Indians ages ago, to be sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli, the sun god who needs their blood in order to defeat the night.

Eagle Rock (Roca del Águila)

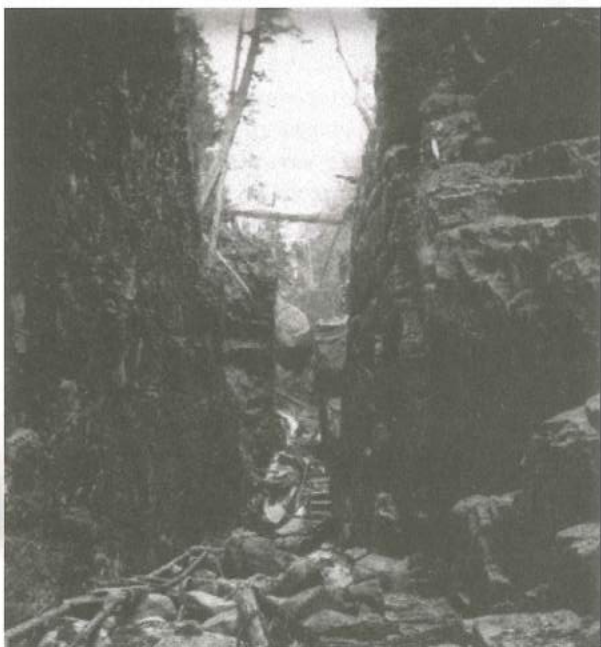
The closer they get to the next mountain range, the more the characters will be on the lookout for a cliff that could be the "Eagle Rock." The first character to succeed with both **Spot Hidden** and **Idea** rolls will finally notice an outcropping like the one drawn on Tiburón del Arroyo's map and which, depending on the position of the sun, actually looks a bit like an eagle's head. The characters leave the dry creek bed and, at the foot of Eagle Rock, they find a narrow ravine, more a crevice, only a few yards wide. It is not visible from the plain, and if one didn't know it existed, it would be almost impossible to find. Behind this fissure begins the Ravine of Echoes.

This likely marks the end of the second day of travel. It's up to the characters whether they want to press on into the ravine at night



or wait until the next morning. The Keeper will have to align the time of day accordingly. In the text it will be assumed that the characters rest one last time and head into the passage in the morning.

Through the Ravine of Echoes (Cañón de los ecos)



The entrance to the ravine is only a few yards wide, and thereafter it never widens much more. The stone walls rise vertically, hundreds of feet high. Sunlight never falls directly on the ground of the ravine except at high noon. Consequently, it's comfortably cool in the ravine. The ground is stony, and the clomp of hooves and the sound of conversation bounce back from the walls like in a great cathedral. It is entirely fitting that the Spanish dubbed the chasm with the name "Ravine of Echoes." The chasm winds several miles

into the mountains and then, around a corner, it suddenly ends. Some sort of watchtower is built right into the ravine, with a gate in it controlling admission. None shall pass! The players may be surprised because the watchtower is not on the map. In fact, the Aztecs built the fortification after the Spanish were driven away. They recognized that their secluded location was no longer sufficient protection. So, unlike the Spanish, the characters are now faced with the problem of getting into the valley – not to mention the problem of getting out again...

At the Gate



Until now, the players had no clues leading them to think that Aztecs might still be living here. All the information they had about the valley was centuries old. Even the remarks they might have heard from an Apache about "evil spirits" probably didn't lead them to think of a surviving Aztec community. But, in fact, a community of Aztecs still lives here, isolated, undisturbed, carrying on as they have for centuries. They even eventually recovered numerically from the Spaniards' raid.

Since no one has tried to invade the valley since 1601, the Aztecs' watchfulness has markedly slackened. But the tower next to the gate still has a guard posted inside. If the characters don't make a ruckus, he won't look out and notice them. If the treasure-hunters decide at this point to look for another route, they may escape unnoticed. Otherwise, they probably check and find out that the gate is barred from inside. At that point, the guard in the tower pays attention and blows a great horn made from a shell, whose sound carries far into the valley of the Aztecs behind the gate and which the characters,

of course, notice. It doesn't matter what they do: ten minutes later, the gate opens and dozens of well-armed warriors stand before them. They carry javelins or obsidian-edged wooden swords, wear woven cotton armor, and carry painted shields. Most terrifying, however, are their helmets which carry imposing and elaborate ornaments and cover the warrior's face like a mask. Every single mask depicts a gruesome, monstrous face.

One commander in a feather-covered suit steps forward and address the characters. He is one of the sub-leaders who wishes to welcome them as prisoners. The characters won't understand what he's saying, however. It will appear to them that they are being invited as guests into the valley of the Aztecs. Resistance is useless, by the way, even with firearms. There are in total 80 warriors and five commanders in the valley. In any case, characters who arrived on horses might be able to flee unscathed. In that case, they'll have a total of 15 javelins tossed after them, for which the Keeper can make to-hit rolls (the Aztecs' statistics are in the appendix). If a javelin hits, roll 1D6. On a 1-4, it hits the mount, on a 5-6, the rider. Wounded

horses are extremely hard to control and throw the rider if he doesn't succeed in a quartered **Ride** roll.

Characters who escape now must choose between giving up or finding a way across the mountains. If they choose the latter, there's still an overwhelming probability that they will be caught. In the following text, it will be assumed that, one way or the other, the characters enter the valley surrounded by Aztec warriors.

In the Valley of the Aztecs:

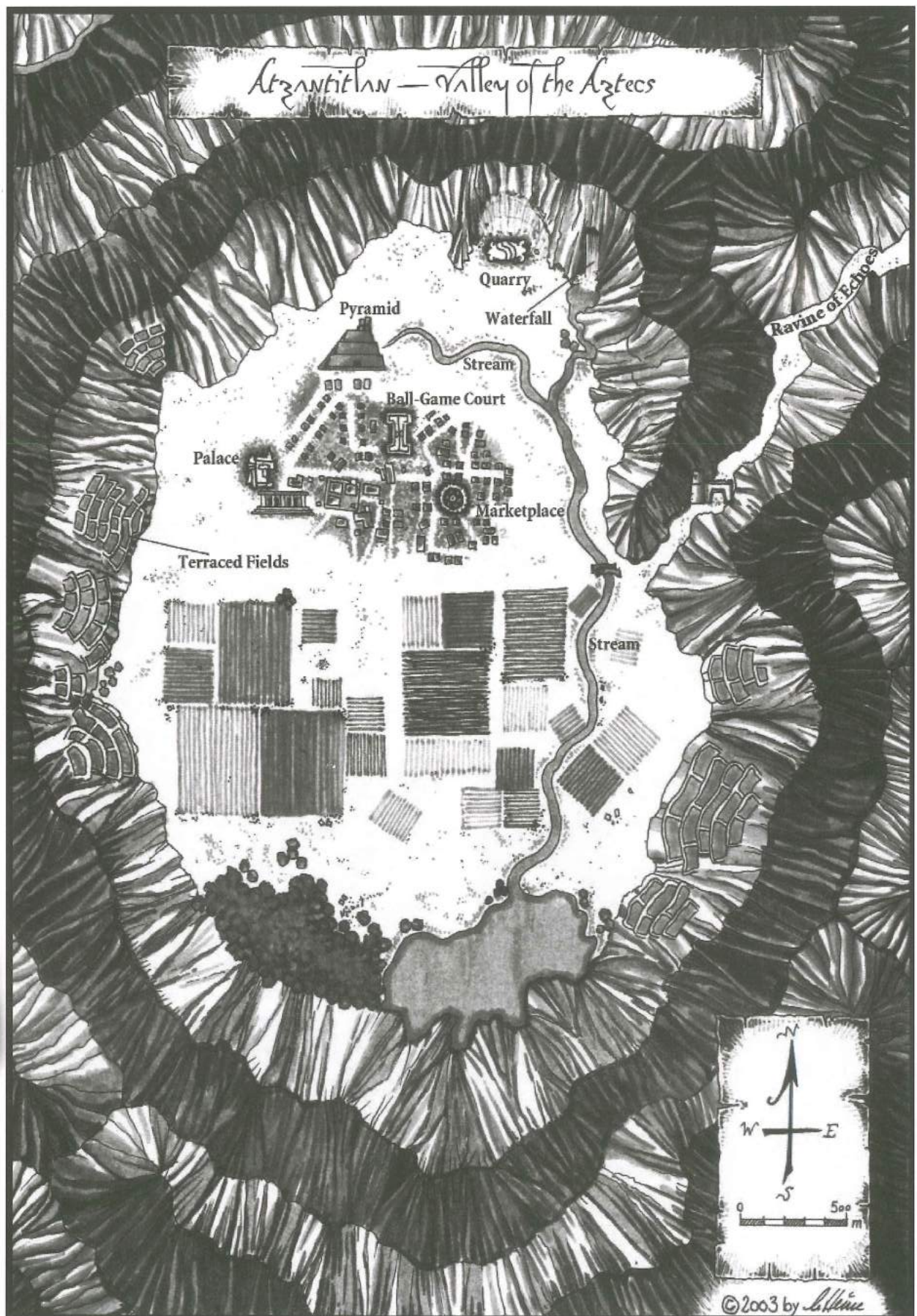
Atzantitlan

The Aztecs residing here call their home Atzantitlan. The valley is surrounded by high mountains like a natural fortress. All the mountain passes are high above, except for the Ravine of Echoes which represents the only actual entry to the valley.



Other Ways into the Aztecs' Valley

There is only one other possibility for getting into the valley: over the mountains. Because the sheer faces of the ravine's walls are not scaleable with the equipment at hand, the characters must head back out and look for another path across the mountains. This course of action dictates an extremely dangerous and strenuous climbing expedition. The Keeper will have to demand at least a dozen **Climb** rolls, some at penalties, and assign damages for missing them (1 to 1D4 HP), with successful **Jump** rolls somewhat minimizing the damage. In addition, **Navigate** rolls will be necessary to keep heading in the direction of the valley. The Keeper can repeatedly inquire of the players if they might not prefer turning around. If they stick to their plan and demonstrate their resolve, they should be rewarded: finally, the green oasis of the valley opens up below them. The descent should be another whole adventure for them. Unless they take particular care (and the Keeper decides he'll let them, realizing that a portion of the adventure must then be improvised), they will not succeed in climbing down into the valley unnoticed, being confronted by the Aztecs sooner or later.



The valley is about three and three-quarters miles long, and a little less than two miles wide. A temperate climate and lush greenery predominate. A waterfall pours from a high flume, plunging down into the valley. Its booming thunder is audible everywhere in the valley. The river runs together with a creek that flows from under an elevation on which a great temple pyramid (teocalli) stands, flowing into a small lake and then apparently flowing out underground. Behind the pyramid, a stone quarry is visible.

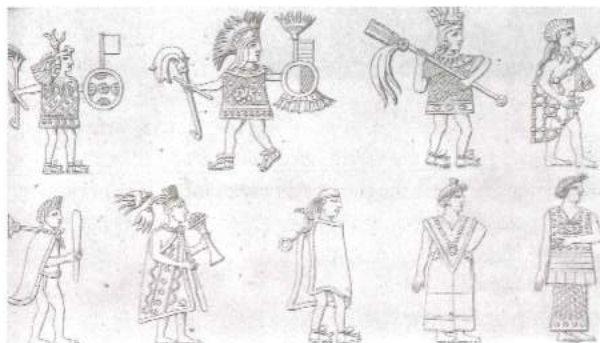


It is fertile and verdant here, and the Aztecs use every available piece of land for agriculture. Even the sides of the mountains are included in the agrarian system, with terraced fields cut into them. This is unusual for Aztecs, since such terraces were generally only found in South America. The circumstances here forced the Indians to use the land as optimally as possible. At the end of the valley a small wood can be made out – the only source for timber available to the Indians. They conscientiously replant every piece that's harvested. The Aztecs do not have livestock or work animals. They work the fields by hand. The only animals they raise are turkeys. They raise edible algae from the lake and collect insect larvae.

As said, a massive temple pyramid looms on a rise. It is a typical Aztec step pyramid with a wide exposed staircase on the west side and a rectangular temple on the topmost platform which is in turn crowned with two ornate stone "huts." This is the great temple of Huitzilopochtli in which the characters are intended to be offered. It is painted white and covered with red decorations. At its feet lies a small town. Perhaps 300 Aztecs live here in square houses made of white-washed earth. There are no other pyramids to be seen. Insofar as other gods are worshipped, their shrines are maintained in simple buildings. One other building does stick out. It is a stone palace built on a raised plinth. Here resides the ruler of Atzantitlan, a man by the name of Tlacopan. He is something like a local king.

The fields are bustling with workers, and anyone not at work will be found on the streets to observe the arrival of the strangers. They all appear curious but slightly fearful.

Aztecs are comparatively short, relative to Europeans. Women are often only about 4'7" tall, and the men less than 5'3" high. The latter wear their hair in a sort of page-boy cut, hanging straight down, while the women generally wear their hair long and loose. Aztec men all wear loincloths (maxtlatl), and many wear mantles (tlimatli) knotted around their necks. Depending upon their caste, the mantle is more or less elaborately decorated. Only important people wear sandals; everyone else goes barefoot. Instead of loincloths, women wear skirts (cueitl).



The Aztecs here are direct descendants of the original migrants from the north. While far to the south, the Aztec Empire rose, Atzantitlan remained an almost forgotten backwater. Because it was forgotten and impossible for strangers to find, it survived the Empire's collapse, and the Aztecs here live today in the same way that their ancestors did centuries ago. They believe it is their sacred duty to worship Huitzilopochtli, the sun god, with all their strength in this place. They know for a fact that it will remain eternal night if they do not bring him human sacrifices. Generally, they choose members of their own community, but frequently they set out on raids to kidnap victims. Centuries ago, they principally preyed on Pueblo Indians whom they ceremoniously exterminated. Today, it's Apaches. At some point, it will be whites, when they get control of this region. And of course, the characters are intended as sacrifices.

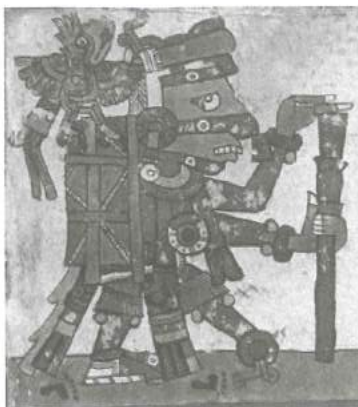
Huitzilopochtli & Tezcatlipoca

The pyramid built upon the ruins of the Serpent People's temple is dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec god of war and the sun. According to ancient Aztec lore, he brought the Aztecs out of their legendary homeland of Aztlan somewhere in the north and into Mexico. The Aztecs believe that he requires the hearts and blood of humans as nourishment, sacrificing to him regularly.

Tezcatlipoca, also called Black Tezcatlipoca, is the god of the night sky, the moon, and the stars. He is connected to the forces of evil and destruction. Occasionally, he is described as a tempter who leads men into evil. He drives everything to collapse, but also stands for resurrection. As a master magician and shape-shifter, he is often represented with a black stripe over his face. His symbol is a smoking mirror which he wears on his chest (or, alternately, sometimes instead of one foot) and with which he can see all the deeds and thoughts of men. In Central Mexico, some sacrifices are made to him. A young, good-looking prisoner is chosen.



The Sun Disk of Huitzilopochtli



Tezcatlipoca

He then lives for one year in overwhelming luxury, with four gorgeous women at his side as playmates. After one year, he enters a temple in which his heart is cut out.

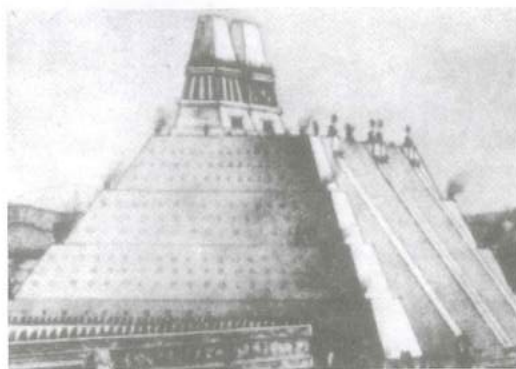
While Huitzilopochtli does not correspond to any figure in the Cthulhu Mythos and can not actually provide any power to humans, in Tezcatlipoca the Aztecs are dealing

with a being elsewhere worshipped and feared under the name "Nyarlathotep." He is the god of a thousand forms, one of which is Tezcatlipoca. The Aztecs' description of his nature is very apt. Before long, the characters will face him.

Invited or Imprisoned?

The Aztec warriors address the characters, but they won't be able to understand a word. Their "hosts" only speak a dialect of Nahuatl (isolated and archaic in comparison with the Nahuatl spoken in Mexico). In any case, their behavior has the appearance that they're not really hostile. They bring mantles ornamented with beautiful feathers and drape them over the characters. They bring gold (!) cups filled with a slightly intoxicating beverage made from fermented cactus (octli). Surrounded by dozens of warriors, the characters are led down into the valley. Attempts to flee are not permitted, but the Aztecs do not want to lose their sacrifices; they attempt to recapture fleeing characters without killing them. The characters will in all likelihood misinterpret the Aztecs' clemency and imagine themselves to be safe. The procession leads over a bridge into a small area where almost all the Aztecs seem to have gathered, lining the streets. Old men, women, and children stare curiously at the strangers. One or two push through to them and give the charac-

ters some thin little cakes of flour (tortillas). It is a friendly gesture, or so the characters will think. They are led to the palace which is built on a stone platform. It is a wide, angular building with a flat roof and a multitude of square pillars. Every flat surface is decorated with artful reliefs. To the right, the gigantic pyramid rises up into the sky. With a **Spot Hidden** roll, the characters notice that the lowest level of the pyramid is built from a different rock, a blackish-green stone, with the yellowish pyramid superstructure atop it. This might be their initial clue that the edifice rests on a far-older foundation.



Some steps lead up into the palace and to a chamber in which a long, expensively decorated table is laid out. Filigreed wood chairs surround it, and at its head the city's dignitaries await the characters. One is evidently a priest, dressed in black. His mantle is decorated with an ornamental motif of skulls and entrails. His long, free-hanging hair is encrusted with dried blood. He is Itzcoatl, high priest of Huitzilopochtli, as the characters will soon become aware.

Next to Itzcoatl stands Tlacopan, ruler of the valley. He wears a golden headdress richly adorned with feathers. His clothes are embroidered, worked through with golden thread. From his neck hang filigreed gold chains and golden bands jangle on his arms. His prominent nose and piercing eyes give his countenance a somewhat unsettling cast.

After an obviously polite greeting, the characters are led into the interior of the palace and brought into tastefully furnished apartments. Mats on the floor invite rest and relaxation, and golden bowls

filled with fruit are near at hand. A hot bath is drawn for the characters as well. Aztecs traditionally wash themselves at least once a day. Some of the characters may be unused to such cleanliness. After refreshing themselves, the adventurers are brought beautiful clothing made from gold-shot cotton. While they'll likely decline the loincloths, they might not refuse one of the gorgeous capes.

Finally, it's conveyed to them that they should come and eat together.



Itzcoatl, high priest of Huitzilopochtli, and Tlacopan, ruler of the valley greet the investigators.

While the characters are eating, the Aztecs search through their rooms and remove anything that looks like a weapon to them. They recognize rifles, as 300 years ago the Spanish had muskets which fell into the Aztecs' hands. The treasure-hunters are left only with the weapons that they took to dinner. If the characters attempt to complain later, they are simply met with a stone wall of smiles. Their weapons will not be returned, because they are prisoners intended for sacrifice.

Because the Aztecs speak nothing but Atzantitlan Nahuatl and the characters don't speak it, communication necessarily is primarily through gesture. The characters will be fulsomely greeted in a banquet hall filled with people, and the most important personages of Atzantitlan are seated around the table. It's striking that Tlacopan, the king, sits isolated at the head of the table, and all the other guests are gathered around the far end. The characters are led to places at that end as well.

Finally, the banquet is served. The characters should eat moderately and not stuff themselves, because they've got to get through 30 different courses! Small braziers underneath the dishes ensure that they don't get cold during the extended feast. There's turkey, rabbit, fish, vegetables, and much more, all accompanied, of course, by corn tortillas. When the food is served, a painted wooden screen is set up in front of Tlacopan. No one is allowed to look upon the king while he eats. Beverages are served in gold cups – it's octli, the fermented cactus juice.

Once during the feast, Tlacopan stands up and claps his hands. Servants bring out a tray covered with a cloth. The king removes it, revealing rusty Spanish helmets and breastplates from around 1600. There are no weapons. Tlacopan points to the characters and seems to inquire if they are kindred strangers. How the characters react is of no real import; Tlacopan is just curious. He only knows the legends of how the strangers came and almost wiped out his ancestors. The Aztecs are all outgoing during the meal, and are enthusiastic if the characters decide to show off any technological marvels that they have with them (telescopes, pocket watches, etc.). Everyone is very friendly because these guests are the honorable sacrifices to Huitzilopochtli. They give no indications of the sacrifice to come. The Aztecs take it for granted that the characters know that they are prisoners and will be put to their "intended use" tomorrow.

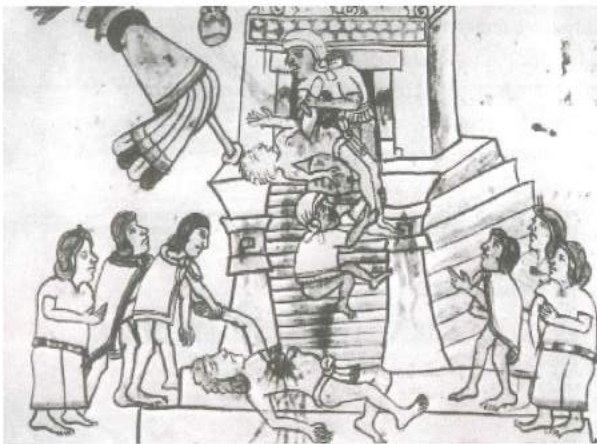
After the meal, gilded pipes are brought in filled with various dried plants. This tobacco substitute is lit and smoked, and the characters are offered one of the pipes.

Outside, it has gradually become night. Some of the banquet guests will have fallen asleep under the influence of octli and others will have made their way back to their apartments. If the characters manage to make themselves understood as inquiring after a golden scorpion, the Aztecs will react guardedly. They appear to want to say that all their questions will be answered tomorrow. Finally, after the welcome feast is brought to an end, the characters can finally go to bed (or, more exactly, the thin mats on the floor, as the Aztecs don't have beds) or to plan a night time raid on the temple.

Once they're alone, they can determine that the Aztecs have warriors keeping a watchful eye on them. There are always at least five visible in the area at any given time. The pyramid appears to be guarded as well. Without heavy weapons, which the characters won't have any longer, it's all but impossible to get into the pyra-

mid. If the players come up with a really clever plan, the Keeper may allow them to succeed. A description of the interior of the pyramid is found in a later section of this adventure. As soon as the Aztecs notice that the characters have disappeared, they will go after them. If the Aztecs figure out they're in the pyramid (perhaps from the characters' asking about the golden scorpion, perhaps following footprints, etc.), the Aztecs follow them in and forcibly compel them to surrender. There is almost no possible way for the characters to succeed in avoiding the sacrificial knife.

The Sacrifice



Very early, not much after four in the morning, shell-horns will drone through the valley, the sound bouncing off the walls and returning as echoes. Sleep becomes out of the question. Shortly thereafter, muscular warriors enter the characters' quarters. They carry short ropes with which they bind their "guests" hand and foot. Resistance is nipped in the bud with brute force. The characters are then dragged out of the palace and carried up the steps of the pyramid. The people of Atzantitlan have gathered at its foot; everyone, young and old, women and men. Even if the characters have more on their minds, a **Spot Hidden** roll can once again reveal that the foundation of the pyramid is made of a different stone. This close up, it's also apparent that the stone base, only one row of greenish-blackish stones high, is ornamented with a continuous relief, an intricate arabesque in which a stylized three-armed motif, a triskelion, appears repeatedly. A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll recognizes it as probably the Sign of Eibon, a symbol barring Nyarlathotep and his minions.

Itzcoatl, the high priest, is already waiting for them up on the platform in front of the temple atop the pyramid. With him are five lower-ranking priests who pin the victim to the bloody altar. In addition, there are 20 warriors present.

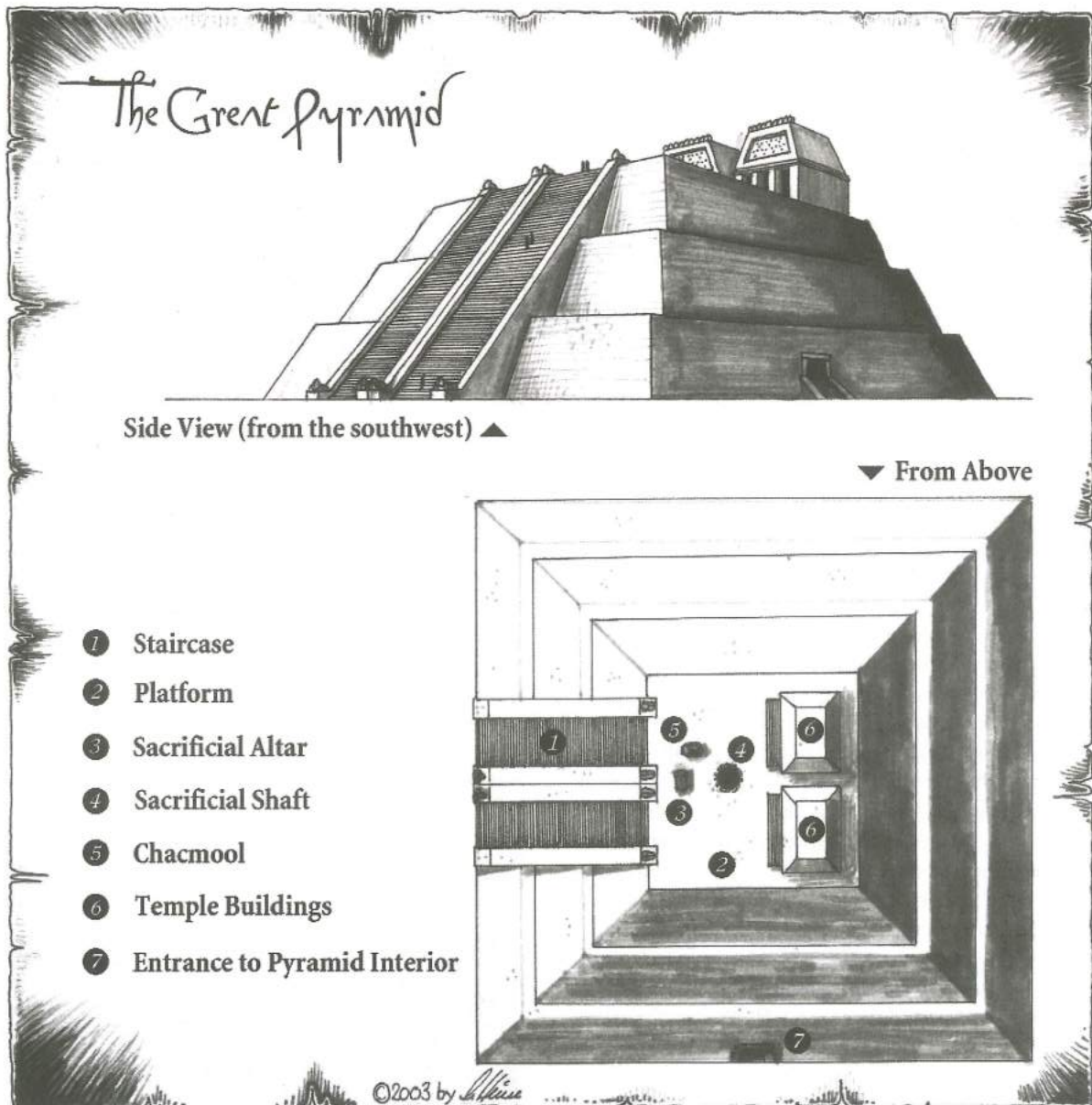


The sun rises blood-red above the mountains as the first character is dragged to the altar. He is laid on his back on the monstrous block of jasper which still holds the night's coolness. He's held down, spread-eagled. The high priest raises an obsidian knife and bellows some sort of prayer to the sky. The crowd at the foot of the pyramid is reverently silent. Then the blade falls. At this moment of certain death, the character must make a Sanity roll, losing 1D4/1D10 Sanity points. In the next moment, the knife cuts deep into the character's chest. He feels a horrific pain, and then nothing at all, as the high priest tears his still-beating heart out of his body, raising it triumphantly to the heavens,



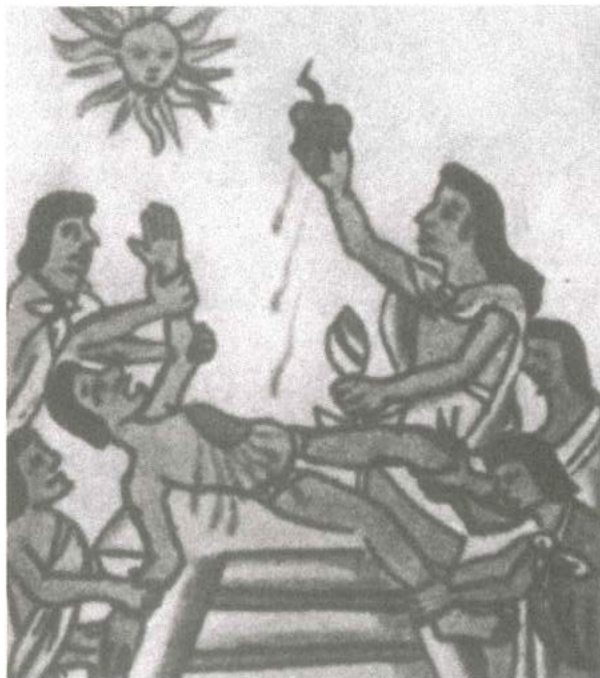
blood running down his arms, and then throwing it with a practiced motion into the chacmool, a stone receptacle in the form of a figure lying on his back, specifically intended for receiving sacrificed hearts.

All of the characters watching lose 1D3/1D8 Sanity points at the sight, realizing that the same fate awaits them. The warriors guarding them will try and ensure that insane investigators cannot cause any disruption. The sacrificed character's body is then be hauled off the altar to a circular hole. The attending priests toss the dead into this shaft, which must lead somewhere inside the pyramid. The ceremony is repeated with all the characters. Each one loses 1D4/1D10 Sanity points immediately before his



death, and the spectators lose 1/1D4 Sanity points for each subsequent sacrifice they must view. The character sacrificed last may have the least Sanity. The players may wonder why they're even keeping track of the Sanity of their characters who are all doomed to a horrible death.

Then, before the players grab their stuff and leave in frustration, the Keeper should admit something is up and take the player whose character was first on the altar into another room. Or he may send the rest of the players out of the room for a private conversation. The adventurer, butchered and tossed into a slaughter-pit, is in fact faced with an immoral offer, exactly at the moment of his death.



Nyarlahotep's Plan

Because of the Signs of Eibon that the Serpent People carved into the base of the pyramid, Nyarlahotep is barred from even seeing into the pyramid and, more importantly, the ancient catacombs beneath it. He remembers all too well, however, that the Golden Scorpion, an artifact of the Serpent People that remains of interest to him, rests beneath it. Because he and his servants cannot enter the pyramid because of the seal, he has repeatedly tried to induce third parties to penetrate the complex and steal the Golden Scorpion. There are two ways into the pyramid: alive through the entrance, or dead through the sacrificial shaft through which the characters are now falling. At first, Nyarlahotep chose living pawns. He gave Tiburón del Arroyo the pages of the Aztec codex in the expectation that the Spaniard, so victorious a warrior, would succeed in retrieving the artifact. But as had happened all too often before, his unwitting pawns all died in the ingenious traps and protective mechanisms set up by the Serpent People in the catacombs. Nyarlahotep came up with a particularly perfidious fashion in which to infiltrate willing helpers into the pyramid: he now only uses sacrifice victims. At the moment of death, he makes them an offer that's described in detail below.

Essentially, they return to life and are given a year to live, if they retrieve the Scorpion, with the promise that they will be able to continue to live if they bring the Scorpion to a specific location. Almost every non-Aztec has taken the deal. The Aztecs themselves believe that when they're sacrificed, they don't die but become a part of Huitzilopochtli, so they have no reason to make a deal with Tezcatlipoca.

The "volunteers" are then thrown into the sacrificial shaft that leads deep under the pyramid. They are awakened to a new life by Nyarlahotep to search for the Golden Scorpion in the catacombs below. All but one of the volunteers have met their ends in the vicious traps of the Serpent People. Only one actually found a way to the Golden Scorpion. The characters will soon learn why he hasn't brought it out of the pyramid, because they will soon meet him down there, a Spanish conquistador who has dwelt down there since being sacrificed in 1601, never dying, never able to die.

Tezcatlipoca's Offer

The Keeper may recall that Tezcatlipoca also represents resurrection.

The Keeper reads the following scene to each player individually, once they're alone. He can also paraphrase it in his own words, of course. How the player reacts to the offer is, when all is said and done, up to him. It's important that the player does not find out what happens to the others in the moment of death. Above all, the offer is ultimately designed so that at the end only one (!) of the characters will be allowed to live on. If a player can't be sure that the other players have received the same offer, it will create an entertaining uncertainty which should produce some interesting role-playing.

You're lying there, the cold, hard stone block below you, blue sky above. And the priest with his hair clotted with blood and the sharp obsidian knife that he will plunge into your chest at any moment. And simultaneously you experience everything again, everything. Your life passes before your eyes one last time. You in your cradle. At school. At work. Your parents. Your friends. Everything that you loved passes by you. It seems like it's been a while when you emerge from your memories. But it couldn't have been more than a second or two. Bones crunch and your own hot blood sprays in your face as the knife rips deeply into your breast. You think you see your own heart held high by the salivating priest who ripped it from your chest. You see it twitch and beat. Maybe it was just a vision, because you're fleeing your body, fleeing the incomprehensible pain, seeming to float above everything. You see your companions screaming, weeping, and raging, and you watch as your body – is it really yours? It looks so strange – is dragged to a shaft, like a well, and thrown down. But you feel drawn away into another dark hole, no, it's a tunnel. And it has a light at the end. You feel strangely safe and you know that Heaven is waiting for you, like you had always imagined it. It's coming closer... closer... You're almost there! (Pause to allow the player to wonder what's coming next.) When you come into the light, you're on top of the pyramid again. Or maybe it's a different pyramid. It's night. A full moon hangs in the sky. The Milky Way glitters. A cold wind tugs at your clothes and blows through your hair. How odd – you had almost forgotten how it feels to be solid. You feel a hand on your shoulder. When you turn around, you see a figure standing some five yards away. (How



"The Aztecs call me Tezcatlipoca. I have observed the wrong done to you and offer you your life back. In return, I require but a small favor. Bring me the Golden Scorpion!"

could he have touched your shoulder? You shudder.) It is... an Aztec. You think. The icy wind doesn't appear to bother him. He stands erect and examines you with black eyes. Completely black eyes. Even the "whites" are as black as night. His face is painted, a horizontal black stripe running across it. His most conspicuous adornment is a mirror giving off a fine smoke, hanging upon his chest. "Do you know who I AM?" His mouth never moved, but his voice rang in your head. "The Aztecs call me Tezcatlipoca. I have observed the wrong done to you and offer you your life back. In return, I require but a small favor. Bring me the Golden Scorpion out of the catacombs under the pyramid. Your body will shortly be thrown down a sacrificial shaft. You will awake at the bottom, healthy and alive. You will then go into the depths of the complex and bring out the Scorpion. I will then grant you one year to live. You may enjoy it however you like. You must, however, guard the Scorpion jealously during that time, because at the end of that year I will make known to you a place

to which you must bring the Scorpion. And when you do, then shall you – and only you – be allowed to live on. I will even give you a choice. Take back your old mortal existence, or become immortal and serve at my side. The choice will be yours. And even if you do not desire eternal life, and even if you do not find the Scorpion, mortal, one year of life is better than an end this instant. Behold, the paradise in which you believe does not exist. There is only I. Consider it well. Would you live or DIE?"

