



# FAIRYLAND

A SCENARIO FOR **CTHULHU DARK** BY SCOTT DORWARD



# FAIRYLAND

## BACKGROUND

The year is 1897. Cullingstone is a village in the Borders of Scotland, on the edge of a pine forest known as Hobs Wood. It is comparatively isolated, and while there is a sense of community, the people there have few dealings with the outside world. They are bound together by a secret that they feel no need to share with outsiders.

Since 1849 a young girl has gone missing from the village every three years. Parents try to keep their daughters safe and stop them from wandering, but one always seems to find her way into the woods. There, she vanishes. The horror only gets worse for the family when, a day or two later, their daughter returns.

The children that walk out of the woods look just as they did when they vanished, but it does not take long for their loved ones to realise that something is wrong. The returned child has all their memories, but is emotionally distant, lacking any kind of sense of right and wrong. While not deliberately cruel, they are careless of any harm they may cause, and given that they are now much stronger than any child should be, they will cause harm on occasion. Their eyes are glassy, staring fixedly into the distance, their skin pale, clammy and oily.

After their return, the children look exactly as they did on the day they were taken. Some families pass off an older sister as a daughter or cousin, or hope that strangers don't comment on the fact that they are too old to have a daughter so young. The children are unchanging, locked in time.

## LEGENDS AND TRUTH

Local legends provide a clear explanation for what has happened: the children have been taken off to Fairyland and changelings have been left in their place.

There have always been stories of fairies in the Borders, and especially around Cullingstone. Hobs Wood takes its name from the hobs, or fairies, reputed to live there. People have always encountered strange entities there, as well as dancing lights and strange noises, and it is common knowledge that people who walk into the woods can become lost almost immediately, sometimes emerging days later while maintaining that they have only been there for an hour at most. Legend maintains that the door to Fairyland lies within the woods.

The truth is that there is a colony of Mi-go that have lived within the woods for hundreds of years. Their experiments with space and time have led to the fabric of reality becoming warped.

In recent years, they have started taking human subjects for experimentation, placing their brains in cylinders and replacing them with simulacra. These changelings act as probes, allowing the Mi-go to gain a greater understanding of the local population and their potential uses.

The waxy human skin of the changelings conceals something hideous and inhuman. It is unnaturally strong, intelligent and utterly devoid of human emotions. It attempts to behave as a human, but this is a charade and an imperfect one at that.

# FAIRY LEGENDS

Scottish fairies are generally not friendly creatures. The more benign ones, of the Seelie Court, are still tricksters, given to playing pranks on humans or luring them away to Elfland (the common local name for Fairyland). The entities of the Unseelie Court are more obviously monstrous, seeing humans as playthings or prey. Red Caps, for example, are wrinkled, bearded old men who rip the unsuspecting apart with their claws and colour their caps with the blood of their victims. Boggarts are mischievous household spirits that torment families by stealing things, hurting animals or spoiling food. Bogles can be anything from harmless trickster fairies to ghosts, or more malevolent beasts which snatch children. Some Scottish myths hold that fairies are the spirits of the dead, and in more Christian times they became associated with the Devil. There are many tales of children who could commune with fairies, often being the only ones who could see them, and who would become corrupted or tainted by this intercourse.

Use these legends throughout the scenario as extra clues or simply to add depth or mystery to anything else that is revealed. For example, if an Investigator researches legends about Hobs Wood, try connecting the wood with the story of Thomas The Rhymer.

## CHILDE ROWLAND

This is a classic fairy legend, although more English in origin, which tells the story of a young girl named Burd Ellen who, while playing a ball game with her brothers, walks around a church widdershins and is pulled into Fairyland. Her brothers go to rescue her, one-by-one, disappearing in the process. Finally only Childe Rowland, the youngest, is left, and he turns to Merlin for guidance. Merlin places a spell on his sword and tells him to chop off the head of anyone he meets in Elfland, and not to eat or drink anything while he is there.

Rowland finds his way to the castle of the King of Elfland, decapitating a few people on the way. He finds Burd Ellen imprisoned inside and almost fails when she offers him some food, but remembers not to eat in time. The King of Elfland then enters, fights Rowland and is defeated. As his last challenge, Rowland reluctantly cuts his sister's head off, freeing her, and then takes her home.

## THOMAS THE RHYMER

The most famous fairy legend of the area is that of Thomas the Rhymer, who met the queen of Elfland just outside Melrose and was taken away to her realm for seven years. He was eventually returned, and was given the gift of a tongue that could never lie.

This made him a prophet, but an unhappy one, and he never quite fitted in with human society again. Eventually he returned to Elfland of his own accord and was never heard of again.

## TAM LIN

In the forest of Caterhaugh, little more than ten miles from Cullingstone, it was reputed that a denizen of Fairyland, named Tam Lin would seduce any young maidens who encountered him. One maiden, named Janet, is seduced by Tam and made pregnant, and when she returns to the woods to seek a herb which will abort the child, she encounters him again. They talk, and Janet discovers that Tam was once a mortal man and after a riding accident, was rescued by the Queen of the Fairies, who took him away.

Tam explains that the fairies have to pay a tithe of souls to Hell every seven years, and that he fears he will be next. They hatch a plan for Janet to interrupt a procession of fairies and to snatch Tam away from it and take him back to the mortal realm. When they try this, though, the Queen of the Fairies responds by turning Tam into various repulsive forms, trying to force Janet to drop him. His final form is as a burning coal, which Janet drops down a well; the naked form of Tam emerges, and the Queen allows him his freedom.

# THE INVESTIGATORS

The Investigators, who should be new to the area, are oblivious to Cullingstone's secret. Two of them should be a couple who have just bought The Rambles, which is an old house just outside the village, and the game starts on their first day there. They must have a daughter, aged somewhere between six to nine years old. There might also be another child, probably younger, either a boy or a girl.

