



MAZING DVENTURES

THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN





THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN

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THE DEEPER DARK TRILOGY, VOL. 3: THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN

An **Amazing Adventures** Scenario for 4-8 characters of levels 5-8

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our latest adventure for the **Amazing Adventures Role Playing Game!** As with *Don't Fear the Ripper* and *The Feast of Black Annis*, this scenario is part of a loose (which is to say, thematic) trilogy of horror adventures, which can be played in any order, though it is generally assumed that *Ripper* is the first one to be played. These adventures are loosely interconnected and are designed to introduce the mythos of H.P. Lovecraft (with a few additions of our own) into your world in a big way.

To that end, GMs will find that this adventure is much less linear than some other published modules—particularly *Ripper*, which is very much structured as a four-act serial, though with lots of room for player and GM improvisation. This scenario, on the other hand, while still structured in “Acts” similar to our other adventure modules, it is very open-ended and heavily investigative in nature, and how fast or slowly the PCs get to the final battle depends on how the GM decides to disseminate information as they explore their options.

This also plays into how short the module itself is—it’s more an adventure framework than a fully-fleshed-out scenario, though it can very easily be played from front to back in one session, exactly as written. As a designer, I like to give players a range of options in their adventures. This can be a fast, one-night session that is playable in a few hours, or you can choose to expand it and even combine it with the other adventures in the series if you’re driven and have the gumption to do so. How exactly it all fits together is entirely up to you, but this adventure sets the potential stage for a worldwide cult of the Deeper Dark.

Do you slowly build encounters with the Nightmare Children until the PCs stumble upon their lair, or do you do an “info dump” after the first encounter? It’s entirely up to you, and with a bit of imagination and creativity this adventure could become a mini-campaign unto itself as more and more children fall prey to the horrors of the Deeper Dark before the final confrontation with the Nightmare Man and the Keepers.

LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR AND MADNESS

Since these are horror-style adventures, the assumption is that madness and sanity rules as found in **Amazing Adventures** and the **Companion** are in play. Since, however, these are pulp heroes, rather than your typical Lovecraftian investigators, GMs may wish to consider the adventures in the trilogy as Howardian in nature rather than Lovecraftian. There’s not enough space here for a treatise on the difference, but at its core, in this game and scenario your heroes have a chance to beat back the darkness, destroy the evil and come out alive and sane against the horrors of the Outer Dark. It’s a different approach than most games using the Lovecraft mythos assume. Regarding the use of Sanity, there’s a lot of potential for temporary madness to arise in this (and the other two) scenarios. This particular adventure,

as with the other two, debuted at Gen Con 2016, and in every session, all the characters failed their Sanity rolls during the final battle, leading to some pretty wild scenarios!

RESTORING SANITY

It’s important to establish a means by which PCs can restore lost Sanity, which is not implicit in the core rules for **Amazing Adventures**, aside from rest, recuperation and therapy under the hand of a skilled alienist. Thus, the following options are presented for this and other adventures in this Trilogy:

1. At the GM’s option, a “Sanity Award” can be given at the end of every scenario which involves heavy Sanity loss. The exact amount of this award is left to the GM’s discretion, and should be based upon the degree of success with which the PCs navigated the scenario and the amount of Sanity lost (but not necessarily restore characters to full Sanity).
2. The Lesser Restoration and Restoration spells could, at the GM’s option, be used to restore lost Sanity points—1d10 per casting for Lesser Restoration, and 3d6 for Restoration. However, characters can benefit from this method of restoring sanity but once per day, and only if they have suffered sanity loss that day.
3. Just by engaging in some good old-fashioned R&R, away from the horrors of the Deeper Dark, characters can recover Sanity. At the end of each week they spend vacationing in peace, with no activity that could cause potential sanity loss, in a way that anchors them to the real world, PCs can make a Sanity check. If successful, they regain 1d8 points of Sanity. Remember, however, that a character’s maximum Sanity score is always limited by their Forbidden Knowledge skill (if any).

SENSITIVE TOPICS

This scenario involves young children being kidnapped, psychologically manipulated, endowed with terrible powers by a malevolent alien entity, and controlled into behaving like horrific monsters. The stated intent is to be disturbing, but there may be gaming groups for whom such a thing is a step too far. It’s important, as the GM, that you know your group, what they can handle, and what is too much. If using children is too disturbing and hits too close to home for your group, it is suggested that the Nightmare Children be substituted to be teenagers, runaways, even derelict adults and the homeless, the dredges of society that nobody cares about...except for the PCs, that is.