The last word thunders in your ears.

If the character doesn't take Tezcatlipoca's bargain, he dies now. If he takes it, he feels himself pulled back into a black maelstrom and wakes up in the next scene.

In the Catacombs of the Serpent People: A New Life

Roughly simultaneously, the characters who have taken Tezcatlipoca's bargain come to. All the others lie next to them on

Optional Alternative

Every Keeper will know his group best. There may be players who in this situation – realizing that the characters are obviously no longer normal, living human beings – will decide that their characters immediately kill themselves out of horror. That would bring the adventure to a premature end, which would be a pity.

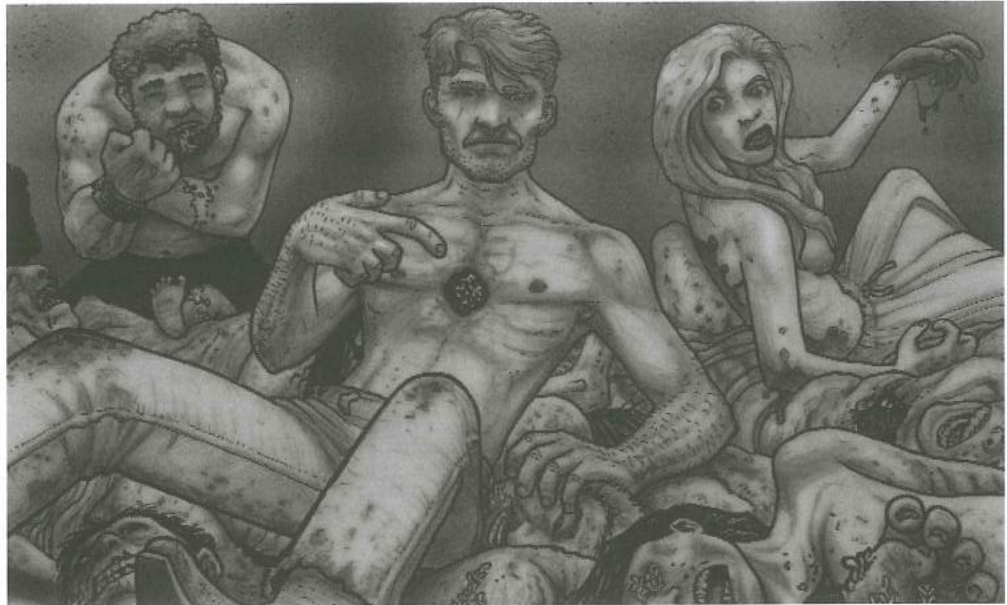
Consequently, if the Keeper thinks this is a possibility with his group, he can describe the presence of the black substance differently.

At first the characters will awake and not notice any change. Where the hole in their chest had been, is now skin. They can feel a heartbeat; everything seems normal. What they won't know is that they've still got the black stuff in them, just camouflaged and, what's more, twitching in imitation of a heartbeat. A week or so later the black substance will begin to "leak out" in small quantities. The skin on the chest will begin to discolor darkly from the "heart" out. Black lines will reticulate like veins across the chest, spreading farther and farther. After two months, the skin will fall off the wound, exposing the black tissue quivering where the heart should be. At this point, the full Sanity loss described above is assessed.

The players are faced with a creeping horror, because they won't know what's wrong with their characters. In addition, they'll play on for a while without committing suicide immediately.

In any case, we prefer the other variant in which the characters wake after their pact with Nyarlathotep, immediately and brutally confronted with what they've done and what horrific consequences they've brought down on themselves. It should be an immediate, extreme shock which strengthens their desire to find the Scorpion and deliver it in a year, in order to have a chance to lead a normal life again.

the floor of the sacrificial shaft, their hearts torn out and their bodies dashed by the fall. High above, a small circle of light is visible. It must be at least 200 feet above them. The fall was long. Down here, the shaft is clearly wider than above, it is about 50 feet in diameter. Underneath the characters is slick, slippery, and greasy: they are lying on an enormous mountain of human sacrifices; the most recent are barely decayed, while further down in the mountain of bodies are corpses that are little



Everywhere they look, ribcages yawn open where hearts were torn out. Dead eyes stare blankly.

more than skeletons. The smell of putrefaction is overpowering. Everywhere they look, ribcages yawn open where hearts were torn out. Dead eyes stare at the characters who need yet another Sanity roll (1D2/1D6 Sanity points lost).

At the sight of all these open wounds, the characters will likely feel for their own hearts. But they're gone. No pulse, no heartbeat, nothing. Instead, the hole in their chest is closed up with a black mass that feels slightly spongy and, above all, completely numb. It is some sort of foreign matter that has taken over the function of their hearts. At the sight of this black growth in a hole in their chest, and at the realization that this mass is keeping them alive, the characters lose 1D3/1D8 Sanity points.

Somehow, the adventurers must get out of the sacrificial shaft. About ten feet above them, they can make out a branching tunnel. The characters either have to stand on each other's shoulders and haul each other up, or move the corpses to the side of the shaft and use them as a macabre staircase.

The characters now stand in a low passageway leading further into the catacombs beneath the pyramid. It is obvious that the stone here is greenish-black, completely different from the stone they saw in the rest of the valley. The floor looks almost polished and is slightly worn down in the middle, as if (Serpent) people had walked down it for millennia. If it hasn't already occurred to them, this evidence and an *Idea* roll will allow the characters to deduce that the pyramid must have been built on the foundation of a much older structure.

From now on, the characters are free to roam where they will. The Keeper should not, however, show the players a map or let them draw one. It's far more atmospheric to simply describe the areas through which they're passing and what they see there. This maintains a suspenseful atmosphere, allowing the complex to confuse and disorient the players more than if they've got a map at hand.

One initial fact to keep in mind: at first, the characters have no light source, and the passageway quickly becomes pitch black. In the Corridor (4), there are pitch (pine-resin) torches burning that

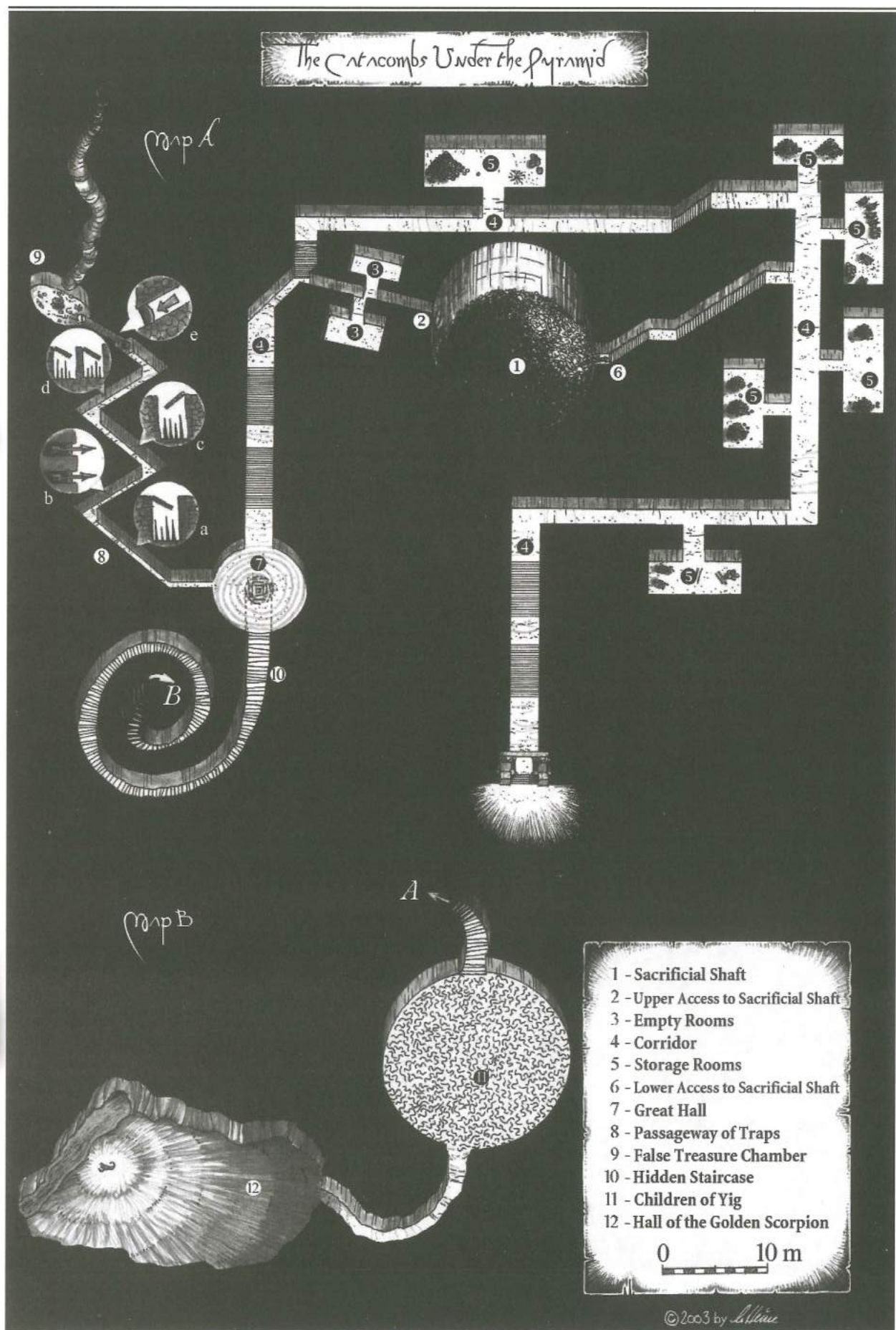
The Black Tissue

The characters feel relatively normal. But over time, they will notice that their bodies are cooling off, until they reach the temperature of their surroundings – another consequence of their new circulatory system. They will never get much below 68°F (20°C), so they don't have to worry about freezing solid in cold temperatures.

Blood is being pumped through their blood vessels, only no longer by means of the regular contractions of the heart muscles, but rather in a constant stream caused by the black tissue. If they have themselves examined, a doctor will inform them that, on the basis of their low body temperature and lack of heartbeat, he would be inclined to declare them medically dead. The characters' blood also appears to be of a darker color than is normal. The black substance exudes some of its own material which is then transported throughout the body.

What the characters don't know is that because of the living mass Tezcatlipoca planted in their chests as they fell down the sacrificial shaft, they have become immortal. Or, more exactly, their body will not die of old age. It is also completely resistant to disease and poison. From now on, they can only die of wounds and, of course, if Nyarlathotep wishes it. He can remove the substance as easily as he implanted it.

The characters can still take in nourishment, though they no longer have to (though they may never notice this fact). The same goes for drinking.



that the characters can take with them. They burn for about an hour and are swapped out at about that interval. Their light can be made out in the distance, down the low passage the characters are walking through.

1. Sacrificial Shaft

This is the sacrificial shaft that the characters have just come down. It narrows as it rises. The temple platform atop the pyramid is about 200 feet above the bottom of the shaft. The bottom 30 feet or so of the shaft are not made of the light-colored stone quarried in the valley, but of the greenish-black stone of the Serpent People. The mountain of corpses is about 15 feet high. There are two ways out of the shaft. One is the passageway the characters climb out of. The other is at the bottom of the shaft. The Aztecs regularly remove the bottom-most, skeletonized corpses of their sacrifices and take their skulls to a Storage Room (5), while the rest of the body parts are burned and used as fertilizer on their fields.

2. Upper Access to Sacrificial Shaft

Here is where the characters climb out of the sacrificial shaft. Behind the passageway lies a five-and-a-half-foot-high tunnel which quickly opens into the larger Corridor (4). Passages to more rooms lead off to the left and right.

3. Empty Rooms

These chambers are empty. The greenish-black stone is carved with bands of ornamental reliefs at hip height. They show snakes devouring each other. It is obvious even to the untrained eye that they are not Aztec in origin. A *Cthulhu Mythos* roll can attribute them to the Serpent People. It's no longer possible to discern what purpose these rooms may have served.

4. Corridor

This wide hallway begins to the west in the Great Hall (7). From there several steps lead upwards. At one point, a small passageway – the one the characters enter through – branches off. At the top of a second staircase leading up is the main length of the corridor with passages to the storerooms. Pitch torches burn on the walls every 30 feet or so, so that the corridor is well-illuminated. There is no illumination anywhere in the catacombs except in this corridor. To the right, a passageway branches off, leading to the bottom of the sacrificial shaft. The passage then leads up more stairs to an open gate to the outdoors on the south side of the pyramid. The gate is guarded at all times by two Aztec warriors (for statistics, see appendix). If they sound the alarm, many more warriors will arrive (2D6 warriors every 20 combat rounds). An escape through the gate must obviously be well-planned. Without weapons, it's almost assuredly suicide.

5. Storage Rooms

In these chambers, which are decorated with the same ornamental bands on the walls as the unused ones, the Aztecs primarily store the skulls of their sacrificial victims. They are stacked in large piles. In the north-eastern-most room, in addition, six wooden troughs are stored. They have hand-grips on their ends and are used to transport body parts or large numbers of skulls. The characters can use them to escape the pyramid, if they use them as boats on the subter-

anean river. The troughs are of course pretty cumbersome and are designed to be carried by two people. One character can fit in each. In order to execute such an escape, they'll have to make several trips. This is not without danger, because the longer the group stays here, the greater the chance of their being discovered. There's a cumulative chance of 20% per hour (i.e., 40% after two hours, 60% after three, etc.) that they will encounter two Aztecs replacing the torches and perhaps fetching more skulls. Their statistics are the same as Aztec warriors, except that they are unarmed. (Their only attack is Fist 50%, damage 1D3+db.) One of the workers will attempt to flee and get help. If he succeeds, the characters have a serious problem: he's getting the guards.

6. Lower Access to Sacrificial Shaft

This is the bottom of the sacrificial shaft. The corpses here are so decayed that they're mostly skeletonized. The Aztecs cart these body parts out and stack the skulls in the nearby rooms. The rest of the remains are burnt. It doesn't need saying that the sight of rotten body parts welling into the passage from the 15-foot-high pile of bodies is repellent and shocking. But the characters are fairly used to such things at this point. They lose only 0/1 Sanity points.

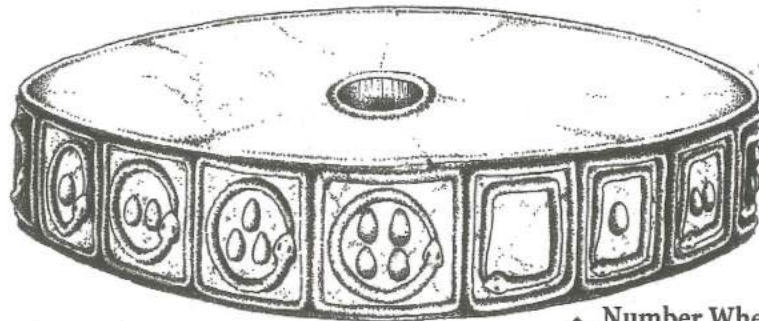
7. Great Hall

This round hall has one exit, on the west side. The walls are decorated with many bands of reliefs. More precisely, it's a single relief band that seems to sort of come out of the floor, climbing higher and higher up the walls in a spiral up to the ceiling. This spiral relief depicts snakes with arms and legs walking upright. Taken as a whole, they appear as an endless procession rising out of the floor, winding higher and higher until they reach the ceiling. Each Serpent Man has something in its arms. They seem to be sacrificial goods of some sort. The 20-foot-high ceiling of the hall is completely covered with a relief. It depicts an oversized snake, taking up most of the ceiling in a coiled position, seeming to fix the viewer with its stare. It bears a crescent-moon sign upon its forehead. With a *Cthulhu Mythos* roll, the characters will know that these are presumably the so-called Serpent People bringing sacrifices to their god, Yig. The Serpent Man who stands directly before the altar 20 feet off the floor is carved substantially larger than the rest. The viewer is apparently supposed to pay particular attention to him. He kneels and holds out an object to the god that has a certain, distant resemblance to a particularly large scorpion...

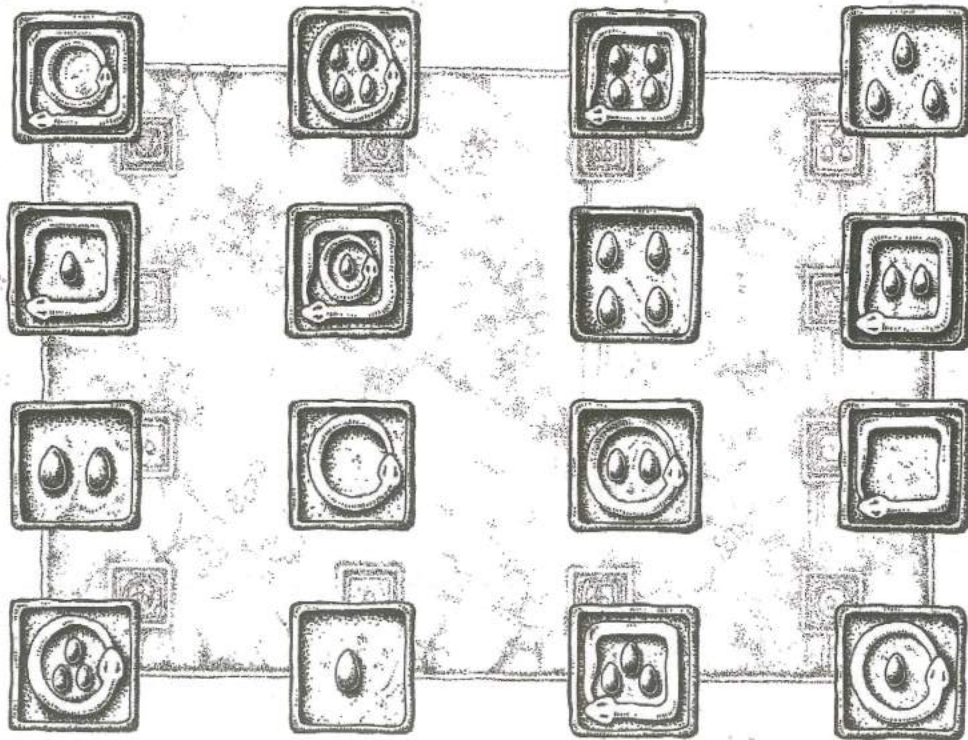
In the floor in the middle of the hall is a 15-foot-square seal. It is a single slab made out of the same green-black stone as the rest of the complex. It shows a relief that the characters at first will not be able to make much of: it is a snake laid out in a square, biting its own tail, with its head in the upper left, as seen from the north side of the hall. Inside this snake is another square snake biting itself in the tail, with its head to the upper right. Inside this is a third ouroboros, square again, with its head to the lower left. In the middle of this innermost snake-square are four oval shapes that an *Idea* roll could identify as snake eggs.

On the south side of the hall, across from the stairs, the wall is flattened. Superimposed over the procession of Serpent Men bearing gifts is a square field about four-and-a-half feet on each side. In this field, 16 square buttons are arrayed, protruding slightly. Different designs appear on the knobs. Many of them have round or square

The Puzzle



▲ Number Wheel



The wall slab with the sixteen wheels ▲
(Symbols shown enlarged)

15	9	14	3
11	16	4	12
2	5	7	10
8	1	13	6

Translation of the symbols on the slab



"34" — The key

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snakes, some with eggs; others merely show eggs in different numbers. The characters will quickly learn that the buttons are in reality rotating wheels that present new pictures as they're turned. They come to a stop with a soft click at a given picture, but otherwise turn without a problem. The characters can determine that each wheel has 16 surfaces, and on each wheel the same 16 signs are depicted, in the same order – the individual wheels are identical.

These are all parts of a single mechanism that allows the seal in the middle of the hall to move downward and to the side, revealing a staircase which leads to the Golden Scorpion. The passageway leading from the great hall is nothing more than a trap; this alone is the correct path. The Keeper is provided with a representation of the 16 signs nearby. He may photocopy them and present them to the players, or draw them himself. Presumably, the players will quickly figure out that the signs represent numbers in a decimal system. They represent the numbers 1 through 16, represented in an ancient system of the Serpent People that became archaic and wasn't used in later periods (much like Roman numerals have fallen almost entirely out of use). An egg equals 1, a round snake 5, a square snake 10. Once, this device served not only to safeguard the portal to the Golden Scorpion but as an initiation test for prospective priests of Yig who had to solve the puzzle themselves in a given amount of time. Fortunately for the characters, they have all the time in the world – though the Keeper is of course under no obligation to reveal that!

The solution of the puzzle is nevertheless relatively simple, once you've figured out what you're supposed to do. The key is hidden in the seal on the floor of the hall. This represents the number thirty-four. The three square snakes each stand for "ten" and the four eggs stand for "four." Added together: 34. The wheels on the wall have to be turned to represent the number thirty-four in the form of a "magic square." A magic square is a square of numbers, in which each row, column, and diagonal add up to the same sum (here, 34). Each number may only appear once and all the numbers (here, one through sixteen) must appear once.

The optimal solution is the following arrangement:

1	12	7	14
8	13	2	11
10	3	16	5
15	6	9	4

This is optimal because it's a so-called pan-magic square, in which the sums of the broken diagonals are also 34 (the broken diagonals are 12+2+5+15 and 6+16+11+1). The seal in the middle of the hall will open by any other combination that fulfills the conditions of a normal magic square, e.g.,

4	6	9	15
11	13	2	8
5	3	16	10
14	12	7	1

In general, the following is true for magic squares. If one exchanges two rows that are the same distance from the midpoint, and then exchanges the two columns with each other that are equally

distant from the midpoint, another magic square is the result. Consequently there are several correct solutions to the problem.

The players must accomplish the following here:

- ♦ Recognize that the symbols represent the numbers 1-16, and the seal represents the number 34
- ♦ Recognize that they need to construct a magic square with the magic sum of 34
- ♦ Turn the wheels until they express a correct solution

If the players can't figure out that a magic square is at the root of the problem, their characters could be able to with an **Occult** roll, or an **EDU×3** roll then an *Idea* roll.

If the players still have problems with coming to the solution, the Keeper can roll against characters' **INT×1** to simulate that they might have greater insights than their players. The Keeper can also offer hints, though they should be limited to generalized insights.

Mistakes have no consequences. The characters should succeed sooner or later in figuring out the concept and then entering a correct combination.

As soon as one of the correct combinations is entered, the slab in the center of the floor slowly begins to sink with a scraping noise and then moves to the side. It reveals a staircase that leads further into the depths.

8. The Passageway of Traps

This passageway was constructed by the Serpent People to fulfill the expectations of treasure hunters of all times and places: that treasures must be guarded with traps that can be conquered in a sort of duel between trap-builder and thief. Realistically, it's never in the interests of someone who has a treasure to secure it in this fashion since traps can be overcome. The passageway of traps consequently serves two purposes: First, it should fool the treasure hunter into thinking it leads to riches and then kill him. Second, it's a diversion from the real portal to the Golden Scorpion. Because it ends in a false treasure chamber, any thieves who manage to overcome the traps will believe that they've actually found the Golden Scorpion.

The passageway of traps is laid out in a zigzag, like a stylized snake. Each leg has a trap built into it. At the end, almost like the snake's head, sits the false treasure chamber.

a) Pitfall

At the beginning is a classic pitfall. The floor will give way beneath the first adventurer who puts more than 50 pounds pressure on it. With a **Dodge** or **DEX×3** roll (whichever is higher), he can throw himself backwards, avoiding the fall. Alternatively, quick comrades can grab him with a **DEX×3** roll. Otherwise, he falls 200 feet. The trapdoor, raised with a spring, closes above him. With a *Luck* roll he lands between two of the rusty metal spikes on the floor of the pit and takes 2D6 hit points in damage from the fall (1D6 if he manages a **Jump** roll to land better). If not, he's spitted on the spikes, losing 5D6 hit points. The pit trap is about three yards across and can be leapt across without a problem if one knows about it. It can be detected as tiny cracks in the floor, but really only if a character is explicitly searching the floor for traps. Two dozen corpses, completely decayed, lie in the pit. They're mostly Indians, but there are a few Aztecs and two conquistadors, recognizable in their rusted equipment. The corpses are skeletons, but the Indians can be seen to have a black, fungoid growth in their ribcage. They too had taken Tezcatlipoca's offer...

b) Bolt Trap

In the next section of the corridor lie another dozen skeletal corpses. Many are conquistadors, a few Indians. In the left-hand wall of the passage are countless small holes. The floor slabs of the hallway activate with 50 pounds of pressure, loosing a rain of small cross-bow-type bolts. However, the magazines are all empty, so that the characters are in no danger, though they can't know that. The Indians all show black growths in their chests like those the characters have. The conquistadors do not. The reason is, of course, that the conquistadors were among those who penetrated the pyramid in 1601 looking for the Golden Scorpion. The Indians were all human sacrifices resurrected by Tezcatlipoca to fetch the Scorpion for him.

c) Second Pitfall

This pit trap corresponds exactly to the first.

d) Third Pitfall

A particularly cruel trap, two pitfalls built next to each other. Each is six feet long. Anyone jumping over the first one will land in the second. Damage is as given above. The pitfalls can be crossed, for example, by stretching the troughs over them from above. Between the traps is a stable middle wall. Alternatively, the characters can try to jump all 12 feet. This requires a successful **Jump** roll.

e) Death Slide

The hallway suddenly ends in a wall. The characters can make out a small opening in the ceiling above, big enough to crawl through. It's eight feet off the ground, so one character will have to boost another up, for example. The narrow passage leads off at an extremely dramatic downward slope. Its floor, walls, and ceiling are constructed of metal rollers that turn very easily. This is a speed-slide down. The players will likely presume that a trip down it is likely to be very unhealthy. Because of the rollers, anyone descending can not grab a handhold or brace themselves, and will inevitably slide down, landing exactly on the blade built vertically into the lower end of the shaft. It remains razor-sharp (because it's enchanted). The effect is the same as sliding into a band-saw. Survival is not possible. The blade automatically criticals, inflicting 6D6 damage, add 1D6 additional damage for each 10 feet the victim fell. The shaft is about 30 feet in length, so that the blade can be seen if a character uses a torch to illuminate the tunnel before climbing in. No one preceding the characters survived this trap. It was the reason that Tiburón del Arroyo gave up, after several of his men slid to their deaths. An additional conquistador, sacrificed by the Aztecs and given a new "heart" to look for the Golden Scorpion met his end here. He can be found on the other side of the "slide," cut cleanly in two like all the others.

It won't help to lower someone down the shaft on a rope in order to render the blade harmless. Because it's magic, it can only be destroyed by magical means (e.g., a Shriveling spell causing 15 HP of damage), and it will cut through anything placed on it. It is highly improbable that the players will have such means at their disposal. Due to the narrowness of the shaft, it's also impossible to remove the blade using tools.

9. The False Treasure Chamber

Anyone who survives the slide, however improbably, reaches the false treasure chamber. It is filled with objets d'art crafted by the Serpent People. There are pieces of tarnished silver, gold vessels

covered with precious stones, and more. On a pedestal sits a foot-high idol of a golden scorpion, covered with jewels. It is not solid gold, but hollow inside. Most importantly, it is not the true Golden Scorpion. These treasures are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions. None are magic. The characters' excitement should also be dampened by the question of how to get all this stuff back through the traps and survive.

In the back of the chamber, a design is carved into the stone of the wall. This is a magical Gate that the Serpent People used to reach the room without setting off the traps. It is a keyed gate, and can only be used by someone intoning the word "Yssghsshts" ("I am worthy" in the language of the Serpent People). In all probability, this makes it impossible for the characters to use.

One wall of the chamber shows evidence of a small tunnel obviously dug with primitive tools. This is the shaft the Aztecs dug when they couldn't overcome the traps and by which they actually reached the treasure chamber. The tunnel ends in a copse of vegetation in the quarry and can only be found from the outside if one knows where to look. The characters can use this tunnel to escape the temple complex relatively unobserved. At that point, only the gate in the Ravine of Echoes stands in their way.

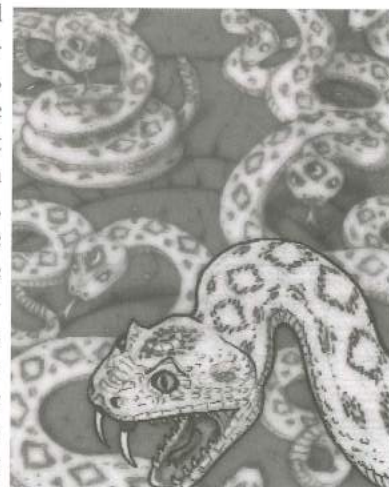
10. The Hidden Staircase

Under the seal is a worn staircase leading into the depths. The steps are so well-trodden that in the middle there's a slope almost like a slide down into the darkness. A slight breeze seems perceptible as long as the seal is open. With an *Idea* roll, the characters guess that there must be another way out down there. The staircase leads in a slight, but perceptible curve to the right, like a gigantic spiral staircase. The seal closes again in about five minutes. In the staircase under the seal, there is a lever which opens it again from below without a problem.

Several hundred steps later, the characters find themselves facing a circular room.

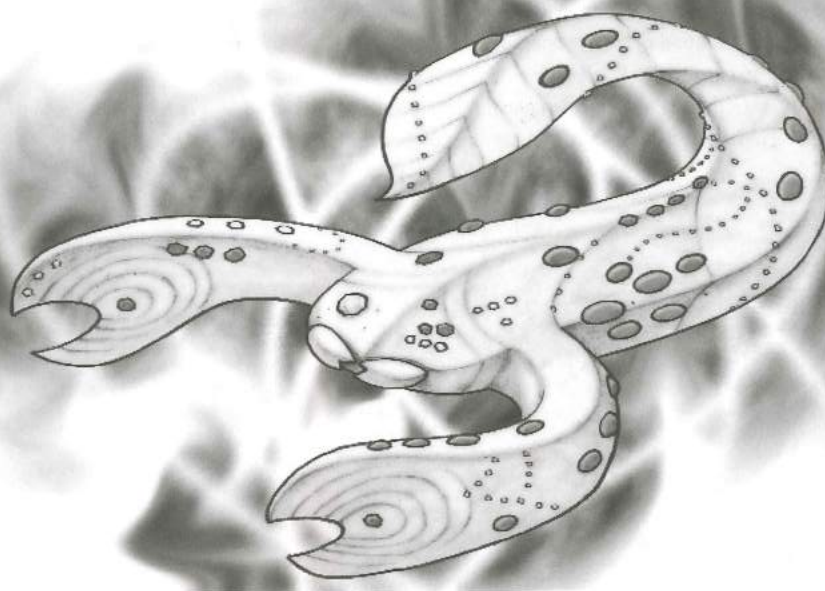
11. The Children of Yig

The room at the end of the spiral staircase is round and has a diameter of 65 feet. On the other side, an exit can be seen. The floor of the room seems to be in constant motion, shifting around. With an *Idea* roll or a close examination, the adventurers notice that the effect has nothing to do with the floor moving, but rather everything to do with the fact that it's completely covered with snakes. As **Biology**, **Natural History**, or **Foraging** rolls reveal, they are rattlesnakes, six-foot-long rattlesnakes. Unusually, they bear a white crescent moon on their heads. The characters know of no such snake. The snakes shake their rattles menacingly, making it clear that crossing the room will be fatal. The characters lose 0/1 Sanity points at the sight.



These snakes are actually no ordinary snakes, but "Children of Yig," also known as the holy snakes of Yig. Their poison is absolutely deadly. Death inevitably follows a bite in 1D6 minutes (see also the snakes' statistics in the appendix). The snakes can live down here because they are not normal snakes, but dedicated to Yig, on guard here for eons, ensuring that only a snake, or more exactly, a Serpent Man, can enter the Hall of the Golden Scorpion. This is better protection than all the traps, since it is a selective, intelligent safeguard.

The Golden Scorpion



The adventurers have no choice, however. If they want the Golden Scorpion, they have to cross the room. The Keeper can lean back and amuse himself watching the players bandy about ideas of what to do.

What the players can't possibly know is: the snakes pose no danger whatsoever to the characters. As described above, because of the black tissue in place of their heart and throughout their bloodstream, they are completely immune to poison. They have no circulatory system any more, in the human sense. The characters will take away nothing but the pain of the snakes' fangs biting them and the corresponding holes in their skin. If they wanted, they could sprint across the room and not lose a hit point.

If the players hesitate to put their characters at such risk, the Keeper can either accept it, and the adventurers have to figure out how to escape the valley, or he can move up the encounter with Esteban de Villa, the insane conquistador. He will appear on the far side of the room and walk across. The snakes will immediately bite him, but he'll come closer, unconcerned. He's also immune to poison. More on the encounter with Esteban de Villa in a few paragraphs.

Another possibility is that a character could be bitten in an attempt to get across unscathed and feel no ill effects from the poison. This should make it clear to the characters that they're immune to poison. (Or they might erroneously assume the Children of Yig are not venomous.)

Anyone who asks how snakes can live down here at all should be reminded (perhaps after a *Cthulhu Mythos* roll), that the Children of Yig are not normal snakes, but supernatural beings.

12. The Hall of the Golden Scorpion

See the next section.

The Hall of the Golden Scorpion

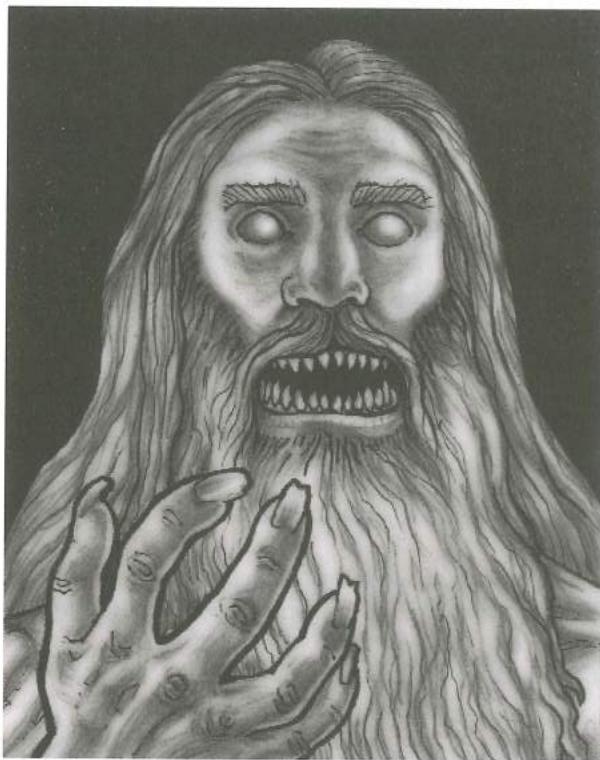
The walls of the passageway through which the adventurers pass have a golden sheen that's transformed into a lively glitter by their torches. But when they enter the Hall, they're blinded by the splendor. The walls, ceiling, and floor seem to be made of pure gold, glowing red and reflecting the flickering torchlight in multitudes. In the background, the rush of water can be heard. A subterranean creek flows through this hall. It's obviously a natural cavern that was carved out by the stream flowing through the back portion of the hall. It is the same stream that emerges at the foot of the pyramid's hill, flowing into the other creek and emptying into the lake in the valley.