Give each Investigator something that ties them to The Rambles, to Cullingstone or to each other. Here are some example Investigators with suitable ties.

- ▶ A new teacher hired by the village school
- ▶ A young doctor, assisting Doctor Boswell or taking from him.
- ▶ A nanny or housekeeper hired to work at the Rambles
- ▶ The child's maiden aunt, coming to live with her sister.
- ▶ The new groundskeeper of The Rambles
- ▶ A police constable, taking over from PC Thorburn

Try strengthening their bonds by making one Investigator a relative or old friend of another.

Tailor the game to accommodate the choices that players make in character generation, making certain NPCs or locations more prominent. If the Investigators are not all members of the same household, find ways of getting them to interact: to bring in a doctor, use the injury to the daughter (see below); to bring in a teacher, use the daughter's first day at school.

# SAMPLE INVESTIGATORS

## AGNES BALFOUR

Providence has only seen fit to bless the Balfours with one child so far: their daughter Christobelle. However, Agnes has not given up hope of having another one day. In the meantime, she has decided to take on the job of teacher in Cullingstone to let her care for as many children as possible, and to make sure she can have a hand in all aspects of Christobelle's upbringing.

Christobelle is an imaginative child, given to seeing fairy magic and imaginary friends wherever she goes. She would be a bit of a handful without the guiding hand of her nanny, Miss Blackfield. Her husband, Sebastian, is well-meaning but not much help. Agnes also relies on doctors wherever she goes to provide her with tinctures and gripe water to stop Christobelle from wandering at night.

## SEBASTIAN BALFOUR

The Balfour family come from old money, and Sebastian has taken advantage of this to set himself up as a photographer. He ran an unprofitable studio in Edinburgh for a number of years, before becoming thoroughly bored with taking portraits. He has now decided to relocate to the countryside to explore natural subjects, and has used a substantial portion of his capital to buy The Rambles, where he and his wife will raise Christobelle.

Sebastian has something of an obsessive manner, and currently finds his photography far more interesting than his wife or daughter. He is not a bad father, but simply a distracted one.

## CYNTHIA BLACKFIELD

While Miss Blackfield dislikes being called an old maid, the fact that she is now in her early thirties and still unmarried does provoke comment. This is mitigated by the fact that she could only charitably be referred to as plain, and while she comes from good stock, her family has no wealth to speak of. She has worked as a ladies' companion before, but has just taken employment as a nanny for the first time.

Miss Blackfield has only known Christobelle for a short while, but is already very fond of the child. Christobelle is certainly wilful, but she is also sweet-natured, imaginative and quick to find wonder in everything. Mrs. Balfour obviously struggles to cope with the child, but Miss Blackfield is determined to care for Christobelle as if the child were her own.

## ROSS MENZIES

Menzies has worked as a groundskeeper and handyman for all of his adult life, but found himself out of work recently following the death of his former employer and the sale of his estate to a family who had no need of him. He has recently managed to find a new employer in Sebastian Balfour, although this involved moving some thirty miles to Cullingstone.

Menzies has taken up residence in the groundskeeper's cottage on the grounds of The Rambles and has been making the main house and its grounds ready for its new owners. While he is not a superstitious man, he has found himself unnerved by the atmosphere of the place. His father would have been quick to put all this down to the influence of the wee folk, but Menzies knows better.

## DOCTOR DANIEL BRODIE

Daniel Brodie is a young doctor, not long out of medical school in Edinburgh. He is energetic, enthusiastic and driven by the desire to help others. He has just taken over the village practice from Doctor Boswell, and is finding the whole experience perplexing and frustrating. Not only has Doctor Boswell left scant patient notes, but he has not set foot in the surgery since Doctor Menzies arrived, but he refuses to even answer his door to visitors. On the few occasions that Doctor Menzies has managed to bump into his predecessor, usually while having a drink at the Tatty Bogle, Doctor Boswell has done all he can to steer the conversation away from his former patients.

Speaking of the patients, very few of them seem to be coming to the surgery, leaving Doctor Brodie rather bored much of the time. They probably just need some time to learn to trust a new doctor. In the meantime, he has heard that a new couple are moving to town and hopes that they will prove less standoffish than the other locals.

*You can run Fairyland using any Cthulhu game system. These symbols indicate when you might use the game rules: see Dark Symbols, at the back, for more explanation.*



# THE RAMBLES

The Rambles is a large country house on the edge of Cullingstone and, when the game starts, the Investigators who will live there are moving in. The Rambles' rooms are large, empty and *feel recently abandoned*: the brickwork is not yet cold and, upstairs, the occasional children's toy is abandoned on the floor. While the Rambles is not quite a stately home, it is grand enough to have a few acres of private grounds, including a groundskeeper's cottage. These grounds border on Hobs Wood for a distance of a few hundred yards, and this border is visible from the back of the house.

Their daughter will want to explore, and it is a nice, clear autumn morning, so she is naturally drawn to the garden. As soon as there is some distraction to occupy the adults, such as the movers dropping the crate containing the family china, the daughter will go off to explore the woods. Unless someone thinks to look for her sooner, the family will certainly notice that she is missing when it comes around to high tea in the late afternoon. By this time dusk has fallen and a chill has entered the air. There is no sign of the daughter in the house or the gardens. There is only one explanation, which can be gathered from *asking a member of staff, finding a toy in the undergrowth* or any other method you devise. She has headed into the woods.

## HOBBS WOOD

Hobs Wood is a patch of thick woodland of Scots Pine trees. This is an old woodland, and the oldest of the trees stands nearly a hundred feet tall. From the outside, it appears to be about 75 acres in size, but it is possible to get lost for days within it.

The woodland has been home to the Mi-go for so long that their experiments have changed it forever. Time flows differently within the woods, but even this is not consistent. On some journeys into the woods, a traveller may pass out again to find that only the normal passage of time has occurred, and on others they may find their loved-ones in distress because they have been lost for days.

