

Mortal Coils



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CALL of
CTHULHU

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DREAD BARGAINS

... a murdered professor at Miskatonic University ...

... a pair of brothers lost in the Louisiana bayou ...

... a man gone mad in a Kentucky mining town ...

... a bizarre photograph from rural Mexico ...

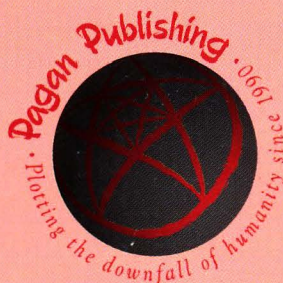
... a strange kidnapping in California ...

... a missing Hollywood starlet ...

... a lost city in the Andes ...

... and a stolen child ...

... these are the ties that bind, the connections from life to life, the terrible compacts between the sane and the mad—these are the mortal coils that entwine humanity and the Cthulhu Mythos in a web of terror. MORTAL COILS is a new anthology of eight *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios from Pagan Publishing. Inside is a diverse group of noisome terrors ranging from surreal horror to violent action. Works include: GOD OF THE MOUNTAIN by Michael Cisco • A MURDER OF CROWS and VIGILANTE JUSTICE by John H. Crowe, III • MYSTERIA MATRIS OBLITAE by Dennis Detwiler • COMMON COURTESY and NIGHTCAP by Jeff Moeller • WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY by Rebecca Strong • DREAM FACTORY by John Tynes



\$20.95 † PAG1007

ISBN 1-887797-11-4

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COVER DESIGN BY JOHN TYNES

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ISBN 1-887797-11-4



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CHILD,

WE TOLD YOU TO BAND TOGETHER
BECAUSE THERE WAS SAFETY IN NUMBERS

WE TOLD YOU TO REVEL
BECAUSE THERE WAS PLENTY OF EVERYTHING

WE TOLD YOU TO REPRODUCE
BECAUSE IT WAS THE GREATEST JOY

WE TOLD YOU TO BUILD HOUSES
BECAUSE IT WAS COLD OUTSIDE

WE TOLD YOU TO BUILD FIRES
BECAUSE IT WAS COLD INSIDE

WE TOLD YOU IT WOULD BE EASY TO CARE FOR EACH OTHER

WE TOLD YOU THAT LOVE WOULD NEVER HURT YOU

WE TOLD YOU THAT YOU WERE SPECIAL.

CHILD,

EVERYTHING WE TOLD YOU WAS A LIE.

WE ARE YOUR TRUE PARENTS,
AND WE ARE VERY, VERY HUNGRY.

AND WE HAVE RAISED YOU ALL
TO BE SO VERY, VERY SWEET.

COME CLOSER.



"TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM: AY, THERE'S THE RUB. FOR IN THAT SLEEP OF DEATH
WHAT DREAMS MAY COME WHEN WE HAVE SHUFFLED OFF THIS MORTAL COIL, MUST
GIVE US PAUSE."
—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, HAMLET

Mortal Coils

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SHENTON • JEFF TIDBALL • RALPH TRUEBLOOD • JOHN TYNES SPECIAL THANKS TO METTA
WILLIAMS • ELINOR FROTHINGHAM • PROFESSOR TOM COOKE • THE MUSIC OF BIG STAR

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"Every night I tell myself that I am the cosmos / I am the wind / But that don't bring you back again."

This book is dedicated to Rebecca, John, Jeff, and Michael, who all had the patience to see their works published. Also to Munsie, Monkey, and Trouble—the new Pagan cats.

LICENSED BY CHAOSIUM, INC. † ISBN 1-887797-11-4

MORTAL COILS

Introduction

The conception for Pagan Publishing to produce an anthology of scenarios first surfaced among the staff back in the spring of 1994. The idea sprung from various scenarios we received, playtested, and deemed as somehow "deserving better" than to just be placed in our magazine, *The Unspeakable Oath*. So we set about separating these submissions, earmarking them for a book which was soon entitled *Mortal Coils*. Yet other projects kept taking precedence over an anthology book. Until now . . .

Mortal Coils is a collection of eight scenarios set within the first three decades of the twentieth century—the earliest in 1900, the latest in 1929. Although all are located in the Western Hemisphere, the settings are diverse nonetheless: from New England to the bayous of Louisiana, from rural Kentucky to California, and even into the jungles of Mexico and the mountains of Peru. A variety of investigators can be used, but it is the Keeper's responsibility to work these scenarios into a campaign—or to instead use them as one-shot adventures.

Each of the eight scenarios tie the investigators to the mortal coil of someone contained within. "Vigilante Justice" showcases a relationship that hits close to home as one investigator's daughter is kidnapped in rural Kentucky. "A Murder of Crows" links the investigators with the disappearance of the Crow brothers in swampy Louisiana. "Nightcap" ties them to a man gone mad in the mining region of southeastern Kentucky. In "God of the Mountain," the investigators must find two explorers lost in the Andes. A missing woman must be rescued in "Common Courtesy." The horrible death of a professor at Miskatonic University is explored in "We Have Met the Enemy." The disappearance of a young Hollywood starlet must be solved in "Dream Factory." And religious ties will be renewed to the priest in "Mysteria Matris Oblitae."

The mortal coils of all of these have been unravelled—whether by mysterious cults, monstrous horrors, or loathsome nightmares. It should be the goal of the investigators to "save" these mortal coils, to preserve their lives, their souls, their memories.

As that most infamous of vampires, Count Dracula, says to the High Priest Kah in *The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires*, "I need your mortal coil; I need the form of your miserable carcass; I need your vile image . . ." So, too, do the individuals in these adventures need the investigators' help and courage.

We at Pagan Publishing—myself especially—hope you enjoy this anthology. These are some of our favorite scenarios to have come our way over the years, and we hope some may become your favorites, too.

—Brian Appleton



MORTAL COILS

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Vigilante Justice

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Vigilante Justice

JOHN H. CROWE III

ILLUSTRATED BY TOREN ATKINSON

The people of Maltbee County, Kentucky see their part of the state as being a nice, safe place to work and raise a family. To most area residents, rural, turn-of-the-century America is idyllic. But when the daughter of one of the investigators disappears, the illusion of safety is shattered.

Background

Vigilante Justice is set in rural Kentucky in 1900, though it may be run as late as 1920. Maltbee County's thin veneer of normalcy and uprightness is just that: a veneer. In truth, it has the highest crime rate of any rural Kentucky county and is the site of many unusual and unnatural crimes. Residents who stumble into evidence of such activity tend to ignore it to avoid making trouble for themselves.

Long before Maltbee County was established as a political entity and certainly long before the arrival of Europeans, a colony of lloigor entered the area and made it their home. Native Americans learned to avoid the place, being receptive to the concept of supernatural perils. The lloigor existed unmolested until the arrival of settlers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

No one knows how long the lloigor have been in Maltbee County. Settlers who came into the area found it devoid of Native Americans, though grass-covered burial mounds indicated they once lived there in numbers. When Indians were encountered, it was very often as adversaries and no one bothered to question them about the area's history. All that mattered was that the land was productive and the weather mild. Not knowing the danger they faced, some early settlers fell prey to the depredations of the lloigor—while others bowed down in worship. The latter, which originally amounted to no more than a dozen or so, formed the basis of a present-day cult.

Worship of these dread beings was (and still is) not out of some great affinity for them. Cult members greatly fear their "gods" for a very good reason. Even the slightest transgression is punished by horrible amputations and mutilations and many cult members bear the marks of the lloigor. Any offense that is deemed to be more than slight is punished with a death so painful and horrid that it is more than the average cultist is willing to contemplate. Thus, the lloigor have earned the complete devotion of their human worshippers/slaves.

The small cult gradually grew as the years passed, mainly through having children, though small numbers were occasionally recruited. It now numbers in excess of one hundred, most of whom are uneducated and live off of subsistence-level agriculture. Some inbreeding has occurred and the effects of this occasionally manifest. More noticeable are the punishments dealt to those who somehow earn the wrath of the lloigor. Amputations are common and some victims suffer from strange tentacular growths which protrude from the skin. (Such growths may be perceived as tumors if they are not covered by clothing or otherwise concealed.)

Evidence of the Lloigor

Perhaps the greatest evidence of the presence of these "beings from the stars" is the cult itself and the way the lloigor treat their worshippers/slaves; the tentacular growths and horrific amputations are emblematic of the lloigor. However, more subtle evidence exists of these beings' malignant influence. The presence of lloigor in a region results in heightened violence and mental instability among residents, and this is certainly true of Maltbee County. The county has consistently had the highest rate of lynchings and the highest rate of crime in the state of Kentucky. Few even suspect this to be the case, however, because most of the crimes that occur there are undocumented—particularly the numerous instances of lynching as well as sexual "perversion" and sexual abuse (typically incest and rape). Lynchings are almost routine because the sheriff's department turns a blind eye towards them, and no lynching has yet been effectively investigated in the entire history of the county. As for sex crimes, the families involved usually keep them quiet for fear of social stigma.

Little physical evidence of the lloigor is present in the area. Perhaps the only evidence of their presence is a lake bearing a sickly, greenish hue that is on the land of the Hollis family, the group at the center of lloigor-worship.

The Ritual

For the past eighty years, the lloigor have charged the cult with performing a special ritual once a decade. The cult does not know the reason for the ritual and their masters have not deemed it necessary to enlighten them. The ritual must be performed in a precise location and in a precise

manner, or the lloigor will take vengeance on their worshippers.

When the time comes around, the cult uses the entire month of April to prepare and finally execute the unnamed ritual. It requires a pre-teenage female of the same bloodline as the high priest to be transported to Keelbreeze Island in the Minnesota stretch of Lake Superior. There, on the evening of April 30 (Walpurgis Nacht), she must be sacrificed. This year, Walpurgis Nacht falls on the evening after the new moon, meaning the ritual will be held on an exceptionally dark night with only a bare sliver of the moon visible.

Detailing the ritual is of little importance for if it is successful, the scenario is pretty much over. Since the author wants to avoid giving a totally gratuitous description of the butchering of an innocent, only the bare details will be covered and the rest is left to the devices of the Keeper.

The ritual takes an hour and culminates at midnight with the slaying of the victim. Once her heart is pierced and she expires, her organs must be removed in a precise manner and order and offered to the "gods"—the lloigor. When this is accomplished, each supplicant expends one magic point. The priest expends ten of his own and if the total exceeds fifty, the ceremony automatically succeeds. Otherwise, a die roll must be attempted with the base percentage chance being double the number of magic points used (a fumbled die roll always fails, however).

What the cultists are unaware of is that the lloigor are servants of Ithaqua the Wind-Walker and this is their way of appeasing this temperamental wind god. If the ritual is begun but then fails for any reason, Ithaqua will descend on Keelbreeze Island and depopulate it. Meanwhile, back in Maltbee County, the lloigor will be none too happy—they will promptly devastate the area around their home. The reason for this is two-fold. First, they must punish the cult. Second, such an action would do much to assuage the anger of Ithaqua, who might otherwise come and put in a personal appearance among the lloigor.

If the investigators are successful in preventing the ritual from commencing in the first place, Ithaqua will not engage in a rampage on Keelbreeze Island—he'll be disgruntled, not insulted. The lloigor will still take revenge on the people of Maltbee County, but considering that the bulk of the people affected by their wrath are cultists, the collateral damage is minimal. Yes, some innocent people will inevitably be affected, either by being killed or injured or by having farms and livelihoods destroyed. Of course, no one has ever legitimately claimed that the Lovecraftian universe is a nice, neat, happy place.

The Dilemma

The cult now suffers from a little dilemma. Because they require a young girl of the priest's bloodline, he is always busy



The Harvest.

Personal Knowledge

Most or all of the investigators are lifetime residents of Maltbee County. This gives them certain advantages not often available in *Call of Cthulhu*. Among these are knowledge of the area, the ability to move about relatively unnoticed, and the ability to interact with area residents on reasonably friendly terms.

Incorporating the investigators' personal knowledge into the scenario without highlighting the bad guys in the process can be a challenge. Some knowledge might be learned only if a player thinks to ask about it. Other information might be volunteered by the Keeper when appropriate or may be provided prior to the beginning of the scenario.

In general, a long-time Maltbee County resident will know the physical layout of the county reasonably well and the area around his residence very well. If the investigator lives in a town (most likely Propriety), then his knowledge of the town is likely to be extensive. In addition to geography, an investigator will know many county residents. Furthermore, even if he doesn't specifically know another county resident, there is an excellent chance (Idea roll) that when confronted by a stranger, the investigator will be able to tell whether that person is an outsider. Such a determination is based on dress, demeanor, and speech. An outsider has little or no chance to be able to effectively mimic such characteristics unless he has actually lived for some time in the county.

The common knowledge of Maltbee-based investigators includes a vast wealth of seemingly minor information, some of which comes into play in the scenario. A sample listing of common-knowledge topics appears below, and the Keeper should feel free to disseminate the following clues or information whenever it seems appropriate. Barring a fumbled Knowledge roll, most information listed below is known to all investigators who are long-time residents of the county.

Gossip network

Everyone participates in the gossip network and notorious gossips are known to everyone. This is almost like a spy network, but information is often untrustworthy and laced with rumor and innuendo. Locating a notorious gossip is easy. (The gossip network is further described on p. 9, but is also referenced throughout the scenario.)

Burial mounds

Almost everyone knows of the Indian burial mounds. To know the specific locations of one or more requires a successful Knowledge or Idea roll (player's choice of which). The history behind these unstudied mounds is not known. (The mounds are further described on p. 10.)

Southworth Mine

The presence of the abandoned Southworth Mine is common knowledge. To know its specific location without having to ask around requires a successful Knowledge roll. It is not uncommon for children to explore the mine and for lovers to meet there. It is known to be treacherous and rumored to be haunted. (The mine is described further on p. 14.)

Town Bully

Seth Fuller is Propriety's town bully. He is not well liked. This is common knowledge for residents of Propriety and its environs; people from further away may know of Seth only if they regularly visit the town. (Seth is described further on p. 12.)

Notorious Men

The county has a dozen or more men who are "notorious." Many are bullies such as Seth. Others are menacing like Rolly McAllister. More are known to have participated in lynchings or to incite them. Some are even believed to be part of the area's chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. County residents who succeed in Knowledge rolls know of most of these notorious individuals. In Rolly's case, rumor has it that he wears an eyepatch because he lost an eye in a knife fight in a Porterville alley several years ago. Other notorious residents include, but are not limited to: John Brandt, Slim Berwick, Harry Calkins, Peter Quinn, Hank Summers, and Harvey Weldon. These men are irrelevant to the scenario, but may be mentioned in the context of Seth Fuller or Rolly McAllister. Any details pertaining to these men should be filled in by the Keeper. Physically, Rolly is by far the most noteworthy, mainly because of his eyepatch.

Scandalous Woman

Lucy Petersley is a so-called "wanton woman," at least according to gossip. This nineteen-year-old was widowed at age seventeen and is believed by many to be a prostitute. She owns a small cabin south of Porterville. The Keeper must determine if there is any validity to this. Regardless, her tainted status is common knowledge throughout the county.

Weird families

Maltbee County is chock full of them. It all depends on how one defines "weird." Many families are reclusive, including all cult families. Simply asking about weirdness or reclusive people will result in a rather lengthy list of family names, many of which are wholly innocent and irrelevant.

Crime

Though county residents think of their area as being safe, they are entirely wrong about this; the presence of the lloigor has served as a psychic catalyst for promoting criminal activity. Violent crime and especially sexual crime is commonplace. Unfortunately, much of this goes unreported. Incest and rape are concealed and no one has any clue as to its true scope. However, everyone is aware that lynchings are common—many, if not most, county residents approve of and encourage vigilante justice. Typical victims of lynchings are unpopular or controversial individuals, members of minority races and religions, and the occasional innocent mistakenly hanged for an alleged crime. On average, several lynchings occur each year. It is entirely possible that some investigators have either witnessed or participated in one or more lynchings (Keeper discretion).

Unusual Events and Occurrences

This is an area wide open to exploitation by the Keeper. It can include anything from rumors of incest to tales of ghosts and woodland monsters. Local folklore can serve to add flavor to the scenario as well as to either mislead or motivate investigators.

Measles

The latest news affecting the county as a whole was a measles epidemic. It ran its course over the span of two to three months, killing several dozen people throughout the county, mostly children. The disease seems to have run its course and is no longer a general threat.

ensuring his several wives are continually pregnant. This plan has always worked well in the past for even if he has no daughter of the correct age, he will surely have a granddaughter or niece or whatever that will fit the bill. Every decade when ritual time rolls around, the priest hauls out his family bible which contains a meticulous family tree.

This time, there is a problem. The priest now is Rollin Hollis, a forty-year-old farmer who is a veteran of two of these rituals. He is fully aware of what is expected of him and the cult and was completely ready to perform the ritual. Then a measles epidemic hit Maltbee County. A month later, Rollin found that the six potential candidates—three of which were his daughters—had all succumbed to the disease. Rollin panicked, but he didn't dare tell his masters. Instead, he broke out the family bible and sifted through it hoping someone might still live who fit the bill.

After a day of nervous research, he found only one option. Over the years, a few of the cultists have left the fold and ended up with more normal lives. One of these was Abigail Hollis, a great-aunt of Rollin's. Abigail moved to Propriety, Kentucky, where she married and raised a family. Her

granddaughter, Leigh, ended up married to one of the investigators and she gave birth to a girl seven years ago. The cult was aware of this branch of the family and although there has never been any contact between Leigh and the cult, they have silently watched and kept the family tree up to date. No one ever thought Leigh's child or any other child of that branch of the family would be important, but it was a matter of routine to keep track of all family members regardless of where they went.

Once Rollin made his discovery, he was elated. However, he had to figure out how to get the child without getting caught. After all, Maltbee County in 1900 can be a brutal place. Since the county sheriff does little to enforce the law, vigilantism is commonplace. At least two or three lynchings take place annually and these impromptu executions are sometimes great social events. Worse, most are over small crimes such as petty thieving or even having an unpopular skin color or religion. Over the years, a few cult members have found themselves at the end of a hangman's knot for stealing livestock, so Rollin is quite aware of what could happen if the cult were uncovered through a clumsy kidnap-

Option: NPC Parents

When a child is missing, many parents will go to great lengths to retrieve what is to them the center of their lives. This can become quite extreme in some cases, especially in the story established by this scenario. Rash action may be detrimental to resolving the situation. If the Keeper decides that the players might roleplay this type of parent to an extreme degree, making the parents NPCs helps reduce the potential for the game to go horribly awry.

If the Keeper so decides, Sarah's parents may be non-player characters. They are Martin and Leigh Stokes. Leigh has been described already. Martin is a sixty-year-old former railroad employee. The marriage is a happy one, but Martin is unable to assist in any investigation. A double amputee, Martin lost both legs in an accident on the job eleven years ago. Income from his pension combined with Leigh's skill at sewing keeps the family going, though not in a prosperous fashion. Martin and Leigh should be close friends of the investigators; Martin may in fact be a cousin or brother to one or more of the group. Statistics for Martin, Leigh, and Sarah are provided in the NPC section.

Keeper's note: If this option is used, it should be understood and Martin and Leigh's marriage is at least somewhat controversial and certainly a topic of industrial-strength gossip. The reason, of course, is the age difference ... Martin is sixty while Leigh is only twenty-four. They were married eight years ago and Sarah is their one and only child. A second child, Robert, died from whooping cough two years ago, six months after his birth. Martin is a kind and gentle man; more than anything, it was this that attracted Leigh to him.

ping—probably a huge, armed mob besieging the farms of accused cult members.

What Rollin did was simple. He sent a trusted cult member named Sullivan McAllister to perform the task. Sullivan waited for school to get out. When young Sarah began what was supposed to be a short walk home, she was simply snatched and carried off. Players who question the ease of this should be reminded that this is rural Kentucky of 1900, a period when children were much more independent and more was expected of them. Furthermore, the kidnapping of a young girl is completely unheard of in such an area. Doors are never locked and known major crimes, aside from lynchings, are rare. (Remember that while there is a lot of crime in the county, a very large portion of it is covered up or intentionally overlooked so that no one knows or understands its true magnitude.)

Fortunately for the investigators, Sullivan was just a little bit sloppy in the kidnapping. Enough clues were left to link him with the more notorious Rolly McAllister, a man known in parts of the county due to his surly demeanor and the distinctive eyepatch covering his left eye. Tracing Rolly is no problem and from there, the scenario can be solved. From here on, the scenario describes in detail the investigation, the opposition, and the consequences of both success and failure.

Getting Started

Vigilante Justice begins on the evening of Monday, April 2, 1900. The basic setup is that Sarah has not returned from school and is now late for supper. Those initially involved should be her parents and it is up to them who is contacted first.

If the Keeper so wishes, this scenario may be set in another year, but should be set before 1920. After 1920, the quality of sheriff's departments began to improve and states began to adopt state police agencies. One element this scenario depends on is the investigators' need to take personal action and not rely on law enforcement for assistance. The specific location can be changed, but the year should be pre-1920.

Once a group is assembled, the Keeper must determine which investigator is married to Leigh. This determines her last name and the last name of their child, Sarah. Furthermore, if it seems appropriate, two investigators may be married and Sarah may be their daughter. The female investigator would take Leigh's place, but would have little or no knowledge of her family background. The scenario is designed for three to six investigators of low to moderate experience. Each should be a Maltbee County resident, making farmers, laborers, skilled artisans, etc. most appropriate. Obviously, trying to logically work in a professor, archaeologist, or the like is a true challenge since such people would be outsiders and would have no reason to be trusted by the close-knit society here. However, a generous Keeper may allow a minority of players to have characters with higher educations to take part. Such people may be town doctors or relatives visiting from other areas.

One alternative is to have Leigh be married to a trusted NPC friend of the investigators. Though this removes some of the motivation, it also eliminates the need to impose a family on one of the players. It also reduces the urgency level and potential for rash action that a parental investigator might take. The boxed text at the top of the page discusses this idea in further detail.

Obviously, the investigators will (or should) be highly motivated. Since they are a close group of friends, all of

Gossip

Since most or all of the investigators should be residents of Maltbee County, they will know the area generally well and their own part of it very well (in fact, most or all should be from Propriety). Being a close-knit, turn-of-the-century community, one popular activity is the so-called gossip network. It is difficult to keep a secret in Maltbee County and true stories mixed with conjecture, innuendo, and myth circulate freely. Gossip often gets out of hand and can get downright vicious. It wouldn't be so bad except that the gossip is taken seriously by many and occasionally leads to lynchings. When the investigators begin their search for young Sarah, their exploits will be closely followed by local residents who focus on all events that seem new or interesting. This can serve both to tip the investigators' hands and provide them sometimes useful (and sometimes misleading) information. At times the gossip chain can go awry, blowing stories way out of proportion and possibly leading to drastic measures such as lynchings.

How the Keeper uses the gossip chain is up to the individual, but it can be a way to spur the group on to greater effort if they run up against the proverbial brick wall. On the other hand, if they do all sorts of atrocious things, the gossip chain can be the element leading to their hangings. If the group doesn't think to check out local gossip, remember that most or all of them should have families they go home to at night. Spouses, siblings, and parents will keep up with gossip and it will no doubt become a topic of conversation at the dinner table.

whom know and like Sarah, they are very concerned with her welfare. Not only must Sarah be rescued, but if/when it becomes evident that stopping the cult could result in widespread destruction, they have a moral problem to tackle. This is elaborated on later.

Keeper's note: Because this scenario is set in a tight-knit rural area and features local investigators, it is advisable to have all players provide detailed character histories, including family information and employment and social background. Use this information to present a credible tale in which the investigators have real ties to the community.

Maltbee County, Kentucky

This fictitious county is located anywhere the Keeper deems appropriate in northern Kentucky. The closest cities should be Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio. Maltbee County is a poor area supporting numerous farms and assorted small towns and villages, but little else. The county seat is Porterville and other communities are Simpson, Bolling, Deer Creek, Propriety, and Spencer City.

Porterville, Kentucky

Porterville is the county seat and is the largest community in the county. It has a population of just over four thousand and is a regular stop for both passenger and freight trains. The town is a reasonably typical community and contains the sheriff's department, county jail and courthouse, and county government and records. It also has the county's only indigenous newspaper, a six-page weekly called the Porterville *Times-Courier*. Porterville is home to the Maltbee County Historical Society. More on it is given later.

Propriety, Kentucky

This is the home of at least one of the investigators and his wife, Leigh (or, alternately, to Martin and Leigh Stokes). It is the second largest community in the county and has a population of approximately eight hundred. It has no local police department, but a small volunteer fire department is present; it is little more than a dozen men equipped with axes, water buckets, and a horse-drawn wagon bearing a manual pumper and water tank. The usual assortment of shops and stores can be found here. The community has no library and only one small school.

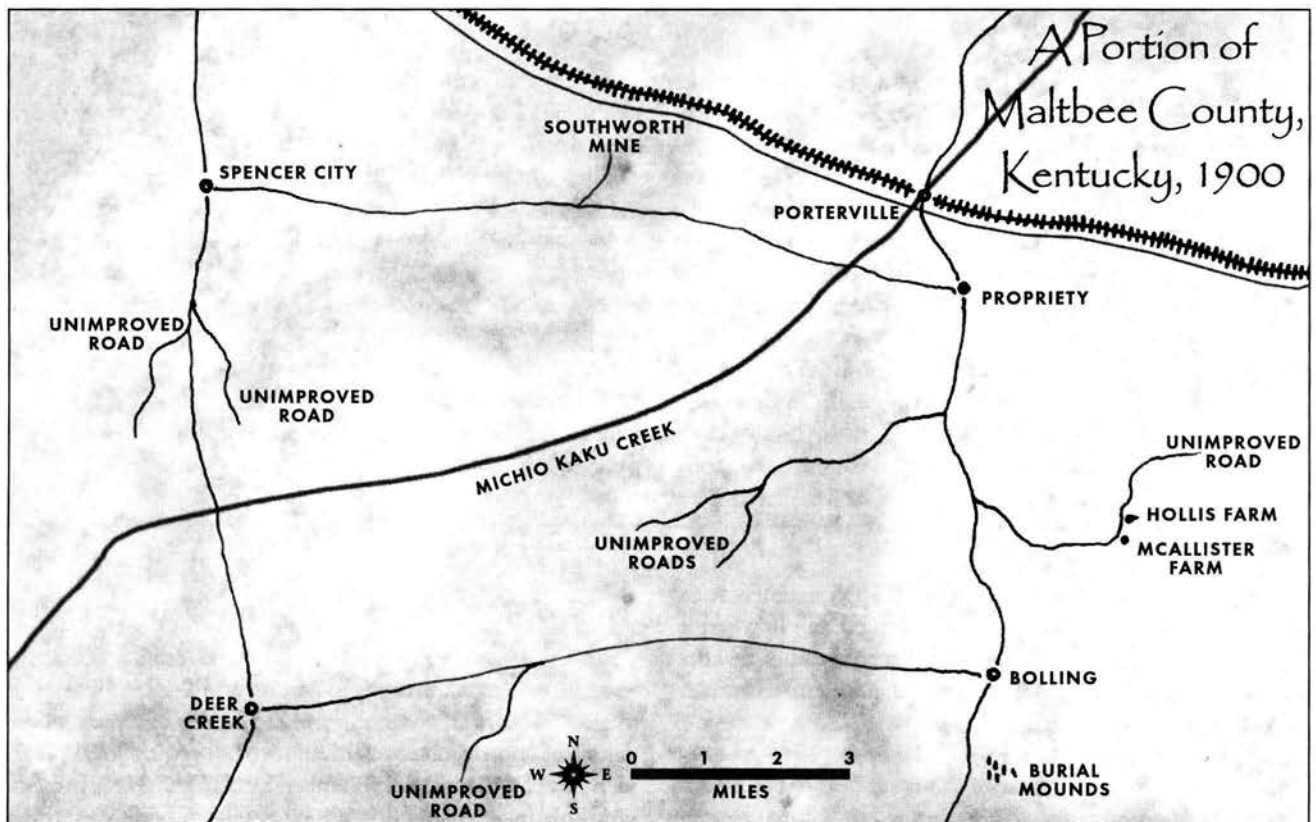
Other Towns

Simpson, Bolling, Deer Creek, and Spencer City are smaller communities each containing no more than a few hundred inhabitants. None have any form of local law enforcement. They are each little more than some shops and a cluster of private residences, with farms stretching out beyond.

The Maltbee County Historical Society

Historical societies, like libraries, are usually magnets for investigators. This one contains nothing of use to the investigators and there should be little reason for them to go here, especially since few, if any, of the investigators should be well-read or intellectuals. However, if the group wishes to waste precious time searching for clues here, they are more than welcome to do so.

The historical society is in a small frame house near Porterville's center and houses a small library (containing commonly available references and popular literature) and the society itself. It concentrates on regional history, particularly that pertaining to Maltbee County. Some artifacts, mainly from the Civil War period, are on display and visitors



are permitted to go through the growing supply of records and documents stored in the attic.

These records will take a while to go through. In addition to newspapers, there are old county records salvaged from the proverbial scrap heap, personal journals and family bibles donated by county residents, and even some Confederate government documents left over from the Civil War. While much is of historical interest, none is even remotely related to the investigation.

If events take a turn that makes a visit to the Historical Society a logical and legitimate option (*i.e.* the investigators are not just desperately grasping for straws) and it seems appropriate, the Keeper may consider tossing some sort of clue in here. It can be virtually anything (a revealing journal entry, an old book on Native American folklore, *etc.*), but should be tough to find, requiring at least one successful Library Use roll and a day or more of methodical searching.

Keeper's note: There is one possible clue present here that may come up. Described in detail on p. 14 under the heading "A Different Tack," it is the testimony of the caretaker who remembers a strange visitor late in March who looked at genealogy records and then departed. This can be an important clue, but is obscure and unlikely to be found.

The Mounds

At several points in the county can be found large, grassy, artificial mounds. These are ancient burial mounds erected by a long-extinct Native American tribe. While the hillocks are known to be burial mounds, no one knows the name of the tribe responsible for their creation. There is absolutely nothing unusual about them, though there may be all sorts of wild conjecture concerning them once the scenario gets in full swing. Most are on private property and a few have been mined for artifacts (bones, pottery fragments, arrowheads, *etc.*). If the investigators choose to examine mounds without getting a landowner's permission, he might respond violently, especially if the trespassers are acting in a suspicious manner. However, threats and warning shots will probably precede any actual attacks. The chances for investigator knowledge of these mounds are described in the boxed text on p. 6.

The Investigation

Solving the mystery of Sarah's disappearance is a long and potentially complex matter. Players who are overly accustomed to delving into libraries and newspaper morgues may have to readjust their thinking when playing through this scenario, as face-to-face interviews and social interaction are the

key to success here as well as liberal amounts of legwork. What follows is a description of the investigation in the rough order in which it may progress.

Stage I: Preliminaries

Any search for Sarah may involve the community as a whole. Friends, acquaintances, and even strangers will want to help as long as Sarah's disappearance becomes common knowledge. The search may begin the first evening and extend through the next day (April 3). It is a fruitless exercise and once this is evident, everyone will return home after extending the family their best wishes and condolences. This leaves only Sarah's parents and the dedicated investigators to continue the investigation.

Keeper's note: In many communities, searches for lost children can go on for weeks or months. However, in Maltbee County, the lurking presence of the lloigor has had an adverse effect on morals and even common courtesy. While many people will express condolences, apathy will certainly take a hand in reducing the level of assistance one might expect in other communities. The Keeper can further demonstrate this (in a subtle fashion) by having interviews with mundane folk be surly, moody, or abrasive on occasion.

An early tactic is to check the route Sarah routinely takes home. This may occur as part of a widespread search or may be conducted quietly by the worried parents and their close friends. Unfortunately, a rainstorm has continually pelted the area for hours (it began late in the afternoon of April 2) and there is little hope that tracks can be found or that scent for bloodhounds is still present. However, searchers may anticipate finding an injured and sodden but hopefully alive Sarah somewhere near the route.

Checking the area proves fruitless. However, if at least one searcher succeeds in a Spot Hidden roll at half the normal chance (10% the normal chance if the search is conducted at night), a waterlogged schoolbook is found in some shrubs near the main road approximately halfway home. The book contains Sarah's name. This confirms that something befell Sarah, but as the investigators may anticipate, the rain has eradicated all tracks and scent.

The Propriety Schoolhouse

This is an old-style, red-brick, single-room schoolhouse and is the only school in the town. The building is essentially a single large room with an attic, and is located just east of Propriety. Most students walk there, though some are dropped off by parents driving wagons.

The teacher, Donna Lockwood, is of little help. She is, of course, extremely concerned about Sarah's welfare and will do anything within her power to assist the investigators,

but she knows nothing. If a search of the schoolhouse is conducted and Miss Lockwood is consulted, she will reveal the presence of the little-known attic. The attic is a disused storage area and is irrelevant.

Throughout any initial contact with Miss Lockwood, she will seem a bit stressful. The recent measles epidemic claimed the lives of six of her students: Robbie Aames, Edda Botlow, Mary Gaines, Willie Hollis, and Allen and Sally McAllister. Though the epidemic is largely over, at least in Propriety, she has felt the loss deeply. Sarah's disappearance has renewed the depression she has suffered in recent weeks.

Keeper's note: The last three listed children were part of the cult; Sally was one of those who was a candidate for sacrifice.

Schoolmates

Intelligent investigators will, of course, question all of Sarah's schoolmates. This is best done at the schoolhouse, preferably on the day after the disappearance. Miss Lockwood will permit questioning of her class as long as she can be present, but none of the class knows anything relevant (though the Keeper may introduce a false lead or red herring here if it seems appropriate).

However, one student is not present the day after the disappearance. Six-year-old Stuart Cline has come down sick with influenza. His condition is not life-threatening and he will return to school in 1D3+1 days. The investigators should ask the flustered Miss Lockwood if all students are present and only then will she recall that Stuart is sick. If the investigators wish, they can visit the Cline residence or simply wait for Stuart to recover and return to school.

Keeper's note: If the players are novices and aren't being thorough, it may be advisable to grant a group Luck roll to see if Miss Lockwood remembers that Stuart is absent and tells the investigators unprompted.

Stuart Cline

Young Stuart witnessed something unusual in the week prior to the crime and will be more than happy to blab the details to anyone who asks. Twice he saw a strange-looking "bad man" lurking near the schoolyard. If asked whether he was watching Sarah or just the yard in general, Stuart can only say "maybe." If the questioners are insistent and seem to want a specific answer, Stuart may be over-cooperative and give them the answer he believes they want to hear. As for a description, Stuart can say only that he was dressed in dirty overalls and was big and ugly. A successful Persuade or Psy-

chology roll will also get Stuart to say the man "chewed tobacco like my Pa," had dark hair, and had a single bushy eyebrow running over both eyes.

What Stuart saw was the man who took Sarah, a cult member named Sullivan McAllister. Information on this lead is given in "Stage II: Progress," on p. 12.

Keeper's note: Unless the investigators are exceptionally incompetent, the Keeper should not go out of his way to withhold Stuart's testimony. It is a key ingredient necessary to promote further action and progress. If for whatever reason the investigators blow it and either don't learn about Stuart or fail to contact him, it is only a matter of time before teacher Donna Lockwood learns about Stuart's knowledge (after all, he will probably blab it to all of his friends). She would then summon the investigators to the school for a chat with Stuart.

Checking the Newspaper

The county's one newspaper, a weekly called the Porterville *Times-Courier*, has no clues of help to the investigators, not even in back issues. The leading story for the past month has been the measles epidemic that has taken the lives of dozens of people, mostly children. It now seems to be under control and the body count has stabilized.

Brainstorming

After these initial checks, the group must consider several issues. First, who took Sarah and why? Was it an animal or a person? Was it a group of people? Is it for ransom or is there some darker purpose to all this? Did Sarah see something she shouldn't have and is now suffering the consequences?

Stage II: Progress

Initially, the only decent lead is Stuart Cline's description of the "bad man." Checking among the locals about the unknown man in question is the only reasonable tactic here.

Each investigator or group of investigators questioning Propriety-area residents may attempt a Luck roll. (If it is a group of investigators questioning a resident, the lowest Luck rating in that group is used.) Each successful roll is rewarded with one of the following stories. The Keeper may use them in order or roll randomly (the author advises the latter and repetition is permissible). It is not necessary to use them all and the Keeper should feel free to insert red herrings of his/her own, if appropriate. Note that when questioning any of these locals, all will be generally cooperative with a county resident and if a Fast Talk, Persuade, Credit Rating (local doctor or other local professional only), or half a Luck roll succeeds, the witness will cooperate. (All of these

rolls may be attempted.) Those who are not county residents are only permitted a Fast Talk roll and it is at half the normal chance of success. Outsiders are not trusted.

Keeper's note: Red herrings are often an important element in a scenario. They can add to the mystery, enhance the mood, and make things more challenging. However, be aware that overuse of red herrings can slow the scenario to a crawl and/or lead to the players being overly frustrated.

Story #1 (red herring)

The investigator(s) meet Mrs. Lilian Tutwiler, a widow living nearby who claims that they are describing her nephew, Carl Richards. She states that Carl visited periodically over the past few days in order to assist in some chores around the house. He lives in Spencer City where he works as a carpenter's assistant. Her description of Carl matches Stuart's sketchy description, but she can provide no further information.

If/when this is checked out, Carl turns out to be a large, muscular, and soft-spoken man in his early twenties. Mrs. Tutwiler failed to mention that he has red hair and freckles and is nowhere near as ugly and mean-looking as Stuart described. He is the wrong man and is totally innocent. If brought into contact with Stuart in some way, Stuart will insist that Carl is not the man he is talking about. Carl will be polite and cooperative if dealt with honestly and amicably. He will even go so far as to travel to Stuart in order to clear his name. In this event, he will insist on having a couple trusted family members accompanying him since he doesn't want to be the subject of an impromptu lynching.

Story #2 (legitimate)

Lynn Innis, the young wife of a local farmer, claims to have seen a man matching Stuart's description when she passed the school on the way into Propriety to shop. She remembers seeing him on the road near the school and then again later in a couple of local shops. If asked which shops he entered, she'll mention the general store and the drug store. If this is followed up on, the Keeper should refer to the section entitled "Stage III: Expanding Horizons" on page 13.

Story #3 (red herring)

One local farmhand named Seth Fuller has a well-earned reputation as a bully and general troublemaker. It is not unusual to hear of his exploits in Propriety barroom brawls on Friday nights. Investigators who are Propriety residents will know him or know of him if Knowledge rolls succeed.

Seth is an arrogant and self-absorbed ruffian who will concoct a false story just to be an irritant. He has abso-

lutely no concern for Sarah and is more interested in getting a good laugh. In short, if questioned, he will state he saw a man matching the description with a little girl down at the old, abandoned Southworth Coal Company mine a few miles west of Propriety. A successful Psychology roll will reveal that Seth is a lying jerk. Besides being a lying jerk, he is innocent.

If the mine is searched because of Seth or because the investigators are grasping at straws, it is further described in the section entitled "Stage III: Expanding Horizons" on p. 13.

Story #4 (red herring)

When the word gets around that the investigators are searching for Sarah, one man will approach them, probably after the second day. He is the stereotypical town drunk for Propriety, Milt Gaines. Everyone knows Milt, including investigators from the Propriety area who don't fumble Knowledge rolls. Unless the investigators are totally gullible, they will not fall for Milt's bogus story that he has concocted in the hope of getting some whiskey money. Any lie-detecting Psychology roll attempted on him is at double the chance or +25%, whichever is higher (though fumbled rolls always fail).

Milt is a medium-size man with a heavy growth of beard and strong (and very offensive) body odor. He wears baggy trousers, a torn flannel shirt, and a large overcoat that could conceal all sorts of weapons, but actually serves to only hide a virtually empty whiskey flask. He is in poor physical condition and suffers from acute alcoholism and associated physical ailments. Anyone who knows him is fully aware that he poses no physical threat.

Milt's story is that he saw a strange-looking man generally meeting the description of Stuart's "bad man" (his description will match it if the "bad man's" description was made public, otherwise he just made a lucky guess) on the same day as the kidnapping. The man was armed with a large butcher knife and had a large canvas bag and was in the woods near the school. Milt claims he last saw him walking into the woods and disappearing into the vegetation.

Checking out Milt's story, if this is necessary, is easy. Any of a dozen residents of Propriety remember that he was lurking outside Pa Sunderhurst's Tavern at the time he claimed to be walking on the road near the school. Physical intimidation will work well on Milt and get him to admit to his lie. Such intimidation will not have to go beyond the threat level (though the threat should be pretty convincing). Anyone who actually strikes this pathetic man should lose 0/ID2 SAN for being so low, though this penalty should not apply to characters who have no consciences or are mean, petty, low-lives themselves (gangsters, criminals, town bullies, very jaded experienced investigators, etc.); it might also not apply to Sarah's parents.

Story #5 (red herring)

If the "bad man's" description is made public, either through the gossip network or in the Porterville *Times-Courier*, an elderly widow named Felicity Peters will come forward and seek out the investigators. Mrs. Peters is an intelligent octogenarian who is well connected to the area gossip chain. Unfortunately, her eyesight has been failing of late and she is sometimes quick to assume before all the facts are in. Despite this, anyone speaking with her will find her to be a nice, honest, and decent individual who only wants to help. If the investigators have an unsavory reputation, she will not approach them or cooperate with them.

After the usual introductions, she will begin her story. She remembers the man passing her when she was sitting on a park bench in the town square the day of the kidnapping. The description is close to that of Stuart and she insists the man slipped into a nearby alley and never came out. The alley is a dead end and only one door opens into it, the side door of Marion Smith's Boarding House.

While she believes her story is true, Mrs. Peters is badly mistaken. What she saw was one of the boarders who has rented a room near that side door and finds it more convenient to use it instead of the main entrance. If the boarding house is investigated, no one even coming close to the description given by young Stuart can be found within; not even the aforementioned boarder matches. Marion Smith will cooperate as much as she can and will describe her boarders, both current and past, but will not permit room searches. Whether or not boarders cooperate is up to the Keeper, but most likely some will not while others won't particularly care if a cursory search of their rooms is carried out, as long as they and Mrs. Smith are present.

Stage III: Expanding Horizons

Once they part company with Mrs. Innis, the investigators will likely want to seek out the shops the suspect visited. This is no problem and Propriety residents can easily direct the investigators to their destinations. Two stores will be on their agenda: Terrence's General Store and Rudson's Apothecary.

The general store is owned and operated by a tall, lanky, thirty-ish man named Herbert Terrence. His bookish appearance belies a strong physique that comes in handy when hauling around pallets and sacks of goods. The store is open Monday through Saturday from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. and is closed on Sundays and holidays. Herbert is there on weekdays, but on Saturdays allows his sixteen-year-old clerk, Tommy Bishop, to run things. If questioned concerning Stuart's "bad man," Tommy knows nothing, but Herb remembers him well. He was an "odd sort," with a thin, lispy voice and odd features, as if he'd once had bones busted in his face that healed poorly. The lone, long eye-

A Different Tack

Some investigators, especially those who want to rely on research as opposed to social skills, may be determined to explore the musty rooms of the Maltbee County Historical Society. Though there should be no clues there of any real value, an incident occurred there in the last week of March that may come to the group's attention.

The building's caretaker is Klaus Müller, an elderly first-generation German immigrant. Klaus has worked in the past for the Southworth Mining Company as well as for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. For the past several years, he has served as the caretaker for the historical society. His duties include maintaining the building and its contents, acting as librarian, and selling minor knickknacks in the gift shop. His wife Greta occasionally assists him.

On March 25, Klaus was on duty when two strange men entered. One man asked for genealogy records and Klaus showed him where to go. The other never spoke. What struck him as odd was that the silent man wore a heavy overcoat despite the fact that the day was unusually hot and humid. The other man immediately delved into the records and was careful to replace everything once he was finished.

During the entire two hours they spent in the library, the men barely uttered a word. Klaus found both to be disturbing and menacing and was glad when they left. These men stand out in his memory because they were menacing, one was unusually dressed, and they replaced all of the documents they examined. This last bit may be frustrating to the investigators since Klaus has no way to know what volumes were examined. If they seek out the genealogy section, they will find all the volumes to be clean and dust-free, thanks to Klaus' helpful cleaning efforts.

Klaus does remember the men and can identify them if confronted by them (or if he sees a photograph). If they are described, he might be able to identify them, depending on how good the description is.

(The first man was Rollin Hollis. The second was Sullivan McAllister, the man who later snatched Sarah. They came to seek out information that might help them locate a blood relative to sacrifice. They failed in this task and were forced to rely wholly on their family bible.)

Klaus is a seventy-one year old German immigrant who is fluent in German and English. His knowledge of the English language is excellent, though he does have a fairly thick accent. He is polite and courteous and will be happy to assist visitors. Being fairly new to the county, his personal knowledge is mainly limited to the Porterville area. Many county residents are still strangers to him and he has no personal knowledge of any of the cult families. No NPC statistics are provided for him.

brow was a bit unnerving and it hooded glassy, bloodshot eyes that had a cold look to them. If asked if the man purchased anything, Herb goes on to say he bought a large bur-lap sack and a length of stout cord.

The apothecary is even more revealing. Owned and operated by a "pharmacist" named Phillip Rudson, the apothecary is a small single-room establishment only a half block away from Terrence's store. Rudson has no formal training or education, but has picked up a fair amount of information about medicines. He is a short, slightly heavyset man with white hair despite his age of 37. Like Terrence, he remembers the strange man well and remembers the unusual purchase clearly. "It was a bottle of chloroform. Now I ask, why would some farmhand or laborer want somethin' like that? As it is, I only keep a small supply of the stuff on hand for Doc Williams. But, he seemed to know what he wanted so I gave it to him." Rudson knows nothing more.

The Southworth Mine

The mine may be investigated because of the lies of Seth Fuller or because the investigators are grasping at straws. In either case, it is a time-consuming red herring that the Keeper should be careful does not exhaust too much game time—no good can come of it.

Checking out the mine seems easy. It is now state-owned since Southworth went out of business several years ago, and the mine itself has been closed since the late 1870s. Records on it are available at the state capital (Frankfurt, Kentucky), but are useless other than providing a fairly up-to-date map. Of course, just gaining access to such records is time-consuming and requires at the very least a successful Library Use or Persuade roll.

Fortunately, its location is well-known and an overgrown but serviceable dirt road still leads to it. A narrow-gauge train track also leads to it, but is unusable even by a hand cart since its tracks are badly corroded and the ties are rotted. The mine consists of several deteriorating shacks that were once used for storage and barracks. Two vertical shafts are in evidence. Most equipment is gone though a couple of small coal cars lie overturned near one shaft entrance. A successful Spot Hidden roll or Track roll will reveal no evidence that anything other than wildlife has been in the area any-time recently, though this should not be considered conclusive evidence that Seth lied or that Sarah isn't present.

Searching the shafts can be accomplished as long as those delving within are equipped with lanterns, rope, and appropriate equipment. While nonfunctional manual hoists are still in each, an iron ladder is bolted to the wall, allowing searchers to descend safely, at least initially. The two main

vertical shafts have scores of horizontal subshafts driving deep within the bedrock. Approximately sixty feet down, the shaft is flooded and there is no way to determine how deep it went unless records have been obtained that contain a decent map. The cross-shafts that are above water criss-cross and connect with each other and actually link the two main shafts. Exploring the mine thoroughly takes an entire day and is dangerous. Shoring and braces are no longer stable and the possibility of a cave-in is fairly high (a successful Engineering, Architecture, or Idea roll will reveal this). During a search, each investigator must attempt the following rolls: Climb and DEXx5.

If the Climb roll fails, the investigator falls and suffers 1D6 hit points of damage (which may be reduced by a successful Jump roll). If the Climb roll is fumbled, the fall occurs and worse, a cave-in also occurs, trapping (or crushing) the victim and possibly some or all of his nearby companions, though they should be allowed Dodge rolls to escape. The details of this screw-up are left to the evil devices of the Keeper.

If the DEXx5 roll fails, a successful Luck roll is required of the clumsy buffoon responsible for the failed roll. If the Luck roll fails, a cave-in occurs, trapping the victim and possibly his or her nearby companions (who, again, should be permitted Dodge rolls to escape). If the Luck roll is fumbled, the same cave-in occurs but the victim takes 2D8 damage.

Finally, a group Luck roll must be attempted. If it is fumbled, one searcher comes across a wooden crate containing twenty-four sticks of very unstable dynamite. While it will appear normal to the layperson, a successful Demolitions, Chemistry, or half a Knowledge roll will reveal it is sweating (droplets of nitroglycerin are evident on each stick) and dangerous to handle or even be around. If this is disturbed in any way aside from extremely gentle handling, the entire case will detonate, causing scores of cave-ins throughout the mine and probably trapping many (or all) of the searchers. Anyone near the blast will suffer whatever damage the Keeper deems appropriate and anyone next to the case will automatically die since the sheer number of hit dice damage exceeds the maximum amount of hit points any human may possess. In the event that this incredible disaster befalls the group, the Keeper should probably be lenient on those not directly involved and modify rolls for escaping accordingly. Otherwise, the entire group could be eliminated outright.

Note that some Keepers may be tempted to expand this section by including some sort of unrelated paranormal encounter. If this is done, it should ultimately be made clear to the investigators that it is not related to Sarah's disappearance. Otherwise, the group could get caught up in investigating the mine while valuable time slips by, allowing the cult to win without a challenge. This section is intended to be a relatively brief red herring, which is why no map of the mine is provided. One easy way to shorten this scene is to simply have the entire mine be flooded, leaving little to search or investigate.

Keeper's note: During both main playtests of this scenario, the Keepers chose to simply leave the entire mine flooded, thereby eliminating this as a threat and a potentially protracted tangent.

Checking Around Propriety

Once it is known that the "bad man" was in Propriety, the investigators will be well served to check with people who frequent local shops and use area streets and roads. Two main options exist here. The first is to fan out and question people the investigators run into. The second is to distribute a kind of flyer bearing a physical description and perhaps even an artist's rendering of the suspect. Of course, the latter may seem to be a modern tactic the players may not think of or may not consider valid in this era. However, wanted posters were a common device at the turn of the century and there is no one around to prohibit privately distributed ones.

If the first tactic is employed, it requires a fair amount of legwork and requires some time to be expended. Investigators expecting immediate results will probably drop this tactic after a few fruitless hours. However, if they stick to it, they may be rewarded. Each investigator involved is permitted to attempt a Luck roll once per day. If it succeeds at 20% of the normal chance, then a potential witness is contacted (the Keeper may modify this chance as he or she sees fit). To get the person to talk, a successful Persuade, Fast Talk, Credit Rating (local doctor or other professional only), or half a Luck roll (all may be tried) is required. A total of three legitimate witnesses have information and once all are contacted, no further searches are helpful though the investigators will not know that. More on these witnesses and their stories is in "Stage IV: Follow Up" on p. 16. The Keeper should feel free to introduce well-meaning witnesses with bogus clues, if appropriate.

The second tactic—that of distributing flyers—requires less leg work and gets witnesses to come to the investigators rather than the reverse. A group Luck roll may be attempted each day after the flyers are distributed. If it succeeds at half the normal chance, one random witness will come forward. Use the same witnesses that can be contacted using the first tactic. At best, only one witness will come forward per day and this assumes three consecutive rolls succeed. If any roll fumbles, a deputy shows up, removes the posters, and contacts the investigators. He insists they cease their activities and allow the sheriff's department to take over. Of course, the sheriff's department will make no progress though at least publicly, they will seem to make an effort. To avoid irritating the sheriff, the investigators merely need to be more discreet. A confrontation at this point with law enforcement is totally unnecessary and if the investigators are so unrestrained as to provoke one, they will do very poorly.



Rolly McAllister and Rollin Hollis.

Stage IV: Follow Up

In Stage III, up to three witnesses may be encountered that will allow the investigators to progress in the scenario. What follows is a brief description of each witness and what they know.

Emma Nichols

Emma is the twenty-year-old wife of Frank Nichols, a Propriety blacksmith. She is pretty and has long, black hair and brown eyes. She remembers encountering a man matching the general description of the so-called "bad man." The incident occurred the day before the disappearance as she walked home from shopping at Herbert Terrence's store. It was approaching dusk at the time and she recalls seeing the man passing her on the street and giving her a surprisingly hostile glance. Why he did this is unknown, but she speculates that he was not happy she was taking notice of him. She knows nothing else of value. Questioning Emma helps the investigators very little except to prove to them that more witnesses may be found among the town's populace.

John Wallace

John is a heavily built man in his mid-thirties and suffers from some form of mental retardation. He was orphaned at a young age and now works at Harriman's Café where he washes dishes and does chores. When not at work, he can be found roaming the streets or in his rented room above the café. John is generally perceived as being harmless, but no one really takes him seriously. Further, he is often the subject of off-color remarks and jokes and is sometimes called "Dim John." Only Ron Harriman, owner of the café, really respects John and is the only one who knows how honest and honorable John is.

The day before the kidnapping, John saw the so-called "bad man" speaking to a strange fellow with a black patch over his right eye. He didn't approach the pair, but watched as they slipped quietly down an alley near the café. He had never before seen either one.

When the investigators' plight becomes known to John, he will immediately come forward to tell all even though he could inadvertently say something either to discredit himself, or worse, implicate himself in the crime. With patient and open-minded questioning, John can provide perhaps the single most valuable clue in the investigation. Conversely, he could turn out to be a convenient scapegoat.

Checking on John's credibility is easily done. Most people who know him or know of him will insist he has a poor memory and is probably making up the story to get attention. However, if his employer, Ron Harriman, is questioned, he can give a much more accurate perspective. He will insist that John is honest and despite his "disability" is

totally trustworthy. As a respected member of the community, Harriman's word should not be taken lightly and investigators from the area should know this (unless they fumble Knowledge rolls). More on John's key information is given in the section entitled "Stage V: Breakthrough."

Elmo Cobb

Elmo is a sixty-year-old farmer who has never stepped foot outside Maltbee County. He still works from dawn to dusk on his farm south of Propriety and once a week rides to town to pick up supplies or get the news.

The day of the kidnapping, Elmo was on just such a trip when he passed a strange man on the road. The stranger matches the description of the "bad man" and Elmo remembers him only because he was so strange-looking. "He 'ad this dark look 'bout 'im, like death itself." The bad man was leading a mule on which were several laden sacks. Elmo last saw him heading south, away from Propriety.

Elmo's story only serves to imply what general direction Sarah was last seen. Of course, the assumption is that she was in one of the abovementioned sacks (which is the case) and that the person Elmo is describing is the same as Stuart's "bad man" (again, this is the case). Wise investigators will beware of such rampant speculation, but will not dismiss it totally either.

Stage V: Breakthrough

The breakthrough clue is that provided by John Wallace. While the description of the "bad man" is unfamiliar to all, the man with the eyepatch is known in Propriety. He is Rolly McAllister, the son of Lloyd McAllister, a farmer who owns a sizable spread in central Maltbee County. Since Rolly is the only one known in Propriety to wear an eyepatch, it should take only a few hours at most to confirm his identity. In fact, investigators who live in the Propriety area will recognize John's description of Rolly if a Knowledge roll at half the chance succeeds and will be vaguely aware of such a person in the area if an unmodified Knowledge roll is successful.

Once it becomes evident that Rolly McAllister may be involved in some way, the investigators must make some basic decisions. Remember, they are in an area where lynchings are common and they are not law-enforcement representatives, meaning they can reasonably act on innuendo and fragmentary information where others would not. However, obtaining basic background information on the McAllisters is not difficult and will only postpone any action by a few scant hours at most. Of course, since Sarah's welfare is at stake, they may not be willing to wait for even this.

Keeper's note: The key element is, of course, learning of the potential involvement of Rolly McAllister since he is distinctive and easy to locate. Inexperienced players (or experienced ones

who are just having a bad day) may require more than John Wallace's testimony. The Keeper should detail Rolly's malign reputation clearly, but hopefully discreetly enough so as not to place a proverbial spotlight on him. An additional clue can be added that points to his involvement. Rolly McAllister rarely ventures into Propriety. While asking around town, more than one person might mention that he was seen recently. His mere presence may be suspicious enough for some investigators to seek him out. ("Gee, isn't it a coincidence that Rolly is in town about the same time a child disappears?")