The adventurers' attention will likely be captured by the Golden Scorpion, which simply sits on the floor of the Hall not far from the creek. A description of this artifact is found in the appendix. No pedestal, nothing. It just sits in the hall. The reason: it regularly changes its position. At this point, the Keeper should become familiar with the properties of the Golden Scorpion as described in the appendix. The blackish-green stone of which the complex is built prevents the Scorpion from leaving this Hall. It is trapped here, but it can exercise its powers inside the Hall at least.

Before the characters can reach the Golden Scorpion, Esteban de Villa, the mad conquistador of days gone by, will hurry up to them. A description and his background are also in the appendix. Esteban de Villa is barely sane. He has had no human contact for almost 300 years. Mostly, he jabbars and giggles madly into space. If the characters attempt to engage this long-bearded, long-haired, naked, golden man, he will tell them the following story, if incoherently and somewhat incomprehensibly.

He tells them how the Spaniards set out to find the secret valley of the temple. They were 33 men, among them Tiburón del Arroyo, Don Felipe Alvarado de la Cerda, and the priest, Don Alfonso Gabriel de Quesada. He tells of their battle with the Aztecs, of their victory, of the exploration of the pyramid, of how many good men died in the traps, of how Tiburón del Arroyo gave up, of how they were attacked again by the Aztecs and driven off. He was captured with

another man and sacrificed. He tells them of Tezcatlipoca and the pact and then of how he found the secret opening mechanism only to come down here and meet GOD. Esteban de Villa sincerely believes that the Scorpion is God, the Lord. It has made him immortal and a higher being. He himself is now an angel, a messenger of the Lord!



Esteban de Villa - barely sane messenger of the Lord?

At this point, if not earlier, the characters witness a golden wave emanating from the Scorpion. This power is detailed in the appendix.

If the adventurers decide for some reason to remain down here, they become like Esteban de Villa and live forever. Presumably they try and take possession of the Scorpion and flee the valley of the Aztecs. As soon as it becomes clear to Esteban de Villa what the characters have in mind, which is to say no later than their attempting to leave the Hall with the Scorpion, he bursts into a frenzy and attacks them. He fights to the death and will not lose consciousness beforehand. For Esteban de Villa the characters are blasphemers, enemies of God whom he must slay. He attempts to bite them to death with his shark maw. Fortunately, the adventurers are immune to his poisons because of the black substance.

flee!

There are two realistic avenues for flight. The first leads through the pyramid through the main exit. That way, the adventurers will have to reckon with many enraged Aztecs who will want to capture them again. It would be better to use the subterranean stream. There is enough ceiling clearance to swim out of the complex or, better, to use the Aztecs' transport troughs as boats. Each person must use one trough. After several minutes, light comes into view and the adventurers emerge into the outside world. Whether it's day or night varies depending on the course of the adventure. The characters can

make their way unobserved to the gate which is not far and is guarded by one not particularly alert guard.



Back to Ojo!

Should the situation become sticky, particularly if the characters have fled through the main gate and are being thronged by Aztec warriors, the Keeper can decide that the Golden Scorpion will demonstrate its abilities. It relocates the characters to another locale, e.g., outside the mountains. Now that it's no longer constrained by the greenish-black stone above it, it can become completely active.

Their trip back to civilization proceeds without incident or complication. The adventurers have so many unbelievable events behind them, nothing bothers them.

One Year to Live

The adventurers have done it! They have escaped with the Golden Scorpion. Each character receives 1D10+2 Sanity Points. They have accomplished everything that they wanted, but... They have only one year, or more exactly, 365 days, to live, and they must deal with the side effects of the Golden Scorpion. In addition, their particular pacts will likely lead them to believe that the only one who will be allowed to live more than the year will be the one person who brings the Scorpion to a particular place. This provides them all with a strong motive to remain in the vicinity of the Scorpion in order to ensure that one of the others doesn't abscond with it.

Some suggestions for structuring this one year with the Golden Scorpion can be found in the description of the capabilities and side effects of the Scorpion in the appendix. Some ensuing adventures can come about due to changes in location and temporal disturbances. Others could be connected with desperadoes or cultists trying (successfully or unsuccessfully) to steal the Scorpion from the characters. Because of the golden waves and the gilding of the surrounding area, it won't be possible for the adventurers to conceal it effectively or deposit it in a bank. Beyond that, now that the Scorpion is no longer contained in the former temple of the Serpent People, it can change its location constantly, as indicated. The Scorpion will be lost to the characters if they do not constantly remain in its vicinity and move with it.

We also suggest running other adventures during this year. They can be adventures based around the group dynamics that result from clashing over the Scorpion. But they can also be completely normal

adventures. And if the players aren't inclined to risk their characters in such a fashion, it can nevertheless come to pass that they are "moved" into the middle of an adventure by the Golden Scorpion. In play-testing, it proved very effective to confront the players with the bizarre properties of the Scorpion and to allow the characters to change under its influence. The Scorpion itself always remained a mystery. The characters needed it in order not to die inevitably in a year; simultaneously, it was a curse, because it altered them and brought them into uncomfortable situations. In addition, an element of mistrust crept in, because of the constant uncertainty that another character would want to make off with the Scorpion.

In adventures with the Golden Scorpion, the Keeper should always portray it as if it has a malevolent intelligence and understands exactly what's going on around it. Perhaps a little like a spoiled child that torments its parents (who can't simply abandon their child). The characters are, after all, dependent on the Scorpion. For example, if a character sighs that they're lucky not to have been moved into the American Civil War, that exact thing may come to pass shortly thereafter, as the characters find themselves on a battlefield again! But, as described, the Scorpion rarely makes large temporal leaps, and will soon return to the characters' timeline.

By the way, the time-jumps can't be used to outfox Nyarlathotep. One year equals 365 days, no matter in which epoch the days are spent. It would not be possible to travel back into the past, toss the Scorpion into the sea, and live happily ever after. Three hundred sixty-five days are 365 days – even if you spend them in the past.

If the Keeper doesn't care to set other adventures during the year, he can always determine that the Scorpion must be brought to its destination immediately. It would, of course, lose the greater portion of gaming enjoyment involved in weaving the Golden Scorpion into a campaign.

Part 2: Tezcatlipoca's Promise The Dream

Around the end of the year, all the characters have the same dream. It is the event that the adventurers have feared for a year. At first, there seemed to be so much time, but now it's all run out.

Each character finds himself back in the Aztec valley at night on the pyramid platform. The icy wind once again tears at his clothes. The round moon looks on coldly from the heavens and promises an early death. The



A Mask of Tezcatlipoca

adventurer is not alone. Tezcatlipoca regards him silently while fumes rise from the mirror on his chest. Then he speaks, almost whispering, but very forceful. He orders the character to take the Scorpion and return to the mountains along the New Mexican border. He must seek out an ancient Indian pueblo built into a cliff in a remote valley. The adventurer experiences a vision in which he's flying above the mountains to the pueblo like a bird. He now knows the way. In this pueblo, there's an entrance into a tunnel system, Tezcatlipoca explains, that leads to an ancient cult site. In the middle of a hall stands a low pillar. He must place the Scorpion on the pillar. If he does, he may choose between his mortal life or an immortal existence at Tezcatlipoca's side. If someone else places the Scorpion on the pillar, or if no one does, then as the year runs out, the black substance will dissolve and the character must die.

With these bald words in his ear, each adventurer wakes screaming.

Back into the Mountains

Now the events surrounding the Golden Scorpion come to a close. That which began with the discovery of a map fragment on Kid Richter's body will end in an ancient cave once used by the Nyarlathotep cult. Only one of the characters will survive.

The Keeper should grant the players all possible liberties: role-playing between the players is now paramount. Will one or more attempt to steal the Scorpion for himself, leaving the others behind? Might they even try to take each other out? Do they intrigue against each other? Or do they remain the loyal companions they always were, and decide in advance who gets to live? Do they play poker for it?

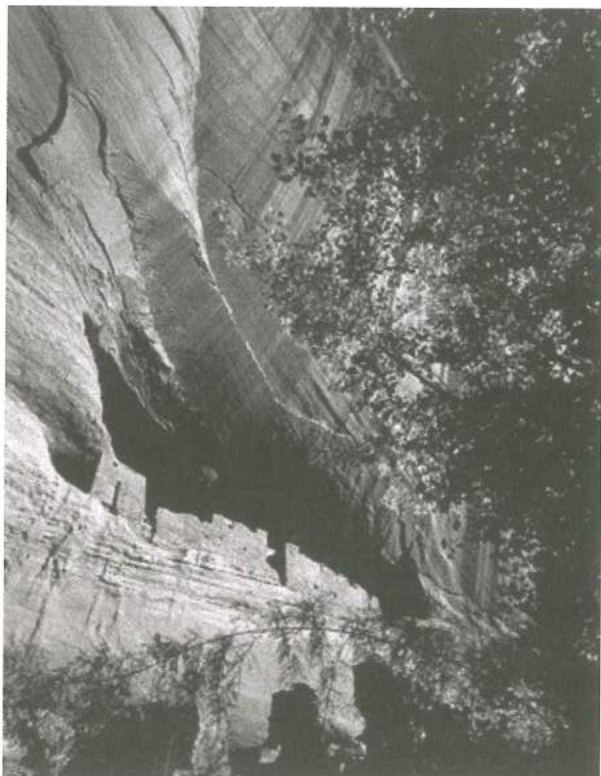
All of this is the barest sketch; it demands a lot of improvisation on the part of the Keeper as well, although he can really let the players react off each other. In one playtest, the players decided to continue working together and to place the Scorpion on the pillar together. One of the characters, an unscrupulous bounty hunter, tricked the rest after they reached the goal and placed the Scorpion on the pedestal himself.

Once again, the adventurers set out for Ojo and head down Dead Man's Valley. They turn to the west under the Pueblo of Ghosts and travel through inhospitable, barren hills as they get deeper and deeper into the mountains. It is Apache country, but the adventurers don't see any of the wild warriors yet.

Four days they spend in the lonely mountain wilderness. Four days leaves plenty of time for intrigues and other cruelties, if the characters and the Keeper have planned something along those lines.

Apaches Again!

Finally, they arrive in a protected valley basin, at the end of which the remains of an Indian pueblo can be made out under an overhanging cliff. The characters would do well to observe it closely, because they can make out (with telescopes) movements in the buildings. At night, a great campfire can be seen from a distance without a problem. Someone's living in the pueblo! The adventurers have stumbled their way directly into the hideout of an Apache clan who discovered the valley and the easily-defensible pueblo. Their families live here when the men are away. At this time, there are ten



warriors here, 13 women, and 15 children. "Elders" per se don't exist: if you can still stand upright, you're still a warrior.

Up in the pueblo, the Apaches are all but invulnerable. A single, narrow, steep path leads up to the pueblo along which two people can't walk abreast. Once up at the pueblo, a similarly narrow passage leads between two earthen walls. The Apaches can easily overpower the adventurers at that point. During the day, entering is almost out of the question. At night, it would be possible to sneak into the pueblo. The Indians don't expect to be found here and are consequently only moderately watchful. The Keeper can flavor a nighttime raid with **Climb** rolls to simulate how difficult it is to stay on the narrow path at night and **Sneak** rolls to keep from waking the Indians. The Apaches are sleeping in the pueblo in one location around a great fire. One warrior keeps watch. The sleeping people require two combat rounds to wake up, and one more to be ready to fight. The ten warriors' statistics are those of a typical Apache warrior in the appendix. The women and children will not join the fight.

Failing anything else, the Keeper can call for an *Idea* roll and remind the players that the Apaches are known for accepting "protection" payments to avoid hostilities. If the adventurers approach



openly and peacefully, the Apaches will converse with them. The Keeper's goal should be to drive a hard bargain on the Apaches' behalf, ending with the adventurers – disarmed! – permitted to descend into the passages and rooms under the pueblo, in order to bring the Golden Scorpion to its destination. The characters should reach the finale practically in their underwear.

Otherwise, they face a bloody confrontation. Because the Apaches have their families here, they will fight to the last man.

Under the Pueblo

In a pueblo tower, there is a hole in the floor which leads to a small labyrinth of passages and chambers. Many passageways have collapsed over time. An Indian tribe once resided here; they worshipped Nyarlathotep under the guise of "The Black Rainmaker." Because they abandoned the pueblo five hundred years before, there are no traces of them left, apart from the natural cave that they used as a worship hall. It is of a roughly round shape, and in the center sits an equally round raised area of air-dried mud bricks, from the middle of which a pillar rises. There stood the idol of Nyarlathotep that the Indians took with them when they left this dwelling. What remains is a special place with particular characteristics, specifically the ability to curb the Scorpion's power again, albeit this time in Nyarlathotep's sphere of influence.

A map of the hall is nearby. There are some boulders lying around which can serve as cover, if the characters end up at each others' throats. Otherwise, there's nothing else in the room but a comparatively unspectacular round brick space about 40 feet across and a hip-high pedestal like a pillar in the middle. The walls of the hall, as well as the pillar, are decorated with spirals and designs which will mean nothing to the characters.

The finale

If someone with the black substance in his chest steps onto the mud-brick area in the middle of the hall, the substance liquefies and begins to flow out of the character's body (Sanity points loss: 1D3/1D6). Anyone without the substance in them (e.g., an Apache warrior) is unaffected. The loss of the black substance becomes more and more dramatic the closer the character gets to the pedestal. It is accompanied by burning pain and an acute terror of death. A character with the substance can only stagger three steps before the black filling has completely flowed out of his chest, and he dies on the spot.

It's different if one is touching the Golden Scorpion when entering the area, particularly if it's carried to the pedestal. Then the deliquescence does not take place and one reaches the pillar. If one places the Golden Scorpion on it, the deadly effect is completely revoked.

The one character who places the Scorpion on the pedestal fulfills Tezcatlipoca's conditions. All the others will die at the end of the year – that is, soon. At that point, the black mass oozes out of them as described above. In a few moments, it's completely flowed out of their bodies and they collapse, dead. Any superficial gilding of the mass from the presence of the Scorpion was simply that – superficial. The substance remains black and tough under the surface.

Perhaps the Keeper will have the time and leisure to create an especially great and atmospheric final scene for the dying player characters – in which they hold each other tightly, all dying together in

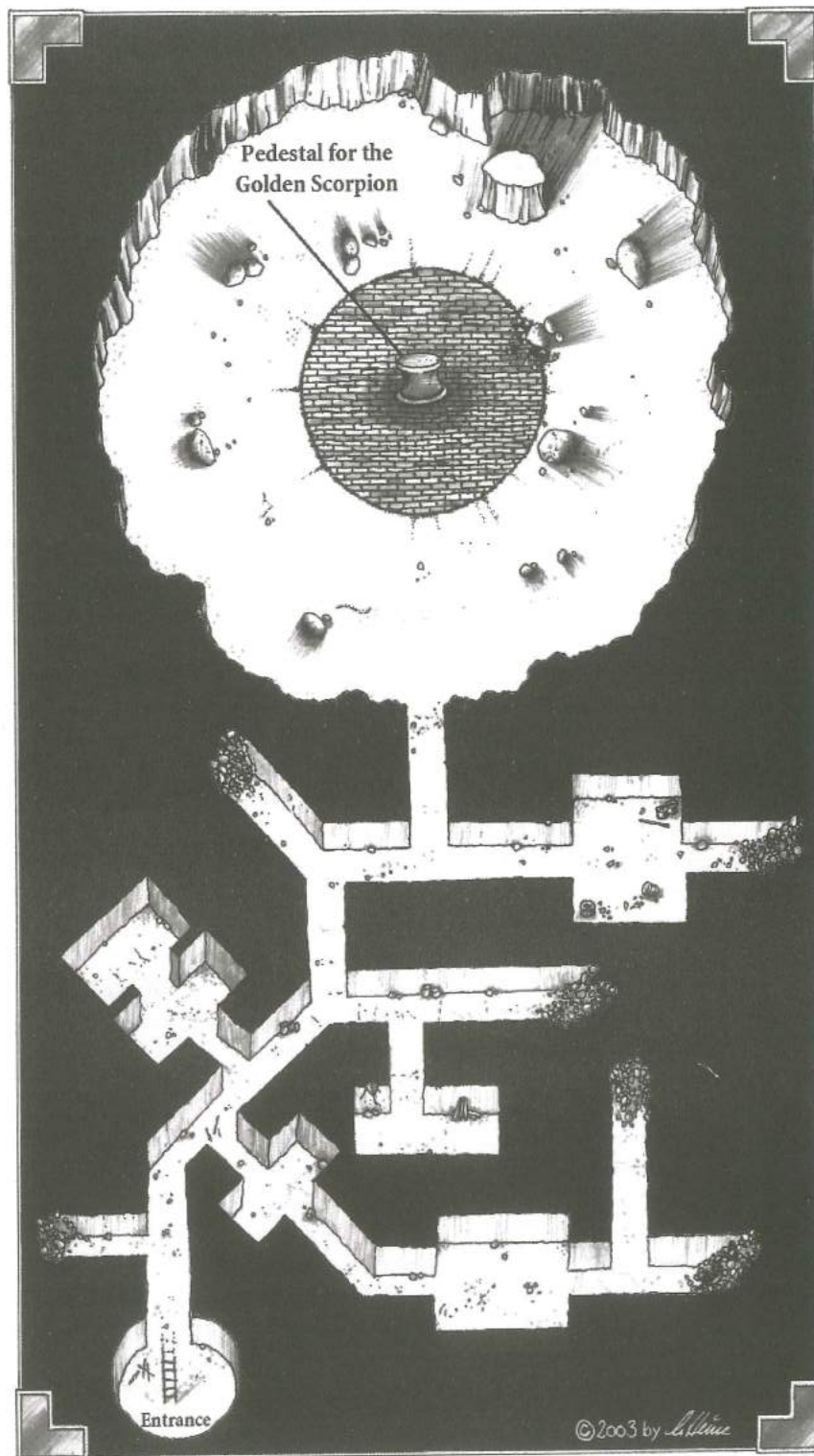
the same moment. Or perhaps each of them dies alone.

The one character who placed the Scorpion on the pedestal feels himself at that moment torn away. He finds himself once again atop the pyramid, battered by an icy wind. With the full moon at his back, Tezcatlipoca is visible only as a silhouette; the smoke of his mirror curls up before the ageless stars.

"Now is the time to decide, human. Do you choose a despicable mortal life, or do you want more? If you so decide, then I shall transform you into my servant and you will learn the truth about the world and the universe. You will travel between the stars, visit strange worlds, and view things that no man has ever seen. You will live forever and leave this mortal existence behind. Choose!"

If the character decides that he wants to live a normal life, he'll lurch back into consciousness. A short moment of dizziness passes. No gilded patches on his body. No black mass in his chest. A heartbeat. His body is warm. The character is in fact as he was before, while his friends die a horrible death as the black slime runs from their chests. Tezcatlipoca has kept his promise: he has given the character his old life back, and indeed a mortal life. But soon he notices deep wrinkles and age spots appearing on himself. Then it's obvious. The character is aging at a furious pace, at about a year per day. Realizing this, the character loses 2D10 Sanity points. His companions, his friends, are all dead because he egotistically had to come out on top. This costs him another 1D10 Sanity points. The character's last days will not be filled with happiness.

On the other hand, if he decides for immortality at Tezcatlipoca's side, then the god will address him further on the pyramid, "So shall it be. You shall be my immortal servant." He steps towards the character, lays his hand on his shoulder, and smiles at him cryptically. The character immediately finds himself back in the subterranean hall. If the year is up, he sees his companions in their death throes. Otherwise, he notices the expressions of horror on their faces. He looks down at himself and notices the metamorphosis that is transforming ever more quickly: his limbs are shriveling, and the black in his chest is spreading everywhere over his body. The gold remains on his skin so that he soon appears black and golden. As he's lying on the floor, just a torso with a head, unbelievable pain



overcomes him as his body stretches longer and longer, his head changes shape, and his bones realign. His body gets longer and longer, a snakelike tail grows from it, wings appear on his back under slimy membranes, then burst free, wet and bat-like. After about a minute the character has transformed completely – into a Hunting Horror!

Nyarlathep has held up his bargain. The character has become immortal and his servant. He can fly between the stars and visit strange worlds. Simultaneously, Nyarlathep floods his servant with

all the knowledge that men have ever sought – and more. His Cthulhu Mythos skill rises to 99%. His Sanity declines permanently to zero. It is finished. The character is a black-gold Hunting Horror who lets loose his horrific scream. And the hunger... to kill... the hunger... If the other characters are still alive, he falls upon them, kills them, tears them to pieces. The statistics of a Hunting Horror are found on p. 166 of the 6th edition rulebook. Then Nyarlathotep calls his servant to him, and thereafter he shall serve and kill for him. For a while, he's a favorite toy of Nyarlathotep and will always catch the eye with his black-and-gold coloration. Whatever human understanding remains in the monster will quickly fade, and someday this black-gold Hunting Horror will only pause briefly at the sound of its former name before slaying the speaker.

The group of adventurers has now been completely wiped out or taken out of the game. What began with the discovery of the treasure map came to a tragic end. At first, they seemed to have cheated death, but in the end, the characters became horribly corrupted as pawns of Nyarlathotep in his eons-long quest to obtain the Golden Scorpion. The campaign is at an end. Nyarlathotep has triumphed at the expense of willing and expendable minions.

If this strikes the Keeper as too grim, he can ameliorate the consequences. In particular, one option is obvious: the characters could all place the Golden Scorpion on the pedestal together, that is, making sure they are all touching it while bearing it to the pedestal. Then they can cross the bricks without having their black hearts melt. If they place the Scorpion together, then they've all met the pact's conditions – or none of them have, however the Keeper wants to interpret it. The Keeper can decide what he considers advantageous. It would be conceivable that Nyarlathotep appreciates the characters' clever ploy and, amused, grants them all continued life. The black substance remains in them and will keep them alive, even if they leave the underground chamber. They live to adventure another day! If the Keeper has in mind a continuation of the campaign, he can hint at it using *Idea* rolls. The adventurers gain their lives and 1D8+2 Sanity points to boot.

The final analysis is up to the Keeper: does he want a tragic ending, with Nyarlathotep the sole victor, or does he want a Hollywood-style happy ending in which a group of friends cheat the horrific Messenger of the Gods? We prefer the gruesome variation, which more closely corresponds to Lovecraft's worldview. One should never undertake anything at the behest of Nyarlathotep – and the characters were really dead the moment they were sacrificed on the Aztecs' altar. Nothing good can come from the unnatural lengthening of lives...

Appendix

1. Non-Player Characters

Prince Boris II Ivanov, age 47

Short-lived Injun hunter

(for purposes of damage, he's considered a Henchman)

STR 14	CON 14	SIZ 15	DEX 10	INT 11
APP 6	EDU 15	POW 15	SAN 75	HP 15

Damage bonus: +1D4

Languages: Russian 75% (own), Other Language (English) 40%, Other Language (French) 50%

Skills: Bear Hug 80%, Booming Laugh 90%, Credit Rating 60%, Foraging 05%, Kiss on Cheek 75%, Navigate 60%, Ride 65%, Tipple 85%

Attacks: Sharps .52 Buffalo Rifle 50%, 2D10+3

Description: 47 years old. 6'3" tall.

Broad shoulders. Garibaldi-style beard. Paw-like hands. Booming laugh. Strong Russian accent. Grand Duke Boris is a good-natured guy, hearty, reminiscent of a friendly bear. When it comes to Indians, like many men of the time, he's a bigot through and through: they're nothing but "savages" and not really human beings.



Red Knife, age 34

Cold-hearted Raider (Henchman)

STR 16	CON 18	SIZ 11	DEX 15	INT 14
APP 11	EDU 13	POW 13	SAN 65	HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Languages: Athabascan 65% (own), Other Language (English) 40%, Other Language (Spanish) 50%

Skills: Climb 80%, Dodge 80%, First Aid 40%, Foraging 90%, Grit 70%, Hide 90%, Listen 80%, Natural History 80%, Navigate 85%, Ride 80%, Sixth Sense 70%, Sneak 85%, Spot Hidden 65%, Trap 60%, Track 85%, Throw 65%

Attacks: .44 Winchester 1866 Carbine 60%, 2D6+2

Bowie Knife 60%, 1D4+2+db

Description: Red Knife is a slim but powerful Apache in his mid-thirties, with cold eyes that have seen death in dozens of forms. He is contemptuous of all whites and will not hesitate to kill them. He has known only the battle for his tribe's survival. If the characters, against expectation, are defeated, he does not hesitate to kill and scalp them. To



be fair, it should be mentioned that some Indian tribes may have "learned" scalping from Europeans who paid bounties for Indian scalps. The Indians paid like with like and scalped their victims

thereafter. (Other Indian tribes, particularly some Plains Indians, may have scalped traditionally. The archaeological evidence is ambiguous.)

If the group is defeated, the Keeper should allow them to ransom themselves. The Apaches customarily allowed this practice. The characters, left in their underwear, will have to return to Ojo and try and reequip themselves...

Typical Apache Warrior (No Feather, Striking Eagle, Six Toes, Stubborn Horse, Black Bear, Keen Eye, Sharp Nose, Spotted Tail, Red Star, Low Dog, Plenty Bears, Mexican Horse, et al.) (Desperadoes)

STR 14	CON 17	SIZ 11	DEX 14	INT 11
APP 10	EDU 10	POW 12	SAN 60	HP 13

Damage bonus: +1D4

Languages: Athabascan 50% (own), Other Language (English) 30%, Other Language (Spanish) 40%

Skills: Climb 80%, Dodge 60%, First Aid 30%, Foraging 80%, Grit 70%, Hide 85%, Listen 80%, Natural History 80%, Navigate 80%, Ride 75%, Sixth Sense 60%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 65%, Throw 65%, Track 80%, Trap 60%

Attacks: Each has a Bow 60%, 1D8+½ db
every third man has a Spencer .52 Carbine 50%, 2D6+3
each has a Bowie Knife 50%, 1D4+2+db

Description: Hardened Apache warriors, weathered and battle-tested. There are no better fighters than Apaches; they train from childhood for life as warriors and are tough, strong, and skilled. If an Apache doesn't want to be found, he won't be found. Apaches can cover hundreds of miles in endurance runs and, in addition, are exceptional horsemen. In their eyes, flight is tactical, not cowardly. If a fight is senseless, they find nothing shameful in withdrawing. Their pragmatism can be taken to gruesome extremes: once, when group of Apaches with women and children was surrounded, the women smothered their children so that their cries wouldn't alert their enemies as they snuck through their lines. The Apaches escaped successfully.



Typical Aztec Warrior, 80 in total (Desperados)

STR 12	CON 12	SIZ 9	DEX 11	INT 12
APP 12	EDU 14	POW 13	SAN 65	HP 11

Damage bonus: +0

Languages: Nahuatl 70% (own)

Skills: Dodge 40%, Grit 50%, Spot Hidden 50%, Throw 50%

Attacks: Macuahuitl ("sword") 50%, 1D6+1

Mitl ("javelin") 50%, 1D6+½ db

Armor: 4 points from helmet, ichcahuipilli ("quilted cotton body armor"), and chimalli ("shield"); only provides 1 point of protection against firearms

Description: The Aztec warriors wear knee-length armor of quilted cotton and wooden shields covered with animal skins and painted. They carry a macuahuitl, a paddle-shaped

"sword" of hardwood edged with razor-sharp obsidian chunks—sharp enough to decapitate a horse. Their javelins are also outfitted with obsidian tips and are flung with great force. Unlike most historical Aztec tribes, the Atzantlan Aztecs wear cantilevered helmets of wood covered in painted hides. The helmets cover the warriors faces and bear the fear-inducing masks which scare the Apaches so, and because of which the Apaches consider them evil spirits.



Five Aztec Commanders: Acolmiztli, Xomimitl, Chimalpopoca, Ahuizotl, Axolohua (Henchmen)

STR 13	CON 13	SIZ 9	DEX 11	INT 13
APP 12	EDU 14	POW 13	SAN 65	HP 11

Damage bonus: +0

Languages: Nahuatl 70% (own)

Skills: Dodge 60%, Grit 60%, Spot Hidden 60%

Attacks: Macuahuitl ("sword") 60%, damage 1D6+1

Armor: 5 points of helmet, ichcahuipilli ("quilted cotton body armor"), tlahuiztli ("war suit"), and chimalli ("shield"); only provides 1 point of protection against firearms

Description: The Aztec commanders also wear knee-length cotton armor and wooden shields covered with animal skins and painted. Over the cotton armor, they wear a war suit made of feathers which is particularly beautiful. In addition, the feathers have an additional protective effect. They are also armed with a macuahuitl. Their helmets are also cantilevered and made of wood covered with painted hides.



Typical Holy Snake of Yig ("Child of Yig")

STR 6	CON 12	SIZ 6
DEX 18	POW 12	HP 9

Movement rate: 6 crawling, 3 swimming

Damage bonus: -1D6

Attacks: Bite 75%, damage: death by venom in 1D6 minutes

Skills: Dodge 75%, Hide 85%, Sneak 85%, Spot Hidden 55%

Description: The holy snakes of Yig in this adventure are six-foot rattlesnakes that bear the unusual marking of a crescent moon on their forehead. Their poison is always fatal, at least to living organisms. The characters consequently are unaffected and take no damage from the snakebites.



Esteban de Villa, age 300**Mad conquistador (Henchman)**

STR 17	CON 13	SIZ 10	DEX 8	INT 9
APP 3	EDU 10	POW 12	SAN 0	HP 12

Damage bonus: +1D4**Languages:** Spanish 50% (own), Other Language (English) 30%, Other Language (Nahuatl) 30%**Skills:** Dodge 30%, Grit 01%, Giggle Insanely 99%, Listen 95%, Spot Hidden 01%**Attacks:** Fist 50%, 1D3+db

Kick 25%, 1D6+db

Bite 20%, 1D4+db+POT 10 Poison (to which the characters are immune)

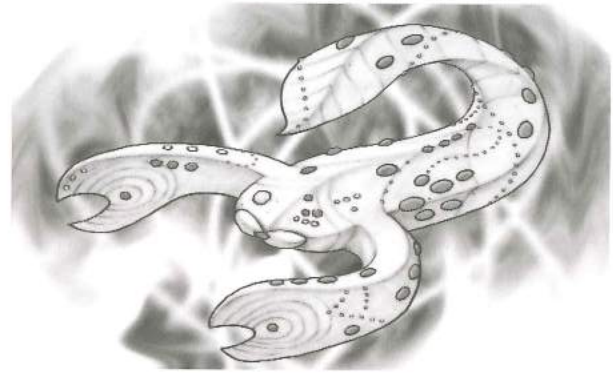
Description: Esteban de Villa is 5'7" tall, extremely haggard, and perhaps 30 years old (actually, he's over 300). It's particularly conspicuous that he is naked and that his body is completely golden. Even his long, shaggy hair looks like it's made of gold. His eyes are just golden surfaces. He's been blind for a long time, but it doesn't bother him since it's completely dark down here anyway. He hasn't even noticed. His hearing, on the other hand, is fantastic. Esteban de Villa has a mouth full of crooked and jagged teeth. More information on these can be found in the description of the Golden Scorpion. If one examines him closely, one can see the mass in his breast in place of his heart like the characters'. It is, of course, completely gilded. Esteban de Villa speaks broken English, which fact he must first remember. His Spanish is also very hard to understand, because his crooked teeth make him mumble and because he hasn't spoken to anyone but himself for almost 300 years.



Background: Esteban de Villa was a conquistador serving under Tiburón del Arroyo and was with him when he defeated the Aztecs here in the valley in 1601. When almost all the men were killed by the traps under the temple, the survivors had to flee. Esteban de Villa was one of them, but he was wounded by an Aztec javelin in his leg, falling into their hands. Ten days later, he was sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli. Tezcatlipoca made him his offer, which another sacrificed conquistador also took. After the other conquistador lost his (second) life in the hallway of traps, Esteban de Villa decided to occupy himself with the picture puzzle and the rotating wheels. Initially, the conquistadors had ignored it as some sort of game. He never understood exactly the purpose of the exercise, but he played around with it long enough that he produced a magic square. He was bitten in the room of the Children of Yig and consequently recognized his immunity to poison. Given that his previous experiences had cost him most of his sanity (as will likely be the case with the characters), he eventually lost his mind. He's come to worship the Golden Scorpion as his god and will attempt to prevent the characters from taking it with all means at his disposal. One thing about Esteban will surely interest the characters. Although the one year promised to him by Tezcatlipoca has long been up, he's still alive. The characters may be able to reason out that the black

mass makes them immortal and – above all – that Tezcatlipoca has no power here in the pyramid. As long as they remain here, they too can live forever...

2. The Golden Scorpion



Description:

The Golden Scorpion is a statue about a foot high and two feet long which seems to be entirely made of gold and richly set with jewels of all sorts. They are predominantly rubies, but there are also emeralds and cut diamonds, as well as jade studs. In shape, the Golden Scorpion recalls a scorpion but appears somewhat distorted and somehow asymmetrical. The two claws are stretched forward and open. The tail is curled above the body, stinger facing forward. Strangely, the statue lacks legs. A closer examination reveals that they have not been broken off in any fashion, but were never there in the first place. No eyes can be recognized, instead green "pustules" of jade are scattered over the entire body. If the Golden Scorpion is lifted, it's clearly too light to be made of solid gold. Anyone trying to scratch the gold off will learn that it's not possible, not even with diamond cutters. Obviously, despite its appearance, the Scorpion is not actually covered with gold, but an unknown material. The precious stones, on the other hand, are "real" and can be broken out of their settings if the Keeper allows. In that case, he should allow a temporal explosion to follow, catapulting the adventurers back in time to when the primordial soup was producing the first life on earth. It is a particularly boring era, lacking not only interesting sights but a breathable atmosphere. The Keeper should be ready with this warning if the characters begin to try and remove the jewels, demonstrating the Scorpion's abilities in dramatic fashion to make clear that danger looms. If the adventurers don't get it, they find themselves and everything in a 100-yard radius in a pool of tasty primordial soup again. Maybe in actuality life on earth developed from their corpses? Who knows?

Primary Abilities:

The Golden Scorpion should always remain mysterious. If the players believe they understand its workings, it will behave differently than predicted. Even the Keeper only knows so much about what the Scorpion was used for by the Serpent People, transporting themselves to other places, particularly to other planets. Moreover, they could take limited trips through time. In any case, the knowledge of how to use the Scorpion has long passed into oblivion since the

fall of the empire of the Serpent People – even among their descendants.