*Small balls of white light can often be seen* moving through the trees, usually high off the ground. Most of the time they are only seen at a distance, but if the Mi-go want to drive off interlopers (see A Storm in the Woods below), they may come much closer. The laughter of children can also be heard occasionally. Sometimes this comes from changeling Maeve (see below) as she plays in the woods, and sometimes it simply hangs in the air as an echo of events long past.

As the Investigators get deeper, there is a brief flash of light from within the darkness of the woods. If someone goes to investigate, they can hear the girl's laughter up ahead, but as they follow it, *the source of the laughter shifts* first to the left and then to the right. There is the occasional glimpse of moving lights off in the distance. Then, unexpectedly, *the daughter comes from around a tree and collapses unconscious*.

There are a few specks of blood on the front of her dress. If anyone examines her, they will find *a small number of pinpricks* on her abdomen. Closer examination shows that the pinpricks form the points of a perfect dodecagon, and that the holes are small and deep, as if made with a very fine needle. The Mi-go have made their initial examination and are now deciding if this is a suitable subject.

When the Investigators emerge from the woods with the unconscious daughter, they will believe their search has taken less than an hour. However, *there are signs that much more time has passed*: perhaps the moon is high in the sky, perhaps even the sun is rising. Any Investigators that stayed out of the woods will know that the search party has been gone for hours.

When the daughter wakes up, she will be excited and happy, telling everyone that there are fairies in the woods. She cannot describe them beyond the dancing lights, but she knows they are there because her new friend Maeve told her. Maeve lives in the woods and is friends with all the fairies there. The daughter is insistent that the fairies are real and that she wants to see them again.

The next day, the daughter insists she is well enough for her first day at school.

## DESCRIBING THE WOODS

Remember that pine woods can be frightening places. The thick foliage blocks out light, making the woods gloomy even in bright sunshine. The carpet of dead pine needles on the ground dampens the sounds of footfalls, which, in combination with *the lack of animal or bird life in Hobs Wood* and its disconnection in space and time from the surrounding area, makes it an unnaturally silent place. The density of the trees in the wood and the lack of variation would make it quite easy to lose one's bearings even without the distortions in space. Play all of these aspects up. The woods should seem threatening even before any strange events occur.

Additionally, create confusion about the passage of time. If one Investigator stayed outside, run scenes in parallel, with no mention of the fact that time is moving differently for each party. If they enter the woods to find the search party, let time run differently for each group. Perhaps one emerges at midnight, the other at dawn. Perhaps, even, one group is gone for days.

When a group who have been in the woods emerge, play with their perceptions. Try telling them that the sun is low in the sky, then let them realise that it is rising, not setting. Try telling them that their fob-watches are wrong: they read five o'clock, but it is patently dark outside. Best of all, use Investigators that stayed outside to convey that the searchers have been gone for hours without explanation.





# CULLINGSTONE

Cullingstone lies in rural surroundings, with gentle hills to the north, green fields dotted around and the dark expanse of Hobs Wood to the west. The buildings are of ancient grey stone, surrounded by dry stone walls of the same material. While the stone appears bone dry, it feels unnervingly slick to the touch. The village holds just over three hundred people, but also serves outlying houses and farms. This gives it a large enough base to support a pub, village shop, primary school and church.

In the area around Cullingstone, sixteen families have changeling children. The town has banded together to keep their secret, partly out of love for the children, and partly out of fear for what they are capable of if they are betrayed. The villagers obviously live in fear of losing more children, but are also afraid of what might happen if the fairies are not paid their due. There are memories of *what happened in 1861*: when the parents all conspired to either leave the area or keep their children locked up throughout the autumn. The fairies brought storms and lightning to the village, burning down buildings, killing the innocent and filling the air with an intolerable grating noise.

Since then, while villagers with daughters often move out of the area until their children are at least adolescents, they do find ways of encouraging newcomers with daughters to come to the village and stay there until their children are taken. Once this has happened, they are welcomed into the secret community of parents of changelings.

If anyone tries to disturb this process, by threatening to expose the changelings or to somehow bring the wrath of the fairies down on the village again, the villagers will have few reservations about hurting or even killing them and offering up their child directly.

Below are various locations and characters that the Investigators might encounter in Cullingstone. However, don't feel that, just because an NPC or location is listed here, you must bring it into play. If they never visit the church, for example, there is probably no reason ever to introduce the Reverend Clow, and the game will not suffer for his absence. These elements simply provide colour, information and sources of conflict, and each has something unique they can bring to the game. As the Investigators find themselves in locations or situations associated with an NPC, bring that character into play. If you find yourself bringing new NPCs into play, find a way that their lives have been touched by the changelings, whether by having a child, a sibling or even an old school friend still living in the town as an unchanging, cold child.

# CULLINGSTONE SCHOOL

The school, as is fitting for a village, has only two classrooms and a small office for the teachers. Outside is a grassy area where the children play during breaks, with a set of swings and a see-saw. Like all the other buildings in the village, it is made of ancient stone, slightly slick to the touch.

Each classroom has wooden chairs, desks and slates for twelve children. Indeed, as only eleven currently attend the school, they could easily all be taught together. The children themselves range in age from five to eleven: older children either attend school outside the village. Older children either go to school outside the village or have started working.

Mrs Alexander keeps the teacher's office locked when it is not in use. The office only has one desk, and the bottom drawer is kept locked at all times. It contains a bottle of gin and an old photograph (see below).

Mrs Alexander will use the excuse of any new teacher coming to Cullingstone to split the class, giving the older children, including Lizzie Erskine, to the new teacher.

## IRENE ALEXANDER

Mrs. Alexander is a widow, who lived for most of her life in Galashiels, the nearest large town to Cullingstone. When her husband died in an accident in the textile mill, she took work as a teacher at the Cullingstone primary school, partly for the income and partly to start a new life for herself, away from painful memories.