Stage VI: The McAllisters

The McAllisters are one of Maltbee County's oldest families. They own a large farm in the central portion of the county east of the Propriety-to-Bolling road. The family patriarch is Lloyd McAllister, a balding man of fifty with six sons and innumerable cousins, nephews, nieces, etc. The farm supports a population of at least twenty, the majority of which are able-bodied men.

What is Publicly Known

The McAllisters are best known for keeping to themselves and minding their own affairs. This is a trait many county residents possess so it should not be considered damning evidence against them. A large portion of their land is cultivated, with corn being the primary crop. They also raise small amounts of livestock. Little else is publicly known.

What is Unknown

The McAllisters are one of the leading families in the lloigor cult, second only to the Hollis clan. In fact, they are actually a kind of extended branch of the Hollis family since there has been rampant intermarriage. Like the clan in general, many of the McAllisters display the traits of lloigor worship, particularly the punishments that are dealt out quite liberally. Many, such as Rolly McAllister, have tentacular growths sprouting from various portions of their anatomies. In Rolly's case, one small growth protrudes from his left eye, requiring an eyepatch to conceal it. Less common, but more obvious, are the amputations. Some cultists are missing arms or legs and some even have lost multiple limbs, all due to supposed transgressions against the lloigor. Their so-called gods have perfected methods of amputation that do not cause death and this, like the tentacular growths, is a common form of punishment for the most minor of offenses. Greater offenses are almost universally punished by a gruesome and very painful death.

Because of this, many mutilated cultists are forced to either conceal evidence of lloigor punishment or retreat completely from public view. While the farm apparently con-

tains a population of twenty or so, there are actually thirty cultists on the premises. No non-cultist has had a chance to have more than a cursory look at the farm and its buildings so little concrete information exists.

The McAllister Farm

Once the investigation leads to the McAllister place, the next logical step is to infiltrate their farm. Since the investigators are all hopefully people of strong will who are more concerned about retrieving Sarah than worrying about obeying the law, they should take some sort of aggressive action. This is not to say that a frontal assault is warranted or even productive. After all, someone should consider whether or not Rolly is the only one involved or if it encompasses the entire McAllister family (though the latter is the truth).

Shrewd investigators have a wide range of possible tactics that do not involve some sort of violent assault. This section provides descriptions of many possible tactics, though it is obviously not exhaustive since each group of players can be quite inventive and come up with options the author (and Keeper) may not foresee.

Research

Little can be learned of the farm from county records aside from its acreage. Many of the records are hopelessly outdated and do not document some of the buildings on the land. Back issues of the *Times-Courier* have nothing on the McAllisters (or any other cultist family).

On the other hand, if the option concerning the historical society (see boxed text on page 14) is used, this is an opportunity to introduce or reinforce this angle. A little digging there and another conversation with Klaus might result in him stating that men matching the general cultist appearance were searching about in the genealogy files. Note that the Keeper is certainly welcome to have all of the cultists share a physical general "look" and demeanor, one that is both distinctive and recognizable (or even stereotypical). This taint might be traceable, at least in the case of the historical society.

Sending in the Sheriff

Law-abiding and conscientious investigators will at least consider taking the "high road" by contacting the sheriff and imploring him to check out the McAllisters. Unfortunately, as they may anticipate, this will only serve to reveal their presence to the cult and, worse, show the cult how close they really are.

Getting the sheriff to take action is reasonably simple. A visit to the Maltbee County Sheriff's Department office in Porterville is the first step. Next, after a convincing argument

is concocted, their spokesperson must succeed in a Law or Persuade roll (a generous Keeper might allow both rolls to be tried). If it fails, the sheriff will politely decline to take action, perhaps coming up with some sort of excuse, legitimate or otherwise.

If the sheriff does take action, it will almost certainly backfire in the investigators' faces. An unimaginative sort, the sheriff will probably just bull ahead by sending a pair of deputies to the farm. He might even be personally present. Of course, after a cursory search, he will determine the McAllisters to be innocent of any wrongdoing and then leave. Any incriminating evidence will be hidden long before the sheriff and his lads have a chance to find it and the residents will happily cooperate with the law. Note that under no circumstances will the sheriff or his deputies permit the investigators to accompany them on the so-called search. However, if one investigator happens to be a deputy, this will be an early opportunity for the group to gain a description of the farm's interior.

ALynching

Some investigators may decide that a lynching is in order at this point. Perhaps getting an irate mob to haul out the accused seems like a good idea, but it is certainly the proverbial "low road." Scraping up a mob of self-righteous idiots is possible, but requires a series of successful Persuade rolls made in the right portions of the community and even this may not succeed. Since there is little concrete evidence against Rolly McAllister at this point, most reasonable people will dismiss any suggestion of vigilantism, at least at this point. However, if more evidence comes to light, perhaps some of the people of Maltbee County might be receptive to the idea.

In the unlikely event a lynch gang is assembled and then marches on the McAllister place, they will be faced with heavy resistance from well-armed and determined cultists who are legitimately defending their lives and property. Unless the vigilantes are highly motivated, they will probably flee after first contact. Remember, lynch mobs are bravest when facing a single helpless target, not a band of determined farmers armed with hunting rifles and shotguns.

Surveillance

Perhaps the best passive method of investigation is to watch the McAllister place. As long as a good pair of binoculars is available, a fair amount can be observed. Otherwise, little can be seen. Binoculars can be purchased at general stores in Porterville and Propriety.

The basic assumption here is that the investigators are subtle and are not observed by the people they are supposed to be spying on. Obviously, if the McAllisters realize someone is lurking outside their property and may be spying on

them, they will curtail any suspicious activity and may take steps to eradicate the annoying voyeurs.

Patiently watching the farm using binoculars will be rewarded with various bits and pieces of information. To acquire them requires a successful Spot Hidden roll for each item. Obtaining all is not too likely and will take at least a couple days of surveillance. What follows is a listing of the possible clues that may be detected (usually via Spot Hidden) and they should be distributed on a random basis and whenever the Keeper deems is appropriate.

- Early on, a Listen roll should be attempted. If successful, the barking of dogs can occasionally be heard. Dogs are always of concern to investigators planning a break-in or infiltration.
- Any observer who has been in the area a while should be permitted a POWx3 roll. If successful, a kind of creepy feeling comes over him, as if something incredibly distasteful—not to mention frightening—just waltzed through the area. The feeling is totally unfocused and may recur if the observers stay around long enough. (The investigator is sensing the psychic presence of the Iloigor.)
- During the daylight hours, the usual farm routine can be seen. People do chores around the buildings and work in the fields. Focusing in on individuals will eventually be rewarded. It's difficult to recognize particular people unless they have obvious distinguishing features; given the pres-

ence of more than two dozen inhabitants on the farm, many will seem to look the same as the hours pass by.

- Succeed in a halved Spot Hidden roll: The investigator sees a man with an eyepatch that might be Rolly McAllister. This may confirm in the minds of the investigators that Rolly is on the farm (the truth). Unless the Keeper decides otherwise, Rolly remains on the farm until the time of the final ritual.
- Succeed in 20% of a Spot Hidden roll: The investigator spots an individual displaying a strange growth (a tentacular growth) on a visible portion of the anatomy. At best, all that can be seen is the person has a strange look about him or her, but otherwise, little detail can be seen, even with superior binoculars.
- Succeed in a Spot Hidden roll: The investigator sees a person on crutches who has had a leg amputated. This man periodically comes into view. If a follow-up Idea roll is successful, the investigator realizes that sometimes when this person comes into view, the missing leg seems to have switched sides. This is not due to some intentional shell game. More than one cultist is missing a leg and since they are all garbed in a similar manner, at this distance, it is easy to confuse them. Similarly, people with missing arms periodically come into view. Any objective analysis of this indicates that there is an



Southern hospitality.

unusually large number of amputees on this farm. The group may speculate that there has been an unusual spate of tragic farm accidents, but the reasons are the punishments of the lloigor.

- Succeed in a Spot Hidden roll: The investigator spots several dogs—at least five. They are large and worse, they roam freely. The property is fenced, but this won't contain them very effectively.
- During the nighttime hours, all is quiet. With Luck or Spot Hidden rolls that succeed at 20% of the normal chance, the dogs may be briefly detected, but they continue to move and cannot be tracked.
- By observing the farm from outside its property line (mainly from the access road), a fairly decent map may be sketched out. If a Cartography, Land Navigation/Navigate, Drafting (Drawing/Sketching), or similar skill roll succeeds, the map is reasonably accurate and detailed—provide the players with a simple but accurate sketch of the farm. If the roll fails, sketch out an inaccurate map—jumble the distances between buildings, get the scale wrong, and so forth. If the roll is fumbled, no map is drawn at all.
- Paying attention to the comings and goings of the McAllisters reveals soon that fairly steady traffic runs between the McAllister and Hollis farms. Some is over the fields and through a gate in the fence on the property line, while occasionally a wagon or a few riders use the access road (possibly passing right by investigators hiding in roadside weeds) to travel between the farms. This traffic is not obvious and the investigators must consciously pay attention to it and actively follow those riding or driving out of the McAllister land. Those walking over the fields and through the gate will be noticed only if a Spot Hidden roll succeeds at 30% of the normal chance.

Infiltration

Infiltrating the farm will ultimately lead to the solution of the scenario. The motivation for such a potentially dangerous tactic is the legitimate fear that Sarah is being held somewhere on the premises. Within can be found clues connecting the McAllisters to the Hollis family plus information giving a general idea of what is going on. Checking out the Hollises will provide the last clues, bringing most of the pieces together into an understandable form. The next section provides detailed descriptions of the McAllister and Hollis farms, their dangers, and the clues present. Note that because these two families are neighbors, what may initially be an infiltration of the McAllister place may become a prolonged operation against both.

To succeed in this scenario, the group does not have to raid or infiltrate the McAllister farm. Sarah is not present here, though evidence can be discovered that leads

the group to the Hollis farm. If the group simply realizes that the McAllisters are linked to the Hollises (detecting the traffic between the two farms is evidence enough), they may decide to check out that farm. The shared family cemetery (described later) is another important link. The Hollis place is described later and the investigators may find it is a more attractive target for infiltration—there are no dogs on the Hollis farm.

The Cult

The Maltbee County cult is concentrated in the central section of the county. The most important family is the Hollis clan, but the neighboring McAllister family is also powerful and important. In all likelihood, the investigators will descend with a vengeance upon the McAllisters first and only later find out that the true threat lies with the Hollises.

In portraying the cult, the Keeper should have a few things in mind. First, both as a group and as individuals, they are incredibly ignorant. No significant book learning exists among the cult hierarchy and only a minority are literate. Few have reached even the high-school level and only a few can boast of having graduated high school. College is an unthinkable concept.

Though uneducated, this does not mean the cult or its leadership is stupid. On the contrary, they possess a cunning intelligence born of years of remaining in hiding and exposure to violent and heartless gods. However, they are in no way infallible. Rollin Hollis is capable of making mistakes and some cult members are prone to rash action in stressful situations. How this is played is up to the individual Keeper. It is advisable, however, that if the investigators are having a difficult time, a successful group Luck roll (made in secret) may indicate that the cult, its leaders, or an individual make some minor error that favors the investigators. Alternately, the Keeper can simply allow the cult to be fallible and insert understandable errors when and where appropriate.

The McAllister Farm

Lloyd McAllister is a cousin of Rollin Hollis and owns a sizable farm bordering the larger Hollis spread. It consists of two hundred acres of fields, fifty acres of woods, and a small cluster of buildings at the northwest corner. The entire property is fenced with a standard split-rail fence into which barbed wire has been laced. McAllister does not have the same restrictions that Hollis does when it comes to animals and keeps a pack of eight large, mean, mongrel dogs on the property. They will attack all non-cult members and even cult members who do not frequent the McAllister farm. Statistics on the dogs are given later.

General Overview

The buildings consist of a two-story frame farmhouse, a stone grain silo, two barns, two outhouses, a well, smokehouse, chicken coop, and a wooden shed. One barn is completely devoted to housing livestock: three dairy cows, four saddle horses, two mules, and one goat. It is secured well because if the dogs get in when someone isn't around, they'd tear the livestock apart.

Keeper's note: Examine the maps of the McAllister and Hollis farms carefully. These are not laid out with an external enemy in mind. Investigators attempting to infiltrate the farms can find plenty of cover and have a reasonable chance of moving about undetected. This assumes, of course, that the cult isn't alerted to their presence, that they are stealthy, and that they at least don't fumble Sneak rolls (failed Sneak rolls may allow nearby cultists to attempt Spot Hidden or Listen rolls to detect intruders). The Hollis farm is especially easy to infiltrate due to extensive woodlands and the lack of dogs.

The description of the McAllister farm and the clues within is provided in order to assist the Keeper in running whatever infiltration the players try to carry out. This description (appearing in the boxed text on p. 23), alongside its companion maps and diagrams, should serve the Keeper well from here on.

The Family Plot

Hidden away on the periphery of the property in woods bordering the Hollis farm is a small cemetery. Here are buried generations of the Hollis and McAllister clans. Markers

are mostly crude affairs, made on the McAllister farm of locally acquired limestone. A few more recent markers are made of wood and are likely only temporary until permanent ones can be carved.

The cemetery straddles the property line. The fence that separates the two farms bypasses the cemetery, forming a large square around it. Two gates pierce the fence, one of the side of the Hollis farm and one on the McAllister side. Neither gate is locked; a simple latch is all that keeps them shut.

The cemetery is obviously quite old. Markers older than one hundred years have been worn smooth by decades of rain and wind, making them unreadable. More recent ones can be examined, but give only names and dates of birth and death. The most recent markers are for Leanne Hollis, Lori-Anne Hollis, Linda-Mae Hollis, Steven Hollis, Willie Hollis, Allen McAllister, Lurleen McAllister, Molly McAllister, and Sally McAllister. Except for Steven Hollis, all were pre-teen children who died in March (of measles). Steven died on February 10 of a lloigor punishment.

An unlikely tactic will be to exhume the bodies. If this is done, all of the children will be found intact. Were an autopsy performed, a competent doctor would conclude that all of the children died of measles. Steven Hollis' remains are a different matter entirely. All of his limbs were amputated, but the stumps appear well-healed. How this could be when the limbs are in the grave with the rest of the corpse is perplexing, and may have some speculating that the family kept the limbs preserved for some months before Steven finally died. (This is not the case, of course; Steven died soon after the limbs were magically removed by the vengeful lloigor.) Exhuming older graves also reveals anomalies—unusually large numbers of amputees and the like.

If the cemetery is discovered by snooping investigators, it should serve as firm proof of the tie between the two fami-

The Journal of Lloyd McAllister

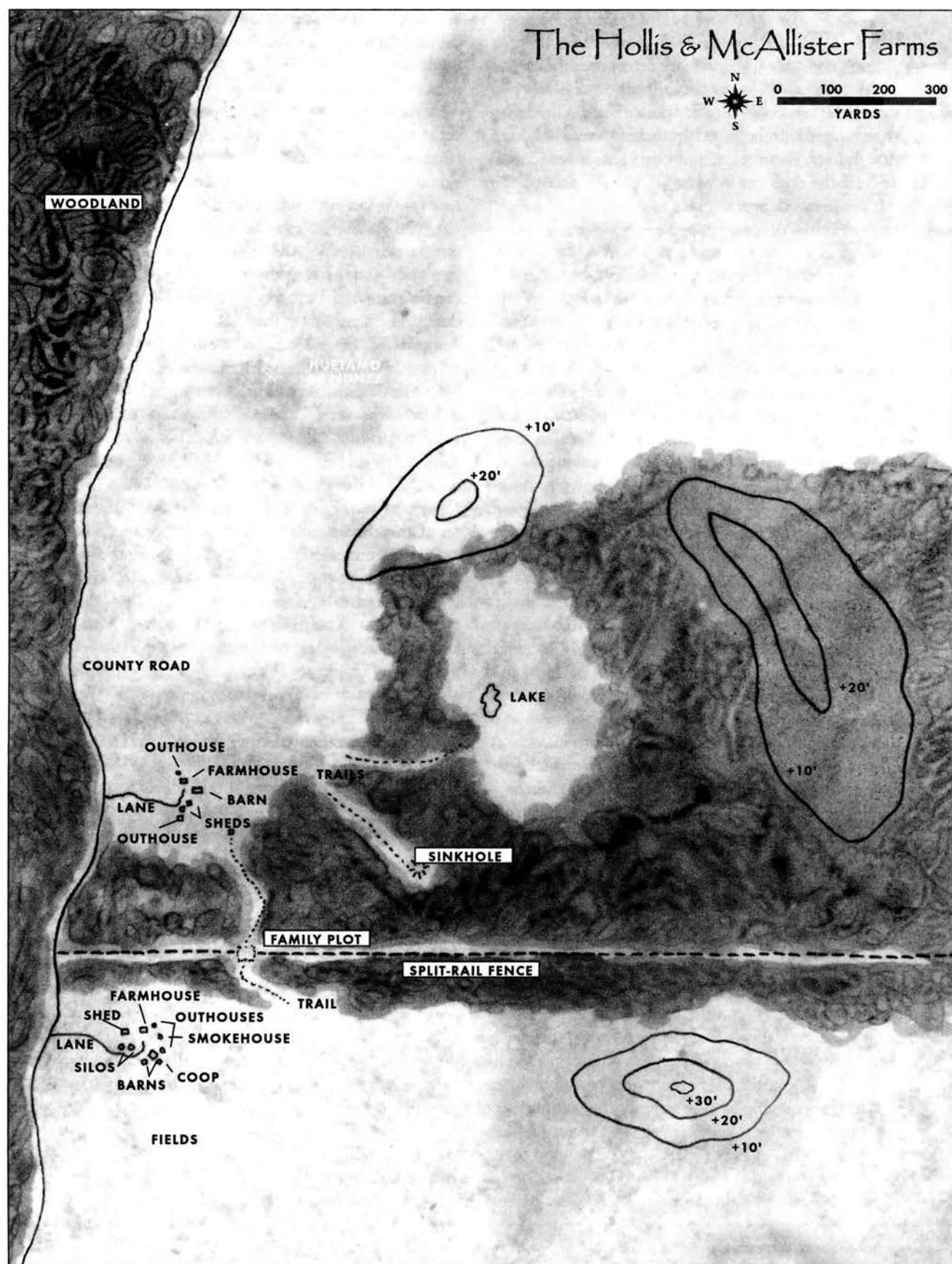
McAllister has kept a small journal recounting the past few years of his life. He tends to write in "bullet" statements, short phrases giving the same meaning as a lengthy sentence. His handwriting is passable and is not too much of a chore to comprehend. Because of this, it is easier to skim through. While reading in-depth takes a day or two, skimming it takes only an hour at most.

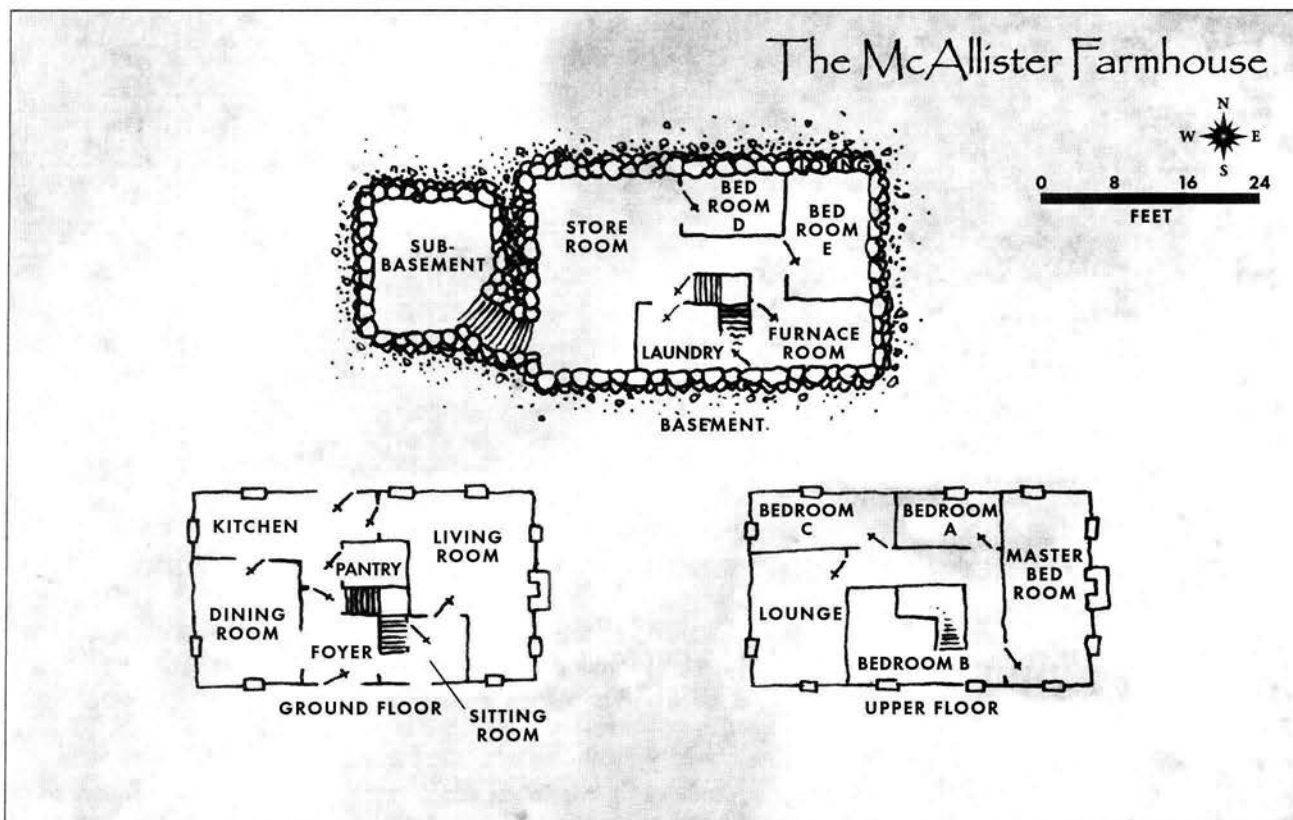
The contents are quite revealing. They indicate a close relationship with the nearby Hollis family as well as others living in the area. What quickly becomes obvious is that Sarah is not here, but is very probably somewhere on the Hollis farm and there is a dark purpose behind the kidnapping. Only reading in depth will elaborate on the latter.

Thorough reading shows that the McAllisters, the Hollises, and others worship "beings from the stars" and believe these entities are the only true gods. These gods are not named in the journal. The local families form a kind of cult worshipping these beings and obviously have dark designs on Sarah. Worse, it is clear that Sarah is only the latest victim in a series, though how the cult has been able to cover up human sacrifice is not given. (They have in the past obtained sacrifices from within their ranks, thus effectively keeping the rites secret for decades). This journal can be used as evidence in a court of law. Statements within can get Lloyd McAllister committed to an asylum or convicted of kidnapping and more.

Because of the way it is written, this book causes no SAN loss nor does it provide any Cthulhu Mythos or Occult skill. However, those especially close to Sarah, such as her parents, will lose 1/ID6 SAN if they read it thoroughly.

Keeper's note: Reduce or eliminate this SAN loss if Sarah is recovered unharmed before the end of the scenario.





The McAllister Farmhouse

The farmhouse appears to be a typical two-story frame structure, painted white and with a red shingle roof. It has no plumbing, electricity, or telephones (remember that it is the turn of the century).

Ground Floor

Foyer: This is a small entryway lit by a fixture bearing six candles that hangs from the ceiling. A set of carpeted stairs ascends from this area to the second floor. The door under the stairs opens onto a set of brick steps descending to the basement. The foyer is furnished only with a small table on which is a brass candlestick with candle.

Dining Room: This large room is dominated by a single oval table surrounded by a dozen chairs. Four brass candlesticks with candles are on the table which is usually covered with a white, linen tablecloth.

Kitchen: This is a typical turn-of-the-century country kitchen. Cabinets line the north wall and contain dishes, cutlery, canned food, etc. Major furnishings include a wood-burning stove, an insulated ice box, and a work table.

Pantry: The pantry is a small closet with shelves on the walls bearing all sorts of canned food. Smoked meats hang from hooks in the ceiling and sacks of meal and flour are stacked on pallets on the floor.

Living Room: The living room is the main gathering spot for the family during the infrequent times of leisure. It is not as formal as a normal living room and is more like a large family room. Furnishings are comfortable and include sofas, chairs, and tables. The brick fireplace always has a fire set in it, but not necessarily lit. A loaded .44-40 lever-action sporting rifle and a loaded 12-gauge double-barrel shotgun hang above the mantelpiece.

Sitting Room: A small room commonly used by Lloyd McAllister as a reading room. It contains a pair of comfortable armchairs, a small wooden table, and fixtures on the walls bearing candles. A brass oil lamp is on the table. A small bookcase is against the east wall and contains an assortment of literature ranging from the classics to popular novels to reference materials.

Upper Floor

Master Bedroom: This room is occupied by Lloyd McAllister and his wife, Annabelle. It is well-furnished and contains a

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king-size bed, armoire (wardrobe), two nightstands, dressing table, desk, small bookcase, small table, three chairs, footstool, and chest of drawers. The chest of drawers, armoire, and closet are packed with clothes and personal belongings. A loaded 10-gauge double-barrel shotgun can be found in the closet behind some hanging clothes, and a small stockpile of ammunition is in the chest of drawers. Lighting is provided by brass oil lamps and candles.

Aside from the usual stuff one would expect of this room, there is more of interest to snooping investigators. Hanging on the wall above the bed is a framed copy of the McAllister family tree. It reveals the ties between the McAllister and Hollis clans. Furthermore, it gives the names of many of the cult members. If the more complete version owned by Rollin Hollis is captured (described later), the entire cult can be rounded up with a minimum of hassle.

Sitting in plain sight on top of the chest of drawers is a leather-bound book with no title. Upon opening it, the reader will quickly learn it is the journal of Lloyd McAllister. While it is too long to read while under the threat of being discovered by the residents, it can be stolen and perused in a single hour.

Bedroom A: This is Rolly McAllister's bedroom. It contains the usual furnishings. A loaded 10-gauge double-barrel shotgun leans against the wall behind the door and several boxes of ammunition (buckshot) can be found in the chest of drawers. Nothing incriminating is in here.

Bedroom B: This room is shared by Sullivan McAllister and his brother Rolland. It contains nothing particularly unusual. No firearms or other weapons are in here.

Bedroom C: Like the previous room, this one is shared by two brothers, Collin and Allan McAllister. Under each bed is a loaded .44-40 lever-action carbine in a leather case.

Lounge: The lounge contains comfortable furniture and in addition to the normal items, a large bookcase is against the west wall. A gun rack hangs on the east wall and contains four hunting rifles and a shotgun, all of which are loaded. A pair of oil lamps provides lighting and a carbide lantern is stored in a chest along with other knick-knacks.

Basement

Bedroom D: This bedroom is occupied by two cousins of the McAllister clan, Jethro Goodchild and Harry Payton. The furnishings are sparse but livable, and a large, blanket-covered chest is in the northwest corner. The chest contains an assortment of small arms (several rifles and shotguns plus ammunition, cleaning kits, and accessories).

Bedroom E: This room is occupied by Lloyd McAllister's two daughters, Lucinda and Lucretia. The typical furnishings can be found in here (twin beds, chest of drawers, dressing table, table, two chairs, nightstand, etc.).

Storeroom: The storeroom is crammed with all sorts of belongings ranging from tools to canned foods to sacks of grain. Much is crated or boxed while some is loose on shelves or tables. A stack of crates over against the west wall is empty and easily moved. If the crates are moved, a three-foot-wide, five-foot-high hole in the wall is revealed. Through this can be seen a narrow set of stone stairs going down. These stairs descend to the hidden sub-basement. Anyone in the storeroom who is doing more than a cursory search may, with a successful Spot Hidden roll, notice the scratches and scrapes on the floor which have been caused by past movement of the crates.

Furnace Room: This contains a single coal-fired furnace and a supply of coal. There is no coal chute. Rather, coal is packed into fifty-pound sacks and manhandled into the room.

Laundry Room: This small room has shelves lining one wall that contain cleaning supplies, both for laundry and for the house in general (soap, ammonia, bucket, etc.). A wooden laundry tub with a washboard is on the floor and mops and brooms lean against the wall in one corner.

Utility Closet: This small closet is lined with shelves bearing all sorts of small items: tools, lanterns, a one-gallon fuel can filled with kerosene, candles, boxes of ammunition, and whatever else the Keeper feels is appropriate.

Sub-basement

The subbasement is a single, large, stone-lined room which is reached via a set of narrow stairs descending from the storeroom in the basement. The room is damp and moldy and rusty sets of iron manacles are attached to rings in the walls, floor, and ceiling. Lighting is provided by several candles, some of which are in wall niches, and a single tarnished brass oil lamp.

Fifteen cult members are located down here along with their few belongings. Most are sufferers of the worst of the lloigor punishments. Some suffer from multiple amputations and all have the tentacular growths previously described. Only two are shackled and this is due to the constant acute pain they suffer from. Were they not shackled, they would injure themselves or others. To muffle their cries of agony, they are gagged. As it is, most impartial observers would seriously consider them as candidates for euthanasia. Of the rest, ten are in good enough shape to go outside and do chores every so often and otherwise contribute to the cult. Three who are not shackled spend most or all of their time in here. One has had all four limbs amputated while another lacks legs and has tentacular growths protruding from his eyes, blinding him. Any non-cultmember viewing the horrible tenants of the sub-

basement and the appalling conditions in which they live loses 1/1D8 SAN. Alternately, the Keeper may demand several separate SAN rolls per investigator, one for each dreadful figure. These individual rolls cause SAN loss of 0/1D4.

If intruders break in here and are detected, the cultists will assault them, attacking with knives, small clubs (bottles, candlesticks, etc.), crutches, and bare hands. They can be barricaded in. If the crates are quickly replaced before the onrushing cultists reach the top of the stairs, they lack the strength to move them; if the barricade is then reinforced with heavy objects, they are effectively trapped for at least a little while. Plenty of heavy crates are available elsewhere in the storeroom, allowing quick-thinking investigators to keep their would-be killers at bay.

Attic

The attic is essentially a storage area containing useless items tossed up here over the years.

lies. It is possible that the Hollis clan up to this point was ignored or overlooked. This cemetery can serve to highlight the relationship between the two families and could steer the investigators in the right direction.

The Next Step

Once it becomes clear that Sarah may be on the Hollis farm or at the very least that hitting the Hollises is the next (and only) step, the investigators are best served by acting decisively and quickly. Fortunately, gunfire at the McAllister farm cannot usually be heard at the neighboring Hollis farm due to the distance and nature of the terrain (woodland and a large hill intervenes), so this will not tip the investigators' hands. If they wait several hours or worse, wait more than a day, news of the McAllister raid will inevitably reach the nearby Hollises. One of several decisions will be made at this point by a now-worried Rollin Hollis.

If Sarah has not been primed for the final ritual, a process described and explained on p. 29 under the heading "The Sinkhole," Hollis will send for as many cultists as possible and fortify the farm. This is not to say that trenches will be dug and ramparts erected. However, every able-bodied cultist will be armed as heavily as possible, with both firearms and whatever hand-to-hand weapons and farm implements are available. Enough arms are available to equip each cultist with a rifle or shotgun, though handguns are scarce. Buildings will be reinforced discreetly (windows boarded up from the inside, sacks of dirt or grain piled against interior walls to stop bullets from penetrating into the house, etc.) and leghold bear traps will be liberally strewn in high grass and weeds around the property. Given time, they will string barbed wire in key places to inhibit the movement of intruders. Once the ritual priming Sarah for the final ceremony has been completed, a group of cultists will attempt to whisk Sarah away discreetly on a dark and hopefully overcast (or stormy) night. They will then make the trip to Keelbreeze Island while the rest of the cult remains behind to act as a diversion. More on this is given later.

Things get worse if Sarah is already primed. Hollis will waste no time and will immediately carry Sarah off under

heavy guard. While (if) he escapes to Keelbreeze, the rest of the cult will fortify the Hollis farm and serve as a diversion.

A third alternative exists. If it seems possible, Rollin might send a squad of cultists out to eradicate the annoying investigators wherever they live. If they have not shared their findings at the McAllister place with anyone, no one will know why they all suddenly disappeared or why they are found hanging dead from trees in a remote field in the western part of the county.

The fourth alternative is one Hollis will hesitate to exercise, knowing the lloigor are quick to anger and swift to punish. He may beseech them to act on the cult's behalf, using any of their arsenal of attacks and powers they possess. More on the lloigor is given later.

Of course, this may all be a moot point. Investigators may act quickly and decisively, thereby not giving the Hollis family a chance to prepare or react. It is even possible that the investigators might take on both farms in one extended operation, especially if their efforts at the McAllister place were successful. Obviously, if the investigators do not act in a quick and decisive manner immediately after their findings at the McAllister farm, they are in for deep trouble.

The Hollis Farm

The cult numbers in excess of one hundred, including children, and members live on a scattering of farms sprawled across central Maltbee County. The largest cult farm is that of the Hollis family. It is a four-hundred-acre chunk of land, about half of which is wooded. The rest is cultivated with corn. Livestock is strangely absent except for a pair of dairy cows, a pair of oxen for the plows, and a few saddle horses. No dogs, chickens, hogs, or other animals are present. While this should not necessarily attract notice (after all, the primary means of income for this type of farm is crops, not livestock), the actual reason is that the presence of the lloigor in the immediate vicinity frightens animals. This means there will be no guard dogs, but also means that any bloodhounds the investigators are using will not set foot on the Hollis farm or any of the land near it. Their fear is obvious and no amount of coaxing or cajoling will get a dog to go onto the Hollis property. In a similar vein, intruders who

succeed in a Listen roll followed by a successful Idea roll will realize that while they are on or near the Hollis place, they never hear (or see) normal wildlife such as songbirds and squirrels. Prolonged observation may even reveal that flocks of birds noticeably deviate from their flight path in order to skirt the Hollis farm.

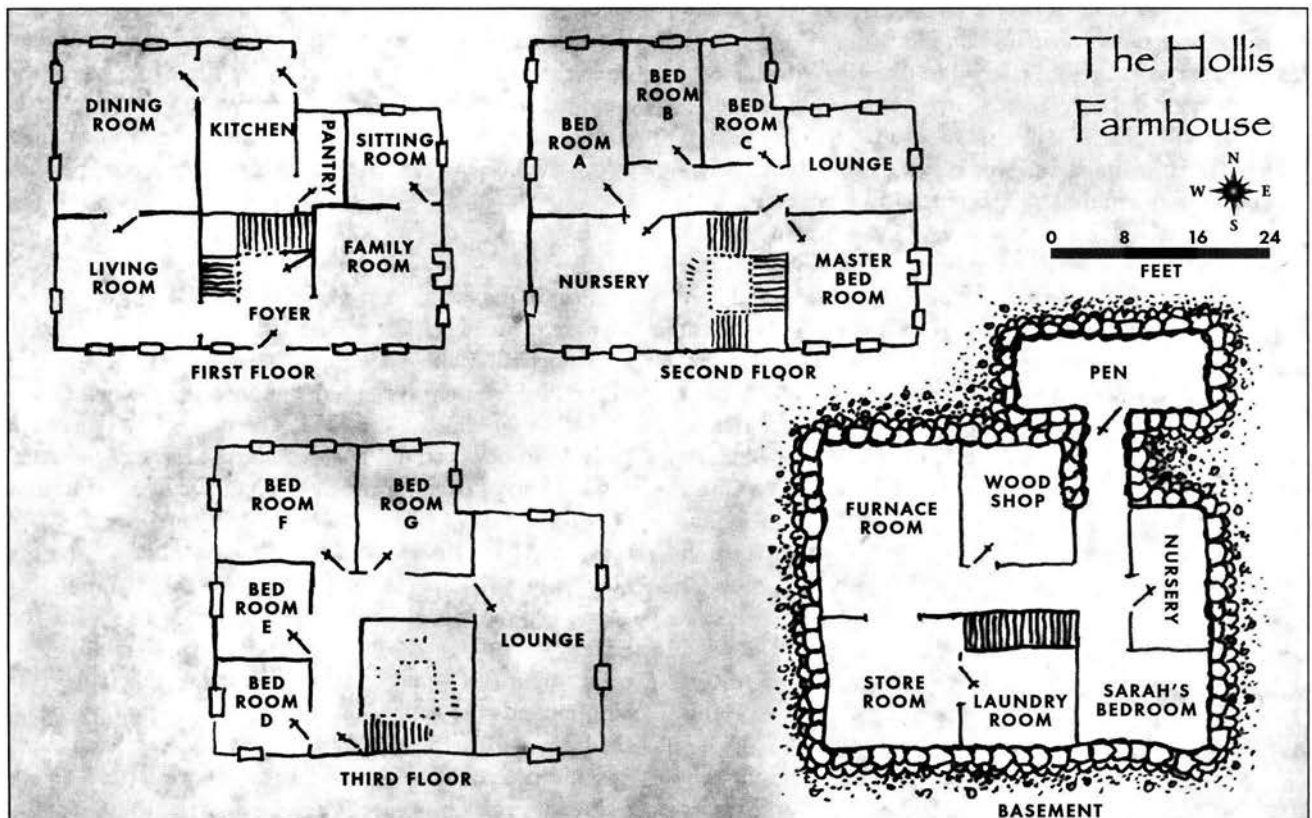
The most noteworthy and obvious feature of the land is its distinctive five acre lake. Located in a secluded area shielded from any area outside the farm, its presence is unknown to county residents. The water seems to have some sort of unusual taint. Most would characterize the sickly, greenish hue as being due to an overabundance of algae. Closer examination of the water reveals that there is indeed algae, but that is not what is causing the hue. The water itself is green, as if someone had poured vast amounts of dye into it. The evil-smelling liquid brings to mind corruption and foulness. No one, not even the cultists, wish to venture near the lake. This is the center of lloigor influence. Occasionally, a lloigor may manifest in the lake on a dark night, appearing much the same as the Loch Ness Monster. Intruders who linger too long near the lake may fall prey to the lloigor at the discretion of the Keeper. In all likelihood, no more than one of the entities will act against intruders so it is at least possible to escape.

Keeper's note: Instead of making this odd green lake a secret known only to the cult, the Keeper could choose to make it

a subject of quiet rumor among those non-cultists living in the general vicinity of the Hollis farm. It would not be a county-wide rumor, but one that must be culled from those living in the immediate area. Further, it is only conjecture since very few people would have the opportunity to see the lake firsthand. This could be an additional motivating factor or clue leading to the cult.

Aside from the lake, fields, and woodland, the farm has a cluster of buildings near its southwest corner. This consists of a large, three-story brick farmhouse, two large barns, two storage sheds, a brick grain silo, a brick smokehouse, and two outhouses. Obviously an extended family lives here and neighbors can say that at least thirty or forty of the Hollis brood are on the property at any given time. Neighbors know little about them (the nearest one is a mile away), but they are on cordial, if not overly friendly, terms.

Questioning neighbors can backfire. Remember that the vast majority of the cult is in the central portion of the county and are arrayed in the area surrounding the Hollis place. If the investigators interview neighbors or beg them for assistance, it is entirely possible that the investigators are talking to cultists. In such a case, Rollin Hollis would be informed, with obvious dire consequences for the group. For those Keepers inclined to let the dice decide, a group Luck roll is appropriate to determine if the investigators have inadvertently stumbled on yet another nest of cultists.



Rollin's Wives

Rollin Hollis has several marriages that are recognized by the cult. His first wife—and the one to whom he is legally married in the eyes of the state of Kentucky—is Ellen Hollis. A first cousin to Rollin, she is three months pregnant and is only just beginning to show the signs of her condition.

Rollin's other wives live on nearby farms controlled by the cult. His relationship with them is primarily designed to produce children that can later serve as sacrifices. Besides this relationship, Rollin's ties to them are the same as those with any other cult member.

Keeper's note: Remember that there are no telephones; information must be taken physically and messengers can be intercepted or followed.

Access to the cluster of buildings on the Hollis farm is via a single-lane dirt track leading from a slightly wider dirt lane running by the farm. A three-foot-high stone fence predating the Civil War marks the boundary line of the Hollis property where it runs adjacent to this lane. The rest of the farm's perimeter is marked by a simple split-rail fence. As with the McAllister spread, barbed wire has been laced into

the rails of the fence. This seemingly minor feature is unique to the Hollis and McAllister farms, potentially cluing the investigators to the ties between the families.

Observing the buildings from the road is easy, especially if a pair of decent binoculars is handy. From 5:00 A.M. to almost dusk, there is fairly constant activity. Over two dozen people can be counted at any given time, doing chores, relaxing in the sun, *etc.* Aside from the large population, it seems like a reasonably well-run, if not overly prosperous, farm. The buildings all seem to be fairly old. A successful History, Knowledge, or Architecture roll will reveal most buildings are of mid-nineteenth century style, though the sheds appear to

The Hollis Farmhouse

First Floor

Foyer: The foyer is unfurnished. Lighting is provided by a single brass oil lamp that hangs from the ceiling.

Sitting Room: This simply furnished room contains two comfortable armchairs and a coffee table. Family photographs grace one wall.

Family Room: The most heavily used room in the house, this room contains a worn couch, a coffee table, a wood box loaded with firewood, several chairs, and a rifle cabinet. The latter contains several hunting rifles and shotguns. Ammunition is stored in a drawer in the base of the cabinet.

Dining Room: This room is dominated by a single large dining table which is surrounded by a dozen chairs.

Kitchen: The kitchen is fully equipped with the usual accouterments including a large, wood-burning stove.

Pantry: The Hollises always maintain a well-stocked pantry. They can their own food whenever possible so jars of preserves, meats, and more can be found on shelves in here.

Living Room: This is a more formal version of the family room. The furnishings are not quite as shabby and include a sofa, two end tables, a low coffee table, four comfortable armchairs, and a small bookcase. The latter is only partially filled, containing a handful of reference volumes, a few grade-school textbooks, and a motley assortment of popular novels and classic literature.

Second Floor

Lounge: The upstairs lounge is where Rollin Hollis will sometimes relax. It contains two comfortable armchairs, a battered wooden desk with a straight-back wooden chair, and assorted other furnishings. The desk contains writing materials, a map of Kentucky, and common reference materials.

Nursery: This contains two cribs and a handful of well-used toys.

Master Bedroom: Serving as the bedroom of Rollin and Ellen Hollis, this large room is also a kind of office where Rollin does his bookkeeping and planning. The average observer will initially note the main furnishings of the room: a king-size canopy bed, large armoire (wardrobe), two nightstands, dressing table, chest of drawers, two chairs, one footstool, one large chest, one desk, and one small bookcase. However, there is much more to the room than this.

One important clue for the investigators is the large, framed family tree hanging above the desk. It is a meticulous document detailing the names, dates of birth, and dates of death of each and every member of the extended Hollis clan. The handwriting is miniscule since over a century of family history is covered and all who are even remotely related to the group

are noted (including the unfortunate Leigh and Sarah). Spotting their names accidentally requires a successful Spot Hidden roll; they are automatically discovered if sought specifically. This document can serve as an excellent means of tracking down the entire cult during or after the scenario.

The bookcase is another obvious place to check. Within are common reference materials including a current atlas, several almanacs, a dictionary, and a set of encyclopedias. The atlas is especially important. It has a broken binding so when it is opened, it naturally falls open to a page bearing a map of Lake Superior and the regions adjacent to it. The map is marked with a red circle around Keelbreeze Island. A successful Spot Hidden roll reveals a virtually unnoticable red dot (where a pen briefly rested) on Duluth, Minnesota.

Adjacent to the bookcase is a desk which is another obvious place to search. In the top drawer is an envelope containing a travel itinerary and eight train tickets. The itinerary and tickets indicate a trip to Duluth, Minnesota will take place in the last week of the month of April. In another desk drawer is a loaded .38 revolver with a half-full box of ammunition (twenty-five cartridges).

The chest at the foot of the bed is important since it contains the family bible, hidden under a couple of blankets and a large quilt. More on the family bible is given in the section entitled "The Hollis Family Bible" on p. 29.

Bedrooms A through C: This bedroom belongs to a rank-and-file cultist of the Keeper's choosing. He or she should be in relatively good health and pose a potential physical barrier or threat to intruders. The furnishings are the usual: bed, chair, chest of drawers, wardrobe, and personal belongings. Lighting is provided by a single oil lamp as well as a candle in a short candle holder. Whether or not there are any weapons handy in here is up to the Keeper.

Third Floor

Bedrooms D through G: See the description for Bedrooms A through C above.

Lounge: The third-floor lounge sees, at best, moderate use. It contains several worn but comfortable chairs, a table, a small bookcase containing a handful of mundane books as well as a few curiosities and knickknacks, a large, open chest (containing two battered violins, a blanket, and some old newspapers), and a coat rack. Lighting is provided by an oil lamp that is on the table.

Basement

Laundry Room: This room contains little more than a large washtub, a crate of soaps, sponges, rags, and detergents, a washboard, and a ringer. A clothesline runs the length of the room and is tied to nails that have been hammered into the walls. A kerosene lantern hangs from a hook in the center of the ceiling and is the only source of illumination.

Furnace Room: The furnace in here is a standard coal-burning type that provides heat to the house during the winter. Sacks of coal as well as a coal bin are in here. Shelves on the east wall contain a well-stocked tool box, two kerosene lanterns (fully fueled), two one-gallon fuel cans containing kerosene, a pair of two-pint oil cans, a hatchet, and assorted other items. The coal bin contains, in addition to coal, a large coal scoop. Nearby can be found two pickaxes, a wood axe, and a shovel.

Storeroom: This storeroom is a kind of dumping ground for excess family possessions. Crates of dishes, old clothes, extra tools, worn saddles, and more can be found here. Some may be useful while much is either worthless or useless. There is no organization in here so trying to find a specific item is a hit-or-miss operation at best.

Woodshop: This is a multi-purpose workshop with metalworking and woodworking tools and equipment. It is well equipped and sees a lot of use.

Bedroom: Sarah is kept locked in this basement bedroom. It contains nothing more than a cot, nightstand, chair, washbasin, and bucket. The latter serves as a kind of chamberpot. No lighting is provided so when Sarah is left alone, she is left in the dark. The door to the room is locked with an external padlock. Rollin has the only key. Breaking this lock is relatively easy; it has STR 8 and the use of a pickaxe or other tool (conveniently located in other rooms in the basement) can swiftly, though noisily, remove it.

Bedroom: This is the bedroom for a rank-and-file cultist. His or her responsibility is to keep an eye on Sarah, make sure she is fed, and ensure she remains generally healthy. This position is rotated every few days so no one cult member is her permanent guardian. Note that this individual has not been trusted with the key to the room. To gain access to her at mealtime, Rollin must first be asked.

Pen: This area is separate from the rest of the basement and is where the family's many "defectives" are kept. Like the sub-basement at the McAllister Farm, there are a number of cultists here who are survivors of various punishments meted out by the Iloigor. In this case there are fewer, only eight, and their injuries and mental conditions far worse. Only two pose a viable threat to intruders. The others are physically restrained, or are either too injured or too mentally damaged to be a threat. The two who can be a problem ("Brute" and "One-Eye") are quite dangerous and are described in the NPC section.

Attic

The attic is a large, low roofed storage area containing a sprinkling of abandoned belongings (rolled-up rugs, dusty trunks of clothing and linens, etc.). Cobwebs and dust cover everything here and this area has long been ignored.

The Hollis Family Bible

The family bible is an important element in this scenario and contains information key to the ultimate resolution of the problem the investigators are facing. (For those unfamiliar with such things, a family bible is a kind of handwritten family history and log, not an actual holy bible or religious book.)

The bible itself is a massive tome with a leather cover and cord binding. The binding is periodically removed to allow new pages to be added and is occasionally replaced when it wears out. The original pages were parchment and Hollis continues to use this increasingly uncommon material even today in order to maintain consistency in the book's structure. This choice, one also made by his predecessors, has been unwittingly shrewd since parchment is acid-free, unlike the pulp paper commonly used since the middle of the nineteenth century. Thus, the book suffers less from deterioration than it would were it using common paper.

Anyone opening this book will realize it contains a plethora of valuable information, but is also too massive to read in a few short minutes. If the investigators must beat a hasty exit, but want to read this book, they must take it with them.

A reader will find the bible to be a challenge since its organization is poor. The handwriting, grammar, and spelling is often difficult to understand and it is very inconsistent. To read the book completely requires ten days and a successful Read English roll. SAN loss for the book is 1D2/1D8 and a successful Read English roll is rewarded with +3% Cthulhu Mythos.

One early piece of information gleaned from its many pages is a complete family tree, slightly more accurate than the one hanging on the wall of the Hollis master bedroom. Again, both Leigh and Sarah are listed in one offshoot. Furthermore, there are listings of births and deaths separate from that in the family tree and sometimes these are accompanied by notes. For example, deaths due to lloigor punishments are often cited as being "retribution of the gods."

More information is available. A kind of running commentary on family history is contained within and documents with reasonable accuracy how the cult has developed and interacted with its "gods." Lloigor punishments are described in some detail and are accompanied by several crude sketches. Perhaps the single most important piece of information is the documentation of the rites on Keelbreeze Island and the activities leading up to it. It provides all the whys and hows except the ultimate reason as to why the lloigor want the cult to perform the ritual. Since the cult has no idea why, they cannot possibly explain it and have not even tried to speculate.

The Hollis family bible contains no spells, but does contain important information on the lloigor (though the lloigor are not mentioned by name). Most Mythos information within pertains to the lloigor. Experienced investigators will notice reference to a few noted Mythos tomes, however, that have somehow been consulted in the past by various cult patriarchs. These include the *Necronomicon*, the *Book of Eibon*, and the *Book of Hidden Things*. None of these books are presently in the possession of the cult.

either be new or to have been recently reconstructed (the latter is the case). If the Keeper so desires, observers may note some of the same unusual things that could be seen at the McAllister place (see page 18; remember, however, that there is no evidence of the presence of dogs).

The farmhouse is the most important building and will probably be the focus of any intrusion or raid. Like the McAllister farmhouse, it lacks plumbing, electricity, and telephones. Clues within will complete the puzzle, revealing all essential elements of the cult plan.

The Land's Secret

Aside from the buildings and the fields, there are many acres of seemingly untouched woodland across the Hollis property. However, concealed deep within is a ritual site. A thin, difficult-to-find footpath leads from the woods' edge (see the map) to a sinkhole deep within the trees. Sinkholes are a common feature of Maltbee County and a successful Geology or Knowledge roll will reveal that a sinkhole is simply a cave whose roof has collapsed, leaving a pit or hole in the ground. Trespassers stumbling upon this will be amazed to

note an obvious set of steps that have been carved into the sheer sides of the deep pit. If approached at night, observers may not notice the steps and worse, may even miss detecting the pit. Falling into it results in a plunge of thirty feet resulting in 3D6 damage, reduced by 1D6 if a Jump roll succeeds. Since the stairs are only two feet wide and have no handrail, they will do nothing to prevent a fall. If someone does plummet to the bottom, a DEXx3 roll must be attempted. If it fails, a broken bone (a random rib, leg, arm, etc.) is the result. A fumbled roll indicates the injury is more unsightly, either a gruesome compound fracture or a broken back or neck. Death is not necessarily the end result, though the injury should have some lasting effect, very possibly permanent, especially if the victim is not handled gently and hauled immediately off to a competent doctor.

The Sinkhole

Once in April before the final trip to Lake Superior, the cult must perform one important ritual. This takes place on April 15 and begins at 11:00 P.M. Though there is a full moon, the weather is overcast, reducing light to a minimum. Cultists

The price of faith.

gather from all over the county (giving the investigators the opportunity to possibly follow suspects to the ritual site) and discreetly enter the woods at staggered intervals. Most use the footpath and quietly walk without lights to the vicinity of the sinkhole. From close by, observers can see the first cultists descend the narrow stairs, led by Rollin Hollis, and soon after a reddish light begins to emanate. This light can be seen only by observers close by (within one hundred feet) or anyone overflying the area at the time. (Of course, this being 1900, the odds of the investigators cruising around in an untethered balloon are so remote as to be ridiculous.)

Anyone observing the cultists closely who succeeds in their Spot Hidden rolls on this dark night will see they are not garbed in anything unusual, though some carry unlit lanterns and a relative few are openly carrying shotguns (an even mix of 10, 12, 16, and 20-gauge single- and double-barrel types). If the cult suspects trouble, all members will be heavily armed and very wary.

Once the entire group has descended, the red glow fades away. This should surprise observers since the sinkhole does not appear from the surface to be of sufficient size to admit a large group. Anyone now peering into the pit and rolling anything other than a fumble on his Spot Hidden skill will see it is dark except for a faint pinpoint glow (caused by the lit cigarette of an armed guard). The cigarette smoke may be smelled if a group Luck roll succeeds. If the guard is neutralized quietly and the pit is entered, the source

of the earlier glow will soon be found. At the bottom of the pit near the guard are two now-extinguished lanterns.

Anyone at the bottom of the pit who succeeds in a Listen roll will detect the noise of chanting emanating from one side. Further investigation reveals a veritable curtain of vines and vegetation that conceals a shored-up tunnel entrance. The tunnel—which is natural, but has been widened and braced by heavy timbers—curves to the left and travels for sixty or so feet before opening out into a wide, flat-roofed, torch-lit cave. Within are most of the cultists and they are loosely gathered about a large, rough-hewn stone block that serves as an altar. Sarah is also present, though she may be concealed among the mass of cultists.

If the cave is searched when the cultists aren't around (they are only here on ritual nights), it is empty except for unlit torches jammed in crevices in the walls, the altar block, and four unlit lanterns. A thorough search will reveal, with a successful Spot Hidden roll, a hidden passageway almost directly across from the tunnel that the main group of cultists use for rituals. All cult members know of this passageway; it's a natural fissure plunging deep into the limestone bedrock that was formed long ago by flowing water. The fissure is wide enough to admit a single-file line of people, but is tight and prevents any energetic movements such as those required for most forms of fighting. If the cult is assaulted by enraged investigators or a lynch mob while in the cave, Rollin can spirit Sarah down this fissure while his friends

cover his retreat. The fissure emerges two hundred feet later after climbing to the surface. Its opening is extremely well-concealed by vegetation and cannot be found unless someone knows exactly what to look for and has been informed previously as to its location. If Hollis is forced to flee, several cultists will join him, if possible, as an escort.

Rites for the Lloigor

If the investigators get this far, but hesitate to act, they may end up witnessing the ritual in the cave. They may assume Sarah is going to be sacrificed or worse, but this is not the case. It is a ritual designed to prepare her for the April 30th sacrifice on Keelbreeze Island. The ceremony begins at 11:45 P.M. and concludes at midnight. It starts with a chant led by Hollis and repeated by the cultists. The words are unintelligible (they are Mythos gibberish), but their effect is tangible: a tingling feeling can be felt by all within one hundred feet of the cave, including those on the surface. The tingling feels almost electrical and grows in intensity, so much so that it becomes uncomfortable though initially it is pleasant.

After ten minutes of this, the chanting suddenly stops, though the tingling feeling remains. Sarah is then laid gently upon the altar and Hollis produces a small clay pot of some creamy black substance (a mixture of coal dust and axle grease) and smears Mythos symbols upon Sarah's face and hands. If later examined by one who succeeds in a Cthulhu Mythos roll, it is evident they are part of some spell and specific references to both the Lloigor and Ithaqua are detected.

Once complete, Hollis produces a small pocketknife, pricks himself and Sarah, mixes the droplets of blood on a small pewter dish, and smears this into the symbols already painted on Sarah. After a final bout of chanting, the spell is complete and Sarah is ready for the April 30th sacrifice. In the process, each cultist present expends one magic point and Hollis expends five. Note that the cult has no name for this ritual, but for sake of bookkeeping, in Rollin Hollis' character description it is given as Attunement.