♦ Golden Waves

At irregular intervals, but at least several times a week, a circular golden wave emanates from the Scorpion. It's not visible in the air, but along the ground and on all objects through which it passes. It appears as if reality were water and someone had tossed a stone in where the Scorpion is. Where it is visible, the wave has a golden color. If it passes through a person, he'll feel a slight prickling quickly followed by a quickly ebbing numbness through his entire body. The wave seems to have no further effects and dissipates after traveling about 30 yards. The first time a character experiences a wave, he loses 0/1D3 Sanity points, but none after subsequent waves.

♦ Temporal Disturbances

Because the characters cannot operate the Scorpion, or even gain an idea of how to influence it, strange effects are constantly cropping up. Whenever the players believe they've figured out how an effect can be initiated, it should prove a mistake. So, for example, dropping the Scorpion can cause a temporal distortion one time. The next time, one occurs when a character sneezes, or when a shot is fired. The Keeper is completely at liberty here, but shouldn't overuse the effect.

The temporal disturbances are noticeable in two ways:

Rarely are they time-travels in the broadest sense. The characters will be displaced a few moments or even a few days in the future or the past. The Keeper should avoid larger time-jumps. They can even occur in combination with a change of location. Sanity point loss is at the Keeper's discretion, between 0/1 and 1D3/1D8.

The second temporal effect is the acceleration or slowing down the pace of time. This should only last from between a few moments to, at most, a few minutes. The exact speed is left up to the Keeper. So the surroundings can seem to become a twitching, rampaging mass with high-pitched sounds (time decelerating for the characters) or to move at a crawl, bullets becoming visible in the air and easily avoided, like in the film *The Matrix*. Sanity point loss is 1/1D6.

All temporal effects only incur Sanity losses for, at most, two occurrences. Thereafter, the character has adjusted and loses no more Sanity.

♦ Spatial Displacement

Without being able to affect it, the characters are suddenly displaced to another location. Sometimes only a few yards, sometimes hundreds of miles. They can wake up in the morning someplace completely different from where they went to sleep. The Scorpion, of course, accompanies them. The spatial displacements are additionally a wonderful tool for the Keeper to bring the characters to locales where his own adventures will take place. Even if the characters have no reason to go to a place, they are simply transported there against their will. This displacement should be used judiciously by the Keeper, so that it's always a significant event and doesn't become tedious. The first few times the characters lose 1/1D6 Sanity points. Thereafter, they become accustomed to it.

Side Effects:

Proximity to the Golden Scorpion and, above all, exposure to the mysterious golden waves have certain side effects. It is important to note that the Keeper is free to omit one, several, or all of the side effects, if he doesn't find them appealing.

♦ Gilding

The area in an approximately 30-yard radius around the Scorpion retains a kind of residue of the golden waves. A little gold fleck can be found on a leaf here and a rock there. If the Scorpion can be compelled to remain in one place, its surroundings are colored more and more by each wave, until it's completely golden after approximately 200 years. The color is not removable. It is the material itself that changes its color, not a coating of any sort.

Unfortunately for the characters, they also become increasingly discolored by each golden wave that passes through them. It begins with a birthmark-sized spot. Soon there are several, maybe on their faces. Then they become connected surfaces. After a year, having been in the vicinity of the Scorpion virtually the whole time, "experiencing" every wave, the characters have dollar-bill sized patches of golden skin all over their bodies. Even their hair, nails, and the like can be "gilded." Such discolored patches are somewhat insensitive, like thick calluses. A one-time loss of 1/1D4 Sanity points is the result. Later they lose 2 points of APP when obvious gold patches appear, for example, on their faces and they don't cover them with makeup, a bandanna, or the like.

Eyes can also become golden. This is problematic because the affected eye is also blinded thereby. Once it's blinded, the golden color becomes complete on the next wave. If anyone touches the eye, it feels hard. If it is removed surgically, it can be determined that it is solid and golden throughout. It is in any case no longer a normal eyeball (1/1D3 Sanity points loss, 1D2/1D6 for the afflicted character). Anyone with a golden eye loses 3 APP and 20% **Credit Rating**. An eye patch lessens the loss to -1 APP, -10% **Credit Rating**.

♦ Bad Teeth

After approximately the 20th golden wave, one character will notice that his teeth are loose. After the 30th wave, they will start falling out. They bleed a little, but a few days later, the character notices that new teeth are growing in from below. They are crooked, lopsided, and very sharp teeth which grow into his mouth in several rows, one behind the other, until his mouth is filled like that of a shark or crocodile. The teeth break off easily and are hollow inside. Most importantly, they are filled with a POT 10 poison (to which all the characters are immune because of the black tissue). A character with such teeth can attack at a 10% chance of success (damage, 1D4+db+POT 10 poison). With such a shark's maw, as soon as the character opens his mouth, he loses 6 APP and 50% **Credit Rating** (to a minimum of 01%).

♦ Angry, Angry Men

After three months in the vicinity of the Golden Scorpion, the characters become markedly more aggressive. Their **Grit** drops by 5% per month until it reaches 01%. Rages brought on by trifles are no rarity.

♦ Nightmares

After a month in the presence of the Scorpion, all characters begin to have nightmares. They are dreams of space and time, of alien stars, of bizarre beings, of past and future days. The dreams always have a threatening aspect. Every month each affected character loses 1D4 points of Sanity. The Keeper can also award the characters 1D3 points of **Cthulhu Mythos** every month because of the insights they gain from the dreams.

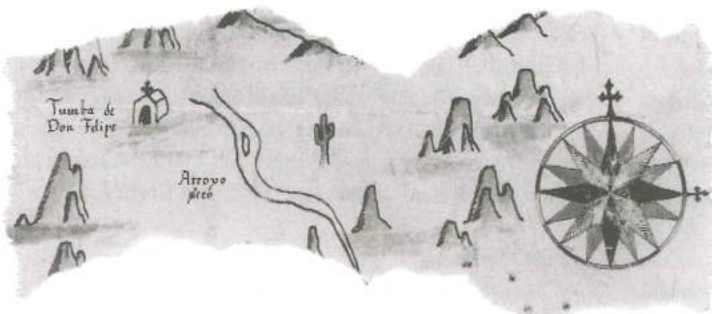
3. Handouts

Scorpion Handouts 1a, 1b & 1c:
Map of Rodrigo Tiburón del Arroyo

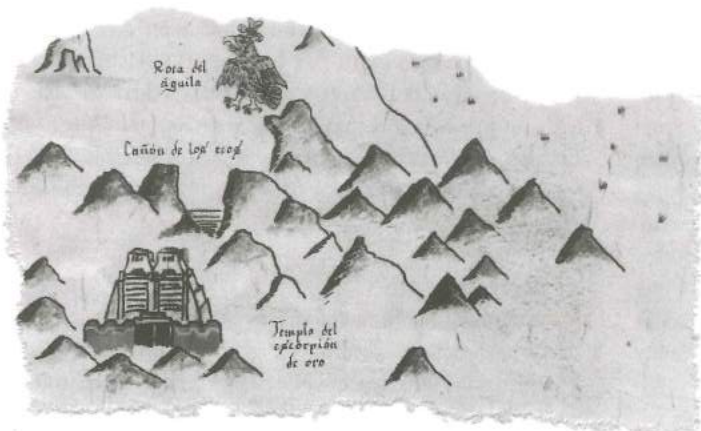


The upper left corner reads: "I am Rodrigo Álvarez Tiburón del Arroyo, conquistador in the name of His Majesty, King Phillip III of Spain, who declares the following: on the twenty-third of June in the year of Our Lord 1601, after overcoming many terrible tribulations and dangers, I, along with thirty-two valiant companions, discovered the secret valley where the brave Indians have hidden their most important goods. This map records the way to the immense treasures, of which the most impressive is the so-called scorpion of gold. It is a pagan idol of gold, decorated with the most precious stones."

The individual entries on the map read, from top to bottom, "Spring of the Blessed Virgin Mary," "Dead Man's Valley," & "Pueblo of Ghosts."

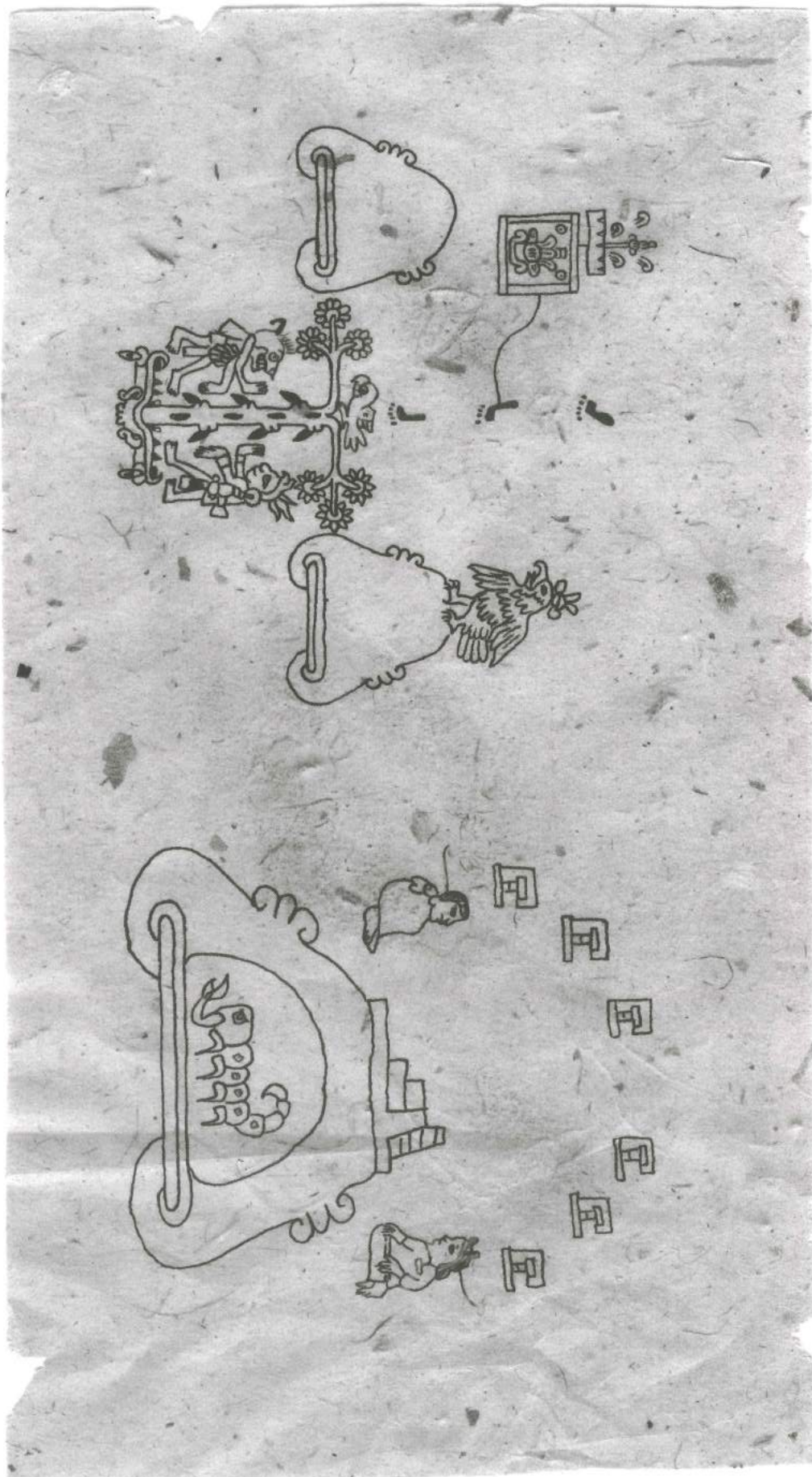


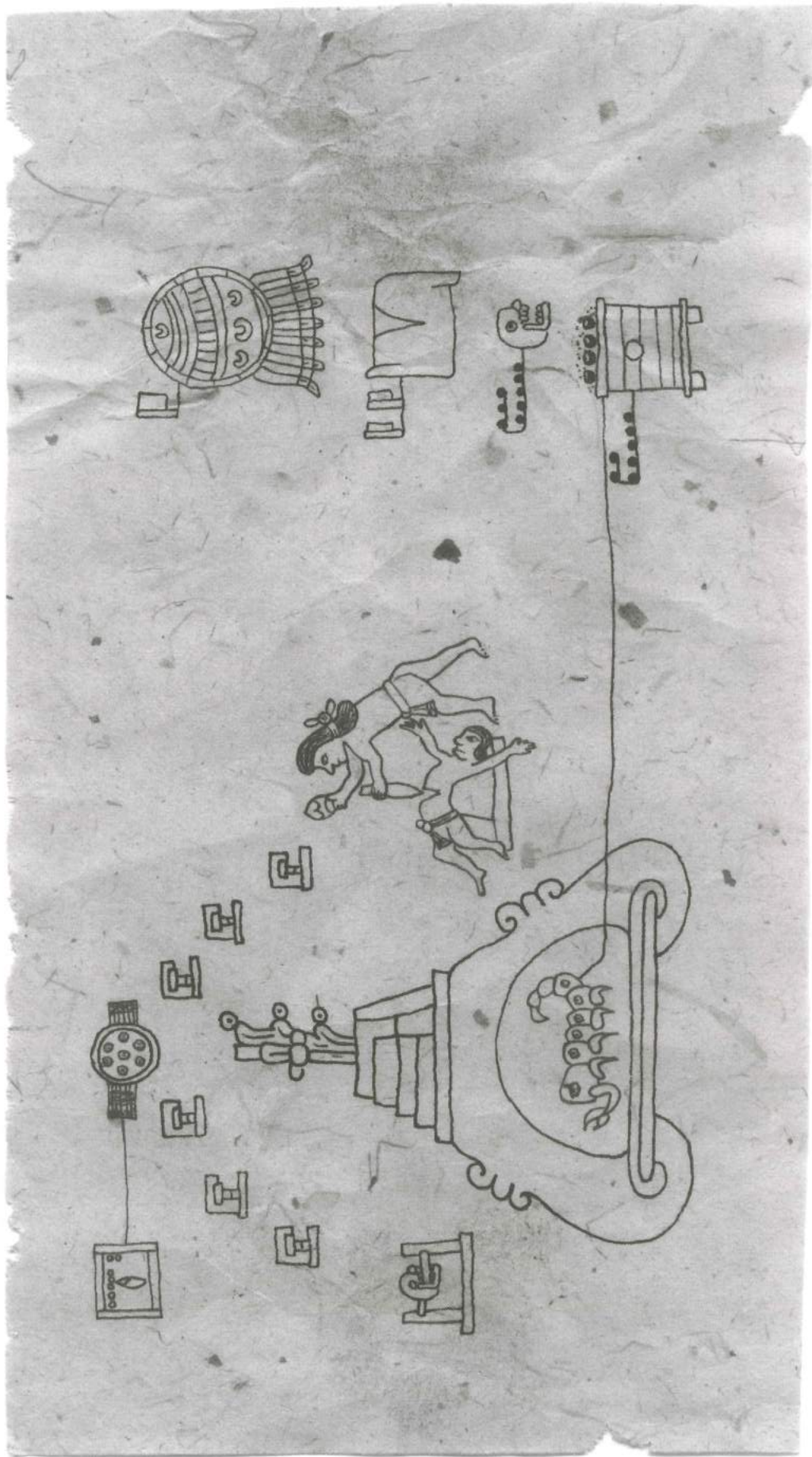
On this fragment of the map: "Don Felipe's Grave," & "Dry Creek."



On this fragment of the map: "Eagle Rock," "Ravine of Echoes," & "Temple of the Golden Scorpion."

Scorpion Handout 2a: Excerpt from an Aztec codex





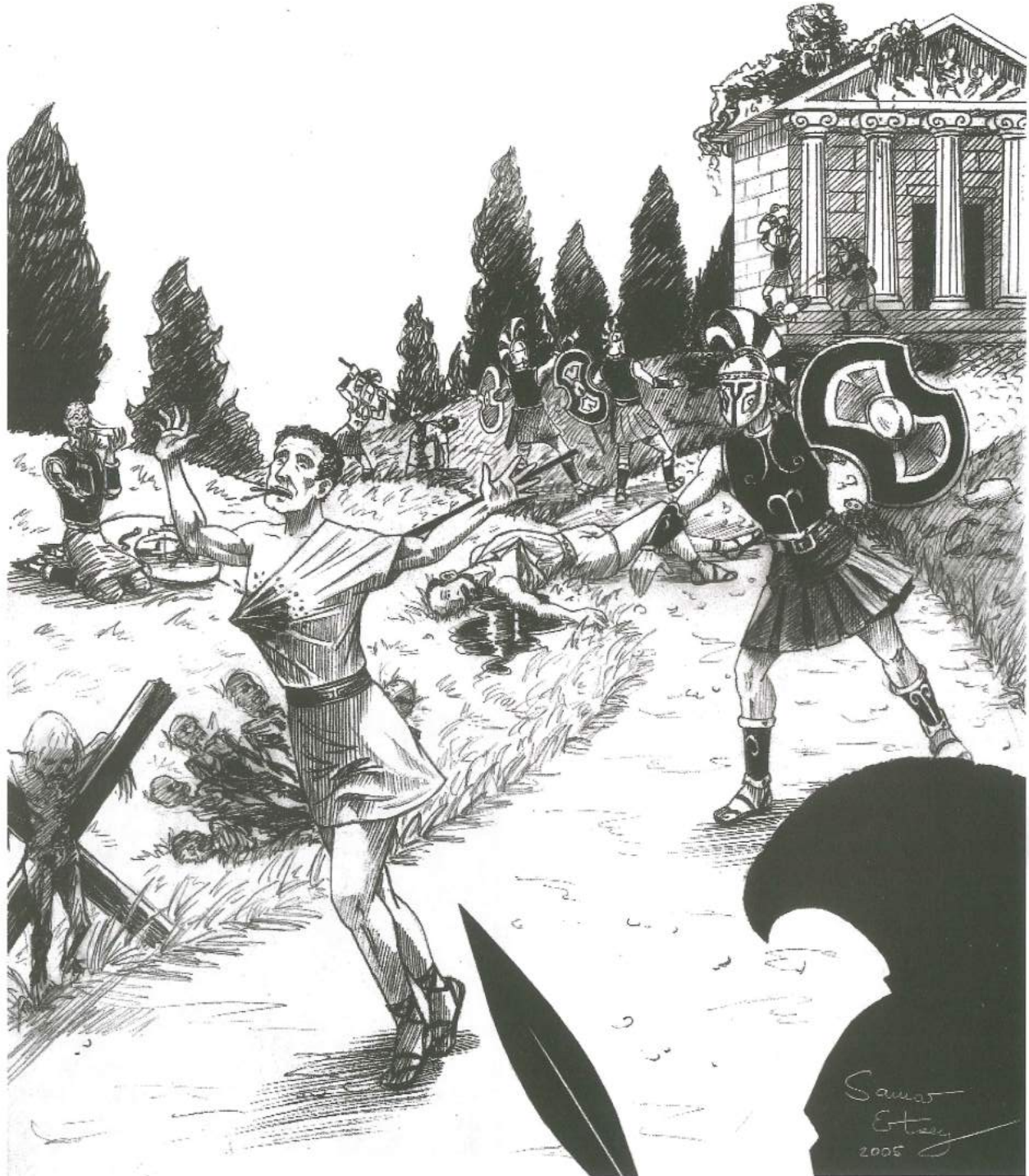
Scorpion Handout 2b. Excerpt from an Aztec codex



Cult Exposed: Chapter 2

The 13th Olympian

by Ben Counter



In ancient Athens, the cradle of democracy and birthplace of western civilization, there festered a blood cult that recruited from Athens' most beloved sons. Its members worshipped Iresbeus, the God of Corruption, in the hope that their traumatic memories would be replaced by blessed oblivion so they could better serve their city and their ancestors. But Iresbeus was not just a target of devotion, like the cold, aloof Olympian gods – he was very real, and his demands pushed the cult members into the most abhorrent of acts.

Two and a half thousand years later, the worship of Iresbeus is beginning anew. Though destroyed in 404 B.C., the cult left its imprint on the literature and archaeology of ancient Greece, and the Thirteenth Olympian Study Group is piecing it together. Its leader is just beginning to understand the truth – Iresbeus is real and really can deliver what he promises. Soon a second fully-fledged priesthood will emerge, and the rites of bloodletting will begin anew.

Thersites and the Bringer of Blessed Oblivion

During the height of ancient Athens' power at the end of the 5th century B.C., Thersites was a wealthy Athenian citizen and a proud son of his city. Like many devoted citizens, he took up arms and fought in the battles that Athens was fighting more and more across Greece and the Aegean. It was a time of Athenian supremacy, for Athens took tribute from dozens of islands in the Aegean Sea and many more city-states in Greece itself (known as the 'Delian League'), acquiring wealth and power that no Greek city had ever achieved. Power meant war – specifically, war with Sparta and her allies. As the other great military city-state of Greece, Sparta was all but honor-bound to face Athens in battle. The result was the Peloponnesian War, a struggle of unusual length and cruelty in which Athens called upon men like Thersites to fight and die in the name of their city.

Thersites was in his mid-twenties when he fought as a hoplite citizen-soldier at Syracuse, in Sicily, in 413 B.C. He was an eager and able soldier, one of the upper-class Athenians for whom power and privilege were guaranteed by the enlightened democratic city-state. He was eager to fight and repay his city for the life it had given him. But Sicily was to prove a catastrophe of immense proportions for Athens. Before the walls of Syracuse, an Athenian army was beaten back by the Syracusans, assisted by the Spartans. Thersites was among the soldiers left for dead while the Athenians retreated to lay siege.

Thersites lay for three days under the bodies of his fellow Athenians. He was still there when they began to rot. By the time Athenian soldiers found him and dragged him back to the lines, he was raving about putrefaction and decay, the injury to his mind as grave as the ones to his body.

Thersites was one of the few wounded men to make it back to Athens from Sicily, and he left a large portion of his soul behind. Visions of the dead, the rotting faces, the bloated bodies, the stench that would never wash off, haunted him. He was a broken man, living a nightmare. But the more the memories plagued him, the more he

thought he perceived something in the mass of decay. Some consciousness was causing the bodies of the dead to bloat and rot, as if inflicting physical corruption on them to remind men of the horrors of battle. Eventually, as Thersites was at his lowest ebb, he heard a voice amongst the nightmares. Only a god could inflict such horrors on the human form, and Thersites had touched that god during his three days amongst the dead.

That god was Iresbeus, God of Corruption.

On the rare occasions when it referred to itself, the cult Thersites founded in Athens called itself the Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian. Its members were those whose minds had been wounded in war, who had seen the side of battle never written of in victory odes or depicted on the sculptures of the Parthenon. They had seen death, horror, and, most of all, the heaps of dead bloating in the sun. This was the work of the son of the war god Ares, Iresbeus, who dwelt in the river Lethe when not riding in his father's chariot across the battlefield. His purpose was to visit corruption on the battlefield dead. Just as he created the memory of corruption, so could he take it away, as he did for the world's dead who drank from his river. It was for this boon that the cult paid him homage.

Thersites was a pillar of the Athenian community. Unable to fight any more, thanks to the severe shoulder wound he had suffered, he became one of the city's prominent citizens by being an enthusiastic participant in the Athenian popular assembly, the *Ekklesia*. At the same time, he was making contacts in order to find Athenian veterans suffering similar kinds of trauma, and to tell them of the promise Iresbeus had made. Many of them were ashamed of the terrors they suffered in nightmares and waking visions, believing it meant they were cowards. They were eager for any way to dull the pain so they could take up spear and shield and fight for Athens again. Thersites brought them into the worship of Iresbeus, and they became believers – Iresbeus, unlike the aloof gods of Olympus, actually answered their prayers.

Iresbeus' worship required the items most sacred to the god – decaying human bodies. Fortunately for the cult, rotting bodies were not a resource in which Athens was lacking. This was due to Mount Kithaeron, the hill outside Athens where citizens went to expose sickly

Sound familiar?

Sharp-eyed Delta Green fans will recall that Iresbeus was mentioned on an amphora held in the D-Stacks at the American Museum of Natural History, curated by DG friendly Dr. Jensen Wu (see *Delta Green: Countdown*, p. 177). This amphora is one of those that was filled at the Temple of Iresbeus on Kynos during the cult's heyday two and a half thousand years ago, and then taken back by Thersites to Athens for use in his own household rites to the god. The existence of this particular amphora is unknown to the modern-day followers of Iresbeus, but as they turn into a fully-fledged cult, it could become a sacred relic for which they will happily kill. The amphora in the possession of Dr. Wu is a ready-made plot hook for DG Keepers.

or unwanted children. Exposure was a method of killing an unwanted child that did not require the shedding of blood and the accompanying religious pollution – the child was simply taken to the slope of Mount Kithaeron and left, alone and naked, to die. Needless to say, the place was not regularly visited at night. Thersites and the citizen-soldiers he had gathered would go onto the mountain's slope and enact the rites to Iresbeus, using the infant corpses as sacred trappings for their rituals. In return, their nightmares would grow less vivid and eventually, if they observed the regular rites to Iresbeus, there would be nothing but a black void in their memories where the horror had once been. Iresbeus was not just the god of corruption, a minor aspect of Ares that barely merited a mention in the myths of ancient Greece – he was the bringer of blessed oblivion, a god who answered the prayers of his faithful and rewarded them with inner peace. He was the only god who listened to the pleas of mortals, and so Thersites came to believe that Iresbeus should be given no less respect than the twelve gods of Olympus themselves. Iresbeus was the thirteenth Olympian, and his priesthood, though small, would show enough devotion to see he got his due.

The people of Athens and the surrounding lands of Attica had no idea that a god was touching the minds of its citizens. The only clues were the strange arrangements of exposed infant corpses, left in neat circles, glimpsed by harrowed parents who went onto the mountain to leave their unwanted offspring to die.

The followers of Iresbeus had lost the traumatic memories that plagued them, but it left them colder and harder. Just as they could not feel their own pain, so they were dulled to the pain of others. Few of them, therefore, had much compunction when Iresbeus

visited them one night on Mount Kithaeron, speaking to them directly for the first time, and told them of the rituals he required to truly make him the equal of the Olympians. What they heard would have horrified anyone else, but Thersites and his followers were hardened to suffering. They agreed almost to a man to do the god's bidding. Those few who did not found themselves subjects of Iresbeus' curse, their bodies bloating and rotting until in a few minutes they were just so much slime and blood. On that night Iresbeus laid down the requirements for a far bloodier ritual that would see the god elevated to the equal of the Olympians.

The Temple of Iresbeus

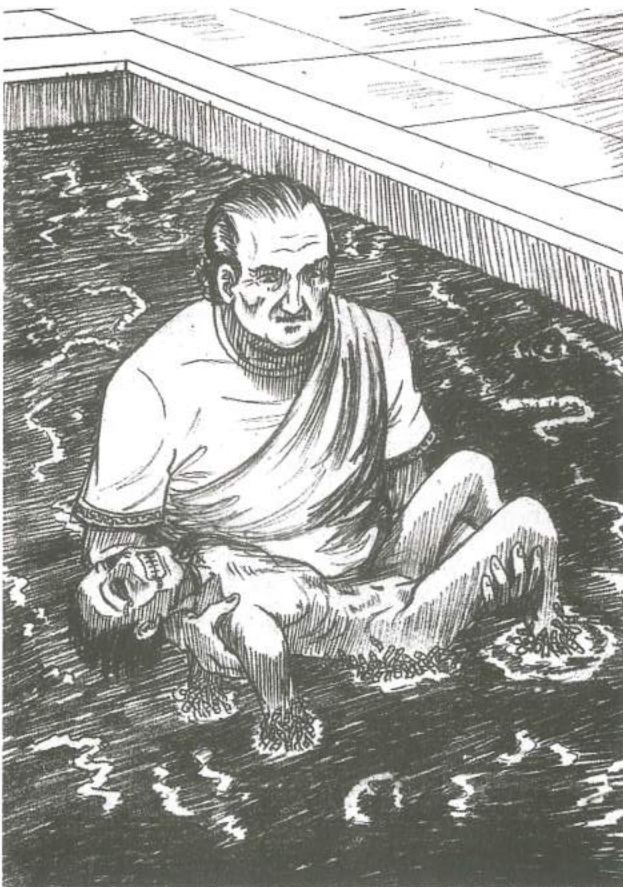
Following the god's instructions, Thersites and his followers financed the building of a temple to Iresbeus on the uninhabited island of Kynos, where it would be hidden from the eyes of unbelievers. Iresbeus' new rites, to be held every year, required a temple consecrated to corruption that would host a manifestation of Iresbeus himself.

They also required a higher quality of sacrifices. The corrupted dead were a powerful symbol of Iresbeus, but the god demanded that newer corpses be prepared, so he could visit his art upon them as a part of his rituals. Furthermore, they should be unmarked by age, battle, or disease. The followers of Thersites knew what this meant – children, brought to the island and ritually killed. Most of all, Iresbeus desired their blood, since this was the very essence of a person and the part that changed most profoundly when Iresbeus touched it.

With the completion of the temple, the Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian grew and prospered. Its members were prominent Athenians and could, like many Athenian interest groups, band together and influence Athens' ruling assembly of citizens. This influence served to acquire resources for the cult, maintain privacy, fend off the occasional charges of sorcery or impiety against its initiates, and recruit new members.

A visit to the Temple of Iresbeus and participation in the yearly rites completed a recruit's initiation. The small temple, built in the elegant Ionic style, stood in the center of an olive grove. The corpses of past child sacrifices hung from the branches, first bloating with rot and then becoming blackened husks of skin. The interior of the temple itself was divided into two cellae. In one were stored the amphorae with the blood of the sacrifices, kept in a permanent state of decay by Iresbeus' blessing, so they constantly churned with decaying filth and maggots. In the other was the heart of Iresbeus' mysteries – a pool filled waist-deep with rotting blood, gore and entrails, into which the blood of every new sacrifice was poured. Though the blood was drawn off into the amphorae the pool never went dry and continued to seethe with corruption through the year-long gaps between rituals.

As the rites commenced, initiates waded into this pool carrying the newly-killed sacrifices. These sacrifices would suddenly rot and bloat in the arms of the worshippers, a sure sign that Iresbeus was with them. At the climax of the rites, Iresbeus appeared, his body formed of gore and maggots, rising out of the pool to tower above



The Nature of the Beast

Who, or what, is Iresbeus? The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this article. The Cthulhu Mythos has more than enough gods, and the really interesting stuff concerns the people who, whether mad or misguided, wish to deal with them. The question of whether Iresbeus is a new Mythos creature, a manifestation of an old one, or an actual ancient Greek god is unlikely to be relevant to investigators who would be better off running than indulging in theological debate. However, likely Mythos candidates include Mordiggian (rotting corpses are just his style) Shub-Niggurath (for the conversion of the dead into new forms of maggoty life), or Cynothoglys (see *Malleus Monstrorum*). And then there's always Nyarlathotep.

the initiates. He would listen to their declarations of devotion, and in return would steal away the memories that plagued them. With every rite the initiates lost a little more of themselves to Iresbeus, for Iresbeus was doing to their minds what he normally did to bodies. But as long as they had oblivion instead of the nightmares, they continued to sacrifice to their god.

The Thirty Tyrants

In the last few years of the Peloponnesian War, Sparta invaded Attica and besieged Athens. During this time, Athens was often unable to defend her maritime assets, and Sparta, seeking naval supremacy over the Aegean Sea, cut Athens off from the Delian League. In 406 B.C., a Spartan fleet sailed past Kynos, and its men landed on the island to resupply their ships. They were unable to find food or fresh water, but the soldiers' leader, a young Spartan officer named Gorgoleon, found something else.

Gorgoleon and a few of his soldiers stumbled upon the temple of Iresbeus and the cultists preparing for that year's rite. Gorgoleon saw the infant corpses hanging from the branches of the orchard and the churning pool of foulness in the temple. He saw the bloodstains on the temple's pillars where the sacrifices had been killed. Gorgoleon was horrified and ordered his men to kill the cultists before leaving. He reported back to the Spartan leadership about the unnatural cult of Athenians that sacrificed children and worshipped decay.

Cut off from her maritime empire and unable to secure the grain needed to keep her citizens alive, Athens finally surrendered in 404 B.C. Sparta did not destroy Athens as many of Sparta's allies demanded, but instead they installed a government in place of Athens' democratic assembly. Dubbed the "Thirty Tyrants", this hated oligarchy remained for a few years before Sparta withdrew back into the Southern Peloponnese. One purpose of the Thirty Tyrants' occupation was to root out and destroy the blood cult that Gorgoleon had discovered at Kynos. Though no ship had managed to locate Kynos again, the cult itself had withdrawn to Athens and was at the mercy of the Spartans. Political recriminations were rife in the aftermath of defeat, and the Spartans soon learned of allegations of impiety against Thersites and his political allies. The Thirty Tyrants sent a force of armed men into Thersites' home and found wall paintings depicting child sacrifice, reams of writings describing Iresbeus and his worship, and amphorae filled with rotting gore.

Thersites was clubbed to death in the street outside his home and the rest of the cult was hunted down. A few fled, but most suffered a similar fate to their leader. The Thirty Tyrants were overthrown by a coup in 403 B.C. and their hunt ended, but any cult member who survived would have had a hard time during the moral and religious backlash that occurred in the aftermath of the Spartan victory over Athens.

In a few dark nights, the Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian was destroyed by the regime of the Thirty Tyrants. But Iresbeus himself was not so easily thwarted. The god took his revenge on Gorgoleon, the officer who had exposed the cult. When Gorgoleon was slain at the Battle of Tegyra against the Thebans in 373 B.C., Iresbeus did not let him die with all the other fallen soldiers. Gorgoleon lay amongst the dead for many days before Iresbeus bade him rise up and walk, leading him all the way across Greece and eventually back to Kynos Island. There Gorgoleon remained, forced to guard the Temple of Iresbeus, kept alive as long as he stayed in the vicinity of the temple. He knew that if he ever left the island, his body would rot, and in a few days he would be reduced to a pool of bubbling gore. Many times he contemplated just walking away and letting it happen – but he also wanted revenge against the god who had robbed him of an honorable death. Haunted by the nightmares of his 'death' in battle and his first encounter with the cult, Gorgoleon refused to give in and die. He waited on the island, compelled to keep strangers away from the temple, but always looking for a way to strike back at Iresbeus, letting his hatred of the god and its followers drive him on through his miserable unlife.

He has waited for almost two and a half thousand years.

Thirteenth Olympian Study Group and the New Temple of Iresbeus

The Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian died along with its founder in the streets of ancient Athens. But Iresbeus is as immortal as any of the Olympian gods, and it might be only a matter of months before his worship begins again in the halls of modern-day academia.

Based in the central London campus of University College London (UCL), the Thirteenth Olympian Study Group is an appar-



A meeting of the Thirteenth Olympian Study Group

ently innocuous and informal group of academics and postgraduate students. Its quarterly newsletter states that the group takes its name from the Macedonian King Philip II, who was hailed as a god by the Greek cities he conquered. In truth however, the Study Group is gradually piecing together a fascinating historical jigsaw puzzle – a strange priesthood in ancient Athens, hinted at in inscriptions and documents, that seems to have enacted rites to the otherwise obscure deity Iresbeus. The current aim of the study group is to disseminate information on the priesthood through hints, obscure references, and cryptic footnotes, and covertly spread the word of this strange and fascinating ancient religion to the academic world at large. But for one man at least, the Thirteenth Olympian is rather more than that.