In the two years she has lived in Cullingstone, she has become steadily unnerved, especially by Lizzie Erskine. The Erskine girl always struck her as a bit odd, with her distant manner and refusal to play with the other children. On the couple of occasions Mrs. Alexander forced Lizzie to join in the games in the playground, *children would get hurt by her*. She still made allowances for Lizzie, due to the girl's exceptional academic ability.

A month or so back, however, Mrs. Alexander found an old picture which had fallen behind the desk in the school office. It showed Lizzie in the playground, looking exactly as she does now, but surrounded by a different group of children. The picture is dated "Spring Term, 1875" and checking the names listed on the back of the picture, Mrs. Alexander came to realise that a few of the children in the picture were now young adults in the village.



As she asked around, trying to find a sane explanation for the image, she found herself increasingly shut out by her fellow villagers. She has started drinking heavily, even hiding a bottle of gin in her desk drawer at the school, and now fears and despises all the children, but especially Lizzie.

If a Investigator takes on the job of teacher, he or she will see many signs of Mrs. Alexander's eccentricity and drunkenness. She will insist on splitting the class in two, with the new teacher taking half the students, including Lizzie, and then refuse to even set foot in the new classroom. She will be reluctant to even discuss the children beyond giving names, and her dislike of Lizzie is obvious. Once the new teacher is in place, she will look for any excuse to lock herself in the office, supposedly to plan lessons, and will drink herself into a stupor.

Once Mrs. Alexander is drunk enough, she can be drawn out on the source of her fears, but she will only make oblique hints about her suspicions after having been rebuffed by the rest of the village. She will not volunteer to show the picture, which is normally kept *hidden in the same locked drawer* as her gin.

## LIZZIE ERSKINE

Lizzie Erskine was replaced by a changeling almost twenty-one years ago. Like many of the changeling children in the village, she was kept indoors and away from prying eyes for much of this time. Last year, though, she demanded to go back to school and her parents eventually relented.

Lizzie's attempts to study the other children have been largely unsuccessful, due to her failure to inspire anything other than fear in them. She sits out for most of the games now and keeps to herself. She will take the opportunity of a new teacher to try to learn about them, and will be especially interested if they have a young daughter.

Lizzie sits in the back of the class and reads books that are far too advanced for a primary school student. She has a special interest in mathematics, and can do calculus as easily as the other children can recite their times tables. If she is presented with the more normal coursework of the class, she will become bored and restless. She has memorised the entire contents of all the books in the school and can *recite each one, word-for-word*, to prove that she has nothing to learn.

The relationship between Lizzie and the other children is a distant one. They are all frightened of her, and she *watches them as a detached observer*, as if recording their behaviour. When she interacts with them, it frequently ends in disaster, as Lizzie either *accidentally hurts a child while playing*, or *deliberately inflicts harm* on one to make them leave her alone. She will grab the arm of a child, preferably the daughter of the couple who own The Rambles, and pull hard enough to dislocate the shoulder. The bruising on the daughter's arm looks like *it was caught in a vice*, but as it becomes more distinct, the shape of a child's hand becomes more distinct in the bruising.

## PLAYING THE CHANGELINGS

To project some of the alien impression of the changeling girls, just try taking all the emotion out of your voice when you speak as them. This isn't quite a monotone, but try to avoid variations in pace, inflections or figures of speech. The girls never become excited, frightened or angry, although they may ask oddly direct questions: "Are you sad?", "Are you angry?", "*Are you going to kill me?*". Try keeping still and maintaining eye contact with whoever you are speaking to, blinking as little as possible. By the time the players have encountered a few girls who speak this way, they should become quite unnerved.

When two or more changelings are gathered and there are no obvious human witnesses, they will drop all pretence and communicate with each other using a strange buzzing sound. If someone manages to penetrate the false, waxy skin of a changeling, they will see *a glimpse of something black, insectoid and thoroughly incomprehensible underneath*. The changeling will almost certainly kill them to protect its secret.

## THE VILLAGE SHOP

The Erskines, parents of Lizzie, run the village shop and post office, and so know everyone in town. Callum Erskine is a friendly soul, if of a somewhat haunted aspect, but his wife is a bit more reclusive. They live in some rooms above the shop, along with their daughter Lizzie.

Unlike some other parents in town, it has never occurred to the Erskines to pretend that Lizzie is anything other than their daughter. Given that they are both now in their late fifties and Lizzie still appears to be eight, this may seem peculiar to a newcomer to the village.

Moirra Erskine is *terrified of her daughter* and has developed a serious addiction to laudanum in her attempt to control her fear. She rarely leaves the house now, and spends much of her time in bed. Any new doctor in town is going to face demands from her to prescribe her some more "medicine for her nerves", as she puts it. She is prone to *staring blankly out of the window, towards the heart of Hob's Wood*, although she cannot explain why her eyes are drawn there.

Moirra's sister, Edith Cameron, lives down in Shropshire now. They still correspond, although Moira has never told her sister the truth about what happened to Lizzie. Instead, Moira has invented a rich adult life for her daughter, full of tales of her new husband and their travels around the world. *She keeps all her sister's letters in her bedside cabinet*, and a number of them make reference to Lizzie's fictitious adult life.



# THE DOCTOR'S SURGERY

If the owners of The Rambles haven't already sought out the village doctor after their daughter's mysterious injury in the woods, they will probably do so if her arm is hurt by Lizzie Erskine.

The surgery is another small, grey building, which stands in the centre of the village. It contains a consulting room, a small office and a few rooms for the doctor's living quarters. These have not been used for some time, as Doctor Boswell now has a cottage just outside the village.

There is a large wooden cabinet full of Doctor Boswell's records in the office, and it will take at least half a day to go through them. Anyone who does so will notice that there have been pages torn out of notebooks, and that *a number of records are entirely missing*. With a bit of detective work and cross-referencing, it can be deduced that *the missing records all pertain to young girls*, and the records with missing pages belong to their family members. These alterations run through the full span of the records, all the way back to the early 1850s.