In the end, the key to a successful horror game is to know how to push your group, but not push them so far that they become genuinely uncomfortable. After all, **Amazing Adventures** is a game. It’s supposed to be fun, and everyone has different limits when it comes to horror and the lengths to which it is appropriate to go, to scare them.

BACKGROUND

The adventure involves the rise of a cult of Cthulhu originating in an abandoned farm outside of the city. It can be placed in any city the GM likes, wherever the PCs are based. About a year ago, an aboleth—a creature of the Deeper Dark—was accidentally summoned to this world by a teen playing with a dark grimoire. The aboleth, enraged, immediately enslaved the teen and sent her to explore the surrounding area, at first looking for a way to allow it to return home. It quickly realized, however, that there was an opportunity here, and used the teen to begin gathering its resources together. It had the teen bring her family to it, and feasted upon them, growing in strength.

Over time it made contact with a small group of Cthulhu-Spawn, creatures also of the Outer Dark who haunt the deep places of the earth and who, like the aboleth, are powerful psychics. Together, they set about changing the world to bring about the return of the Old Ones to the world. Their first step was to corrupt and enslave the local rural population, creating a degenerate cult of Cthulhu around the farm, which quickly fell into disrepair. Its cultists began to worship it as a god, and it spoke to them in dreams.

It then created a psychic web among its servants, spreading it further to infiltrate the dreams of local children, appearing to them as a Nightmare Man who promised rewards for obedience and pain for disloyalty. One by one it corrupted and controlled the children, attracting them to the farm house under the care of the Cthulhuim, who the children came to know as the Caretakers. It also sought out men of science and learning, using their unique knowledge to craft chemicals that could mutate and enhance humans and beasts to better do its bidding. One of these serums was used on the children to help create and bolster their psychic abilities, building a psychic web and hive mind that grows stronger with each new addition.

Now, a year later, the aboleth is prepared to begin its diabolical plan, which is where our story begins. Of course, the aboleth didn't count on heroes such as the PCs, who may be all that stands between the city and an eternity of darkness....

GETTING THE PCS INVOLVED

Getting the PCs involved is always the trick. Presumably you're running a game where they'll be inclined to investigate this sort of oddity on their own. If not, they can be ordered to look into events by a superior in their organization, they can be hired by police as consultants who are known as experts in the strange and unusual, or even a concerned parent whose child has been kidnapped might approach them for help after hearing reports that their missing child was seen in one of the area's Red Light districts.

DET. JOE KNONAEM

If necessary, introduce an NPC, one Detective Joe Knonaem of the New Orleans Police Department (or whatever city in which the PCs are based). Det. Knonaem is a grizzled, heavyset detective in the homicide or major crimes division who also happens to be a contact of one of the PCs (Mackie, if using the Brotherhood of William St. John from the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook, or ideally a Socialite if using original PCs). Joe was first introduced in Vol. 1 of the Deeper Dark Trilogy; he is reprinted here for those who don't own that module.

When cases arise that are strange and unusual, Joe calls the PCs in for help, always begging them to keep things on the D&L—invariably, their exploits have gotten him in trouble before, so it's generally with reluctance he brings them in.

DET. JOE KNONAEM (*This 3rd-level LG Gumshoe has vital stats HD 3d10 (25 hp), AC 16 (Fedora, 3-piece suit, trench coat, dexterity), move 30 ft. His primary attributes are Dex 15, Con 13, Wis 15. He attacks by .38 Special dealing 1d8 (Rof 3, Acc +1, Rec -2; BtH+3). His special abilities are Climb, Cat and Mouse, Hide, Move Silently, Precision Shot +1, Take 'em Down +1, Face in the Crowd.*)

Prologue:

Read or paraphrase the following text to the players:

In a typical department store, in the dead of night in the city, an average nighttime security guard strolled the aisles, whistling to himself, shining his flashlight up and down. It was a pretty quiet night, not that that was any surprise. Most nights were quiet. Sometimes he longed for something to happen...just something to break up the monotony.

He should've been careful what he wished for.

First, he heard a giggle, like that of a small child. It rose and ended in a second. He spun, shone his light around, but saw nothing. Then it came again, this time longer—definitely a child's laugh.

"Hello?" He called out. "Who's there? You shouldn't be here! We're closed!"

More giggling.

"Did you get left here? Where's your parents? Where are you?"