Professor Alfred Mariner was the first to discover the Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian through papyri he translated while studying for his doctorate in the late 1970s. A very talented source historian, he became Professor of Ancient History at UCL, and as he uncovered more information on the priesthood, he became fascinated by what Iresbeus promised to his followers. Had Mariner been born in the days of ancient Athens, he might have become a follower himself.

Shortly after receiving his doctorate, Mariner married to a woman he met when a student and with whom he had fallen completely in love. Siobhan Mariner was a supremely intelligent woman whose passion was medieval French literature, and as they pursued their respective academic careers, the couple only fell further and further in love.

After three years of marriage, Mariner returned one day to find their modest house had been broken into and ransacked. It was as he was trying to find what had been taken that Mariner found the body of his wife, crammed into the airing cupboard. She had been strangled. The killer was never caught.

For Mariner, the moment he found her never ended. He relived the sight of his dead wife over and over, and though he forced himself to function in everyday life, he still saw her face every time he closed his eyes. Eventually, suppressing his sorrow and anger became a reflex action, and Mariner despaired that he would never be free of the memories. His grief threatened to bubble over until he discovered the existence of the Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian.

Iresbeus promised his followers relief from their nightmares, in return for unfaltering devotion. From the fragmentary contemporary accounts of the cult,

they had received their wish. Blessed freedom from the horrors of memory was something that Professor Mariner wished for very much. Slowly, as the Study Group grew to include more than a 100 academics and enthusiastic students from all over the world, Professor Mariner scoured the evidence for a way to recreate the fabled lost Temple of Iresbeus and receive the god's sacred oblivion for himself.

Mariner has managed to keep detailed information on the Thirteenth Olympian within the Study Group, and in many cases to himself, thanks to his position as one of the foremost authorities on the translation of original Greek documents. Much of the new evidence for ancient Greece comes in the form of stonework with legible inscriptions from archaeological digs, or from papyrus documents recovered from inside late-period Egyptian mummies in which the papyri has been used as stuffing. These artifacts often come to Mariner for translation before being published, and so he can effectively prevent their translations becoming widely known if he wishes. He has also managed to acquire many original papyri and a few inscriptions for study by UCL; he has kept these for himself, and he treats them as sacred artifacts for the new temple of Iresbeus. Mariner knows that his reputation as an expert on ancient Greek history and literature gives him a great deal of latitude in suppressing evidence about the Thirteenth Olympian without anyone suspecting. He allows the Study Group to work on the less disturbing evidence, letting them do the legwork in building up a picture of the cult's activities, members, and place in democratic Athens.

Mariner's efforts at recreating the Priesthood are based at his workplace in UCL's Gower Street campus. The History Department at University College London is housed in a number of narrow terraced houses, knocked through to form the department (along with the Philosophy Department next door). This has left the department a confusing warren of rooms and staircases where floors

Evidence

The fledgling temple of Iresbeus at UCL contains several pieces of evidence of the priesthood in Athens, including some items of great occult or even magical significance. All these items require 40% or higher in Ancient Greek before they can be read or otherwise used by a character.

- ♦ An inscribed marble stele describing the generosity of one 'Thersites', who paid for the religious education of several young Athenian boys. These boys were all orphaned by the deaths of their fathers at the battle of Cyzicus in 410 B.C.
- ♦ A papyrus fragment on which is written a passage from a history of the later Peloponnesian War. The author is unknown (Mariner has concluded that it is not Thucydides, the most famous historian of the era). The passage describes how, during the rule of the "Thirty Tyrants", the Spartans suppressed cult worship by certain Athenians who were denounced as child-killers for sacrificing to a son of Ares.
- ♦ An illuminated page evidently taken from a book transcribed some time in the early Middle Ages, presumably from original Greek source material included in a variant manuscript of Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*. It concludes that the plants grown on Mount Kithaeron have magical powers because they are sacred to a certain Iresbeus, son of Ares, and cause the consumer to swell and become foul like the dead on the battlefield – thus suffering the fate of the dead while they still live.
- ♦ A page of papyrus reassembled from several strips found inside an Egyptian cat mummy of the Ptolemaic period. The page is from a travelogue-style work, apparently by an author foreign to Athens, and describes his brief stay with an Athenian landowner. This unnamed landowner related a story of how Iresbeus, a minor deity of the battlefield dead, has become "beloved of the men of the city". Their fear of battle, and the pain of wounds they suffered in past battles, is taken away by Iresbeus in return for divine honors. The writer intended to revisit the landowner the following year, but found that he had died in the intervening months of a wasting disease brought on by a "surfeit of wine".
- ♦ A rectangle of pottery on which is inscribed a prayer to Iresbeus. It names the god and implores him to "banish the memories that are the curse of all men". It was evidently intended to be said over "the bodies that please you the most, for they are free of scars and the marks of age. May they honor you and become vessels for your art. In return, take from us the memories that cause us fear. Son of Ares! Corrupter of the Dead! Iresbeus, Bringer of Blessed Nothingness!"

In addition, Mariner's notes (which can be assembled from various notebooks and papers in his office) depict his knowledge of the cult. They include most of the information in the first part of this article about the Athenian cult, except Mariner does not know the location of the temple or the exact circumstances of how Thersites first encountered Iresbeus on Sicily. His notes omit any mention of Gorgoleon.

connect in strange places. Though the department is not large, it is surprisingly easy to get lost. Professor Mariner's office is on one of the top floors, a small room with the walls completely covered in bookshelves groaning with books and periodicals. Mariner has arranged for two of the attic rooms above to be closed for 'refurbishment', and it is here that he is building the new temple to Iresbeus.

These two attic rooms have been knocked together to form one long, low room. One half is mostly taken up with an old water heating tank that is no longer needed, but which no-one ever bothered to have removed. Mariner had a couple of brawnier post-grads saw the top off this tank, leaving a large basin which is currently empty. The other half of the room holds the temple's relics – papyri, inscriptions and pottery shards relevant to the worship of the Thirteenth Olympian, some of the more potent evidence collected by Mariner and the Study Group. The marble slabs with the inscriptions are fixed to one wall, while a glass-topped display table protects several scraps of papyri. The room is old and dusty, and so far the worship of Iresbeus has not begun in earnest. But Mariner is laying the preparations for the time when the most promising of the Study Group members, particularly those who have suffered some serious past trauma, will be brought up here to enact the first rite to the God of Corruption.

Mariner's current goal is piecing together enough evidence to recreate an ancient rite to Iresbeus. He has collected enough prayers and chants to Iresbeus, but the actual ritual actions still need to be recreated. He knows that there was a hidden temple to the god with a ritual pool into which was poured sacrificial material. Mariner always assumed that this material was libation wine or perhaps the blood of sacrificed animals, but a prayer to Iresbeus on a papyrus recently discovered in Turkey suggests that the pool must be filled with the putrefying blood of several children. Mariner has been so long pursuing the worship of Iresbeus that he is willing to acquire children's blood for this purpose. He does not believe that the Study Group is close-knit or dedicated enough to go through with these preparations, however, and he does not know how to acquire children (or their blood) for the rituals. He is therefore trying to find out which Study Group members have suffered serious enough trauma for them to help him with this most extreme requirement of Iresbeus' worship.

The Thirteenth Olympian Study Group is not yet a cult. So far only Professor Mariner truly believes in Iresbeus – but if left to his own devices, he will assemble from the Study Group a small but dedicated band of desperate and impressionable acolytes to assist him in the worship of the god. Further, he is using the Study Group to locate the site of the first temple of Iresbeus, evidence for which is

on a fragmentary red-figure painted vase in a museum in Munich. The Study Group is trying to get access to this vase, and when they do, Professor Mariner could send an expedition of his acolytes to Kynos and uncover the temple, which still stands surrounded by decay. Of course, this will bring the new priesthood into contact with Gorgoleon – but that is a different story.

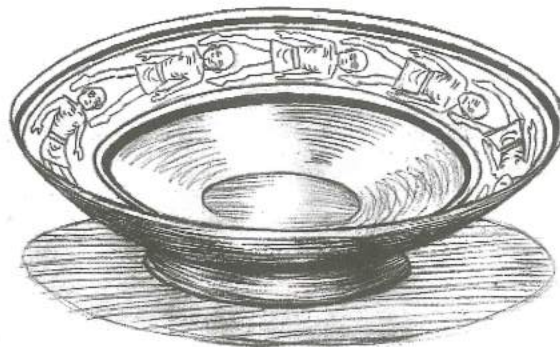
Cult Relics

Some relics of the Priesthood of Iresbeus survive, and Professor Mariner is using the Study Group to acquire them. They will become instrumental in converting members into fully-fledged worshippers of Iresbeus, and will be a major factor in the Study Group successfully contacting Iresbeus and becoming a Mythos-tainted secret society.

Amphora of Corruption: Mariner already has the fragments of one of these and is aware of others in existence. Each of these wine-jars is decorated with scenes from Iresbeus' worship, normally depicting the murder and mutilation of children, and is too disturbing to be displayed openly in museum collections. Each was used to collect rotting gore from the pool at the temple on Kynos, and the blood so collected never evaporated. Instead, it was kept in a permanent state of festering decay. Each amphora is full of oozing, pulsing putrescence, and if a broken amphora is reassembled, it will quickly fill up with this foulness of its own accord. The amphorae were sometimes taken back to Athens for use in Thersites' own rites, and each can act as a proxy for the pool of rotting blood normally required for the Contact Iresbeus spell. However, the chances of successful contact are not increased by the use of child's blood if an amphora is used instead of a full pool.

Krater of Suffering: Thersites enchanted several of these kraters (wine-bowls) to help him recruit new members into the cult. Each one was a shallow bowl on a stem, the inside of the bowl painted to depict a ring of infant corpses, in which strong Greek wine was mixed with water before being drunk. Anyone drinking wine mixed in one of these bowls must overcome POW 20 on the resistance table or relive their worst memories. They are plagued with persistent visions for a number of days equal to their INT score, suffering a total San loss of 1D3/1D8. Professor Mariner would dearly love to acquire a Krater of Suffering, and it is only a matter of time before he discovers that one, almost complete, survives in the British Museum just around the corner from University College London.

Mourning Wine: This wine is made from grapes grown on the slopes of Mount Kithaeron and mixed in the Krater of Suffering. Anyone drinking it will physically decay, remaining alive and aware for a number of days equal to their CON score. In addition to obvious physical symptoms, the victim loses 1D6/2D6 San per day. After days equal to half their CON score, they are medically dead, though conscious and partially mobile. The last day is spent completely immobile as their muscles and tendons rot away. Thersites used this wine to kill random Athenians whenever he felt he had offended Ires-



The Krater of Suffering

beus and wanted to appease him with a quick, obvious sacrifice. Once or twice, it was also used to eliminate the priesthood's enemies. No wine exists in the modern day, but the secret of its creation is currently being translated by the Thirteenth Olympian Study Group.

Contact Iresbeus: This spell works much like any of the other Contact Deity spells. Its particular requirements are that the spell must be cast over a pool of putrescent blood (or one of the Amphorae of Corruption). If the blood is the blood of children, the chance of Iresbeus replying is increased by 20%. Professor Mariner has acquired this spell from cult papyri and inscriptions.

Call Iresbeus spell: Again, this spell works in a similar manner to other Call Deity spells. It requires a fully consecrated temple of Iresbeus, a pool of putrefying children's blood, and several freshly killed child sacrifices. If any of these elements are missing, the spell will not work. This was the spell cast by Thersites at the temple on Kynos. Professor Mariner does not know this spell, but he is sure it must exist – a trip to the Kynos temple will put him well on the way to learning it. The Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian did not employ a Dismiss Iresbeus spell – Iresbeus was always sufficiently placated by Thersites' sacrifices to remove the traumatic memories of the worshippers and depart without too much further incident. Whether Professor Mariner will be able to mollify Iresbeus in the same way remains to be seen.

Investigating the cult

The Thirteenth Olympian Study Group may at first seem a difficult group to bring into contact with investigators, especially those based in the US or otherwise outside the UK. However, the Study Group has members throughout the academic world, including the US and many other countries. As the Study Group develops into a fully-fledged cult, Mariner will have devoted acolytes all over the world, perhaps trying to build their own temples to Iresbeus or hunting down cult artifacts in museums and private collections. While the cult as it stands is not a large or powerful group, investigating it could make for a long and satisfying multi-part investigation that follows the Thirteenth Olympian's worshippers from the investigators' own stomping ground across the Atlantic to London, and perhaps finally into a gore-soaked finale in the Aegean.

Another obvious possibility is for the campaign to take place in ancient Greece, in the heyday of the original Priesthood of the Thirteenth Olympian. Perhaps players could take the part of Spartans tasked by the Thirty Tyrants with hunting down and destroying the blood cult, or even of Athenians who must decide whether to ally with the hated Spartans to take down Thersites. Ambitious keepers could even have a two-tier campaign where players have one modern-day and one ancient investigator each, and pursue parallel investigations into both incarnations of the cult.

Important individuals

Thersites

Thersites is a pillar of Athenian society – wealthy, politically active, and able to call on political allies in the democratic assembly of Athens. Very few of those allies also know his second face, that of the priest of the Thirteenth Olympian who presides over the god's rites, a holy man with a direct connection to the Thirteenth Olympian, as he would be tried instantly. No-one but Thersites himself, however, knows his true face – the massive trauma he suffered at Sicily left him a psychopath utterly devoid of empathy for his fellow man. There is a hollow at the center of his soul created by Iresbeus removing his traumatic memories, and Thersites desperately attempts to fill it with the approval of his god. He will stop at nothing to do the will of Iresbeus. Nothing.



Thersites, age 38 (circa 404 B.C.)

Demagogue and Blood Cultist

STR 12	CON 11	SIZ 15	INT 15	POW 15
DEX 09	APP 11	EDU 16	SAN 0	HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Private tutelage

Occupation: Independently wealthy politician and socialite

Skills: Abuse Democratic Process 55%, Credit Rating (Athens only) 85%, Cthulhu Mythos 9%, Dodge 25%, Fast Talk 39%, Navigate 44%, Occult 30%, Persuade 73%, Pilot Boat 39%, Psychology 31%, Ride 55%, Throw 35%

Languages: Ancient Greek 80%

Attacks: Hoplite Spear 45%, 1D8+db

Fist/Punch 35%, 1D3+db

Physical Description: Thersites was a fit man in his youth, but he is turning to fat now. Underneath his clothes there are large and vivid scars, the remnants of the wounds he suffered on Sicily. His hair is starting to thin, and he keeps it slicked back with oil.

He has an open, clean-shaven face that smiles easily. For too many of Athens' children, this is the last face they see.

Gorgoleon Then

Gorgoleon is a product of the Spartan military education system, the agoge, in which the sons of Spartan citizens are conditioned to become tough, self-sufficient soldiers. He believes that Sparta deserves dominion over Greece by virtue of its greater strength – not just physical military prowess, but also strength of will and character. Newly selected to lead his fellow citizens in battle, he combines dedication and discipline with intelligence and a willingness to sacrifice himself for the good of Sparta. Sparta has few better soldiers.



Gorgoleon, age 21 (circa 404 B.C.)

True Spartan Officer

STR 17	CON 15	SIZ 15	INT 11	POW 11
DEX 11	APP 13	EDU 12	SAN 55	HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Spartan agoge

Occupation: Officer in the Spartan army

Skills: Climb 56%, Dodge 35%, Grapple 47%, Hoplite Tactics 46%, Hide 20%, Jump 31%, Navigate 30%, Ride 25%, Sneak 19%, Spot Hidden 31%, Track 25%

Languages: Ancient Greek 60%

Attacks: Hoplite Spear 75%, 1D8+db

Fist/Punch 50%, 1D3+db

Short Sword 38%, 1D6+db

As a hoplite soldier, Gorgoleon carries a large hoplite shield (Shield 55%, 30 HP) in addition to his spear and short sword.

Physical Description: Gorgoleon looks completely at home in the hoplite armor and red cloak of Sparta. His is well-muscled, and his skin is a handsome bronze. He has thick curly black hair and a well-kept beard. He is every inch a citizen-warrior of Sparta.

Gorgoleon Now

Gorgoleon is a man consumed by hatred. He has been kept alive for almost two and a half thousand years by the malicious will of Iresbeus. His loathing for the god and its followers has totally consumed him; he now hates everyone and everything. If he leaves the vicinity of the temple on Kynos, he will begin to decay. If he has a chance to avenge himself on the god, it is a price he is more than willing to pay.

**Gorgoleon, age 2,431 (circa 2005 AD)****Undying Victim of Divine Cruelty**

STR 17	CON 15	SIZ 17	INT 11	POW 11
DEX 10	APP 06	EDU 12	SAN 0	HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D6**Education:** Spartan agoge, two millennia of suffering**Occupation:** Undead Guardian of the Temple of Iresbeus**Skills:** Climb 56%, Dodge 35%, Grapple 52%, Hoplite Tactics 46%, Hide 35%, Jump 31%, Navigate 30%, Ride 15%, Sneak 19%, Spot Hidden 31%, Track 25%, Universal Hatred 89%**Languages:** Ancient Greek 60%, Modern Greek 22%, English 12%**Attacks:** Hoplite Spear 75%, 1D8+db

Fist/Punch 50%, 1D3+db

Short Sword 38%, 1D6+db

Physical Description: Gorgoleon has increased in size over the millennia and is now a hulking, hunched monster of a man. His skin is a sick brownish-gray shade, and his face is so weather-beaten it is hard to see his eyes. His hair and beard are straggly and gray. Gorgoleon can pass as a normal human, albeit a large and unfriendly one – at least, that is, until his body starts to rot.

Professor Alfred Mariner

Professor Alfred Mariner is an intelligent, educated man. To his students, he seems a slightly detached but obviously knowledgeable academic. He has learned to hide his true self very well. Beneath this façade he is a broken man haunted by the memories of his wife's death. The memories are just under the surface, and Mariner spends every waking moment keeping them down. Only when he is alone can he let go and constantly relive how he found her body. He doesn't know if he can keep it up for much longer. He is dedicated to Iresbeus because Iresbeus is his only hope.

**Professor Alfred Mariner, age 55 (circa 2005 AD)****Seeking Blessed Oblivion**

STR 09	CON 09	SIZ 10	INT 18	POW 11
DEX 11	APP 08	EDU 21	SAN 22	HP 10

Damage Bonus: None**Education:** Ph.D. in Ancient History, Durham University.**Occupation:** Professor of Classics & Ancient History, University College London.**Skills:** Anthropology 22%, Archaeology 45%, Computer Use 12%, Credit Rating 69%, History 91%, Library Use 80%, Occult 30%, Persuade 40%**Languages:** English 91%, Ancient Greek 85%, Latin 63%, Modern Greek 55%, French 31%, German 29%, Italian 25%, Cuneiform 25%**Attacks:** None.

Physical Description: Professor Mariner is tall and slim with a thin, distracted face and thinning red-brown hair. He always wears a suit that never seems to quite fit him. When he is alone, he often becomes a sobbing wreck as the memories flood back.

Professor Amanda Klein

Professor Klein is a psychologist at UCLA. She is one of the scattered academics who follow the Thirteenth Olympian Study Group. Klein's specialty is trauma and stress-related disorders. She is fascinated by the possibility that a group of ancient Greeks pursued their own form of study into trauma within a religious framework. Professor Klein is slowly being seduced by the possibility that the worship of Iresbeus can be a sort of psychological cure-all. Right now, she thinks that the act of worship itself had therapeutic benefits, but soon she will come to believe in Iresbeus as Professor Mariner does. When that happens, Klein will be the principal cultist of the Thirteenth Olympian in the United States. Klein is not a trauma victim, but her research has put her in contact with many military and emergency services veterans who are. Eventually she will bring these men and women into the worship of Iresbeus, and they will function as cult muscle in the way Mariner's pasty-faced students cannot.

**Professor Amanda Klein, age 39 (circa 2005 AD)****Immersed in Suffering**

STR 12	CON 13	SIZ 12	INT 16	POW 14
DEX 11	APP 10	EDU 19	SAN 60	HP 13

Damage Bonus: None**Education:** Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Johns Hopkins University**Occupation:** Research Psychologist at University of California, Los Angeles**Skills:** Computer Use 25%, Credit Rating 40%, First Aid 40%, Library Use 60%, Medicine 35%, Persuade 25%, Pharmacy 30%, Psychoanalysis 40%, Psychology 75%, Spot Hidden 35%**Languages:** English 96%, German 40%, French 25%**Attacks:** Fist/Punch 50%, 1D3+db

Physical Description: Professor Klein is a short and fairly stocky woman who keeps herself neat but otherwise doesn't care much about her appearance. She keeps her blonde hair short so it will be easy to manage.

Plot Hooks

- ♦ Mariner discovers the location of the first Temple of Iresbeus and sends one of his post-graduate students to Kynos Island to conduct preliminary investigations. The student runs into Gorgoleon who imprisons the student and quickly gains his loyalty through fear. This is where the investigators get involved. They investigate the disappearance and find the temple, getting the first hint of an ancient Greek blood cult – but Gorgoleon and the student are gone. The two are now heading for London, hoping to wipe out the resurgent priesthood before Gorgoleon completely decays. Thanks to a borderless Europe and Europe's express train network, the Spartan can get to London and cause massive damage before either the investigators stop him or he dissolves into a puddle of maggot-infested goo. Will the investigators have learned enough to finish what Gorgoleon started? Or will they have to wait until the children start disappearing from London's streets?
- ♦ A suspect is arrested and charged with the murder of Siobhan Mariner. Professor Mariner's grief turns to hatred; now he finally has someone to blame for his suffering, and he turns the worship of Iresbeus into a weapon. Victims of horrible murders start turning up across the UK, their deaths marked by the rapid and spectacular decaying of the bodies. Each victim is a friend or family member of Siobhan's alleged murderer, killed by Mariner using the Wine of Mourning. But is Mariner waging a crusade of vengeance against an innocent man?
- ♦ The investigators are hired by Mariner to acquire an amphora from a private collection in America (or, for those with *Delta Green: Countdown*, from the D-Stacks at the American Museum of Natural History). The paintings on the amphora will confirm the sacrificial requirements of Iresbeus. Once Mariner has the vase, the investigators realize (if they haven't already) that Mariner is the bad guy. If they try to bust the cult in London, Mariner flees to Kynos to enact the rite at the first temple to Iresbeus. Investigators who follow him will find themselves walking into a good old-fashioned stop-the-ritual finale, with dead babies and vengeful Spartans everywhere.
- ♦ Noted academics are vanishing; their offices and homes found empty after signs of a break-in. Characters will soon discover that all those affected were members of the Thirteenth Olympian Study Group. Could it be that the cult is conducting an internal purge, or is something else going on?

The disappearances are actually the work of the cult of Mnemosyne, behind which lurks the Mythos entity Ubbo-Sathla. While Iresbeus allows the blotting out of memories, Mnemosyne allows humans to remember everything – not only the details of this life, but also the memories of past lives going back into the earliest eras of life on earth. Its followers have uncovered the cult, and are seeking to purge these offenders against memory from the planet by forcing them to drink an extract of Liao. This causes the Iresbeus cultist to travel back

in time to Ubbo-Sathla, who absorbs them utterly. When the investigators show up, will the Mnemosyne cult assume that they were sent by Iresbeus and react accordingly? How will Mariner and his would-be followers react?



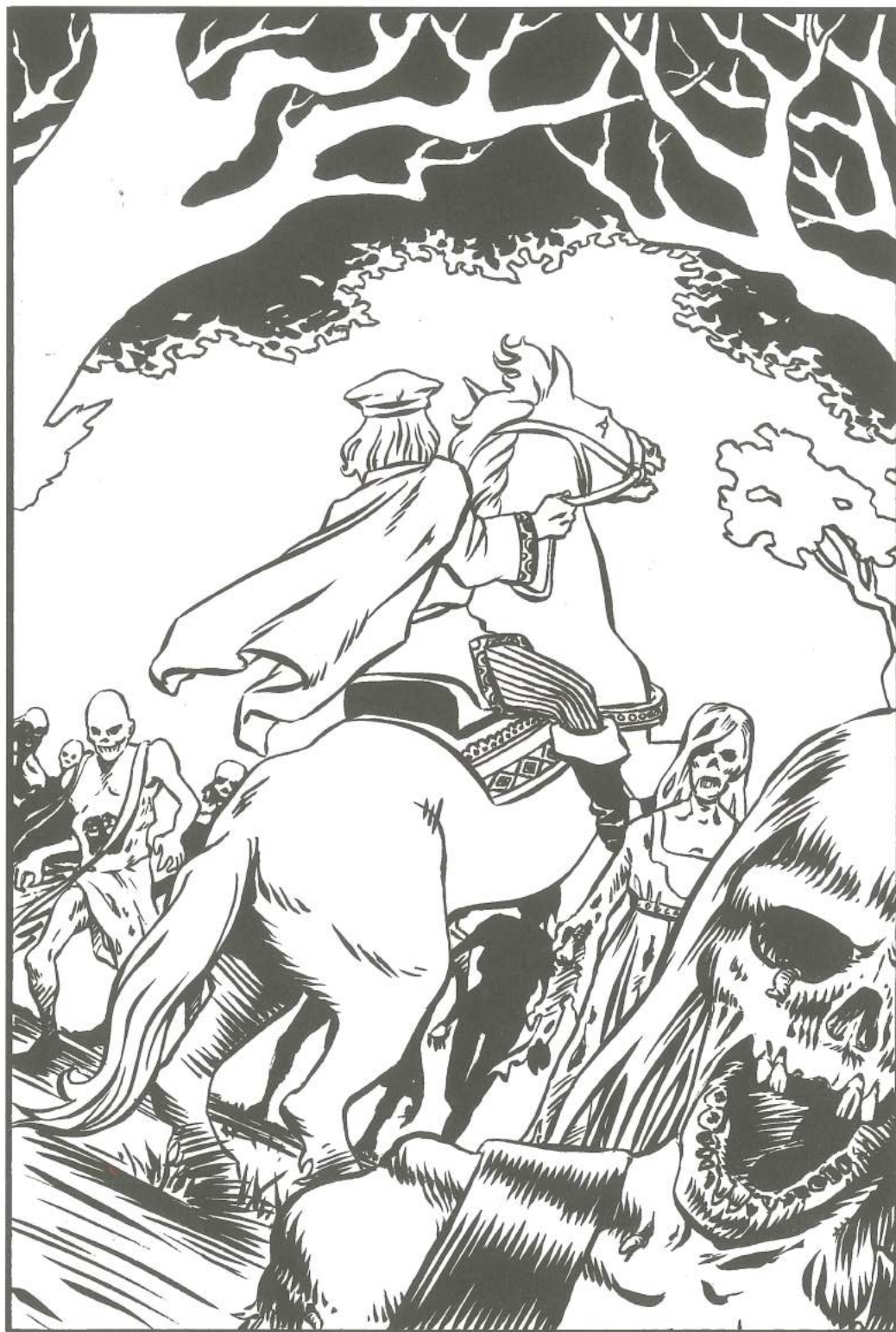
The rotting Gorgoleon will stop at nothing to stop Iresbeus



Clark Ashton Smith's

Dark Ages: Averoigne

by Daniel Harms, Adam Crossingham & Richard Becker



An Averoigne Bestiary

by Dan Harms and Adam Crossingham

Though the monsters of Averoigne are savage, they merely reflect the lust, rage, and fear of the people of the land. Bear this in mind when using them.

The Beast of Averoigne

Independent Entity

The horror stood erect, rising to more than the height of a tall man; and it swayed like a great serpent, and its members undulated, bending like heated wax. The flat black head was thrust forward on a snakish neck. The eyes, small and lidless, glowing like coals from a wizard's brazier, were set low and near together in a noseless face above the serrate gleaming of such teeth as might belong to a giant bat... the thing went past him with its nimbus flaring from venomous green to a wrathful red. Of its actual shape, and the number of its limbs, he could form no just notion. – "The Beast of Averoigne," Smith



The Beast appears in Averoigne in 1369, though keepers may adjust this so their group may confront the monstrosity themselves.

In the days before the Beast appears, a scarlet comet is seen streaking across the night sky. The Beast's essence emanates from the comet and travels

to earth, seeking a suitable host body. It often chooses a person of influence who nonetheless is solitary and weak-willed by nature. Once choosing its target, the Beast's essence engages in a POW vs. POW struggle with the person. If it fails, the Beast must seek another host. If successful, the essence merges with that of the person.

At night, under the blazing comet, the host undergoes a transformation into the Beast. This creature preys on the surrounding countryside, starting with animals, then working its way up to corpses and living humans. Every victim has its spine laid open and the marrow drained. As time progresses, it becomes bolder, preying in towns and in front of many witnesses. It may choose to act against the victims, institutions, or beliefs of its host. It retains the memory and knowledge of the host in this form as well.

The Beast should be played as an intelligent being. If it believes it is being trapped or tracked, it will immediately depart and seek prey elsewhere. Any attempt to capture or attack it must be well planned, as the creature will uncover most efforts due to its abilities and cunning. (Any such plan should be judged harshly by the Keeper; if uncertain, pit the monster's INT versus that of the plan's

originator.) When pursued, the Beast uses its knowledge of the area, ability to run up walls, and great speed to escape. It will also attack its foes if it feels no danger and the targets are isolated.

During the day, the host appears normal, though as time goes on they become more pale and feverish. The Beast exerts enough control in the daytime that the host never considers that it might be the terror of the countryside. For the most part, its personality is so submerged that not even exorcism will dislodge it. Such techniques may be used at night, but at that time the Beast is much more dangerous.

Destroying the Beast will be a difficult task – no force of this world can damage it. In the two version of Smith's story, the Beast is defeated by an extraterrestrial being in one, and by a dust recipe from the Book of Eibon (possibly the Baneful Dust of Hermes Trismegistus, *Call of Cthulhu* 6th edition rulebook, p. 219). It may also be that other types of magic, or a weapon made from meteoric iron may also be effective. Clever characters may notice that the Beast never manifests itself in sunlight and try to recreate its effects. They may do this by seeking compounds and substances that embody the solar influence (Occult rolls to identify these) or by rigging immense sources of light using fire and mirrors. The success of such tactics is left up to the Keeper. Hard-hearted investigators might slay the host or wait for the comet to depart after several months.

The Beast of Averoigne

STR 18	CON 24	SIZ 15	INT 17
POW 23	DEX 19	MV 13	HP 20

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Attacks: Bite 85%, 1D4+db

Armor: No terrene weapon or force may injure the Beast in its own form. Any damage done to the Beast is healed when it returns to the host's form, and vice versa.

Skills: Climb 95%, Sneak 95%, Scent Prey/Foes 65%, all Knowledge and Perception skills of the host.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D10 to witness, 0/1D4 to find one of its victims.

The Black Unicorn of Averoigne

Independent Entity

This depiction of the Unicorn is unique, for it is the only known tapestry in all of France to color the mythical animal black instead of white. The horn is a rich, gleaming ivory with five ridges running the length of it, spiraling out to its tip. – "The Muse of Averoigne," Vester and Hilger.

Although most legends of the unicorn, as the rulebook suggests, are confused memories of the rhinoceros, at least one unicorn



approaching the ideals of romance appears in Europe. This unicorn is pure black, its horn is ivory, and its eyes glow with reddish fire when it is angered. It could be the only one of its type, or the psychic creation of humanity's unicorn legends, or a demon sent to earth to chastise the greedy.

The unicorn appears once every few generations to lead huntsmen on a merry chase. It is said that the creature's horn may be used to bestow immortality upon the person who obtains it, so there are no shortage of seekers. The unicorn usually escapes its foe by outrunning the hunters through the woods. If met with mortal danger, the unicorn will use its Death's Breath spell to separate pursuers and Fear on their mounts. A favorite tactic of the black unicorn against a single hunter is to lie on the ground, pretending to be dead, so it may launch a preemptive strike against the hunter when he is unprepared.

The Black Unicorn

STR 24	CON 24	SIZ 22	INT 16
POW 25	DEX 19	MV 12*	HP 21

Damage Bonus: +2D6

Attacks: Hooves 60%, 1D6+db

Horn, 65%, 1D8+db

Armor: 4 points of hide.

Skills: Dodge 85%, Hide 55%, Listen 65%, Play Dead 85%, Spot Hidden 75%.

Spells: Death's Breath, Fear.

Sanity Loss: None.

* The black unicorn takes no movement penalties for traveling through difficult terrain.

Cats of Sadoqua Lesser Servitor Race

...the huge black cats captured at those very singular Sabbats on the rocky hill behind Vyones – the cats which could not be burned, but which escaped unhurt from the flames... – Letter to Smith, Lovecraft

...dozens of black feline figures gushed out of the tunnel, as nimble as bats. They rushed and sprang straight into the mass of men, claws and fangs bared, moving so swiftly that [he] could make out little of them in the uncertain light and moving shadows. He glimpsed darting, shiny pelts and large eyes gleaming like moons. – "The Wedding of Sheila-na-Gog," Tierney

In ages past, a variant form of the formless spawn (*Call of Cthulhu* 6th edition rulebook., p. 159) evolved that was capable of living in symbiosis with an animal form. Once entering the creature's system, the spawn quickly takes over its body and mind until it is fused completely with the animal. Most such spawn are tiny, meaning that

most of Sadoqua's animals are small ones, such as these cats.

These cats are often found guarding the few remaining places holy to Sadoqua, deep in the woods of Averouigne. They may also be present at the ceremonies held by Averouigne's surviving Sadoqua-worshippers, or be sent on special missions for the god. At times, they interact with the fabled Dreamlands cats from Saturn, but these rarely appear on earth. Ordinary cats, as well as most animals, avoid the Cats of Sadoqua.

In combat, a cat of Tsathoggua often exudes a whiplike pseudopod from its mouth, following up with two rakes of its claws. If both claws hit, the cat latches onto its victim, raking with its hind claws.



char. rolls averages

STR	2D3	4
CON	3D6	10-11
SIZ	1D3	2
INT	2D6+6	13
POW	2D6+6	13
DEX	2D6+24	31
HP		6-7

Damage Bonus: -1D6

MV 10

Attacks: Tongue Whip 75%, 1D6

Claw 50%, 1D4+db

Rake 80%, 1D4+db

Armor: None, but takes no damage from physical weapons and fire. Magic, acid, and other forces harm them normally.

Skills: Dodge 62%, Hide 65%, Jump 40%, Sneak 85%, Track 80%.

Spells: Roll INT×1 or less on D100. If successful, the cat knows 1D3 spells. Suggested: Become Spectral, Fury, Pray to Sadoqua (Tsathoggua),

Sanity Loss: None normally, but 1/1D4 to see one attack or absorb damage beyond the ability of a normal cat.

The Colossus of Ylourgne Independent Being

The thing was no longer a skeleton: the limbs were rounded into bossed, enormous thews, like the limbs of Biblical giants; the flanks were like an insuperable wall; the deltoids of the mighty chest were broad as platform; the hands could have crushed the bodies of men like millstones.... – "The Colossus of Ylourgne," Smith

The Colossus was the creation of Nathaire, formerly a doctor and necromancer of Vyones. Nathaire bore years of insults and mockery from the townsfolk, fleeing to the fortress of Ylourgne when charged with witchcraft. Assembling bodies from the surrounding lands, he created a huge undead body, to which he transferred his consciousness before striding forth to punish the land. Only the quick thinking of a young wizard saved Vyones from the terror.