## DOCTOR MALCOLM BOSWELL

Doctor Boswell has been the village doctor for almost forty years, and the strain of living with Cullingstone's secrets has taken its toll on him. He sleeps poorly when he sleeps at all, which makes him distracted and easily angered. The only thing which has stopped him retiring *is the fear of having to deal with a newcomer learning his role in keeping the secret*.

While Boswell is secretive and surly, he will soften slightly should the parents of a new changeling child come to him for help. Obviously he will be unable to help with the child's condition, but he is more than happy to prescribe laudanum to calm the nerves of any distressed parents.

## THE NEW DOCTOR

If one of the Investigators is the new village doctor, they will find, on taking over, that the surgery has obviously been empty for a while, with a light coating of dust on all surfaces and a slightly musty smell in the air.

If a Investigator is taking over as the village doctor, he will find Boswell singularly unhelpful; he will not volunteer to come to the surgery, share details about any patients or even talk to the new doctor *unless he absolutely has to*. Boswell has taken many of the patient notes with him, especially those relating to the changeling girls and their families. *He keeps these notes locked in a trunk in his cottage*.

Many of Boswell's patients will be reluctant to trust a new doctor, and any Investigator in this position will find the surgery oddly empty unless there is a serious accident in the village.

# THE POLICE STATION

Police Constable Gareth Thorburn is the one policeman in the village. While he reports to the main police station in Galashiels, he spends most of his time in Cullingstone and the surrounding farms. He is a large man, with a thick, greying beard and a cheerful disposition. *This cheer is forced*, masking a sullen, fatalistic temperament.

Like so many others in the village, PC Thorburn has lost and gained a daughter. Marie Thorburn has not left her father's house for the past eight years. She has become defective, and no longer pretends to sleep or eat. She wanders round the house, day and night, usually in the dark. Her eyes look even less life-like than the other changelings. If anyone attempts to talk to her, she will simply ask, over and over, to be told a story, speaking in a flat monotone.

*Thorburn's wife, Sheila, was unable to cope with the change in her child* and went into the woods in search of answers. She has not been heard from since. PC Thorburn tries to love his daughter as if she were as she always was, and is very protective towards her. Nevertheless, *he is terrified of what she might be capable of*.

If PC Thorburn is brought in to investigate a missing child, he will try to keep everyone involved as calm as possible. His goal is simply to stop outsiders getting involved before a new changeling can appear. He will also try to convince the parents of a changeling child to accept her as their own.

# THE OLD WAIN HOUSE

The house in which the Wain family lived, before their lives were destroyed, is now empty and boarded up. If anyone breaks in, they will find it mildewed, musty and home to rats and pigeons which have managed to find their way in through the crumbling walls and ceiling.

The main room of the house has a smaller structure built within it. This is the prototype of Wain's shack in the woods (see below), and shares the same deranged geometry. It can be entered by crawling into one of the holes in the sides, and any explorer will then find themselves in a dark, cramped maze of tight passageways. The walls are rough and wooden, and splinters and protruding nails abound. If they persist, they will find themselves *crawling for far longer than could be explained* by the size of the structure they saw from the outside. Chinks of light can be seen in the walls, and after a while there will be a coating of dead pine needles on the ground and a smell of pine sap in the air.

The tunnel finally comes out into a corner of Wain's shack in the woods, but if a PC attempts to trace their steps back they will find no sign of an entrance to the maze in the shack.

# THE TATTY BOGLE

The sign outside this pub, which lies on the outskirts of Cullingstone, depicts a ragged-looking scarecrow of evil aspect, with arms reaching out in front of it. *The name "Tatty Bogle" refers to a type of fairy reputed to hide in potato fields and capture unsuspecting people.* The pub itself is an old stone building with a relatively small public bar and a couple of rooms upstairs. It is busy on most evenings, except on Sunday, when it is shut. A number of the villagers are regulars.

PC Thorburn can be found here most nights, as can Doctor Boswell, and the two of them often drink together at a corner table near the fireplace. Callum Erskine also drops in a few times during the week.

The atmosphere at the pub is subdued, and it becomes obvious that *many of the customers are there to drink to forget.* While they will give a cool welcome to any newcomers, any talk of the children or local fairy legends will be met with silence. So, too, will anyone asking after the Rambles' previous tenants: a young curate and his wife, who *walked into the woods after their daughter was abducted*, never to emerge. A stranger will have to work hard to win the trust of any drinkers here, and even then they are most likely just to hear stories of boggarts, bogles or Thomas the Rhymer. Only after much persistence and alcohol might a drinker mention *children disappearing and returning changed.*

If anyone attempts to tie the local fairy legends with strange events that have happened in the village, they will be met with laughter at first, then attempts to steer the conversation onto other topics and finally with angry silence. This avoidance should be *all the confirmation the Investigators need.*

# CULLINGSTONE KIRK

The village church is a modestly-sized grey stone building just off the main road that runs through Cullingstone. It is large enough to hold the entire church-going population of the village for weekly services. The denomination is The Church of Scotland. There is nothing sinister going on at the kirk, and everything is exactly as it seems.

The vicar, Reverend Clow, has no children of his own, but has seen enough of what is happening in Cullingstone to *believe that girls have been replaced.* His struggle to understand what had happened was superseded by the requirement to give comfort to the affected families and the community at large. As a result, he tries to accept the changelings, and even attempts to rationalise having children who never lose their innocence as a divine gift. Underneath all this, though, *he is terrified*, and tries to keep the peace out of fear of what will happen if the changelings or the fairies who placed them in the community are angered.

If a Investigator comes to Reverend Clow for help, he will attempt to convince them to accept the child as their own, to show it love and patience and, above all, not to anger it.

# BACK TO THE WOODS

Over the next few days, the daughter of the couple who own the Rambles *tries to slip away into the woods*, to play with the fairies again. If she succeeds, she does not come back.