He moved towards the laughter, which was coming from the children's department. As he turned the corner to enter the toy aisles, what he came face to face with would haunt his nightmares forever. His flashlight clattered to the ground, and his screams pierced the night, mingling with a chorus of lilting laughter, a scene that repeated itself all over town...

ACT ONE: CRIME SPREE AND KIDNAPPINGS

It starts with a series of strange robberies—a wave that plagues the city practically overnight. There are two strange things about the robberies: the places that have been hit, and the reports of eyewitnesses to the crimes.

The places that have been hit are odd in their wild divergence. First, several banks were robbed across the city to the tune of a few hundred thousand dollars. Second, meat packing plants and seafood warehouses at the wharfs were hit. Third, toy stores and department store toy departments were robbed bare.

There were deaths involved; the few witnesses that did survive are stark, raving mad, ranting about living nightmares, imps, boogey-men under the bed and eyes as black as the pits of hell...at least between predicting death and doom for those questioning them, and alternating between laughter, sobbing, and hysterical, semi-violent fits. There are two things in common: every victim will say, “You’re all gonna die out there!” and “They said the whole city will pay!”

Whatever choice the PCs make will lead them to their first confrontation with the Nightmare Children—powerful psychics who have the ability to control minds and emotions and impart waking nightmares. They are gaunt, horrific-looking, with pallid skin and eyes that are entirely black.

The children themselves work via a hive mind and are controlled by a single, powerful source which any psychic in the party will sense, but attempting to track it to its source is, in modern terms, trying to track an expert hacker bouncing a computer signal around between thousands of servers. In the end, the psychic will get lost in the stream of consciousness and suffer 2d6 damage in psychic backlash as well as being knocked unconscious for 1d4 hours (CL 6 Wisdom save for half damage and -2 to all actions for 1d4 hours instead).

Magic users may also sense the presence of supernatural energy, but won’t be able to track it as a psychic would.

There are two options to delve deeper: capture one of the children alive, or let one escape and trail them.

THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN

The nightmare children are being controlled via a psychic web by the “god” of their cult—a horrific, otherworldly creature from another dimension called an Aboleth, who has become trapped on this world, and seeks to extend its influence as far as possible. It works via the children and its agents, horrible creatures from beyond the Deeper Dark known as the Cthulhuim. Their goal, quite simply, is to enslave enough of the world to awaken their dark master from the depths of the ocean, but they believe in starting small and building on a foundation. Being open to fantasy and imagination, children were the natural choice to begin to build their insidious invasion. The truth is, humans can’t fathom the depth or scope of their intellect and their overall plan cannot be conceived. But they must be stopped, or chaos and darkness will spread across the land.

It is important to remember, however, that these Nightmare Children are just that: children. They are not corrupted, not mutated. They’re being controlled by an otherworldly force. If a child is removed from the psychic network—that is, removed from the presence of at least two other Nightmare Children or their “god,” their abilities fade at the rate of 1d4 levels of ability per minute until they disconnect from the network and become normal, frightened children again.

Psychics, arcanists, occultists or the like can, with a CL 5 Intelligence Check determine that the psychic web connecting these kids to a hive mind is likely based on proximity to others, and removing them might break the connection. Any characters that have the Forbidden Lore Knowledge can divine this with a CL 3 check instead.

NIGHTMARE CHILDREN *(These 1st-level NE humans have vital stats HD 1d4 (4 hp each), AC 14, move 30 ft. Their primary attributes are Mental. They attack by psionics. Their special abilities are: psychic powers as a 12th-level Mentalist. They are +10 to activate psychic powers which have a CL 10 save). Powers include: Empathic Transmission, Mental Stun, Mesmerism, Telepathic Communication, Mind Control, Telemagry. SAN 1/1d6)*

INTERROGATING A NIGHTMARE CHILD

Interrogating a Nightmare Child is easier than it would at first seem. The child will lash out with its psychic powers, but is, in the end, a child. Threatening them, punishing them, countering or resisting their powers, or even tricking them into revealing information are all possible tactics. If a child is captured, the psychic web will release them so that it cannot eventually be tracked back. The child, now feeling alone and abandoned, will naturally seek comfort and solace, but may also react by lashing out and throwing a tantrum. Regardless, their powers will be substantially reduced and will even fade within hours. The formerly all-black pupils will turn back to normal and the child will have only vague, dreamlike memories of what happened while they were “in the other place,” as they’ll call it. The only thing they can tell about the person who controlled them was that he was The Nightmare Man. He was very scary, and if they did good he rewarded them with toys and gifts, but if they did bad, he made them hurt.