This monstrosity could only be created with the darkness of the black arts and the power of the land to amplify human evil. It is possible that this act could be recreated, or (for earlier times) that Nathaire received his inspiration from a smaller-scale experiment lost to history...

The Colossus of Ylourgne

STR 150 CON 300 SIZ 200 INT 18
POW 27 DEX 7 MV 15 HP 250

Damage Bonus: +21D6

Attacks: Stomp, 30%, 1D6+db

Pine Tree Club, 35%, 1D20+db

Armor: None. Non-impaling weapons do half damage, and impaling ones do one point of damage. The Colossus takes no damage from missiles smaller than those of a siege engine.

Skills: Chuckle at Hideous Atrocity 95%, Hide 0%, Sneak 0%, Spot Hidden 45%.

Spells: As per the soul's former body.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8 to see the Colossus.

FAMILIARS & Sublunar Spirits

Lesser Servitor Race

The familiars, who had the shape of enormous and shadowy beasts, approached the body of Le Loupgarou and that of Brother Theophile. One of the foul demons, like a vapor that sinks into a marsh, entered the bloody nostrils of Le Loupgarou, disappearing inch by inch, till its horned and bestial head was withdrawn from sight. The other, in like manner, went in through the nostrils of Brother Theophile, whose head lay weird athwart his shoulder on the broken neck. Then, when the demons had completed their possession, the bodies, in a fashion horrible to behold, were raised up from the castle floor, the one with raveled entrails hanging from its wide wounds, the other with a head that dropped forward loosely on its bosom. – "The Colossus of Ylourgne," Smith

Vainly I consulted the stars and made use of geomancy and necromancy; and the familiars whom I interrogated professed themselves ignorant, saying that the Beast was altogether alien and beyond the ken of sublunar spirits. – "The Beast of Averaigne," Smith

Familiars are spirits called forth from the Sub-Lunar Plane, the space between the Earth and the Moon, by sorcerers to assist them in their necromantic endeavors. Some may decide assist the sorcerer willingly, if it coincides with their plans; others are forced into co-operation by the bindings. Familiars have knowledge of use to the sorcerer but impart it only when bound to the service of the sorcerer.

Sublunar sprits are consulted by sorcerers, witches and others with magical knowledge because they know everything. From their home on the Sublunar Plane they see everything that happens on Earth. However just because they know everything, doesn't mean



they will co-operate with their summoner. Coerced into telling what they know by spells such as Evoke Familiar of Erudition, many spirits try and obscure the truth by being as obscure and tangential as possible when questioned.

Familiars

char.	rolls	averages
INT	2D6+6	13
POW	4D6	14

HP equal to POW

MV equal to POW

Attack: POW vs. POW attack. The defeated loses 1D3 POW. Can also use attacks of the body possessed.

Armor: None, but a familiar is only hurt by magical weapons.

Skills: Blasphemous Knowledge 95%, Corrupt Person 75%, Magical Insight 85%.

Spells: Possess Body plus 1D6 spells.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8.

Sub-Lunar Spirits

char.	rolls	averages
INT	3D6	10-11
POW	3D6+3	13-14

MV equal to POW

Attack: None.

Armor: None.

Skills: Answer Question in a Deliberately Obtuse Manner 90%, Know All Things 100%.

Spells: None.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6.

Incubi AND Succubi

Lesser Independent Race

She was exquisite as the succubi of youthful dreams, but her perfection was touched with inenarrable evil. The lines of the mature figure were fraught with a maddening luxuriousness; the lips of the full, Circean face were half pouting, half smiling with ambiguous allure. – "The Disinterment of Venus", Smith

Male demons, incubi and female demons, succubi, who prey on sleeping women and men, are believed to roam the night of medieval Averaigne looking for victims to seduce. Incubi and succubi are thought to be fallen angels, and incubus literally means nightmare in Latin, which they are. Sexual intercourse with one of these demons



is thought to produce demons, witches and deformed children. The legendary wizard Merlin was said to be the result of such a union.

char.	rolls	averages
STR	3D6	10-11
CON	3D6	10-11
SIZ	2D6+6	13
INT	3D6+6	16-17
POW	4D6+6	20
DEX	3D6	13
APP	4D6+6	20
HP		12

Damage Bonus: +0

MV 8

Attack: Sexual Congress 90%, 1D6 CON drain. Female victims run the possibility of pregnancy. Roll 1D100 after every encounter, 00 means pregnancy.

Armor: None.

Skills: Seduce 75%.

Spells: Enthral.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4.

Liches or Undead

Lesser Servitor Race

Ghastly tales, however, were told by late wayfarers who had met certain of these liches, striding alone or in companies along the roads of Averigne. They gave the appearance of being deaf, dumb, totally insensate, and of hurrying with horrible speed and sureness towards a remote, predestined goal. – “The Colossus of Ylourgne,” Smith



Liches are recent corpses that have been raised from their graves or places of death by necromancy and summoned or guided to a destination. Whilst fulfilling this objective, liches are insensate to all around them. If they stopped or blocked from reaching their destination, they will

attempt to claw or fight their way through the obstacle. If it is impassable, they will attempt to find another way around the obstacle. Liches can be instructed by their necromancer master to fight if necessary, or perform other duties such as guarding but this is rare.

char.	rolls	averages
STR	3D6x1.5	15-17
CON	3D6x1.5	15-17
SIZ	2D6+6	13
INT	2D6+6x0.5	6
POW	0	0
DEX	2D6	7
HP		15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

MV 9

Attacks: Improvised club 35%, 1D8+db

Fist 35%, 1D3+db

Armor: None naturally. Might be wearing the armor it died in.

Skills: None.

Spells: None.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8 to see a liche.

Special: Liches can only be stopped by being physically hacked apart or decapitated.

Living Statues

Lesser Independent Race

One was a snarling, murderous, cat-headed monster, with retracted lips revealing formidable fangs, and eyes that glared intolerable hatred from beneath ferine brows. This creature had the claws and wings of a griffin, and seemed as if it were poised in readiness to swoop down on the city of Vyones, like a harpy on its prey. Its companion was a horned satyr, with the vans of some great bat such as might roam the nether caverns, with sharp, clenching talons, and a look of Satanically brooding lust, as if it were gloating above the helpless object of its unclean desire. – “The Maker of Gargoyles,” Smith

Averoigne is home to many of France's finest artisans who make its cathedrals and castles places of beauty and calm. Still, the land's influence pervades even these works. A sculptor who works for a great deal of time on a statue while under the influence of a strong emotion may compel the statue to animate to act upon those desires or hatred. As most hearts are dark at their core, the statue usually becomes a terror to the surrounding community. The creator has no control over the statue – indeed, they may not know that they have created such a being at all.

A living statue typically waits until nightfall to begin its depredations, seeking out victims who can gratify or suppress the emotions it embodies. The statistics below are for a gargoyle statue. The Keeper is encouraged to modify them based on the size, substance, and other properties of the animated statue.



char.	rolls	averages
STR	4D6	14
CON	4D6	14
SIZ	4D6	14
INT	1D6	3-4
POW	3D6	10-11
DEX	2D6	7
HP		14

Damage bonus: +1D4

MV 8, (fly 12 for gargoyles)

Attacks: Claw 40%, 1D6+db

Bite 30%, 1D4+db

Grapple 40%, special

Head Butt 30%, 1D6+db

Armor: 8 points of stony hide.

Skills: Climb 65%, Hide 25%, Hide among Cathedral Rooftops 85%, Sense Sin 90%, Sneak 60%, Track 50%.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D4.

Ogres

Lesser Independent Race

The woodsman, in proportion to the surrounding trees and brush, seemed disconcertingly large. His hands and forearms were grossly knotted with muscle. Although he stooped at his work and his face was therefore difficult to see, when the woodsman turned to fetch a fresh post, Hugh was presented with a strange, craggy profile.

At ten paces more details: the woodsman wore a greatcoat stitched together from bear-skins, odd pieces of cloth, and oily leathers. An enormous hat of red felt tried to encompass his head, and over his back, dropping just below the waist, draped someone's tablecloth. Beneath the brim of the hat, Hugh could see rows of shovel-like teeth set within a square jaw, and a long nose with three long hairs protruding from the tip, one golden, one black, and one green.

A sudden and uncomfortable thought occurred to Hugh. But then it was too late; the woodsman stood up to his full height, grinning fiercely, and extended a massive hand. "Good evening," he said in a low, but dulcet tone. Hugh could now see that the 'posts' he had been hammering were human femurs. – "Hugh the Discerning", Elliott



Deep in the woods of Averaigne there live solitary individuals who live in tents of human skin and have a taste for human flesh. They are ogres. Surprisingly well-educated and learned, ogres often trick their meals into a false sense of security, with subtle psychology and compliments, putting their victims at ease. Ogres like

on the ogre's menu, is the smell of boiling cooking stock or the sound of sharpening butchers' knives.

Extremely ambitious ogres can mingle with human society, without raising human suspicion, even taking human partners, but usually only if they don't eat their neighbors.

char.	rolls	averages
STR	2D6+12	19
CON	2D6+6	13
SIZ	2D6+12	13
INT	1D6+12	13
POW	2D6+6	13
DEX	3D6	10-11
HP		13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

MV 8

Attack: Any weapon 40%, damage varies.

Armor: May wear any.

Skills: Dodge 33%, Etiquette 25%, Fast Talk 50%, Insight 75%, Listen 75%, Other Kingdoms 25%, Own Kingdom 50%, Persuade 50%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 75%.

Spells: On an INT×1 roll, the ogre knows 1D3 spells.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4.

Satyrs

Lesser Independent Race

There were two horns in a matted mass of coarse, animal-like hair above the semi-human face with its obliquely slitted eyes and fang-revealing mouth and beard of wild-boar bristles. The face was old – incomputably old; and its lines and wrinkles were those of unreckoned years of lust; and its look was filled with the slow, unceasing increment of all the malignity and corruption and cruelty of elder ages. It was the face of Pan, as he glared from his, secret wood upon travelers taken unaware. – "The Satyr", Smith

Satyrs live in the deep dark woods of Averaigne, keeping themselves to themselves. Worshipers of Shub-Niggurath, satyrs prey upon the unwary who venture too deep into their territory, young women being a special prize. Some especially sadistic satyrs know of Christianity, and like to taunt the errant faithful with tales of the true reality of the universe knowing that the truth will send the faithful mad.



char.	rolls	averages
STR	5D6	17-18
CON	4D6	14
SIZ	2D6+6	13
INT	2D6+6	13
POW	4D6	14
DEX	3D6+6	16-17
HP		14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

MV 10

Attacks: Headbutt 55%, 1D6+db

Club 40%, 1D10+db

Thrown Rock 40%, 1D4+½db

Armor: 2 points of sun-tanned hide, wooly legs and horns.

Skills: Hide 50%, Perform (dance) 90%, Perform (play pan pipes) 99%, Sneak 75%.

Spells: A satyr knows 1D6 spells, all enhanced by the playing of pan pipes.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D3 to encounter a satyr.

Serpent Women or Lamia Lesser Independent Race

*As dark as he, in features wild and proud,
And with a weird supernal grace endow'd,
The haughty mistress scorn'd the rural train
Who sought to learn her source, but sought in vain.
Old women call'd her eyes too bright by half,
And nervous children shiver'd at her laugh;
Richard, the dwarf (whose word had little weight),
Vow'd she was like a serpent in her gait. . .* – "Psychopompos," Lovecraft



Though like werewolves (see below) in some ways, serpent women are different in many ways. Rather than being the result of a magical curse, most serpent women are created through a pact with a dark power, perhaps one associated with the Worms of the Earth. No men are known to have accepted the curse – whether

this reflects the Church's views on women or some other cause is uncertain.

Create a serpent woman as a normal human with a POW of 12+1D6. When in this form, the creature has no defenses save its spells and what resources are available to it as a human. When in serpent form, make the following adjustments to her statistics:

char.	rolls	averages
STR	1D6	3-4
SIZ	1D6	3-4
DEX	2D6+12	19

MV 3

Attacks: Bite, 65%, poison POT equal to serpent woman's CON.

Armor: 1 point of scales.

Skills: Beguile 60%, Dodge 38%, Sneak 65%.

Spells: Enthrall, Serpent Form (12 MP), others as the Keeper sees fit (suggested: Flesh Ward, Curse (characteristic or skill group)).

Sanity Loss: Witnessing a transformation costs 1/1D6 Sanity. In addition, if the Keeper rules that either form is particularly eerie, a Sanity loss of 0/1D3 may be called for.

Vampires Lesser Independent Race

The man was inordinately tall and cadaverous, and was dressed in black garments of a superannate mode. His lips were strangely red, amid his bluish beard and the mortuary whiteness of his face. . . His eyes were pale and luminous as marsh-lights; and Gerard shuddered at his gaze and at the cold, ironic smile of his scarlet lips, that seemed to reserve a world of secrets all too dreadful and hideous to be disclosed. – "A Rendezvous in Averroigne," Smith

It was a slight pale hand, attached to a slim graceful arm that emerged from the narrow opening of the archer-slit. . . She came in a tangle of limbs, like a spider. Fingers, heels, toes – all dug into the stone, all strained and grasped to pull her forward. Into the gap she pushed, distorted, misshapen, taking shape, her body a pale puppet envelope of bones unconnected, a kaleidoscope of flesh, flowing siren hair and lolling loose head. Swiftly the frightful, attenuated face was made right again. The limbs no longer moved in ways unpleasant to see. Bone fused, the body swelled and took form. – "The Butcher of Vyones," Minnis

The vampires of Averroigne seem to be the creations of a curse by God. Those chosen for this are usually those who led wicked lives of sin and depravity, or so the church says. These are not the creatures that today's readers are familiar with from the legends – they have no fangs, can come out in the sunlight freely, and have no aversion to garlic or holy symbols. They do not need to eat and drink, but they can do so without discomfort.

For twelve hours of the day, the vampire must remain asleep, unable to defend itself. During the other twelve, the vampire can hunt and attack its foes. If successful with a bite attack, a vampire may drain CON on subsequent rounds. For every point drained, the vampire gains an additional MP for the next 24 hours that it may use to fuel its powers. A victim reduced to 0 CON turns into a vampire in three days, but these are free-willed beings, so most vampires kill their victims rather than creating spawn.

A vampire collapses when its hit points pass below zero, but it can still regenerate when in that state. If a stake is put into the vampire before it rises, it will turn into dust. It is not truly dead,



however, as it will slowly reform over hundreds of years. When it awakens, it has taken on a new form and has no memories of its previous life. Such a creature may rejoin the living, take up a profession, and even marry, though engendering children is beyond its power. Still, they will be curious as to blood, and if they taste a cup or more of the precious fluid, they will recall their true nature once again. The only true way to destroy a vampire is by burning it into ashes, a process that takes hours.

Vampires should be created as ordinary humans, after which the following traits are applied:

Attacks: Bite, (use **Fist** or **Grapple** skill, whichever is higher), 1D3+½db

Drain, automatic, 1D3 CON/round

Acidic Blood Gout, 50%, 1D4 for 3 rounds to one target*

* Costs 6 MPs to initiate; cannot be used on the same round as a bite or drain

Armor: None usually, but some may wear that with which they were familiar in life. In addition, a vampire regains 1 HP for every MP spent, doing so even if reduced below zero HP.

Spells: Bless Constitution, Bless Dexterity, Bless Strength, Bless Physical Movement, Body Warping*, Soul Singing (this is often used to create illusions in which the prey is imprisoned and drained at the vampire's leisure)

* A special version of this spell that costs only 12 MP and allows the vampire to dislocate its bones to move through openings of only a few inches in diameter.

Skills: As in life, plus Track by Scent 75%.

Sanity Loss: None, normally, though seeing a victim attacked costs 1/1D3 Sanity points. Seeing a vampire perform a superhuman feat (Keeper's option) may also cost a small amount of Sanity.

deeply may be unable to transform themselves back into human form at all. Those in between may regain human form temporarily at the dark of the moon, or by discovering a particular root (one days' search and a **Natural History** roll). Those of exceptional will may gain some control over the transformation, or even be able to transform part of their body.

A transformed werewolf remembers the hatreds and desires of its human form and its hunts will often reflect these distant memories, but has no control over its actions. It is common for such a creature to use its Compel ability to bring a group of ordinary wolves with it as it attacks.

In human form, the werewolf's statistics are normal, save for the POW noted below. In the wolf form, use the human form's stats with the skills of the wolf (*Cthulhu Dark Ages*, p. 98), modified as described below.

Both Forms:

POW: 12+1D6

Wolf Form:

Attacks: Bite 50%, 1D8+db

Spells: Compel Wolf, Fury, Wolf Form (12 MP).

Armor: 1 point hide. In addition, non-magical weapons do minimum damage (apply armor after accounting for this). Silver has no special effects on werewolves in this setting.

Sanity Loss: Witnessing a wolf that manifests supernatural powers costs 0/1D3 Sanity points. A werewolf who is undergoing a transformation, or who has undergone a partial transformation, costs 1/1D6 Sanity points.

Werewolves

Lesser Independent Race

...his alarm was touched instantly with the fear which only preternatural things can arouse. The beast was strangely colored, its fur being a glossy bluish-black. It was far larger than the common gray wolves of the forest. Crouching inscrutably, half hidden in the sedges, it seemed to await the woman as she waded shoreward. – "The Enchantress of Sylaire," Smith



The werewolves of Averaigne differ from those described in the Dark Ages book. Instead of being sorcerers who transform themselves into monsters, these werewolves take on their nature through drinking magical water from a pool or a concoction derived from the blood of a werewolf (for which a **Potions** roll is needed to create).

The extent of the transformation depends upon the amount consumed. Those who have drunk only a small amount may transform only on nights of the full moon, while those who have imbibed

The Averaigne Grimoire

by Dan Harms with Richard Becker

Avernoigne games occur in a milieu where magic, though still wondrous, is much more commonplace. In many of Smith's stories, the wizard figure is often the hero who must battle evil with incantations and wits. Thus, keepers should be more willing to allow players some latitude in selecting and using spells.

The following spells from the Mythos Grimoire in the 6th edition *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook (page 217) may be appropriate for use in an Averaigne game. Note that some of these are offensive or somewhat powerful. The setting should lead to the use of such spells being limited. Few in Averaigne support the Inquisition, but they are more than willing to use it to destroy a threat within their midst:

Baneful Dust of Hermes Trismegistus, Blight/Bless Crops, Dream Vision, Evil Eye, Identify Spirit, Lame/Heal Animal, Mirror of Tarkhun Atep, Voorish Sign, Warding, Warding the Eye, Wither Limb.

New Spells

Of the spells below, it is suggested that only Evoke Familiar of Erudition, Exorcism, and Nathaire's Ward against Divination be available to starting characters.

Blood Wine (Group Ritual)	
Range: Touch	Duration: Permanent until used
Cost: 20 MP	
Sanity: 1D3	Resistance Table: No.

Creates a liquid bestowing great magical potency. Before casting, a special wine must be prepared using grapes, herbs, spices, and a pint of blood from a human sacrifice to Sodagui (also known as Sadoqua), requiring a successful **Potions** roll. A group ritual is chanted over the bottle and afterward, the bottle is sealed with magical sigils and aged for at least a year. Breaking the seals beforehand ruins the spell.

A dose of this wine takes one round to quaff and provides 6 MP to the drinker. Each bottle contains 10 doses. When finished drinking, the person must resist their new MP with their POW or be forced to cast a spell. The character chooses the spell, while the Keeper determines the number of MP spent (if applicable) and the target. After casting, the character must make another roll or repeat the contest. No spell may be cast twice until all other spells the character knows have been cast.

This spell is known only by Sodagui's high priests, who drink in moderation. (From *Cthulhu Live: Lost Souls*)

Brew Timedrift Philter

Range: Touch	Duration: Until used
Cost: 20 MP per dose	
Sanity: 0	Resistance Table: No

A potion intended to send its user backward or forward in time. Like the spell Brew Space Mead (6th edition rulebook, p. 221), this spell requires five special ingredients chosen by the keeper (brewed into a potion in a week's time) and the infusion of 20 Magic Points by the caster over a period of one or more days. The philter created by this means will consist of one dose per casting, which the caster or other user must drink to make effective. The resultant philter can easily be hidden in drinks, such as a good red wine. The drinker loses one MP and one Sanity point for every 100 years traveled, however Sanity points are only lost once the drinker has realized the current date.

Create Dust of Remembrance

Range: Touch	Duration: Until used
Cost: 1 MP per dose	
Sanity: 0	Resistance Table: No

Creates a dust potent against all animated dead. Compounding the substance requires 10 deniers' worth of materials, and a quarter of an hour per dose. At the end of each day it is compounded, the caster must make an **Alchemy** roll. If unsuccessful, the day's work has been for naught, and the magic points and money are lost.

When confronted by one of the walking dead, the caster may enter hand-to-hand combat and make a **DEX×5** roll to toss this substance into the creature's nostrils. If successful, resolve the effect of the dust with a resistance roll pitting the number of doses successfully tossed against the POW of the monster's creator. If successful, the monster remembers that it is dead and wanders off to bring about an appropriate death (burying itself, burning itself on a pyre, or any other appropriate means). Afterward, no magic will animate it again.

Throwing the powder at a living being will cause a hearty sneeze at best. It also has no effect on vampires, who often have heard of the spell and may take insult from its use.

Enchant Staff of the Sacred Flame

Range: Touch	Duration: Permanent
Cost: 2 POW	
Sanity: 1D8	Resistance Table: Special

These staffs were the creations of a particular sect of druids, who used them to provide illumination and to ignite sacrifices during

their rites. The staff must be cut of oak, carved with powerful symbols, and enchanted at ceremonies on two Midsummer's Eves with a point of POW being lost at each one.

The staff may be used in two ways. The creator may spend MP to cause the staff to glow as a torch, though its fire is considered magical for affecting beings immune to regular fire. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to the MP spent when the staff is ignited, so the staff could be handed off to another person during that time. In addition, the creator may merely concentrate when holding the staff to cast a shriveling spell (*Cthulhu Dark Ages* pp. 90-91).

Those who own such a staff must refresh its power by bathing it in the blood of a human sacrifice on each Midsummer's Eve. If they do not do so, the spirit within the staff emerges, engulfing the creator in flames, and then departs.

Evade the Gravedigger's Ire (Necromancy)

Range: 50 miles

Duration: Until corpse's arrival

Cost: 8 MP

Sanity: 1D6

Resistance Table: No.

Often employed by wizards in search of grisly components, this spell sends a spirit to inhabit the closest fresh corpse of a person slain in their prime. The caster chants for ten minutes while rubbing together two human bones. The corpse, now treated as a zombie or liche (see page 105 elsewhere in this issue), will do anything in its power to come to the magician. It has no skills and will not attack those in its way, but it will attempt to break through any obstacles. Once arriving at the location where the spell was cast, the cadaver falls to the ground, inanimate.

Evoke Familiar of Erudition (Ritual)

Range: Touch

Duration: See below

Cost: Variable

Sanity: 1D4

Resistance Table: No

Costs 12 hours to cast, a variety of questionable components, and a variable number of magic points. This spell summons a spirit to answer the magicians' questions on a particular topic. The origin of such spirits is uncertain; they may be demons, angels, elementals, ghosts, or expressions of the human consciousness, and they take whatever form the magician expects. (To add flavor, the player and GM might develop the exact techniques and components the magician uses, as well as the names, appearances, and personalities of the familiars summoned.)

The spell should be cast in a desolate place such as a crossroads, graveyard, ruin, monolith, desanctified church, or other such location. It may be cast in another location, though an additional 4 MP must be spent to create the proper atmosphere.

The player should state how many magic points their caster spends in the ritual. For every magic point spent, the magician may assign 5% (up to 90%) to any Thought skill (save *Cthulhu Mythos*, *Potions*, and *Write Language*) or *Other Language* (save *Mythos* languages) for the spirit. If the skill has specialties (such as *Science* or *Other Language*), the caster must choose one specialty for the

spirit. The spirit is assumed to have the same *Own Language* skill as the caster and an effective POW equal to the MP spent.

After magic points have been assigned to skills and the ritual carried out, the Keeper should make an *Occult* roll for the character. If this roll fails or fumbles, roll on the Summoning Failure Table. Otherwise, the summoning has been successful.

To ask the spirit a question, the magician must succeed in a contest between the spirit's POW and their own. (Do not use the caster's MP for this contest – it is a battle of wills, not mystical potential.) If the caster succeeds, roll the skill, treating the spirit as a knowledgeable person at the caster's location. (In other words, the spell grants no abilities to see information at a distance; a *Library Use* spirit is practically useless outside a library.) The question should only require an answer of one sentence. If the contest is failed, the spirit refuses to answer any more questions, and the magician must send it back whence it came. Only when the process is complete may she leave the area of the summoning.

Others witnessing it may lose 0/1D4 Sanity points for witnessing this unholy act. Thus, most magicians perform such rites alone.

Summoning Failure Table

D100 Result

01-40	Spirit does not appear. MP lost.
41-55	Spirit appears, but requests a service from the caster for each question answered. Pit caster's POW vs. spirit's POW to determine how involved these tasks may be. If the caster fumbles the roll, no questions can be asked, and the caster is compelled to perform a task for the spirit.
56-58	Spirit does not appear, but one of its subordinates (with half the skill and effective POW) does.
59-62	Spirit appears in a hideous form (0/1D6 Sanity points loss).
63-66	Spirit appears with a hideous stench (match CON vs. spirit's POW or become incapacitated).
67-70	Spirit appears with a booming voice (take 1D6 damage each time it speaks).
71-75	Spirit appears, makes a dire prophecy, and departs.
76-80	Spirit appears, but remains invisible. If the caster does not state they are banishing, the spirit strikes them for 3D6 damage and departs as soon as they attempt to leave the area.
81-85	Spirit appears and attempts to possess caster (caster's POW vs. spirit's POW). If successful, spirit takes up residence in caster's body, requiring exorcism to dismiss.
86-95	Different spirit appears and answers caster's questions as it amuses it
96-98	Magician suffers a minor heart attack (treat as poison with POT equal to the spirit's POW).
99	Mystical insight! Lose 1D8 Sanity points.
00	The walls between the worlds are broken. A horde of spirits appears, devastating the area and dragging the caster back to their home dimension. SAN loss 1D3/1D10 Sanity points to witness. Caster's MP and life lost.

Exorcism

Range: Sight (within spirit's sphere of influence) **Duration:** Instantaneous
Cost: Variable (see below)
Sanity: 0 **Resistance Table:** Special

This spell allows the caster to initiate spirit combat (*Cthulhu Dark Ages*, p. 115) with a possessing entity or spirit. The caster may spend up to 12 hours beforehand in preparation – meditation, prayer, fasting, or calling out to the ancestors, as their faith calls them to do. During this time, they may invest whatever number of magic points they desire in the spell. Magic points are regained normally during this time (¼ of total every six hours).

When spirit combat begins, add the magic points invested in the spell to the caster's MP. These extra MP are only available for the purposes of spirit combat, and may not be used to cast spells. If the caster loses MP from the combat, these extra points are lost first.

Spirit combat brought about by Exorcism may be stopped if both parties desire to end it. This spell does not take effect as a group ritual. It is suggested that this spell substitute for both the Cast Out Devil and Dismiss (Spirit) spells.

Immolation of Aforgomon

Range: Sight **Duration:** Instantaneous
Cost: 1 MP per 3 SIZ of corpse
Sanity: 1 **Resistance Table:** No

This spell destroys an amount of dead (not undead or animated) flesh and bone. The caster speaks aloud a short phrase for one round to activate the spell. When finished, the corpse is consumed in heatless flame, down to the slightest traces, including blood on a weapon (0/1D3 Sanity points to witness).

A priesthood of a forgotten land once used this spell to speed their comrades' souls in their journey into death, but today it is used by murderers seeking to cover up their crimes. The spell appears in *The Testament of Carnamagos*.

Incarnate Oracle of Sodagui (Group Ritual)

Range: Touch **Duration:** Permanent
Cost: 50 MP
Sanity: 1D10 **Resistance Table:** No

This group ritual requires a chosen victim, the sacrifice of half a dozen humans, and a day to cast. This spell transforms a person into a mouthpiece for the wisdom of Sodagui. A number of casters may meet at an underground gateway to Sodagui's realm that emits foul vapors. The casters contribute magic points in whatever number meets the spell's requirement, then extinguish any lights and leave the victim and the sacrifices to their fate.

Through the rite, the victim is transformed into a hideous amorphous monstrosity hideously similar to Sodagui (1/1D8 Sanity point loss, or 1D3/1D10 if the viewer knew the victim before). The monster is happy to answer any questions put to it, though it often hides its

true knowledge through vagueness or irony. After several weeks or months, the creature degenerates into a pool of viscous slime.

Only the priests of Sodagui know this spell. In previous eras, the oracle was released to the outside world after the spell's completion, living among the people for decades while taking an occasional victim. In the present inquisitorial clime, the priesthood considers such an arrangement to be unhealthy, and no oracle to the god exists in 1275. (From *Cthulhu Live: Lost Souls*)

Infusion of the Animate Cadaver (Necromancy)

Range: Touch **Duration:** See below
Cost: 8 MP + variable
Sanity: 1D6 **Resistance Table:** No.

Calls a spirit to possess a corpse that then performs one task. The corpse must be chanted over for an hour, its mouth filled with herbs. At any time in the next day, the caster may speak the final words of the incantation in three rounds, and a spirit will enter the corpse and animate it as a zombie (0/1D6 Sanity points to view). At this time, the caster must spend 8 MP to animate the corpse, plus 1 MP for every 10% in a skill from the Physical Movement category (up to 50% in any skill).

The corpse will carry out a single instruction from the caster. After the task has been completed or half an hour has elapsed, the corpse collapses. It can never be reanimated by any means.

Nathaire's Ward against Divination

Range: See below **Duration:** Special
Cost: 4 MP
Sanity: 1 **Resistance Table:** No

Protects an enclosed space against divination. The magician may either draw the ward in the air in one round to take effect for their minutes in POW, or draw it on a portal for 10 minutes to protect an area for a day.

Magical Items of Averaigne

by Richard Becker

The Mirror of Reality

...an oblong silver mirror, brightly burnished, with jeweled handle, such as a great lady or damsel might own. – “The Enchantress of Sylaire”, Smith



This silver oblong mirror shows the reflections of things as they truly are, without regard for illusion. Thus, creatures enchanted to appear very young and beautiful may be seen as decrepit and ugly, etc. It would be disastrous to use it to view something beyond human comprehension, such as Daoloth (double all costs in Sanity points).

Philter of Time-Traveling

...the two vials, one of which contained a sanguine-colored liquid, and the other a fluid of emerald brightness. – “The Holiness of Azédarac”, Smith



Each dose of this terrible potion causes a burning sensation throughout the body, followed by an icy cold, then vertigo, and a sense of falling through endless grayness while the world around one dissolves away. When the potion is finished, the user finds him or herself transported some distance forward or backward in time. (If the potion is meant to send its user backward in time, it will be red-colored; if forward, it will be green.) This distance may be years, decades, or centuries, at the will of the person brewing the potion - not the person drinking it.

When a referee runs a scenario involving time travel, it is good to keep in mind the notes in *Worlds of Cthulhu* #1 on the creation of a medieval investigator for pointers on the difference between the modern and feudal mindsets. Also, one shouldn't forget that while they wouldn't necessarily be totally unintelligible to each other, modern Frenchmen and medieval Frenchmen speak rather different versions of the same language.

The time-traveling philter is created by the spell Brew Timedrift Philter (see page 109 elsewhere in this issue).

The Ring of Eibon

It was made of a redder gold than any that the Earth had yielded in latter cycles, and was set with a large purple gem, somber and smoldering, whose like is no longer to be found. In the gem an antique demon was held captive, a spirit from prehuman worlds, which would answer the interrogation of sorcerers. – “The Beast of Averaigne”, Smith

A ring of Hyperborean design made of gold and set with an unusually large purple gem. An ancient prehuman demon is trapped within the gem and can be compelled to answer questions (“in a shrill voice that was like the singing of fire”) by a properly protected user. (Proper protection requires a magical circle and certain runes, a brief ritual, and the inversion of the ring over a brazier of hot burning amber.)



Failure to use these protections may result in an attempt by the demon to attempt to dominate the will of the ring's user (POW vs. POW, if the demon wins then at the keeper's discretion it will compel the ring-user to free it by shattering the gemstone, after which the great demon will automatically steal the hapless user's soul to be its slave forever). Each use of the Ring of Eibon costs its user three magic points and requires a successful Sanity roll for 0/1D3 Sanity point loss.

Also, each time the Ring is used, its user may ask three questions (such as: What is the origin of the Beast of Averaigne? What are its attributes and abilities? By what method can the Beast be vanquished?) which will receive length and detailed answers filled with valuable information.

If used in the manner shown in the story “The Beast of Averaigne”, the Ring of Eibon will be broken to free its inhabitant: a Fire Vampire of unusual power (all attributes are maximum for its species), which will attack and destroy the Beast or other creature as per its bargain with the user and then disappear into the night sky.

Viper-bordered Mirror

Alone with his books, in a sparsely furnished attic, he frowned above a small, oblong mirror, framed with an arabesque of golden vipers, that had once been the property of Nathaire. It was not the reflection of his own comely and youthful though subtly lined face that caused him to frown. Indeed, the mirror was of another kind than that which reflects the features of the gazer. In its depths, for a few instants, he had beheld a strange and ominous looking scene, whose participants were known to him but whose location he could not recognize or orientate. Before he could study it closely, the mirror had clouded as if with the rising of alchemic fumes, and he had seen no more. – “The Colossus of Ylourgne”, Smith

With this mighty creation, Nathaire (and later, Gaspard du Nord) could attempt to view distant scenes and even other sorcerers' lairs. Use of the Mirror requires no Sanity point loss, but it does cost one Magic Point per 100 miles distance of the location to be viewed (minimum one point cost) or three Magic Points per turn to view another world (such as Yuggoth). However what is seen using the mirror may involve Sanity point loss.

There is a possibility that any being viewed may realize it is being observed (this chance equals the being's POW minus 20 or less on 1D100). If so, the viewed being cannot actually attack the user through the Mirror, but if it wishes it may attempt to dispel the viewing by rolling its POW×5 or less on 1D100.

France in the Thirteenth-century: An Overview by Dan Harms

Dark Ages: Averroigne is set in the year 1275, over two hundred years after the Dark Ages setting ends. In many ways, not only is this setting closer to the vision of Smith's Averroigne tales, it also embodies many images which we have come to associate with medieval times. Players may find that it is easier to understand, but this is not necessarily the case.

For the most part, life in the Thirteenth-century goes on for people as it has for centuries. They eat, drink, sleep, fight, squabble, preach, and dream. Still, the times have brought a number of changes. The material below departs from the descriptions given in Cthulhu Dark Ages to show the face of another era.

Agriculture

One of the major changes in agriculture since the Dark Ages was the widespread use of iron for agricultural implements as well as weapons. The main innovation that came out of this was the wheeled plow, an iron-bladed machine pulled by horses or oxen that allowed the plowing of harder yet nutrient-rich soils. As a result of the plow, as well as the widespread adaptation of three-field crop rotation and planting crops that inserted nutrients back into the soil, the farmers often found themselves with a surplus. This was to have a great impact on Europe – people were better-fed, the population grew, and the surplus gave people the ability to concentrate on other projects than survival.