Throughout the entire ritual, no threatening motion is made toward Sarah aside from the pricking of her finger (which causes her to yelp, then cry) even though many present are armed in some way (mostly hunting knives, though a half dozen or more pack shotguns and a few possess sidearms).

The Final Step

Preparations for the ritual have been made well in advance by Rollin Hollis. Train tickets, supplies, travelling funds, and other necessities are all ready and have been since before Sarah's disappearance. Several alternate routes and means of escape from the county have been prepared including riding to an adjacent county and catching the train there (as opposed to meeting it in Porterville).

The final element in the cult's plan is to whisk Sarah off to Keelbreeze Island, accompanied by a mob of cultists. The trip is made in secrecy. Cult members discreetly depart their homes after dusk on April 24 and begin the trip. Some catch the train in Porterville while others ride to a nearby county and take the train from there. The train trip itself takes only a day to reach Duluth, Minnesota. There, a boat is hired to make the voyage to the island and that adds another day to the journey. Overall, the entire trip should take three days (one to reach the train station, one for the train trip, and one for the boat voyage) barring unforeseen circumstances (bad weather, rude investigators, lynch mobs, etc.).

This year, in Duluth, Hollis has prearranged passage aboard a small steamer called the *Lady Evangeline*. It is large enough to accommodate all the cultists and their baggage. Note that they are travelling lightly, each carrying only a single suitcase, burlap bag, or large satchel. Some also are carrying rifle cases and all are well-armed. More on the cultists is given later. The *Lady Evangeline's* captain, Émile LeClerc, is a French immigrant and he and his four-man crew are completely unrelated to the cult. They were simply hired to transport the cultists—who they believe are hunters going to Keelbreeze for a vacation—to and from the island. If LeClerc or any of his crew are gunned down accidentally or intentionally by the investigators and the group becomes aware that they made a horrible error, SAN loss will result (perhaps 1D6 per innocent killed and 1D3 for each wounded). The steamer may be assaulted in port, during the voyage, or at the island, as the investigators deem is appropriate.

Keelbreeze Island

Keelbreeze is a five-mile-long, one-mile-wide forested island containing a sprinkling of cabins and lodges used on a seasonal basis by hunters and vacationers. In addition to the usual waterfowl, someone in the past introduced deer to the island and since there are no predators, hunters find game to be common. Many cabins are owned by private citizens, though one landowner who lives on Keelbreeze year round rents out ten cabins to anyone visiting the island. His name is Harold Regan and he lives in a large house on the south end of the island with his wife, Gertrude.

This fictitious island is in the southern portion of Lake Superior and is in U.S. waters. There is no police or government here so the investigators are pretty much on their own. Hollis has already rented two cabins from Regan and it is into these that the cult group will cram themselves. They keep to themselves, avoid contact with the locals, and avoid doing anything suspicious. By this time, Sarah has been thoroughly cowed, as her SAN rating should reflect, and she makes no attempt to flee or reveal her captors even though she now has plenty of opportunities. The cult remains very protective of Sarah, but she is no longer bound or gagged.

The Final Ritual

On the morning of April 30, the cultists begin preparing for the ritual. They gather several lanterns and torches and pack what tools and weapons they intend to take. A guard keeps watch at the cabin at all times to warn of any potential interference by local residents and law enforcement. At dusk, the cult members slip from the cabin and walk reverently to the ritual site.

The site is an overgrown area at the heart of the island that is only rarely travelled by hunters. Beneath a thick coating of vegetation are flagstones forming a kind of floor. At the perimeter of this circular flooring are broken and splintered foundation stones and columns. Scattered about the area are six overturned monoliths, each measuring ten feet by four feet by two feet. At one time, this was a sacred temple to Ithaqua, but when worshippers bumbled through an important ritual, the Wind-Walker eradicated the temple and the devotees.

The original worshippers that used this temple (before it was destroyed) were a small tribe of Native Americans who conducted dark rites to their god. This tribe's name has long been lost in the mists of time and the origins of the temple itself are mysterious.

The ritual begins once the group has arrived and emplaced the lanterns and torches in strategic positions around the perimeter designed to illuminate the proceedings and make it difficult for observers to remain undetected. The subsequent specifics are left up to the devices of the Keeper since by this time either the investigators have hopelessly failed or are about to intervene, making a detailed description of Sarah's tragic demise unnecessary. Needless to say, the ritual culminates in her death as a kind of rite for Ithaqua on behalf of the lloigor. No tangible supernatural effects are spawned by the ritual. In fact, the area lacks the malevolent feel possessed by the McAllister and Hollis farms, as there are no lloigor nearby.

Aftermath

Disaster of some sort is very difficult to avoid in this scenario. Unless the investigators permit—either accidentally or intentionally—Sarah's sacrifice, there is little they can do to stop what is about to be described. If Sarah is not sacrificed *properly* (merely killing her is insufficient and Hollis is aware of this) at the appointed time, two major disasters will occur. First, Ithaqua will come down and rampage on the island, killing many or most of the residents and all of the cultists. Second, the lloigor, in an attempt to appease the now-angry Ithaqua, will devastate much of central Maltbee County, killing a large portion of the cult and perhaps some innocents who are in the way. If the investigators managed to prevent the cult from even reaching the island, Ithaqua will not as-

sault it and will be appeased by the lloigors' drastic actions in Kentucky. Obviously, preventing Sarah's sacrifice will inevitably result in innocent deaths and injuries, but it will also serve to cripple the cult.

Ithaqua's possible rampage can occur in one of two ways. The more likely of the two is that a tremendous storm assails the island and the waters around it, denuding the island of vegetation, structures, and people. All that remains from this treatment are splintered stumps, broken foundations, and scattered debris. Alternately, Ithaqua could put in a personal appearance—though being late April, this is not likely. In such a case, he would ravage the island, killing and destroying all in his path. Trying to escape by boat is impossible since a craft bobbing out on open waters would be obvious to the great wind deity. Some few people on the island would probably be seized by Ithaqua and borne aloft, either never to be seen again or to be found dead many miles away.

The lloigors' treatment of Maltbee County is no more kind. Their wrath would be confined to the area that is dominated by cult farms. Damage to innocents in this case would be limited. Much like Ithaqua, they would most likely employ a devastating cyclonic storm. While the damage is less extreme, it impacts a greater area. Rescuers coming here in the aftermath would find that most of the cult is dead and many are completely missing.

SAN Rewards & Penalties

Event or Action	Reward or Loss
Rescue Sarah unharmed (physically)	
.....	+ID10 SAN
Rescue Sarah, but she is physically injured	
.....	+ID8 SAN
Each five points of SAN Sarah has lost (if rescued)*	
.....	-I SAN
Eradicate the cult using legal means	
.....	+ID10 SAN
Eradicate the cult using illegal means	
.....	+ID8 SAN
The lloigor rampage in Maltbee County	
.....	-ID10 SAN
The ritual on Keelbreeze Island succeeds	
.....	-ID10 SAN
Ithaqua devastates Keelbreeze Island	
.....	-ID10 SAN
Sarah is killed (double the result for her parents)	
.....	-ID10 SAN
Organize and/or take part in a lynching	
.....	-ID6 SAN

* Note that Sarah starts the scenario already having lost five points of SAN so even if she is immediately rescued, this takes effect.

NPC Stats

LEIGH

wife of investigator and descendant
of the Iloigor cult, age 87

Nationality: American

STR 12 DEX 15 INT 15 CON 12 APP 15 POW 14
SIZ 11 EDU 12 SAN 60 Luck 70 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: high school

Skills: Bargain 16%, Cooking 77%, Drive Carriage 26%, Fast Talk 14%, First Aid 51%, Listen 40%, Medicine 19%, Needlepoint/Sewing 60%, Persuade 33%, Psychology 20%, Spot Hidden 31%, Swim 40%

Languages: English 74%

Attacks: none above base skill

Physical Description: Leigh is a good-looking young woman with fine features, medium-length brown hair, and gray eyes.

Notes: Leigh has been married to an investigator for the past eight years and in that time has had one daughter, Sarah. The marriage is a strong one and the kidnapping of Sarah has been the first major negative incident. It is also a fairly progressive marriage since Leigh is strong-willed and unwilling to submit to a hard-line "traditional" marriage. Theirs is a more equal-responsibility marriage as was sometimes the case in rural areas where the wife played a more dominant role in the family. The Keeper may play Leigh as he sees fit, even going so far as to allow a player to run the character. Remember, Leigh is a protective mother who will go to any length to retrieve her daughter, possibly even including violating the law. While she will advocate legitimate means, she may be receptive to more underhanded tactics if they appear to have a reasonable chance of success. Remember, when choosing an investigator to whom Leigh is married, you should ensure that the player is willing to roleplay the relationship and not just treat Leigh as a piece of baggage or extra set of hands. Note that it is possible that she is married to an NPC, Martin Stokes. If this is the case, she will be a devoted wife who is very protective of her aging husband.

MARTIN STOKES

optional husband to Leigh, age 60

Nationality: American

STR 9 DEX 8 INT 13 CON 10 APP 12 POW 15
SIZ 10 EDU 14 SAN 67 Luck 75 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: high school

Skills: Blacksmith 31%, Drive Carriage 25%, First Aid 35%, Geology 7%, History (local) 66%, Listen 61%, Mechanical Repair 56%, Natural History 24%, Persuade 37%, Psychology 15%, Spot Hidden 32%

Languages: English 75%

Attacks: none above base skill



The unseen lord.

Physical Description: Martin is an average looking man with gray hair and blue eyes. He is missing both legs due to an accident suffered many years ago, but is in otherwise good health and condition.

Notes: Martin is an optional NPC. He may be employed if the Keeper decides that it is better to not have an investigator be Sarah's father. He is a kind and gentle man who is totally devoted to his family. His physical condition keeps him in the house much of the time and makes it improbable that he can take an active role in the scenario. However, he does have a good knowledge of local history and lore and therefore may be used as a source of information. On the negative side, he is also a prime target for cult retaliation or intimidation.

SARAH

Leigh's daughter and kidnap victim, age 7

Nationality: American

STR 5 DEX 6 INT 13 CON 6 APP 15 POW 13
SIZ 6 EDU 3 SAN 60 Luck 65 HP 6

Damage Bonus: -1D6

Education: some grade school

Skills: none above base skill plus any the Keeper feels are appropriate to add

Languages: English 40% (10% written)

Attacks: half of base skill

Special: Sarah's SAN rating degrades at the rate of one point each day she is in the clutches of the cult. She is already assumed to have lost five points of SAN due to the kidnapping. She may also lose more SAN due to other causes. For each parent she learns has been killed she loses 1/1D10 SAN (doubled if the death occurs within her sight). If anyone else is killed within her view, she loses 1/1D6 SAN. Unless a full scale battle occurs in front of her, she should still have a SAN of thirty or so when the April 30 ritual rolls around. Her SAN will not degrade below twenty five due to captivity though long term psychological problems will crop up.

Physical Description: Sarah is a pretty seven year old with gray eyes and long brown hair. She resembles her mother.

Notes: Sarah is little more than baggage for the cult and tends to scream or whimper at inopportune times. She has not been physically abused, but has been terrorized periodically, especially when she does not cooperate with instructions. She is often bound and gagged, though not always, especially at mealtimes. If she is confronted by a non-cultist who may be a rescuer, she must attempt an Idea roll. If successful, she will run (if possible) into the person's arms and beg to be saved. For every point of SAN she has lost, this Idea roll is at a -1% modifier.

ROLLIN HOLLIS

cult leader and priest, age 40

Nationality: American

STR 15 DEX 15 INT 13 CON 16 APP 9 POW 17
SIZ 15 EDU 12 SAN 0 Luck 85 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: self-taught

Skills: Bargain 30%, Boating 30%, Climb 55%, Conceal 49%, Cthulhu Mythos 31%, Dodge 40%, Drive Carriage 29%, Fast Talk 45%, Hide 55%, Jump 34%, Listen 66%, Natural History 30%, Navigate 39%, Persuade 60%, Ride 50%, Sneak 61%, Spot Hidden 65%, Swim 51%, Throw 44%, Track 33%, Woodcraft/Carpentry 50%

Languages: English 72% (written 57%)

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 59%, 1D4+2+db damage (hunting knife or sacrificial dagger)

Fist/Punch Attack 77%, 1D3+db damage

Rifle Attack 37%, 2D6+1 damage (.44-40 lever-action rifle)

Spells: Attunement, Shrivelling, Wither Limb, Wrack

Physical Description: Hollis is a heavily built and average looking man with a lantern jaw, bristling black eyebrows, and a shock of long, stringy, black hair. A light growth of beard is often in evidence since he shaves only irregularly. He has been fortunate in not having to face the wrath of the lloigor yet and does not display any of their marks of punishment.

Notes: Rollin Hollis is the domineering, overbearing, and arrogant leader of the Maltbee County cult. Like all the cultists, he greatly fears his frightening gods and will do anything they say without question or hesitation. In the past, mere misunderstandings have resulted in the deaths of cult members, not to mention other horrible punishments. Hollis is fully aware of the need for secrecy and will do anything he can to ensure the cult remains completely anonymous. Aside from the lloigor, the greatest threat he faces is the possibility of publicity which could result in lynchings of cult members and destruction of cult property. Up until now, he and his predecessors have succeeded in remaining in the shadows and only now is the risk of being revealed great.

LLOYD McALLISTER

influential cultist, age 55

Nationality: American

STR 12 DEX 13 INT 13 CON 14 APP 11 POW 16
SIZ 13 EDU 13 SAN 0 Luck 80 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: self-taught, some high school

Skills: Bargain 40%, Boating 41%, Climb 50%, Conceal 41%, Cthulhu Mythos 21%, Drive Carriage 35%, Fast Talk 45%, Hide 45%, Jump 29%, Listen 57%, Natural History 53%, Navigate 33%, Persuade 51%, Ride 65%, Sneak 50%, Spot Hidden 63%, Swim 56%, Track 25%, Woodcraft/Carpentry 40%

Languages: English 80% (written 65%)

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 50%, 1D4+2+db damage (hunting knife)

Fist/Punch Attack 61%, 1D3+db damage

Rifle Attack 35%, 2D6+3 damage (.30-30 lever-action carbine)

Spells: Shrivelling

Physical Description: Lloyd is one who has avoided the punishments of the lloigor. He is a middle aged man with a large paunch, cold, gray eyes, graying hair, and a profusion of wrinkles. Age, the worries about the cult, and the tough farm life have not been kind to Lloyd.

Notes: As one of the older members of the cult and as such, Lloyd is well respected and revered by the cult in general. One of his great failings is that he has shown a poor aptitude for learning spells. Despite this, he has kept those under his command well in line though the lloigor still find excuses to deal out punishments.

ROLLY McALLISTER

cultist, age 23

Nationality: American

STR 16 DEX 12 INT 11 CON 18 APP 7 POW 12
SIZ 15 EDU 8 SAN 0 Luck 80 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: none, cult training and indoctrination only

Skills: Boating 50%, Climb 55%, Conceal 61%, Cthulhu Mythos 11%, Drive Carriage 35%, Hide 65%, Jump 44%, Listen 69%, Natural History 42%, Navigate 39%, Ride 41%, Sneak 68%, Spot Hidden 29%, Swim 66%, Track 18%, Woodcraft/Carpentry 40%

Languages: English 61% (written 37%)

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 74%, 1D4+2+db damage (hunting knife: he carries two, one of which is concealed)

Fist/Punch Attack 80%, 1D3+db damage

Large Club Attack 46%, 1D8+db damage (heavy cudgel or shotgun stock) or 1D8+2+db damage (wood axe)

Large Club Parry 20%

Shotgun Attack 50%, 4D6+2/2D6+1/1D8 damage (10-gauge double barrel shotgun)

Spells: none

Physical Description: Rolly is tall and heavily built and is obviously a strong physical specimen. He has dark brown hair, a scraggly beard, and an ominous, menacing air. Of greatest note is the black eyepatch covering his left eye. While the right eye is brown and bloodshot, were the patch removed, the left is a shocking sight. Protruding from it is a one inch long, tentacular growth vaguely resembling some kind of horrid worm. When freed of the patch, the growth moves and wriggles with a life of its own. The sight is unnerving to non-cultists, causing 1/1D6 SAN loss. The growth is a punishment from the lloigor and has completely and permanently destroyed the sight in that eye.

Notes: Rolly is the cruel and menacing son (one of several) of Lloyd McAllister. He is ruthless to the enemies of the cult and is a dangerous foe when confronted. He hates the lloigor with a passion, but that is no different from his hatred of everything else that lives. His fear of the lloigor is tremendous and he will not cross them, fearing what else they might do to him.

SHERIFF WILLIAM "BILL" THOMERSON

Maltbee County Sheriff, age 41

Nationality: American

STR 12 DEX 9 INT 13 CON 14 APP 10 POW 10
SIZ 12 EDU 12 SAN 50 Luck 50 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: high school, police training

Skills: Conceal 40%, Drive Carriage 28%, Fast Talk 35%, Hide 49%, Jump 32%, Law 29%, Library Use 40%, Listen 45%, Navigate 22%, Persuade 47%, Psychology 20%, Ride 53%, Sneak 57%, Spot Hidden 50%, Swim 38%, Throw 40%, Track 35%

Languages: English 75%

Attacks:

Handgun Attack 25%, 1D10 damage (.38 revolver)

Rifle/Shotgun Attack 51%, 2D6+1 damage (.44-40 lever-action rifle) or 4D6/2D6/1D6 damage (12-gauge double barrel shotgun)

Small Club Attack 50%, 1D6+db damage (nightstick)

Small Club Parry 31%

Physical Description: Thomerson is average and nondescript and is the kind of guy who is often overlooked in crowds and at parties. He is a bit thin in the face and a pair of wire rim spectacles (to cure mild myopia, without them he has 20/80 vision) give him the appearance of an intellectual though he is barely a high school graduate. Always well groomed, Thomerson has medium length blondish hair and a thin moustache.

Notes: Thomerson is quiet and unassuming and makes his living by running the Maltbee County Sheriff's Department (MSCD) in a manner usual for the time. Simply put, he is an elected official who sees his primary duty as being that of a kind of court officer, not law enforcement officer. The jail is run efficiently and the courthouse is well guarded against any who might take offense at the judge, prosecutor, or defense attorneys. Unfortunately, except for enforcing laws in and near Porterville, he does little to protect the people in the rest of the county. Like it or not, this was often the state of affairs in county sheriff's departments around the turn of the century and Maltbee County is no exception. If approached with a specific grievance, he will have a deputy check it out, but often nothing comes of it and county residents have no confidence in the MSCD's ability to enforce the law (thus the problems with vigilantism). The impact of the MSCD in the scenario should be fairly minor unless accused cultists are turned over to the sheriff as opposed to being simply lynched. If turned in, the possibility of a conviction is pretty high even if the evidence is only circumstantial as long as enough credible witnesses come forward to testify. In his spare time, Thomerson is an avid hunter of both large game and fowl, but with a handgun, he is little better than Barney Fyfe.

McALLISTER CULTISTS

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	EDU	Hits	Bonus	Damage
Jethro Goodchild	8	17	10	9	4	8	10	7	10	+0	
Allan McAllister	9	8	9	10	6	10	11	6	11	+0	
Collin McAllister*	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	8	12	+0	
Rolland McAllister	12	10	10	11	6	11	11	6	11	+0	
Sullivan McAllister*	16	11	12	17	7	12	16	7	17	+1D4	
Lucinda McAllister	5	11	13	5	14	9	8	6	7	-1D4	
Lucretia McAllister	9	13	9	11	3	9	11	4	11	+0	
Harry Payton	13	11	8	12	3	8	14	4	13	+1D4	

Note: all of the above have a SAN rating of zero.

* If possible, this cultist will attend the final ritual on Keelbreeze Island.

Skills: as the Keeper sees fit. Note that the cultists are generally poorly educated. Few have made it past grade school and any who bear physical evidence of the lloigor are likely totally uneducated. However, the cult does "educate" their own though this is totally inadequate compared with the public schools.

Languages: English EDUx5%; all are illiterate or only have a written knowledge no more than 25%.

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 50%, 1D4+2+db damage (hunting knife); this is a popular weapon carried by everyone.

Fist/Punch Attack 65%, 1D3+db damage

Rifle/Shotgun Attack 35%, damage dependent on what the Keeper arms them with. Typically, they will be armed with .44-40 lever-action rifles (2D6+1 damage) or double barrel break-open shotguns (a fairly even mix of 10, 12, 16, and 20-gauge weapons).

Spells: none

Notes: Jethro Goodchild, Harry Payton, and Lucretia McAllister have suffered more than any of these from the punishments of the lloigor. Each displays one or more tentacular growths on obvious portions of their bodies (face, back of hands, arms, etc.) which can only be partially concealed by clothing. Jethro and Harry haven't left the farm in years but do work outside, especially in the fields. Lucretia generally does chores about the house. Lucinda has avoided punishments altogether, but is physically frail and generally stays in the house except in the mornings to help out with the chickens. The McAllister "boys" are all in good health though Allan and Rolland both have tentacular growths on their torsos. Allan has also had his left hand amputated, but this was due to an accident, not the lloigor (a doctor could tell the difference). All of these folks are dedicated to protecting the cult and defending the land and will fight to the death if assaulted.

ROLLIN'S BASEMENT "DEFECTIVES"

Two of the unfortunates who are in the basement of the Hollis home are especially dangerous. Six others who are with them are generally not, having suffered catastrophic physical and/or mental damage or being restrained by shackles and chains. Of the two dangerous ones, one is huge (SIZ

19), immensely strong, and totally naked. He is known simply as "Brute" in part because of his size and in part because of his abysmal intelligence. His goal in life is to crush the guts out of anything he can lay his massive hands on. Oddly, has the ability to sense anyone who is mentally unstable and will not attack anyone who is either temporarily insane or has a SAN rating under 20 (this includes investigators). Fortunately, Brute is attached to a long chain by his neck and cannot exit the pen. He does have total freedom of movement within the pen, however.

The other dangerous occupant is smaller and is armed. He has only one eye (his left eye) remaining and is clothed in several layers of ragged clothing. Within these rags he has concealed an assortment of crude cutting implements fashioned out of glass, nails, or whatever has come into his possession. These can cause nasty, aggravated wounds. One-Eye's goal in life is to murder Rollin Hollis. He is shackled on a long chain in the room much like Brute except that his chain is attached to his ankle. Note that though he wants to kill Rollin Hollis, he also wants to kill everyone else he can. Right now, he is patiently waiting for an opportunity to escape. Thus, he has not murdered anyone in the pen for to do so would result in his execution by the cult.

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	EDU	SAN	Hits	Bonus	Age
Brute	19	11	4	20	3	10	19	1	0	20	+1D6	23
One-Eye	13	15	15	12	5	12	12	5	0	12	+1D4	26

Brute's Attacks:

Fist/Punch Attack 80%, 1D3 + db damage

Grapple Attack 74%, special damage

One-Eye's Attacks:

Small Knife Attack 66%, 1D3 + db damage (crude, make-shift blade)

Large Knife Attack 54%, damage dependent on what becomes available to him

THE MASSES

What follows are statistics for county deputies, local residents, and rank and file cultists.

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	EDU	SAN	Hits	Bonus	Age
Cultists												
Alan	12	13	10	17	9	9	12	7	0	15	+0	22
Brian*	17	9	13	13	3	12	15	5	0	14	+1D4	22
Charlie	11	9	11	11	14	15	9	5	0	10	+0	29
Chris	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	0	13	+1D4	45
Dennis*	9	7	8	14	3	10	12	6	0	13	+0	24
Eddie*	8	8	10	10	7	11	11	5	0	11	+0	25
Ellen†	8	13	11	15	8	13	9	4	0	12	+0	30
Ernie*	6	10	17	11	11	13	12	8	0	12	+0	42
James††	13	3	8	12	3	3	8	4	0	10	+0	23
Jeb	14	14	9	15	13	7	15	12	0	15	+1D4	33
Joe**	5	6	10	8	7	12	8	10	0	8	-1D4	29

John	14	15	14	14	14	12	13	12	0	14	+104	24
Kevin*	7	12	15	8	11	8	11	9	0	10	+0	19
Lee**	10	5	12	7	6	4	8	9	0	8	+0	17
Margie	11	10	15	10	12	9	10	10	0	10	+0	20
Mike	16	13	9	16	8	11	15	6	0	16	+104	22
Mike	13	12	10	11	12	12	13	10	0	12	+104	23

Deputies

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	EDU	SAN	Hits	Bonus	Age
Ben	14	8	12	13	9	10	13	10	46	13	+104	24
Bert	15	13	11	14	10	13	14	10	59	14	+104	19
Martin	10	16	14	12	12	14	12	12	65	12	+0	20
Ned	12	12	14	15	12	13	13	12	61	14	+104	22
Tim	13	12	12	14	7	10	14	11	50	14	+104	18

Locals (and potential members of a lynch mob)

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	EDU	SAN	Hits	Bonus	Age
Alex	9	9	15	10	12	12	13	10	50	12	+0	21
Bob	13	11	14	13	9	13	12	12	51	13	+104	22
Celia	9	14	14	12	13	14	9	12	56	11	+0	39
Chet	16	10	12	15	10	11	15	9	50	15	+104	20
Diane	8	12	13	8	10	9	8	8	40	8	+0	24
Frank	14	8	14	13	8	16	13	12	71	13	+104	30
Harry	9	12	12	10	10	8	13	11	39	12	+0	29
Jed	15	17	13	15	13	15	14	13	69	15	+104	23
Ken	14	12	12	13	12	12	13	12	55	13	+104	24
Lee	8	8	10	12	8	10	17	11	49	15	+104	25
Mary	10	12	14	12	13	11	10	13	50	11	+0	30
Mel	10	12	9	10	13	11	12	12	48	11	+0	44
Sam	14	7	13	14	10	10	11	13	44	13	+104	44
Tom	10	16	9	12	16	9	12	11	40	12	+0	19
Vida	8	9	12	6	7	13	11	9	52	9	+0	35
William ...	10	12	11	13	9	9	14	10	40	14	+0	23

* This cultist bears some mark of punishment inflicted by the lloigor. Typically it is a tentacular growth (possibly not concealed by clothing) or horrible scarring.

** This cultist is missing one random appendage due to a lloigor punishment.

† This is Rollin Hollis' wife. She is three months pregnant.

†† This cultist is missing both legs due to a lloigor punishment and is among the most extreme examples of the wrath of these entities. He can still pose a legitimate threat, especially since he might be underestimated.

Skills: as the Keeper sees fit. Deputies are poorly trained and educated and the locals (including cultists) should have skills reflecting their occupations and backgrounds.

Languages: English EDUx5%

Cultists' Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 50%, 1D4+2+db damage (hunting knife)

Fist/Punch Attack 65%, 1D3+db damage

Rifle/Shotgun 40%, damage varies (hunting weapon)

Deputies' Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 35%, 1D4+2+db damage (hunting knife)

Fist/Punch Attack 65%, 1D3+db damage

Handgun Attack 30%, 1D10 damage (.38 revolver)

Rifle/Shotgun Attack 40%, 2D6+1 damage (.44-40 lever-action rifle) or 4D6/2D6/1D6 damage (12-gauge double barrel shotgun)

Small Club Attack 35%, 1D6+db damage (nightstick)

Locals' Attacks:

attack forms and skill ratings vary per individual (generally hunting arm of some kind)

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A Murder of Crows

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A Murder of Crows

JOHN H. CROWE III

ILLUSTRATED BY HEATHER HUDSON

On January 30, 19—, David and Allan Crow, students at Miskatonic University, traveled to Morgan City, Louisiana, to conduct research on local Native American history, culture, and legends. They have not been heard from since April and were expected back a month ago. Their father, Arthur Crow, contacts the investigators on June 10 to find them. Authorities both in Massachusetts and Louisiana have been of no help, and he considers the investigators to be his last resort.

Background

This scenario begins on June 10 in either Boston or Arkham and may be set anytime between 1910 and 1923. Its origins extend back over a century. In the early 1800s, as European settlers moved west, some came to southern Louisiana. A small group fleeing persecution in France settled in a remote part of Louisiana's bayous and have since shunned society and the outside world. Practitioners of black magic and worshipers of a foul fertility deity they call Shubbe-Mig, they are a threat to any who enter their reach. For decades, disappearances in the area have been attributed to the treacherous swamps rather than to the secret cult. Recently, the cult has begun to expand its operations in response to civilization's encroachment on the bayous. Many cultists now blend into local communities, and some even hold positions of authority and power. This is especially true in the small town of Black Moss, Louisiana, which is located in St. Mary Parish a few miles southwest of Morgan City.

The cult of Shubbe-Mig has been growing and festering in the coastal bayous of Louisiana since the early 1800s. Learned investigators who discover the name of their deity likely will suspect it to be either Shudde-M'ell or Shub-Niggurath. The latter is correct. The cult now has over one hundred human members, most of whom suffer to some extent from the effects of over a century of inbreeding and various foul practices that have warped their bloodlines. The main staple of their diets is the flesh of their victims, whom they collect from local communities and from among their own number. In addition, they have long been in league with much of the local ghoulish population, with whom they share many of the same tastes and interests. Perhaps one of their greatest blasphemies has been their mating with ghouls, resulting in human-ghoul hybrids informally known as hughouls. While most of the cult resides in a secret village in

the swamp near Black Moss, enough have integrated into nearby towns to make the entire region treacherous to investigators. The small town of Black Moss is essentially controlled by the cult and informants also live in several other nearby communities, including Morgan City. Cult control of Black Moss as well as the large number of spies in the area are great hurdles the investigators must overcome.

The cult proved to be the bane of Arthur Crow's sons. David, a graduate student in anthropology, and Allan, an undergraduate student in history, were researching the obscure (and fictitious) Minlani Indian tribe, which fled European expansion and westward movement by migrating to the swamps and vanished from the region in the early 1800s. The story of the Minlani has been embellished over the years and most believe it to be mere myth. The Crows came to Louisiana to prove whether or not the Minlani existed, by finding physical evidence and/or descendants of people who encountered them. Instead they fell into the cult's grasp, and were slain and consumed by the cult and their ghoulish allies.

Thus enter our hardy and determined investigators, who are bent on solving this mystery. They will soon realize they are in for much more than they bargained for. "A Murder of Crows" is designed for four to six investigators with low to moderate experience. Note that this scenario can be very graphic and contains elements disturbing or offensive to some. It is intended for mature readers and players only.

Getting Started

One or more of the investigators is contacted on June 10, 19—, by Arthur Crow, a prominent Boston physician. Dr. Crowe calls one of the investigators living in Boston, where Dr. Crow lives, or in Arkham, where his sons went to school, and arranges to come over and meet the investigator and his associates. At the meeting, he explains that his sons, David and Allan, traveled to Louisiana to study and research an extinct Indian tribe. They were supposed to have returned in May, but failed to do so. Dr. Crow last received a letter from David in April and now believes his sons are in trouble. Authorities in Morgan City and St. Mary Parish (Louisiana uses the term parish instead of county) have been of no help, and Dr. Crow has turned to the investigators as a last resort. Those contacted are welcome to recruit a small number of trusted associates to assist in the investigation.

Dr. Crow offers the investigators \$100.00 each in advance, plus \$500.00 to cover group expenses, not counting the cost of

travel, which he will pay for separately. In addition, the group will be given \$1,000.00 when one or both of his sons are returned safely home. If the group's spokesperson succeeds in a Bargain skill roll, Dr. Crow will double the advance pay and reward money. If this roll is fumbled, nothing immediately adverse will happen, but if something goes awry with the investigation, Dr. Crow may sue the group in civil court and/or provide them no legal assistance if they get in trouble. The Keeper should not suggest that this Bargain roll be made; it should be the idea of one of the investigators/players.

The Investigators

"A Murder of Crows" can best accommodate characters working as private investigators, possibly working for a large agency such as the Pinkertons. Dr. Crow might also contact a personal friend or associate with the appropriate background who may, in turn, hire or recruit the other player characters. Of course, all the investigators could be close friends of the Crow family, thus solving any motivational problems for taking part in the scenario.

Research in Massachusetts

The following sections describe research the investigators can undertake before leaving for Louisiana.

Interview: Dr. Crow

Dr. Crow will offer the investigators recent photographs of his sons (Photographic Aids #1 and #2, p. 196). If asked, Dr. Crow will gladly provide all the information he can about his sons and their project, but he does not think to volunteer information, so it will take careful questioning to elicit answers from him. He knows the names of his sons' Miskatonic advisors and roommates, and the name of the St. Mary Parish deputy he had contact with (Kyle Washburn). He also knows that his sons stayed in a boardinghouse in Morgan City run by a woman named Edna Archer. If the investigators ask to see correspondence from his sons, give them Player Aid #1, the last letter of David Crow (also on p. 196). The letter comes in an envelope postmarked "Morgan City, Louisiana."

Note that Dr. Crow is ignorant of the village of Black Moss, Louisiana, and the ultimate fate of his sons. He never knew his sons went to Black Moss, one of the primary strongholds of evil within this scenario. Letters sent from Black Moss that mentioned the town were intercepted by the cult and destroyed.

Interview: Former Roommates

David's and Allan's roommates can provide little information. David's roommate, Jeff Ragan, is absorbed in research on his



The celebrants.

master's thesis and has paid little attention to unrelated matters. Allan's roommate, Albert Buell, is more outgoing and will be very sympathetic to the group. Both Ragan and Buell are aware that the brothers went to Louisiana, but were not interested in the specifics. They have not been in contact with the Crows since they left, and are unaware that the brothers are missing.

Interview: Advisors & Professors

Traveling to Miskatonic to interview David's and Allan's professors is of value. David was working toward a Master of Arts degree in anthropology and his advisor, Dr. Alan Gibson, is best equipped to assist the investigators. Those wishing to meet with him must make an appointment (no exceptions) at least one day in advance. He will answer any normal and reasonable questions put to him, but will be more open and helpful if Dr. Crow is present or calls or writes ahead to vouch for the investigators. He can inform the group of the subject of the students' research, the lost Minlani tribe, and the sources David used. The plan was for David and Allan to travel to Louisiana and spend a semester there. This month, David is supposed to submit a paper and journal, which, if satisfactory, will earn him eight hours of credit and satisfy his Field Research Techniques requirement. Dr. Gibson can provide nothing further, other than to say that David was an above-average student dedicated to his field of study.

Allan was working on his Bachelor of Arts degree in history and his advisor, Dr. Carl Morrison, approved Allan's trip to assist his brother in Louisiana. Like David, Allan had to write a paper and journal and, if these were satisfactory, would earn history credit and satisfy some graduation requirements. Interviewing other professors familiar with David and Allan provides no further information and at best can only confirm Gibson's and Morrison's statements. Nothing can be learned from other friends or acquaintances of the missing brothers and no one seems to be aware they are missing (it hasn't yet hit the local newspapers). They simply haven't been involved in anything nefarious or suspicious.

Research: Library

Any good university or city library in New England can provide information useful to the investigators. They will find a few books mentioning the Minlani tribe, and many more on Louisiana's swamps and towns. This information is limited to general background only but can be had after succeeding in a single Library Use roll. Information on the setting is provided for the Keeper in the next section.

Louisiana

Once the investigators are finished in Massachusetts, their next step is to travel to Louisiana, by either train or ship.

Traveling to New Orleans from Boston by freighter takes five to six days. Traveling directly to Morgan City by train takes four days. Regardless of the method used, the trip (paid for by Dr. Crow) is uneventful. The group may decide that an initial stop in New Orleans is ideal, since there are many good libraries and universities present. A trip from Morgan City to New Orleans by train is brief (a few hours at most).

If they failed to do so in Arkham or Boston, the investigators may conduct research at one of New Orleans' libraries, such as the main public library, which is patterned after the Temple of Mars in Rome. Among the institutions of higher learning present in the city are Tulane University and Loyola University, whose libraries contain essentially the same information as New England libraries, with perhaps a little more detail.

The city's daily newspaper is the *States-Item*. Digging into back issues can be useful. Investigators looking for a pattern of disappearances over the years will notice one if they make two successful Library Use rolls and one successful Idea roll. Of course, such research is time-consuming and requires a minimum of one hundred man-hours to conduct. Overall time can be drastically reduced by the *coordinated* use of multiple researchers, but only those making successful Library Use rolls help. Those failing Library Use rolls must have their work redone before the final pattern can be seen. Assuming this research is successful, it can be determined that disappearances occur on a fairly regular basis throughout the region's swamps, but they peak in the Morgan City/Black Moss area. Most are attributed to the dangerous nature of the swamps, but the Morgan City area is cited as being the most dangerous, for various reasons, including ignorance and carelessness of travelers and residents, occasional marauding "highwaymen," hidden quicksand, treacherous currents and undertows, and even unexpected violent storms from the Gulf of Mexico. The cult is not mentioned but is actually responsible for the high level of disappearances around Black Moss. The pattern is clear, but subtle, and it should come as no surprise that no one up until now has discovered it. Of course, from the perspective of the investigators it *could* be a coincidence . . .

Checking into local libraries for legends and folklore pertaining to the swamps near Black Moss is a good option to exercise. At the very least, investigators should want to check for information on the Minlani Indians, since the very subject could have been what got the Crows into trouble. Indirectly, this is the case, though the investigators will not learn that for some time. Investigators may stumble upon the other subjects listed below if they search for information on strange disappearances. Research on local lore and culture may also turn up stories on these topics. Each of the following requires a successful Library Use roll to discover.

The Minlani Indian Tribe: This tribe, which was the reason for the Crows' being in Louisiana, has already been

described. According to records, no physical evidence of this tribe remains.

Confederate Gold Shipment: In January of 1865, a company of Confederate cavalry fled from Union troops into the swamps in the area of Morgan City. This company reportedly was escorting a mule caravan transporting a large gold shipment from Texas to Confederate government authorities in Alabama. Realizing they were outnumbered and virtually surrounded, their commander led them into the swamps in the hope of evading the federal forces. They were never seen again, and some believe the gold is still out in the swamps somewhere, waiting for a fortunate person to find it. Of course, most people believe either that this is a fairy tale or that the troops waited it out and later shed their uniforms and divided up the gold. Fortune seekers have from time to time entered the swamps in an effort to find the gold, and many have never returned. It's chow time for the cult when fortune hunters enter the swamp!

For the purposes of this scenario, this fictitious event did occur. The troops, led by Captain William Anderson, were escorting a gold and arms shipment to Alabama and were charged with smuggling it across the Union-controlled Mississippi River. Failing that, the caravan was not to fall into enemy hands. Having been informed by his scouts that the situation was hopeless, Captain Anderson led his unit into the swamps to shake off pursuit. The Union forces believed the Confederates were just another ordinary unit and allowed them to escape. Anderson was unaware that the Union commander had no idea of the nature of his cargo and entrenched his unit in the swamps to play a waiting game. Scouts he sent to determine what was going on outside the swamps never returned. Meanwhile, disease decimated the ranks. Anderson and a handful of his men still hide in the swamps, believing the war to be in full force. Now in their seventies, these elderly Confederates are somewhat unstable and fully believe the South would never surrender, a belief reinforced by their encounters with the cult, whom they believe to be Yankee sympathizers. The only thing preventing them all these years from going after the cult has been their need to keep their cargo secret and safe. Captain Anderson and his men can be valuable allies if convinced of the situation in the outside world (or if deluded into believing the investigators are Confederate troops or representatives). They know much about the cult, including the location of the village, and are good at navigating and surviving in the swamps. If the investigators travel in the swamps, they are likely to be shadowed eventually by one of Anderson's men, and if they are then accosted by the cultists, the Confederates may believe the investigators to be potential allies. A group Luck roll should be made once every few days of travel in the swamp. If successful, one of Anderson's scouts has detected the group and begun to follow them.

Keeper's note: Though irrational, especially concerning the subjects of the cult and the Civil War, these men are not insane or evil. They are merely dedicated to their cause and their mission and now know no other life.

The Swamp Creatures: This red herring may have the investigators believing the swamps are chock full of Deep Ones or Serpent People. A number of tales describe humanoid, frog-like reptilians residing in the remotest parts of the bayous. They are credited with waylaying passing boats and killing and eating their passengers. The Keeper should feel free to embellish this as much or as little as he likes. This story can do much to confound and confuse the investigators.

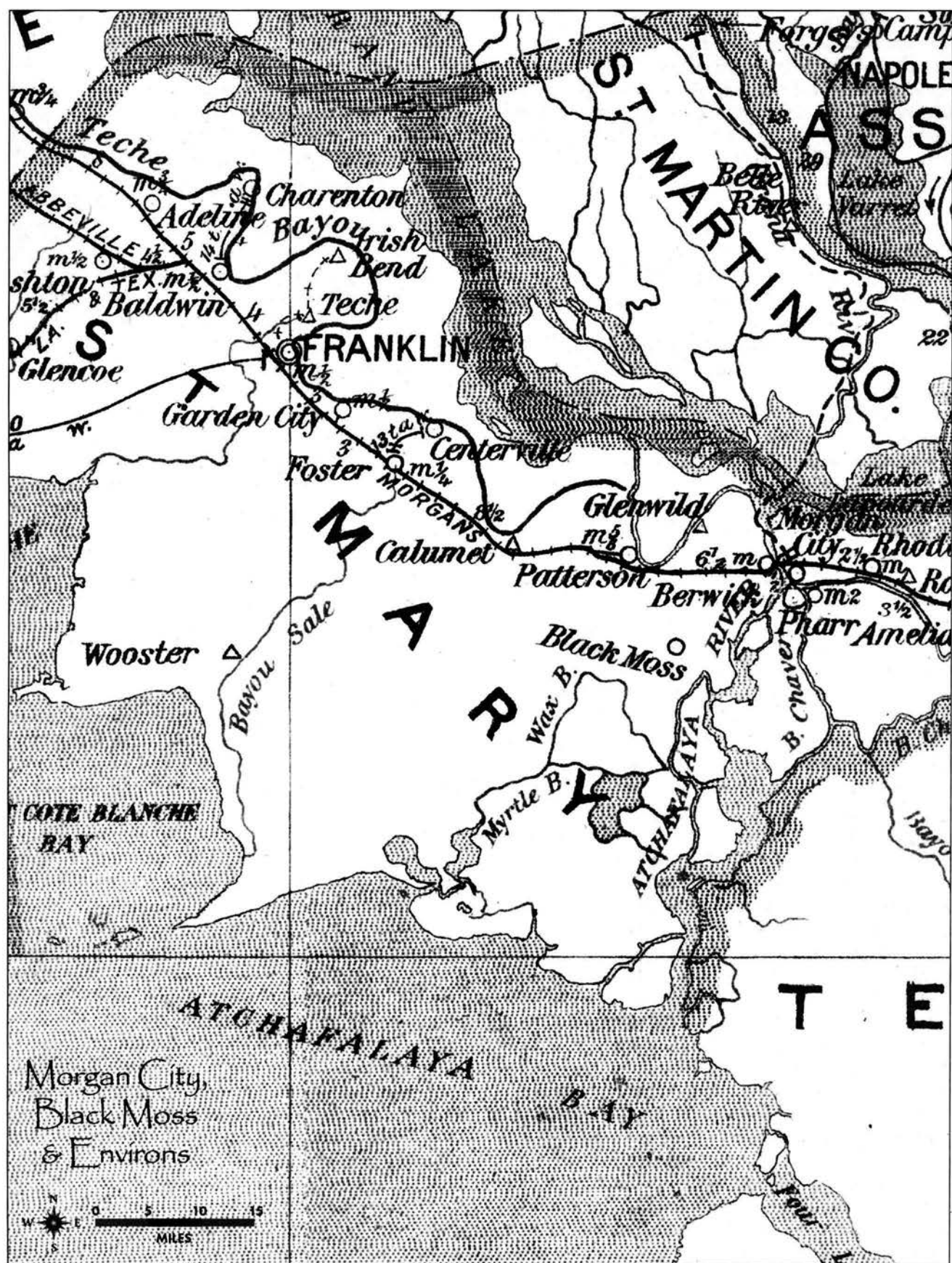
The Swamp Ghosts: Another red herring, this consists of reports of strange, unearthly lights that are seen from time to time in the swamps and bayous of the region by local residents and travelers. No one has yet explained these lights, but many theories have been put forth concerning them, including ghosts of Indians or pirates, and aliens from Mars. In reality, these are caused by methane and other gases in the swamp that glow with a soft luminescence. Patches or blobs of such gas are seen by superstitious locals who exaggerate their appearance and behavior. The Keeper can create disturbing images of Fire Vampires dancing in the active imaginations of experienced investigators through the use of this story.

Morgan City, Louisiana

From New Orleans, Morgan City is accessible by motor vehicle, horseback, and railroad. While a train trip takes only a few hours, an automobile trip takes the better part of a day. Vehicles and mounts can be rented or purchased in New Orleans at whatever cost the Keeper deems appropriate. Note that if the Keeper sets the scenario prior to the First World War, motor vehicles will be rarer and much more costly.

Morgan City has a number of places the investigators will want to check out. First, it contains both the Morgan City Police Department (MCPD) and the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Department (SMPD). Both departments are aware of the Crow case, but have failed to discover the fates of the students. They are not aware they went to Black Moss, since Dr. Crow never informed them of this. As a result, detectives in both departments believe the students are no longer within the parish. Both of these law enforcement agencies contain a spy or two who may (Keeper's discretion) notify the cult in the event the investigators make their presence and intentions known.

The investigators are likely to check out Mrs. Archer's Boardinghouse, where David and Allan stayed while in town. The Crows' room has been rented twice to other



boarders since they left and is currently occupied by a salesman named Joshua Farmer. No evidence is in the room, and both Mr. Farmer and Mrs. Archer will resent any intrusion. Mrs. Archer will not permit a search without Mr. Farmer's consent, which he will give only if bribed at least two dollars (wealthy-looking investigators will have to pay up to five dollars). Neither Joshua Farmer nor Edna Archer are affiliated with the cult.

If the investigators decide to question the other boarders, they will have luck with a young man named Julius Bickers. Julius is a clerk at a local general store who has lived in Morgan City only a year or so. He spoke with the Crow brothers on occasion and thought highly of them. When questioned in a courteous manner, he can tell investigators that the Crows mentioned they had to go to Black Moss to continue their studies. He knows little of their project except that it involved some obscure Indian tribe. If asked, he cannot say where Black Moss is.

The St. Mary Parish Historical Society is the third place investigators may wish to look into. It is funded by private donations and its small gift shop, and is run by Mrs. Hannah Merriwether. A friendly and intelligent lady, Mrs. Merriwether will do her best to assist cordial and polite investigators. She can tell them that she remembers the Crow brothers, who spent several days in the building looking through old records, photographs, and artifacts. If a successful group Luck roll is made, she will also remember that David and Allan mentioned that they planned to go to Black Moss. If the roll is failed, she can only say that they mentioned they were going to leave town, but can't remember their destination. If asked about Black Moss, Mrs. Merriwether will say it is a stagnant and malignant place that she wouldn't visit even if offered a hundred dollars.

Finally, interviewing people on the street and in businesses can be useful if the appropriate communications rolls (generally Fast Talk or Persuade) are successful. In general, no one will know the Crow brothers, but most can say that Black Moss is an unpleasant little town southwest of Morgan City. Few have actually gone there, but it does possess a bad reputation for containing seedy and unsavory characters. Note that the people of Morgan City are friendly and outgoing, and if investigators are polite and do not appear to be low class or abrasive, they receive +15% to all their communications rolls. Unfortunately, the reverse is true for any non-Caucasian investigators. Such individuals will have all communications rolls halved while dealing with many (though not all) Morgan City residents.

If at this point the investigators report the Black Moss lead to law enforcement, they will be politely turned away. The case of the Crow brothers has already been closed as far as the authorities are concerned, and they have more important matters to tend to. Without hard proof, the investigators are on their own. Worse a cult informant within the police or sheriff's office may learn of their presence (this is

indicated if a group Luck roll fails, or at the Keeper's discretion), and warn the cult hierarchy, making life much tougher for the group if they decide to travel to Black Moss.

The Journey to Black Moss

Black Moss is a fictitious community located a few miles southwest of Morgan City and is nestled on the edge of the swamp. The road to it is a single-lane muddy trail. Horses have little trouble with this, but drivers of vehicles (including wagons) must make successful Drive rolls to avoid becoming stuck. A failed roll merely means the vehicle is briefly mired. If the roll is missed by more than 35%, the vehicle is badly stuck and will require a horse team (or similar measures) to pull it out. If the roll is fumbled, the vehicle is not only stuck but disabled (broken axle or the like). Very few people in Black Moss own motor vehicles (none if the scenario is set prior to 1920), and the town completely lacks telephones, telegraphs, electricity, plumbing, sewage treatment, and other modern conveniences.

Black Moss, Louisiana

Black Moss was so named due to its abundance of an unusual, dark-tinted subspecies of the normal Spanish moss that is common throughout southern Louisiana. The town is small (population of between 200 and 400) and is firmly in the hands of the cult. The people speak with an odd accent borne out of their isolation and exposure to three languages: English, French, and Creole. All speak English, and many speak Creole or French. The literacy rate here is very low.

All levels of the community have been infiltrated by the cult, and residents who are not members live in constant fear. Such people know little of the cult but realize some dark power is in control of the town and their lives. None dare to rise up against it. Those who resisted in the past have disappeared. The Keeper should take extra special care to emphasize the sullen, depressed, and forbidding feeling of the town. Despite the despair of most of the inhabitants, or perhaps because of it, Black Moss is full of leads and sources of information. Unfortunately, it is also full of cultists, and the investigators will be subtly shadowed and watched from the moment they enter the area. Who exactly is watching the party is up to the imagination of the Keeper.

Keeper's note: Though Black Moss is relatively close to Morgan City as the crow flies, it is actually very isolated. The environment is forbidding and the roads appalling. Furthermore, few people have a desire to travel to the nasty little village, nor do they particularly want to frolic in the swamp. All of this has combined to make Black Moss virtually unknown and ignored.

New for Call of Cthulhu

New Skills

Boating (10%)

Vital during this scenario, boating is the ability to pilot small watercraft such as canoes, kayaks, and rowboats. This skill applies only to those craft propelled by oars or paddles. Motorboats and sailboats fall under completely different skills. The base is 10% and to be proficient, the user must have at least 25%.

Woodcraft (10%)

This comprises basic skills in carpentry and woodcarving and allows the user to repair sleds, small structures, and the like.

Ghouls

In "A Murder of Crows," two variants of ghouls appear. In this section, three are given, even though one, greater ghouls, play no role in the scenario. This material first appeared in *The Realm of Shadows* (Seattle, Washington: Pagan Publishing, 1997).

Lesser Ghouls (lesser independent race)

"These figures were seldom completely human, but often approaching humanity in varying degree. Most of the bodies, while roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast. The texture of the majority was a kind of unpleasant rubberiness." —H. P. Lovecraft, "Pickman's Model"

The type most familiar to *Call of Cthulhu* players, this is the version represented in the rulebook. The description here is somewhat expanded and slightly altered, but is otherwise consistent with the *Call of Cthulhu* guidelines.

Lesser ghouls are rubbery, loathsome humanoids with hoof-like feet, canine features, and claws. Their speech has been described as being a series of gibberings and meepings. Unclean, foul creatures, they are adept tunnelers that are often covered with grave mold or soil.

Beneath many cities are tunnel systems created by ghouls. These serve as both homes and as a secure means of movement outside the influence of humanity. Ghouls have been tied to witches and are known to occasionally attack humans. Their primary diet, however, are the corpses of the recently buried. It is possible for humans to transform into ghouls over a prolonged period. Lesser ghouls are able to employ tools and weapons, but in combat will usually rely on teeth and claws. They are not mindless monsters; the intelligence level of a typical ghoul is on par with that of humans.

Lesser Ghouls, Charnel Feeders

Characteristics	Die Rolls	Averages
STR	3D6+6	16-17
DEX	2D6+6	13
INT	2D6+6	13
CON	2D6+6	13
POW	2D6+6	13
SIZ	2D6+6	13
Hit Points	(CON+SIZ)/2 13	

Move: 9

Average Damage Bonus: +1D4

Attacks:

Claw Attack 30%; 1D6 + db damage

Bite Attack 30%; 1D6 + automatic worry

Armor: Firearms and projectiles do half damage (round up fractions)

Spells: roll 1D100 - if the roll is higher than the ghoul's INT rating, it knows no spells; otherwise it knows 1D3 spells, except in special cases, where it may know more (Keeper's discretion).

Skills: Burrow 75%, Climb 85%, Hide 60%, Jump 75%, Listen 70%, Scent Decay 65%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 50%, plus any others the Keeper chooses to provide them

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6

Ghoul Attacks: A ghoul may attack with both claws and its bite in a single combat round (for a total of three attack rolls). If the bite strikes successfully, the ghoul will hang on to the victim with its fangs. In subsequent rounds, it will automatically "worry" the victim, doing 1D4 hit points damage each round, but will not use its claws. A ghoul's victim can dislodge its grapple by succeeding in a STR versus STR contest on the Resistance Table; in any event, a ghoul is dislodged if it is killed.

In *Call of Cthulhu*, lesser ghouls are the species of ghouls most commonly found on Earth. They are degenerate (by the standard of most humans) and live in primitive and often disgusting conditions. They avoid humans and use all their resources to remain a secret to them. Humans caught within the realm of the ghouls are not likely to be treated mercifully.

Greater Ghouls (lesser independent race)

"It seemed that his cry was answered by a score of sardonic echoes, unhuman as the howling of hyenas, and yet articulate, that repeated the name Mordiggian. Into the room, from the dark hall, there poured a horde of creatures whose violet robes alone identified them in Phariom's eyes as the priests of the ghoul-god. They had removed the skull-like masks, revealing heads and faces that were half-anthropomorphic, half-canine, and wholly diabolic. Also, they had taken off the fingerless gloves.... There were at least a dozen of them. Their curving talons gleamed in the bloody light like hooks of darkly tarnished metal; their spiky teeth, longer than coffin-nails, protruded from snarling lips." —Clark Ashton Smith, "The Charnel God"

More reflective of the ghouls of the Clark Ashton Smith stories, this race is a more evolved, more sophisticated relative of lesser ghouls. While lesser ghouls are often long-lived despite their way of life, greater ghouls are immortal, or nearly so. They are also more intelligent and better organized than their more primitive brethren. This, combined with their superior physiques, makes greater ghouls more fearsome opponents.

The general description of the lesser ghoul applies also to the greater ghoul. However, they are more commonly found in times predating or postdating what is termed "recorded human history." During recorded history, greater ghouls are rare on Earth. They are, however, found in great numbers in the Dreamlands, where they generally form a leader and priest class over lesser ghouls there and live in well-built temples, not grubby tunnels. Rather than appearing as filthy, grime-covered monsters, as priests they are garbed in hooded robes of funereal purple, their faces concealed by skull masks of a silver-like metal. This costume completely hides their form.

In combat, greater ghouls are likely to enter hand-to-hand fighting, relying on superior coordination and strength to overcome human foes. However, they will employ weapons and/or spells if the need is apparent. Tireless adversaries, they are able to outrun humans and horses in any prolonged pursuit.

Greater Ghouls, Charnel Feeders

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Die</u>	<u>Rolls</u>	<u>Averages</u>	
STR	3D8+6	19-20		Move: 15
DEX	2D8+6	15		Average Damage Bonus: +1D4
INT	2D8+6	15		Attacks:
CON	2D8+6	15		Claw Attack 40%; 1D6+1+db damage
POW	2D6+6	13		Bite Attack 30%; 1D6 + automatic worry
SIZ	2D6+6	13		Armor: Firearms and projectiles do half damage (round up fractions)
Hit Points	(CON+SIZ)/2	14		

Spells: roll 1D100 – if the roll is higher than the ghoul's INTx2 rating, it knows no spells; otherwise it knows 1D4 spells, except in special cases, where it may know more (Keeper's discretion).