TRACKING THE NIGHTMARE CHILDREN

If one or more children get away, tailing or tracking them to their location is definitely possible, especially if there are Gumshoes or Hooligans in the party. Alternately, a Gumshoe using Cat and Mouse can track down sightings and signs of the wayward children, turning over the following pieces of information at the GM’s discretion with one or more successful rolls:

- There have over the past six months been a rash of kidnappings, runaways and disappearances of children aged eight to ten throughout the city, amounting to several dozen kids missing.

- There have been sightings of a lot of “street rats” and “waifs” in the low-rent and red light districts of the city recently, combined with strange goings-on, robberies, people waking up in compromising situations with no memory of how they got there. Sometimes they’re dressed up in bizarre outfits. Sometimes left with broken toys. Sometimes they’re injured. If pressed, people are hard-pressed to remember exactly where they saw the children, where they came from, what they were doing, or where they were going. Thinking about it is uncomfortable, causes serious headaches, and people become insistent (frighteningly so) that there’s nothing to remember, but there are whispers of strange, barely-remembered happenings and these “Nightmare Children” are becoming the boogymen of the districts where they appear.
- Interviews with victims of the above may turn up similar reports of nightmares involving monstrous, red-eyed creatures like giant wolves or coyotes, impish or gremlin-like demons and a huge, shadowy figure lording over all of them, stretching his arm out to cover “everything.”
- After enough interviews, if the PCs think of it, it may be possible to track a central location from where the incidents seem to be occurring, and thereby find the entrance to the children’s hideout.
- A homeless man has seen kids coming and going from the entrances to the local sewers, steam tunnels or access tunnels. He’s also in the know about a series of disappearances that have gone unreported to the authorities. Homeless people all around town have been vanishing for weeks. He’s seen some of them walking off with the strange kids. With the right motivation, he could be convinced to show the heroes just where they are...

APPROACHING THE HIDEOUT

The Nightmare Children are hiding under the streets of the city, in a network of abandoned tunnels, be it steam tunnels, access tunnels, old Underground Railroad tunnels, or what-have you. Once the general location of ingress and egress is discovered, it’s not hard to track their location—they’re largely unsupervised children, and children are messy. They leave signs: Broken toys, paper bags, candy wrappers, you name it. Eventually, the trail leads to a large central chamber, full of garbage, where the children make their home. The room is full of toys, some new, some old, some partially broken, some entirely unusable. It’s also strewn with junk food and candy wrappers. There are a bunch of old mattresses on the floor, most of which have stuffed animals thrown carelessly upon them.

How many children are here when the PCs arrive depends on when they decide to approach. If they come during the day, the place is full, and they’ll have quite the battle on their hands—they may even be forced to flee and return. During the day, some of the children may be sleeping. Whether it’s possible to move stealthily through them is at the discretion of the GM. If, however, they come late at night, the place will be largely empty, with perhaps one or two children left behind. These may be guards, they may possibly be sickly and in need of care.

Regardless, a psychic alarm will draw the rest of the kids to the place within several minutes.

The key to this encounter is to lead into the next stage. A clue found in the room will direct the gumshoes to Manny’s Meat Packing, an old, abandoned slaughterhouse on the outskirts of town. Perhaps they find an old set of overalls among the kids’ junk emblazoned with the company logo. Possibly they find a notepad printed with the logo, or a mechanical pencil stamped with it. Perhaps a number of these things are present, drawing a strong connection. Either way, there’s some connection between these children and the old Manny’s Meat Packing abattoir.

ACT TWO: MANNY’S MEAT PACKING

Manny’s Meat Packing is an old abattoir located several miles outside of town in the middle of nowhere. It was shut down years ago after a scandal involving tainted meat coming out of the facility. GM’s can feel free to invent details of the scandal if they like, but in the end it’s a red herring—the current use of the packing plant has nothing to do with the reason it shut down. It’s just a convenience for the villain of the piece.

The Meat Packing plant is the scene of a large battle. The PCs, as they approach, will note a number of huge, hairy monstrosities in the fenced-in yard where cattle would’ve once been kept. Any sort of background in animal handling or nature will allow a Wisdom check to denote that not only are these not natural creatures (that much is evident just from seeing them) but that they appear to be gigantic, mutated weasels and wolverines. The monstrosities have slavering fangs, nasty claws and eyes that actually glow red. As the PCs get near, the gates are inexplicably flung open and the monsters attack!