The Towns

Civil centers had existed for centuries, but now they gained their own level of autonomy. Stone walls protected the larger centers from invaders, and the increased trade of goods between regions led to the formation of a new merchant class. The town was often governed by a commune, an association of all local businessmen. Freed of their feudal obligations by substituting cash payments for service in the lord's army, the townspeople were free to engage themselves wholly in commerce. This allowed the lord to staff his army with well-paid

fighters rather than poorly-trained conscripts, and allowed the merchants to sell their wares unmolested. Their success was seen by the clergy as an assault on the proper order of things, but without the support of the nobility, there was little the Church could do to stop them.

Towns of this era were often unpleasant places in which to live. Houses, their upper stories nearly meeting above, hemmed in narrow streets clogged with filth. In such a setting, people encountered a number of difficulties: fires, plague, lack of water, and poor sanitation. These towns were very much tied to the countryside, which brought it both business and the necessities such as food and raw materials. Still, the influence of these centers was growing. The nobles enjoyed the new source of revenues, and due to the need to make shipping safer, more inns and safer roads could be found throughout the kingdom.

Buildings

Two structures defined this period of history. The first was a new style of fortifications. The old motte-and-bailey fortresses, though effective in holding off intruders, were vulnerable to siege and fire, and wealthy nobles sought more durable structures to protect themselves and their holdings. The solution was the concentric castle, a familiar image from books and movies. The central keep of this structure was protected with stone curtain walls with battlements at the top and interspersed with square or circular towers with battlements and holes for arbalests designed to give the defenders flanking fire on sections of wall. These were in turn contained within more walls and towers, all of which would have to be breached to take the castle. When combined with a defensible position or moat and drawbridge, not to mention stockpiled food and a well, such a structure was only vulnerable to prolonged sieges or mining. Within its walls were sparsely furnished rooms that were nonetheless decorated with tapestries and brightly-painted walls.

The other defining structure was the Gothic cathedral. Gothic architecture, a term coined in the Sixteenth-century, based itself upon a structure dedicated to maximizing the amount of light that entered it. A number of innovations, such as high pointed arches and flying buttresses, served to lift the roof higher and provide more space for large stained-glass windows. Inside and outside were carvings of events from the Bible, plants, animals, and fearsome monsters. Cathedral-building became an industry in medieval Europe, with nobles and commoners committing money to the project out of civic pride and teams of stonemasons traveling the countryside from job to job. These projects might take decades or centuries, and often were never finished.

The Crusades

In 1095, Pope Urban II called for a crusade against the infidel at the Council of Clermont. Soon, many kings, nobles, and commoners sold their possessions, took up arms, and marched to the Holy Land to cast out the Muslims. Although they met with initial success, retaking Jerusalem in 1099, they had no long-term plan for the administration of this region. Their foes took advantage of this, slowly winning back all of the land that the Crusaders had taken from them. The Crusaders fell upon easier targets for their zeal, committing such infamous acts as the sacking of Constantinople in 1204.

In 1275, the Crusades were still going on, but the expeditions had become less frequent and less powerful. The nobles' trips to the Holy Land had taken on a quixotic character, and the townsfolk objected vociferously to the stream of taxes and levies that funded the expeditions. Still, Europe had encountered benefits from the Crusades. Not all contact in the Middle East had been hostile, so Europe benefited from the philosophy and learning, not to mention the trade goods and spices, of other lands. Much of this would take some time to have its impact on European civilization, but the effects are beginning to be felt already as people sought out new sources of trade and knowledge.

The groups that could be considered the winners of the Crusades were the military orders. These began in 1080 with the formation of the Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, or the Hospitallers. Soon other such orders were formed, with the most prominent being the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon, or the Templars, and the Teutonic Knights. These orders attracted the younger sons of nobles and other men with money but less rich titles. These orders had received rich bequests in both Europe and the Levant, so even after the Crusaders had lost most of their territory, these orders could return to their extensive estates in Europe. The Templars have even set themselves up as bankers, becoming one of the major financial institutions of the time. It is likely that this was the reason that they were disbanded in France in 1307, though rumors of blasphemy and devil-worship have lent them an aura of glamour.

Heresy and the Inquisition

Heresy had always been a concern of the Church, but the Thirteenth-century saw struggles over doctrine take their bloodiest form yet. In Toulouse in the south of France, the Albigensian Cathars became the greatest threat to the papal authority. They taught that the material world was impure and that the Roman Church was corrupt. Only by taking the consolamentum, the vows of a holy person or "Perfec-

tus" that included abstinence, vegetarianism, truthfulness, and other rules, could one enter the kingdom of God. Unsurprisingly, most Cathars took the consolamentum on their deathbeds, but they nonetheless supported the Perfecti who lived the lifestyle they held in esteem.

For the most part, the doctrines the Cathars taught were little different than many of the heresies the Church had confronted before. The difference was that their beliefs had found a widespread following, including several members of the nobility. The Church began by sending missionaries to persuade the inhabitants to give up their ways, but these worthies had few successes. In the end, Count Raymond of Toulouse and Peter of Castelnau, the papal legate, disputed over the Cathars, an argument believed to have led to the murder of Peter in 1208.

Confronted by this assault, Pope Innocent III called for a crusade against the Cathars, the only one ever called against a nominally Christian land. The nobles of northern France responded eagerly, glad to have a shorter trip than the one to the Levant and the possibility of winning new territory. The Cathars could do little to resist, and while their followers still exist in hiding later in the century, their power has been broken forever.

The situation had called the papacy's attention to the difficulties in confronting heresy, leading to the Lateran Council reaffirming the tenets of the Christian faith in 1215, and to the creation of the Inquisition in 1232. Inquisitors were special judges charged specifically with the investigation of heresy. The Church also authorized them to work in concert with the secular authorities in their discovery and punishment of heretics, so torture and execution could enter into the equation without churchmen dirtying their hands.

Nonetheless, the Inquisition at this period differed considerably from the picture we have of it today. While powerful, the institution could not proceed without the assistance of the rest of the church, the nobility, and the populace. Inquisitors who grew too zealous in their duties were often removed from their office, or at least the area. In addition, the inquisition was little concerned with sorcery at this time. While they did prosecute those accused of witchcraft, they were often reluctant to do so, as it took away from their efforts to prosecute heresy. Nonetheless, the year 1275 saw the Inquisition's first burning of a witch – an old woman in Toulouse who claimed to have a corpse-fed devil's child as her son.

The Troubadours

The Twelfth-century saw the rise of a group of entertainers known as troubadours in southern France. While some of their number included nobility, many came from the burgeoning middle class. They often spoke of men who performed daring deeds, held high ideals and gave up everything for the sake of a high-born and haughty lady. Their repertoire covered a broad range, including songs of crusades, funeral laments, satires, and others. These songs became quite popular, resonating through the culture of southern France and beyond.

The message the troubadours brought was, at its heart, subversive of the conventional order. Its ideals of chivalry may have influenced the nobility to become less harsh, but they also challenged the wisdom that a noble was made by birth, not behavior. Further, its portrayal of love glorified infidelity, championing emotion over

the ties of marriage on which so much of medieval society's power and economic structure depended.

Some have said that the troubadours championed the beliefs of the Cathars, or that they hid a system of esoteric wisdom hidden in their songs. By 1275, their time had almost passed, yet they had left an indelible mark upon the culture of the region.

Tournaments

The nobles of the period still warred as always, and one of the chief ways they practiced for warfare was the tournament. A tournament was held at an occasion important for other reasons, such as a new alliance or marriage. The entertainment usually consisted of two types. The first, the melee, was a battle between two groups of mounted men, often wielding swords. The second was the joust with which we have since become familiar. By this time, safety had become more of a concern, but innovations such as blunt weapons and special armor were not in wide use, so injuries and fatalities were common occurrences. Such additions as the tilt, a fence to keep jousters' horses from colliding at full speed, would not come until much later.

Tournaments had initially come under fire by churchmen and royal officials alike, who felt that the time and energy spent attacking one's countrymen might be better spent in other pursuits, such as attacking the king's enemies or the infidel. In 1275, a ban placed by Louis IX on tournaments is still in effect. One medieval source describes a contravention of this ban brought about through the staging of a supposed Arthurian play, which omitted the melee but included several jousts.

Learning

Schooling is still a luxury, but it has seen considerable growth in recent years. Many young men of good family are taught the basics of the trivium or quadrivium at a cathedral school by the bishop himself. For those who desire further learning, there are the universities.

The universities existed in large towns, such as Paris and Montpellier, where they had gained a charter. These universities are yet to have designated buildings; instead, teachers and students live and teach in whatever rooms they can find for classes. The university

is overseen by a senior faculty that sets the rates for tuition, rent, and other expenses.

A student was expected to master the artes liberal during his first few years at the university. After this, he might proceed to one of the higher disciplines, such as law, medicine, or theology, in which a doctorate would allow him to teach. The greatest innovation in learning in the Thirteenth-century was the rediscovery of Aristotle. While his books had been banned from the universities earlier in the century, they now provided a new and encyclopedic source of knowledge on the world that became popular with scholars tired of the old sources. Scholars such as Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus sought to reconcile the wisdom of Aristotle with Biblical knowledge, as well as their own experience.

University students are considered to be in training for the priesthood, and thus fall under canon law and its less strict regulations of behavior. This freedom from civil regulations has led to many of them becoming gangs, wielding weapons and fighting with the locals and other groups of students.

Justice

As time has gone on, it has become clear that the old systems of determining truth in court have serious flaws. The ordeal (*Cthulhu Dark Ages*, p. 67) has vanished due to the pope's order that the clergy not bless the proceedings. The processes of compurgation, in which others swear to the truthfulness of a person's statements, and trial by combat, are slowly acknowledged to have little to do with a person's guilt or innocence. They are still practiced, but they are being phased out as time goes on. This has led to the institution of the inquisitorial system for determining truth or innocence.

Despite its ominous-sounding title, the inquisitorial system should be familiar to those from modern times. To determine the facts in a case, a number of witnesses with knowledge of the crime are called to the stand. Lawyers who represent both the accusers and the accused may cross-examine the witnesses to arrive at the truth. If unsatisfied with the results, the judge may use torture to bring out confessions. Most of those taken to court are convicted, and even the innocent have little chance if the judge or jury have been bribed. As a result, many of those accused flee to other lands or the wilder-

The Order of St. Jerome

In *The Abbey* monograph, Chaosium presents the Order of St. Jerome, monks devoted to the cause of stamping out the Mythos. In the opinion of this author, the Order should take a different form in the age of Averroigne. If the Order is indeed in charge of the investigation of heresy and sorcery, the declaration of the Albigensian Crusade suggests that the papacy finds the Order's response to be insufficient. In addition, the church has favored the cooperation of its heresy-fighting priests with the secular authorities, another suggestion that it disagrees with the group's methods.

Thus, in our version of Dark Ages, the Order is officially no more. Its monastery and training ground have been taken over by the Cistercians, its funding has dried up, and those members recognized as having talent were subsumed into the Inquisition in 1231. A remnant of the old Order still remains. Some have taken up residence among other orders, while others roam the land as wandering monks or friars. They recognize each other when they come into contact through certain secret signs and certain Biblical passages (Ezekiel 12:14 is a favorite).

Although new faces are recruited into the ranks from time to time, the membership of the Order is mostly old. Some have gone over to their post-Order employment, whether religious or secular. Others still try to fight against the evils that once they faced, now outside the blessing of the Church. In such an atmosphere, it is unsurprising how many fall or are tainted by the forces they sought to overcome.

ness, where they live as outlaws. One who feels the court has done them wrong may appeal to a higher court – but they must take on the judge or tribunal in the next court instead of the other party.

In the end, however, much of justice is a revenue-generating area, and most civil offenses provide other punishments only if the condemned party cannot afford a fine. As a result, many people avoid the courts and resort to informal arbitration from an impartial, respected member of the community.

Resources

For those who wish to set their games in this time, a wide variety of sources are available. One of the best is the *Encyclopedia of Medieval France* edited by William Kibler and Grover Zinn (New York: Garland, 1995). This huge reference work covers people, places, and a wide variety of topics relating to the place and period. Simi-

lar books exist for England, Germany, Iberia, Italy, and Scandinavia. Those interested in a town setting are recommended Joseph and Frances Gies' *Life in a Medieval City* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1981) which describes life in the French town of Troyes circa 1250. A more general view of the robbers, prostitutes, and other scum of the time, along with a general overview on crime and justice, may be found in Andrew McCall's *The Medieval Underworld* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1993).

For gamers, I highly recommend the books from the *Ars Magica* line. These typically cover one aspect of medieval society (such as *Kabbalah: Mythic Judaism*), or a particular region (*Blood and Sand* for the Middle East). Your mileage with a particular title may vary, but they are useful tools for Keepers who wish to concentrate on one aspect of the world or another.



Disturbing Curios for Hard-pressed Keepers

Little Slices of Death

Dangerous Winds

By James Roth

This scene is designed for keepers to use as a brief encounter in an existing scenario or larger campaign. It is also ideal for a "flash game," a 30-minute session. *Dangerous Winds* is set in no fixed time period. It is designed for any number of players and for players of any ability. Keepers should feel free to adjust the elements and location as needed.

Keeper Information

The investigators have ventured into the country for a relaxing week-end away. Staying at a local inn they have been spending the last few days strolling the hills and valleys and generally enjoying the countryside.

Unfortunately over the last few days the weather has taken some rather drastic turns for the worse with sudden storms and gales occurring erratically from day to day.

The midday meal is already underway as the investigators sit around the inn at the onset of another freak weather storm. No doubt they will now be contemplating ending their vacation, but still enjoy-

ing a few ales and roast dinner in the meantime. The locals' talk in the inn centers on the unpleasant turn of the weather over the last few days, but there are also a number of conversations concerning the disappearances of sheep on the hills recently. Such talk leads to disquiet among the village folk who are wondering if perhaps a beast is prowling the hills and attacking animals. People are becoming fearful to stroll in the woods to the east or on the surrounding hills.

Some time during the investigators' meal, a man will rush into the inn half soaked, and go straight to the local constable/deputy who has been quietly reading the daily paper by the hearth. The man frantically tells the officer his nine year old boy has gone missing flying his kite on the hill.

"One moment he was there flying the kite and the next he was gone! I'd been keeping an eye on Jimmy from my study window. It's never been a problem before; he's a good boy... He was under strict instructions to return home should a storm approach but he hasn't, and I haven't seen him for the last half hour! I need help to go out there and find him!"

The officer agrees to go out and help the father find his boy and asks for volunteers to help with the search. Most patrons look away and concentrate on their meals. The officer, knowing the locals only too well, looks towards the investigators table; time for the investigators to step forward. The father introduces himself as Henry Johnson and apologizes for the inconvenience of finding his wayward son.

Dark Stones, Darker Skies

The ridge of the hill where the father last saw his son is a 10 minute track along a rough gravel footpath. Pouring, wind swept rain assaults all that set out on the search. All investigators without watertight clothing quickly become drenched (-2 DEX until dry). At the top ridge of the hill the officer tells everyone to search the area. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll will allow any investigator looking to find a broken kite fluttering on a nearby thorn bush... the kite is made of brown paper and wire but what distinguishes it are the incredible markings and glyphs decorating its surface.

Henry identifies the kite as his son's and becomes very upset. Should an investigator comment on the kite's decoration, Henry will tell them he is an anthropologist and copied the markings from ancient stones found in the forest. An investigator making a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll realizes that the markings are for some sort of wind spirit or perhaps even an ancient god.

Further searches of the area near the thorn bush will reveal heavy but child size boot marks in the grass. Following the prints the search party will be lead towards the wood to the west but as they progress the foot falls become further apart until after about 20 yards when they become impossibly spaced as if the child is being carried and only touching the ground partially. Still, the trail can be followed...

Nearing the edge of the wood Henry will mention the stones that lie at its heart. He describes them as ancient markers of great interest in his amateur anthropological studies. At the edge of the wood no more tracks are found but a successful **Spot Hidden** roll spots a small yo-yo hanging from a low lying tree branch as if it had dropped there from a height above the tree...

Henry, seeing the yo-yo, visibly shakes and says it must have been thrown there... directly beneath lies a dirt path leading into the wood.

Trekking through the dark dripping forest the investigators will hear but no longer feel the rushing winds and pelting rain above the wood. Continuing for 10 minutes into the wood the party will discover a gruesome find. In the trees and underbrush about the path, dead sheep carcasses can be seen scattered the woodland floor. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll reveals broken branches lying around many of the carcasses as if they had been dropped into the wood through the tree canopy from a great height. Touching any of the carcasses reveals they are frozen. A successful **Zoology** or **Natural History** roll indicates that that the animals died in a state of extreme fear. The nightmare scene is strangely disturbing and agitating. Investigators take 1D3-1 Sanity point loss if they fail their Sanity check.

Progressing with care onwards into the interior, the path eventually leads to the stones at the woods' center. Incredibly the floor of the clearing is covered with two inches of snow while the surrounding foliage is frosted. A fierce chill holds the air. There are 12 five-foot high dark gray stones arranged in a line, two foot apart. If an investigator takes the time to look over the stones, old glyphs and ancient markings may be found as seen on little Jimmy's broken kite. Any investigator looking closely at the markings and who fails a Sanity check is overcome with a heightened feeling of dread and revulsion causing them to quickly move away from the stones into

the clearings edge (losing 1/1D3 Sanity points). An investigator who takes the time to view the stone's markings and who does not retreat from them may identify them as those of the Wind Walker, the dread being Ithaqua with a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll...

At the end of the line of stones, furthest from the investigators, little Jimmy can be found lying unconscious. He is dressed as he was when he left home but there is one strange occurrence. The boy's Wellington boots have been melted horribly and much of the rubber has been burnt away; in places the rubber has burnt onto the boy's skin. Jimmy clearly needs urgent medical attention. Henry, quite beside himself with upset and horror cradles Jimmy in his arms and carries him from the wood.

Henry Johnson

Concerned father & Anthropologist, age 34

STR 12	CON 12	SIZ 13	INT 15	POW 13
DEX 13	APP 12	EDU 15	SAN 80	HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Small Pocket Knife 25%, 1D3+db

Fist/Punch 15%, 1D3+db

Kick 15%, 1D6+db

Skills: Anthropology 85%, Cthulhu Mythos 6%, Dodge 25%, English 85%, Geology 45%, Hide 35%, Latin 25%, Natural History 65%, Occult 5%, Rubbing 60%, Sneak 25%, Spot Hidden 45%.

Belongings: Anthropological notes, Charcoal, Compass, Flashlight, Pocket Knife, Rubbings, Rucksack, Waterproofs, Wellington Boots

Description: Henry is a recent widow who, since his wife's tragic death in an accident on the hill, has retreated more and more into his study to follow his amateur anthropologic study into local stone formations and primal religion.

Jimmy Johnson

Anthropologist's son, age 9

STR 5	CON 8	SIZ 7	INT 10	POW 9
DEX 13	APP 11	EDU 7	SAN 90	HP 8

Damage Bonus: +0

Weapons: None.

Skills: Cthulhu Mythos 1%, Dodge 65%, English 45%, Hide 65%, History (local) 3%, Natural History 1%, Sneak 25%, Spot Hidden 20%.

Belongings: Small Pocket Knife, Yo-yo, Kite, Waterproofs, Wellington Boots

Description: Jimmy, Henry's son, is a happy and energetic youth who, although sometimes lonely at the loss of his mother, is well cared for by his devoted father.

Conclusion

Arriving back in the village Jimmy is rushed to the doctor's house and given medical aid. When he awakes he is in great pain at first but after an injection of morphine starts to gently talk about a person from the sky who held him by the hand and walked with him across the hills and over the clouds... Jimmy then faints and remains unconscious for some time. When eventually awakening he will remember only the vaguest of dreams.

Now alone with his son and the investigators, the doctor and officer having left, Henry admits to the investigators his fears that what his son has seen is linked to his studies. Originally he decorated the kite as a present for his son using ancient symbols discovered on the line of standing stones out in the forest. But given what's happened, Henry is going to stop studying the stones.

Henry offers any interested investigator who persists in questioning him all his written information and books on the subject on the condition that they remove them all from his house. The investigator gains a collection of some 30 anthropological books and a portfolio of etchings of the stones.

A day or two later, should the investigators remain in the village, they will see the badly scarred Jimmy back on his feet, but seems not to care about his injuries as he now exhibits a liveliness and joy not seen since his mother's death, says his father. Henry is astounded and swears to devote all of his time now to ensuring the boy's welfare.

What future truly awaits little Jimmy only time and the winds of fate shall tell...

Other Possibilities

It is entirely possible the Keeper might use this scene to confront the players with a deadly challenge in the form of a confrontation with whatever air elemental is connected to the stones. If Ithaqua is the protagonist then no meeting with the party should be allowed except as the gravest of outcomes...

The 'truth' and background behind the occurrences in the surrounding area of the village have obviously not been explained wholly either to the players or indeed the Keeper in the scene above. There are however, some interesting possibilities that might be considered whether or not the information is passed directly to the players.

Firstly there is the matter of Henry Johnson's wife, Isa Johnson, and her subsequent disappearance. A trained anthropologist herself, with a Ph.D. in the field, she had often worked locally in the surrounding hills and valleys of the village. While Henry commuted to the city and various academic institutions to carry out his work, Isa was content to stay at home with her studies while tending young Jimmy.

It is probable that Isa's contact with Ithaqua came through her work with the stones that she discovered in the local woods. Slowly uncovering the ancient secrets they represent, she drew Ithaqua and

his dark insatiable lusts upon herself. Her husband was uninterested by what he deemed an 'unexciting discovery' linked to discredited lines of 'mythical' anthropological study; however, Isa was determined to make a name for herself and would not be stopped by her husband's lack of support.

In fact Isa's 'death' as told by Henry is not so straightforward. The woman he loved may indeed be dead to him but she is certainly not resting in her grave. No body was ever found and although the villagers believe in her untimely accident on the hills Henry knows better. Jimmy's mother has been taken by Ithaqua to be his bride, to accompany him on his travels with the winds, over the world and between the stars.

Since Isa's disappearance Henry has done all he can to learn of her fate and although skeptical at first of anything unearthly, was unwilling to believe she had simply disappeared on the hills. Reading through her research and diary he learned of her studies and the disturbing mythos that permeated them. In time he became convinced that the disappearance and studies were somehow connected and the 'stories' of a malevolent wind god became increasingly believable.

The kite decoration may have been deliberate. Henry perhaps envisaged using the boy and the markings on the kite to lure his wife back to the life she left behind. However, he soon discovers the truth of her new condition when the boy goes missing as well and realizes his terrible mistake.

Upon the discovery of Jimmy in the woods and his subsequent recovery, Henry is outwardly relieved but secretly horrified to confirm his wife is not dead. What this will mean for his and little Jimmy's future he can only dread. He knows now his wife is lost to him; now, perhaps thanks to his damned kite, he will have to watch his son is not taken from him as well... After all why is Jimmy happy again? What did he see in the winds?



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Professionally Speaking...

The Debunker

by Steffen Schütte

translated by Calum McDonald



The medium's art of table tilting exposed at a séance

Humbug! Not w all Humbug!!

- The Debunker as Character Occupation

Investigators on the trail of the mighty Cthulhu develop their own preconceptions about the Universe. They KNOW that blasphemous spells are hidden within the pages of ages-old tomes, they are CERTAIN of the fact that the memory of nameless deities lurks behind local superstitions and at least SUSPECT that the remarkably frequent occurrence of bulging eyes in the population of remote fishing villages is due to the orgiastic rites of depraved cultists and

Deep Ones. Now, some things may perhaps be better left to the imagination... But when all is said and done investigators come to KNOW all of these things with great certainty!

It is this familiarity with the supernatural that makes parapsychologists, occultists and cryptozoologists such successful investigators. And which often ensures that the twilight years of their eccentric fringe existences are spent at the local funny farm... However,

Cthuloid investigators are also glad to note the existence of a second, completely different group of people engrossed in the search for the supernatural. These are the professional expositors of charlatans, the unmaskers of confidence tricksters and false mediums and the refuters of scientifically dubious theories about UFOs, Atlantis and miraculous healings. These people even have their own "job title": Debunker!

Supernatural Debunking

According to the dictionary, "to debunk" means to remove a false aura of mystery from someone or something. "Demystifier" would be a perhaps more straightforward – although linguistically inelegant – synonym. The simple term "skeptic" can also be used, particularly as there is a group of "demystifiers" that has adopted this term as their name.



Genuine spiritual ectoplasm...
or is it?

The debunker represents conventional, learned wisdom as opposed to spiritual or intuitive wisdom and assumes (in real life, usually correctly) that behind phenomena such as poltergeists, dowsing, spirit contact and the miracle healings of donation-hungry evangelists lie greed, the desire for respect, delusion and culpable gullibility. This public stance in the name of generally recognized common sense naturally grants the debunker a certain cachet of respectability on his part, and his honest abhorrence of profiteering at the expense of the superstitious creates additional sympathy. However, his firm belief in the mundane and natural forces behind "supernatural" phenomena is likewise – unfortunately – unscientific. The scientific method must always allow an open conclusion, but the unshakable confidence of the debunker, which requires him to be able to explain any of the remaining mysteries of the universe at any given moment, is a delusion not entirely dissimilar to that of the occultist who claims to be able to infer the course of world history from the dimensions of the Great Pyramid. In extreme cases, even the sight of Great Cthulhu may not drive the debunker into insanity. His profound assessment may well be: "It's all done with mirrors! Hidden mirrors!! And ventriloquism!!!"

People from two entirely different walks of life are drawn to become skeptics and debunkers of charlatans. The first group is composed of scholars and scientists, who are asked in the context of their



Arthur Conan Doyle believed these fairies to be genuine.

normal professions, for expert assessments of the apparently miraculous. The second group, however, consists of professional stage magicians, who are able to demonstrate in their stage shows every kind of illusion used by the gurus of the esoteric scene to impress their followers.

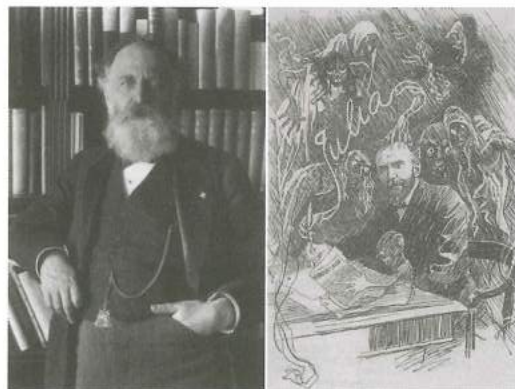
The power of logic

The scientifically oriented debunker follows in the investigative tradition of Sherlock Holmes: secure the evidence, evaluate the indications, observe and investigate. When you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains – however improbable – must be the truth. Elementary, my dear Watson! No wonder therefore that *Twin Peaks* co-author Mark Frost uses Holmes' creator Conan Doyle himself in the role of the debunker in his furious thriller *The List of 7*, starting the novel in the midst of a faked séance.



Arthur Conan Doyle

Ironically enough, however, the historical Arthur Conan Doyle was a fervent follower of spiritualism. His expert testimony in favor of the authenticity of the so-called Cottingley Fairy photographs by two English schoolgirls, pictured together with small fairies and gnomes in their back garden, is still remembered today. It was only a generation later that the two (still rather roguish) British ladies – now well beyond retirement age – dared confess to the BBC that their legendary photographs were nothing but extremely simple fakes: cut-out pictures of fairies were skillfully pinned up amidst shrubs and flowerbeds for the photographs. But after receiving a



Newspaper editor, social campaigner and spiritualist W.T. Stead - left: the public face; right - satirized

certificate of authenticity from an expert such as Sir Arthur, it took the two country girls 60 years until they felt able to expose their own swindle. Mundus vult decipi...

An apparently more serious skeptic was the Danish professor Alfred Lehmann, whose standard work *Superstition and Magic* pres-



A photo of a genuine ghost?

ents a classic exposure in its frontispiece. Lehmann places an allegedly authentic "spirit photograph" of the Victorian spiritualist W.T. Stead (and spirit) opposite a self-portrait in which exactly the same spirit appears. Photographs like these are very simple to make using double exposures, but many gullible people were impressed in the early days of photography. Together with a well-grounded theory of

superstition, similar exposures fill this voluminous work, which first appeared in 1895 but which saw several new editions in several languages before Lehmann's death in 1921. A marvelous footnote by German editor Dominic Petersen reveals that in 1924 a Berlin city councilor named Miehte claimed to have discovered the secret of artificially producing gold by means of an electrical "transposition of mercury atoms"! Unfortunately for subsequent finance ministers, yet another mystery now lost to memory.

Stage magicians

The fact that occult fraudsters take advantage of the gullibility of their fellow human beings in order to cheat them is of course old news. And who better to shed light on occult machinations than a stage magician, whose occupation teaches him the same tricks and ruses as his dishonest, esoteric counterpart? Conjurers, seeking to preserve the good reputation of their art, are known to have been involved in the exposure of spiritualist humbug since the 19th century. John Nevil Maskelyne, Alexander Herrmann and Joseph Dunninger are only two of the names prominent among stage magi-



John Nevil Maskelyne



Alexander Herrmann

cians in this field. But few showmen were more engaged in debunking than variety legend Harry Houdini – perhaps because, as a starving unknown, he had himself practiced scams similar to those he would later expose.

The illusionist and escapologist Harry Houdini was born Erich Weiss in Budapest in 1874 (even if he himself often supplied different data); his stage name was a homage to his great role model, the



Harry Houdini: exposing scams and fraud meant front page publicity

Frenchman Robert-Houdin. Houdini's stage shows were every bit as spectacular as his escape attempts. And whenever an overconfident rival declared himself "better than Houdini", it was quite possible that the insulted artist would smuggle himself onto his competitor's stage and proceed to steal the show from under his nose. Interestingly enough, it was contact with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who vainly tried to convert Houdini to spiritualism that drove the illusionist to intensified efforts on the spiritualistic front from around 1923 onwards.

Spiritualism had existed as a pseudo-religious movement since the late 19th century (particularly after the devastating First World War), possessing approximately one million adherents. The field was wide open for confidence tricksters, who knew how to get bereaved families and naïve eccentrics to open their wallets. But against a master of illusion such as Houdini, none of them had a chance. Like everything else the world-famous magician did, this debunking took place in the glare of publicity and unleashed a bitter war of faith between skeptics on one side and spiritualists on the other. In 1922, the renowned journal *Scientific American* promised a reward of \$2,500 to any medium able to produce a genuine supernatural phenomenon in front of a critical jury (of which Houdini was naturally a member). But nobody was able to withstand the critical gaze of the master – the word of the great magician alone decided the controversy. Whether his death from a ruptured appendix on Halloween 1926 was the result of a curse directed at him by one of these enemies is something that keepers may decide for themselves. In any case, Houdini was undoubtedly still uncooperative when he showed up in spiritualism's other world: so far, every documented attempt to evoke his spirit has failed.



Amateurishly simulated ectoplasm

Skepticism in play

Debunkers here, debunkers there – many groups of investigators would no doubt gladly include one of these among their ranks, either to procure scientific test kits en masse or to bring top quality sleight-of-hand and escapology to the group. But beware: skepticism is not completely harmless to the course of the game...



Mediums' tricks exposed

Unlike in the real world, a debunker in the game world of *Call of Cthulhu* is nearly always wrong! He becomes the amusing sidekick of the hero, who compares the Hounds of Tindalos with the Hound of the Baskervilles (whose appearance was famously enhanced with phosphorescent paint and wax teeth), and who continues to look for the Fungi from Yuggoth's puppet strings long after they have opened up his companions' heads. In short,

such a character is not exactly suitable as the leader of a group. If a debunker is to be introduced into an existing team of investigators, his role should be agreed upon from the start on a meta-gaming level between players and keeper. With certain restrictions, it can be rather fun to play a debunker in a *Call of Cthulhu* game...

The debunker as comic relief allows a little humor into the game – and this counterpoint to otherwise all-pervasive horror can even heighten the sense of fear by creating a contrast. On the other hand, after countless Mythos adventures, there is nothing to stop a keeper introducing a somewhat lighter mystery in which the cultist leader turns out to be nothing more than a greedy pseudo-guru, whose supernatural powers are purely the result of simple parlor tricks. Such an opponent does not have to be harmless by any means, as countless real-life cult leaders have demonstrated. And in the final analysis, what could be more disturbing than a proven charlatan, who would actually have unintentionally caused the end of the world if allowed? In any case, a little uncertainty is a good challenge for the firmly established belief system of the typical investigator. Knowing that you cannot be CERTAIN about anything is ultimately the first step on the road to enlightenment.

Special Sanity Rules

Naturally there are a few peculiarities when it comes to Sanity when playing a debunker. Rotting corpses and evidence of brutal crimes of violence affect debunkers on the same psychological level as they do other characters. But when confronted with the supernatural, the debunker only risks insanity if he is unable to produce a credible "rational" explanation. If he is able to formulate a reasonably academic scientific hypothesis when faced with the horror, he must only make a Sanity roll if he first loses a Resistance Table roll of his EDU against the maximum possible Sanity loss caused by the phenomenon concerned. Even in the worst cases, the debunker becomes insane when encountering a deep one not because it

irrefutably proves the existence of monsters, but rather because he "can't find the zipper on the damn rubber suit" instead.

New Investigator Templates

The scientific debunker

This character normally works as a scientist in a university or in private research, and his occupational skills are standardized accordingly. It is up to the player to choose the appropriate scientific specialization – as a rule, this should be of a natural, scientific or technical nature.

Occupational skills: Bargain, Credit Rating, Library Use, Occult, Other Language (only living languages, player's choice otherwise), Persuade, and two scientific specialties.

Income: 1D4+2×\$1,000

Special: See main text for handling Sanity rolls; **Credit Rating** may only be increased after an adventure if circumstances can successfully be explained in the context of academic science. The **Occult** skill is to know your enemy and debunk him. **Cthulhu Mythos** may never rise above 0%. If it does the debunker no longer enjoys the benefit of special Sanity roll rules.

The illusionist as debunker

This character works as a conjurer, mind reader or escape artist in a circus or variety show. The character is well-known to the public and must therefore reckon with being accosted on the street.

Occupational skills: Conceal, Craft (conjurer/mind reader/escape artist, etc.), Distract, Fast Talk, Hide, Legerdemain, Mechanical Repair, Physics, Psychology, Sneak, Spot Hidden.

Income: 1D6+2×\$1,000

Special: See main text for handling Sanity rolls; for conjuring tricks, escapology, etc. use the appropriate **Craft** roll. **Cthulhu Mythos** may never rise above 0%. If it does the debunker no longer enjoys the benefit of special Sanity roll rules.

New Skills:

Distract (10%): The ability to distract an audience's attention to somewhere else allowing the user to do something. This skill just distracts the audience. Another appropriate skill must be tested for the subsequent action.

Legerdemain (10%): See the *Keeper's Companion* volume 1, p.191 for a definition of this skill.



A regular column for

Cthulhu Keeper's Corner

The first step is always the most difficult

Some fresh ideas for a new start into horror

by Momo Evers with Adam Crossingham

translation by Hannes Kaiser

Keeper: "You are sitting in this café and..."