If the Investigators enter the woods – either to find the daughter or simply to discern its secret – they hear a small girl laughing. On following the voice, they see a small girl, *running through the woods and playing with ethereal lights.* This, however, is not the daughter, but Maeve. She is difficult, but not impossible, to catch. Maeve, unlike other changelings, has not acclimatised to people and rarely speaks to adults. She just wants to find other children to play with.

## MAEVE WAIN

Maeve spends her time roaming the woods. Her purpose, which she only half-suspects, is to act as a lure when the fairies wish to take a child. She befriends little girls who wander into the woods and tells them about the fairies who live there, showing them the dancing lights and the glowing fairy ring. She then tells the child to return, whenever they can, to learn new games.

Maeve is seven years old, with long brown hair and a broad pale face. She wears a bright red overcoat. Maeve laughs constantly as she runs through the woods; *this is not mirth, but a lure for her prey.* If anyone demands that she takes them to see the fairies, *Maeve may oblige, taking them to the Fairy Ring* (see below) and showing them how to open the door to Fairyland.

## WAIN'S SHACK

Deep in the woods, the Investigators stumble across a shack. At first sight, it looks incompetently built: planks are nailed together at strange angles and often seem to be leaning against nothing. As the Investigators draw closer, the shack's geometry is unsettling. *It should not stand and, yet, it has clearly been standing for many years.*

If anyone enters, they discover a tattered figure skulking in a dark corner. He has a shotgun, which he points at the Investigators. The figure divides his attention between the intruders and something hidden beneath an old blanket. He whispers calming words to whatever is hidden, telling it not to be afraid. This is Ian Wain, Maeve's father, and under the blanket are the bones of the original Maeve.

*Wain was a carpenter and builder*, who had carried out work for almost everyone in the community. He used to be a friendly, outgoing man, known for his good humour as much as for his professionalism.

*Eight years ago, Maeve disappeared from Wain's house*, where he lived with his wife Helen. When the changeling calling itself Maeve returned, he refused to accept it as his daughter. He tried to drive it from the house, but his wife refused to let him do so. He clung to the idea that his real daughter was still out there, and searched Hobs Wood for her, day and night.



Eventually he found the rotted husk of what had been his daughter, with the top of her head surgically removed and her brain missing, lying in a pile of dead leaves. He brought the corpse home to prove to his wife that the thing in their house was not Maeve, which proved more than Helen could bear. She killed herself with her husband's shotgun that night.

All this drove Wain quite mad. He abandoned his house and went out to live in Hobs Wood, believing that Maeve's spirit still lived out there. He has been there for many years, but thanks to the deformations of space and time in the woods, less than a year has passed for him. He has been foraging in the woods to survive, and *may have eaten some of his daughter's remains*. The distortions in space and time which permeate the woods have further changed him, giving him insane insights into the true nature of reality. *He sees the fairies out in the woods. Sometimes, he sees Maeve playing with them.*

Wain built the shack to protect himself and his daughter. Its structure has been influenced by his perception of the woods. There is not a normal angle in the place. It is possible to walk into a skewed corner and keep going, disappearing from the view of others, or turn a corner into a room and end up somewhere behind where you started. *There is no stable geometry.*

Maeve's remains rest on a dark wooden table. They are largely skeletal, although there is mummified flesh on the bones. If anyone inspects it, they will find *the top of Maeve's skull has been removed, with impossible surgical precision*: the edges of the bone are as smooth as glass. Wain himself can no longer differentiate between the dead girl and the changeling: they are both Maeve and both need to be looked after. Both Maeves wear the same red overcoat, but the one on the skeletal Maeve is tattered and stained. In his more lucid moments, he realises that something is wrong with his daughter, but he can't quite articulate it.

Wain's speech is rambling. He believes absolutely in the existence of fairies, making references to Thomas the Rhymer, Tam Lin or Childe Rowland (see above). If one of the parents asks what has happened to their daughter, he will tell them not to worry: she will come home soon, and that they should love her as their own. His main motivation is to protect Maeve, which an Investigator can extend this into helping their own daughter by pointing out the similarities in their situations. *If persuaded, he will lead the Investigators to the Fairy Ring* (see below).

## SPLITTING THE PARTY

Between Maeve Wain, Ian Wain, the dead daughter and the Fairy Ring, there are many places to go in the woods. If the Investigators split up, present each with a different scene. Let them meet each other again when the story needs it.

# FINDING THE DAUGHTER

It is time for the Investigators to find the missing daughter. Better still, they may find two of them.

As the Investigators approach the Fairy Ring, they may see the changeling of their daughter, walking in circles, lost and confused. *She is cold and pale, with a film of oil on her skin.* Alternatively, if the Investigators are elsewhere, the changeling daughter may make her way to them. She walks out of the woods at night. While she says she does not feel cold, her skin feels frozen, and *all attempts to warm her up are futile.*

Additionally, while exploring the woods, the Investigators should find the real daughter's body. She is sitting up against a tree, still and cold to the touch. If anyone tries to move her, *the top of her head slides slowly off and lands on the ground*, revealing the emptiness in her skull. As with Maeve, *the surgery has been performed with inhuman precision.*

# A STORM IN THE WOODS

The Mi-go rely on the unwelcoming nature of the wood to deter intruders. However, if people are undeterred by the darkness, dancing lights and echoing laughter, they will start building up a storm.

The storm starts off as a charge in the air - Investigators perceive a smell of ozone and the hairs on their necks and arms stand on end - with the occasional crack of electricity discharging into the ground. The air then grows darker and a wind starts to pick up, swirling the dead pine needles and dust on the ground and raising them into the air.

The strength of the wind grows steadily, and the trees begin to shake. The ground rumbles and a strange buzzing fills the air. The dancing lights of the wood air everywhere now and seem to be closing in. Branches begin to crack and break loose, and there is real physical danger from flying debris. *Strange, dark shapes can be seen flying through the dust*, almost man-sized, but with many misshapen limbs.