MUTANT WOLVERINE: *(These N beasts have vital stats HD 5d10 (30 hp), AC 16, move 30 ft. their Primary attributes are Physical. They attack by 2 claws for 1d6+3 damage each and a bite for 1d10+3 damage. Their special abilities are: damage resistance (1/2 stabbing, slashing, piercing) rend (+1d6 damage if both claws hit), track by scent (treat as mental primary for tracking). SAN 0/1d4).*

MUTANT WEASELS (6): *(These N beasts have vital stats HD 3d10 (20 hp each), AC 14, move 30 ft. their Primary attributes are Physical. They attack by 2 claws for 1d4 damage and bite for 1d6 damage. Their special abilities are: hide, move silently, back attack (+4 hit/double damage). SAN 0/1d4).*

It is likely the PCs will go for their guns when the beasts attack; if they do so, they will certainly announce their presence—then again, the fact that these creatures were unleashed upon them would seem to indicate that whoever is inside is already aware.

Inside, the PCs will find themselves once more beset by guards tasked with defending the work done within. These guards are armed and the remote location ensures that no authorities will come running when a firefight erupts. Even worse, however, there are Nightmare Children present who are being used to aid and augment the defenses, and the gunmen aren’t above using them as human shields.



GUNMEN *(These 3rd-level NE humans have vital stats HD 3d8 (16 hp each), AC 14, move 30 ft. Their primary attributes are Physical. They attack by Luger pistols for 1d10+2 damage (ROF 3; ACC +2, Rec -1) or knives for 1d4 damage. Their special abilities are: hide and move silently; favored weapon (luger)).*

Besides the guards, there are a number of scientists working hard on the serums that are being used to mutate and control the children and the animals. The scientists are not given combat statistics as they're not fighters and they're more likely to run or surrender than they are to battle. Startlingly, though, the scientists, if the Cast tries to question them, will scream in agony, drop to their knees, clutching their heads, and die with blood running from their eyes, ears, nose and mouth as the veins stand out clearly across their faces. The Nightmare Man has forced them to inject a modified version of the psychic serum into themselves, which enables it to "punish" those who are disloyal.

THE CHIMERA CONNECTION

Players who have been through the Ashton and the Augments scenario will be familiar with the concept of mutant animals as well as the augment serum. The serum they find within the slaughterhouse—should they survive—will appear to be a derivative of the same chemicals used in that scenario, only further enhanced with more of a supernatural manipulation and certainly more refined. This could indicate either that Chimera is still active, or someone else has gotten hold of their work. Are they somehow in league with the Aboleth? Has the Aboleth kidnapped one of their scientists and divined the secrets of the augment serum as a result?

The details are left to the GM to determine. Regardless, it is intended that this is a further refinement of the same serum, details of which are covered in the Ashton and the Augments adventure. Those GMs who don't own that scenario can simply invent the effects of the serum, which grants enhanced size, strength, natural weapons and possibly supernatural abilities, and can ignore the connections to Chimera.

ONTO THE FINAL STAGE...

Within the abattoir will be evidence of horrific experiments in various stages, as well as a quantity of the mutagen serum that turned the animals into giant, raving monsters. There seems to be several different varieties of the serum there, and PCs may theorize that some of it is intended for animals, and some for humans, though the various different kinds would have to be tested to divine their exact effects, and testing it could be quite dangerous.

They may also theorize that the serum could have been used to alter the children, and they would be right—one of the varieties, a purplish fluid, is used to dose children who are kidnapped or guided to the "god", which opens up their psychic capabilities, allowing them to join the network, boost their powers and control them. The only way to tell this, however, would be to test it, or a psychic or occultist with an object-reading ability could use their power to work it out.

There are important discoveries to be made here, either by interrogating surviving gunmen or searching their bodies. The cast will discover the existence of a "safe word" that when spoken, cuts off the connection between the children and the Web, rendering them harmless.

The second is the location of the "Dark God" that is worshipped by the cult. The gunmen here are hired hands—not true believers—and while they are doing their jobs, they're not looking to die. They won't fight to the death, and at least one may have overheard the scientists or children mention rumors of an old farm out on Route 50 where this whole thing began. None of the guards has been to the farm, and they don't know what's there, save that there's some sort of "god" that the scientists and children have been trained to worship. The children have also talked about (and threatened the gunmen with) "The Caretakers," but nobody has seen one of these, and lived to talk about it.

If the players wonder or ask why the gunmen haven't died like the scientists, they will reveal that the serum used on the scientists was rare and experimental, and there were only limited quantities. As hired guns, the guards weren't considered necessary to the operation at this stage.