Skills: Burrow 75%, Climb 85%, Hide 60%, Jump 75%, Listen 70%, Scent Decay 65%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 50%, plus any others the Keeper chooses to provide them

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6

Ghoul Attacks: A ghoul may attack with both claws and its bite in a single combat round (for a total of three attack rolls). If the bite strikes successfully, the ghoul will hang on to the victim with its fangs. In subsequent rounds, it will automatically "worry" the victim, doing 1D4 hit points damage each round, but will not use its claws. A ghoul's victim can dislodge its grapple by succeeding in a STR versus STR contest on the Resistance Table; in any event, a ghoul is dislodged if it is killed.

Hu-Ghouls (lesser independent race)

This is an unsavory crossbreeding of ghouls (almost always lesser ghouls) and humans. The result can be a misshapen monster or perhaps something that is presentable enough to blend into "normal" human society (generally those that cause no SAN loss when viewed). An underclass among ghouls, hu-ghouls are treated poorly and are little more than slaves. While there have been some rare attempts to breed humans with ghouls in the hope that the best of both races can be brought out, the result is sometimes a slow-witted and weak creature. In other cases, the offspring is both intelligent and physically strong, though may demonstrate unusual physical and/or behavioral characteristics. Hu-ghouls in themselves are not malevolent, but the environments in which they usually reside (in the company of ghouls) often make them so. Like humans, hu-ghouls can transform into ghouls and, being partway there already, can do so much more quickly.

Continued on next page

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Hu-Ghouls, unfortunate crossbreeds

Characteristics	Die	Averages
STR	3D6	10-11
DEX	3D6	10-11
INT	2D6+6	13
CON	3D6	10-11
APP	3D6-2	9-10
POW	3D6	10-11
SIZ	2D6+6	13
EDU	1D6	3-4
Hit Points:	(CON+STR)/2 12	

Move: 9

Average Damage Bonus: +0

Attacks:

Claw Attack 30%; 1D4+db damage (if APP ≤ 4)

Bite Attack 30%; 1D2 damage (if APP ≤ 4)

Punch Attack 55%; 1D3+db damage (if APP > 4)

Armor: None usually; those with APP ≤ 4 take

¾ damage from gunfire and projectiles (round up fractions)

Spells: None usually

Skills: Keeper's discretion; some and perhaps many hu-ghouls can blend into human society

Sanity Loss: 0/0 to 0/1D4, depending on specific appearance

New Spells

CONTACT GHOUL: Contact Ghoul is described on page 145 of the fifth-edition *Call of Cthulhu* rules. The variants listed here have been adapted to the specifics of this scenario and provide greater detail.

There are two forms of Contact Ghoul: Contact Lesser Ghoul and Contact Greater Ghoul. They are completely different spells. Contact Lesser Ghoul is by far the more commonly known of the two.

CONTACT LESSER GHOUL: Requiring the expenditure of 8 magic points, this spell must be cast at night (preferably a moonlight night), in a cemetery, crypt, or other place where lesser ghouls might be found. The caster brandishes a piece of human flesh and chants a series of words in the ghoulish tongue in order to coax the loathsome critters out of hiding. The spell takes only a minute or two to complete. The chance of success is entirely up to the Keeper, but there should be a small negative modifier on nights when there is no moon or it is obscured by cloud cover. Whether or not the spell is successful, the caster loses 1D3 SAN and, of course, may lose more SAN if a ghoulish shows up (0/1D6). If one does come, it will arrive in 1D100 hours, or whenever the Keeper deems appropriate.

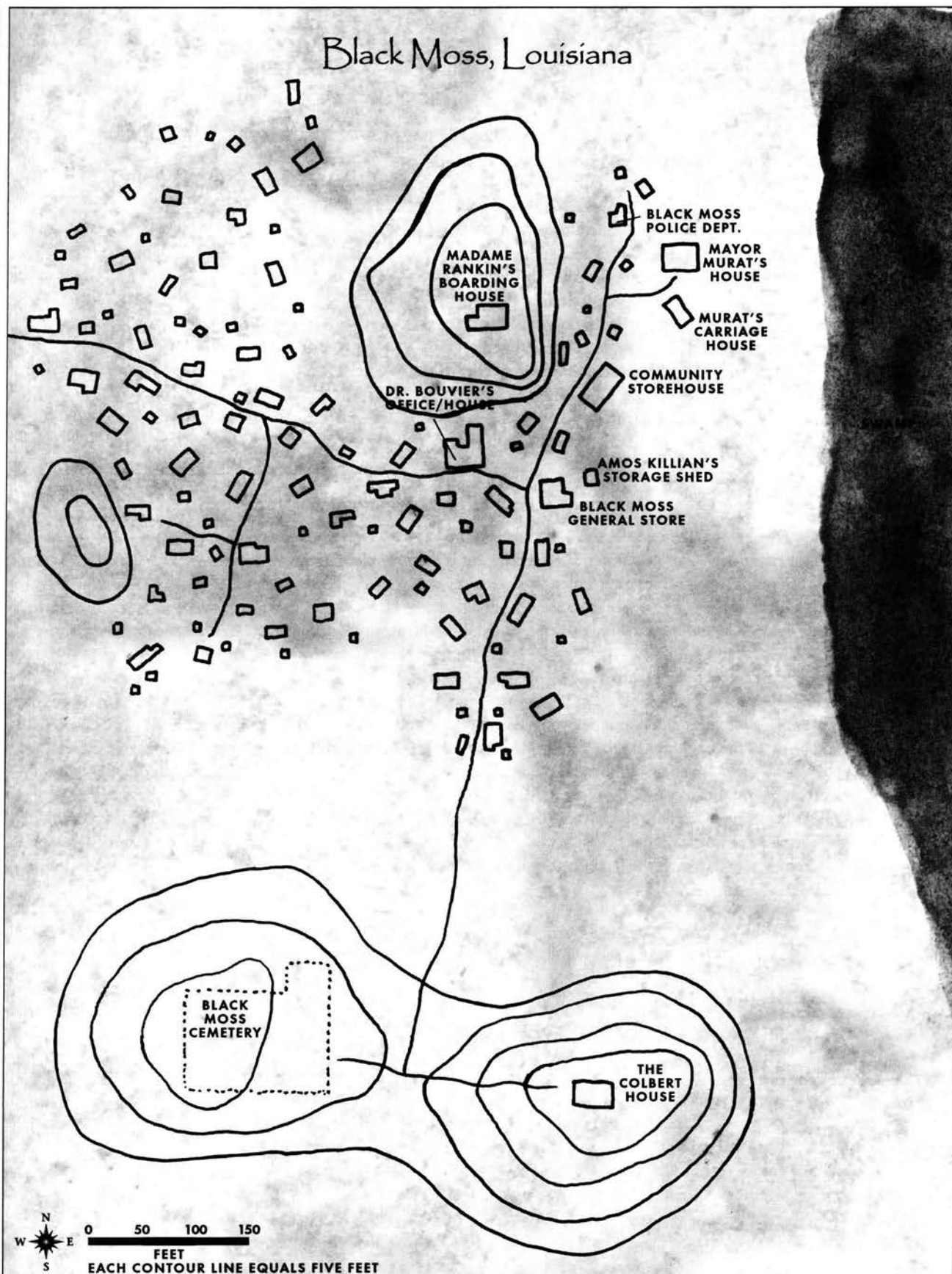
A lesser ghoulish so contacted is a random representative of the local population. It is under no restraint and may very well be hostile. How it reacts to the caster depends on what the caster does and what the specific personality of the ghoulish is.

CONTACT GREATER GHOUL: Requiring the expenditure of 8 magic points, this spell must be cast at night (preferably a moonlit night) in the area of a large ghoulish population or particularly well-organized ghoulish clan. Greater ghouls are much rarer than their lesser kindred.

Contact Greater Ghoul requires the caster to brandish a piece of human flesh and chant a series of words in the ghoulish tongue, which include repeated invocation of the charnel god Mordiggian. The spell takes two to three minutes to complete. The chance of success is entirely up to the Keeper, but there should be a small negative modifier on nights when there is no moon or it is obscured by cloud cover. Whether or not the spell is successful, the caster loses 1D4 SAN and, of course, may lose more SAN if a ghoulish shows up (0/1D6). If one does come, it will arrive in 1D100 hours, or whenever the Keeper deems appropriate.

A greater ghoulish so contacted is a random representative of the local population. It is under no restraint and may very well be hostile. How it reacts to the caster depends on what the caster does and what the specific personality of the ghoulish is.

TELEKINESIS: This spell costs 1 point of SAN to cast and a variable number of magic points. For each five pounds of mass to be moved, 1 magic point must be expended. Such movement can be up to five feet horizontally or two and one half feet vertically (assuming normal Earth gravity is present). This spell requires two rounds to cast, and the movement occurs in the third round.



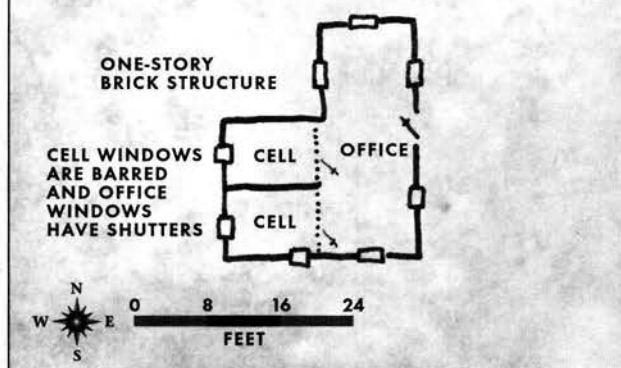
Areas of Interest in Black Moss

The following are places likely to be useful to the investigators while in Black Moss.

The Black Moss Police Department

This four-man police department is run entirely by the cult. The chief, Philippe Arnot, is a heavyset, beer-drinking, gas-filled maggot, who delights in instilling fear in the townsfolk. He is much more subtle with outsiders, however, and keeps the crude remarks, obscenities, and semi-veiled threats to a minimum until he has made an assessment. The department keeps few records (only one officer writes even remotely well), and nothing useful can be found here. The police in Black Moss can be a great headache, and those arrested on whatever trumped-up charges may find themselves hustled out in handcuffs in the middle of the night to become the main course in a cult feast. Alternately, such individuals may become the victims of a staged vigilante attack. Being arrested in Black Moss is definitely a bad thing. On the other hand, observing how the residents react to officers can be quite illuminating.

Black Moss Police Department



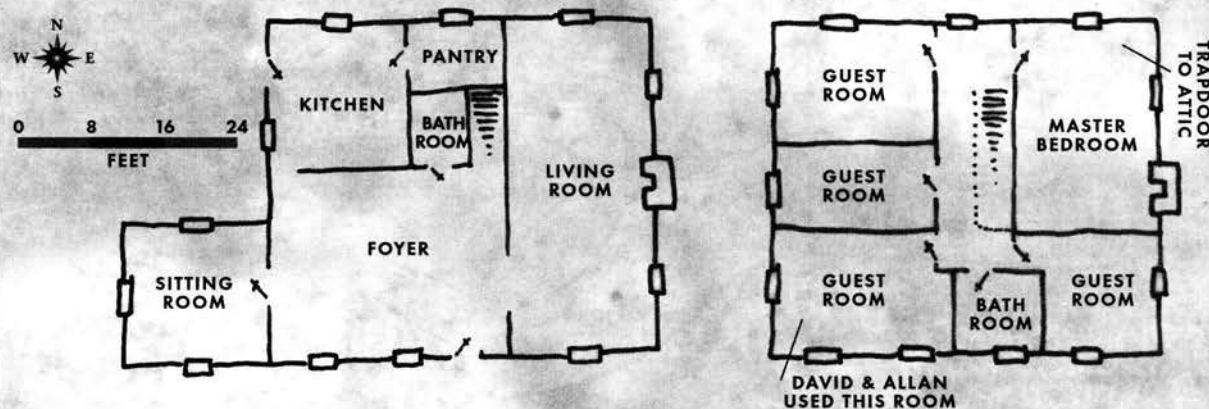
Madame Rankin's Boardinghouse

This island of sanity and comfort in the middle of Black Moss is owned and operated by Madame Rankin, a widow whose husband died in the Spanish-American War. Her neat and tidy establishment is the only place in town where investigators may stay, short of camping in or near the swamp. She charges each tenant fifty cents per day, plus fifty cents per meal. Mrs. Rankin is not a cultist and maintains her dignity despite the crude surroundings. She refuses to leave Black Moss, because her home there was left to her by her husband. If attacked, she can defend herself with an old 10-gauge double-barreled shotgun that hangs (loaded) over the fireplace in the living room.

Mrs. Rankin can be a valuable source of information to the investigators. David and Allan stayed in her house from early March to late April, and she still has their belongings boxed up in a storeroom. While ignorant of why they suddenly "left" town without their things, she does know of their project and is aware of some of the people and places they visited. She mentions Tyler Wilkinson, who acted as a guide on some of their field trips; Dr. Pierre Bouvier, who treated Allan for a broken finger and served as an information source; Elias Masters, who told them some of the old tales and stories of the region; and Jebediah Stump, who provided them with yet more stories. They had passing contact with even more residents too numerous to mention. Reputable-looking investigators may examine David's and Allan's belongings, and Mrs. Rankin will be glad to mail these back to Dr. Crow if the investigators pay for the postage.

Mrs. Rankin is aware that something is not right with the town but has not specifically heard of anything terrible occurring. Her ignorance has kept her safe from the cult, since they have little reason to act against her. She may, however, try to couch her

Madame Rankin's Boarding House



misgivings about the town in misdirected warnings. She may tell the investigators not to leave the house at night because of the treacherous swamps, or tell them that according to local superstition, those who wander alone invite disaster. Her admonitions will not get any more concrete or detailed than this.

Thoroughly examining the Crows' belongings takes thirty minutes to one hour. Among normal items such as clothing, photographic equipment, and toiletries are numerous photographs and notes. The notes detail the search for the Minlani, and from these it is evident the Crows were making little headway. At several points they got sidetracked by unrelated stories, such as the ones about humanoid reptilians (which they concluded were alligators) and the supposedly haunted Colbert House at the north end of town. They apparently spent the night at the Colbert House once just for the heck of it and did some research on the "strange and mysterious Colbert family." The photographs are all normal, showing swamp scenes, local structures, and local residents. However, an undeveloped plate bearing a picture of the swamp still sits in one of the cameras (Photographic Aid #3, p. 197).

There is photolab equipment amongst the belongings—red light, paper, timed projector, trays, and chemicals—which the investigators can use both to develop the picture and blow it up. All that is required is a dark place and a person skilled in developing (perhaps reflected by Photography skill in excess of 40%). When the plate is developed, it is obvious that it was exposed in very low light, either in deep shadow or at night (the latter is correct), and on cursory examination it appears to contain nothing of interest. However, if an investigator makes a successful spot hidden roll at half the normal chance (or normal chance if he employs a magnifying glass), he will notice a hunched figure in profile among the trees. If an investigator examines a blow-up of this figure and makes a successful Spot Hidden roll at 10% of the normal chance (5% if a magnifying glass is not used), he will notice the figure appears to have canine facial features. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll will suggest to the investigator that the figure resembles a ghoul. This photograph was taken by Allan only a few hundred yards outside of town, and the following day the cult arranged for the Crows' disappearance.

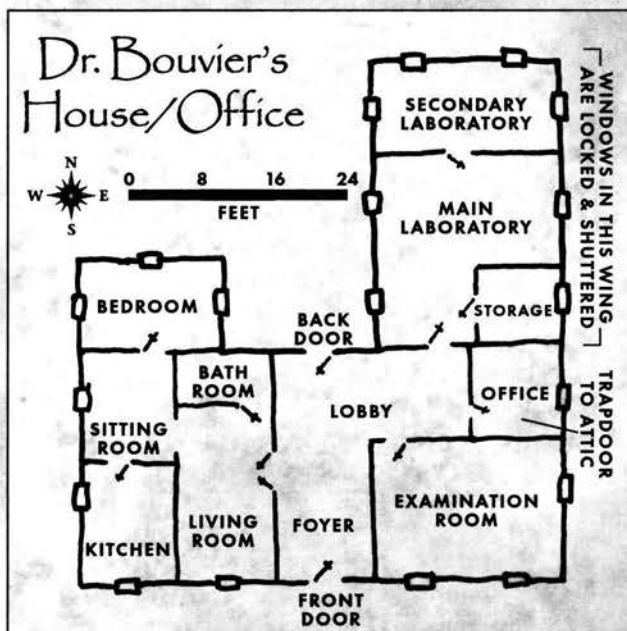
An alternative to developing the plate in Black Moss is to take it to New Orleans or Morgan City. If the Keeper wants to make things a bit easier, it is certainly reasonable to have the already-developed picture among others in the boxed belongings.

Dr. Pierre Bouvier

Dr. Bouvier is one of many cultists who live in Black Moss. He provides the cult with the remains of any of his patients who die while in his care (and many do die, either because he kills them intentionally or by his incompetence). Appearing to be a normal small-town doctor, Dr. Bouvier is actually an evil deviant who delights in obscene sexual practices involving corpses. He will provide no useful information to the investigators, and will report their activities to the cult.

A search of Bouvier's house/office can be revealing. The records he keeps on file in a steel cabinet in his office are so poor that any reasonably educated person will question the doctor's credentials after scanning through them. A qualified physician would be horrified by the lack of detail in the records and the evident high mortality rate the papers document. A file on Jacques Murat, the mayor of Black Moss, indicates he has chronic heart trouble, which Bouvier is treating. Another file briefly documents the treatment of Allan Crow's broken finger. In all fairness, the latter file seems to be in order and shows the proper treatment was, in fact, given.

One wing of Bouvier's house is even more revealing. Several rooms at the north end are a kind of laboratory he uses to create zombies. Bouvier's necrophilia recently entered an even more vile stage when Bouvier began to use black magic to animate certain "favorite" corpses. The cult would not be happy about this were it to become common knowledge, since he is withholding food from the "family." Four zombies occupy the north wing and guard against intruders and spies. Furnishings are sparse, but the central room contains a large steel examination table and two chests of materials used in the Create Zombie spell. Unless intruders are detected, the zombies stand quietly and merely observe their surroundings. More on them is given in the NPC section.



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Tyler Wilkinson

Tyler Wilkinson is a somewhat reclusive individual who lives in the swamp approximately half a mile south of town. His shack, located on a dry piece of land, is only a single room that serves as a kitchen, dining room, living room, bedroom, and (when he gets roaring drunk) bathroom. For all outward appearances, he seems to be a good 'ole boy who is glad to earn a little money guiding ignorant outsiders around the swamp in his flatboat. Unfortunately, he is another cultist and was responsible for setting up the young students. Tyler is a crack shot with a rifle and constantly carries an old Sharps .50-90 caliber rifle with him. Tyler will relate many interesting tales about the swamp and about the people and wild things living in it, but not so interesting as to compromise the cult.

Elias Masters

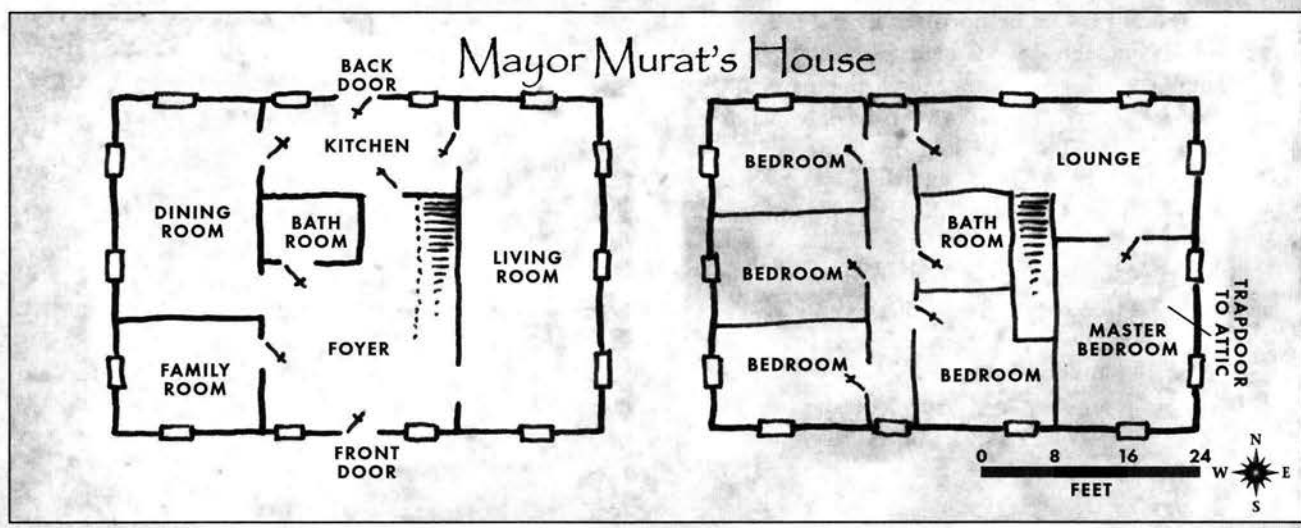
Elias is yet another cultist but is an excellent source of information about the area and its history. He will provide investigators with no information which would reveal or incriminate himself or the cult but can entertain people for hours with fascinating legends he has collected over the past sixty-odd years of his life; some of these legends even involve the lost Indian tribe. Masters is an expert with a long gun and recently purchased a brand new 12-gauge double-barreled shotgun with money he received from David Crow.

Jebediah Stump

This ancient man has a repertoire of stories superior even to those of Elias Masters. While he is not a cultist, he is not actually sane either. Senility overcame him a decade ago and he is virtually unable to care for himself. He is likely to soon become meat for the cult's pot, but the cult has respect for him. One night two years ago three ghouls and two hu-ghouls tried to take him. Stump's four huge mongrel dogs and his 10-gauge Remington objected to this, and they departed five minutes later minus two of their buddies. Stump's memory failed him and by the next morning he was wondering why he had only thirty cartridges instead of forty. Stump welcomes reputable-looking visitors who bear no ill will or firearms and come openly during the daylight hours. It's open season on anyone approaching his shack at night, and he is a light sleeper even if the dogs don't bark. While senile, Jebediah is still wily and cunning.

Jacques Murat

Mr. Murat is an obese cultist who serves as the mayor of Black Moss and is called "Mayor Carbuncle" by local children. Always the politician, Murat will say much to interviewers without actually saying anything. A well-dressed man who has a taste for the finer things, he also is a procurer of small children. At least one abused child can be found imprisoned in his home at any given time. Murat is unique in this town in that he is one of only a few people who completed high school (which makes him virtually unique among the cultists). Like most of the cultists, he suffers from the effects of decades of inbreeding, which in his case has cursed him with a weak heart. If he suffers any great shock (Keeper's discretion), he may suffer a heart attack. After receiving a shock (such as being tortured by enraged investigators), he must make a CONx5 roll. If successful, he is okay. If he fails the roll up to and including 10%, he narrowly avoids a heart attack, but does hyperventilate. If he fails the



roll by more than 10%, he suffers a mild to moderate heart attack and must make a second CONx5 roll. If he fumbles the first CONx5 roll, the heart attack is severe and fatal. If he fails the second CONx5 roll, he dies. If he succeeds, he lives for at least an hour, after which he dies. If during this hour he is treated by a person with First Aid or Medicine skill of greater than 50%, he will survive only if that person is successful in the skill roll. After this, he will be bedridden for several days at least. Dr. Bouvier has been treating Mayor Murat for years and has files detailing his condition.

Questioning local children about Murat (a difficult task in itself) reveals that many find him laughable while more find him to be the most frightening of all of the adult authority figures. None of the children can say exactly why they fear him, and some investigators may incorrectly deduce that their fear is irrational.

Observing Murat can, at the Keeper's discretion, reveal his vile appetites. He may be seen subtly watching or even leering at children. Worse, he may even be caught in the act of smuggling a bound and gagged child into his home late at night. In this case, it can serve as excellent motivation to act against him and gain the additional benefit of searching his house for clues. If a child is rescued, the Keeper can possibly involve the parents. Parents may react by (1) thanking the investigators and then fleeing the area, (2) joining the investigators in righteous anger over the incident, or (3) cursing the investigators because they actually sold the child to Murat (and perhaps informing the cult of the group's activities).

Breaking into Murat's home can be of great value. Beyond rescuing a child, investigators can gain some vital clues to the existence and location of the secret cult village. In a locked desk drawer (STR 9) in the study is a portfolio of photographs. Among various crude pornographic photos are pictures from within the cult village. In the background can be seen small huts and shacks, and, in the foreground, ragged people disfigured in various ways by degenerative ailments or perhaps genetic disorders (both are true, the genetic disorders due to inbreeding, ghoulish heritage, or both). Photographic Aid #4 (p. 198) is a sample of what may be found here.

Analysis of this discovery can provide the investigators with a crude and incomplete diagram of the layout of the village. A centrally placed altar is evident, as well as at least a dozen huts. The desk contains another item of note, Murat's diary, located in another locked drawer. The diary is poorly written and takes five days to decipher. Anyone succeeding in a Read English roll can learn that Murat is some sort of cultist devoted to a deity named Shubbe-Mig and that some of the cult's rites involve human sacrifice and cannibalism. No Cthulhu Mythos is gained, since the diary contains no real detail. More important is a hand-drawn map stuck within the pages. It provides, in general terms, directions to the village using Black Moss, Morgan City, and the shoreline as points of reference. With this in hand, someone succeeding in two Navigate rolls can find the village. If at any time the map becomes damp or wet, the ink will run, rendering the map unreadable.

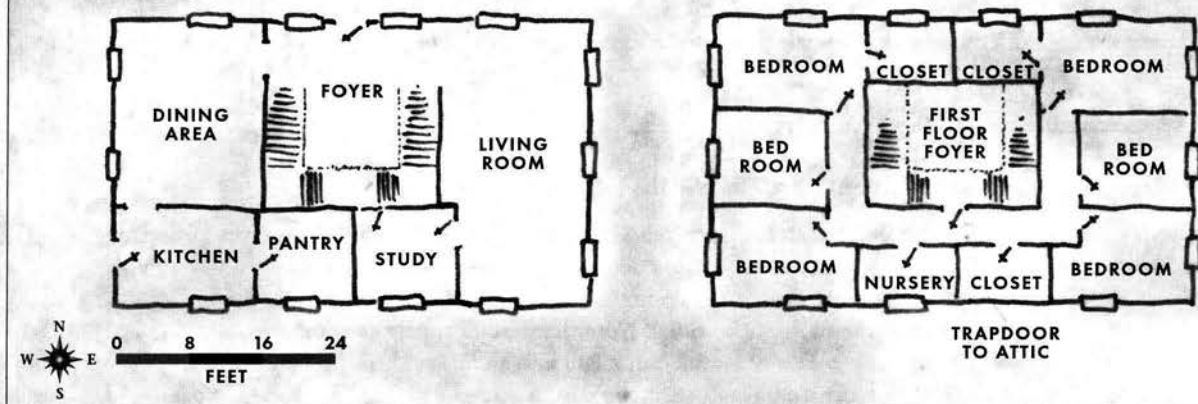
The Colbert House

This once fine home on the north edge of town has stood empty for over a decade. Next to it is the city cemetery in which can be found gravestones dating back before the American Civil War. The house is reportedly haunted, and its former owners, the Colbert family, had a grim and suspicious history.

Records at the Historical Society in Morgan City provide information on the Colberts. They came to Black Moss in the 1840s and built a large house there. Just where they were from and where they got their seemingly endless wealth is unknown. The first owner, Marcelle Colbert, and his wife, Simone, were reclusive. The house was passed on to their children, Robert

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The Colbert House



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and Jean-Claude. The eldest, Robert, vanished in the swamps at the age of 22, and legend says this was arranged by his brother so he could have the inheritance to himself. Jean-Claude married an unknown outsider named Marie in 1859, and she later died in childbirth. Jean-Claude hanged himself from a tree in the backyard in 1870 and the house was passed on to his only son, Philippe. Philippe had three wives, all local girls, before reaching the age of 24. None of the marriages lasted more than one year and all of the wives died of "strange, unexplained ailments." His last wife bore him twin sons, David and Jean-Claude. Philippe never remarried, and died in his bedroom in 1889 of a pistol shot to the head. It is unknown whether or not his death was the result of murder or suicide, but a revolver was found in his hand (a good forensicist will tell you that this is unlikely to be a suicide, since the muscles in his hand would have relaxed upon his death and relinquished the gun). His teenage sons inherited the house. In 1900, Jean-Claude's decapitated body was found in the kitchen. David and the severed head were never found. Just what happened to David was never determined, and rumors still circulate that he lurks in the swamps just outside of town. The house was left abandoned and has sat pretty much unchanged since then. More on the current status of the Colbert House is in the section entitled "The Haunted House." Though the house is haunted, none of the events surrounding the Colbert House have anything to do with the cult, and a Keeper may use the house as a prolonged distraction from the real point of the adventure. Especially cruel Keepers may have an insane, 30ish or 40ish, axe-wielding David Colbert stalk the area around the town at night looking for victims. If so, he should not care whether his victims are investigators, local residents, or cultists. The Keeper should be careful if he decides to actively use David as a homicidal maniac. Statistics for David are provided in the NPC section.

The Cemetery

Located on a hill adjacent to the Colbert House is the town cemetery. As has already been stated, some graves predate the Civil War. The hill itself is situated high enough above the water table that some graves near the summit are traditional types. Those located further down the slopes are above-ground stone crypts much like most graves in the New Orleans area.

A ghoulish community thrives in the swamps and has found the Black Moss cemetery to be an excellent place to forage. The hill is honeycombed with tunnels, but the complex does not extend beyond the hill itself, due to the proximity of the swamp. All new graves are violated from below within a few days. Once a corpse is procured, the coffin (if one was used) is replaced and the tunnel to the grave is back-filled to cover up any trace of ghoulish activity. Stone crypts are opened from above on especially dark nights. Investigators who wish to play grave robber (very unlikely, of course) will find any grave they violate to be empty or contain only a vacant coffin. If a Spot Hidden roll is successful, the earth at the bottom of the grave will be seen to be loose, and if this is dug out, a tunnel will be found. Stone crypts are similarly empty. The ghouls are not stupid, however. They keep a constant watch on the cemetery and its immediate surroundings and will probably notice any activity in the area. The Keeper must determine the cult's reaction, but it can include the intervention of the corrupt Black Moss Police Department, a massive ghoulish assault, or an outcry to the townsfolk, who will demand to know why people are trying to dig up graves. The cult will not try the latter tactic if the investigators have already completed the excavation of one or more graves, for the townsfolk's subsequent investigations could damage the cult.

The General Store

The Black Moss General Store is run by a kindly-seeming old cultist named Amos Killian. Killian's store contains pretty much anything a person could need (food, tools, clothing, etc.), but no firearms, ammunition, or related accessories. If asked about this, Killian will say he can order such things, but that it will take a few weeks for them to arrive; firearms on order must be paid for in advance. Of course, Killian never places any orders and merely keeps the money. The post office is attached to the store and is also run by Killian. Killian examines all incoming and outgoing mail. Any mail that he doesn't deem subversive he gives to his son to take to Morgan City, where it goes through the official processing and postmarking. This is why David's last letter was postmarked "Morgan City, Louisiana" and why Arthur Crow never received any truly disturbing letters. Killian intercepted the last two, which the brothers mailed the day before their disappearance, and he used them to roll cigarettes. No traces remain.

An Unusual Side-Effect

An unusual side-effect of the cult's monthly rituals is that it creates some imbalance or disturbance in the area's magnetic field. Summonings are especially likely to do so. The effect can be detected only by viewing a compass at a time when a ritual is occurring (usually the night of the new moon). Rather than point north, all compass needles within five miles of the ritual site point directly toward the village for the duration of the ritual. Note that not all rituals have this effect and the Keeper must decide what ones do (typically summonings). This phenomenon might give an incisive group of investigators at least a general idea of the cult village's location. If they are reasonably close, it could even lead them straight to the source of the disturbance.

Early Tactics

Initially, the investigators will arrive in Black Moss blissfully unaware of what they have stumbled into. The town will be dank and dreary, the police menacing, and the inhabitants sullen and depressed. After checking into the town's one boardinghouse (and hopefully questioning the landlady), they will probably explore the area. The layout of the town is well described in the boxed text entitled "Areas of Interest" and by the maps.

Mrs. Rankin, the aforementioned landlady, is the one good source of information they start with. She is open and honest (Psychology rolls can confirm this) and provides early leads that can keep the investigators occupied for a little while. Through her, they can easily be led to Tyler Wilkinson, Elias Masters, and Jedediah Stump and may also learn of the Colbert House and even Dr. Bouvier.

Aside from Mrs. Rankin, the group may interview any number of area residents. The most notable are listed in "Areas of Interest." However, speaking with some of the mundane inhabitants is worthwhile. Unfortunately, most of the locals are resistant to requests for interviews. Those who are not cultists are unwilling to talk, fearing reprisals from the shadowy "powers that be." Cultists will often rudely turn investigators away or ignore them. Children of non-cultists may be the best source of information. If any can be spoken with and a rapport established, they can say much. Parents

in Black Moss are vigilant, however, since many past victims have been young. Children are constantly watched and no one trusts anyone, for anyone can be in league with the unseen rulers of Black Moss. Despite this, inventive investigators may be able to repeatedly contact an individual child; and if they set up a rapport through a liberal offering of peppermint sticks they can learn a lot.

Most children in town can tell investigators that the Colbert House is haunted, that bogey men roam the area at night, and that some unseen horror lurks in the swamps waiting for unfortunate fishermen and hunters. No one likes the town police, because they are mean and bully everyone. No one likes the mayor either, because he allows it. Nothing about the disappearance of the Crow brothers is known, but it is believed they either fled town or fell victim to some nightstalking monster.

The children of cult members reveal even more. If investigators simply watch the town, children will come out to play but are careful never to stray from the immediate areas of their homes. Children of cultists play unusual games. Some mimic rituals they have witnessed. This includes doing unspeakable things to helpless pets and captured animals. Some may even mimic sexual acts that should be unknown to them. If the group observes such activity (probably requiring some combination of successful Luck and Spot Hidden rolls), they should be clued in to the magnitude of what they may be facing. After all, if children are involved in some way,



Child's play.

The Haunted House

The Colbert House is located on the edge of town near the cemetery and is indeed haunted by ghosts of long-dead Colberts. While the investigators may correctly deduce that the phenomena in the house is unrelated to the town's decadence, they may determine it is still worthwhile to check out, due to its vantage over the area. Not only does it overlook the cemetery, but it is near the swamp's edge, and its view of the southwest side of town is unobscured by other structures. During the daylight hours, the house is quiet, aside from the noises made by various loathsome vermin that infest the walls and floors. Any reasonable inspection of the interior shows that many of the old furnishings remain, though nothing of real value can be found. What is still within is rotting and some pieces are covered with soiled sheets. The night-time hours are a different story. Inexplicably, the house is ten to twenty degrees colder inside than out. From the outside, shadowy movement or perhaps a faint light such as that from a candle can be seen through a window, but nothing turns up if this is investigated. Those who choose to stay the night may be in for a surprise. If the investigators fail a group Luck roll (or regardless of the dice, at the Keeper's discretion), something supernatural occurs.

Note that the cult may also send a very stealthy and capable scout into the house to check out the intruders. Such a scout should not be captured or directly encountered, but signs of his presence may be left behind (muddy or wet footprints on floorboards and carpet, doors left ajar, items missing, etc.). What follows is a sample listing of paranormal events that can occur within the walls of the Colbert House.

- Floorboards creak in a nearby room or up in the attic, as if someone were walking around. Investigation reveals no sign of an intruder, not even footprints in dust and debris.
- Furniture and other objects inexplicably change position, though no one witnesses the actual movement. Unattended weapons could be unloaded or vital equipment moved into places of hiding. Some might conclude that a poltergeist is responsible, especially if Occult rolls succeed.
- Light appears in adjacent rooms and can be seen through windows and under doors. When the room is actually peered into, the light goes out. The source is unknown. Candles and lanterns in such rooms are cold, and the house has no electricity.
- Flashlight batteries and other sources of electricity are drained of power.
- Perishable food and even canned food suddenly goes bad. Maggots and other parasites infest it, and the smell is so putrid that anyone fumbling a CONx5 roll vomits.
- A large rat attacks a sleeping investigator. Unless a guard is watchful, the first few attacks can be quite damaging and may result in infection. The rat is not rabid.
- A horde of rats openly assaults the investigators. If a dog is present, the rats will retreat swiftly when it barks. Anyone who has a phobia versus rodents or similar vermin will lose 1/ID6 SAN from the attack.
- Photographic film and plates are fully and inexplicably exposed. Photographs are unaffected, only undeveloped film and plates.
- Photos taken within the residence (or of the residence) show faint spectral figures in the background. Some leer at investigators within the photos; others hide behind chairs or appear as reflections in window glass or mirrors. SAN loss for this is 0/1 (optional).
- A hideously malformed and partially decomposed face appears in a mirror as an investigator shaves or otherwise views his reflection. The sight causes 1/ID6 SAN loss. Others who check this out fail to see the apparition and a second glance by the victim reveals his usual reflection.

something is endemic within the town's basic cultural fabric, something that will be difficult to contend with.

Aside from observing children, watching the town can prove to be fruitful. As stated, people obviously fear the police. Some recoil in fear, while others try to cover up their apprehension (Psychology and Spot Hidden rolls are appropriate here). A minority of townspeople show no fear, and these are generally members of the cult. However, even some cultists in town fear the police, since the police are often indiscriminate in their abuses. The basic sense of fear in the town is further proof that something is amiss.

Ultimately, the investigators should come to the conclusion that there is something dreadfully wrong in the town

that must be dealt with. Bringing in parish or state authorities at this point is useless, since the investigators lack proof of illegal activity. The group is on its own to act.

An alternative is to report the town to the press in New Orleans or Baton Rouge. If the investigators are convincing, a reporter may visit the town, record his observations, and write about the area. This can lead to a public furor over the town, a furor that is based on inherent fears of the unknown and biases against people who are different. While bringing in a reporter may eventually incite the state to investigate the town, it is unlikely to help the investigators very quickly. (Early in the century, the citizens of the New Jersey's Pine Barrens were the subject of a health study by a well-meaning re-

- A spectral wood axe flies throughout the house and strikes a random investigator. The chance of a successful strike is 50% and damage is $1D8+2$. The axe disappears after one attack. It will not target a sleeping or otherwise unaware individual. The recipient of the attack loses $0/1D4$ SAN. Examining the wound shows it to be genuine, but no evidence of the assailant can be found. An alternative is to have the victim attempt a $POW \times 5$ roll. If it succeeds, the axe misses and disappears. If the roll fails, the axe strikes, doing the aforementioned damage. The victim may attempt to dodge or parry the attack with the appropriate skill roll, and if the attack is avoided, the axe vanishes. Later examination of any wounds may show the victim accidentally fell on some broken glass or an exposed piece of jagged wood or metal. In this case, the victim's companions may disbelieve their disturbed comrade and assume it was "all in his head."
- One investigator hallucinates blood oozing from a wall or ceiling, and smells its pungent odor. The others do not perceive this. As soon the investigator blinks or looks away, the apparition vanishes. SAN loss is $0/1D3$.
- Investigators failing $POW \times 6$ rolls who sleep in the house have horrible nightmares and awake screaming, losing $1/1D4$ SAN in the process. No one can remember the specifics of the dreams. If a victim later undergoes successful Psychoanalysis, the particulars of the nightmare can be dredged up. The victim is a sacrifice in a horrible, cannibalistic rite to summon some unspeakable entity. The ritual ends with the heart of the dreamer being ripped out of his chest cavity and consumed by a foul humanoid with strange, canine-like features. While Psychoanalysis may return some SAN to the victim, the return of this memory will cause the subject to lose $1/1D8$ SAN.
- One person discovers the severed, maggot infested head of Jean-Claude Colbert in a cupboard or in his bedroll, losing $0/1D2$ SAN. If the head is further examined, the eyes open and it says, "You are going to die!" which costs the witness another $1/1D6$ SAN. When the investigator blinks or looks away, the head vanishes.
- A foul stench permeates a room occupied by one or more of the investigators. Each must succeed in a $CON \times 4$ roll to avoid vomiting. The stench fades after a few minutes; its source can't be found.

The Keeper should resist the temptation to bludgeon the investigators with all these events in one disturbing evening. Rather, the Keeper should spread them out over days, if not weeks, using them to keep the investigators off balance as they try to guess what the nonexistent link is between the house and other events.



Dr. Bouvier spends a quiet evening at home.

searcher whose work was sensationally publicized so as to depict the citizens as diseased, ignorant, and dangerous. One politician even went so far as to propose that the Pine Barrens be quarantined. It is reasonable to believe that a similar controversy could be incited over Black Moss, a community that could be fairly characterized as a public menace.)

Investigators who look for a spiritual source for the town's demeanor may concentrate their attention on the haunted house. They may incorrectly assume there is evil there that is pervading the fabric of the community, or that perhaps a cult is based there. However, savvy investigators should conclude initially that the threat is more mundane, that the political and law enforcement structure is to blame, or at least is accountable.

Later Tactics

The investigators may do a number of things to try to flush out the cult and end its domination of the area. If they manage to secretly watch a suspected cultist or wrongdoer, such as the cruel Chief of Police or the evil Mayor Murat, their surveillance will eventually turn up incriminating activities. If they are especially lucky, they may even be able to follow such a person to the cult village in the swamp; however, not only must they must be very patient, since it could take days to catch a suspect making a visit to the village, but they must distract cult spies and cover their own activities, something that becomes more difficult with time.

Impatient or unsubtle investigators may choose instead to break into the houses of suspected cultists. Some incriminating evidence will be found in many of these, especially those of Murat and Bouvier, but only the map and photographs in Murat's home reveal the existence and location of the secret village. A sloppy break-in will almost certainly provoke a violent cult reaction, but if the investigators break-in carefully (leaving no broken window glass, attracting no witnesses, *etc.*), they can avoid detection. Ultimately, burglaries will be rewarded with the greatest amount of information but are also the quickest way to encounter the violent side of the cult.

Some investigators may choose to attempt to follow the footsteps of David and Allan Crow. If so, they will check out the Colbert House (and find nothing relevant) and will visit Masters, Stump, and Wilkinson. Wilkinson will gladly take the investigators out into the swamp where he supposedly took David and Allan, but this *could* result in a cult ambush (Keeper's discretion). Of course, the investigators may be prepared for this and it could turn to their advantage. If they were to survive the first wave of an attack in the swamp, the previously mentioned elderly Confederates might notice and assist them in escaping by distracting the cultists, pinning them down with highly accurate rifle fire, *etc.* The Confederates are experienced guerrilla fighters and will probably avoid face-to-face confrontation with their enemies or con-

tact with the investigators. However, circumstance may dictate that the Confederates reveal themselves to the party, which will give the investigators an opportunity to gain their trust for close cooperation. Ultimately, the Confederates may help them find and assault the cult village.

Investigators who like playing with high technology toys may suggest doing an aerial reconnaissance of the area. Depending on the year, a two-seat Curtiss JN-4 biplane (maximum speed 75 mph; 150-mile range) with pilot can be hired in New Orleans for a few dollars per flight. Overflying the area may be of value. If using good binoculars, the observer in the two-seat aircraft has a *chance* of seeing the village from the air. The observer must make a successful Spot Hidden roll at 20% of the normal chance in order to spot a structure, smoke from a campfire, or whatever. A successful Idea roll combined with a successful Navigate roll will allow him to judge the approximate location of whatever he spotted, and be able to find it later on the ground. Of course, the cult will notice the aircraft, and will step up their security if the aircraft circles their village for a while.

Cult Actions

The cult will take notice of any newcomers to Black Moss and observe them round-the-clock. Spies may be noticed by perceptive investigators, but nothing they do is illegal. Taking overt action against a spy may provoke a violent cult response. Slipping away from one is possible and will not provoke violent action. A spy will usually appear as a normal townsman. Stats for cult members are given in the NPC section; any cult spy will be armed, though probably only with a concealed knife.

The main goal of the cult is to learn the purposes of the investigators. If they find out they are looking for David and Allan Crow, they will not hinder the investigation unless it threatens them with harm or exposure. Therefore, the group will be generally unmolested until they take overt steps against cult members: breaking into their homes, assaulting them, violating graves in the town cemetery, and so on.

Once the cult is pushed to the point of violence, they will react swiftly, probably in one of two ways. Either the corrupt Black Moss Police will take action by making false arrests, or the cult will stage a nighttime assault on the investigators, preferably outside the village, though the cult may be forced to infiltrate Mrs. Rankin's boardinghouse.

The Keeper should avoid executing the investigators in a one-sided assault, or engineering their capture. However, if player characters are captured as a logical progression of events, they will most likely be taken to the cult village for eventual ritual sacrifice. There, they might be able to escape (if lucky) and then gain assistance from the Confederates in the swamp. If the cult has them arrested, it might simply eject them from town if it views them as more of an annoyance than a genuine threat.

The Swamps

The swamps, marshes, and bayous of Louisiana form a twenty-mile-wide band along the coastline. Traveling by flatboat or canoe is the most efficient method of movement in the area south of Morgan City. The climate in southern Louisiana is hot, humid, and tropical, and there is an average of fifty-seven inches of precipitation annually. The average temperature in January is 55 degrees Fahrenheit, and in July, 82 degrees. Wildlife is varied, and dangerous animals include alligators, rattlesnakes, and moccasins. Spanish moss hangs from trees and insects grow to massive size. The environment itself is a major obstacle to the investigators.

Transition

The Keeper will want to make sufficient clues available to lead investigators to the cult village in the swamp. If they miss them, they may end up acting only against the cult in Black Moss itself, perhaps in conjunction with parish or state authorities. Cleaning out Black Moss is a noble cause, but the roots of the cult are in the swamps and only crushing them there will permanently resolve the problem.

Clues to finding the cult village are scattered throughout the scenario. Investigators may discover the village by making a reconnaissance flight, or by following a cultist into the swamp. It's more likely, though, that investigators will follow clues available in the homes of cultists in Black Moss or gain assistance from the elderly Confederates.

After discovering the awful secrets of the village, the investigators need not rely on their own resources to stop the cult. With sufficient proof of the cult's crimes, the investigators may be able to secure the aid of the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Department or the government of the State of Louisiana. After that, wanting to resolve to put an end to the cult quickly and quietly, the authorities will recruit the investigators as guides or consultants.

The Cult Village

Located deep in Louisiana's coastal swamps, the cult village is well concealed by vegetation and well-protected by the environment as well as its occupants. The village is located on a relatively dry island and consists of a few dozen huts and shacks, some of which are elevated on stilts. Eighty or so

human cultists, two to three dozen hughouls, and a score of ghouls live here. There is always activity in and around the village. Most is mundane such as repairing boats and shacks and foraging for food, but some is unusual. Rituals are conducted on nights of the new moon. They vary greatly, but can consist of cannibalistic feasts, frenzied orgies, summonings of the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, human sacrifices to Shub-Niggurath, or some rude combination of some or all of these. Most rituals center in the village compound around a massive, crudely carved sacrificial block. Two rituals are described below, but any other ritual the Keeper chooses to create should cause the observer(s) to lose no more than 1D10 SAN.

The standard version of Summon/Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath requires that a beast of at least SIZ 8 be sacrificed. The summoner uses a knife to perform ritual cuts when dispatching the creature. The spell further requires that it be performed outside, in woods, during the dark of the moon. When summoned, the Dark Young stalks out of the woods 2D10 minutes after the chanting ceases. One magic point per 10% chance of success is expended and five minutes of chanting is required for each magic point. 1D3 SAN is lost during the casting process, regardless of whether or not it succeeds. The caster's remaining magic points are matched against those of the Dark Young on the Resistance Table to determine whether or not it is bound. While the cult possesses this spell, it will prefer the following variant, the Ritual of Summoning.

The Ritual of Summoning is performed once or twice each year and results in the summoning of a Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. This variant of Summon/Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath is unique to this cult (and this scenario). It begins in the middle evening hours of the night of the

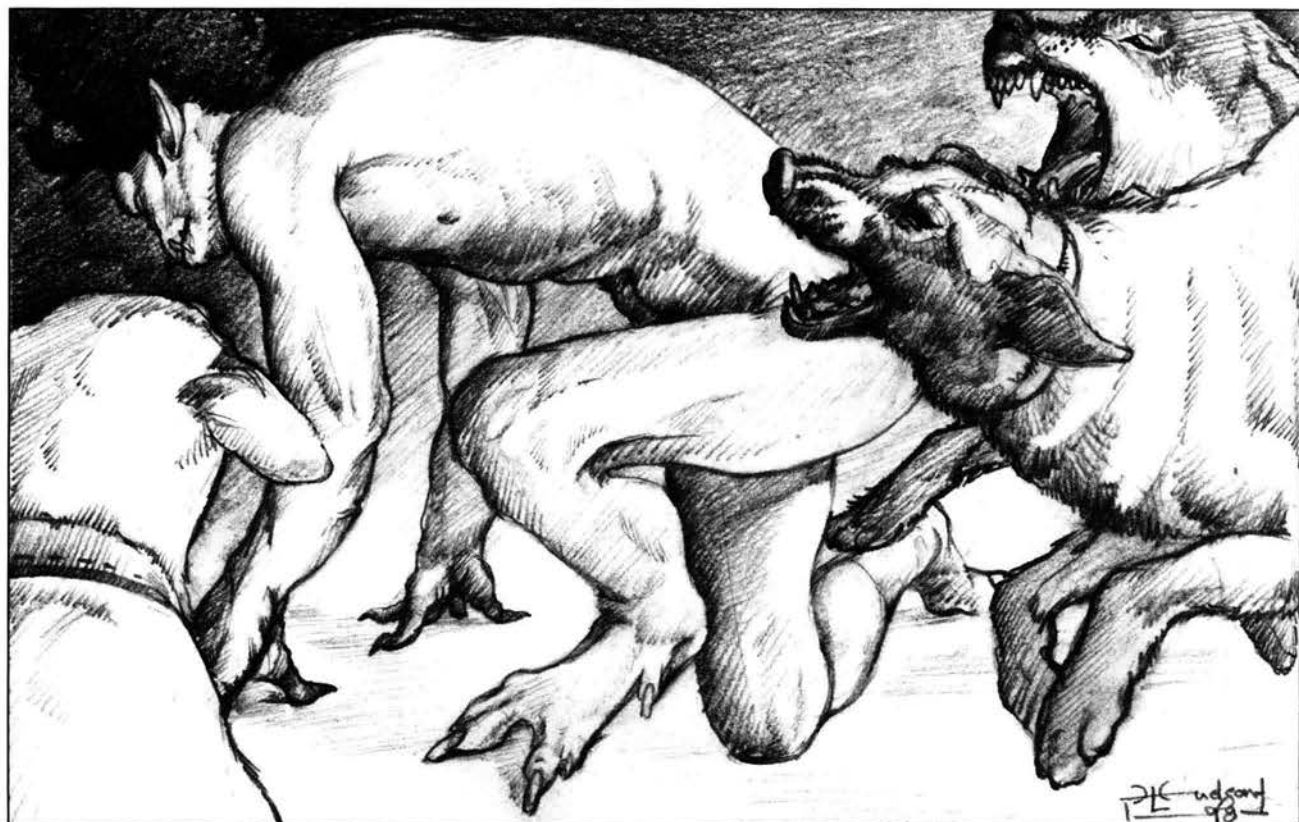
Evidence of the Minlani

The Keeper may see fit to introduce the following evidence of the lost Minlani tribe: Before they finally died out, the Minlani once used the cave in which the Confederates have taken up residence. Faint paintings still decorate the walls near the back and depict life in the swamps (fishing, building boats and huts, etc.). Digging in the cave will be rewarded with pottery shards, arrowheads, spear points, and even a cracked mortar and pestle. With a successful Archaeology roll, an investigator can confirm the artifacts are Native American; however, they match the work of no other known tribe. Dr. Crow will be grateful, though hardly consoled, to learn that his sons weren't on some sort of wild goose chase. He will offer to fund research of the site on the condition that his sons receive some credit for the find. Any archaeologists or historians in the group could greatly improve their reputations by leading the excavation and research of this site.

new moon when several summoners collaborate to perform the spell. The village's inhabitants gather around the great sacrificial block in the compound. The summoners begin chanting and gradually release magic points into the spell as they would in the standard version. An hour passes, and midnight approaches. A sacrificial victim, always human and not always willing, is brought out of a nearby hut. All clothes, even eyeglasses and undergarments, are stripped by frenzied cultists who then strap the victim to the block. As the priests continue to chant, one steps forward, produces a razor-sharp ritual knife (the equivalent of a dirk in combat), and slowly inflicts precise cuts upon the victim. The cuts are done in a strict manner and are timed to the background chanting. The result is a victim that is virtually drawn and quartered. Slices of flesh are pulled away from the screaming subject and are tossed into the mass of reveling cultists who scramble to snatch and devour them. The sacrifice culminates with the victim's rib cage being forced apart, revealing a still-beating heart, which is then torn out and eaten by the leading summoner. It is only this final act that kills the victim. Assuming the ritual is successful, a Dark Young will march out of the swamps 2D10 minutes later. It is provided more victims to consume while the worshippers dance in a giant circle around the focus of their ceremony. The cultists view the creature as a direct disciple and servant of their deity and venerate it above all other creatures in the Mythos. SAN

loss for each summoner is $1D8$, $1D10+2$ for the one wielding the knife. Any non-cultist observing the ritual loses $1/1D10$ SAN. A sacrificial victim who suffers through but survives some or most of the ritual loses $1D6$ SAN if some injuries were inflicted and $1D20+2$ SAN if the ritual was mostly completed. Anyone who suffered through the bulk of the ritual will certainly have several permanent injuries, including severed appendages, partial skinning, and tremendous scarring. Even one who underwent only the initial stages will be scarred horribly, since some deep cuts in the face and torso area are among the first inflicted. APP ratings decline by $1D3+1$ for those who endure only the initial stages, and are reduced by $2D6+2$ if most of the ritual is accomplished. APP cannot go below 1.

One of the cult's other important rituals is the Ritual of Fornication, which is performed much more often than the previously described ceremony. While the population of the village commences a huge orgy, the caster uses the power generated by the released emotions either to provide magic points temporarily to spellcasters and priests or to "anoint" the sacrificial block with power to be used in other rituals. The Ritual of Fornication is a required prequel to the Ritual of Summoning and must be performed no earlier than three days prior to the new moon. If the ritual is used to empower priests with magic points, each reveler involved in the orgy sacrifices 1 magic point. Of these, half are lost in transit. The remaining points can be divided among the participating



The faithful.

A Spiritual Guide

"A Murder of Crows" may be difficult for some players. If the Keeper feels the group is having too difficult a time, he may introduce a spiritual guide: the ghost of a long-dead, nameless Minlani shaman who, displeased with the presence of the foul cult in his precious bayous, is exerting influence to aid in its downfall. Note that this is an *option*, one that should probably not be exercised unless the investigators need help.

The shaman can take no physical action, nor can he directly harm anyone. He cannot even communicate, since he lacks any knowledge of modern languages and his own language has long-since died out. In times of trouble, such as when the cultists are skulking about, he can manifest himself as a thin, wispy, vaguely humanoid form that casts a benevolent glow and is totally non-threatening. As the scenario progresses, this apparition may look more and more clearly like an "Indian medicine man." The shaman may lead the group to safety, or perhaps even to the Confederate camp. The group may, of course, ignore him, or assume he is an evil apparition, which will not dissuade him from attempting to assist. He understands the investigators are opposed to the cult but otherwise has difficulty interpreting their state of mind.

Note that it is likely the shaman has tried the same tactics with the Confederates. They have no fear of him and (correctly) understand he is somehow displeased with the cult. However, their duty has always been to protect the gold, not go into a one-sided battle with a group of degenerates.

The Keeper should employ this spectral ally so as to nudge the investigators onto a healthier path, not to lead them by the nose to the cult village.

priests and each priest can have up to double the normal number of points he may normally possess.