When you describe this, try speeding up your delivery of the details as they escalate to create a sense of menace. Ask "What do you do" occasionally, but then start throwing in more details if the players hesitate. Try to overload them with information, and don't worry about repeating yourself. Concentrate on the sensory details their characters will feel -- the disorientation of being lost in the storm, the stinging of debris, the nausea caused by the maddening buzzing. Convey the sense of panic.

If the Investigators escape from the woods, all the chaos stops. *From the outside, the woods are perfectly calm and quiet.*

# THE FAIRY RING

Deep in Hobs Wood, where the trees are unnaturally thick, is a clearing shaped like a perfect circle. Here, the air is unusually still and silent. The changeling children are often drawn here when they are in the woods.

In the centre is a ring of large, fleshy mushrooms: this, according to folklore, is a fairy ring. Whatever the mushrooms are, *they are not from this earth*, and the colours underneath the cap are outside the known spectrum. Under each mushroom, embedded in the ground, is a luminescent purple crystal.

This is the entrance to Fairyland. To enter, one must walk around the ring anticlockwise (widdershins) three times. With each completed circuit, the ground trembles, the wind increases and reality begins to blur.

There are many ways to learn *the secret of entering Fairyland*. All changelings know it. Ian Wain knows it, although he has never been there himself. Indeed, any of the Cullingstone villagers might tell the Investigators how to enter: after all, it is an easy way to silence them.

# DEPICTING THE CREATURES

If your players are familiar with Cthulhu games, be wary of mentioning the Mi-Go or describing them too clearly. Once they can put a name to the horror, the mystery and menace disappears.

Instead, keep the Mi-Go as a shadowy presence, rarely glimpsed, rarely encountered if it all. If they do appear, simply describe misshapen, dark figures, with too limbs, that move too fast for the eye to see. Give so many sensory impressions -- windstorms, dust, dancing lights, creaking trees, buzzing -- that anything else is just part of the chaos.

If your players are unfamiliar with Cthulhu gaming, then you might be more Lovecraftian. Emphasise the alien nature of the creatures. Give hints towards other planets and ancient ages.

Always, however, leave some doubt about what the monsters are. Use different names and never "Mi-Go": fairies, shapes, things, creatures, bogles, chatterlings, old ones, wisps, shadows. Are they fairies? Are they aliens? By the end of the scenario, the players should remain unsure.





# FAIRYLAND

Whatever Fairyland is, it exists in multiple dimensions. Perceiving it is more than the human mind can cope with. Most Investigators will simply see *a riot of light, colours and shifting shapes*. In the distance, little girls' voices can be heard, some crying, some laughing, some calling for their mothers. Dark shapes move within the dancing colours -- misshapen things with many crooked limbs.

Anyone who follows the sounds of the children will encounter rows of gleaming metal cylinders. These containers are the sources of the voices, which come from dark metal grates on the lids. All the missing children are here. They have all been driven mad by the experience of having had their brains removed and placed in these cylinders.

The daughter of the owners of The Rambles is especially frantic. *She knows that she is trapped and she wants her parents to free her.*

At first, the misshapen creatures simply observe. However, if anyone tries to make off with a jar, they will intervene. Give some warning of this: when the Investigators begin studying the jars, describe the dark shapes drawing closer. If they continue after that, it is their funeral.

First, the creatures shock their intended victim with lightning. They then vivisect them while conscious. This process is fast, efficient and merciless. This, note, is not really combat, but a suitable end for an Investigator who has pried too far.

The other Investigators see *the victim suspended in the air, on their back, and the top of their head removed with something shiny and unfamiliar*. Perhaps the victim screams or cries for help until the brain is actually severed from the spinal cord. Finally, the brain is inserted in one of the gleaming cylinders, and the voice of the victim joins that of the frightened girls.

## WRAPPING IT ALL UP

There is no one way to end Fairyland. Some Investigators may examine every aspect of the situation, pushing on until they uncover the secret of the Fairy Ring. Others may be drawn more towards the problem of the changeling in their midst or to the human drama which surrounds losing a child.

Watch for a suitable ending and finish the game on a dramatic or emotional note that feels right. Maybe one Investigator tries to murder another to protect a changeling. Maybe, having provoked the Mi-go, the Investigators withdraw to the house to make a last stand, as a storm of light and chaos descends on them. Don't be afraid to ask the players, "Shall we end it there?" even if there are loose ends.

If it feels right, have the players narrate codas for any Investigators that survive (whether in cylinders or not).



# CTHULHU DARK

## YOUR INVESTIGATOR

Choose a name and occupation. Describe your Investigator. Take a green Insanity Die.

## INSANITY

Your Insanity starts at 1.

When you see something disturbing, roll your Insanity die. If you get higher than your Insanity, add 1 to your Insanity and roleplay your fear.

## DOING THINGS

To know how well you do at something, roll:

- ▶ One die if the task is within human capabilities.
- ▶ One die if it's within your occupational expertise.
- ▶ Your Insanity die, if you will risk your sanity to succeed.
- ▶ If your Insanity die rolls higher than any other die, make an Insanity roll, as above.

Then your highest die shows how well you do. On a 1, you barely succeed. On a 6, you do brilliantly.

For example: you're escaping from the window of an Innsmouth hotel. On a 1, you crash on an adjoining roof, attracting the attention of everyone around. On a 4, you land quietly on the roof, but leave traces for pursuers to follow. On a 6, you escape quietly, while your pursuers continue searching the hotel.

When you investigate, the highest die shows how much information you get. On a 1, you get the bare minimum: if you need information to proceed with the scenario, you get it, but that's all you get. On a 4, you get whatever a competent investigator would discover.

On a 5, you discover everything humanly possible. For these clues, consider weaving in some elements of Scottish fairytales. And, on a 6, you may glimpse beyond human knowledge (and probably make an Insanity roll). For hints on this, see the short phrases at the bottom of each page.