ACT THREE: THE FARM

The climax of the adventure takes place at an abandoned farm on Route 50, several miles outside the city. It is here that the horrific "Nightmare Man," the aboleth, holds its court and makes its plans. In addition to the remainder of the Nightmare Children (at least a dozen beyond those that the PCs have already faced, the aboleth has driven mad and enslaved a number of degenerate country folk, who will defend it to the death using items like shotguns, pitchforks, big knives and the like.

Finally, in order to get to the aboleth, who resides in a deep, small lake in the forest behind the farmhouse, the characters will need to face the Caretakers, the four Cthulhuim that act as its agents on the surface world.

THE FARMHOUSE

The farmhouse itself is ramshackle and in disrepair, but solidly constructed of stone and dating back about 60 years to the early Victorian era. The lower level of the old farmhouse consists of a sitting room/parlor, a kitchen, dining room, formal living room and office. Upstairs, the home consists of six bedrooms—a master bedroom approximately 15 x 10 in size, and five other bedrooms all about 10 x 10. Toiletries would be handled via chamber pots and an outhouse. The basement (if there is one; depending on where exactly the GM decides to set this scenario, homes may not have basements) is a plain coal room and root cellar. The attic, likewise, is a fully-realized floor, but unfinished. The roof has partially caved in, leaving it open to the sky and elements, but once the floor was subdivided into what could've been four rooms, or three rooms and an attic cistern for what may have been the beginnings of a running water system that was never completed.

The PCs could encounter any sort of monstrosities here, from the remaining Nightmare Children (who share bedrooms—2 to 4 per room) to giant rodents (use the stats for weasels and vary the descriptions from rabbits to rats to raccoons) which the children treat as pets but which will attack anyone not in the psychic web, to any number of degenerate insane locals acting as cooks and babysitters for the children. One or two of the Caretakers may be found here—only a truly cruel GM would have the heroes battle all four Spawn and the aboleth at once.

THE GOAL

The key to this adventure is to free the children (preferably using the trigger phrase the PCs learned in Act Two) and destroy the aboleth and the threat it presents to the world at large. The trick for the characters is finding the aboleth, which isn't in the house. It's possible to get this information from the children or from one of the deranged locals, who may rant and rave about the Nightmare Man in the lake. The locals, for their part, are completely mad and beyond saving, and could make for convenient scapegoats on which to hang the entire kidnapping conspiracy. The children, once released from the Web, are confused and terrified and don't remember anything but awful nightmare images of indescribable monsters.

PSYCHICS AND THE WEB

The psychic web of control is at its strongest here and will have a distinct and negative effect on psychic characters, who feel disoriented and confused the entire time. They will be at -6 to activate all psionic powers, to SIEGE checks and to attack and damage rolls because of the draw of the web. In addition, if the character rolls a natural "1" on any check, they are temporarily overcome by the Web. Roll a d6; on a 1-3, they are stunned and unable to act, and on a 4-6 they fall under the control of the Nightmare Man; each round thereafter they are entitled to a Charisma check (CL 5) to break free and regain their own free will, though the confusion effect will remain.

With each of the Caretakers that is eliminated, the penalty to activate psychic powers is reduced by one. Thus by the time they have killed the fourth Caretaker, when only the aboleth is left, they will be at -2. Should they kill the aboleth first, the penalty is reduced by 2.

SEEKING THE NIGHTMARE MAN

As the heroes travel into the darkened forest towards the lake, they will be set upon by more deranged villagers and the rest of the Caretakers, pulling out all the stops to prevent them from posing a danger to the god.

CRAZED TOWNSFOLK *(These 1st-level CE insane humans have vital stats HD 1d6 (6 hp each), AC 12, move 30 ft. Their primary attributes are Physical. They attack by shotguns for 1d8 damage (ROF 2/B; ACC 0, Rec -5) or knives/improvised weapons for 1d6 damage. Their special abilities are: hide and move silently).*

CARETAKERS *(These CE outsiders have vital stats HD 8d10 (45 hp each), AC 15, move 30 ft. Their primary attributes are Men-*

tal. They attack by knives for 1d6 damage, tentacles for 1d4 or psionics. Their special abilities are: 11th level Mentalist and Consume).

Eventually, the heroes will arrive at a deep, murky pond where the sense of power and madness hangs heavy in the air. Within the murky waters, they may be able to just barely see a hulking monstrosity shimmering at the bottom of the pool. A voice rings out in their minds, overwhelming their senses.