Finally, in a search of the village, the group will find appalling squalor and little of real value. Evidence of murder and sacrifice is commonplace . . . virtually every shack contains gnawed bones (many of which are human) and even the personal belongings of some victims. A few articles belonging to the Crow brothers may be found on the ground near the sacrificial block, which should confirm investigator theories about David and Allan's fate.

The Confederate Camp

The handful of surviving Confederate soldiers maintain a very well concealed encampment waiting for relief that will never come. Their camp is located on a dry island deep within the swamps and consists of a natural cave that has been enlarged over the years to accommodate equipment and personnel. The area around the cave is well protected by snares, pits, and deadfalls, through which only the soldiers know how to pass. In the extremely unlikely event the investigators stumble upon the camp, these traps will ruin their day. In addition, at least one and often two soldiers are on guard duty at all times while the rest sleep, forage, scout, or whatever. The cave contains the following:

- 210 gold bars, each weighing sixteen ounces
- 1,920 one-ounce gold coins of various mints, years, and nationalities (divided among ten burlap sacks)
- 1 wooden chest containing 1.1 million Confederate dollars (of little actual value in the early twentieth century)
- 105 Springfield Model 1861 .58 percussion rifles, each with one pike bayonet

- 30 Sharps New Model 1859 .52 percussion rifles, each with one pike bayonet
- 60 Sharps New Model 1859 .52 percussion carbines
- 60 Colt Model 1860 Army .44 percussion revolvers, each with one flapped holster
- 25 Colt Model 1861 Navy .36 percussion revolvers, each with one flapped holster
- 55 Remington Model 1861 Army .44 percussion revolvers, each with one flapped holster
- 36 wooden kegs, each containing fifteen pounds of blackpowder
- 17 wooden kegs of lead minie balls, round shot, *etc.* (assorted calibers)
- 4 wooden kegs of percussion caps
- 44 leather saddles with bridles, blankets, *etc.*
- 2 Model 1841-44 6-Pounder cannon (3.67 in. caliber; 60" long; 884 lb. barrel; 900 lb. carriage; fires a 6.1 lb. round using 1.25 lbs. of powder; 1,523-yard range)
- 2 caissons (wheeled ammunition carriers; includes two ammunition chests, tools, and a spare wheel; weighs just over 3,800 lbs.)
- 2 limbers (wheeled ammunition carriers; includes one ammunition chest, one grease bucket, two canvas waterbags, and one tarpaulin; weighs 880 lbs.)
- 2 disassembled wagons with accessories
- 86 6.1 lb. solid-shot cannonballs (in the aforementioned chests)
- 24 6.1 lb. explosive-shell cannonballs (in the aforementioned chests)
- 40 6.1 lb. canister rounds (in the aforementioned chests)
- 225 friction primers (for the cannon; in the aforementioned chests)
- 12 wooden crates of miscellaneous equipment (tools, uniforms, blankets, rope, *etc.*)



Damn yankees.

Keep in mind that none of the surviving soldiers have experience with artillery and would be of little help with it even if it could be moved through the swamp to a useful position. However, the powder and ammunition can be used in numerous creative ways to confound the opposition.

The few remaining soldiers are led by Captain William Anderson. While the rest of the group remains at the camp to rest, eat, and guard the gold, two are usually out scouting the surrounding swamps. Several small, flat-bottom boats are available to them, and when they wish to be more stealthy, they use small camouflaged "rafts." These are flotation devices too small to be ridden that the soldiers cling to as they swim and that they use to keep weapons and ammunition safe and dry. Despite their age, all of these soldiers are in excellent shape, having been hardened by the environment. Only one is currently ill (suffering from an eye infection), and he is on continual guard duty at the camp. Although they are equipped with antiquated weapons, all are masters of moving, surviving, and fighting in the swamps. Sadly, they trust no outsiders and rarely encounter anyone other than cultists. As far as they know, the Civil War is still going and the cult members are degenerate Yankee invaders. It will be hard to convince these men that the Confederacy fell in 1865 and harder that they should allow their gold and arms to fall into government hands. In the event the investigators earn their trust, they will agree to turn the shipment over to *bona fide* representatives of the government of Alabama. They are intelligent and will be sure to double-check the credentials of such representatives. If worse comes to worse, they will travel to the state house to personally deliver the gold to the (confused and surprised) governor. It is possible to gain their support to wipe out the cult, but at least two will remain with the gold at all times.

Foiling the Cult

Once the investigators have uncovered the cult, they have several options. The best is to convince skeptical government authorities of the legitimacy of their story so that they send in the state militia and/or parish deputies. More likely, however, they will have to deal with the opposition personally. Wiping out the cult leadership with an aggressive, well-planned raid is one option. Such a plan must be simple and decisive in order to have a reasonable chance of success. Of course, alternatives exist. The group may choose to turn their backs on the cult, believing it is impossible to eradicate them without government assistance. They may even choose to attempt to steal the hidden gold shipment and completely ignore the cult. If they attempt the latter, they can expect significant resistance from the gold's guardians, who are intelligent and cunning and should not be discounted merely because they are elderly.

SAN Rewards & Penalties

Action	Result
Destroy the cult	+1D10 SAN
Each slain Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath	+1D10 SAN
Each slain ghoul*	+1D6 SAN
Eradicate the top cult leaders	+1D10 SAN
The Confederates return to civilization	+1D6 SAN
The cult continues unchecked	-1D10 SAN
Each investigator that is sacrificed	-1D6 SAN

* Awarded only to the slayer. The Keeper should put a cap on how many dice of SAN can be gained if many ghouls are killed.

Aftermath

In the aftermath of the scenario, the group is ultimately accountable to Arthur Crow, the man who sent them in the first place. He will ask all sorts of uncomfortable questions concerning the fate of his sons. Open and honest answers will be rewarded with his gratitude, though he will, of course, be grief-stricken. This assumes the group did nothing particularly illegal or repugnant. The reward will be paid as long as the group held up their end of the bargain and did their best to resolve the case.

On the other hand, if the investigators are dishonest, were involved in illegal or immoral activities, lie to Dr. Crow, or withhold information, he may react in a less-than-friendly manner. If he succeeds in a Psychology roll or has reason to believe the investigators are holding information from him, he may take legal action against them or have private investigators dog their every step. In later scenarios, such NPC investigators could be a great hindrance.

NPC Stats

Cultists

ARLENE "MA" LANIER

high priestess and cult leader

STR 4 DEX 4 INT 19 CON 9 APP 1 POW 23
SIZ 18 EDU 14 SAN 0 Luck 100 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: October 10, 1820

Skills: Astronomy 26%, Botany 21%, Credit Rating 0%, Cthulhu Mythos 66%, Demonology 56%, Drool 95%, Fester 95%, Gurgle 95%, History 30%, Listen 61%, Occult 56%, Psychology 52%, Spit 75%, Spot Hidden 63%, Wheeze 95%, Zoology 17%

Languages: Creole 90%, English 90%, French 90%, Latin

40%, Spanish 42%

Attacks: None

Spells: Call Shub-Niggurath, Clutch of Nyogtha, Contact Ghoul, Deflect Harm, Dominate, Dread Curse of Azathoth, Flesh Ward, Implant Fear, Mental Suggestion, Mesmerize, Mindblast, Mind Transfer, Shrivelling, Summon/Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, Telekinesis, Voorish Sign, Wither Limb

Notes: Arlene Lanier, called "Ma" by cult members, has not been exposed to the outside world for decades, which is good, since her appearance is horrific, to say the least. Those observing Ma for the first time must make a SAN for 1/ID6 SAN loss. Ma is essentially a huge mass of bloated, festering, cancerous flesh that has not moved from bed in her cult-village shack for over ten years. Warped by heinous practices and the use of black magic, Ma's body is in the last stage of life. She is now seeking a method of extending her existence via a Mind Transfer spell. Finding a suitable subject for this has been difficult, and she is growing more desperate as time goes by. Investigators should be very careful when in proximity to this malevolent woman. While she cannot physically attack, she does possess an arsenal of spells and is capable of swiftly laying waste to enemies when she is of the mind to.

JEAN-CLAUDE RENIER

college-educated cultist

STR 12 DEX 13 INT 16 CON 12 APP 14 POW 12
SIZ 14 EDU 15 SAN 0 Luck 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Date of Birth: April 19, 1890

Skills: Accounting 21%, Anthropology 20%, Archaeology 21%, Boating 30%, Climb 50%, Credit Rating 20%, Cthulhu Mythos 22%, Demonology 16%, Dodge 63%, Drive Automobile 25%, First Aid 36%, Fishing 38%, Hide 50%, History 45%, Jump 44%, Law 12%, Library Use 43%, Listen 52%, Occult 21%, Persuade 32%, Psychology 22%, Sneak 46%, Spot Hidden 54%, Swim 51%, Throw 36%, Track 20%, Woodcraft 22%, Zoology 10%

Languages: English 76%, French 54%, Latin 10%

Attacks:

Fencing Attack 65%, 1D6+1+db (rapier)

Fencing Parry 45%

Fist/Punch Attack 61%, 1D3+db

Rifle/Shotgun Attack 40%, 4D6/2D6/1D6 (12-gauge pump-action shotgun)

Spells: Contact Ghoul, Dominate, Dread Curse of Azathoth, Mindblast, Shrivelling, Summon Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, Voorish Sign

Notes: Jean-Claude is the first and only cultist to have attended a university. He recently received a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of Texas at Austin, where he earned high grades and was a member of both the fencing team and the Gamma Upsilon Gamma fraternity.

The cult plans for him to be the first of many to attend universities and colleges and infiltrate "normal society" so that the cult can survive if it is forced to flee the swamps. Jean-Claude recently returned to Black Moss and is currently at the nearby secret cult village visiting friends and participating in gruesome festivities. Within a few months he will return to the University of Texas to attend graduate school. He eventually hopes to become a professor of history so he can have an impact on the shaping of the young minds of America. In the event of Ma's untimely demise, he will likely assume the mantle of command over the cult. However, Jean-Claude does fear Ma and is not likely to arrange an accident for her unless an excellent opportunity presents itself. A handsome man, Jean-Claude does not outwardly wear signs of his inner corruption.

TYLER WILKINSON

treacherous guide and cultist

STR 14 DEX 12 INT 10 CON 15 APP 8 POW 11
SIZ 14 EDU 5 SAN 0 Luck 55 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +ID4

Date of Birth: February 27, 1860

Skills: Bargain 20%, Boating 57%, Botany 12%, Climb 62%, Conceal 63%, Cthulhu Mythos 12%, Dodge 35%, Fishing 60%, Hide 65%, History 38%, Jump 31%, Listen 69%, Occult 20%, Persuade 20%, Psychology 19%, Sneak 75%, Spot Hidden 76%, Swim 41%, Throw 34%, Track 71%, Woodcraft 60%, Zoology 12%

Languages: English 58% (only 15% written), French 44% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 55%, ID4+2+db (bowie knife)
Fist/Punch Attack 55%, ID3+db
Kick Attack 37%, ID6+db
Rifle/Shotgun Attack 65%, 2D8+3 (Sharps .50-90 rifle)

Spells: Contact Ghoul

Notes: Tyler Wilkinson is essentially a "good 'ole boy" cultist who is a crack shot with a rifle. The cult may have him set up the investigators. He may also be a suspect the investigators may want to check out.

JACQUES MURAT

Mayor of Black Moss, pedophile, and cultist

STR 6 DEX 7 INT 12 CON 4 APP 5 POW 8
SIZ 18 EDU 12 SAN 0 Luck 40 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: December 1, 1880

Skills: Accounting 22%, Credit Rating 23%, Cthulhu Mythos 27%, Drive Automobile 25%, Fast Talk 80%, History 28%, Law 19%, Listen 30%, Occult 28%, Persuade 76%, Psychology 65%

Languages: Creole 51% (spoken only), English 65%, French 45% (spoken only)

Attacks: None above base skill

Spells: Contact Ghoul, Dread Curse of Azathoth, Shrivelling
Notes: Murat, known as "Mayor Carbuncle" by local children, is a grossly obese cultist with a weak heart. As Murat is a procurer of small children, investigators would do well to rid the world of this degenerate. He is one of only a few people in town with a high school education. He can greatly affect the investigation through the use of his political ties in Morgan City and elsewhere.

DR. PIERRE BOUVIER

physician, necrophile, and cultist

STR 10 DEX 13 INT 12 CON 10 APP 13 POW 12
SIZ 13 EDU 14 SAN 0 Luck 60 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: June 10, 1871

Skills: Accounting 18%, Anthropology 12%, Boating 25%, Botany 11%, Chemistry 6%, Credit Rating 30%, Cthulhu Mythos 15%, Drive Automobile 25%, First Aid 48%, Fishing 31%, History 30%, Library Use 31%, Listen 35%, Medicine 23%, Occult 12%, Persuade 21%, Pharmacy 22%, Psychology 30%, Ride 25%, Spot Hidden 44%, Swim 35%, Zoology 5%
Languages: Creole 56% (spoken only), English 71%, French 55% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Small Knife Attack 55%, ID3 (scalpel)

Syringe Attack 55%, 1 point (plus effects of syringe contents)

Spells: Contact Ghoul, Create Zombie, Shrivelling

Notes: Dr. Bouvier appears to be a typical rural doctor. He is friendly, courteous, likable, and pleasant, but is also a vicious cultist. A quack, Bouvier has only a high school education; the diploma on his office wall (from the University of Cincinnati School of Medicine) is a forgery. While he is capable of treating minor injuries and ailments, the afflicted are better served staying at home rather than risking his ministrations. Patients who die while in his care may disappear and end up in cult hands. Easily the most repugnant thing concerning Bouvier is the carnal relationships he has with the deceased. He has gone so far as to turn some of his "favorites" into zombies.

PHILIPPE ARNOT

Black Moss Chief of Police and cultist

STR 14 DEX 10 INT 10 CON 14 APP 6 POW 11
SIZ 16 EDU 6 SAN 0 Luck 55 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +ID4

Date of Birth: May 16, 1881

Skills: Boating 38%, Climb 57%, Conceal 33%, Cthulhu Mythos 13%, Dodge 44%, Drive Automobile 27%, Fishing 34%, Hide 50%, Jump 48%, Law 14%, Listen 54%, Occult 10%, Psychology 22%, Ride 27%, Sneak 48%, Spot Hidden 60%, Swim 35%, Throw 35%, Track 35%, Woodcraft 33%

Languages: English 61% (only 14% written)

Attacks:

Fist/Punch Attack 66%, ID3+db
 Handgun Attack 38%, ID10 (.38 revolver)
 Rifle/Shotgun Attack 50%, 4D6/2D6/ID6 (12-gauge double-barreled shotgun)
 Small Club Attack 55%, ID6+db (nightstick)

Spells: Contact Ghoul, Shrivelling

Notes: This ignorant and obscene police chief runs the town with an iron hand. Vicious and cruel, Arnot and his officers permit nothing to interfere with the cult. Actual law enforcement is the furthest thing from their minds unless they can gain some peripheral advantage from it. The police do not generally abuse outsiders without some provocation.

ELIAS MASTERS

storyteller and cultist

STR 8 DEX 8 INT 14 CON 7 APP 7 POW 9
 SIZ 10 EDU 6 SAN 0 Luck 45 HP 9

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: July 21, 1848

Skills: Boating 40%, Botany 18%, Climb 49%, Conceal 40%, Cthulhu Mythos 20%, Demonology 11%, Fishing 55%, Hide 43%, History 62%, Listen 59%, Occult 57%, Persuade 83%, Psychology 20%, Sneak 40%, Spot Hidden 60%, Track 38%, Woodcraft 37%, Zoology 17%

Languages: Creole 70% (spoken only), English 80% (spoken only), French 70% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 34%, ID4+2 (bowie knife)
 Fist/Punch Attack 55%, ID3
 Handgun Attack 25%, ID10+2 (Remington .44 percussion revolver)
 Rifle/Shotgun Attack 50%, 4D6/2D6/ID6 (12-gauge double-barreled shotgun)

Spells: Contact Ghoul, Mindblast, Shrivelling

Notes: Masters is an excellent storyteller whom the Crow brothers visited. He will provide no information in his stories that will aid anyone in finding the cult, but will inform the cult of any activities he learns the investigators are involved in. He could possibly ally himself with the investigators in order to spy on them from within, but that is left up to the Keeper.

AMOS KILLIAN

storeowner and cultist

STR 13 DEX 15 INT 11 CON 14 APP 9 POW 10
 SIZ 15 EDU 5 SAN 0 Luck 50 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Date of Birth: January 3, 1878

Skills: Accounting 25%, Bargain 57%, Boating 38%, Credit Rating 20%, Cthulhu Mythos 11%, Drive Carriage 40%, Fast Talk 20%, Fishing 44%, Hide 31%, Listen 45%, Occult 15%, Oratory 35%, Psychology 28%, Ride 26%, Sneak 39%, Spot Hidden 58%, Swim 39%, Woodcraft 20%

Languages: English 60%, French 46% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Fist/Punch Attack 55%, ID3+db
 Kick Attack 33%, ID6+db
 Large Knife Attack 65%, ID6+db (butcher knife)
 Large Knife Parry 44%
 Rifle/Shotgun 35%, 2D6+2/ID6+1/ID4 (16-gauge double-barreled shotgun)
 Small Club Attack 55%, ID6+1+db (hatchet) or ID6+db (hammer)
 Small Knife Attack 65%, ID4+db (large pocketknife)

Spells: Contact Ghoul

Notes: Amos is the owner and operator of Black Moss's only store, which also serves as the post office. The store contains most of what one could want other than firearms, ammunition, or related accessories. Amos sorts incoming and outgoing mail, and local residents pick their mail up at the store. Of course, he goes through all mail and "loses" anything he disapproves of. Mail is sent weekly to Morgan City, where it is properly processed and postmarked. Amos is adept with a wide variety of weapons, all of which are in easy reach in his store or home. A well-honed butcher knife is always concealed somewhere within Killian's clothing.

BLACK MOSS POLICE OFFICERS

Black Moss has three officers in addition to the Chief of Police. They are all cultists and brutal to the townsfolk. Their statistics are:

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	EDU	SAN	Hits	Bonus
Wade Singleton	17	11	8	17	4	13	17	2	0	17	+1D6
Thomas Hogan	13	14	12	14	9	12	14	4	0	14	+1D4
Billy Jackson	14	15	12	13	8	10	13	4	0	13	+1D4

Dates of Birth:

Singleton: 3-3-1894; Hogan: 4-20-1895; Jackson: 11-16-1891

Skills:

Singleton: Boating 40%, Climb 52%, Cthulhu Mythos 6%, Fishing 44%, Hide 66%, Jump 33%, Listen 60%, Occult 10%, Ride 25%, Sneak 60%, Spot Hidden 67%, Swim 43%, Throw 46%, Track 19%, Woodcraft 23%

Hogan: Boating 59%, Climb 61%, Conceal 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 11%, Dodge 48%, Drive Carriage 30%, First Aid 35%, Fishing 50%, Hide 70%, Jump 46%, Listen 67%, Occult 11%, Ride 34%, Sneak 70%, Spot Hidden 76%, Swim 56%, Throw 54%, Track 67%, Woodcraft 33%

Jackson: Boating 70%, Climb 59%, Conceal 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 9%, Dodge 43%, Drive Automobile 40%, Fast Talk 20%, Fishing 35%, Hide 65%, Jump 58%, Listen 64%, Occult 12%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 81%, Swim 88%, Throw 40%, Track 30%, Woodcraft 25%

Languages:

Singleton: English 50% (spoken only)

Hogan: Creole 49% (spoken only), English 60% (only 45% written), French 60% (spoken only)

Jackson: English 55% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Singleton:

- Fist/Punch Attack 71%, ID3+db
- Grapple Attack 55%, special
- Handgun Attack 25%, ID10 (.38 revolver)
- Large Club Attack 40%, ID8+ID6 (any convenient large club or club-like object)
- Rifle/Shotgun Attack 50%, 4D6/2D6/ID6 (12-gauge pump-action shotgun)
- Small Club Attack 43%, ID6+db (nightstick)
- Small Club Parry 25%

Hogan:

- Fighting Knife Attack 52%, ID4+2+ID4 (bowie knife)
- Fist/Punch Attack 60%, ID3+ID4
- Handgun Attack 39%, ID10 (.38 revolver)
- Kick Attack 35%, ID6+db
- Rifle/Shotgun Attack 55%, 2D6+1 (.44-40 lever-action rifle)
- Small Club Attack 50%, ID6+db (nightstick)
- Small Club Parry 25%

Jackson:

- Fighting Knife Attack 40%, ID4+2+db (bowie knife)
- Fist/Punch Attack 60%, ID3+db
- Handgun Attack 60%, ID10 damage or ID8 (.38 revolver and .32 revolver)
- Rifle/Shotgun Attack 43%, 4D6/2D6/ID6 (12-gauge pump-action shotgun)

Spells: None**Notes:** Not much further needs to be said about these three morons.**CULTIST SQUAD**

What follows is a group of cultists for use by the Keeper. The stats given aren't typical because there is no such thing as a typical cultist: each suffers to a greater or lesser degree from the effects of life in the swamp, inbreeding, and exposure to black magic and evil rituals. However, cultists generally are stupid, uneducated, and illiterate, and have only wilderness and survival type skills. The way given cultists respond to outsiders may vary. All are cannibals and most blindly follow Ma and the elders. The cultists employ a wide range of weapons, from crude knives and clubs to rifles, bows, and shotguns.

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
STR	18	12	14	8	10	16	15	9	12	12	9	6
DEX	6	10	14	8	16	12	13	13	14	17	8	15
INT	5	6	8	7	10	8	6	10	12	9	7	7
CON	18	16	14	10	11	15	14	12	10	12	10	11
APP	3	4	6	6	8	7	4	10	9	7	12	5
POW	10	12	9	10	14	11	7	10	8	13	6	4
SIZ	18	13	12	12	11	17	15	10	13	14	9	14
EDU	1	1	2	0	2	0	1	1	4	2	5	3
SAN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luck	50	60	45	50	70	55	35	50	40	65	30	20

Hits	18	15	13	11	11	16	15	11	12	13	10	13
DB	+1D6	+1D4	+1D4	+0	+0	+1D6	+1D4	+0	+1D4	+1D4	+0	+0
Age	18	20	21	19	28	17	27	25	23	21	43	35

Skills Common to All: Boating 25%+, Climb 50%+, Conceal 40%+, Cthulhu Mythos 5%+, Dodge 20%+ (minimum DEXx2+5%), Fishing 25%+, Hide 50%+, Jump 35%+, Listen 50%+, Occult 10%+, Sneak 50%+, Spot Hidden 50%+, Swim 50%+, Throw 50%+, Track 20%+, Woodcraft 20%+

Languages Common to All: Creole 10%+, English 50%+, French 10%+

Attacks: Each cultist has ID4+1 forms of attack that are above base skill. In addition to this, all cultists have at least 40% in either Large Knife (ID6 damage) or Fighting Knife (ID4+2 damage) Attack skills. Common form of attacks are Rifle/Shotgun, Bow, Spear, Hatchet, any type of knife, Large and Small Club, Fist/Punch, Kick, Grapple, and Sabre/Machete. Handguns are rare among the cultists. In primary attack forms, cultists will have at least 20% above base skills.

Spells: 20% of cultists have spells, but only a few of these have more than one. Their most common spells are Contact Ghoul and Shrivelling.

GHOUL SQUAD

What follows is a group of ghouls provided for the use of the Keeper. They are based on the standard type in the fifth edition *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook.

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	17	16	19	15	18	17
DEX	12	10	13	16	15	12
INT	6	8	10	9	8	12
CON	16	15	18	17	15	14
POW	10	12	15	11	16	13
SIZ	18	12	14	12	15	13
Luck	50	60	75	55	80	65
Hits	17	14	16	15	15	14
Damage Bonus	+1D6	+1D4	+1D6	+1D4	+1D6	+1D4

Skills Common To All: Boating 25%+, Burrowing 70%+, Climb 50%+, Conceal 40%+, Cthulhu Mythos 5%+, Dodge 25%+ (minimum DEXx2+5%), Hide 50%+, Listen 60%+, Sneak 50%+, Spot Hidden 60%+, Swim 50%+, Throw 30%+

Languages Common to All: Creole 10%+ (spoken only), English 40%+ (spoken only), French 10%+ (spoken only)

Attacks:

Claw Attack 30%+, ID6+db

Bite Attack 30%+, ID6 + automatic worry

Also, see the section on cultist attacks. Ghouls will tend more to use physical attacks (relying on superior physiques to overcome the opposition), but some do use firearms and other ranged weapons.

Special: A ghoul may attack with both claws and a bite. If the bite strikes, the ghoul doesn't use its claws in subsequent rounds; instead, it hangs on with its bite and "worries" the victim, doing 1D4 damage automatically. This occurs every round until the victim or the ghoul dies or the victim succeeds in a STR versus STR roll on the Resistance Table (thus breaking the grapple).

Armor: Ghouls take half damage from gunfire (round up fractions).

Spells: 10% possess 1D2 spells

Notes: The above six are representative of the ghouls in this area, and the Keeper may repeatedly recycle their statistics. The ghouls around Black Moss vary somewhat from the standard ones in that they tend to look somewhat more human than the ones depicted in the rulebook. Each is an individual, however. SAN loss for seeing one can range from 0/0 to 0/1D2, 0/1D3, 0/1D4, 1/1D4, 0/1D6, or 1/1D6, depending on its appearance. Those which do not require a SAN roll when viewed may walk about in human society and merely appear to be particularly ugly or unwholesome. Those causing 0/0 or 0/1D2 SAN loss do not possess claws but are likely to still have an effective bite attack.

HU-GHOUL SQUAD

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	12	16	10	9	14	13
DEX	12	11	14	10	16	12
INT	10	12	10	15	8	12
CON	12	13	10	9	14	14
APP	9	6	12	5	4	10
POW	12	10	11	14	8	12
SIZ	12	14	12	10	15	13
EDU	1	2	1	1	3	2
Luck	60	50	55	70	40	60
Hit Points	12	14	11	10	15	14
Magic Points	12	10	11	14	8	12
Damage Bonus	+0	+1D4	+0	+0	+1D4	+1D4

Skills Common to All: same as for the cultist squad

Attacks: same as for the cultist squad

Spells: same as for the cultist squad

Notes: Hu-Ghouls, also known as hum-ghouls, are the unsavory result of a mating between a human and a ghoul. Such creatures are generally shunned by both societies and tend to be the whipped servants of their "betters." Despite their genes, they are not inherently evil or malevolent, but generally turn out this way due to their upbringing. Particularly ugly examples tend toward the ghoul side of the family and may be somewhat resistant to gunfire (¾ damage from bullets) and/or possess an effective bite attack. The specifics are left up to the Keeper, but these creatures are unlikely to be encountered in significant numbers outside this scenario.

BOUVIER'S ZOMBIES

	Marlene	Portia	Russ	Zeb
STR	15	16	18	22
DEX	10	8	7	4
INT	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CON	16	17	19	22
POW	1	1	1	1
SIZ	10	10	14	17
Move	6	6	6	6
Hits	13	14	17	20
Damage Bonus	+1D4	+1D4	+1D6	+1D6
Gender	female	female	male	male

Attacks:

Marlene:

Bite Attack 31%, 1D3

Fist/Punch Attack 35%, 1D3+db

Large Club Attack 25%, 1D8+db (table leg)

Portia:

Bite Attack 44%, 1D3 damage

Fist/Punch Attack 32%, 1D3+db

Large Club Attack 25%, 1D8+db (carved tree limb)

Russ:

Bite Attack 30%, 1D3

Fist/Punch Attack 36%, 1D3+db

Large Club Attack 30%, 1D8+db (baseball bat)

Zeb:

Bite Attack 33%, 1D3

Fist/Punch Attack 37%, 1D3+db

Large Club Attack 39%, 1D8+db (carved tree limb)

Armor: None, but impaling weapons do one point of damage and all others do half rolled damage

SAN loss: 1/1D8

Non-Cultists

KYLE WASHBURN

St. Mary Parish Deputy

STR 14 DEX 16 INT 15 CON 14 APP 14 POW 15
SIZ 15 EDU 14 SAN 77 Luck 75 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Date of Birth: May 5, 1881

Skills: Boating 30%, Climb 49%, Dodge 58%, Drive Automobile 46%, Fast Talk 51%, First Aid 40%, Fishing 31%, Hide 60%, History 30%, Jump 43%, Law 21%, Listen 65%, Mechanical Repair 30%, Persuade 50%, Psychology 48%, Ride 40%, Sneak 65%, Spot Hidden 65%, Swim 44%, Throw 33%, Track 26%, Woodcraft 16%

Languages: English 70%, French 15% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Fist/Punch Attack 80%, 1D3+db

Handgun Attack 55%, 1D10+1 (.41 revolver)

Kick Attack 56%, 1D6+db

Rifle/Shotgun Attack 53%, 4D6/2D6/1D6 (12-gauge pump-action riot shotgun)

Small Club Attack 59%, ID6+db (nightstick)

Spells: None

Notes: Deputy Washburn is a good, honest law enforcement officer who can be an excellent ally or tireless enemy. The investigators may avoid him at first but later come to him for help. Depending on the situation, he could end up helping to bust the cult, then turn around and arrest the investigators. On the other hand, if the investigators show restraint and good intentions, he might look the other way for a few minutes while the group gets a head start on their sprint toward the state line.

JEBEDIAH STUMP

ancient and senile storyteller

STR 5 DEX 10 INT 13 CON 5 APP 6 POW 12
SIZ 10 EDU 6 SAN 23 Luck 60 HP 8 MP 12

Damage Penalty: -ID4

Date of Birth: January 19, 1823

Skills: Boating 25%, Fishing 55%, History 40%, Listen 45%, Persuade 90%, Senility 88%, Spot Hidden 46%, Swim 30%, Track 61%, Woodcraft 48%

Languages: English 80% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 30%, ID4+2-db (hunting knife)

Handgun Attack 25%, ID10+2 (Colt .45 Peacemaker revolver)

Rifle/Shotgun Attack 75%, 4D6+2/2D6+1/ID8 (10-gauge double-barreled shotgun)

Spells: None

Notes: This ancient and senile man is an outstanding storyteller and can entertain people for hours. He is dangerous when using a long gun and does not take kindly to unfriendly strangers. However, when approached by a group of friendly, unarmed, normal-looking people during daylight hours, he will restrain his pack of vicious dogs and invite the visitors up for some vile tea and a story. He knows nothing of the cult and does not remember that he was attacked.

Stump's Dogs

	<u>Fang</u>	<u>Killer</u>	<u>Viper</u>	<u>Wolf</u>
STR	12	12	12	12
DEX	16	17	21	18
CON	12	12	12	12
POW	8	9	10	8
SIZ	8	8	8	8
HP	10	10	10	10

Skills:

Dodge	60%	65%	80%	60%
Hide	75%	70%	65%	70%
Jump	60%	65%	70%	55%
Listen	95%	95%	90%	95%
Spot Hidden	80%	85%	80%	85%
Track by Smell	55%	65%	50%	60%

Attacks:

Bite Attack (1D6) ..	70%	75%	85%	80%
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CAPTAIN WILLIAM BEDIVERE ANDERSON

elderly Confederate officer

STR 6 DEX 8 INT 16 CON 8 APP 8 POW 17
SIZ 14 EDU 17 SAN 30 Luck 85 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: July 7, 1839

Skills: Boating 50%, Climb 62%, Conceal 80%, Fast Draw 60%, First Aid 41%, Fishing 39%, Hide 88%, History 34%, Jump 31%, Listen 50%, Navigate 35%, Persuade 45%, Ride 65%, Sneak 89%, Spot Hidden 62%, Track 77%, Woodcraft 46%

Languages: English 90%

Attacks:

Handgun Attack 85%, ID10 (Le Mat .42 percussion revolver; has additional single shot 20-gauge barrel doing 2D6/ID6/ID3; nine shots with the .42 barrel; one shot per round)

Off-Hand Handgun Attack 60%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver; six shots; one shot per round)

Rifle/Shotgun Attack 75%, 4D6+2/2D6+1/ID8 (10-gauge double-barreled shotgun)

Sabre Attack 67%, ID8+1 (cavalry sabre)

Sabre Parry 62%

Spells: None

Notes: Captain Anderson still leads his unit despite the passage of years. He will trust no one except his own men, but he may assist investigators who are attacked by the cult, which he believes to be made up of Yankees. Anderson and his men know where the cult village is; how many cultists, ghouls, and hughouls there are generally; and how well-armed they are. The Keeper must remember, however, that the gold and arms shipment is Anderson's greatest priority. None of the Confederates take SAN loss from anything involving the cult, including seeing Dark Young and their exploits.

SERGEANT JONATHON KIDDER

elderly Confederate soldier

STR 9 DEX 12 INT 15 CON 8 APP 12 POW 14
SIZ 12 EDU 10 SAN 29 Luck 60 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: March 19, 1840

Skills: Boating 56%, Climb 57%, Conceal 80%, Fishing 60%, Hide 81%, History 27%, Jump 31%, Listen 70%, Ride 61%, Sneak 90%, Spot Hidden 63%, Swim 50%, Track 40%, Woodcraft 46%

Languages: English 62% (only 25% written)

Attacks:

Bayonet Attack 60%, ID6+2 (pike bayonet attached to rifle)

Bayonet Parry 65%

Fighting Knife Attack 53%, ID4+2 (bowie knife)

Handgun Attack 50%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver)

Off-Hand Handgun Attack 30%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver)

Large Club Attack 65%, ID8 (rifle stock)
 Rifle/Shotgun Attack 69%, ID10+4 (Sharps .52 percussion rifle)
 Sabre Attack 61%, ID8+1 (sabre)
 Sabre Parry 57%

Spells: None

Notes: Sergeant Kidder is second-in-command to Captain Anderson.

SERGEANT SETH DAVID CARLYLE

elderly Confederate soldier

STR 10 DEX 10 INT 12 CON7 APP5 POW 12
 SIZ 12 EDU 7 SAN 28 Luck 60 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: October 29, 1840

Skills: Boating 52%, Climb 50%, Conceal 89%, Fishing 67%, Hide 78%, Jump 33%, Listen 30%, Ride 60%, Sneak 81%, Spot Hidden 95%, Swim 56%, Track 83%, Woodcraft 29%
 Languages: English 61% (spoken only), Spanish 10% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Handgun Attack 59%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver)
 Off-Hand Handgun Attack 32%, ID10+1 (Remington .44 percussion revolver)
 Large Club Attack 44%, ID8 (rifle stock)
 Rifle/Shotgun Attack 76%, ID10+4 (Sharps .52 percussion rifle)

Spells: None

Notes: Sergeant Carlyle is somewhat hard of hearing but is the best tracker in the group.

CORPORAL LUCIEN BENJAMIN WALTERS

elderly Confederate soldier

STR 8 DEX 10 INT 14 CON8 APP10 POW 14
 SIZ 14 EDU 7 SAN 31 Luck 70 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: June 23, 1841

Skills: Boating 44%, Climb 82%, Conceal 71%, First Aid 35%, Fishing 49%, Hide 80%, Jump 77%, Listen 60%, Ride 62%, Sneak 83%, Spot Hidden 86%, Swim 64%, Throw 80%, Track 25%, Woodcraft 45%

Languages: English 70% (only 14% written)

Attacks:

Fighting Knife Attack 60%, ID4+2 (bowie knife)
 Handgun Attack 65%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver)
 Off-Hand Handgun Attack 45%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver)
 Large Club Attack 50%, ID8 (rifle stock)
 Rifle Attack 47%, ID10+4 (Sharps .52 percussion carbine)

Spells: None

Notes: Corporal Walters is an excellent knife thrower and generally carries three or four well-honed bowie knives with him in addition to other weapons.

CORPORAL PETER GEORGE

elderly Confederate soldier

STR 6 DEX 11 INT 13 CON7 APP6 POW 12
 SIZ 13 EDU 7 SAN 25 Luck 60 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0

Date of Birth: February 22, 1842

Skills: Boating 50%, Climb 71%, Conceal 71%, Fishing 45%, Hide 72%, Jump 44%, Listen 50%, Sneak 73%, Spot Hidden 62%, Swim 55%, Throw 34%, Woodcraft 67%

Languages: English 60% (spoken only)

Attacks:

Handgun Attack 75%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver)
 Off-Hand Handgun Attack 70%, ID10+1 (Colt .44 percussion revolver)
 Rifle/Shotgun Attack 70%, ID10+4 (Sharps .52 percussion carbine) or 4D6+2/2D6+1/ID8 (Remington 10-gauge double-barreled percussion shotgun)

Spells: None

Notes: Corporal George is currently suffering from an eye infection and is temporarily blind. This is not reflected in the above skills. He is always in the cave with a pair of 10-gauge, double-barreled, sawed-off shotguns, a Sharps .52 carbine, and a pair of heavy .44 Dragoon revolvers. Anyone entering without the password will get blown to tiny bits by Corporal George, who hides in an excellent position behind some crates of tools. His ailment is easily curable in a modern hospital, but if left untreated (or treated by a quack), he may become permanently blind, or even die.

DAVID COLBERT

homicidal maniac

STR 18 DEX 15 INT 6 CON18 APP4 POW 14
 SIZ 16 EDU 13 SAN 0 Luck 70 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +ID6

Date of Birth: February 5, 1884

Skills: Boating 55%, Climb 77%, Conceal 45%, Hide 87%, Jump 60%, Listen 70%, Navigate 65%, Sneak 81%, Spot Hidden 79%, Swim 66%, Throw 50%, Track 46%

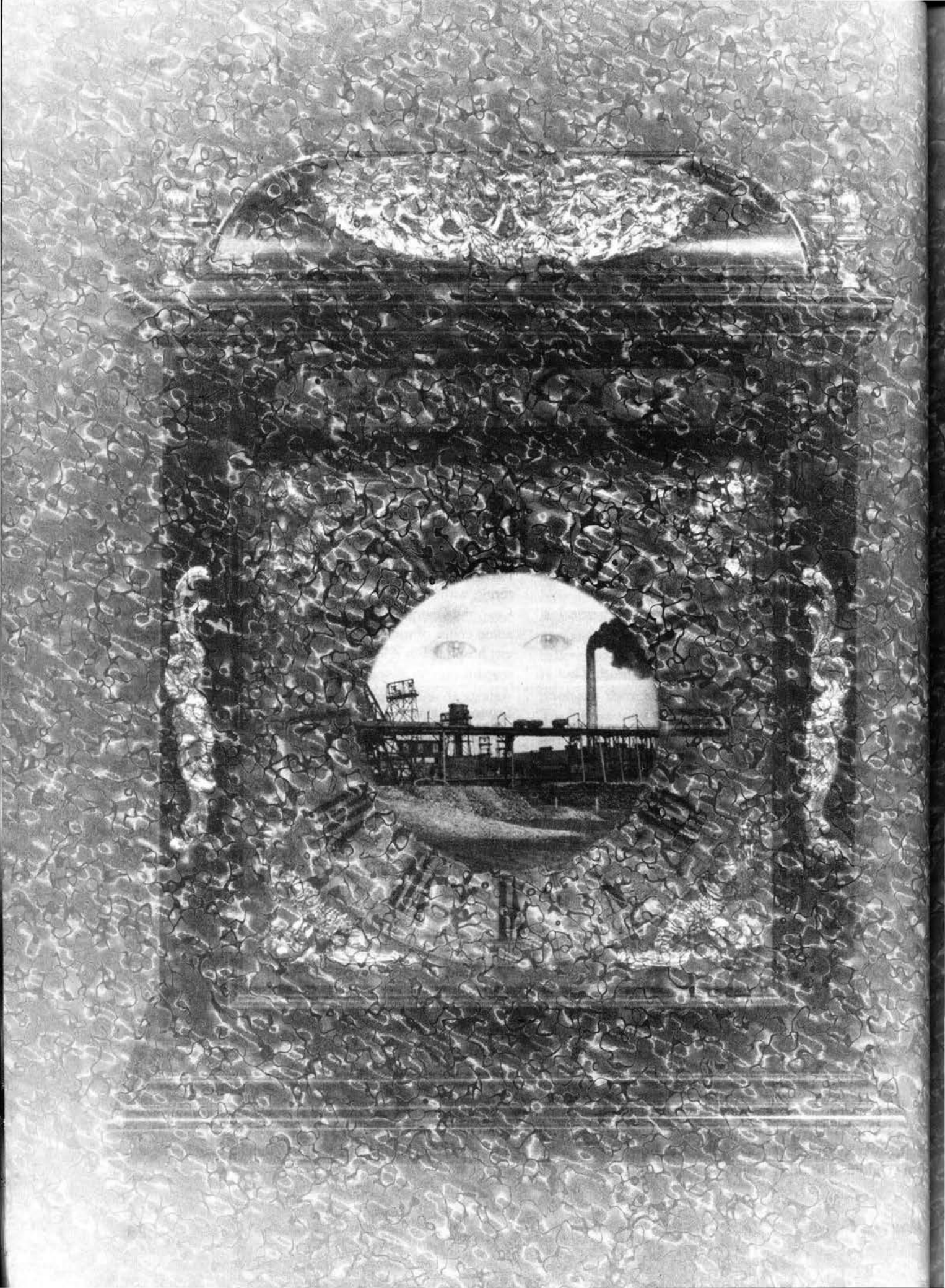
Languages: English 67%, French 60%

Attacks:

Fist/Punch Attack 80%, ID3+db
 Fighting Knife Attack 66%, ID4+2+db
 Head Butt Attack 54%, ID4+db
 Kick Attack 57%, ID6+db
 Wood Axe Attack 78%, ID8+2+db

Spells: None

Notes: David may, at the Keeper's discretion, be running around the swamps attacking investigators, local residents, police, and cultists alike. Attacks are not particularly frequent or indiscriminate, since this would attract undue attention. While he was once a reasonably educated man, David is now a raving lunatic who is more cunning than intelligent.



Nightcap

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Nightcap

JEFF MOELLER

ILLUSTRATED BY DENNIS DETWILLER

Set in rural Kentucky in late 1922, "Nightcap" presents a detailed investigation and some truly unusual challenges for players. It's unlikely that your investigators will forget their strange encounter with Teddy any time soon . . .

Background

In the late 1830s, a cult devoted to the exploitation of man's darkest dreams operated in the (fictitious) rural county of Leshay County, Kentucky. Leshay County is a mountainous, secluded area in the southeastern part of the state. Through the use of foul magic, the nameless cult opened a physical pathway, called a Gate of Oneirology, to the haunted plateau of Leng in the Dreamlands. For a brief time, they consorted with the grotesque Men of Leng and their loathsome allies, the slippery moon-beasts, then brought back to the waking world five items of note: first, a horrible book, *The Tome of the Masked One*, written on the skin of a being not known to our world in an ink better left undescribed. Some in the Dreamlands whisper that the author is none other than the nameless priest in the silken yellow mask and robes who dwells in isolation in Leng's hideous monastery. The cult also brought back to its hidden meeting place—deep in a Leshay County cavern—four flasks of fabled Moonwine. Each flask was carved from a single ruby, and was intended for use in their hideous ceremonies.

In November of 1839, a bear looking for a place to hole up for the winter got into the cult's hidden cache, dragged out two of the four bottles of Moonwine, and consumed the entire contents of one before running into the cultists. When the cultists saw the mutagenic effects of an entire flask of dream-created Moonwine on Teddy, they plunged through their Gate of Oneirology and quickly sealed it from the other side, abandoning their wine, the partially translated Tome, and other cult trappings. An immortal archetype of the wild, destructive aspect of nature, Teddy continues to haunt the woods of Leshay County.

In the summer of 1842, Ephraim Peabody, an eccentric prospector from Pittsfield, Massachusetts, went to Leshay County to follow up a lead on a potentially valuable mercury ore deposit. Peabody did not find much in the way of mercury, mercury not being commonplace in Kentucky, but he did find Teddy's cave and the second flask of Moonwine. Recognizing the value of a whiskey-bottle-sized, flawless

ruby, Peabody took the flask and high-tailed it back to Pittsfield. Curiosity got the better of him, however, and he poured himself a full quart of the Moonwine once back home. The Berkshire County coroner later had to scrape him off the dining room table, chair, floor, and cellar steps, for Peabody's flesh dissolved into a liquid, gelatinous horror and literally poured through his house. There was an inquest, closed to the public. Nearly all records of the inquest were destroyed soon thereafter, though juror number 4, John Peters, still lives in Pittsfield.

In the late 1880s, the small town of Heighton sprang up a few miles from the site of the cave, fueled by several new coal mines in the area. In June of 1922, Brent Johnson, an aspiring author looking for source material, went to Heighton to work in the mines for a few months. Johnson made a nuisance of himself and was suspected of being a union organizer, a rumor supported by his staying in the foremen's boardinghouse on a miner's salary.

Johnson took long walks into the surrounding wilderness to commune with nature. On his last day as a sane man, Sunday, October 22, 1922, Johnson did not return until late that evening, missing his entire Sunday shift. Johnson had stumbled onto the cultists' cave and uncovered the two remaining bottles of Moonwine, as well as the now crumbling, water damaged, and rotting tome. Unfortunately for Mr. Johnson, he also found Teddy. Johnson dropped the tome but attempted to escape with the two bottles of Moonwine, one of which slipped out of his grasp as he tried to lose Teddy by running down a stream. Johnson finally picked his way back to Heighton, speaking to no one upon returning. He secreted himself in his room and marveled over his remaining find. Johnson sampled but a small amount of the Moonwine before turning in, but the horrible, intruding visions it induced left him a gibbering vegetable.

The dropped bottle of Moonwine has seeped into Heighton's water table. The result has been that the subconscious minds of people in the surrounding area influence reality, warping it to conform with their expectations of what is about to occur. For a paranoid group of investigators, this has created a dangerous situation.

Getting Started

The scenario opens in late November, 1922. One of the investigators is approached by a local friend, a lawyer who grew up in Leshay County and who is an acquaintance of a

sheriff there, John Q. Bates. The sheriff is looking for private investigators on behalf of a Mrs. Elaine Johnson, whose son went insane, apparently after drinking some strange poison derived from a fungus. There's no evidence of criminal activity, so the sheriff's department isn't pursuing the case, but the sheriff told Mrs. Johnson that he'd try to refer her to someone. The investigator's lawyer friend shows the investigators a letter from the sheriff detailing the particulars of the case and a photograph of the sheriff's deputy, Bill Samuels, holding a strange bottle of red glass that's nearly filled with some clear liquid (Player Aid #1).

According to the letter, Mrs. Johnson's son Brent did not show up for his shift at the CMMI mines at Heighton, Kentucky, on either Sunday, October 22, or Monday, October 23. He was a new-hire who had only been on for a few weeks. A college-educated, soft-spoken fellow, he had been renting a room in the foremen's boardinghouse, with the

help of an allowance from his mother. This had caused some friction between him and the miners. Mrs. Johnson has no idea what Brent was doing in Leshay County. She assumes working there was one of his whims.

The shift foreman said he went to Brent's room after work that Monday to fire him, and found him lying in his bed and staring at the ceiling, all glassy-eyed and foaming at the mouth. Dr. Rivers, who examined him, said there was nothing to do but pack him off to the lunatic asylum in Lexington, which is what Mrs. Johnson did.

On Brent's nightstand, the sheriff found the bottle that the deputy is holding in the picture. It is, according to the letter, like nothing he nor Mrs. Johnson has ever seen. The sheriff had a sample of the liquid in the bottle sent off to a lab and the lab report came back "Ethanol 90%, Water 9.9%, trace of highly complex organic molecule, similar in structure to ergotic alkaloid, previously unclassified." The

Player Aid #1—A Photograph

The B&W photograph in the envelope shows a big, rugged-looking, blond, mustachioed man in his early 20s wearing a police uniform shirt, badge, and work pants. He is holding a faceted, cut-glass bottle, like a brandy decanter, that has a stopper and a pitcher handle. It looks like something that would only come from Tiffany's or some other very upscale establishment. It is nearly full of some sort of liquid. Anyone studying the bottle very closely and who has journeyed to the Dreamlands should have a secret Dream Lore roll made for them by the Keeper. Success discloses that the bottle resembles the flagons rumored to be carried by certain sinister, turban-wearing slave merchants who call at the port of Dylath-Leen in unwelcome black galleys. Some whisper that these flasks contain the fabled and potent Moonwine, and are carved from a single, immense ruby . . .



lab has no clue about how to duplicate the molecule or what species of fungus it might have come from. Obviously the liquor is the source of Brent's trouble, but what it is and from whom he obtained it is a complete mystery. The sheriff has retained the bottle, along with Brent's things.

Mrs. Johnson is offering \$100, plus board and two round-trip train tickets, to any experienced investigators willing to go down for a few days and have a look around. The sheriff notes that he can have Deputy Samuels meet them at the station. The transcript ends: "Nice lady. Should probably go down before winter sets in. Sounds like some outdoor work. Suggest you check a university library re: Leshay County to acquaint yourself with area around Heighton." If the investigators are willing to take up the case, the lawyer friend passes the news on to Sheriff Bates, and within two days a pair of round-trip train tickets from the investigator's town to Sylvanville, Kentucky, arrive via certified mail.

Research

Any appropriate reference text can divulge the following information: Leshay County is a rural, sparsely populated region in the mountains of southeast Kentucky. The county seat and largest town is Sylvanville, population about 4,000. Mining (especially coal mining) is the principal industry. Heighton is a company town owned by Consolidated Mines and Minerals, Inc. (CMMI), a large, publicly traded corporation. Anyone knowledgeable about big business, or who spends a few minutes looking over a stock register at a large library, can tell the investigators that CMMI is nominally incorporated in Delaware, has its principal offices in Boston, and posts decent earnings. CMMI (Know roll) has a well-known and well-deserved reputation for not tolerating union organizers. Persons knowledgeable about CMMI (or someone succeeding in a Library Use roll while reviewing the archives of any major news-

paper) can relate that a CMMI mine in a neighboring county was the scene of an armed crackdown on labor unrest in 1918. This resulted in the death of three miners. It could be that one of the wealthier investigators has some CMMI stock in his or her portfolio and knows all this.

Persons looking for interesting facts about Leshay County who make a successful Library Use roll at the Miskatonic University Library, or any other library noted for its occult holdings, will come across a limited-edition book by the late Thaddeus Throckmorton, a professor of American Folklore at Miskatonic around the turn of the century. The book, dated 1898 and titled *Superstition and Folklore in the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains*, devotes a bit of space to some peculiar goings on in Leshay County circa 1830-40. According to Throckmorton, there was reputedly a coven of witches operating in the county around this time. Reading the entire volume takes thirty hours, and nets the reader (after a successful Read English roll) +3% to Occult, and +1% to Cthulhu Mythos, at a cost of 1D2 SAN. Within the transcript of a reputed witch's oral history is the elaborate hand gesture for the Voorish Sign, which an investigator may find on close study (INTX1).

Throckmorton does not make any mention of the Ephraim Peabody incident (below), since no one in Leshay County knew anything about it.

Also to be found in the book, on a successful Read English roll, is Player Aid #2, discussing an incident that happened in Leshay County circa 1840. Letitia Harpwood died childless in 1900, and no living person knows her story.

Sylvanville

Presumably the investigators wire Sheriff Bates and agree to have two (or more) of their number come. Once Sheriff

Player Aid #2—An Excerpt from "Superstition and Folklore"

One very old woman in Sylvanville, a Mrs. Letitia Harpwood, had a very odd tale to tell concerning the rough hills in southern Leshay County, near what is now the new mining town of Heighton. Before the Civil War, the area had been remote wilderness, visited only by hunters and trappers. To a great extent it remains so, though local hunters and trappers shun the area because of persistent rumors that the woods are haunted. Mrs. Harpwood's husband had run a profitable trapline in the area for black bear in the Twenties and Thirties, but abandoned it after a frightening experience in 1835.

One day in October of that year, Mr. Harpwood trapped a bear late in the day and having taken until after dark to butcher the creature, he camped in the woods for the night. Harpwood returned without the bear the next day, his clothes ripped and soiled, and a wild, frightened look in his eyes. Harpwood said that he had had a weird nightmare in the woods, in which he saw "horned and hooved devils with forked tails and burning pitchforks" dancing around a bonfire and yelling to the sky in some demonic, un-Christian language. They saw him and stopped their dancing when their leader, a tall, bearded man in a scarlet robe, pointed at him and shouted for the others to "seize the sacrifice and take him to the monastery." Harpwood abandoned his gear and ran all night through the wilderness to get home. The "devils" chased him for several miles, howling like rabid dogs.

When I asked Mrs. Harpwood how her late husband's clothes had gotten torn after he awoke from his dream, she gave me an odd, confused look, and would say no more to me . . .

Bates learns when the investigators will be arriving, he wires to confirm that Bill Samuels (the same deputy from the picture) will meet them at the station. The train trip is uneventful (unless the Keeper wishes otherwise). If more investigators than two decide to check things out, fine, but they have to pay their own way. True to Sheriff Bates' word, Bill Samuels (looking much as he did in the picture) is waiting for them on the platform in Sylvanville. He greets them warmly and offers them a nickel tour of Sylvanville.

Sylvanville is the county seat of Leshay County, population roughly 4,000. CMMI runs a coal mill in Sylvanville that employs a big chunk of the (non-unionized) working population. Most of the rest work in transportation (loading coal onto trains), service industries (feeding coal-loaders), and government (taxing coal-loaders). The county courthouse, clerk's office, and recorder's office are all in Sylvanville. Samuels lives in an unremarkable one-room flat above a diner in the middle of town, across the street from the county courthouse. There is a movie theater in town in case the investigators get bored. The investigators' hotel, the Leshay Hermitage, is surprisingly nice. It's the place where CMMI bigwigs stay when on inspection tours in the area.

There is a public library, of sorts. It has some encyclopedias, standard reference books, complete archives of Lexington and Louisville newspapers, copies of most great books of Western civilization, some mining and geology texts, topographic maps of the county, and not much else. Throckmorton's *Superstition and Folklore* is not here.

There is no local newspaper and never has been. Louisville and Lexington papers, usually two days old, are sold at the newsstands. If the investigators' impression of Sylvanville is that it's rather poor and somewhat backward, and a fairly persuasive argument for labor unions, then they have gotten the right impression. The sheriff's office is in the courthouse.

Sheriff Bates

Sheriff John Q. Bates is a pudgy 60-year-old with a burr haircut and what might euphemistically be described as a rural speech affectation. Lacking much formal education, Bates has been underestimated by criminals in Leshay County for most of his life, usually to their regret. Under the provincial demeanor is a fairly sharp mind. Although Bates will not take seriously any investigator ravings about monster bears, dream-realms, and overarching alien conspiracies, pitch the same thing to him wrapped up as devil worshipers using exotic poisons and give him some proof and you still have his skepticism, but also his cooperation. He has already decided that something out of the ordinary is going on. He is just not sure what.

Sheriff Bates greets the investigators warmly. Once the investigators have finished looking through the evidence and questioning Bates and Samuels, Bates will offer the assistance of his deputies, and will assign Samuels to guide

the investigators full-time while they are in Sylvanville or Heighton. Samuels will not be allowed to leave Leshay County on side trips, though.