For example: shortly after arriving at The Rambles, an Investigator wants to know where his daughter has gone. On a 1, he suspects she has gone into the woods. On a 4, he finds her favourite toy, a glittery ball, near the edge of Hobs Wood.

On a 5, he finds the toy and remembers newspaper reports of similar disappearances in Scotland, which locals related to the folktale of Childe Rowland, whose sister also disappeared while playing with a ball. On a 6, he finds the toy, remembers the reports and recalls the connection with Childe Rowland. Additionally, when he picks the toy up, he feels the trees are silently watching him, as they watched his daughter before.

## FAILING

If someone thinks it would more interesting if you failed, they describe how you might fail and roll a die. (They can't do this if you're investigating and you must succeed for the scenario to proceed).

If their die rolls higher than your highest die, you fail, in the way they described. If not, you succeed as before, with your highest die showing how well you succeed.

Returning to the example above: you're escaping from the hotel window. This time, someone thinks it would be more interesting if your pursuers caught you. When you both roll, they get the higher die. You are caught.

## REROLLING

If you included your Insanity die in the roll and you're not happy with the result, you may reroll (all the dice). If you didn't include your Insanity die before, you may add it now and reroll.

Afterwards, look at the new result. As before, the highest die shows how well you do.

If your Insanity Die rolls higher than any other die, make an Insanity roll, even if you made one after your previous roll.

## CO-OPERATING AND COMPETING

To cooperate: everyone who is cooperating rolls their dice. The highest die, rolled by anyone, determines the outcome.

To compete: everyone who is competing rolls their dice. Whoever gets highest wins. If it's a tie, the person with highest Insanity wins. If Insanity is tied, reroll.

As before, if your Insanity die rolls higher than any other die you roll, make an Insanity roll. And, if anyone is not happy with their roll, they may reroll, using the rules above.

## SUPPRESSING KNOWLEDGE

When your Insanity reaches 5, you may now reduce it by suppressing Mythos knowledge: for example, burning books, stopping rituals, destroying yourself or impeding investigation.

Each time you do this, roll your Insanity Die. If you get less than your current Insanity, decrease your Insanity by 1. And you may continue suppressing Mythos knowledge when your Insanity drops below 5.

## GOING INSANE

When your Insanity reaches 6, you go incurably insane. This is a special moment: everyone focusses on your character's last moments as their mind breaks. Go out however you want: fight, scream, run or collapse. Afterwards, either make a new character or continue playing, madly, but retire the character as soon as you can.



## OTHER CLARIFICATIONS

If you fight any creature you meet, you will die. Thus, in these core rules, there are no combat rules or health levels. Instead, roll to hide or escape.

Things within human capabilities include: picking locks, finding Ry'leh, deciphering carvings, remembering something, spotting something concealed, rationalising something horrific.

Things outside human capabilities include: casting spells, understanding hidden meaning, doing things in dreams. You can try such things if you have the opportunity: for example, if you sense patterns, you can try to follow them. However, you won't get the "within human capabilities" die, and might just roll your Insanity die.

A high success never short-circuits the investigation: That is, it never takes you to the end of the scenario, skipping everything in between. Thus, in the example above: even if you rolled a 6 while searching your greatuncle's personal effects, you would not find the coordinates of Ry'leh, where Cthulhu sleeps.

When you make an Insanity Roll and succeed, getting your Insanity or lower, this means you keep it together, not that you are fine. When you fail, getting higher than your Insanity, you fail to keep it together.

To play without a character sheet, use your Insanity Die to keep track of your Insanity, by keeping its highest face turned to your current Insanity.

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Who decides when to roll Insanity? Who decides when it's interesting to know how well you do something? Who decides when something disturbs your PC? Who decides whether you might fail? Decide the answers with your group. Make reasonable assumptions. For example, some groups will let the Keeper decide everything. Others will share the decisions.

## LAUDANUM

This is a special rule for Fairyland.

If an Investigator takes laudanum, they may roll to reduce their Insanity. This works exactly as with Suppressing Knowledge, above, except that Insanity need not be 5.

The Keeper should take this as a license to describe increasingly weird things to the Investigator. Perhaps, after taking laudanum, they are particularly entranced by the fairy lights. Perhaps they believe that the dissected daughter is beautiful. Or perhaps, once inside Fairyland, they find the fairies comforting and welcoming.

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## DARK SYMBOLS

You can run Fairyland using any Cthulhu game system. These symbols show you when to use the rules. When they appear, the text to which they refer is italicized.



*This is a clue. Investigate to discover it.*

In Cthulhu Dark, make a roll (as described under Doing Things opposite). In other systems, the Keeper chooses an appropriate skill or ability.



*This is a clue. Talk to someone to discover it.*

In Cthulhu Dark, make a roll. In other systems, the Keeper again chooses an appropriate skill or ability, which is normally social (e.g. Bargain) or academic (e.g. Architecture).



*This might harm your sanity.*

In Cthulhu Dark, roll your Insanity Die.

In other systems, make a SAN roll, a Stability Check or similar. If you lose, the number of branches on the symbol tells you how bad the SAN or Stability loss will be. For example, the symbol to the left indicates a loss of D6 SAN or 6 Stability Points.



*Check to see whether you notice this.*

In Cthulhu Dark, make a roll. In other systems, use Spot Hidden, Sense Trouble or similar.



When two symbols are combined, so is their meaning. So *this is a clue. Investigate to discover it. It might harm your sanity.*



And *this is a clue. Talk to someone to discover it. It might harm your sanity.*

With all that said, remember these symbols are only guidelines. Sometimes, you might give a clue without a roll. Sometimes, you might call for a roll where no symbol appears. Sometimes, an event won't seem frightening enough to harm an Investigator's Sanity, but another event will. Use your judgement during the game.