"Welcome, travelers," it says. "You have done well, breaking down my network, small and new as it was. I congratulate you and offer a choice. Open your minds to me and become my agents in this world. Together you will help me usher in a new age of enlightenment and truth. Your other option is oblivion."

The voice itself is sanity-blasting, requiring a SAN check at CL 8 with a rating of 1d8/1d10. When the characters inevitably refuse the offer, let the final battle begin. The problem is that the aboleth, despite its size, is deep in a murky pool, making it almost impossible to target with physical attacks; gunfire is -5 to strike and other physical attacks are impossible without diving into the pool...which carries its own challenges.

In the end, however, the only way to resolve this scenario is to destroy the aboleth. Players may come up with all sorts of clever means to do so, and GMs are encouraged to allow them to try out any unique and original strategy they might have. Whatever the outcome, just make it dramatic and deadly. The aboleth is well and truly trapped on this plane of existence, and thus will go to great lengths to ensure its own survival, targeting PCs to control them and turn them against their companions, even trying to transfer its own consciousness from its body to another.

If the players prove adept at damaging it in the water, it will pull itself out of the lake and attack on land, combining its formidable psionic abilities with its physical attacks.

ABOLETH *(These LE aberration has vital stats HD 9d8 (43 hp), AC 16, move 10 ft 60 ft (swim). Their primary attributes are Mental. They attack by 4 tentacles for 1d6+8 damage or psionics. Their special abilities are: 16th level Mentalist, Enslave, Slime and Mucus Cloud).*

ACT FOUR: RESOLUTION

After the defeat of the aboleth, all that is left to do is deliver the children home and let the authorities clean up the mess. For once, the PCs are hailed as heroes and appear to get their just desserts, possibly even being awarded the key to the city for uncovering the degenerate cult and rescuing the kids.

Of course, if any of the children die in the process, the PCs have to determine their next step, as the city won't look kindly upon the slaughter of innocents by their hand.

Either way, as the PCs go to sleep, they are plagued by dreams of tentacled horrors from beyond the pale in the back alleys and dark places of the world, and a darkness spreading over all the earth, as voices whisper to them in strange and alien tongues...

APPENDIX: NEW MONSTERS

ABOLETH

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-4

SIZE: Large

HD: 9 (d8) (43 hp)

MOVE: 10 ft.; 60 ft. (swim)

AC: 16

ATTACKS: 4 Tentacle (1d6+8)

SPECIAL: Enslave, Psionics, Slime, Darkvision 60 ft., Mucus Cloud

SAVES: M

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Lawful Evil

TYPE: Aberration

SANITY: 1d8/1d10

XP: 1610+9 (1,998)

An aboleth is a loathsome, sinister monster of fish-like appearance that dwells in subterranean waterways, but hails from beyond the Deeper Dark, the realm of madness that is the home plane of the Old Ones. They are powerful creatures who often serve these malign entities.

On Earth, an aboleth resembles a huge, monstrous greyish-green catfish or carp with four massive trunk-like tentacles protruding from its back. The tentacles can lash out to attack, and the aboleth can also use them to move itself about on land. The creature's skin is surrounded by a thin membrane of noxious grease and, when desperate, it can fling a viscous glob of this oily putrescence at its opponents.

Intelligent and malign, an aboleth is a psionic creature that utilizes illusions, deception and trickery to devastating effect. An aboleth's joy is the enslavement of intelligent, good beings, and it will attempt to subjugate enemies rather than destroy them outright. An aboleth can telepathically communicate with any creature, but generally speaks only with creatures it has successfully enslaved. An aboleth is typically solitary, but up to four may be encountered in one place, on the rarest of occasions.

COMBAT: An aboleth rarely engages its opponents in melee, preferring to send the unwilling victims of its enslavement ability to do its fighting. If this fails, the aboleth will attack viciously, first by attempting to enslave the strongest-appearing foe. After that, the aboleth will use divide-and-conquer tactics. Any foe that engages the aboleth in melee finds itself under assault by bludgeoning tentacles, subjected both to the effects of the creature's natural slime and possibly the release of its deadly mucus cloud. If forced into melee by foes it cannot enslave, or if se-

verely threatened, an aboleth will retreat to water, relying on its natural aquatic nature to escape and recover.

ENSLAVE: An aboleth can force another creature within 30 feet to make a wisdom saving throw, or be permanently dominated and completely controlled by the aboleth. If the aboleth travels more than 1 mile away, however, the enslavement immediately terminates. A remove curse spell will also end the effects of this ability.