Potential clues that can be acquired from Sheriff Bates:

- The shift foreman who found Johnson is a fellow by the name of Bobby Lynn, a local. Bobby is about 30 and Bates knows the family. A "good old boy" is how Bates describes him.
- Bates and Samuels interviewed the miners who knew Johnson in Heighton. They describe him as a soft-spoken fellow who was always asking foolish questions like "What is it like to be a coal miner?" and "How does it make you feel when you are a hundred feet down in the earth and they pull the lift back up?" They resented him for renting a nice room, but admit he did his share of the work.
- People had different opinions about what Johnson was doing in Heighton pretending to be a coal miner. He did not hide being from the city (Cincinnati, to be precise), but whenever someone asked him what he was doing here, he asked them the same question. A few people thought he was a union organizer. Most of these did not understand why he was being so obvious as to stay in the foremen's boarding house if he was. In any event, all questioned say that they had never heard Johnson engage in any union recruiting. Some people thought he was a Pinkerton detective looking for union organizers, but again he was not keeping a good cover if he was. Most guessed he was hiding out from something.
- Lynn told the sheriff that the door to Johnson's room was locked when he got there and that he had to get the manager to let him in. The manager (Matilda McCoy) confirmed this. There was no window in the room.
- Samuels subtly insinuates throughout the course of the discussion his "gut feeling" that CMMI is behind what happened to Johnson. Samuels acknowledges that the union organizer theory "maybe" suffers from the flaw that CMMI is too obvious a suspect. He cogently observes however that CMMI has shown no compunction about having its private police simply gun "labor rioters" down, so this is not beyond them. Bates has no idea who is behind what happened to Johnson, if anyone is.
- Neither Bates nor Samuels has heard tell of anything remotely similar ever happening, though they have not engaged in any kind of historic research.

Johnson's Stuff

Bates and Samuels searched Johnson's room and cleaned it out of Johnson's belongings. The investigators can have them. They include:

- Several sets of work clothes and two pairs of boots.

- Miscellany: two sets of street clothes and a nice suit. Also, a big, shaved oak stick with a steel point at one end, and a pack. Inside the pack are a compass, a field guide, a leather water flask (half empty), a box of pencils, and a pair of water-stained, dirty, expensive-looking soft leather boots. Samuels says there was also a half-eaten lunch that they threw out.
- A diary with daily entries. The diary is full of notes about the people, scenery, and way of life around Heighton. Johnson did not write anything about himself in the diary, which takes about an hour to read. Nothing occult, no mention of enemies or problems, nor any discussions of bizarre occurrences can be found. Each reader should be asked to make an Idea roll. If it succeeds, the reader notices that Johnson did not go to church on Sundays. Instead, he got up before dawn and went off on wilderness walks, being careful to get back before noon for his shift. On a second Idea roll, the reader gets the impression that most of the entries were written at the end of the day. The last entry is dated Saturday, October 21. Johnson refers to finding some interesting red mineral formations that day, but gives no information about where he found them. Johnson's diary also notes for that day: "Found beat-up, rusty old lantern nearby." In one entry, Johnson expresses his intention to take another nature hike "early tomorrow up that way again."
- The lantern: A very rusty, beat-up old lantern. Scratched on the bottom are the initials "E.M.P." Stamped into the side is "Made in Adams, Massachusetts." The journal notes: "Wonder who E.M.P. was? Maybe there's some source material here. Check vital statistics records?"
- An opened envelope: Samuels says this was found in the wastebasket in Johnson's room. The letter is addressed to Brent Johnson c/o General Delivery in Heighton. The return address reads, "E.F. Johnson, 716 Springfield #2, Mt. Healthy, Ohio." It is postmarked October 5. No sign of any letter can be found. (It contained money from home).
- Money: \$46 in cash, plus change—far too much for a coal miner to be sitting on.
- A chunk of the bizarre: The bottle of Moonwine resembles a faceted, cut-glass brandy decanter, with a similar stopper. The decanter is of some sort of heavy, red, glass-like material, covered with strange carvings of griffins, unicorns, and other, less-identifiable fantastic beasts. It has an elaborately carved handle, which is of one piece with the decanter itself. An Art roll fails to identify its origin, although it looks like an artwork of some sort. A Geology roll rules out that it is made of glass, although what it really is should not be ascertainable on a mere Geology roll—it is too fantastic to simply occur to anyone. An investigator could try to scratch it. Corundum, the general class of gems that includes ru-

bies and sapphires, is 9 on the Mohs hardness scale, just above topaz, and just below diamond, which should be well known to anyone with Geology experience if they think to ask about it. A substance of a given rating can only be scratched by a substance of an equal or higher one (glass rates just below 6, tempered steel at 6½, quartz at about 7). The investigators will be hard-pressed to find any topaz, but it could be that the sheriff could borrow a sapphire or ruby ring on behalf of the investigators; the decanter and the gemstone will scratch each other, which will leave little doubt as to what the decanter is (but the investigators may need to pony up some money to have a lapidary fix the ring). Appraise rolls are meaningless—if this thing were ever broken down and sold, the market would collapse. If the investigators failed their Dream Lore roll before when studying the photograph, kindly Keepers might allow them another while looking at the bottle itself.

Drinking the Moonwine

The bottle of Moonwine is nearly full. If someone takes a sip, he sleeps very soundly and has some rather frightening, but hazy, dreams, all shadows and suggestions. The only thing the investigator remembers clearly from the dream is meeting some sort of king in a lonely tower, and then going on some sort of trip. SAN loss for this very disturbing, but thankfully very vague, dream is 0/1. If someone drinks a shot glass, this will give the investigator the same dose Brent Johnson got (about 1/50th the dose that Teddy and Peabody got). What horrors the investigator sees are up to the tender mercies of the Keeper. Suggested is an outline of the part of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* where Randolph Carter meets up with Nyarlathotep atop Kadath in the Cold Waste, and gets tossed onto a Shantak and hauled off to Azathoth's throne, with as much horrific emphasis as you can muster. Allow the poor bastard a Dream Lore roll (to figure out to jump off the Shantak before it's too late). If he succeeds, he wakes up screaming before he sees the worst of things; he remembers every vivid detail as long as he lives, and loses 1D10 SAN. What a hangover. If the Dream Lore roll fails, the investigator loses 5D10/10D10 SAN for the ride of his life, and almost certainly wakes up a drooling idiot in the same ward as Brent Johnson. That ought to teach the player the dangers of substance abuse.

The contents of the bottle have already been analyzed, as was mentioned in the section "The Investigators Get Involved." But the bottle itself has not. Investigators who want to send the bottle itself off for analysis had best choose their analysts carefully. The Keeper is well within his rights to have the lab technician realize what the bottle is, steal it, and disappear for parts unknown. Perhaps the investigators read in the newspaper a year or so later of a fabulous ruby find in a remote part of India. Tracking down the lab technician

Archetype Intrusions

Each investigator who has sampled the Moonwine will be subject to periodic "archetype intrusions" for the duration of the scenario. Suggestions appear throughout this scenario. The Moonwine breaks down barriers between the conscious and unconscious mind, as well as barriers between the waking and dreaming world. An archetype intrusion is a quasi-real hallucination of a dream-related myth symbol appropriate to the investigators' circumstances. One comparatively non-threatening intrusion that may occur periodically is the White Stag. If influenced investigators begin to stray from the task at hand, or draw seriously wrong conclusions, they will see the White Stag. The White Stag, a symbol of unattainable goals, appears at the edge of one's vision, and only for a split second. The Stag cannot be caught. It appears as a large, white deer with bronze antlers. Uninfluenced investigators will not see what the influenced investigators see, and may conclude they are having a mental disturbance. A successful Occult or Psychoanalysis roll reveals the significance of the White Stag.

might be a good jumping-off point for a subsequent adventure, but it is beyond the scope of this one.

Investigations in Sylvanville

The investigators should at least suspect that Johnson might have found the strange bottle on his nature walk the day before he was found; however, there's no information as to exactly where Johnson went that Sunday. Assuming eight hours one way in any direction from Heighton, this entails a lot of ground. Air searches do no good.

Library/Courthouse

Topographical maps of the area around Heighton can be purchased for a nominal fee. Assuming Johnson's trekking speed to be two miles an hour and considering that he could have been out for up to eight hours, the investigators will have to search a circular area with a 16-mile radius (translating to roughly 500 square miles). Most of it is wilderness, ridges, forest, played-out mines, and even some cave systems. If the investigators do not realize that searching this whole area without more information is a waste of time, have Samuels explain it to them. There is no local newspaper that might give clues as to where he might have gone. Searching through Lexington or Louisville newspapers, no matter how far back, is a waste of time.

County Coroner

There is no county coroner as such; local doctors are hired to provide such services. Doc Rivers can easily be found, but knows nothing. The county recorder's office keeps such matters as autopsy records, tax records, records of live births, and death certificates in a file at the courthouse. Every unattended death is required to have an autopsy, and every death occurring in the county has a death certificate on file (in theory anyway). The records go back to 1828. Because the investigators are working with the sheriff, they are welcome to browse through them. A Library Use roll (auto-

matically successful if the searcher looking for the initials "E.M.P.") uncovers one possible lead (Player Aid #3).

Nothing more about Mr. Peabody can be found in the coroner's files.

County Recorder's Office

At the county recorder's office in the courthouse, the investigators can check the property records for 1842. A Library Use roll combined with a successful Spot Hidden roll discovers a recorded mining claim, dated June 4, 1842, complete with metes and bounds description, for a mercury claim in the southern part of the county. The Spot Hidden roll is not necessary if the investigators know they are looking for a mercury claim. They will probably not know this until they return from Pittsfield. The claim is in the name of "Massachusetts Mining Prospectors, Inc." (MMPI). The nearly illegible signature can (after a successful Spot Hidden roll) be made out to be that of "Ephraim M. Peabody, President." Appropriate inquiry at the offices of CMMI by a shareholder or at the Delaware Secretary of State's office discloses that MMPI is a corporate predecessor to CMMI.

The clerk at the county recorder's office will be more than happy to mark out the metes and bounds of the 1/4-acre claim on an investigator-provided topographical map. It marks an area about five miles north of Heighton, seemingly along the top of a 40'-high ridge overlooking a small stream noted as Raspberry Creek. Samuels relates that the creek got its name for the heavy concentration of berry bushes in the area. The clerk looks disturbed at the investigators' possible interest in that area. "Nobody goes up there—those woods are haunted," the clerk volunteers. Samuels just laughs, but the clerk persists. "Trappers and miners used to go up there in the old days, but more than one never came back." The clerk cannot give any names, but the investigators might hear similar, vague stories from other older locals.

Sylvanville Savings & Loan

This is the only bank in town. Once the sheriff's office clears the way, the investigators can learn that Brent Johnson had

Player Aid #3

a letter in the death-certificate file at the Leshay County Courthouse

November 17, 1842

To: County Coroner, Leshay County, Kentucky

Dear Sir,

I am conducting a confidential, official inquest into the disturbing death of Mr. Ephraim Peabody, late of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Mr. Peabody is believed to have spent the past summer on business in Leshay County. Any information you might be able to provide on his activities or whereabouts this past summer would be greatly appreciated by the Commonwealth and by

Your Humble Serv't

Hartford Waite
County Examiner
Berkshire County, Mass.

(At the bottom of the letter is scribbled two notes, in different hands: "What do I do with this? L." and "Just put this in the records. M.")

an account there. He opened it with a \$50 deposit on June 10th of this year. He withdrew \$45 a week later. There is another \$50 deposit and \$50 withdrawal on each of the following dates: July 5th/7th; August 6th/8th, September 4th/7th, and October 6th/8th. There is a \$5 balance in the account. The records are not good enough to ascertain where the money came from, and the tellers do not remember. It came from his mom.

Beyond Sylvanville

The investigators' research in Sylvanville will suggest two side trips that might be made before (or after) a trip to Heighton: Lexington State Hospital and Pittsfield.

Lexington State Hospital

In a few words: Dirty. Overcrowded. Underfunded. Disease-ridden. Dangerous. That describes Brent Johnson's ward, one of the better ones in the place. With a note from Sheriff Bates, the investigators have no trouble getting in. The emaciated Johnson is strapped to a bed and lying in a puddle of his own excrement in a padded cell that contains three other similarly situated, similarly catatonic patients. Johnson's current SAN is at 2. For now, he is hopelessly catatonic. A Psychoanalysis roll does get him to babble a bit, however; he says, "Leng, Leng, Leng." If the person making the successful Psychoanalysis roll proceeds to talk about the shadowy dreams undergone by someone who sampled the Moonwine, Johnson looks at the

investigator, howls like a banshee, bursts his restraints, and tries to gouge the investigator's eyes out (followed by his own). At least the investigators find out with certainty what happened to him, though.

If the investigators ask around, they learn that Johnson had a visitor about two or three weeks ago (nobody bothers to keep records of this or most other sort of things). She was a short, middle-aged woman. She said she was his mom.

Pittsfield

The investigators might be led to Pittsfield by the letter from the Berkshire County coroner seeking information to aid his inquest into the death of Ephraim Peabody. Pittsfield, Massachusetts, is the county seat of Berkshire County, in the extreme western part of the state. Unlike in Leshay County, there is an appointed coroner. He has his own office in the county courthouse and keeps death records and inquest transcripts. This is the obvious first stop for the investigators.

Inquest Records?

The first and most obvious tack to take is to ask the clerk for the transcript of the Ephraim Peabody inquest back in 1842. "There is no record," reports the clerk. If the pushy investigators do not believe her, they can look for themselves. If they want to, she directs them into a back room full of vertical inquest files running back well before 1842. Thorough investigation of the 1842 files (including surrounding years, behind the bookcase, etc.) discloses nothing.

A Side "Trip"

The Moonwine's tendency to blur the distinction between nightmares and reality could have unpleasant consequences for any investigators who have drunk some. If at any time during the scenario such investigators come to believe that Michael Hutchins, the local CMMI manager, is a dangerous cultist, he becomes one—for those investigators only. This bit of subjective reality requires management by the Keeper. Veteran players should have no trouble with the idea that party members are having deranged hallucinations that they are not lucky enough to share.

The "hallucination-Hutchins" should generally act as the affected investigators fear his acting. "Hallucination-Hutchins" will only strike when an influenced investigator is asleep and dreaming. Influenced investigators will be subject to periodic attacks of increasing magnitude by Dreamlands creatures. An investigator "slain" by a hallucination suffers a 2D10 SAN loss. Non-influenced investigators will believe that the influenced investigators are undergoing a violent nightmare from which they cannot be awakened. Suggested Dreamlands beasts with which to torment influenced investigators appear below.

MEN OF LENG

diabolical dream-men

STR 3D6 CON 3D6 SIZ 2D6+6 POW 3D6 DEX 3D6 APP 2D6

Move: 8

Attacks:

Spear 45%, ID8+1+db damage

Spells: None

Notes: The hallucinatory Men of Leng wear red monk's robes and do not bother to conceal their deformities.

Sanity Loss: 0/ID6

WAMPS

STR 5D6 CON 3D6+20 SIZ 5D6 INT 2D6+3 POW 3D6 DEX 2D6+6

Move: 9

Skills: Smell Prey 60%

Attacks:

Bite 40%, ID6+ID6+infection (see below)

Armor: 2 points of flabby skin.

Notes: Hallucinatory wamp bites do transmit a loathsome disease of the Keeper's choice, unless the investigator rolls CONx5 on a D100. Flesh-eating strep is highly recommended.

Sanity Loss: 0/ID8

ing. The clerk shows the investigators out with a smug, I-told-you-so look on her face.

Local Newspapers

Local newspapers from 1842 carry no mention of any inquest for Ephraim Peabody, although there is a brief obituary dated November 15, 1842. It appears as Player Aid #4 nearby.

Local Gossipmongers

No one the investigators can easily find (for example, the current coroner, others with the surname "Peabody," the

police, CMMI bigwigs, local gossipmongers, *etc.*) know anything about what happened to Peabody. Of course, it did happen eighty years ago. The local gossipmongers might make up a story, though, at the Keeper's discretion. The obituary and the letter combined, plus the absence of records of any inquest, should add up to "cover-up of weird death" in even the most inexperienced investigators' minds. If it does not, call for an Idea roll and suggest it.

Hopefully the investigators do not give up at this point. If they start talking amongst themselves about what other sorts of records might be checked, call for a both an Idea roll and a Know roll, or a single Law roll. Any investigator who succeeds realizes that inquests are conducted

Player Aid #4—from the Berkshire County Dispatch, 11/15/1842

PEABODY, Ephraim. Mr. Ephraim M. Peabody, 44, died suddenly at home on November 13th. Services will be private at the request of the coroner's office.

before a six-man jury, like a court case. This should get them back to the courthouse looking through the general courthouse records.

General Courthouse Records

The master case index for 1842, available for the asking, turns up an entry for "Case No. 134-PEABODY, Ephraim-Inquest." Next to this is written in large, block letters "SEALED AND DESTROYED BY ORDER OF THE COURT."

The jury pool records are technically available for the asking, but the clerk wants an explanation as to why he ought to have to go drag them out of storage. A Persuade roll, modified upward depending on the plausibility of the excuse for looking at them, gets them brought to the desk after some grumbling. They consist of a dusty, yellowed old ledger book with "1842 jury roll" embossed on the front. The first section of the ledger contains the entire voting rolls from the last election, with a check next to the unfortunates who were drawn to be on the venire. Following this is a case-by-case breakdown of names and addresses of jurors. There is no entry for Case No. 134. That page has been thoughtfully ripped from the book.

The 1842 jury records are in a pen-and-ink ledger book. If the investigators study the page for Case No. 135, call for a Spot Hidden. If the roll is successful, faint indentations from the prior page can be seen. Savvy investigators rip out and pocket the page for Case No. 135 after distracting the cranky clerk ("Could we look at the 1843 records, please?"), and then return the 1842 jury pool records while profusely apologizing for any inconvenience. There is only one clerk at work in the office, so this plan easily succeeds.

Returning to a safe place and taking the side of a pencil to the purloined page, the investigators find the names and addresses of all six jurors, as given in Player Aid #5, nearby.

The Pittsfield Coroner

Methodical review of the death records, and of newspaper obituaries—a process that takes two man-days—turns up death records for five of the six jurors. Cabot Snow: killed in the Civil War (cavalry officer), 1862, obituary only; Percival Osborne: died of natural causes at age 64 in 1855 (moved to Pennsylvania but ran an obituary only in his old hometown newspaper); Wilcox Smith, died 1872 of natural causes, both an obituary and a death record; James Abbott, died 1869 of natural causes, both an obituary and a death

record; Robert Dunning, death record only, died in 1881 of natural causes. Try as they might, the investigators find no death record for John Peters.

The reason is that John Peters, now 104, in fact is still alive. Looking through local tax records for 28 Broad St. reveals that he owned it and paid taxes on it up through 1910, after which time a Samuel Peters started paying the taxes on it. Looking through the real property records for 1910-11 discloses (four hours on a successful Library Use roll, one day otherwise) a quitclaim deed of the property from John to Samuel for the token sum of \$1. Rechecking the obits and the coroner's records around this time still gives no suggestion that the elder Peters is dead. Alternatively, the investigators might just ask around if anyone knows a John Peters; a Luck roll results in someone knowing the Peters family and that "Old Man Peters" is still around.

Archetype Intrusion: Investigators that have sampled the Moonwine will see a small, grubby boy dealing three-card monte on a street corner. He will call out to the investigators to try their luck, by name if necessary. No matter how sneaky the investigators are, the only cards they will ever turn up are Black Jacks. An Occult or Psychoanalysis roll reveals the child as a subconscious archetype. The child represents the spirit, and is linked with the archetype of the Wise Old Man. The child can direct the investigators to Old Man Peters' house, but vanishes at his first opportunity.

Old Man Peters

Old Man Peters can still be found at 28 Broad St., the address of an old house in downtown Pittsfield with a shingle reading "Samuel Peters & Sons: Stonemasons." John Peters when active was a stonemason and the house on Broad St. is now home to four generations of masons, an extended, tight-knit family. Samuel Peters, John's son, is himself 74 and retired, but serves as the family patriarch. He and the other Peters are protective of the 104-year-old semi-invalid, so a bunch of strange investigators who want to talk to the old coot will need to succeed on a Persuade roll. Mentioning why they are here does not provoke any reaction from the family members; John has not spoken a word to anyone of what he learned as part of the coroner's jury in 1842.

Assuming the investigators get a chance to speak with John Peters, Samuel Peters takes them up to an uncomfortably warm bedroom in the front part of the house. Propped up in a big leather chair is a tired, frail-looking old man who looks like he has one foot in the grave. His only

Player Aid #5—the list of jurors for Case No. 134

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Cabot Snow, 13 Elm St. | 4. John Peters, 28 Broad St. |
| 2. Percival Osborne, 58 Broad St. | 5. James Abbott, 57 Elm St. |
| 3. Wilcox Smith, River St. | 6. Robert Dunning, Dunning's farm. |

real medical problem, though, is that he happens to be 104. He is found listening to an old phonograph (bad opera) and watching out the window. Hearing a 74-year-old man say, "A bunch of folks here to see you, father," may be somewhat unsettling.

John Peters loves visitors and should talk the investigators' ears off about the weather, the good old days, newfangled inventions, opera, and his personal sore spot, automobiles ("Foul-smelling contraptions will be the death of us all, if you ask me") before the investigators can get a word in edgewise. As soon as the investigators turn to the subject of 1842 and the coroner's jury, Peters tries to claim they have the wrong fellow. He even goes so far as to make up an elaborate story about there having been another John Peters who was killed in a mill accident back in 1849. "Must have been him." Peters is a poor liar, and a Psychology roll, if successful, suggests as much. If the investigators impeach Peters with the evidence from the jury rolls, Peters becomes visibly agitated (and even a little frightened) and orders the investigators out of his house. The interview is permanently over at this stage unless the investigators produce either a bottle of Moonwine or the photograph of Samuels holding it and ask him if he has ever seen such a thing before. At this, Peters' eyes bug out and he demands to know where the investigators got such a thing. If the investigators are honest enough with him (including a mention of working

with the police in Leshay county), allow a Persuade roll. If the roll is successful, Peters informs them that he was in fact on the jury, and hopes to God that "the same thing isn't happening again—those bastards in Leshay County never did write us back." Peters will then convey the following information in response to appropriate questions:

- Peters was 22 when he was on the jury. He had just inherited this house from his father, Ezekiel, and got his name picked because he had become a property owner.
- The coroner swore everyone to secrecy about what they heard there. Peters has never told a soul until now, but feels like he cannot let this same thing happen again. The coroner burned all the records, he thinks, back in 1842.
- Ephraim M. Peabody was a noted member of the local upper class. He had an eccentric reputation. He made his money from mining through some sort of mining corporation. Peters does not remember the name.
- There was not much evidence put on at the hearing. Peabody was single and lived alone. His lawyer, a man by the name of Jacobs, was the only witness, and all he knew was that Peabody had been off in Leshay County, Kentucky, the past summer and had just returned. While he had been away, Peabody had Jacobs prepare a mining rights claim to file with the recorder's office down in Leshay County.

Optional: Leaving Pittsfield

Depending upon how much of the Moonwine the investigators have been exposed to, the Keeper might want to stage the following encounter. This encounter should occur in broad daylight, while at least one influenced investigator is in the dining car. The special of the day in the dining car is pea soup with ham. If one of the investigators orders some, the waiter approaches from behind with it. The influenced investigators hear a strange sounding voice say, "Your pea soup, sir." The waiter, however, appears to influenced investigators to be a red-robed Man from Leng (SAN loss 0/1D6). The soup, likewise, is better described as Ephraim-Peabody soup—a steaming hot bowl of gelatinous, oozing horror. The hallucinatory horror immediately attacks. Noninfluenced investigators and innocent bystanders see the victim thrust the bowl of soup into his face and launch into a prolonged fit. Influenced investigators see the slimy contents of the soup bowl attempt to smother the investigator. An investigator killed by the soup is truly, physically dead. If non-influenced investigators attempt to help the victim, treat the situation as though they were combatting the creature, even though all they will perceive themselves doing is attempting to pry their comrade's face out of a soupbowl. The Keeper should bear in mind the social and legal consequences of such bizarre behavior in a dining car.

PEABODY SOUP

mm, mm, good

STR N/A CON 18 SIZ 2 INT N/A POW 18 DEX 18

Move: 1

HP: 10

Attacks:

Facial Glurp 70%, 1D6 of combined smothering and scalding per round. Once the soup hits, it stays attached until it is destroyed.

Armor: All non-magical attacks do minimum possible damage.

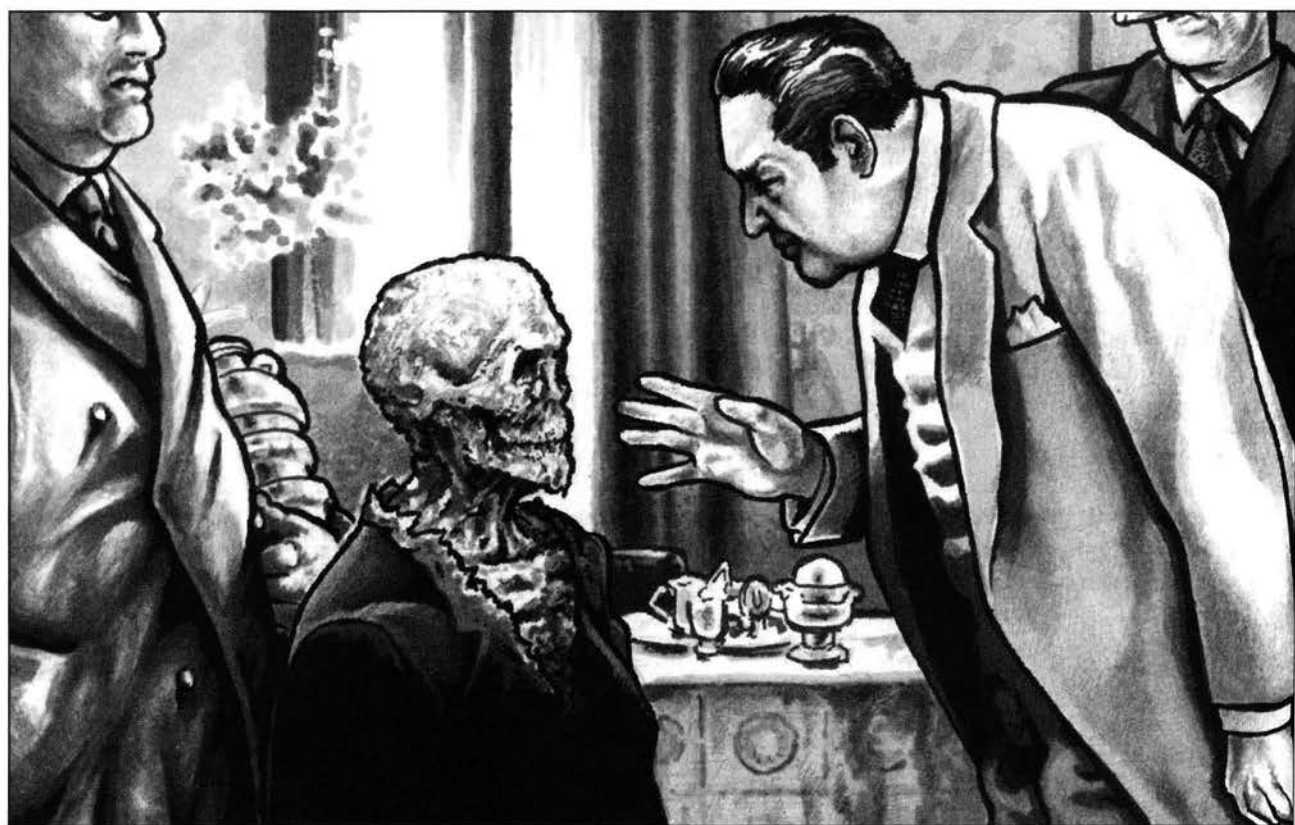
Sanity Loss: Seeing the assault of Peabody Soup costs 1/1D6 SAN.

- The mining claim was for quicksilver, which sticks in Peters' mind because he thought it was an unusual thing to be looking for. Peters knows that there is not much mercury to be found in Kentucky. Of course, in 1842 parts of Kentucky were still being explored.
- Most of what the jury did was to go to Peabody's house and examine the scene. Peters does not say "look at the body"; he says "look at the [long pause] scene." Specific questions about the condition of the body make Peters look down, shudder, and shake his head. He still sees it in his dreams sometimes. Peters guesses that Peabody had been sitting at the dinner table: there was a plate of half-eaten food, silverware, a wine glass, and an open bottle (just like the one the investigators have seen). Peters suffers from a mental block when probed specifically about the body's condition; ultimately he croaks out a single word: "melted."
- The verdict was death by misadventure. If quizzed about this, Peters asks the investigators what they would have put.
- The bottle was so unusual that the jury thought it must have been responsible in some way. It was empty, but smelled faintly of some sort of spiced wine. The jury and the coroner agreed that it ought to be disposed of.
- Peters was given the bottle to dispose of because he was a stonemason. If the investigators ask him where he put it, Peters points out the window at the church across

the street. "In the cornerstone." If the dastardly investigators dig into the cornerstone of the church, the bottle is there, empty (unless the Keeper has other ideas about where it might have gotten to since then).

Heighton

If the investigators thought that Sylvanville was a reasonably good argument in favor of labor unions, Heighton will almost certainly convince them. Heighton is a squalid little company town owned and operated by CMMI. It mostly consists of bunkhouses, a chow hall, a wash house for the miners and any families, a church, a mercantile store owned by CMMI, a nicer boardinghouse where foremen room, a company office, and a terminus and loading platform for a spur rail line. Tracks to various mining operations lead off in several different directions. Under normal circumstances law and order is maintained by Pinkerton rent-a-cops in the employ of CMMI. Even under normal circumstances, the Pinkerton thugs are not above much when it comes to suspected union organizers; they generally try non-lethal force (read clubs) first. Pinkerton thugs generally each have a +1D4 damage bonus, between 50-70% skill with their respective pick handles, railroad ties, etc., appear in groups outnumbering the investigators by two to one, and behave in a cowardly fashion.

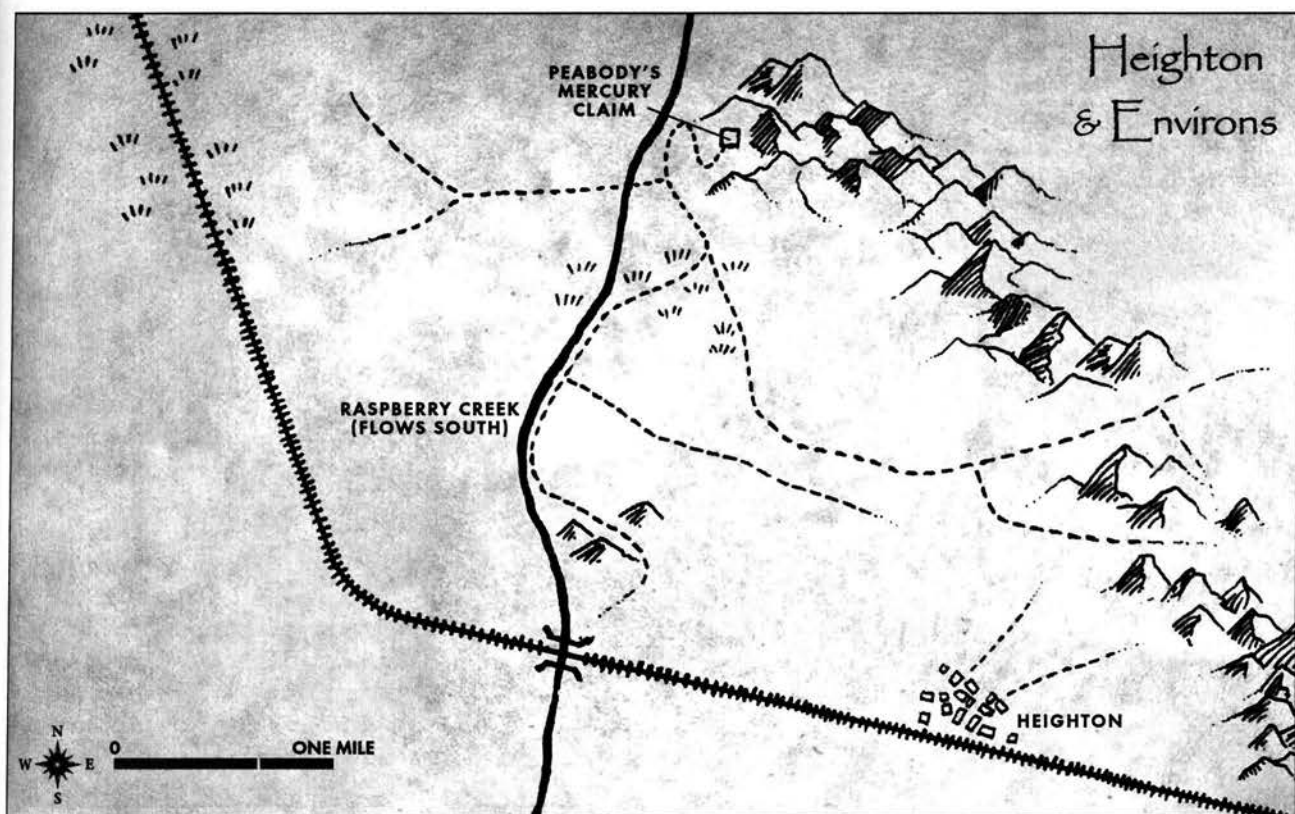


The mysterious death of Ephraim Peabody.

Heighton Archetype Intrusions

Unfortunately for the investigators, circumstances are not presently normal in Heighton. The escape of the third bottle of Moonwine into the water table has gradually worn on the SAN of the inhabitants as well as produced increasingly severe archetype intrusions into the area. The general rule about Heighton is this: The more water the investigators drink in Heighton, the more their subconscious intrudes into events in Heighton and the surrounding woods. The Keeper should feel free to experiment, remembering that dream-based archetypes should be used as a guide. A few examples follow:

- If the investigators expect squalor, Heighton appears increasingly squalid as they consume more and more of its water. If they expect brutality from the Pinkerton thugs, brutality is increasingly likely to follow. It is entirely possible that different investigators will have different perceptions of the same experience, depending on respective water/Moonwine consumption.
- Before the investigators arrive in Heighton, ask each of them to write out on a card what they really think of the other investigators, including Deputy Samuels, in terms of their physical appearance, typical behaviors, character traits, and perceived weaknesses. As a given character drinks more and more water, the others begin living up to the character's expectations.
- Investigators with appropriate phobias should be confronted with them in Heighton. A paranoid investigator under the influence of the contaminated water table will discover that everyone in Heighton really is out to get him. If the investigators are convinced that Mr. Hutchins is some high priest of a Great Old One, this could be a very dangerous combination. For that investigator, he just might be.
- Parties staying overnight in Heighton should at least suffer vague, shadowy, disturbing dreams, sufficient to prevent them from getting enough sleep. Dreams tend to concern the investigator fleeing through the woods, attempting to escape from something he never quite glimpses. Everyone in Heighton has a tired, bedraggled look about him. Those who influenced investigators suspect of being cultists, however, look well rested by contrast. Events in Heighton tend to conform to subconscious expectations.
- The Washer Woman: Investigators who have consumed any Moonwine or Moonwine-contaminated water during the course of this investigation should suffer the following archetype intrusion shortly after their arrival in Heighton. The affected investigators will see a woman dressed in medieval garb washing out bloody clothes on a rock in a stream. Although she will be about 100 yards away, each investigator will know that the clothes being washed are the ones he or she is wearing now. The woman cannot be approached or caught; she simply



vanishes behind a rock. The clothes are gone, but blood stains the water. A successful Occult or Psychoanalysis roll reminds the investigator that the Washer Woman is an archetype for imminent, unavoidable death. At this point, a confrontation with a particularly belligerent, nervous group of Pinkerton men might ensue.

Investigations in Heighton

The investigators are free to retrace what ground Bates and Samuels covered with the miners and to poke around Johnson's room. They discover only that Bates and Samuels were thorough. Samuels may get a little exasperated with them if they take too long recovering ground.

The investigators will probably go and talk to someone over at CMMI's offices. The general manager, a 28-year-old, suave, articulate Ivy-league-educated Bostonian by the name of James Hutchins, is happy to chat with them for a few minutes, particularly if one of them owns a sizable amount of stock. Hutchins admits that CMMI has, as he puts it, "had to deal harshly with potential union organizers in order to maintain order." Hutchins even admits that he wondered whether Brent Johnson was a union organizer. If he was, Hutchins observes, he was a none-too-subtle one, staying in the boardinghouse with what must have been outside cash. None of the miners could afford to live there on their salaries. He (truthfully) denies knowing anything about what

happened to Johnson or about CMMI having any part in it. Rude investigator requests along the lines of "Mind if we snoop through your confidential business records?" are politely denied, and Hutchins asks two Pinkerton men to (politely) show them to the door. Allow the investigators to think "chief cultist" of Hutchins if they want. To a level-headed investigator, he is not. If influenced investigators think that Hutchins is the stereotypical chief cultist, then he just might be.

If the investigators ask if Hutchins has any problem with their going up to Peabody's old mercury claim, Hutchins will want to think about it for a little while. He wonders if the investigators think it might be worth something. Hutchins gets back to them the next day and politely informs them that it is private CMMI property and that the investigators should keep off. A Law roll reminds the investigators that if no work affidavits have been filed on the claim since the 1830s and it was never patented to MMPI or CMMI (and a review of public records in Sylvanville reflects that it was not) then CMMI does not own it. In fact, a land status map available at the recorder's office in Sylvanville shows the land as presently owned by the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The investigators can legally tell Hutchins what to do with himself and go up there at their leisure. Whether a confrontation of some kind between the investigators and some of Hutchins' Pinkerton thugs occurs is up to the Keeper.



The washer-woman.

Into the Woods

The easiest way to get to Peabody's old claim is to go to Heighton and set out on foot from there. The claim is roughly five miles north of town, apparently on top (according to the map) of a narrow, forty-foot-high ridge overlooking Raspberry Creek. There are some animal trails in the vicinity, one of which follows the creek on and off starting about a mile north of Heighton. Even so, it takes about three hours to go the five miles. The investigators fight their way over small, craggy ridges and fallen pines, and through muddy patches; dark, unspoiled forest; poison ivy; stinging plant life (it is too late in the year for stinging animal life); uneven ground; and most of all an almost surreal amount of berry bushes. The aptly named Raspberry Creek is teeming with an almost equally surreal number of fish. The closer to their destination the investigators get, the more (on a successful Spot Hidden) the investigators notice how thick the berry bushes are. All are native to the area, but a Botany roll suggests that the berry bushes are so thick in the last mile as to be almost, but not quite, unbelievable. A Track roll made anywhere near the creek spots some fairly fresh black bear tracks in muddy areas.

Samuels will insist on going along with the investigators, and smart investigators will want a local along with them. Samuels brings along another deputy, Bob Grisham, for this trip. Grisham is a tall, lanky fellow in his 20s, an experienced woodsman who constantly dips snuff. He dresses warm, and brings two days of rations for himself, a spare change of clothes in his pack, some matches, a hatchet, a first aid kit (with splints), some rope, and a varmint rifle "In case I see something worth shooting at," he explains as he spits tobacco juice into an old can. Samuels is similarly equipped (though minus the rifle); he has also brought a picnic lunch with some chicken and rolls. Belle (his girlfriend) gave it to him, he sheepishly explains. It smells delicious.

Raspberry Creek

When the investigators get close to their destination, the animal trail they have been picking their way along suddenly widens into a very nice path that almost has a maintained look to it. Lining it on both sides are the most unbelievably well-stocked berry bushes the investigators have ever seen. No Spot Hidden is needed this far in. Call for a Botany roll (and allow Grisham one). Grisham, if he succeeds, cannot believe that there are this many berries on any bush in mid-November. "That's right peculiar," he exclaims.

The better-maintained path (and abundant raspberry bushes) abruptly opens onto a narrow, treeless, grassy spit running alongside Raspberry Creek. Overlooking the area is a 40-foot-high ridge, with about a 45-degree angle up, that is absolutely covered with berry bushes. Some of these are blossoming (in November—the surrounding deciduous trees

are many different hues of scarlet and gold). Raspberry Creek is loaded with bluegills. A mere Know roll picks up on the fact that something is strangely amiss here. The immediate area looks like some bear dreamed the place into existence (which of course it did). A Spot Hidden picks up a trail (again, strangely well-developed) switching back up through the bushes to end at what looks to be a cave about thirty feet up. A successful Navigate roll while studying a topographical map with the old mercury claim marked on it suggests that the cave lies smack dab in the middle of the claim. Even failing the roll, the investigators are sure that they are close. Downplay the sense of menace; the whole scene is rather beautiful in an odd sort of way, and there are plenty of birds and other forest creatures about.

At this point, Grisham suddenly whips out his rifle and plugs a rabbit, and then proceeds to dress it out in front of the investigators. While he decapitates it, guts it, flays it on a rock, and then washes it in the stream, Grisham makes small talk about how he intends to cook it according to an old family recipe involving lots of garlic. No SAN loss even for the most "uptown" investigator. Play this scene of sudden, matter-of-fact violence for an unsettling contrast to the forest's surreal, dreamlike beauty.

While Grisham is skinning the rabbit, he looks into the creek and fishes something out with a stick. On the end of Grisham's stick is the third, open, now-empty bottle of Moonwine.

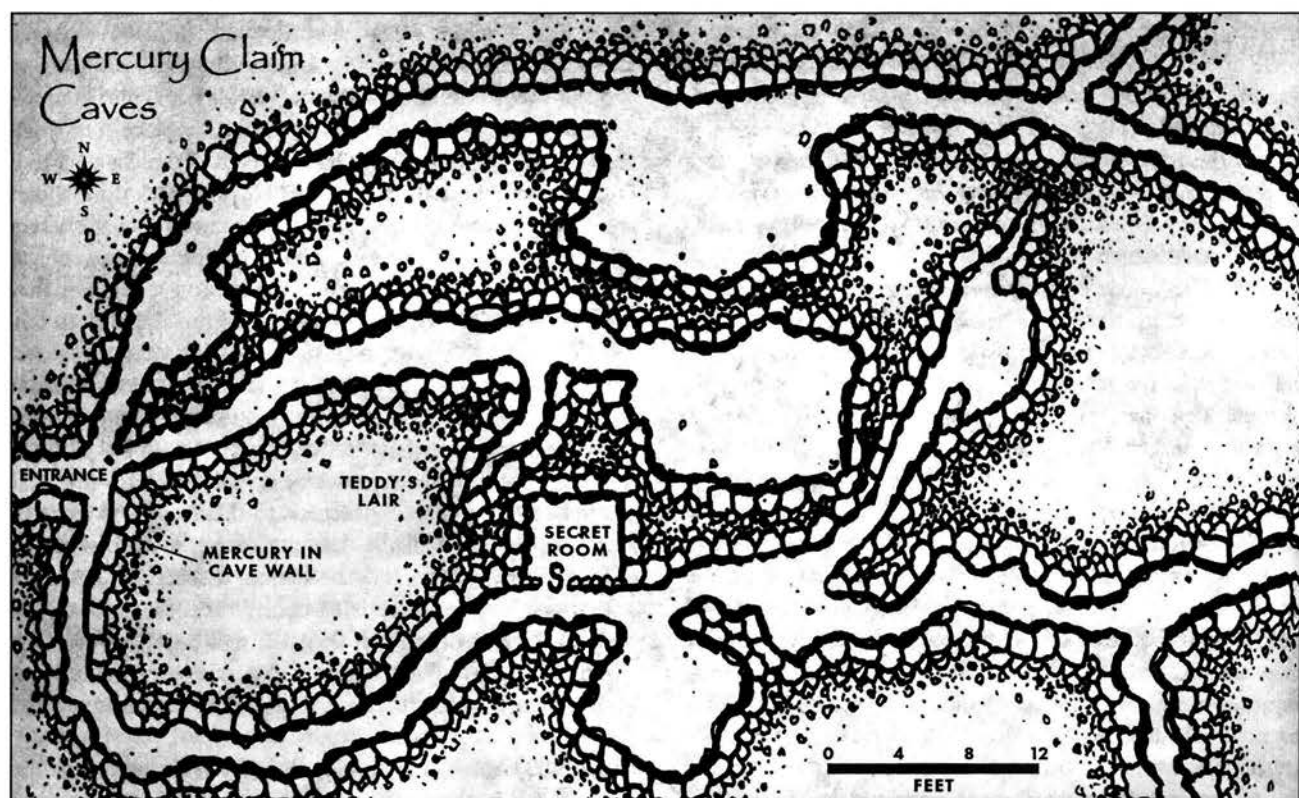
The Cave

The party can proceed up the switchback trail without incident. The late-blooming berry bushes are certainly odd, but are no threat. Anyone with a Track skill of at least 25% can tell that this trail is used by bears. There are several bear tracks proceeding both up and down, though all are at least a week old. Grisham spots this if no one else does, and volunteers the observation that the bears are probably hibernating by now. Allow the investigators a Zoology roll to realize that this may be, but is not necessarily, the case, and that in any event hibernating bears can wake up when disturbed. A map and description of the cave appear on pp. 86-87.

Teddy Appears

The investigators are no doubt expecting to be attacked by a bear at some point in the adventure. Perhaps they have even derided the blatant foreshadowing of a bear attack that has preceded this section, or even allowed themselves to settle into a sense of complacency, confident that their 12-gauge shotguns will subdue any cranky old bear. This is where they get their attitudes adjusted.

As the investigators and NPCs leave the cave, something peculiar happens. Any modern-era gear (from shotguns to clothing) suddenly and without warning twists, wriggles, and



changes to a more medieval counterpart. Guns shift to spears, bows, or knives; flashlights to torches; clothes to robes; *etc.* The crumbling book, blessed blade, and Samuels' picnic lunch, plus other plausibly medieval things, remain unaffected. From behind them in the cave, where they are quite certain nothing of the sort was a second ago, comes a sub-basso growling that quite plainly is not entirely natural. If you have a menacing *leitmotif* prepared for Teddy, play it now.

If the investigators turn to have a look at the source of the growling, they see what is literally a living, breathing nightmare coalesce from the subterranean shadows. It is a huge, distorted cartoon of a bear—jet black in color, twice the size of man, with slaving jaws, three rows of razor sharp, six-inch teeth, and hellishly glowing green eyes. Part bear, part shadow, and all bad dream, it looses an ear-splitting roar that will haunt the investigators' sleep for some time to come. SAN loss for viewing Teddy's sudden manifestation and having your guns suddenly disappear at the same time is ID4/ID10.

Dealing with Teddy

When Teddy manifests itself, Grisham fails his SAN check, loses 8 SAN, and succeeds in his Idea roll. Shrieking that Teddy is a demon from hell, he charges forward with the spear that has replaced his varmint gun (ID8 + ID4 damage, can impale, 20% chance to hit). Teddy is quicker, though (DEX 18). Assume the first Claw hits, doing 15 points of dam-

age and knocking Grisham to the ground, dead, blood spurting from his severed jugular. Onlookers take a 0/ID3 SAN loss. All of this happens before the investigators can move; any guns the Keeper was kindly enough to allow to become missile weapons cannot be employed before Teddy acts with his 18 DEX.

This is a critical juncture for the investigators. Their options are basically either to join in with Grisham in his ill-fated assault or run for it. Anyone going insane and gaining an unnatural insight realizes the need to run for it. Samuels takes this tack. Teddy's second action in the round is either to direct a second Claw at any investigators not running for their lives, or, if they all run for it, to start to eat Grisham's rabbit. If the investigators try to slug it out hand-to-hand with Teddy, it is likely that their nibbled-on bodies are found at the cave entrance the next day, looks of horror frozen on their faces. Bates, Samuels, any investigators who ran for it, and a small army of bear hunters descend on the scene the next morning, too late. Only if the investigators have powerful offensive magic should they stand much of a chance against Teddy in a knock-down, drag-out fight at close quarters.

Outside the Cave

Another bizarre sight awaits the investigators as they exit the cave. The dream aura generated by Teddy splits the scenery into two sharply contrasting vistas: one (commenc-

Cave Description

Keepers should refer to the map of the cave for help in following the area-by-area description.

Cave Entrance: Roughly six feet in width and six feet high. Away from the cave entrance things get rather dark; light sources will be needed.

Mercury Deposit: This part of the cave wall, from the floor to about three feet high by three feet wide, has a mineral formation of reddish stone blending into the cave wall. A Geology roll identifies it as cinnabar, a common ore of mercury. Analyzing the ore in a lab reveals it to be of poor grade and commercially impractical to develop.

Secret Door: When the investigators walk by here, make secret Spot Hidden rolls for those investigators or NPCs who are carrying a light source. Success means that an investigator's light catches a glint from something metallic in what appears to be a small fissure in the cave wall. The investigators can reach a hand into the fissure and grab the object, or bend down, shine a light in, and have a closer look. Beyond the fissure is obviously a chamber or tunnel of some kind. The metallic glint proves to be a still-sharp, gleaming curved knife, 8" in length, with its hilt broken. It is a blessed sacrificial blade that can hit creatures only affected by magic weapons. It can impale, but as it has only half a hilt, all attacks with it suffer a -20% penalty. It is too awkward to get a damage bonus behind. If any investigators want to make like Daniel Boone, it does 1D6 (non-regenerable) to Teddy, and can impale.

The fissure is actually a slightly ajar concealed door. The door is counterbalanced and anyone inserting a lever of some kind (Grisham's varmint rifle gets the job done) need only pit their combined STR (up to two persons may combine) against the door's SIZ of 15 (due to its being stuck from age and disuse) to pivot it open. A Spot Hidden notices a crack running at right angles to the fissure and back down again toward the floor, suggesting a door, if the investigators have not figured it out. The door has been damaged and will tend to shut itself unless wedged open. A second Spot Hidden directed immediately around the fissure detects what appear to be scratch marks (bear claws, perhaps?) nearby.

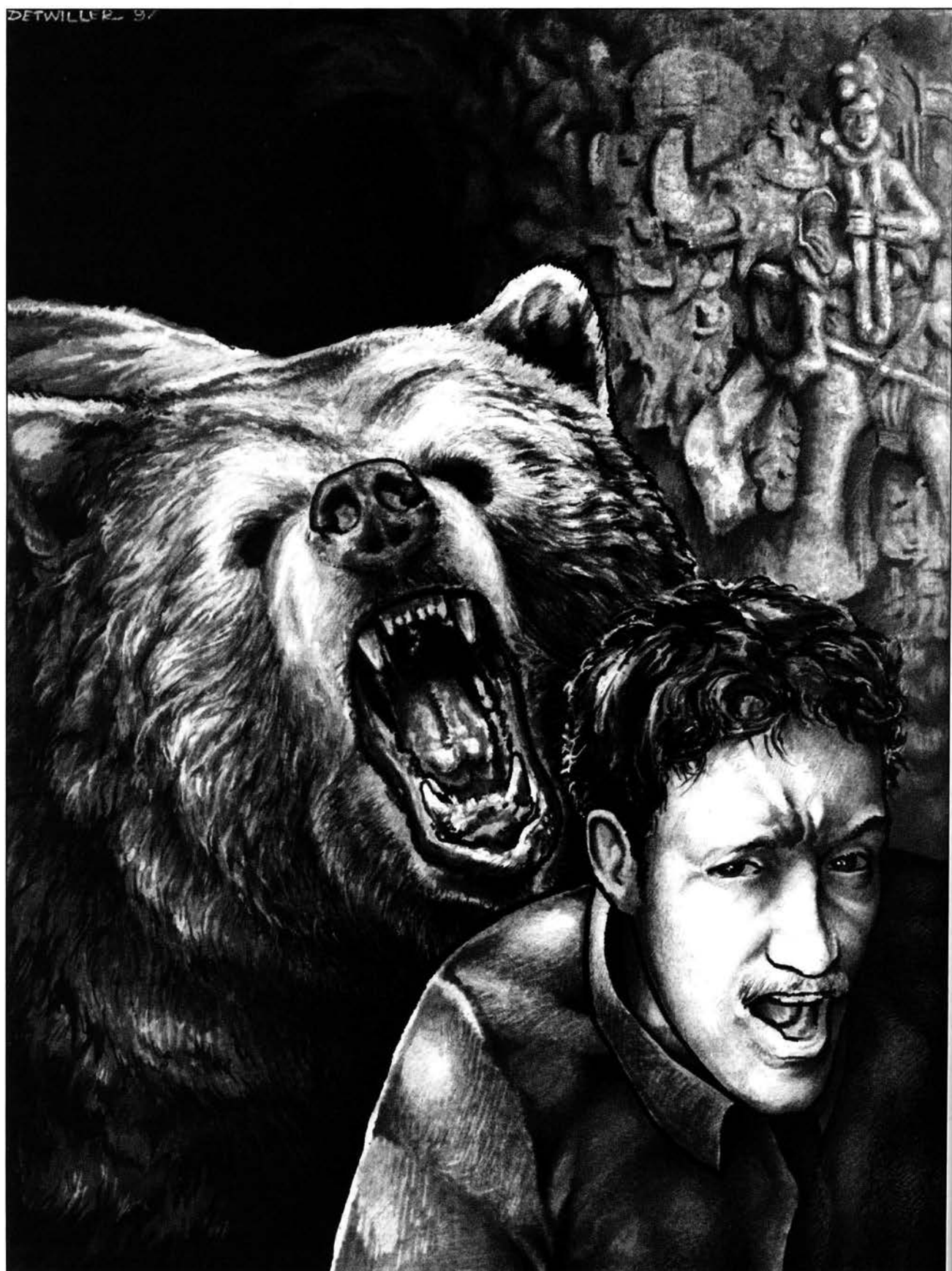
Secret Room. This room is a mess. It is littered with crumbling, smashed, overturned furniture, ancient shards of broken glass, rotting scraps of red cloth, and a few vintage, rusted-away firearms that will blow up in someone's face if loaded and fired. If the investigators decide to sift through the wreckage, they will find three items of note:

- The first item is a skeleton dressed in the rotting, tattered remains of a red, hooded robe. Even a cursory search discloses it. Several of the skeleton's bones have been snapped, and its rib cage is caved in. SAN loss o/I for viewing this oddly flattened fellow. If the investigators have read Throckmorton's *Folklore and Superstition*, an Idea roll reminds the investigator of the description of the red-robed cult leader seen by Mr. Harpwood in these parts.
- The second item is found by anyone who states he is spending at least five minutes sifting through the wreckage. The investigator spots a crumbling book in the wreckage, in very bad condition. The ink has faded or run in several spots. The pages are yellowed, rotting, and in some cases missing. It is also apparent to anyone who has ever kept a dog that some sort of animal has spent a fair bit of time gnawing it, shaking it, and slobbering on it. A cursory review reveals that it is written in a strange tongue. Cthulhu Mythos rolls, if successful, conjure up memories of runes said to be carved in certain peculiar stone cliffs in the mountains near the Dreamlands city of Lelath-Leng. It has been partially translated into English in the margins in some spidery hand.
- The third item is found only after a successful Spot Hidden roll. Amidst the broken glass is a dirty, dusty, intact piece of glassware of a by-now-familiar shape. Cleaning it off reveals it to be a third (long-empty) flask of Moonwine, carved from a single ruby.

Teddy's Lair: There are two things of interest in this little side passage. The first is the fact that the area smells like an animal spends a fair amount of time here. The second is the series of strange, faded carvings at the end of it. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll (or prior experience with Gates) recognizes it for what it is. The successful investigator also realizes that it apparently has not been used for some time. Nor, apparently, is it usable any longer, at least in its present state. Attempts to somehow use it fail. Unless the investigators have experience with a Gate of Oneirology, they will have to make a successful Dream Lore roll to identify what kind of Gate it is/was.

ing a few yards out) of gray autumn sky and changing leaves; the other (near the investigators and Teddy) a dream landscape of fantastic plants and dark, foreboding woodlands. To hammer the point home, an inquisitive zoog peers out and chitters at them (SAN loss o/1D3) from

behind a nearby oak incongruously dripping with Spanish moss. Viewing the bizarre dichotomous landscape costs the investigators another 1/1D3 SAN. A Dream Lore roll recognizes the more proximate scenery as that of the Enchanted Wood in the Dreamlands.



Teddy greets a visitor.

The Chase

If the investigators run for it, ask them whether they run down the switchback trail or straight down the slope. Insane investigators go straight. The switchback trail is far safer, but slower, and has the disconcerting condition of running the investigators in and out of Teddy's dream aura. Their guns appear and disappear depending on where they are, until they hit the bottom of the trail. At this point they will be just outside the dream aura. Samuels goes straight down the slope, falling and tumbling the last ten feet of the way and landing in a raspberry bush. There is a loud *snap!*, and Samuels screams in pain, having met up with a rusty old bear trap left behind by Mr. Harpwood in the 1830s. Samuels takes 2 points from the fall down the slope and another 7 points from the trap; his leg is broken, but he remains conscious, screaming for help.