Player: "And how did I get there?"

Keeper: "Well, you are just there, just like that. Anyway, you are all sitting around a table when suddenly..."

You have been preparing an adventure for weeks. You didn't buy it, but you wrote it yourself, researched it in detail, adding post-it notes to your research to make easier to find the relevant facts. You made the handouts with loving care, maybe you even spent hours finding the right kind of background music. You wisely decided to settle on New York as the setting for tonight's adventure, and you told each player in advance about the famous exhibition their character wants to visit.

"Find my husband, and bring me undeniable proof for his insanity!" this is the mission the players will get from Professor Edwards's wife which tonight, and the following nights, will engage and entangle them deeper and deeper into the secrets of the Mystery of the Kadatheron Texts – the bizarre obsession of her husband Isaac – and of the little hamlet of Sicily.

A clear objective with a certain group of investigators in mind. In reality Mrs. Edwards would probably use a detective agency or private investigator to find her missing husband. But as a keeper used to suffering with a group of players without one PI or detective between them, what can you do to bring your group and plot together and actually start?

Mystery of the Kadatheron Texts

Well, you can always ask one of the players to impersonate a detective – but then you have to follow up with bizarre coincidences and most unpredictable relationships between the characters. They could simply happen to live in the same house, happen to meet in the street, happen to sit at the same table in a café or.... but anyway – the characters shouldn't be so particular, if you want to have my opinion. It's the players that want to play together. That's why they are here now. They will eventually come together sooner or later – if only

Boom!: a shock effect to launch an adventure



for their own (or the keeper's) sake. It's not too much to ask for, to have a short time at the beginning of an adventure or campaign where everyone doesn't take the role-playing so seriously and get into character! What's all the fuss about? But why does it have to come to this?

My answer is no, and the magic formula for the avoidance of such clumsy beginnings is called individual character motivation. It is vitally important, especially with *Call of Cthulhu*, where the characters will lose their sanity in the course of the action and where in extreme situations they will often be on the verge of a nervous breakdown, that the players get the chance to role-play their characters from the very start – in their fullest health and sanity. The journalist Elspeth, for example, doesn't usually talk with her broadest Connecticut accent. She finds it rather depressing, since it reminds her of her ex-husband. Only after an encounter with a fishy-smelling thing Elspeth is driven into a neurotic display of her Connecticut origins – and later whenever she comes across the smell of fish. But how are her companions ever going to notice her strange change in voice at the fish restaurant if they've never had a chance to get to know the 'normal' Elspeth at the beginning of the adventure in the first place? In other words: to recognize madness, you have to experience normality first.

The Plot before the Plot

Cthulhu characters don't usually meet in a classic fantasy tavern, or in a net runner's dive or in a vampires' elysium. And even if our above-mentioned player-characters were to meet at the Café Krammer and talk about the exhibition that they've all recently visited, the keeper will still have a problem. For when they will have finished their conversation, each of them will return to their own business – meet their fiancé, go to work, etc.

What distinguishes Cthulhu characters from fantasy characters is this: they aren't heroes or larger than life characters, instead they are everyday characters.

They are – on the whole and large – law-abiding citizens. They don't intend to experience or explore the Cthulhu Mythos. They have everyday obligations, families, aims. And the horror that is waiting for them (and for you) that night is nothing they asked for. They simply got drawn in – and then drawn deeper into the depths.

So you have to face the problem to find a successful beginning which enables the players to find out and develop their characters in relaxed surroundings, in every-day situations. But at the same time, the beginning of the plot should be individually compelling. We must allow the characters to come together, then become so involved in the action to leave their usual surroundings and follow the "traces of plot" – together. A difficult task...

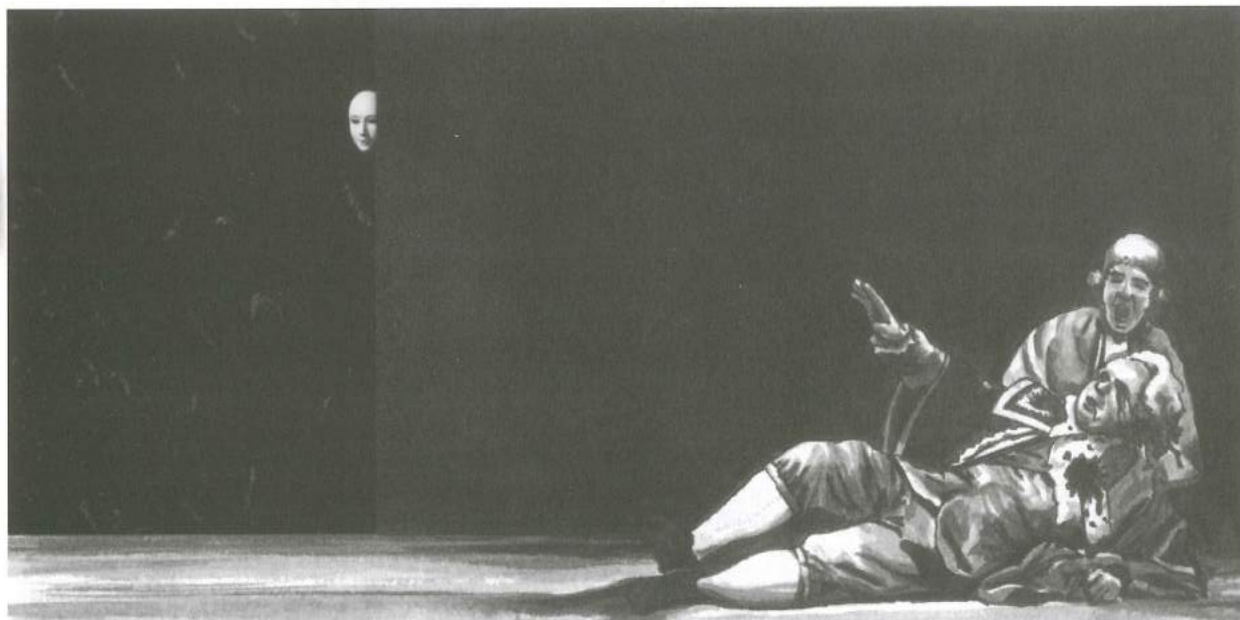
But we could address it from a different angle. The following statement should help: *Call of Cthulhu* games should start before the plot begins, not with the opening hook and clues, in a normal situation. The characters should have a chance to experience normality before starting their first Cthuloid horror trip.

For the Heart of the City

The keeper can prelude events by giving the characters small edited pieces of information that have something to do with the plot but doesn't lead straight into action. For instance (just to stay with the *Mystery of the Kadatheron Texts*), everyone happens to hear a radio news report about a demented man running through Gotham City in his undies shouting 'eureka!' loudly who has disappeared since (The perpetrator of this public decency offense is Professor Edwards, as the characters will find out only much later).

Afterwards the characters can all be brought together in an activity that occupies and involves them for a longer space of time, e.g.,

Masked ball: getting to know each other at a masked ball



a common acquaintance could invite them to a marriage, baptism, bar mitzvah, birthday party or similar. The event's good host introduces the characters to each other, and give the characters some information or anecdote about each other that will encourage a combining of forces ("This is Hilda, the governess of my wife's friend. She may teach but she has an uncanny knack of being around murders... And this is my friend from Pennsylvania. He's an engineer and is working here in New York with the same company as your late husband. He writes murder mystery novels in his spare time. You may have read one of his books...")

It's also possible to get the characters interested in a common good cause. A charity or similar organization is ideal to bring people from different social backgrounds and places together. The characters could plan the Christmas pageant for an senior citizens' home or organize a party for an orphanage. These are good possibilities for the keeper to arrange contact with Mrs. Edwards – even if this is not the time or place where she would talk about her problem to any of the characters yet.

On the other hand: The game doesn't necessarily have to start in New York...

Out in the Open

There is a lot to be said for letting the characters meet outside usual circumstances of their lives, for example on their holidays, because here they are not bound by everyday routines. On vacation there are no obligations that cannot wait. On vacation the forest worker's wife, the police sergeant, the engineer and the governess can all sit together with Mrs. Edwards on the bus, which by chance gets stuck in a snow storm on a high pass route. They all want to reach the Elkton skiing resort which is about eight miles down the road. The last village was more than an hour way by foot. The way the characters solve their snow problem is up to them. But a situation where they need each

other is good for bringing them together as a group. And so, after their arrival at the hotel and whilst enjoying a warm drink at the open fireplace (drinks that may be served in real-time), Mrs. Edwards may have a real reason why to address the characters with regard to her problem, and nobody else instead.

Out of the Blue

But let's take our minds off Mrs. Edwards and her demented husband and let us walk down a different alley towards some other possibilities for a prelude to the plot. One of the classical shock effects can be copied from Edgar Allan Poe: "You are in a dark room. You know neither where you are nor how you got here. But there is this strange noise in the air, and every bone in your body is hurting..."

There are many reasons for such a disastrous state of the player-characters, and the players shouldn't be presented with a supernatural reason right at the beginning. So there could have been a train crash in a tunnel or an elevator cable breaking, or a bank robbery where the robbers used stun grenades before hitting everybody on the heads – all good reasons for short-term memory loss. And getting out of the situation again is another good reason to get to know each other more intimately and establish some real comradeship. There might also be, as a kind of compensation afterwards, an invitation to dinner organized by the bank director, the railroad company or the firm that operates the elevators, for all the victims of the accident, including the player-characters and their potential new patron.

If you like it a bit harder, you might want to try the following opener: have your characters simply arrested without a comment at the beginning of the adventure and thrown in a prison cell together. Afterwards it will turn out to have been a complete mistake and that they only happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. (If

Funeral: a mutual funeral as a starting point for the game



you choose this option, make sure to unravel the mystery of the arrest in full when the characters eventually get out, otherwise they will probably suppose that the arrest is the first clue of their upcoming adventure. But maybe the wrong arrests can be connected with the actual plot?)

Shifting the focus of Attention

For another style of introduction, try shifting the focus of the characters' attention away from the often very interesting and compelling non-player characters and allow them become more

Begin the Beginning

Other universally applicable beginnings for adventures could include some of the following:

- *"You are gaining consciousness. Everything hurts. It is strangely silent, just a regular clacking can be heard. The opening of your eyes reveals darkness which is interrupted at regular intervals by a harsh light. Behind you and next to you hear moaning..."*
The characters obviously had a car crash. They were on the road together. They can't remember why but they can investigate it if they go through their belongings that are in the trunk of the car. This is a quick start that enables the keeper to have a relationship between the characters already established. He or she may add identification documents amongst the characters' baggage. The characters know each other, but they still have the opportunity to get to know each other all over again, because of the shock they can't even remember their own names. Their memories will only return piece by piece...
- The cruise liner/pleasure steamer/ferry/expedition boat the characters (and their future patron) are traveling with sinks. They can escape in one of the life boats or dinghies. The cause of the sinking may or may not be Mythos related.
- A seemingly unknown individual decides to commit suicide in front of the characters in a dramatic way. Trouble is he is willing to take the characters with him when he does, e.g., by sabotaging the cable car they are in, detonating a bomb, etc.) The madman is desperate. He is only going to give in to characters' pleas or persuasion under one condition: he's going insane because nobody believes him about what's really going on. Life holds no meaning for him anymore. The characters may recognize him, as an inconsequential figure in their daily life, and if the characters are ready to help him, perhaps even swear to it... then he won't go through with his suicide. Whether he is found later found dead under mysterious circumstances, is up to the personal taste of the keeper, and whether the characters are sufficiently curious.
- *"You're waking up. It smells strongly of disinfectant, and you are sick as hell. Screams splitting your eardrums let your head explode..."*
The characters wake up locked up inside the walls of a lunatic asylum and can't remember the last 24 hours. They have to find out what happened. Here the adventure can unravel from the end. The characters have nearly found the solution of the adventure but they can't remember. Shortly afterwards the doctors dismiss them as "cured" since they don't show any signs of physical or psychic defects (apart from their amnesia). The characters then might recall the place where they were last (this can be any place, a fun fair, a café, a cinema, etc.) And this location is also the only common memory the characters have shared until now.
- *"The end of your working day! You are on the bus home. The shaking bus feels comfy and soothing. Where have the other passengers gone? The bus is rather empty, apart from you there are only six other people. Lost in thought, you are looking out of the window. Your stop is coming up any minute now. But what's that? Why doesn't the bus stop? And why are two of the passengers suddenly holding a gun to the driver's head."*
Two criminals have hijacked a bus in the course of committing another crime. The characters and their potential patron are both on board. When everything is over, the patron insists on the characters coming home with him to have "one for the shock". That's where the adventure starts...
- Two or more characters have been chosen for jury service. A jury is a great place to introduce people from widely ranging backgrounds and helping them act together. See the movies *12 Angry Men* or *Runaway Jury* for the mechanics. The jurors find it's a weird case but nevertheless the evidence indicates the innocence of the accused. At the end, the characters vote on the outcome, and if the keeper has presented the right evidence, the accused is acquitted. He or she invites the characters to drinks or dinner as a thank you for their belief in his or her innocence – and turns out to be the starting catalyst to the next adventure.
- Last not least one alternative concept which doesn't have the same immediate thrust but which has got a lot of comic potential: introductory interviews at a marriage bureau – only the characters and their future investigative leads are there. Perhaps one of the characters may go on a date with a Marsh.

Why should the Keeper do all the hard work?

This article is mostly about how the keeper can shape his adventure or campaign to his players' characters. This is hard work for one person: the keeper. In this incidence the keeper has to do all the hard work fitting everything together. There is an alternative. Make the players do all the hard work.

There are two ways of doing this. The first is define what sort of characters that you as keeper want to see and will fit in your proposed adventure or campaign. As a result all the characters should be able to fit into your game without serious shoe-horning. This is good in theory but I'm sure we've all had our share of problem players who ignore what you say and design what they want to play anyway, and leave their introduction to the rest of the group for the keeper to work out.

The second way is to allow the players to design whatever type of character they want, to their heart's desire. But the players will have come up with a reason why the assembled cast of characters know each other and would cooperate with each other. Be firm and make the players do the hard work here. Yes, you can make suggestions of what would be good or work well, but ultimately the players must choose the reason why they are working together. If you stand firm however, it is quite surprising how resourceful players can be, and their chosen solution is often a wonderful gold mine of ideas to plunder and hang future plots on. And the players created it, not the keeper!

interested in and attracted by each other! It is vitally important at the start of the game to let the players develop their characters and let them interact with their fellow players. Of course plot movers, information bearers and atmospheric NPCs should be role-played with love and attention to detail, and the keeper's description should bring them to life. But nevertheless, don't try to focus too much on a description of people, surroundings and situations at the very beginning of a session. Keep your keeper-run characters that it took you so much care and attention to develop, for later, when your disparate group of characters has become a group of investigators.

You might want to introduce certain important NPCs nonchalantly, very early in the story, so that they can reappear at a later point when they become more important. Restrict your own fun and dramatics for the time being to keep the emphasis off these NPCs – you can ham it up later. Rather, put your motivation into creating plot introductions individually designed to fit your particular group of characters, and they will thank you for it.



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Regular observations from the world of
Directives from A Cell

by A. Scott Glancy

Directive 103: Kicking Ass for the Lord

One reason of the main reasons I wanted to write about the Federal government's interest in the Cthulhu Mythos was that Lovecraft himself gave me the opening with the government raid against the Esoteric Order of Dagon in his story *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. With that one opening my co-authors and I extrapolated the entire **Delta Green** conspiracy. But the US government isn't the only source of institutionalized opposition to the Mythos mentioned by Lovecraft. The Catholic Church or the Holy Inquisition appears often, but usually as a footnote or as part of the back-story. Lovecraft often portrays the Catholic Church as suppressing Mythos knowledge and destroying Mythos tomes like the *De Vermis Mysteris* and *Les Cultes des Ghoules*. More than a few Mythos worshipping sorcerers like Ludwig Prinn meet their end at the hands of the Inquisition. Frequently when the old evil comes forth again it is because the Inquisitors of yore left their task half-done. There's always some tunnel they incompletely sealed, some incantation they couldn't bring themselves to intone, or some book they failed to burn. But at least they are in the stories, doing their best to keep this evil at bay, if not always succeeding.

So if we have multiple stories citing the suppression of the Mythos by the Catholic Church, then why not extrapolate an arm of the Catholic Church dedicated to eradicating the physical manifestations of evil here on Earth? The added benefit here is that a Vatican monster squad with a world wide reach will provide players anywhere in the world with a venue for playing *Call of Cthulhu* in the modern conspiracy genre of **Delta Green**.

The Holy See in Rome often organizes specific Vatican functions into Congregations. These days the task of detecting and eliminating heretical clergy belongs to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, once called the Inquisition. The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints is the organization that documents and authenticates miracles. So for the time being let's call our group of Vatican Investigators "the Congregation." As mentioned in the first Directive from A Cell, when coming up with a new organization for the **Delta Green** universe it's important to figure out its scope, mission, history and theme. In the case of Vatican investigators there is another attribute that must be determined; how the group's theological beliefs affect their view of the Cthulhu Mythos.

In Lovecraft's universe (and I cannot stress more emphatically that I am talking about a fictional world here) the God of

Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed is just an imaginary friend that we hairless apes made up to comfort ourselves when we're afraid of the dark. Of course this is the canonical view of Lovecraft's universe, so for our purposes let's stick close to Lovecraft's vision of a scary, hostile universe where Christianity has no supernatural power to repel or contain the Cthulhu Mythos and the rituals and symbols of the Catholic Church will be useless to our team from the Congregation.

Understanding that, the question remains whether the Congregation see the Mythos as something distinct from their faith, or do they see the Mythos as part of their eschatology? Are they are going to see Nyarlathotep as Satan and the other Outer Gods and Great Old Ones as filling in for the various demons named in the Bible and traditional sources on demonology (Cthulhu = Leviathan; Azathoth = Astoroth)? Or are do they see the Outer Gods and Great Old Ones for what they are; powerful, extra-dimensional alien entities, more a matter of misunderstood physics than magick? The problem with seeing the Mythos as part of traditional medieval demonology is that the Congregation will never really understand what they are fighting and this could lead to deadly mistakes. If the Congregation sees Mythos magick as Satanic sorcery, they are unlikely to use banishing or protective spells, further hampering their effectiveness. Their false belief in the power, rituals and symbols of Christianity will also lead to more casualties and failures. The problem with truly understanding the nature of the Lovecraftian universe is that such knowledge is mentally corrosive and will cause an Investigator to lose their faith, their sanity, and even turn to worshipping the 'real' gods of the Mythos. For reasons that I will explain later, I believe that the Congregation is more likely to view the Mythos as just more traditional Judeo-Christian demonology.

So what kind of clergy are likely to join the Congregation? Certainly there are very liberal trends in the Catholic clergy, particularly among the youngest generation. A noteworthy example of this trend is Liberation Theology, a movement that began as a reaction against authoritarian regimes in Latin America during the 1980s. Liberation Theology clergy are more concerned with their parishioners' access to food, shelter, medical care and the political system than they are with their spiritual life. These liberal trends produce clergymen who are more interested in opening a food bank or free clinic than combating physical manifestations of supernatural evil, a

concept that liberal 'modern' clergy are likely to scoff at. Faced with a case of possession, Liberation Theology clergy are going to phone the county mental health services and call it a night.

It's far more likely that Congregation members would be very socially and politically reactionary. On matters of Catholic doctrine the Congregation is perfectly orthodox; we're not talking about those Society of St. Pius Xth fossils that claim every Pope since the Second Vatican Council is a heretic. But members of the Congregation are going to believe that the world took a wrong turn in the 19th Century, beset by a plague of 'modernity' that has delivered such ills as scientific materialism, social permissiveness, and moral relativism. They are the kind of men who approve of highly conservative Catholic lay organizations like Opus Dei. They are not willing to discuss or acknowledge the mistakes the Vatican has made over the centuries, particularly in the realm of politics. Such introspection can only lead to doubts about their church, their faith and their mission. It's their moral certainty that allows the Congregation to justify their ruthless actions in the service of the Church. And if their actions serve the Church, then they must also serve God. This could give the impression to secular investigators that the Congregation is bunch of self-righteous, close-minded, religious bigots; and they'd be right, but not the way they think.

The Congregation's scope is going to be worldwide, just like the Catholic Church itself. Unlike **Delta Green**, where members can use their official capacity to aid their investigations or even act with genuine law enforcement jurisdiction when prosecutable crimes are detected, the Congregation has no authority to act in any way. Its members are nothing more than members of the Catholic clergy, or lay employees of the Vatican. That means that if they cannot convince the local authorities to act, and take vigilante action against human agents of the Mythos, they will find themselves on the wrong side of the law. These investigations are going to be much closer to traditional *Call of Cthulhu* investigations, where the investigators end up routinely skirting the edge of legality. The big difference is that they will have nearly unlimited operational funds, a worldwide organization to support them, one of the world's largest archives to draw on for research, and perhaps even diplomatic immunity.

These days the Catholic Church is quite sensitive to scandal, so the Congregation is not expected to be getting into fire-fights and dynamiting archeological sites, although it has come to that now and again. When illegal violence appears to be the only solution, the Congregation calls on the services of an elite and deniable group of volunteers: the Sicarii. The Sicarri, which is Latin for 'dagger men,' are members of the Swiss Guard who have resigned their commission in order to join this elite unit. If any agents of the Congregation (or the Sicarri) are arrested and prosecuted for crimes committed on a mission, the Catholic Church isn't going to publicly support them. The Vatican would secretly arrange for their bail, hire their attorneys and even use whatever back-room influence they have to get them off the hook, but Congregation agents are expected to keep to a code of silence even in the face of imprisonment, torture and death. Such is the discipline expected from soldiers of God.

The Congregation's mission is twofold. They are charged with eliminating the physical manifestations of supernatural evil, but more importantly they must suppress public knowledge of the existence of the Mythos. If the world knew the reality of the Lovecraftian universe, it would cause millions to lose faith in Christianity, perhaps even accelerate the end times as those faithless millions (or even billions) turn to the worship of the alien gods of the Mythos. Some members of the Congregation may suspect the true nature of the Lovecraftian universe, but that knowledge only spurs them to greater zeal in suppressing the truth. For the Congregation, concealing the truth about the Mythos is going to be just as important as eliminating cultists, closing gates, and banishing demons.

Destroying Mythos tomes is a primary objective of the Congregation. This could easily bring them into conflict with other groups of investigators who want to combat the Mythos with the knowledge locked away inside such forbidden tomes as the *Necronomicon*. There might be just the banishing spell the investigators need in a book in the Congregation's possession, but they will not allow anyone to see it, at least not until after they incinerate it. Even worse, if the investigators have a publicly known cache of Mythos tomes there is a good chance the Congregation will first attempt to buy the books and, failing that, will steal them or destroy them. The Congregation cannot trust that the investigators are not cultists, or that they might not later become cultists because of the dire influence of the Mythos tomes. No matter what the cost in lives might be, for the Congregation, anything is better than endangering the souls of billions.

Considering the nearly two millennia of church history, it's highly unlikely that a single, continuous church agency would be conducting this mission since the time of Emperor Constantine the Great. After all, the Inquisition has gone through multiple reorganizations since its first appearance in 1184 AD. More than likely our Congregation was created to take over some of the duties that the Inquisition could no longer publicly perform. By 1871 the last of the Papal States had been conquered as part of the campaign for Italian Unification and the Papacy lost its temporal powers. That lack of temporal power means that the Congregation couldn't operate like the Inquisition did in the past, as an officially recognized arm of the church. Instead the Congregation operates like an 'off-the-books' intelligence service of the Holy See. Money for operations would be provided by a dizzying maze of financial arrangements. Personnel would be hand picked members of the clergy, the monastic brotherhoods or even the Holy Sisters. Although many members of the Synod of Bishops and College of Cardinals are aware of the Congregation, they only know it as an organization designed to trouble-shoot 'non-spiritual matters' for the Vatican. This could include anything from covering up scandals before they break, buying political influence, circulating propaganda, collecting dirt on the church's enemies... all the things that the CIA does for the United States.

But the Vatican doesn't own spy satellites or listening posts or reconnaissance aircraft. Sure, they could buy the hardware and train the personnel to perform bugging operations, clandestine entries and searches, or even local surveillance, but they

don't have the budget to be another CIA or MI-6. Instead for most intelligence collection the Congregation relies on HumInt or Human Intelligence. In other words, the Congregation relies on the faithful. There are devout Catholics serving at all levels in the police, military and intelligence organs of governments around the world. The Congregation has convinced thousands of them to share information when it comes to subjects deemed "of interest" to the Congregation. These informants, or 'confessors,' know that there are some things that the civil authorities are not equipped to handle. So when they discover something that looks unusual, whether a police report, an autopsy, an intelligence report or just raw data, they pass it on to a member of the Congregation. The one area of intelligence collection where the Congregation doesn't have to rely on such "donations from the faithful" is in the area of ArchInt, or Archeological Intelligence. The Vatican itself has a Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archeology. No doubt the Congregation has more than a few members keeping an eye on that department.

The Congregation's theme is perhaps less obvious than it might at first appear. While the Congregation has a theological component, the theme of 'faith tested' isn't really what the Congregation is about. The Congregation actually represents an intrusion into the modern world by an archaic force. Lovecraft is often concerned with the idea that older ways were better, that the world was more beautiful and clearly defined in the past, and that we can only slide further into moral and ethical relativism the more 'modern' we become. No one wants to admit that our modern society, with all its permissiveness and openness, could be part of the problem. In Lovecraft's world these

dour, book-burning, religious bigots are more likely to be part of the solution while open-minded, cosmopolitan, truth-seekers are more likely to be the ones who end up summoning that which they cannot put down.

So the theme of the Congregation is 'Ignorance is bliss.' The Congregation doesn't understand the true nature of the Mythos and they know better than to even try. They see the Mythos as nothing more than the usual cast of demons from Christian, Hebrew and Islamic demonology. Even those whose faith has been shaken by the Mythos know it is better to believe in a lie that makes life worth living, than to know the truth and be rendered hopeless. Lovecraft speculated mankind would flee into the 'safety of a new dark age' if we ever truly understood our place in the cosmos. The Congregation has already retreated to that safe redoubt of willful ignorance.

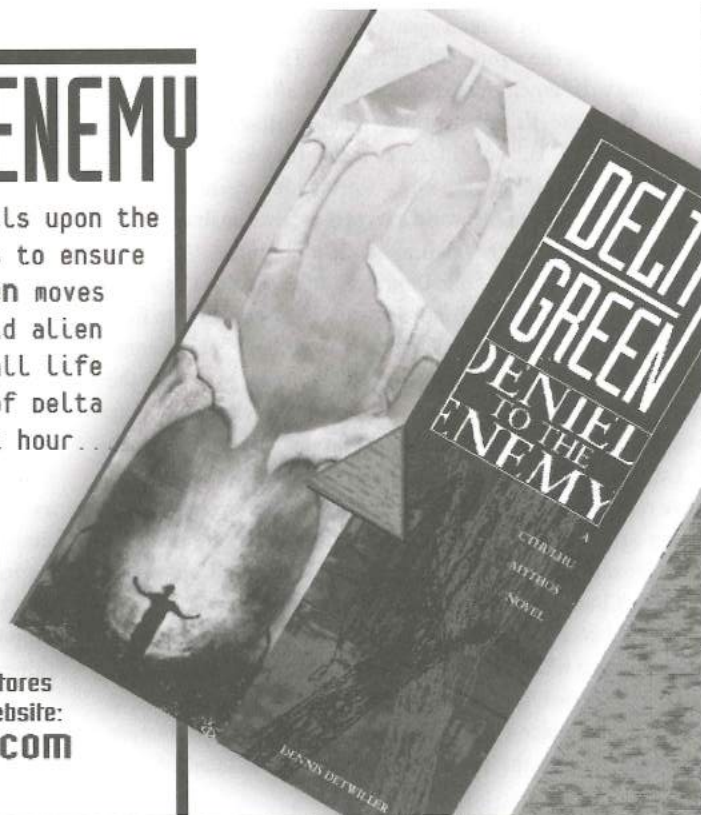
If this makes our Vatican monster hunters seem unattractive or unlikeable, then my response is that we often resent the people who have the responsibility of protecting us. The cop who is giving you that speeding ticket is nothing more than a buzz-cut-wearing fascist on a power trip, until he's pulling you out of the burning wreckage of your overturned car. Similarly, the Congregation should not be painted as simply blind religious fanatics. They have a mission to protect humanity, not just the faithful, and despite what they may think of the society they are protecting, they will risk their lives, their sanity and even their souls to defend it. The Congregation, like **Delta Green**, has decided to make a stand.

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WEIGHT: TONS
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SHOGGIES:

FREQ: COMMON.
WEIGHT: DEPENDS
PINK. SHAPELESS. LOTS OF EYES, TEETH AND
OTHER UNSPEAKABLE ORGANS. AND
REALLY DUMB. FORMERLY MADE TO BE
SLAVES (BUT IDIOT SLAVES ARE NOT
THAT USEFUL)



NYARLY

FREQ: UNIQUE, BUT HAS MANY LOOKS.
WEIGHT: UNKNOWN
NASTY. BLACK. CAN'T KEEP A SECRET
(ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S ABOUT ATOMIC
WEAPONRY). LURKS A LOT.

...YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO STOP THE
CEREMONY. ALL THE CULTISTS RAN AWAY
AND THE CULT LEADER JUST DROPPED THE
DARK MAGIC BOOK HE
WAS READING. THE TITLE
IS "THE INVOCATION
OF THE SHAPELESS
HORRORS"
VINCENT, WHAT DO
YOU DO NEXT?



ERR... I.I READ THE BOOK.



...THE EVIL MONKS ARE NOW SLAIN,
AND YOU CAN ENTER THE CRYPT.
VINCENT, HIDDEN BEHIND THE ALTAR,
YOUR KNIGHT FINDS AN ANCIENT
SCROLL MARKED AS "THE OLD
SCROLL OF THE END OF THE
TIME". WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?



HU? ERR, I READ THE
...THE SCROLL, YES, THE
SCROLL! AND I KNOW
LATIN AT 85%!



SO, YOU FINALLY FIND OUT THE SERVER
SENDING OUT THE INFECTED MAILS FROM THE
CRAWLING CHAOS AVATAR, THAT DROVE ALL
THOSE GEEKS INSANE. VINCENT, ON THE
TERMINAL, A MAIL CLIENT IS OPEN. WHAT...



ERR, WELL: I READ THE FILES.



...AND NOW, THE SITUATION IS
CRITICAL! ALL YOUR TEAM IS
WAITING TO KNOW WHAT YOU
ARE GOING TO DO!



ERR... I READ... I READ THE...
WHAT'S THERE TO BE READ?

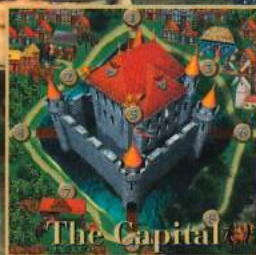
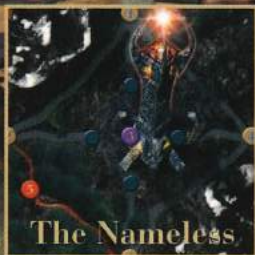
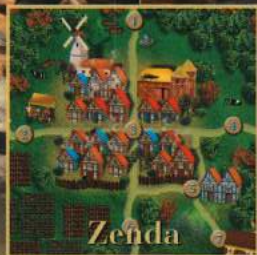
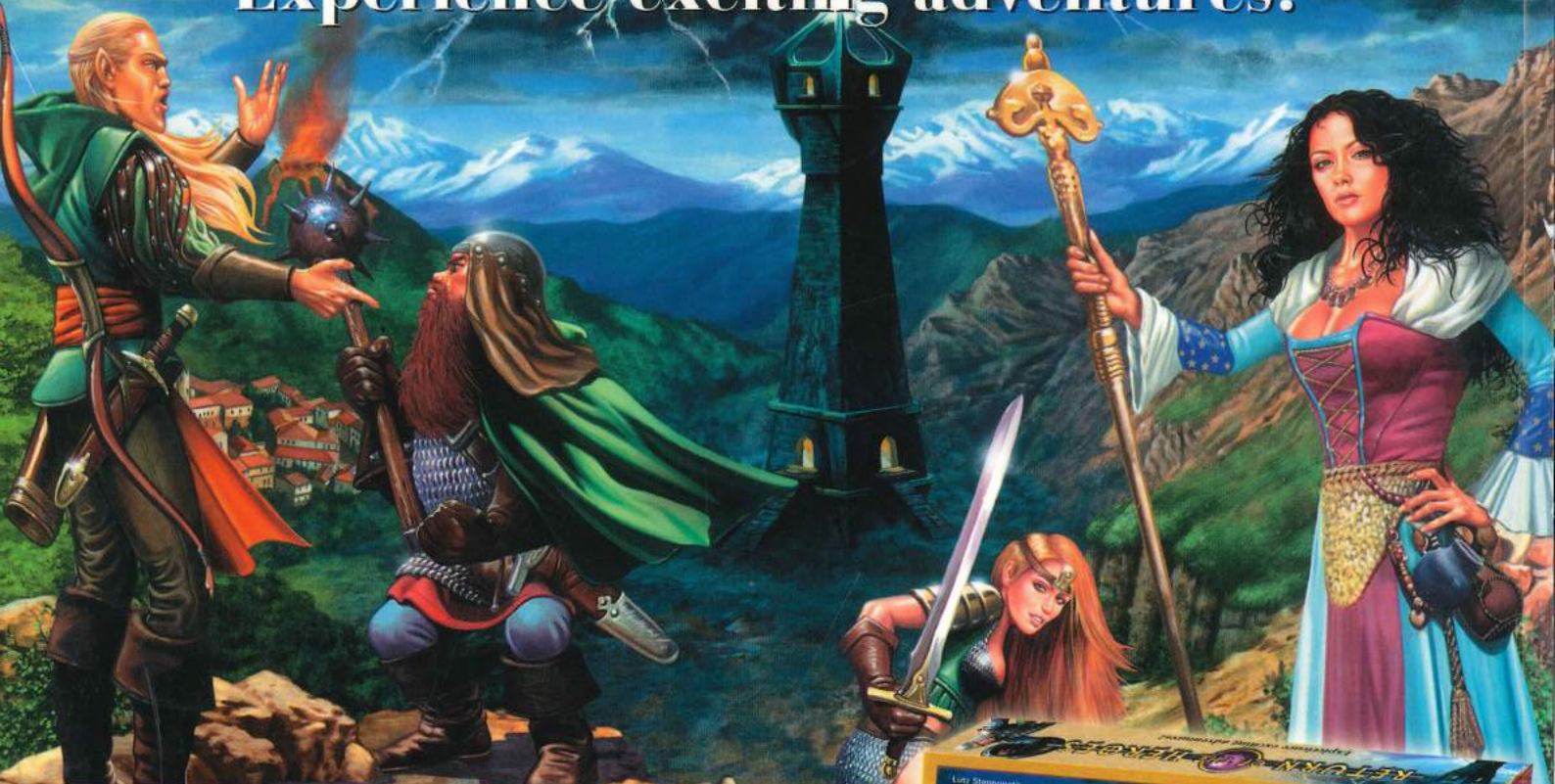


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WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
GOING TO DO TO BE
ACCEPTED BACK IN THE TEAM.



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