PSIONICS: An aboleth has the abilities of a 16th-level Mentalist, including 5 Basic and 3 Advanced powers. They do not need to meet the normal prerequisites for advanced powers. The exact powers will vary by individual but a typical aboleth might have Combat Awareness, Empathic Transmission, Mesmerism, Psychic Defense, Telekinesis, Biokinetic Harm, Telekinetic Defense and Telemagry

SLIME: Every successful hit with a tentacle releases a chemical toxin into the skin of the victim. If the victim fails a constitution save, the slime slowly causes the skin to transform into a membrane. The victim will eventually find itself unable to breathe air, and will discover that the membrane must be kept wet. The victim becomes aquatic in nature over the course of 1d4 turns, with all associated benefits and penalties. For instance, they can breathe and swim underwater. This process can be halted by remove disease prior to transformation; thereafter, only heal or wish can alter the outcome. Immunity to poison does not confer immunity to the effects of this ability.

MUCUS CLOUD: An aboleth can surround itself with a thick, greasy cloud of mucus, forcing all non-aquatic creatures within 30 feet to succeed at a constitution save or be unable to breathe air for 3 hours. The aboleth can maintain the mucus cloud for 3 turns each day. The mucus cloud can be stopped and started without expending the full duration at any time (for example, an aboleth can exude a mucus cloud for 5 rounds, end it, and secrete more for the remaining duration at a later time). This ability only functions underwater.

THE PSIONIC ABOLETH

The aboleth presented here is subtly different from the one presented in the Castles & Crusades Monsters & Treasure book. It is designed to take advantage of the Mentalist and Psionics rules in Amazing Adventures, delivering a psionic version of this iconic monster, which has always been conceived as such.

CTHULHUIM

NO. ENCOUNTERED: 1-8

SIZE: Medium

HD: 8 (d10) (45 hp)

MOVE: 30 ft.

AC: 16

ATTACKS: 4 Tentacle (1d4 plus burrowing) and ceremonial knife (1d6)

SPECIAL: Consume, Psionics, Telepathic Communication, Darkvision 60 ft.

SAVES: M

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Evil

TYPE: Outsider

SANITY: 1d6/1d8

XP: 1,000+8 (1,360)

These foul creatures are the servants and children of the high priest of the Old Ones, the slumbering Cthulhu. Their numbers, thankfully, are small with fewer than 100 left in the world. They generally inhabit the dark and dank places of the earth, where moisture is plentiful, and only emerge when the opportunity arises to move the world towards a new age of darkness when their father and master rules over the world once more with chaos and madness. They sometimes pledge their service to very powerful creatures of the Deeper Dark, so long as it serves their greater goal. They love nothing more than to consume minds and spread madness and the worship of their dark gods across the world.

In appearance the Cthulhuim resemble tall, slender and vaguely humanoid creatures with clawed hands and a head which appears to be a gigantic brain with two enormous, glowing, pupil-less green eyes and eight writhing squid-like tentacles

hanging from the bottom. They dress in robes of purple, green and sickly yellow covered with arcane symbols which seem to constantly shift and undulate, unidentifiable in nature and sanity-blasting to behold.

COMBAT: The Cthulhuim prefer not to engage in direct hand-to-hand combat, instead choosing to attack with their formidable psionic abilities. When the creatures are forced into melee combat, they attack with large ceremonial knives and their tentacles.

CONSUME: If even one tentacle hits a victim in combat, the victim is ensnared and racked with agony, able to do nothing but attempt to break free, which, requires a successful Strength check. This check begins at CL 6, and may be made each round, but every round after the first, the victim takes 1d4 damage and the CL to break free increases by one.

After 1d4 rounds, the tentacle reaches the victim's brain and drains their personality and intellect. For all intents and purposes, the victim is completely dead and may not be resurrected by any means. They still retain all of their previous skills and abilities but are nothing more than puppets under the control of the Spawn.

For one hour after consuming a victim, the Spawn gains +4 on all attacks, checks and saves, as well as 5 temporary hit points per level of the victim.

PSIONICS: All Cthulhuim are 11th-level mentalists, possessing three basic psionic powers and two Advanced psionic powers. They do not need to meet the normal prerequisites for advanced powers. These abilities can vary by individual but a typical Spawn will have Empathic Transmission, Obfuscation, Psychic Defense, Biokinetic Harm and Mind Control.





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