If the callous (or insane) investigators leave Samuels to his fate and keep running, they make it back to Heighton without seeing Teddy again. They suffer 1D4 points of bruises and sprains and other damage from covering the rough terrain in such a hurry. When they get to town, charge each of them with a 1D6 SAN loss for abandoning Samuels. If they head back later, only Samuels' leg can be found, still securely in the bear trap.

Hopefully the investigators try to help Samuels out of his predicament. Making a Mechanical Repair roll or overcoming the trap's STR of 15 with a lever (a hatchet works) gets Samuels' leg free. A First Aid roll (takes about five minutes) cures 1D3 points of damage and gets the leg splinted so as to allow Samuels to hobble along at a speed of 2, with assistance. About this time a growl is heard from the cave, and Teddy sticks its head out to see what all the fuss is about. When Teddy sees, it casually lumbers down the slope after the investigators.

How the investigators and Samuels get back across five miles of rough terrain to comparative safety in Heighton is left to the Keeper's imagination. It should not be easy. Some issues remain to be considered, however:

- Do not forget that Teddy is above all else a bear. Teddy is not going to chase the investigators five miles out of bloodlust unless given a reason. The investigators can under the circumstances try to pepper Teddy with long-distance gun fire. This likely only makes Teddy mad and gives Teddy a reason to chase them further. In addition, the more Moonwine the investigators have drunk, and the more they think Teddy is after them, the more Teddy is likely to actually be after them.
- There is a perfectly nice stream to ford in an effort to throw Teddy off the scent. This is more likely to work if the investigators just cross it. Trying to flee down it will create splashing noises to attract his attention.
- Have Teddy give chase on and off for most of the way for dramatic tension. Teddy-chases work best with repeated manifestations and de-manifestations. Just when the investigators think they have lost Teddy, their weapons transform and the sub-basso growling (and *leitmotif*) is heard nearby. At each natural obstacle they struggle to get Samuels past, they hear a rustling in the bushes. Do the investigators think to try to distract Teddy with the goodies in the picnic lunch? Do they try to set a trap? Could Teddy climb a tree after them? (Yes.)
- If Teddy catches up, do the investigators think to duck and cover rather than act aggressively? If so, does Teddy just sniff and paw at them before trundling away?
- Are there any Teddy-spawn lurking out in the woods? Is Teddy female? Do the investigators make the serious mistake of getting between a mother bear and her cubs?

Mercury Poisoning?

Another possible investigator explanation for strange events, which might appeal to Sheriff Bates, is chronic mercury poisoning. Mercury poisoning is one of the oldest known occupational diseases. It became particularly common in the 19th century amongst hatmakers, who used a solution of mercuric nitrate to treat the felt used to make hats, hence the expression "mad as a hatter." Mercury was used as a major treatment for syphilis into the early twentieth century, so the symptoms of mercury poisoning would be familiar to a 1920s medical practitioner.

Chronic mercury poisoning typically occurs in one of two ways. The first is by the inhalation of inorganic mercury salts, such as by hatters or mine workers. Symptoms of mercuric salt poisoning include a metallic taste in the mouth, excessive saliva production, inflammation of the mouth membranes, loosening of the teeth, formation of blue lines on the gums, tremors in the extremities, loss of weight and appetite, and personality changes most often characterized by depression. Severe cases look like your cinematic drooling madman.

The second mode of mercury poisoning is organic poisoning, in which mercury escapes into the water table, where it forms organic compounds over time. These build up in the tissue of animals (such as fish). This particularly nasty form of mercury poisoning is characterized by lesions on the central nervous system, which lead to progressive weakening, brain impairment, loss of vision, eventual paralysis, and in extreme cases, death.

A cruel Keeper might wish to inflict hallucinatory chronic mercury poisoning symptoms on investigators who have consumed some of the Moonwine, particularly those with a medical background.

- It should take until past nightfall for the investigators to pick their way back to Heighton with "Hopalong Samuels." How cold is it at night? Do the investigators lose their way after dark? What else might be out in these woods? Pinkerton thugs? Worse? Is Teddy the reason trappers now shun these woods, or is there some other reason? Do any ghost stories have a basis in fact?

Aftermath

The encounter with Teddy is the climax of the scenario. Punitive expeditions against Teddy are left up to the Keeper's imagination. The explanation for Grisham's death that Sheriff Bates is most likely to buy into is "rabid bear." Bates chides Samuels for stumbling into the bear trap, observing that Samuels should have known better. Samuels is treated to a tetanus shot, and put into a hip-high cast. The doctor's prognosis is rather grim, especially if the investigators tried to escape with him in a hurry without attempting First Aid. Samuels will not lose the leg, but will likely limp when the cast comes off.

An in-depth study of the Tome will take a full 2D6 months. It is partly illegible, partly missing, only partly translated, and is a confusing mishmash of code, allegory, and cross-reference, in any case. The annotations can be skimmed in 1D3 days, however, for a cost of 1D3 SAN, with no Mythos gain or spells. Skimmers learn the following facts, one per successful Read English roll (this information is not part of the Tome itself but contained in annotations, notes on facing pages, etc.):

- The translator (whose name is never mentioned) had succeeded in opening a physical pathway to the Dreamlands, and was trafficking with the Men of Leng, the loathsome moon-beasts, and Nyarlathotep himself.
- The translator had hit upon a spell that, after appropriately hideous rituals, enabled objects from the Dreamlands to be brought back to, and exist in, the waking world.
- The translator succeeded in bringing back some items to the waking world: The Tome itself and four flasks of Moonwine.

With the fact that only five items had been brought through the Gate in their possession, and assuming all five items are accounted for, the investigators should realize that there is no further danger from dangerous dream artifacts being loose in the waking world. If not, then they have some investigations to follow up on. Once the Tome and all four bottles of Moonwine are accounted for, award 1D8+2 SAN for success. If Teddy is eliminated, award 1D8 SAN to survivors. If Samuels is successfully gotten back to Heighton alive, award 1D4 SAN; if the investigators tried and failed to rescue

him, they lose 1 SAN. If they didn't try to rescue him, they lose 1D6 SAN, as stated before.

Anyone who successfully plows their way through *The Tome of the Masked One* receives, on a successful Read English roll: +8% to Cthulhu Mythos, an additional +4% to Dream Lore, -2D6 SAN, and possibly the following spells (INTx3): Contact Moon-Beast, Seraph's Glory, and Spiral of Suth. The latter two Dreamlands spells are altered in such a way that they do indeed work in the waking world. The investigator also gets the feeling that when the tome was in good condition, it contained additional secrets and spells that were even more dangerous.

Author's Notes

Certain segments of this adventure benefit greatly from atmosphere, particularly the "Into the Woods" and "The Chase" segments. For "Into the Woods," the author recommends "Forest Murmurs" by Wagner, from his *Ring Cycle*. The Neptune movement from Holst's "The Planets" works well for the area near the cave. For the chase, try "Night on Bald Mountain" by Mussorgsky, or the old standard "Teddy Bears' Picnic."

NPC Stats

TEDDY

The Monster of the Piece

STR 28 DEX 18 INT 6 CON 18

APP 15 POW 18 SIZ 28 HP 23

Move: 16

Damage Bonus: +2D6

Attacks:

Bite 40%, 1D10 + 2D6

Claw 60%, 1D6 + 2D6

Teddy can attack with either a Bite/Claw or two Claws. If Teddy hits the same target (or, if the Keeper is feeling mean, separate targets) with both claws, the bear hangs on and Hugs each succeeding round for 2D6, not letting go until either it or the investigator is dead.

Armor: 3 points of fur and gristle. In addition, non-magic-based attacks do only minimum possible damage, and Teddy regenerates non-magic-based damage at 1 point per round unless dead.

Special Abilities:

Dream Aura: Teddy got into a flask of Moonwine in the late 1830s. Consuming the entire contents of a bottle of dreams made real through foul magic has made Teddy partly a thing of dreams itself. The area within 20 yards of Teddy simultaneously coexists in both the Dreamlands and the waking world. Things that could not exist in the Dreamlands (notably modern weapons) do not exist within this area. The dream aura has a less profound effect beyond 20 yards.

Teddy's subconscious thoughts and desires subtly influence the surrounding terrain, generating an unnatural surfeit of bear-pleasing goodies in Teddy's territory. Dreamlands magic does work within the Dream Aura.

Manifestation: Teddy is not normally material. Rather, Teddy's consciousness drifts about its territory, perhaps glimpsed as a large, out-of-place shadow. Only when something that would interest a bear (like a bunch of investigators carrying a delicious-smelling picnic basket and a freshly skinned rabbit) comes along does Teddy coalesce from the shadows. This costs Teddy a magic point and keeps Teddy material until his attention wanders, at which point Teddy slips into the shadows and vanishes.

Sanity Loss: For viewing one of Teddy's sudden appearances, 1D4/1D10; otherwise, 1/1D8.

Notes: Teddy fades out for a while and regenerates damage if it takes more than 50% damage.

DEPUTY BILL SAMUELS

Protectin' and Servin', age 27

Nationality: American

STR 15 DEX 13 INT 11 CON 15 APP 15 POW 13
SIZ 16 EDU 10 SAN 65 Luck 65 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: 8th Grade

Skills: Botany 25%, Cook Rabbit 25%, Drive Automobile 25%, Law 25%, Local History 60%, Occult 25%, Smile and Be Helpful 90%, Spout Conspiracy Theory 50%, Zoology 25%.

Languages: English 50%

Attacks:

.38 Revolver 50%, 1D8

Notes: A genuinely nice, though somewhat fascist, guy who makes every effort to befriend the investigators. The sort of fellow who might become an investigator someday—if he lives.

SHERIFF JOHN Q. BATES

Leshay County Sheriff, age 60

Nationality: American

STR 12 DEX 12 INT 14 CON 13 APP 11 POW 16
SIZ 14 EDU 11 SAN 80 Luck 80 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Skills: Accounting 30%, Bargain 40%, Camouflage 60%, Climb 70%, Drive Automobile 40%, Fast Talk 50%, First Aid 50%, Hide 60%, Law 40%, Listen 55%, Mechanical Repair 45%, Persuade 45%, Photography 15%, Psychology 60%, Ride 20%, Sneak 55%, Spot Hidden 70%, Swim 50%, Track 50%, Zoology 20%

Languages: English 55%

Attacks:

Winchester 12-gauge semi-auto (1 shot, 5 rounds) 70%,
4D6/2D6/1D6

Notes: Shrewd and disarming.

BRENT JOHNSON

Aspiring Author cum Vegetable, age 24

Nationality: American

STR 18* DEX 15 INT 14 CON 14 APP 5* POW 13
SIZ 12 EDU 15 SAN 2 Luck 65 HP 13

Damage Penalty: N/A

Education: Bachelor's Degree

Skills: None at the present time.

Attacks:

Eye Gouge, 50%, 1D6. If Johnson succeeds in inflicting 5 points of damage, he has gouged out 1 eye; if 10 points, both. After gouging for 10 points of damage, he turns on himself, unless restrained.

*Reflects his current state. Normally he is STR 11, APP 12.

BOB GRISHAM ("GRISH")

Backwoods Leshay County Deputy, age 23

Nationality: American

STR 13 DEX 12 INT 11 CON 13 APP 10 POW 12
SIZ 13 EDU 10 SAN 60 Luck 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: 8th Grade

Skills: Astronomy 25%, Botany 50%, Camouflage 45%, Climb 70%, First Aid 50%, Hide 40%, Law 25%, Listen 55%, Spot Hidden 55%, Mechanical Repair 45%, Sneak 40%, Swim 55%, Track 60%, Rifle Attack 50%.

Languages: English 50%

Attacks:

.22 Rifle, 50%, 1D6+2, 30 yards base range, 1 shot per round. "Maggie" is an old one-shot, slide-bolt job that takes 1 round to load. "Grish" decided to bring "her" at the last minute and absentmindedly stuck four bullets in his pocket. He does not keep "her" loaded.

Notes: Friendly. Unpretentious. Doomed.



God of the Mountain

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God of the Mountain

MICHAEL CISCO

ILLUSTRATED BY TOREN ATKINSON

This is a 1920s scenario designed for a small party of investigators, three or four being best. Ideally, one of the investigators should be an archaeologist connected with a university faculty somewhere in the U.S. Otherwise, use Dr. Clement from the NPC section at the end.

Background

It is typically believed that the Inca empire grew from three different political centers—first Chavin (around 800 B.C.), then Tiahuanaco (from 100–1100 A.D.), and then Inca (1438–1532 A.D.). Dr. Richard Tregellis of Columbia University disputes this. After many years of research and study, he concluded that there must have been a fourth center, Tahuan, that predated all the others, and he ventured to Peru and Ecuador on numerous occasions to find it. Although he routinely uncovered sites and artifacts that would have amply pleased any other archaeologist, he always returned disappointed, valuing only the scraps of information that seemed to point toward the existence of Tahuan.

Roughly one year before game time, Dr. Tregellis returned from Peru in a state of considerable excitement. He captivated the rest of the department with stories of what appeared to be an undiscovered Incan city perched high on a plateau in the Andes. Bad weather had made a direct investigation of the city impossible, and for the moment he was forced to content himself with a few photographs taken from several miles away. Believing he had at last found Tahuan, he petitioned for a full expedition to the site, but received only a frustratingly small amount of money from the university. Nevertheless, Dr. Tregellis and his brother Jason, himself an anthropologist, raised further funds from private sources and returned to Peru several months ago. Their last telegram placed them in the town of San Sebastian, in the vicinity of the site, preparing to go into the mountains. Their guides returned—alone—a few weeks later, and would say nothing except that “the Americans are on the mountain.”

The investigators are assembled by the University to travel down to Peru and find out what happened to Dr. Tregellis and his brother. Dr. Clement or an archaeologist player character will lead the expedition. The investigators will each receive \$200.00 worth of gear, mostly mountaineering equipment (rope, boots, warm clothes, etc.), although, considering the potential dangers down there, no

one will bat an eye if any of the characters uses some of that money to purchase a gun. If Dr. Clement is not coming along, the party will need someone who can speak Spanish. There should definitely be a few characters who can draw, and at least one with Photography. The party will sail to Colombia and then take an overland route to San Sebastian, where they will send a telegraph to the university announcing their arrival. Regardless of circumstance, they will then have four weeks to return to complete their foray into the mountains and then return to San Sebastian and file a partial report via telegraph before heading back to the U.S. Once back in New York, they will give a complete briefing to faculty and administrators and receive payment of \$400 each (individual merit bonuses may also be awarded depending upon the content of the briefing).

Getting Started

A small village of less than 1,500 people, San Sebastian sits among the foothills of the Andes. The air here is a bit thinner and colder, but still comfortable and temperate. The town is poor, clean and well-tended. The people are unremarkable except in their resemblance to the Incas, recognizable to any making an Anthropology roll. Guides and last-minute supplies are available in San Sebastian, where the party will have a one- or two-night layover before heading into the mountains.

In such a small town, it is not difficult finding the guides who led the Tregellis brothers to Tahuan. The difficult thing is getting them to talk about it. They sympathize with the investigators, but they have nothing to say about the city or the mountains, although anyone making a Psychology roll will note that they get very anxious and frightened when the city is mentioned. They will insist that the city is really nothing, and that people never go there, simply because they have no reason to. Everything they need, they insist, they can get in San Sebastian. They will not act as guides for the party.

Fortunately one of the guides, Gustavo, is a heavy drinker. Even drunk, he'll still try to be evasive about the city—it's just that his evasiveness becomes less and less effective the more he drinks. “The Americans are okay,” he says in English, using American slang to endear himself. “They just don't understand about that mountain.” If the characters ask him what he means, he'll reply, “You get up there and you don't know what you are doing.” Then he will fall

silent, and nothing will convince him to speak further. Anyone succeeding in a Spot Hidden during this speech will notice the hair on the back of his neck standing on end.

Traveling to Tahuan

Anyone braving the mountains on his own will find them impassable, repelling every attempt to penetrate beyond the first few outlying peaks. Guides are essential. The party can procure guides into the mountains, but all potential guides are adamant that they not be asked to go into Tahuan itself. Once the party and guides have reached agreement on the sum for guide services (around \$25 for two guides), the guides will immediately lead them into the mountains. It is summer, and the weather is clear and warm, although the party rapidly crosses the permafrost line as they climb. The trip will take three days, and each day the air gets thinner and thinner. Tahuan is almost three miles up, and with each passing mile, physical effort becomes more difficult.

Characters will get winded easily and will experience mild headaches, dizziness, nausea, and disorientation as they near the end of the climb. The guides, being more accustomed to this altitude, are less affected (although more than they let on). Every day, the investigators should make CONx3 rolls; those who fail will be at -10% to all actions for that day, owing to general oxygen deprivation and discomfort. They will have to stop and rest very frequently, perhaps having to

vomit, and will lose 1 SAN by nightfall, due to the generally surreal, fever-dream state of their minds throughout the day. If more than half the party are affected in a given day, then half a day's travel time must be added.

When the party does arrive at the city, characters will have reached the highest point in the surrounding countryside, approximately 18,000 feet. Full acclimatization to this altitude will take a given investigator a period of time determined by his CON—less than 10, three days; 10–13, two days; 14+, one day. Acclimatized characters are at -10% to do any strenuous physical activity; otherwise, they suffer no penalties or ill effects from the altitude. Non-acclimatized characters will still feel ill and delirious, suffering a -10% penalty on all activities and exacerbating all SAN losses by one additional point (because of their fevered mental state).

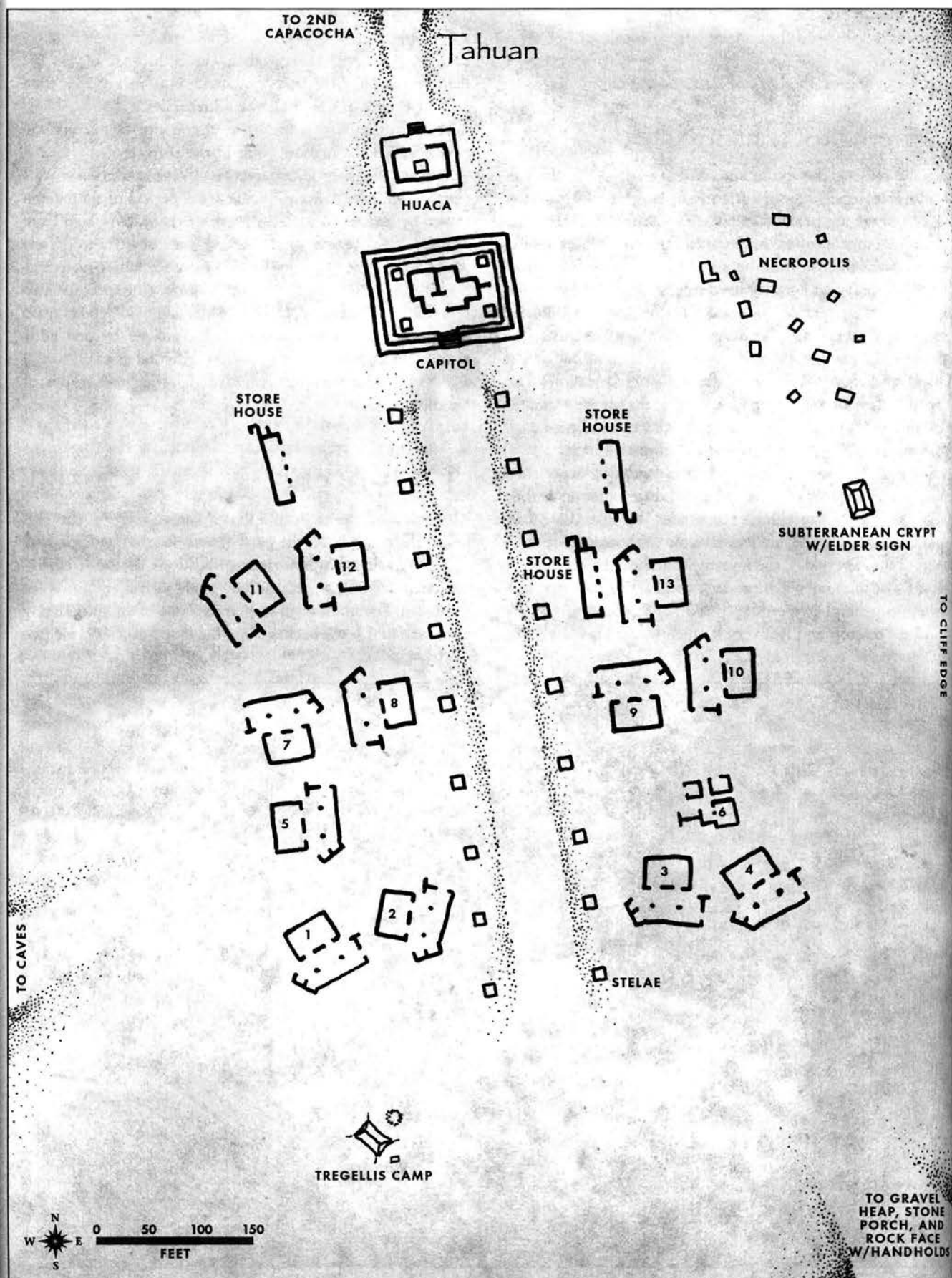
Sadistic Keepers may want to throw in rock slides or bandit attacks, *etc.*

Tahuan

The city takes up most of a small plateau roughly 200 feet below the summit. As the party draws near, a few Spot Hidden rolls will uncover various indications of the Tregellis' presence—footprints, discarded trash, small mounds of snow, *etc.* The guides will stop at the base of an intimidating rock face that leans back against the slope at a sixty-degree



It seemed as though the mountain knew their hearts.



Locations and Clues

Eventually, the investigators may discover that Tahuan actively preserves its ancient condition. When investigators move artifacts around, the objects will eventually move back to where they originally were (at the rate of about an inch a day). Markings on buildings will rapidly fade, footsteps will vanish into the ground after a few weeks, excavations will slowly collapse and fill in again, and disrupted buildings will repair themselves.

The Tregellis' camp: A tent, a hearth, and some scattered, desultory supplies, but no sign of either man. An Idea roll will indicate that this camp hasn't been used in weeks. Searching the leavings reveals numerous personal effects belonging to Jason and Richard, but nothing that could explain where they are. A second Idea roll after a thorough search will indicate that some of the camping equipment is missing—but only enough to sustain one man, not two.

Stelae: These are tongue-shaped, flat stones ranging from two to four feet in height emerging from the ground at regular intervals along the main avenue and decorating the capitol (see below). These stones are elaborately carved with images of gods and spirits, and should be of considerable interest to archaeological types. Many of the beings depicted are completely unfamiliar to investigators versed in Inca lore. Anyone with Cthulhu Mythos knowledge is welcome to examine the stelae as well, but a successful roll only confirms that these figures are somehow Mythos-related. A Spot Hidden or Track roll (+20%) will turn up faint footprints around each stela—these are the tracks of the Tregellis brothers, who photographed every carving the first day. These are the only things in the entire city that are decorated in any way—all the buildings are completely blank.

Buildings 1–4, 8–13: All these houses, with the exception of number five, are identical. They are medium-sized standard dwellings. An Anthropology or Archaeology roll will permit the investigators to determine that these were priests' houses, each one the same. There are artifacts all over the place—knives, bowls, pottery, clothing (including feathered cloaks and headdresses), ancient hearths, and the remains of preserved foods. In other words, the ancient dwellings are perfectly preserved and unmolested, a major find for any archaeologist. An Archaeology roll -15% will indicate further that these artifacts easily predate all known Incan remains, suggesting that Tregellis was right—this is Tahuan, the first Incan city.

Building 5: Jason Tregellis will be found here about 40% of the time. While physically the same as the other priestly dwellings, this one contains no artifacts, but rather the missing equipment from the Tregellis' camp, along with a freshly used fireplace and numerous bits of refuse and trash.

Storehouses: Baskets and pottery cover the ground in neat rows. They contain dried corn, feathers, pigments, cloth, and withered leaves and fruit.

Capitol: The largest, most elaborate building in the city (and the only one with multiple rooms), the capitol is elevated on a low, truncated pyramid with a brief flight of shallow steps leading up to the "porch." It is decorated with upright stone stelae of the kind described above. Inside there are eerily preserved tables, chairs with leather seats (still in good repair and usable), and shelves. The rearmost chamber has a few regal-looking fittings, including llama-skins (still supple) on the floor, and a table with a few knotted strings on it (the closest thing to "notes" in a culture with no written language). These are decipherable only to someone with a specific skill in decoding Inca knots (like the ever-useful Dr. Clement). The strings represent a jumble of mixed information, mostly tallying tributes and the like. The only clue of any importance is a brief message mentioning a ritual to honor "the God of the Mountain." Neither the ritual nor the god are described.

Necropolis: A collection of small, closed domes and stone slabs where the privileged dead of Tahuan were buried. Digging up these graves will reveal only pulverized skeletons and withered mummies, buried with a few gold trinkets and the "usual" artifacts. (Note: Dr. Clement, or the investigator archaeologist, should frown on pilfering gold items.) If he was not in building 5, Jason Tregellis will be here, sunning himself on a stone slab. Note: there is a crypt, all but totally submerged, which is sealed with what appears to be an Elder Sign (it is). When opened, the crypt smells odd, but there's nothing inside except for a fine, greenish-black powder on the floor.

Huaca: A small, uninteresting-looking shrine with a path leading up to the peak of the mountain starting behind it. This is the temple of the God of the Mountain, and the site of the first capacocha offering in Tahuan (see below). Richard Tregellis became first fascinated by the huaca, then possessed by it, and he will always be found inside, kneeling before the little altar. He sits on his knees, motionless, staring at a single stone in the center of the thick rear wall behind the altar. A cursory examination of his physical condition suggests that he has been sitting like this for several days, evidently without eating or drinking. His lips are chapped, his cheeks are sunken, his clothes hang loose on his skinny frame. He will take no notice of the investigators unless they try to remove him from the huaca, in which case he will start screaming hysterically—a startlingly loud sound in this silent place. For all his depleted appearance, he will resist leaving the huaca with surprising strength, to the death

continued on next page

Continued from previous page

if he's not subdued. If he is dragged over the threshold to the outside, his screams will seem to double in volume, and the investigators will be seized by a sudden, irrational fear, feeling naked and exposed, terrified that the mountain might hear them and rouse itself to some terrible, inconceivable act. Within moments, Richard will begin to bleed from the nose and ears, first a trickle, then a flood, taking LD4 hit points of damage every round he remains outside the huaca. If released, he will immediately return to his former position in front of the altar, abruptly regaining all lost hit points.

Richard's screams will have a galvanizing effect on Jason, and he will drop everything and run to help his brother. As far as he's concerned, "helping" Richard means preventing the investigators from removing him from the huaca, and Jason will take any steps necessary to "save" his brother, even if he has to kill the entire party. At first he will simply demand that they leave Richard alone, but if the investigators don't respond, he will threaten violence and try to take a hostage, releasing him only when Richard is back in the huaca and the investigators have promised not to "bother" Richard anymore. If Richard dies, Jason will kill any hostage and then attack the rest of the party in a frenzy, not stopping until he, too, is dead.

The stone that Richard stares at so persistently is loose and may be removed with a combined STR of 20. It conceals a shallow square alcove containing an upright bundle, wrapped in a bright red blanket with feathers on top, which emits a pungent, spicy odor. This bundle is the first capacocha offering made in Tahuan—a once-beautiful ten year-old-boy, who had been drugged with a fermented drink, and then sealed into the wall, where he died without regaining consciousness. The Incas believed that the spirits of such sacrifices would occupy and protect the site of the offering, and serve as an ambassador to the god of the huaca. Dr. Clement or any investigator making an Anthropology or Archaeology roll at a -15% can explain this. The investigator making this grisly discovery loses 1/ID4 SAN.

The child is almost perfectly preserved, having been freeze-dried in the cold, rarefied air of the mountains. His limbs are still limber, his face is seamed but intact, his body totally fresh. This is a major find, one of the oldest mummies in existence (3,000 years old). However, Richard will fight to the death, if necessary, to keep the capacocha from being removed from the shrine. If the mummy is removed, he will follow it outside, with the same consequences to himself as if he'd been dragged from the shrine, and Jason will respond to his cries ("If he wants you to put it back," he says, "then *put it back!*").

Witnessing Richard's reactions to being removed from the shrine and/or to the party's tampering with the capacocha will cost 1/ID4 SAN.

The Path and the Mountain Top: The path is steep and difficult, requiring a CONx3 roll just to make it to the top. After an arduous climb, the investigators will emerge on a flat, gravelly shelf sheltering in the tip of the peak. There is a definite presence here, which imparts an almost intolerable sense of being watched, exposed, small, and insignificant.

A Spot Hidden will reveal a slab of stone roughly two and a half feet square and lightly covered with gravel. A combined STR of 20 is required to lift it up, revealing a square pit with another bundle in it (another capacocha, also a young boy, as well-preserved as the other). There's nothing much else up here, except an incredible view. Investigators who mess around up here for more than fifteen minutes, or who exert themselves (notably by lifting the slab), will have to make a SAN roll, or experience a vertiginous, agoraphobic terror: the sensation of dangling from a thin needle of rock above a fathomless abyss. Investigators so affected lose ID6 SAN and will find themselves clinging frantically to the rock face, refusing to look up at the sky overhead. SAN loss is doubled if the investigators visit the peak at night.

The Caves: These are simply red herrings, designed to keep the investigators in Tahuan hunting for answers they will never find, frustrated and frantic. These caves are natural formations where the people of Tahuan occasionally stored extra grain, offerings, and the like. There are plenty of artifacts, including gold ornaments, but nothing of any unique interest. However, for some reason, the caves smell funny, with an odd, almost fishy smell (just very old bat guano). There are also shallow bas-reliefs on the walls just within the cave-mouths that depict figures whose heads are a mass of tentacles with many eyes nesting randomly within.

angle. From here on, the party is on its own. The guides will remain camped at the base of the rock face until the characters decide to leave or one week has passed, whichever comes first.

While it is possible to climb the bare rock face, a Spot Hidden will reveal badly weathered toe and hand holds carved into the rock. The handholds don't make climbing any less strenuous, just faster, getting the party to the top in ten minutes instead of twenty. Characters should make a CONx1 roll after they complete the climb, or fall over in exhaustion, requiring another five to ten minutes of rest.

There is a flat balcony (see map) atop the rock face. The view of the city is obscured by a crumbling rampart of heaped stones, easily climbed, at the top of which, the party can finally see Tahuan, spread out below.

If Dr. Clement is with the party, he will recoil, stunned, the moment he lays eyes on Tahuan. Even for nonprofessionals, the city is an awesome sight. It stretches out for several hundred yards below, perfectly symmetrical, built entirely out of huge blocks of polished stone that gleam as if newly quarried. The thatch rooftops are intact, the white chalk border around the broad central avenue perfectly pre-

served. Even from this distance, it is clear that here, too, the renowned precision of Incan stonemasonry—the carving and fitting of titanic stone blocks so that no mortar is necessary to hold them together—is in evidence. The thought of people moving and positioning these massive stones at this altitude, where carrying simple camping equipment is almost too much for the characters, is mind-boggling.

When the party recovers, the first thing it should notice is the city's unparalleled state of preservation. Anyone making an Idea roll while looking at the city and pondering its pristine condition notices how the mountainside itself, looming up on one side of the city, seems to enfold Tahuan in a semicircular enclosure, exposing only the eastern side of the city to the elements. This, in addition to the cold, dry conditions at 18,000 feet, would seem to account for the fact that Tahuan looks for all the world as if it had been abandoned only a few hours ago, not 3,000 years.

The characters will no doubt want to explore right away. Many, especially those with low SAN or high POW, will feel an uncanny, overwhelming sensation of insignificance, as if standing at some vertiginous height, staring down into limitless gulfs below.

Exploring

Tahuan is absolutely silent. Even the smallest noises seem amplified and inappropriate. Although the wind never let up

during the climb to the plateau, the air in the city is completely still. Most disturbing of all to the characters is the sense that they themselves are being *stilled*. It will take several days to explore the city thoroughly, and as time passes, the investigators will feel themselves becoming numb, stupefied, and entranced, as if an enormous force was overriding their wills, drawing them into harmony with an incalculably old pattern. During the day, the sun seems to hover motionless directly overhead, pouring cold, piercing rays down out of a weirdly blue, cloudless sky. At night, the stars appear to hang among the buildings and just above the rooftops, peering down with a steady, unwavering light. The black void beyond is terrifyingly vast, inflicting on the investigators a kind of subconscious agoraphobia—they will suddenly stop up short, realizing they have been creeping from building to building in vague fear of having the sky swallow them.

The mountain peak itself is inexplicably fascinating and repellent. It looms over the city, seeming to wait, with inscrutable, limitless patience, and the investigators will soon experience a sensation of having a person standing immediately behind them, peering angrily over their shoulders—when they turn, they find the mountain, malevolent, arrogant, and cold. When they discover the message in the Capitol building referring to “the God of the Mountain,” they should recall these experiences.

The longer the investigators stay, the more dreamlike and unreal the city seems to them, and the more difficult it



Exploring the site.

is to leave. After two days in the vicinity of the city, investigators should start rolling for SAN loss on a daily basis, 0/1. If anybody's SAN drops by 20%, either all at once or gradually, daily SAN loss will increase to 1/1D4, and that investigator will have to make a POWx3 roll to leave the city of his own accord. Otherwise, force will be necessary to get him out. That roll drops to POWx2 after losing 40% of one's SAN, and down further to POWx1 after losing 60%. If anyone's SAN drops to zero, he will become the property of the mountain like Richard Tregellis—see below.

Leaving the city and climbing back down the rock face will negate any SAN loss for that day.

Anyone who sleeps within the city walls will have vivid dreams about wandering through its streets, sometimes mingling with the vague forms of its former citizens, witnessing rituals, and so forth, but ultimately his attention will always return to the mountain peak overhead. For the remaining minutes or hours before he wakes, he will stare at it with a sensation of expectation, dread, and, increasingly, reverence.

The Tregellis Brothers

Richard and Jason Tregellis are alive in the city, but far from well. Richard Tregellis' passionate search for Tahuan against all odds made his success all the more overpowering an experience for him. Entering the city for the first time, he felt he was walking into a waking projection of his every dream and ambition. From that moment, the city began to possess him. Eventually, he ended up in the huaca, described in the next section, completely insane and a slave to the will of the God of the Mountain. His brother, Jason, wanders the streets, not yet completely insane but compelled to stand by and make sure that his brother's observances are undisturbed. Jason has set up a camp for himself in building 5, and may be encountered there, in the necropolis, or at the huaca. See the following section for details.

Jason had felt that something was wrong with the city soon after their arrival but he acceded to his brother's request that they remain "just another day." By the time it became clear that no departure was pending, Jason found that he had no will to leave. He drifts, bored and aimless, from place to place in the city, feeling that Tahuan has permeated his entire being, and that a return to the dirt and noise of ordinary city living is impossible.

If asked why he didn't leave the mountain, he will reply vacantly, "No matter how far away I go, I will always be here." He will generally be sarcastic and flippant with the investigators, and they will get little useful information out of him.

Jason is to be a sacrifice to the God of the Mountain, as described later, and if the party presses him to confront his situation rationally, he will grow serious, almost imploring for a moment, and say, "I can't escape what's going to happen." If questioned further, he dismisses the statement and

then grows sarcastic once again: "Oh, I've been foretelling the future my whole life, but I got tired of winning at the track and decided to take up archaeology. Come, gentlemen. Really."

How to Proceed

The Keeper is advised to take significant events in this adventure a little more slowly than he normally might. Speed through the routine of the players' daily regimen, and then slow things way down for the weird interludes. Build the feeling of quiet menace, and then select with care the time to spring the final act of this adventure—the sudden departure of Richard.

The party should set up camp first, putting themselves in readiness and perhaps even postponing exploration until the following day. An exploration of the city and its surrounding is the next order of business—figure the amount of time necessary to conduct a survey under normal circumstances and then double it, representing both the unusual care the party is presumably taking and the physical strain of working at this altitude.

Dr. Clement or the presiding archaeologist investigator should lose no time in beginning to record information about the site. In particular, once the state of the Tregellis expedition's records of their data about Tahuan is discovered (nonexistent—Jason readily admits to having burned everything weeks ago), the investigators will have to survey the city themselves. Measurements need to be taken in order to make drawings to scale; significant carvings tagged by Dr. Clement or the archaeologist investigator will need to be sketched in detail; the precious handful of photographic exposures available will have to be carefully allotted among the many points of unique importance in the city; items will first have to be drawn in situ on a grid precisely as they were found and then individually cataloged, labeled, and tagged; and a collection of artifacts specially chosen for their unusual characteristics will have to be carefully packed for transport back to New York.

The daily regimen should go something like this: A given investigator gets up feeling somewhat unwell and having slept a few hours longer than usual. After a disappointing breakfast, he trudges out into the city and explores a little more; receives today's orders from Dr. Clement/the boss investigator; measures the streets and buildings; copies the carvings on the stelae; sketches objects on-site; catalogs items, photographs things (whatever that investigator's delegated task is on the mission) for as long as he can stand it, then maybe explore a little more if he has the energy; separates off from the group a moment, perhaps, and then (Keeper lets loose with something horrible) loses SAN; wanders back among the others, distressed but unable to communicate his experience very well; eats a disappointing

dinner; sleeps restlessly; and then repeats the whole business until insane.

Nothing will happen for several days after the investigators first arrive, so give the city time to go to work on them. Have them poke around, talk to Jason, "investigate," and so forth. If it seems like they have nothing to do, all the better. Give them a sense of time distending into a meaningless, nonsensical concept, until they begin to feel, like Jason, that they have always been here, and will always be here—that in fact, there is nowhere else. Use Dr. Clement, or the archaeologist investigator, as a contrast: he should find limitless fascination and activity in the city, browsing delightedly over all the artifacts, photographing them, sketching them, tagging them, measuring, cataloging, *etc.* At any rate, just keep them in the city; keep it cooking them until they're nice and tender; keep sucking out their SAN.

Remember, most players are expecting hordes of monsters, cultists, and magic. Exploit this as best you can. Make them run around in circles, give them false clues to explore, and then dump them right back at square one. The caves are the best place to start, but delay their discovery if possible, to make it look as if they are the place to go for answers. Or perhaps you'd prefer to emphasize the subterranean crypt with the Elder Sign—it's up to you. Another good gimmick is to plant clay figurines that resemble various Mythos entities in some of the buildings. Let the investigators dig up as many bits of information and clues as they like, but never let

them forget that for all the "investigating" going on, not a single meaningful conclusion can be drawn.

At any rate, while they go about their business, take every opportunity to strafe them with weird happenings. The boxed text nearby has a list of suggestions; feel free to employ or reject any of this material. The Keeper should invent situations keyed specifically to the investigators and their own particular fears and appetites. We all know how people's true natures come out under pressure. Perhaps some investigators turn against the others. Maybe someone thinks the city should be destroyed—or perhaps that the city should remain undiscovered and that everyone who knows about it (including himself) should be somehow prevented from alerting the outside world to its existence. Now and then take a player aside as the adventure progresses and explain how his investigator's natural defensive behaviors are becoming slightly exaggerated. Direct players so as to keep the tension veiled, unreleased, mostly hidden. Most of the investigators will probably become negative in some way, so for dramatic contrast you should designate one investigator as "immune" (Dr. Clement, if he's being used), someone who remains cheerful and unaffected, fascinated and delighted by this "wonderful archaeological find" and happily working away.

Overt supernatural events should be minimized. Part of keeping the players scared is keeping their investigators feeling clueless and powerless, with little recourse to action.



Mysteries within mysteries.

And Then

One night (when the Keeper has run out of handmade shocks for the investigators), while everyone is sleeping, Richard will suddenly stand up and leave the huaca. He will experience no pain, no screaming fits. His first stop will be the storehouse, where he will collect a bowl, some water, and two feathered capes, one of which he will wrap about his shoulders. Regardless of whether or not anyone is "on guard," he will not be noticed leaving the site and heading up to the peak.

The next day, even before Richard's disappearance is noted, Jason will start acting strange (stranger), standing per-

fectly still with a distracted expression, as if listening to something very faint. If anyone asks him what's going on, he merely replies, "I'm being called . . ." Then he will start walking, slowly, and with a stately air, up the path toward the peak. If he is not stopped, he will join his brother. Richard will drape the second feathered cape around Jason's shoulders, give him a drugged drink, which he has concocted from the storehouse supplies, place him in a pit identical to the one in which the second capacocha was found, and seal him in with an identical stone slab (neither the pit nor the slab were there before).

If he is not rescued, Jason will slip into a coma and die within an hour of his burial—sacrificed to the God of the

Suggested Weird Happenings

R'lyeh Nightmare: Select an investigator at random and take his player aside. Plunge his investigator, alone, into a sort of waking nightmare, in which the city, like a ghost-R'lyeh, turns all weird angles and odd corners, swallowing him up, consuming him. The other investigators see him cringing and squinting. If they try to get his attention, he's unresponsive for a moment, and then he wakes up and the hallucination passes.

Growing Mountain: In a related item, the investigator may be involved in doing something requiring his close attention, or perhaps he's at work indoors. He begins to feel acute symptoms of altitude sickness. As he looks around, it seems to him that the mountain is bigger than he remembers. The surrounding peaks are much farther below, and the plain beyond seems impossibly distant. As he watches, the sky goes black (if it's daytime) and the stars seem to be plummeting away from him. The mountain is visibly growing, expanding up out of the atmosphere, out into space, and the earth is disappearing forever. As the mountain continues to grow, the air seems to get thinner and thinner—to the other investigators this all appears as a sudden and severe attack of asthma. The affected investigator will have more and more difficulty breathing and will start to strangle within LD6 rounds (see *CoC 5th Edition*, p. 32, for suffocation rules). The trance can be broken with some difficulty (repeated slapping or other abrupt shocks, an injection of morphine, or immediate removal from the confines of the city—whatever the investigators choose, select an appropriate roll to determine whether or not they succeed). If the affected investigator is not rescued in time, he will smother and die. Even if he doesn't die, he loses LD6 SAN. Witnesses to the attack lose 0/1 SAN.

Incan Boy: One of the investigators is startled awake in the middle of the night by vague nightmares (something to do with falling and falling and falling, over and over again; the same jarring sensation of losing one's balance and falling), only to discover he is no longer the person he was when he went to sleep. He is now a small Inca boy, not more than ten years old, lying on a mat of straw in one of the stone buildings of Tahuan. His parents are asleep in the next room, which is pitch black—their slow, deep breathing is audible. The investigator may do whatever he wants, but his sense of his previous self is only an indistinct nagging feeling, like something left over from a dream. Tell the player that he is basically playing a different investigator for the time being. He feels he wants to get back to sleep, but the player may compel him to investigate anyway. The city is physically identical to the way it is in the true present. The city is inhabited, but all the inhabitants, including the boy's parents in the next room, are indistinct, ghostly dream figures that can only be viewed dimly out of the corner of the eye and that all speak in the same flat voice. If he tries to speak with any of them, they answer with irrelevant nonsense-phrases like Zen koans.

The boy is afraid to go outside; something connected with his nightmare prevents him. There is a window in the house that opens onto a view of the mountain—even a momentary glimpse of it, shining white in the moonlight, chills the boy through and through.

If the boy goes back to sleep, he will have horrifying dreams about the stars coming down out of the sky and slithering around in the rustling grass of the roof, crooning and chuckling as they try to pull the roof away and expose him to the yawning sky overhead. Later, he dreams of waking and being given something bitter to drink from a clay bowl. Immediately everything goes hazy, before he even gets the opportunity to see who gave him the bowl. While a numbness spreads through him, he feels himself being dressed in a fine feathered cape and headdress and then being led outside into the jabbing sunlight. Barely dressed though he is, he cannot feel the cold wind as he is led out to the huaca, given more to drink, and asked by someone with long, dark spidery legs and a buzzing voice to climb into a small square alcove behind the altar. And then comes

Mountain. Richard will not leave the peak for any reason, and will attempt to prevent anyone from rescuing Jason. When the investigators learn of his fate, whether or not he dies, they all lose 1D8 SAN.

If Jason is sacrificed (or if he has already been removed from the city) and Richard isn't stopped, he will target the investigator with the lowest POW in the group as the next offering. That investigator will sense himself being called and will have to make a POW vs. POW struggle every round to resist obeying the call. If he is not stopped, that investigator will do exactly as Jason did, and be sacrificed in a previously (and mysteriously) undiscovered pit nearby. (Richard will have another dose of the drug and another feathered

cape—from where?) This will continue until everyone available has been sacrificed to the mountain. Richard will remain on the peak of the mountain for a few more days and then suffer a complete collapse and die on the spot.

Saving the Brothers

Jason may be removed from Tahuan at any time, although he is too far gone to depart of his own free will. Away from Tahuan, he will recover his sanity after therapy, although his memories of the site will haunt him for the rest of his life like a bad dream, and he will develop a crippling fear of

sleep, and darkness, and a numb warm-cold feeling and then something he feels towering over him like a mountain peak, reaching out to him . . .

The investigator wakes up. He's been sleeping for hours and hours, but he's not refreshed. He'll be at -10% for the day, plus whatever effects the altitude sickness may have, and he'll have lost 1D4+2 SAN as well. However, this may be the clue that directs the party to find the capacocha walled up in the huaca. The Keeper may wish to make this a recurring dream, or inflict it on more than one party member.

Speaking in Tongues: One of the investigators (perhaps one with an especially low SAN or POW) suddenly begins speaking gibberish. He will fail to recognize any writing or speech in any language. Investigators with Linguistics, Inca Lore, or other related skills will recognize the gibberish as ancient Incan. Until the afflicted investigator leaves the mountain, he will be stuck thinking, speaking, and understanding only Incan. This will not, however, give him any edge in understanding the carvings around the city. He will, however, be able to read (and create) Incan knots. This experience costs 1 SAN for the victim and 0/1 SAN for everybody else. This problem may begin to spread to other players—until everyone is speaking Incan!

Decryption Obsession: One investigator becomes obsessed with the mountain specifically; he is positive that its craggy face contains some written code, carved there by the Incas or perhaps even older people, and that within that code lies the "secret" of the mountain. The investigator will not, however, feel compelled to elaborate more on what exactly that "secret" could be. He will sit and stare at the mountain, and run back and forth to get different perspectives on it at different times of the day and night, trying to "read" the shadows and irregularities of the rock face. The investigator will make a diligent (and fruitless) search for any signs of chiseling or other tool marks on the stones, and will become increasingly reluctant to come down off the slope back into the city, and powerfully hostile to anyone who might try to "interfere" with the "decryption." An investigator in this position will automatically fail his daily SAN roll to resist the atmosphere of the mountain, and will become paranoid if he goes insane.

Gravity Shift: Suddenly, one of the investigators wakes up one morning feeling fine. From that point on, he suffers no penalties from altitude sickness, none whatsoever. He feels perfectly normal. He'll keep feeling normal until he leaves the mountain and descends again down towards sea level. After dipping below 10,000 feet, the investigator will begin to feel sluggish, weighted down, dizzy. This sensation will only get worse the lower he goes. Below 5,000 feet, he will start feeling as if he were under several feet of water. Headaches, ear aches, lightheadedness, diarrhea, random muscle and joint aches, and general enfeeblement will put him at a -10% to do anything at all unless he can make a CONx3 roll, in which case the -10% penalty only applies to strenuous actions. If at any time the investigator heads back up the mountain, or any mountain, these symptoms will vanish as he continues to ascend. This condition is permanent.

The altered investigator may manifest physical signs of his transformation as well—his lungs will enlarge; his voice will become more resonant and huskier, owing to the growth of odd fernlike bronchial branches in his larynx; he will become able to see normally under conditions of very low light; a third major bone will grow in the lower half of each limb, to balance the tibia and the fibula, the radius and the ulna; he will become infertile; the small intestine will shorten itself; other organs (whose function is unclear) will develop in the body cavity; the victim's SAN will drop 1D6+4 as a result of these alterations.

You will notice that these events hit individual investigators instead of the entire party. Nevertheless, you should let everyone in on what's happening to the individual investigator so as to: a) get the maximum atmosphere out of each event, and b) keep everyone involved at all times to prevent the game from dragging.

heights and mountains. Once Richard has left the shrine of his own accord, he may also be subdued and taken down the mountain without risk to his physical condition, although he will have to be kept under perpetual restraint to prevent him from running back to Tahuan from any place on earth. Unlike his brother, Richard is incurably insane, and will spend the rest of his life in an asylum, silent, staring blankly at the sky.

Aftermath

Rescuing Jason Tregellis from his brother nets the investigators 1D6 SAN each, while saving Richard Tregellis gathers them an additional 1D3. Killing either of them negates the SAN gain. Killing both of them saps 1D6 more SAN. Keeping Tahuan a secret from the rest of the world will earn them 1D4 more SAN, but if on the other hand it becomes clear that further expeditions are being planned, they lose 1D4 SAN each. If everybody gets out alive and (more or less) sane, then give them all another 1D6 of SAN.

This scenario was designed to give a Mythos feel without any actual monsters, cultists, or spectacular supernatural events. Everything that happens can be rationally explained, but there are a few elements that require considerable leaps of faith to interpret as nonsupernatural. The whole idea is to keep the players and investigators off-balance, to give them a

spooky place to explore, and especially to frustrate the jaded veterans who'll be looking for monsters to kill. The investigators may leave Tahuan, but Tahuan will never leave them. They'll turn a corner and be struck by the angle of a building, a stone wall, a pinnacle on a skyscraper or the sweep of a street . . . or they'll wake up in the middle of the night in dead silence, under a telescoping, empty sky, and for an instant they'll be back in Tahuan again, in the still, waiting, watching emptiness . . . and the words of Jason Tregellis will echo in their ears: "No matter how far away I go, I will always be here."

NPCs

DR. MILTON CLEMENT

Boyish archaeologist, age 54

Nationality: American

STR 11 DEX 9 INT 17 CON 13 APP 10 POW 15
SIZ 14 EDU 19 SAN 75 Luck 75 HP 14 Age 54

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Ph.D. in Archaeology from Columbia University

Skills: Archaeology 89%, Art: Incan Architecture 89%, Astronomy 68%, Credit Rating 62%, Library Use 78%, Persuade 75%, Psychology 32%, Spot Hidden 63%

Languages: English 95%, Incan Knot Code 75%, Spanish 85%

Attacks: None above base



"The god . . . the god of the mountain . . ."

Notes: Coming from a well-to-do society family with a number of siblings to carry on the family business, Milton pursued his own eccentric interests, which eventually led him to archaeology. He loves his work and will commit himself cheerfully and tirelessly to any related task. Discovering Tahuan is the most momentous occasion in his life, and his simple delight and curiosity will more or less shield him from any weird effects. The behavior of the Tregellis brothers is completely beyond his explanation; he assumes they are unfortunately affected by prolonged exposure to high altitudes.

RICHARD TREGELLIS

Obsessed celebrant, age 44

Nationality: American

STR 14 DEX 12 INT 18 CON 16 APP 8 POW 15
SIZ 11 EDU 18 SAN 0 Luck 75 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Ph.D. in Archaeology from Columbia University

Skills: Anthropology 45%, Archaeology 90%, Credit Rating 65%, History 72%, Library Use 93%, Persuade 44%, Psychology 48%

Languages: English 90%, Incan Knot Code 82%, Spanish 85%

Attacks: None above base

Spells: None, but once he is mobile again, he is able to call victims to sacrifice with a POW vs. POW struggle. This power costs him no magic points to use, but it will only work as he stands atop the peak of the mountain.

Notes: Richard's passionate search for Tahuan against all odds made his success all the more overpowering an experience for him. Entering the city for the first time, he felt he was walking into a waking projection of his every dream and ambition. From that moment, he began to surrender to the city's peculiar possession. When he discovered the little capacocha shrine, he sensed that he was standing at the heart of Tahuan's enigma, and was overcome by the compulsion to unravel it. This led first to fascination, then to obsession, and finally to the complete fragmentation of his personality, reducing him to a sort of living mannequin with no will of its own, dragged slowly into cycles of veneration and sacrifice thousands of years old.

JASON TREGELLIS

Bitter wreckage, age 46

Nationality: American

STR 10 DEX 15 INT 16 CON 13 APP 11 POW 12
SIZ 12 EDU 17 SAN 9 Luck 65 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia University

Skills: Anthropology 85%, Art: South American Carving 75%, Credit Rating 45%, Dodge 40%, First Aid 72%, Hide 45%, History 86%, Library Use 50%, Listen 85%, Persuade 55%, Psychology 45%, Sneak 65%, Spot Hidden 78%

Languages: English 87%, Spanish 85%

Attacks:

.38 Automatic 65%, ID10

Swiss Army Knife 45%, ID4

Spells: None

Notes: Richard's passion was infective. Jason has always had faith in his little brother's vision, and when asked to join the expedition assented readily. He has subsequently watched his brother, his life, and his entire world disintegrate. As the city's strange silence came to settle on his soul, he could sense his sanity evaporating, his will to leave draining away a little bit every day. At first, he remained only because Richard remained, continually postponing their departure until it became clear that no departure was pending. Now he feels that Tahuan has permeated his entire being, and that a return to the dirt and noise of ordinary city living is impossible.

Jason is resigned and bitter, drifting bored and aimless from place to place in the city, yet unable to leave. He will be sarcastic and flippant with the investigators out of the gaping despair he feels—in part, a fatalistic premonition of his eventual sacrifice to the God of the Mountain.

AVERAGE QUASH-INCAN GUIDE

STR 14 DEX 13 INT 12 CON 13 APP 11 POW 11
SIZ 10 EDU 10 SAN 55 Luck 55 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Skills Common to All: Bargain 55%, Climb 85%, First Aid 50%, Jump 45%, Listen 40%, Persuade 35%, Spot Hidden 30%, Track 55%

Languages Common to All: Spanish 50 %

Attacks:

Fist 55%, ID3

Club 65%, ID6

Utility Knife 40%, ID6

Rifle 45%, ID6+2

Notes: Acquiring a guide is essential in order to reach Tahuan. A pair of guides can be procured for \$25, but they will state up front that they will not enter the city of Tahuan. Guides will remain camped at the base of the mountain until the investigators decide to leave or after one week, whichever comes first.



Common Courtesy

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Common Courtesy

JEFF MOELLER

ILLUSTRATED BY HEATHER HUDSON

This is a 1920s scenario that can be played in one or two sessions. The investigators are faced with a problem that will ultimately lead them to a moral dilemma. In trying to rescue an innocent woman from kidnappers, they inevitably clash with an ancient Scythian sorceress intending to perform funerary rites that involve human sacrifice (albeit of willing participants). If the investigators try to thwart the rites, they may create more havoc and suffering than the rites themselves. This is primarily a non-Mythos piece; the primary antagonist could easily have no Mythos connection at all.

Background

"Common Courtesy" was inspired by the *Histories* of the Greek historian Herodotus. Nasra the Priestess is a 2200-year-old sorceress, from the ancient royal house of Scythia. The Scythians were a race of horse-mounted warriors from the steppes of western and central Asia, and were dominant during the 5th Century B.C. While there were many tribes and subgroups of Scythians, this scenario is concerned with the Paralatae, or Royal Scythians, of which Nasra is a member.

The Paralatae's influence over the lands surrounding the Black Sea brought them into contact with the Greek historian Herodotus, who devoted considerable space in his *Histories* to a discussion of Scythian idiosyncrasies. Herodotus gives a brutally detailed description of the funeral rites for a member of Scythian royalty. "Common Courtesy" is basically a "what if" scenario: What if someone tried to give a descendant of Scythian royalty an "old-fashioned" funeral in twentieth-century America? While one may wonder what complications might arise from such a simple premise, consider that the Paralatae royal funerary rites involve the ritual strangulation of a concubine, over fifty other attendants, and fifty horses, voluntary ritual self-mutilation by mourners, and ritual purification through the burning of pits full of, among other things, hemp seed. A detailed account of Herodotus' description of these proceedings are given in the boxed text, "Scythian Rites of Death," on the next page. The Keeper should thoroughly acquaint himself with what is involved, since a working knowledge of it is essential to properly run this scenario.

As far as 2200-year-old sorceresses go, Nasra is not a bad sort. She is ruthless, imperious, haughty, and arrogant, but not outwardly malign. She is royalty, albeit of a long-fallen empire, and merely expects to be treated as such.

Nasra, as with most sorceresses, is acutely aware of the importance of ritual. As Nasra views her main goal as the perpetuation of Scythian culture, she is particularly concerned that her people observe rituals connected with royalty, which serve an important social cohesive function. On the remote steppes of Afghanistan, Nasra is revered by the local populace, many of whom are her descendants. Nasra is closely served by a cadre of several hundred Afghani tribesmen to whom she has taught the skills, methods, language, and swagger of the ancient Paralatae. All who know her refer to her as "Exalted Grandmother." By isolating her followers from the outside world and instructing them to be rigorously faithful to the ancient ways, Nasra has kept alive a culture thought to be long dead. Her modern-day Paralatae are fanatically loyal and prepared to die to achieve her goals.

The New King

By Nasra's reckoning, the man with the strongest claim to the throne of ancient Scythia is (or rather was) one of her direct descendants, Turib Nasfari. Nasfari lived with Nasra and her insular tribe of throwbacks in a remote part of Afghanistan until ten years before the scenario begins. Always a rebellious youth, Turib deserted his tribe when an expedition including bohemian photographer Ellen Black visited their village. Nasfari accompanied Ellen back into the United States (where he went by the name "Bobby") and blossomed into a thirty-year-old college dropout, drug addict, and artist living in an artist's colony in central California. Nasfari died of advanced syphilis approximately ten days before the scenario begins.

Nasfari, a homosexual, had a deep but platonic relationship with his "liberator," Ellen Black, with whom he'd shared apartment space. Emotive and soft-hearted, Ellen married Nasfari two weeks before his death, as a token of the strength of their friendship and had just started the process of changing the names on her identification. The marriage was never consummated, nor intended to be.

Nasfari's will left all of his possessions to Ellen, and appointed her executrix of his estate. For reasons that only recently began to become clear to Ellen, Nasfari specified in his will that Ellen was to handle all funeral arrangements and not allow his relatives to plan the funeral. Nasfari realized that the performance of the traditional ritual burial for Scythian kings would cause substantial problems in the United States. Ellen, who had heard Nasfari talk vaguely of an "Exalted Grand-

mother" back in Afghanistan, had no inkling that her marrying Nasfari would put her in mortal danger.

Several months ago Nasra had a premonition of Bobby's death. Upon receiving this premonition, Nasra set about to arrange passage for herself and approximately 150 of her Paratae followers, intending to stage a "proper" funeral upon their arrival. Nasra and several of her goons encountered Ellen at her attorney's office going over funeral and estate plans. An argument erupted, with Nasra demanding to be given custody of Nasfari's body, and Ellen telling her that she was his wife and she would decide when and where the funeral would be. Nasra wrongly assumes from this exchange that Ellen was intimate with Nasfari and thus eligible to fulfill the role of the sacrificial concubine in the royal funeral rites. Nasra has kidnapped Ellen and taken her to the planned burial site in rural northern California until Bobby's body can be seized.

Getting Started

The scenario begins in late November. Throughout the scenario, temperatures will be in the lower thirties, and a

steady, accumulating snow will fall throughout the area. The investigators are contacted by John Clancy, an attorney in the fictitious central-California town of Blaketon. Blaketon is a mountain town of about 3,000 and is a notorious hotbed of bohemian artists. Clancy is a thirty-year-old redhead who is missing his right arm at the shoulder and walks with the aid of a cane. One of the investigators should know and trust Clancy, and should owe him a favor. A private investigator who has had some run-ins with the law would be a good choice; Clancy may have gotten him off light in the past.

Clancy asks the investigators to help him contact one of his clients, Ellen Black-Nasfari. Clancy tells the investigators that he was helping Ellen probate the estate of her late husband Bobby Nasfari. Bobby's real name is Turib, and Clancy thinks he was from Afghanistan. Mr. Nasfari died of advanced syphilis about ten days ago. His wife is a struggling artist short of cash, and Clancy was working for her on a pro bono (free) basis. Clancy had drawn up Mr. Nasfari's will two years ago when his condition began to deteriorate. Clancy does not know how Nasfari contracted the disease. If asked, Clancy will state that Ellen and Bobby were married shortly before his death, when Bobby was fatally ill. He found the marriage surprising and doubts that they were in-

Scythian Rites of Death

The investigators should eventually come to research Scythian death rituals once they focus on the Scythian connection. The investigators should be able to find a nicely detailed description of ancient Scythian death rituals in any decent library, by simply looking up "Scythian" in a library catalog. A small library in Blaketon has sufficient resources for this investigation. A straight Library Use roll at the Blaketon Public Library will lead them to a compilation of the writings of Greek historians, including Herodotus. Reviewing Herodotus' *Histories* gains the investigators the following information.

The death of a Scythian king was marked by a year-long series of death rituals. Members of each tribe were required to attend at the burial site. When a Scythian king died, some subjects would immediately begin preparation of the tomb, a large, square-shaped wooden affair. The body of the king was placed on a mattress. Spears were erected on either side of the body, and beams and twigs placed on top of the spears to form a superstructure. A retinue of attendants to the afterlife—one of the king's concubines, a cupbearer, a cook, a groom, a lackey, and a messenger—and the king's horses were ritually strangled and placed within, along with the most valuable of each of his possessions and some golden cups. This affair would then be covered with earth, and made as high as possible—historic examples measure up to sixty feet.

While the tomb was being made ready, the king's body was split open and filled with frankincense, aniseed, cypress, and parsley, then sealed with wax, placed on a wagon, and displayed to all the different tribes. When each tribe viewed the deceased king, each man among it demonstrated his grief by chopping off a piece of his ear; cutting his hair short; lacerating his arm, forehead, and nose; and jamming an arrow through his left hand.

Once the king and his retinue were placed inside the tomb, all who were engaged in the burial went through a purification ritual. The women washed their heads, and prepared a paste of cypress, cedar, and frankincense, which was used to plaster their bodies. The men made a felt tent, dug a pit inside, filled the pit with red-hot stones, and threw a large amount of hemp seed onto the stones. They then sat inside the tent and got stoned out of their minds. The purification and mourning ceremonies lasted for about forty days.

After a year, a further round of sacrifices ensued. Fifty more attendants and fifty quality horses were ritually strangled. The attendants and horses were split, cleaned out, filled with chaff, and sewn up again. A circle of pairs of posts was then erected around the tomb, with a wheel set on top of each pair. A stake was run through each horse from stem to stern, and the horse was then set on top of the wheel, the legs dangling free. Each horse was equipped with tack, and each attendant was then affixed, as a rider, to the horse by a long stake run the length of his spine and through the horse. The whole effect was one of a macabre, elevated merry-go-round. The tomb was at last complete.

timate, as Bobby was rumored to be exclusively homosexual.

Clancy tells the investigators that while he and Ellen were talking over funeral arrangements, a group of ten muscular men of Arabic or Pakistani appearance burst in, led by an incredibly old, stooped-over woman dressed in a bright-purple, gold-ornamented sarong and wearing massive neck torques and gold hair combs. The men all wore long trench coats, had long hair and black beards, and wore a lot of gold jewelry (including neck torques and hair combs). They each seemed have something bulky holstered at their hips under their trench coats. The woman identified herself as Nasra, the "Exalted Grandmother." Clancy tells them that this name seemed to ring a bell with Ellen, who thanked her for coming all the way from Afghanistan for the funeral. Clancy thinks that Nasra was some sort of family elder. Nasra demanded to know where the Nasfari's body was and announced that she would be conducting the funeral. "Turib," said the old woman, "will be given a funeral as befits his rank." Ellen told Nasra that she was Nasfari's wife, that she did not need her attitude right now, and that if she wanted to come to the funeral, she needed to shape up. Ellen also pointed out that Bobby's will specified that she was to decide how the funeral was to be handled. Clancy can show the investigators a copy of the will, which, among other provisions, states, "My executrix, Ellen Black, shall have sole discretion to decide the method of my interment, and no one from my homeland shall interfere with her decision."

At this point one of the men reached under his coat and pulled out a three-foot-long heavy bronze knife. Nasra herself held up her hand and said something in a strange language. The knife was sheathed and everyone left. On her way out, however, Nasra looked back at Clancy and said in flawless English, "O Advocate, know that we mean your people no harm. Know also however that I will brook no interference in ensuring that our ancient traditions are properly followed." This incident occurred five days ago.

The funeral had been scheduled for yesterday, but it had to be postponed. No one seems to be able to find Ellen. Clancy had gotten the key to Ellen and Bobby's apartment from the landlord, on the pretext that he needed to inventory Bobby's things for the court, and he checked the apartment out yesterday. No one was there, and he saw no signs of a struggle. He did not think to check and see if there were any signs of a break-in. He has reported Ellen missing to the police, but missing persons are low on their list of priorities, and the police have limited manpower. He has talked to Ellen's friends, and none of them has seen her since the meeting at Clancy's office five days ago. Clancy has the key, which he offers to the investigators. Ellen was supposed to come back the next day after the run-in with Nasra, but did not. Clancy is worried about Ellen and wants the investigators to locate her.

If they think to ask, Clancy will tell them that Bobby's body is in cold storage at Evergreen Memorial Chapel in

Blaketon. Ellen asked that the body not be embalmed; this was also specified in Bobby's will. Clancy can provide the address for both the memorial chapel and the apartment.

Bobby and Ellen's Apartment

Bobby and Ellen's apartment is a one-room studio located on the second floor of a two-story building in the artists' district of Blaketon. The first floor is occupied by a bookseller. The second floor is reached on the street by a door to the left of the one to the bookstore, and up a flight of narrow, poorly lit stairs. There are two apartments at the top of the stairs, one directly ahead and the other on the right; Bobby and Ellen's apartment is the one on the right.

When the investigators start up the stairs, call for a Listen roll. Successful investigators hear a floorboard creak above them. If the investigators try to proceed quietly, roll a group Sneak roll, against the Sneak roll of the worst investigator going up the stairs. Success means the group going up arrives quietly.

The door at the top of the stairs directly ahead has an eviction notice posted on it and a big pile of mail in front of it. No one is home. The door to Bobby's and Ellen's apartment is closed, but a Spot Hidden reveals that it has been jimmied. If the investigators have successfully snuck up the stairs and then burst through the unlocked door, they have a round of free action. Two Paralatae will be selectively looting the place, taking the most valuable items to bury with their king and putting them into a large felt bag. Only a few things of any real value are in the place; these are discussed below. The Scythians will be by the far window if surprised; otherwise they will be concealed and ready to attack, a naked tulwar in one hand and a javelin in the other.

Scythian warriors are ruthless and fanatic and will sacrifice themselves to gunfire if it allows a fellow to disable an investigator. At the same time, they are not out to kill the investigators. Their single-minded goal is to get away with the loot and have the ceremony proceed apace. When deciding the Scythians' actions, keep this overriding goal in mind. The Paralatae know that killing an investigator will invite unnecessary and undesired police attention, and thus will deliberately kill only as a last resort. Do not overlook the possibility that the Scythians will attempt to escape or even parley with the investigators. If the investigators attempt to flee from a Scythian encounter, the general rule of thumb is that the Scythians will give token pursuit only, to ensure that the investigators do not interfere further.

This group of Scythians speaks no English, and communication efforts may lead to misunderstandings. Note that Scythians are not patient people and will resort to some level of violence fairly quickly to settle a dispute with investigators.

The Scythians generally will not kill disabled investigators outright, but they may scalp them if the investigators are rude. (The Scythians use cleaned scalps as hand towels.)

Scalping does 1D6 of damage (which could kill a hurt investigator), and costs an investigator 1D4+1 points of APP and 0/1D3 SAN. There is nothing sanitary about a bronze tulwar, so checks for infection would be in order for a scalpee.

The Keeper should note that the Scythians are not adverse to using modern technology; they are merely employing traditional garb and accouterments because they consider themselves to have already begun the formal proceedings of the funeral ritual. The Scythians can be assumed to have base skills with firearms and other modern contrivances; however, the rank and file Scythians are not very good drivers.

Assuming the Scythians are defeated, or either they or the investigators get away, a successful Archaeology or Anthropology roll at 20% of normal identifies the warriors as Paratae. Alternatively, sufficient labor in a library or consultation with appropriate academics leads to the same conclusion. Anyone who identifies the Scythians with successful rolls will know that Herodotus' *Histories* are the best source for information about ancient Scythians and their ways.

Searching the Apartment

Once the Scythians have been dealt with, the investigators can explore the apartment. Whether they defeated the Scythians or not has little real importance to what they will find there.

Bobby and Ellen's apartment is a one-room studio with a small bath. Generally speaking, it is furnished in a mix and match, starving-artist motif. There are two separate single beds. One of the beds is made. The other has been stripped to the mattress.

Things of notice in the main living area:

- With a Spot Hidden, the investigators notice that Ellen's purse is not there.
- There is a stack of bills on the coffee table, about half of them opened. Some are to "Ellen Black," while others are to "Ellen Black-Nasfari," suggesting a recent name change.
- There are a large number of black-and-white photographs in silver-metal frames on the walls. The quality is professional but not award-winning. One, taken in this apartment, depicts a young Caucasian woman in a wedding dress sitting on the edge of a bed and holding the hand of a recumbent, thin Middle Eastern man; the woman is small and thin and has a bob-style haircut. The bed is the one that has been stripped down. Investigators who study this photo will be able to positively identify Ellen later. The photograph is dated two weeks ago on the back.
- There are a few pieces of brass and gold-leaf metalwork: hair combs, torques, and decorated bowls. The style is similar to that worn by the tulwar-wielding



Ransacking the apartment.

kooks. One particularly nice bowl, showing two horsemen hunting a wolf, went into the felt bag that the Paralatae were carrying. These are Bobby's Scythian-influenced work. An Art roll identifies them as steppe art in style, common to nomadic tribes of Western and Central Asia in the several centuries preceding Christ. Because the tribes were nomadic, they literally wore their wealth in the form of gold accouterments. Persons making a successful Anthropology or History roll with this information know that Herodotus is the best source of information about ancient steppe tribes, which include Sarmatians, Scythians, and Paralatae, or Royal Scythians.

- On the bookshelf are a number of art books. Some deal with photography. Others deal with ancient Middle Eastern and Western Asian art forms, principally gold metalworking. Study of the examples of metalworking around the apartment and comparison of these to the metalworking books reveals that the metalwork is clearly imitative of ancient Scythian work. The gold torques and hair combs worn by the two Scythians in the apartment can also be identified as ancient Scythian in derivation by examining these art books.

A copy of M. Oldfield Howey's *The Horse in Magic and Myth* (William Rider & Son, Ltd., 1923) is also on the bookshelf. This is a comparative anthropology work with discussion of the rituals of the steppe nomads of Western Asia, of whom the Scythians are an early example. Also present is a copy of George Rawlinson's 1910 translation of Herodotus (Everyman's Library, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.). Both of these books are real-to-life. If the investigators are stumped, the Keeper might have the following passage from Herodotus regarding ancient Scythian royal funerary rites marked, with the word "concubines" circled and a penned-in "?????" adorning the margin: "In the open space around the king, they bury one of his *concubines*, first killing her by strangling, and also his cupbearer, his cook, his groom, his lackey, his messenger, his horses, firstlings of all his other possessions and some golden cups—for they use neither silver nor brass."

- Next to a small phonograph is a wooden box of phono-

graphic recordings. The records are numbered 120. Anyone playing the scratchy records will hear the voice of an old woman speaking in a totally incomprehensible tongue. A Linguist, or possibly another scholarly type, who listens to the records might identify the language as seemingly Indo-European in derivation and guess at a few words. If the Keeper is running the scenario with the Mythos lurking in the background, the name Tawil at'Umr is mentioned frequently. A Cthulhu Mythos roll recognizes this as one of the names of Yog-Sothoth.

The recordings are in Scythian, an extinct, non-written language. They comprise Nasra's lectures and lessons on proper adherence to Scythian ways and on rituals of Scythian magic. Having them translated will be a daunting task for even the best linguist (see sidebar for more). Bobby was instructed in these ways but rebelled against them and was not an avid follower. Ellen's understanding of Scythian, a smattering picked up from Bobby, was not sufficient to permit her to grasp the occult weirdness of the infrequently played records.

- A jimmied-open chest in the living room contains about \$200-worth of professional-quality photographic equipment. There is an important clue here. If the investigators check the cameras, they will see that one of them has an undeveloped picture on it. If the investigators have the film developed, they find the shot appears to have been taken out the window of the apartment. Two trench coat-wearing Scythians can be seen getting out of a gray flatbed truck that looks to be Army-surplus. As explained in a later section on tracking down the Scythians, inquiring at Army-surplus dealers can lead the investigators to the Scythian funeral site.

Things to notice about the bathroom:

- The bathroom is set up to double as a darkroom and has a full set of developing equipment.
- The medicine chest contains a vast array of prescription medicine, all related to the treatment of syphilis (including mercury salts). There is also a pipe and some marijuana in a black leather baggie. If anyone thinks to check, no contraceptive devices will be found.

Linguist Skill Revisited

Players who want to have the Scythian recordings translated should face an extremely difficult time in dealing with this dead language. If the Keeper still uses, or decides to reintroduce, the Linguist skill from pre-fifth edition CoC rulebooks, a success would have to be made at -50% to the roll. Another option would be to have the investigator succeed in an appropriate skill (such as history or anthropology) at 10% of normal if the investigator is a specialist of studies dealing with ancient steppe peoples or ancient Greek, Roman, or Persian history.

A linguist would have to devote six uninterrupted months to the records. Rewards for successfully translating the records +5% to Cthulhu Mythos (optional); -2D4 SAN (if Mythos knowledge is granted); +5% to Occult; and an optional spell multiplier of x1 with the following spells potentially learnable: Call Yog-Sothoth, Bless Blade, Cloud Memory.

Given the artwork, the information provided by Clancy, and the activities of the Scythians, the investigators should be able to piece together the fact that Nasra plans on giving Bobby a proper Scythian funeral. From there, the investigators should look into Herodotus to divulge what that entails.

Ellen's Friends

The Keeper should *ad lib* interviews with Ellen's friends. Many of them will be left-leaning, bohemian artists, poets, and musicians who will not appreciate being probed by strangers about one of their friends. Mentioning Clancy's name and that Ellen might be in trouble helps matters. No one knows where Ellen is. If asked, the friend will acknowledge that Ellen and Bobby were just friends, and never intimate. Bobby was openly and exclusively homosexual. Ellen married him because he was about to die and because she loved him in a platonic sense. They were married about two weeks ago.

Other background information might also be gleaned from interviews with Bobby and Ellen's friends, particularly if questions about Bobby's national origin or relatives are asked:

- Ellen was a wandering photographer and met Bobby several years ago on a journey to remote Afghanistan. Bobby was from a very rural part of that country, but befriended Ellen and snuck back into the States with her. Bobby had a hard time adjusting to California, and drifted from a poor performance at college into drug abuse.
- Bobby's friends correctly believe that he was an heir to some sort of noble title in his homeland. At least one of the friends that the investigators talk to will recall a fight Ellen had with Bobby. Bobby's problem was that he got so strung out on heroin that he could not tolerate the anti-syphilis medicine he needed to take. One time after he got extremely strung out, Ellen gave him a verbal dressing down in front of this friend. Ellen told Bobby that she did not care who he might be in Scythia; this was California, and, besides, Scythia did not even exist anymore. This comment utterly terrified Bobby, who hid himself away for several days. Bobby seemed a bit paranoid for several weeks thereafter.
- Every so often a distant cousin of Bobby's, whose name no one recalls, would come to town to visit. This fellow was of the same general age and ethnic appearance as Bobby. He spoke decent English and was reasonably civil, although he seemed exasperated with Bobby. They often had heated exchanges in whatever language they spoke amongst themselves. Ellen once said that he was a distant cousin of Bobby's who lived in the U.S., and that Bobby's grandmother had him check on Bobby periodically. The distant cousin is Hadjani Nasfari, more information on whom is provided in following sections.



Nasra, the Exalted Grandmother.

Meet the Exalted Grandmother

This is an optional encounter that might be staged depending upon how the investigators' encounter with the Scythians went at Bobby and Ellen's apartment. Late at night, the investigators are awakened in their rooms by the sound of their door being kicked in. A large number of Scythians—enough to deter any ideas the investigators may have about fighting—burst in. They take up defensive positions, secure any visible weapons the investigators have out, and keep their own weapons at the ready, but they do not attack. Another Scythian, dressed in Western clothes, comes in after the area is secure. This is Hadjani Nasfari; he introduces himself as "Turib's cousin Hadjani," in accented but decent English. He orders the investigators to bow before the presence of the Exalted Grandmother, who then enters. If the investigators still have not focused on Scythian practices as a line of investigation, Hadjani may add the honorific "High Priestess of the Royal Scythians!" when introducing her. Any investigators who do not bow as Nasra enters the room are subject to a punch in the abdomen. Nasra enters the room imperiously, scowling and sniffing in distaste. She eyes the investigators with disdain. Nasra speaks in Scythian to Hadjani, who then translates for the investigators, prefacing his translations with introductions such as "The Exalted Grandmother deigns to have me inform you . . ." Although Nasra speaks perfect English, she is too imperious to address the investigators herself.

The gist of Nasra's haughtily delivered message is a warning not to interfere further with her plans to give Bobby a funeral "as befits his rank." Next time, Nasra warns, her warriors will not be so merciful. Nasra entertains no questions, and anyone insolent enough to ask any risks nonlethal violence from the Scythians, up through and including scalping. The Scythians do not disclose the whereabouts of the funeral, since Nasra does want police interference. If the investigators have already involved the police, Nasra acknowledges that she has Ellen and states that Ellen will be killed if police interfere with the funeral plans. Nasra and her horde then depart, warning the investigators not to follow them, on pain of death. Any investigators who do attempt to follow find their tires slashed.

Possible Police Involvement

A group of investigators may opt to involve the local police in matters if there is a particularly violent episode at Bobby and Ellen's apartment. The local police force is quite limited; assume that there is one full-time constable and three reserves who can be called in when needed. If the local police do become involved, a few complications might arise. First, depending on what occurred at the apartment, they might seal the apartment off as a crime scene. If this occurs, use Clancy to intercede on the investigators' behalf. Clancy has a good relationship with local law enforcement (and judges) and will be able to persuade the local police to allow any private investigators among the players to assist in the investigation. Second, if the police do become involved, this could lead to police participation in defending a raid against the Evergreen Memorial Chapel. To guard against this contingency, the Scythians have a diversion planned, as discussed in the next section. If the investigators persist in expanding police involvement, the Keeper could intensify the snowfall, thereby cutting off reinforcements and forcing the investigators to stay involved themselves. Whipping up a winter storm is well within Nasra's sorcerous powers.

Occult Research

Anyone delving into an appropriate occult or Mythos tome might, at the Keeper's discretion, learn a few interesting facts. The tome should have good coverage of Yog-Sothoth to contain any of these facts. Worship of Yog-Sothoth as

Tawil at'Umr is rumored to have occurred among certain steppe tribes, including the Scythians. Strict and proper observance of ritual is extremely important to sorcerers devoted to the Tawil at'Umr aspect of Yog-Sothoth. Tawil at'Umr is one of the less malevolent aspects of Yog-Sothoth, though by no means friendly. Tawil at'Umr is concerned with opening the way to distant times and places. The term "Exalted Grandmother" is an honorific for particularly important and powerful priestesses of Tawil at'Umr.

Staking Out the Chapel

Once they have read Herodotus, the investigators should suspect that Nasra intends to have the funeral "her way," and that "her way" involves the ritual strangulation of Ellen, a total of about sixty assisted suicides, fifty counts of cruelty to animals, and sixty or so counts of abusing a dead body. If they do not make the connection between the sacrificial concubine and Ellen, call for an Idea roll or introduce the marked passage from Herodotus. Since you cannot have a funeral without the deceased, staking out the Evergreen Memorial Chapel is an obvious thing to do.

The Evergreen is a small operation located several blocks from Bobby and Ellen's apartment. It is run by one Paul Pfefferman, an oily, smooth-talking salesman in a black suit. Mr. Pfefferman is in the funeral-home business for the money. Ms. Black-Nasfari, to his way of thinking, skipped town without paying the \$75 bill for the aborted funeral of her late husband. Bobby is on ice on a refrigerated sliding

table in the back, and Mr. Pfefferman is acutely aware of the amount of money the electricity is costing him. He will not turn over Bobby's body to the investigators unless forced to do so, in which case he will call the police. He will not cooperate with investigator plans to stake the building out from the inside, unless they happen to offer to pay the bill plus a little something extra. Pfefferman becomes much more tractable if he is paid. An inspection of Bobby's body reveals that his illness was extremely advanced. He has not been embalmed, at the request of Ellen. Pfefferman remembers her saying something about cultural preferences. Lack of embalming was also specified in Bobby's will.

The Scythians attack the funeral home around 4 A.M. on the second night of the stakeout. First, however, they create a diversion designed to occupy the local police force. Fifteen minutes before the raid, ten horse-mounted Scythians, armed with bows and arrows as well as tulwars and javelins, go on a looting rampage in the other end of town. This is a suicide mission, and the Scythians simply lay down their lives to advance the diversion. They attract as much police attention as possible, in order to divert police from responding to the raid at the Evergreen. They deliberately do not kill any policemen or citizens, since this would provoke a massive police retaliation. The Scythians are masterful horsemen, and each possesses 70% skill in Horseback Archery. Assume a base range of 30 yards for the bows, with one arrow shot every two rounds at 1D8 damage. The diversionary force will

slash the tires of, or otherwise disable, any police vehicles they can. The raid is sufficient to divert the entire attention of the limited local police.

If the investigators never stake out the funeral home, the Scythians simply seize the body three nights into the scenario. Either way, eight Scythians will park on the side of the funeral home in the same Army-surplus truck as shown on the undeveloped film in Ellen's camera. One of this group is Hadjani Nasfari, who is distinguishable by his Western dress and generally civilized appearance. Hadjani and one warrior stay with the truck while six others make a frontal assault, bash down the front door and head straight for the refrigeration room, fighting any investigators who try to stop them until the investigators either go down or flee. They are focused on grabbing Bobby's body and getting away clean. If the frontal assault is met with heavy resistance, the seventh warrior sneaks around back and tries to slip out unnoticed with the body. Unless the investigators are exceptionally tough, they are wise to stay unnoticed and trail the Scythians' van from a distance. If the investigators are numerous, double the number of Scythians.

Depending on the investigators' actions, it is possible that they will encounter Hadjani directly. If they do, Hadjani is nonviolent, but extremely exasperated with them. In accented but decent English, Hadjani advises the investigators that he and the other Scythians will stop at nothing to liberate the body of their king, and that if the investigators do



Welcome to America.

not stop interfering, he cannot be responsible for what "his cousins" do. If the investigators do not capitulate, combat (and scalping) may result.

The Keeper should play out any hot pursuit of the Scythians, noting that a high-speed chase is rather impracticable due to the weather conditions. Most of the Scythians are terrible drivers, but Hadjani, who drives the getaway vehicle, is an exception. His Drive skill is a respectable 40%. Hadjani's full stats are set out at the end of the scenario. Hadjani will drive through the snow like a maniac to reach the outskirts of town. If the investigators are hotly pursuing, select Scythians will attempt to leap off the back of the truck onto the investigators' vehicle, where they will proceed to smash out the windshield and try to cause an accident by way of killing the investigators (getting themselves killed is not among their concerns). At the outskirts of town, another truckload of Scythians waits to ram any hotly pursuing investigator vehicles. If the investigators follow discreetly (lights out) and from a safe distance, however, they may be able to trail both trucks of Scythians all the way to the funeral site by following the tracks in the falling snow. In the event of a confrontation from which the investigators attempt to flee, the Scythians again only offer token pursuit, as long as they still have Bobby's body.

If the Scythians' raid is somehow daunted, Nasra will use two Nightgaunts the following night to get the job done.

Finding the Scythians

From the time the Scythians grab the body of Bobby Nasfari, the investigators have until midnight the next night to rescue Ellen. They should prove fairly easy to track, however. The investigators should be able to surmise that the Scythians arrived in the country fairly recently. If they read Herodotus, they have an idea of the sorts of things needed to properly stage the funeral. Tracking down delivery of these items will lead the investigators to Hadjani Nasfari and the funeral site. Hadjani had to finance the funeral through selling off some gold jewelry items, and inquiry at local assayists or jewelers could reveal this.

The investigators may call around to local military-surplus dealers to find out if any Afghani-looking individuals purchased surplus trucks recently. Hadjani Nasfari purchased six identical surplus military flatbed trucks from a depot in Sacramento about ten days ago. He did so under his actual name, and listed his address as "General Delivery, Nelsonville, California." Nelsonville is a fictitious small town in a rural county in Northern California, roughly 100 miles from Blaketon. He was with a couple of gentlemen who fit the description of the Scythians down to the trench coat. The depot clerk is happy to talk about this incident, since one of the Scythians grabbed him when he was bargaining over the price.

In order to properly stage the funeral, the Scythians had to acquire a large number of horses. Virtually every conceivable source of horses in the general area was contacted by Hadjani Nasfari. This would include horse breeders, stockyards, and large farms. Hadjani bought a total of about 100 horses. Hadjani also bought several horse trailers. Hadjani consistently used his true name and gave his address as "Nelsonville, California." On some occasions he paid in gold. All concerned remember these unusual purchases.

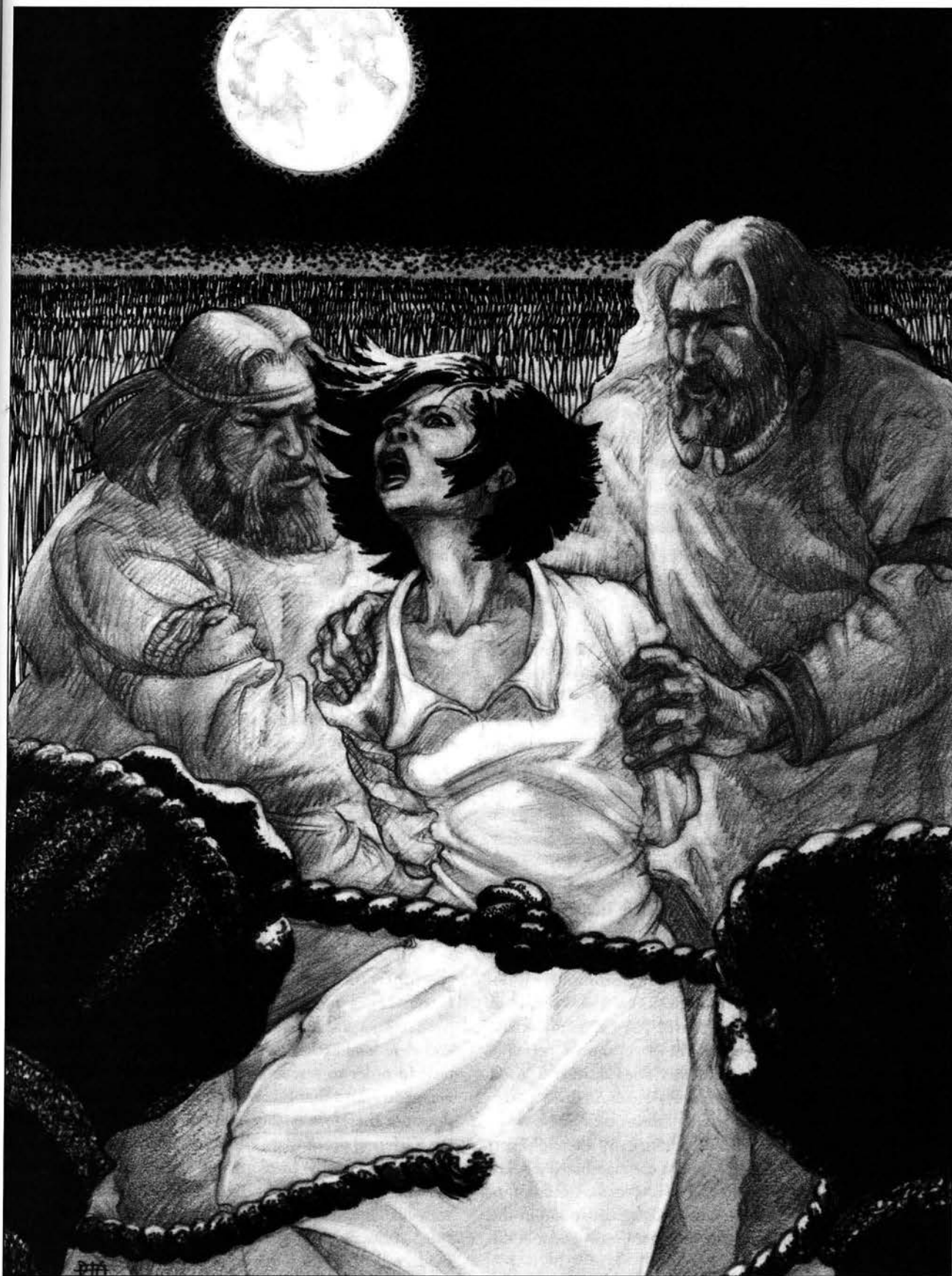
Most people in Nelsonville, including the sheriff, know about "them weird people from Afghanistan" who bought a remote piece of farmland about ten miles west of town a week ago. The sheriff, George Eastbrook by name, has driven out there. He tells the investigators that the Afghans are building some sort of structure out of stakes and beams. "They were friendly, but closed-mouthed about what they were doing. One fellow by the name of Hadjani Nasfari did all the talking." The sheriff notes that as they're buying a lot of tools and building materials from the local hardware store, he's not too concerned about them. He figures that they are some kind of weird but harmless religious sect. If the investigators try to involve the sheriff in what they portray as a kidnapping case, he will contact the police in Blaketon to verify the story. Due to the snow, the remoteness of Nelsonville, and the limited police presence in the area, however, he will only be able to muster himself, four county deputies, and about ten armed citizens before midnight. This is why the Scythians placed their camp in such a remote area. Sheriff Eastbrook and his posse are of only average competence and are not at all prepared to deal with a sorceress or a vicious horde of mounted archers. The Scythians will make short work out of any such posse that appears.

The clerk at the Nelsonville post office, once suitably cajoled, can tell the investigators that Hadjani Nasfari has gotten a lot of large packages from San Francisco, from an outfit called "Dockside Spices." The clerk remembers that one of the packages had a packing invoice noting "frankincense."

Funeral Services

Bobby Nasfari's funeral will occur at midnight on the evening following the seizure of his body. Nasra's plan was to conduct the first part of the ceremony as detailed in Herodotus' account, take up residence on the farmland for a year, and then finish the ceremony. Due to the investigators' interference, she intends to bypass the intervening year and finish the ceremony at the end of the forty-day mourning period.

As the investigators approach the farmland, they will see a cluster of about forty felt tents (yurts) set up in the middle of a trampled-down cornfield. A fleet of six Army-surplus trucks is parked by the side of the road. About twenty yards east of the tent cluster is what looks to be a 20'



The bereaved.

by 20' crude wooden building, walled with stakes and roofed with beams and twig thatching. There are about eighty horses in a large corral nearby.

Throughout the evening, Nasra will be preparing Bobby's body for burial. At midnight, she and the rest of the camp's inhabitants—fifty Scythian warriors plus sixty attendants—place Bobby in the tomb. This is followed by the ritual self-mutilation, and then the systematic strangulation of Ellen and ten of the attendants. A struggling, cursing Ellen is the first to be strangled, assuming that all the investigators do is watch. Witnessing the entire ritual up through the strangulations costs the callous investigators 1/ID8 SAN. Otherwise, the course of events depends on what the investigators do.

Disrupt Preparations: It is possible that the investigators will discover the Nelsonville camp before the Scythians successfully procure Bobby's remains. They may then try to disrupt the ceremonies without directly confronting the Scythians. Alternatively, they may try to disrupt the proceedings later. Possibilities include poisoning the water supply to kill the horses, starting a fire, or performing similar acts of sabotage. The investigators would have to wreak a great deal of havoc to cause the ceremony to be postponed. The horses are not needed until after the end of the forty-day purification ritual, so killing them does not help Ellen. The Scythians will try to procure more, but by that point the police will have probably gathered en masse, especially if the investigators have alerted them. Note also that investigators skulking about the camp stand a chance of being found and ridden down by the mounted patrol.

Attack the Funeral: This is a major mistake. There are obviously far too many Scythians for a straightforward investigator assault to succeed, but play out any assault on the camp. Ellen is bound but ungagged in a large pavilion tent on the east end of the camp, which is also where Nasra is preparing the body. The investigators will almost certainly be killed. The Scythian warriors react very quickly to any type of assault. The investigators should notice that ten mounted Scythian archers are patrolling the camp in a group. They are the first to respond to any disturbance.

Call the Cops: This is a mistake but slightly more likely to succeed. The ill-fated posse of Sheriff Eastbrook may, depending on events, either take up positions and watch until midnight or attack when they arrive. They certainly attack once the strangulations begin. They are almost certainly butchered by the Scythians, but this does distract a good chunk of the Scythians for ten minutes or so. An investigator-led assault conducted while Sheriff Eastbrook's posse is being dealt with faces better odds. Ultimately, after it is too late, more police will arrive. Massive carnage inevitably ensues, with the all-but-bulletproof Nasra eventually summoning Mythos beings or resorting to other magic to aid in the Scythian defense effort. Such unfortunate events occur at the Keeper's discretion.

Infiltrate the Camp: The investigators may try to sneak into the camp, either in or out of disguise. They may even use captured armor and accouterments. The Scythians all know each other, so disguises will not survive direct scrutiny, but with the aid of darkness may be of some use. If the investigators are captured while skulking about the camp, they will be automatically subjected to the purification mutilations, with as much forceful assistance as is necessary. They will then be hauled in front of Nasra for questioning. Nasra will not be favorably impressed by skulkers. As Ellen has not been gagged, an occasional torrent of epithets may help lead the investigators to the right tent.

Go down to the camp and pay respects: This plan, if approached correctly, stands a reasonable chance of rescuing Ellen and minimizing the bloodshed. The Paralatae will be suspicious of the investigators at first, especially if any of them have fought the investigators. If the investigators throw down their weapons and do not act aggressively, a Persuade roll gets them permission to enter the camp, under a heavily armed escort. If the investigators conducted themselves bravely in some prior combat, give them +10% to their roll; if they announce they want to pay their respects, add 20%. If they agree to show respect to the fallen king by engaging in the appropriate ritual mutilations, add 30% to all other modifiers. (Thus, the investigators could get as high as a 60% bonus to the roll.) The investigators' wish to pay respects will have to be conveyed to the relatively patient and nonviolent Hadjani Nasfari, as only he and Nasra speak much English. If the investigators killed Hadjani, they are in for a tough time.

The ritual mutilations (face and arm lacerations, removal of part of an ear, and jamming an arrow through your own left hand) are mandatory for any investigators who desire to have an audience with Nasra, to visit Ellen, or to view the body, as Nasra, Ellen, and the body are all in the same big pavilion tent. The mutilations inflict ID6 points of damage, and cost ID6 APP and 0/ID3 SAN. The investigator is permanently scarred and will remember the funeral every time he or she looks in the mirror. That, of course, is the whole idea.

An investigator who has properly paid his or her respects may then view the body and receive an audience with Nasra. Nasra remains haughty and arrogant, but initially pleased that an American has followed Scythian practices and demonstrated what she sees as simple common courtesy. In order to rescue Ellen, the investigators will have to Persuade Nasra that Ellen was not intimate with Bobby and does not therefore qualify to accompany him into the afterlife. Offering proof that Bobby and Ellen were only married weeks ago, gently breaking his homosexuality to Nasra, showing the wedding photograph where Bobby is prostrate with his illness, and stressing the importance of doing the ritual correctly should all give positive modifiers to the Persuade roll. If Nasra is persuaded, she releases Ellen on the

condition that Ellen and the investigators assist in the burial and be properly purified afterwards. She assures them that they will not have to strangle anyone themselves or be sacrificed. They will be expected to help embalm the body and erect the tomb.

Aftermath

Once the investigators get Ellen out of the tent and out of Nasra's presence, they have two options. First, they might try to run for it. If approached correctly, this is a plausible means of escape, especially if the investigators quietly disabled the Scythians' trucks. Since Ellen is not now seen as necessary to the ceremony, the investigators are not hotly pursued and can make their escape.

If the investigators do participate in the ritual, they are still parties to the strangulation of many victims, albeit willing ones. SAN loss is in the Keeper's discretion, who should take into account the philosophical nature and hard-boiled outlook of each investigator, but 1/ID6 SAN should be a typical loss. If Ellen is successfully rescued either way, each surviving investigator receives 2D4+2 SAN. If the investigators fail to rescue Ellen, charge each with a ID3 SAN loss. If they trigger a massacre, charge each with a ID6 SAN loss.

The investigators should realize that even after they rescue Ellen, the ceremony is not over. Fifty willing victims and fifty horses will still be ritually strangled and impaled to finish the ceremony as planned. The moral dilemma posed by this realization, set against the massacre that would ensue if the funeral is disrupted, is the real challenge posed by this scenario.

NPC Stats

ELLEN BLACK-NASFARI

compassionate photographer, age 25

Nationality: American

STR 10 DEX 13 INT 12 CON 12 APP 12 POW 13
SIZ 10 EDU 13 SAN 58 Luck 65 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: Some college, off and on

Skills: Art 71%, Credit Rating 16%, Curse Blue Streak 90%, First Aid 52%, Law 23%, Medicine 12%, Persuade 35%, Photography 74%,

Languages: English 67%, Speak Scythian 5%

Attacks: None above base skill

Notes: Ellen sports a flapper-style haircut, espouses far-left politics, and is very compassionate and emotional. She is a good friend and a competent photographer. She has a large vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon epithets, which she will employ to express her preference not to join Bobby in the afterlife.

NASRA, THE "EXALTED GRANDMOTHER,"

High Priestess of the Paralatae, age 2230 (appears 95)

Nationality: Scythian

STR 3 DEX 3 INT 20 CON 20 APP 8 POW 35
SIZ 9 EDU 25 SAN 0 Luck 99 HP 15

Damage Bonus: -ID6

Education: 2230 years in the school of hard knocks.

Skills: Accounting 13%, Anthropology 51%, Archaeology 45%, Art 82%, Astronomy 99%, Bargain 50%, Biology 52%, Botany 65%, Cartography 57%, Credit Rating 31% (99% to Scythians), Cthulhu Mythos 50%, Drive Auto 6%, Fast Talk 66%, First Aid 90%, History 95%, Law 50%, Medicine 47%, Natural History 95%, Navigation (Land) 99%, Occult 99%, Persuade 95%, Pharmacy 54%, Physics 55%, Psychology 95%, Ride 99%, Scythian Rituals 100%, Woodcraft 95%, Zoology 52%, Behave Imperiously 99%

Languages: Speak Scythian 100%, Speak/Read/Write Akkadian, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Greek, Hittite, Latin, Russian, Sumerian 99%

Attacks: Does not need or carry any. Nasra does carry an enchanted, gnarled, gold-inlaid walking stick, which she always keeps fully charged with 35 magic points. Nasra has Javelin, Tulwar, and Horseback Archery skills, all at 99%, but due to her advanced age, relies on spells.

Spells: All of the spells of the Greater Grimoire, Bless Blade, Chant of Thoth, Cloud Memory, Command Ghost, Conjure Glass of Mortlan, Create Mist of Releh, Death Spell, Deflect Harm, Enthrall Victim, Fist of Yog-Sothoth, Flesh Ward, Heal, Journey to the Other Side, Levitate, Mesmerize, Mindblast, Wrack, most types of ritual magic; other spells at Keeper's discretion

Notes: Nasra's purple and gold-ornamented sarong is enchanted and counts as 15 points of armor against non-magical attacks. If expecting trouble, Nasra augments this with Flesh Ward.

HADJANI NASFARI

Westernized Scythian Go-Between, age 31

Nationality: Scythian

STR 14 DEX 13 INT 12 CON 14 APP 12 POW 12
SIZ 13 EDU 12 SAN 30 Luck 60 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +ID4

Education: Some college

Skills: Ancient Scythian Way of Life 70%, Art 46%, Bargain 51%, Climb 69%, Conceal 33%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Dodge 70%, Drive Auto 42%, First Aid 51%, History 34%, Jump 53%, Listen 52%, Occult 21%, Ride 80%, Sneak 48%, Swim 67%, Throw 68%, Track 71%

Languages: English 40%, (Speak) Scythian 60%

Attacks:

Bronze Tulwar, 70%, ID8+1+DB, can parry and impale

Javelins, 68%, ID8+1, one/round, five carried in quiver

Notes: Hadjani was sent to the United States to keep an eye on Bobby when he defected. He has become somewhat West-

ernized and more amenable to reason than his fellows as a result. He acts as the spokesman and go-between when the Scythians must interact with society. His SAN reflects this Westernization, but he is just as capable of engaging in the funeral ritual as the others. He does not see the ritual as wrong.

TYPICAL PARALATAE WARRIOR

Nationality: Scythian

STR 16 DEX 16 INT 11 CON 16 APP 8 POW 14
SIZ 13 EDU 8 SAN 0 Luck 70 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +ID4

Education: Combat and ritual training by the "Exalted Grandmother"

Skills: Ancient Scythian Way of Life 70%, Art 20%, Climb 70%, Conceal 30%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Dodge 70%, Drive Auto 5%, First Aid 50%, History 30%, Jump 50%, Listen 50%, Occult 20%, Ride 80%, Sneak 50%, Swim 70%, Throw 70%, Track 70%

Languages: Speak Scythian 40%

Attacks:

Bronze Tulwar, 70%, ID8+I+DB, can parry and impale
Javelins, 70%, ID8+I, one attack every other round, five carried in quiver

Note: The Scythians will be dressed in hide trousers and heel-less leather boots. They will also be wearing leather tunics under leather armor, and a lot of gold: rings, torques, and hair combs. They also each carry a leather shield with metal scales. Armor and shield grant 4 HP of protection. All of this they will hide as best they can under their oversized trench coats.

TYPICAL NELSONVILLE POSSE MEMBER

Nationality: American

STR 13 DEX 13 INT 12 CON 13 APP 12 POW 12
SIZ 13 EDU 12 SAN 60 Luck 60 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +ID4

Education: Variable

Skills: Climb 50%, Conceal 35%, Drive Auto 30%, First Aid 50%, Hide 50%, Jump 35%, Law 15%, Listen 50%, Mechanical Repair 30%, Sneak 45%, Spot Hidden 50%, Swim 45%, Throw 45%, Track 20%

Languages: Read/Write/Speak English 60%

Attacks:

Rifle Attack, 40%, 2D6+4 damage (.30-06 bolt-action)

Notes: Brave but not well-trained volunteers, they are not used to dealing with a frothing horde of expert combatants. They will probably break and panic once serious losses start to be inflicted on them. A set of scalps just waiting to be taken.

NIGHTGAUNT

STR 11 DEX 13 INT 4 CON 12
POW 11 SIZ 14 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +ID4

Move: 6/12 flying

Attacks:

Grapple 30%, damage: held for tickling

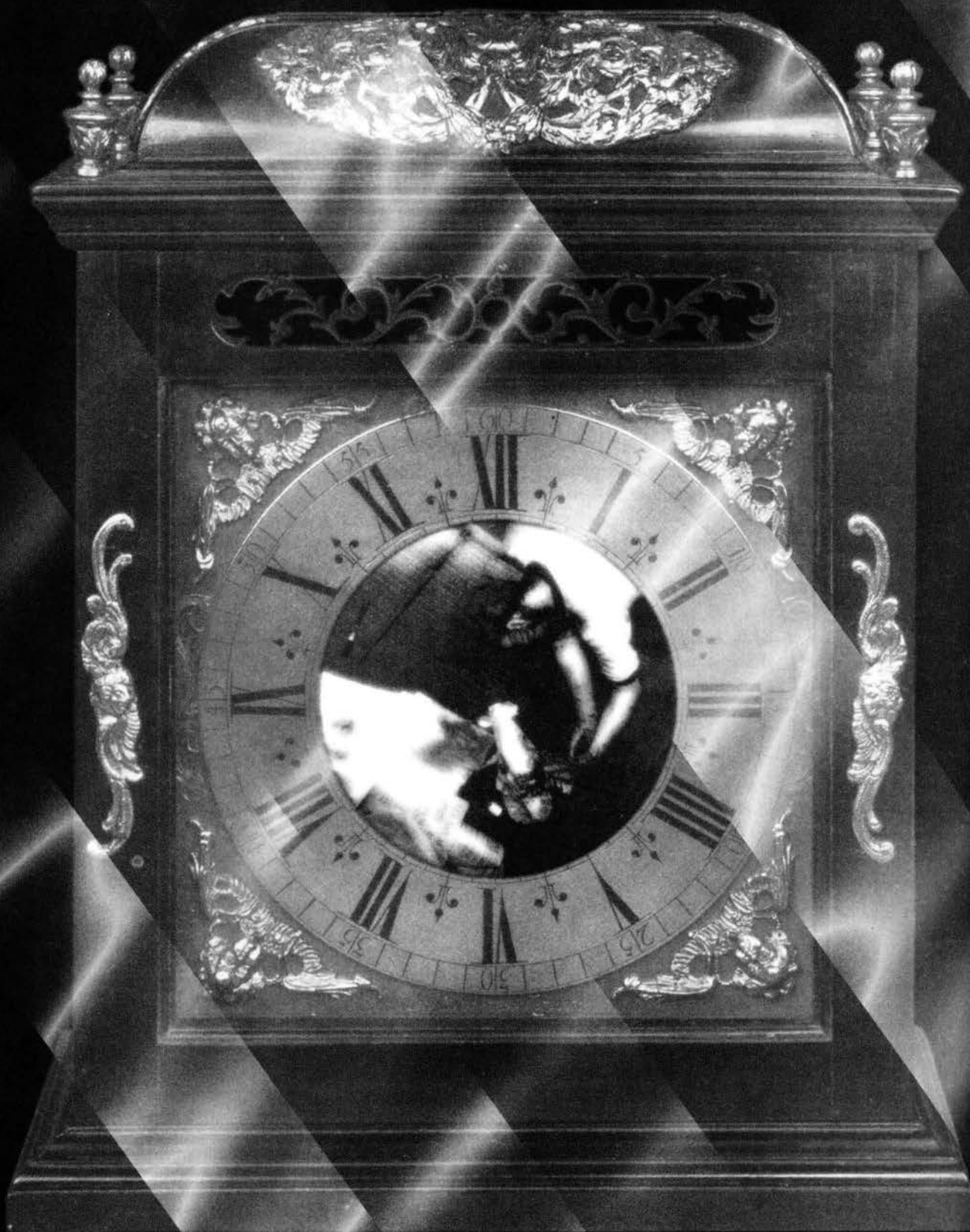
Tickle 30%, immobilized ID6+I rounds

Armor: 2-point skin

Spells: None

Skills: Hide 90%, Sneak 90%

SAN loss: 0/ID6 Sanity points



We Have Met The Enemy

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We Have Met The Enemy

REBECCA STRONG

ILLUSTRATED BY DENNIS DETWILLER

This scenario explores a moral gray area always present in *Call of Cthulhu* but seldom emphasized. Investigators are frequently called upon to acquire evil and forbidden knowledge and to flout the law, but they are seldom required to do anything personally or morally repugnant, and their ultimate goal is always the good of mankind. In fact, for the most part investigators wear the white hats and cultists wear the black hats. However, in this adventure, there is no black and white. The ultimate goal of the investigators is good, but the means by which they must achieve that goal include grave-robbery, mutilation, human sacrifice, and (to a small extent) cannibalism.

This scenario will work best with three to five players. Experienced players will enjoy it most, as they should appreciate the irony of the situation in which they will find themselves.

The setting is June of 1926 in the town of Danvers, approximately five miles southwest of Arkham and two miles north of Salem. Its population is around 11,000. However, this scenario would be easy to adapt to another period and locale if the Keeper wishes to incorporate it into a campaign.

This adventure, which should take only one evening, is guaranteed to have deleterious effects on the sanity of the investigators involved, and the rewards in terms of regained sanity are fairly small. It would be a good adventure to run when all the investigators are a little too high on sanity to start with.

Background

One investigator is summoned to the morgue to identify the body of his (or her) uncle, Frederick Short. Be sure to let the player who will be the nephew or niece (hereafter referred to as "the relative") of Frederick Short volunteer for the role; it involves the heaviest SAN losses throughout the adventure, but it is also the most interesting role.

At the morgue, the investigators will meet the county coroner, Dr. Franklin. The relative of Frederick Short will be taken into the viewing room and shown Fredrick's body. The investigator will be able to identify the body, despite the horrible mutilations.

Frederick Short was a historian of comparative religion at Miskatonic University. His special area of interest was India, and in the course of his study of and travel to that country, he discovered hints of a series of bizarre rituals connected with a dreadful apocalyptic myth. Fredrick's investigations drew him deeper and deeper into the web of

the Mythos. Eventually, he learned that the black rituals and formulae hinted at in the most secret stories of the natives were true, that these rituals had been performed and would be again in the near future as a millennium-long process of preparation reached its culmination in a horrible ceremony that would bring about the end of the world. The key to this ceremony was the terrible Amulet of Kali, a gate that would allow the Great Old Ones entry into our world from the outer darkness. For the time being, fortunately, the gate was closed. Soon, however, it would open, and the horrors of the End-Time would engulf the planet.

Showing more daring than most of his acquaintances would have thought him capable of, Fredrick infiltrated the cult. For years, he traveled back and forth between America and India, gathering knowledge and strange artifacts. The investigator related to Fredrick remembers him best as a small, quiet, darkly tanned man who visited seldom but often sent strange gifts from distant lands to his favorite relations. Gradually, Frederick Short pieced together the ritual that would destroy the Amulet of Kali as a gateway. Then he stole the amulet and fled with it back to Danvers, pursued all the way by a band of bloodthirsty Thuggee cultists. He had the Amulet. He had the incantation necessary to destroy it. But he could not bring himself to perform the necessary ritual, because it involved human sacrifice.

If Uncle Freddy had one fault, it was his gentleness, and if he had a second, it was his slight tendency to indecisiveness. So it was that the Thuggees caught up with Uncle Freddy at his home. Uncle Freddy had no time to conceal the Amulet in his house—so he swallowed it. The Thuggees subjected him to terrible tortures in an attempt to make him reveal the location of the Amulet, but to no avail. Cowardice was not one of Uncle Freddy's flaws.

The goals of the investigators should be:

- To investigate Uncle Freddy's murder.
- To locate and retrieve the Amulet.
- To destroy the Amulet.

Getting Started

The ideal setting for the beginning of this adventure is a surprise birthday party. If the investigator who is established to be the relative has not set his birth date, there will be no problem. However, if the birth date has been set (and is not,

Optimum Chronology

- June 18 Friday** (day) Uncle Freddy mails diary to relative
(late at night) Uncle Freddy murdered
- June 19 Saturday** (day) Diary arrives in relative's mail. Uncle Freddy's body discovered
(night) Party, trip to morgue, cultist breaks into relative's house.
- June 20 Sunday** (day) Uncle Freddy's body sent to funeral home; relative learns of break-in: service and funeral.
(night) Investigators possibly rob grave, battle with cultists.
- June 21 Monday** (day) Preparations for the ceremony.
(night—Summer Solstice) Ceremony to destroy gate.

by chance, June 19th!), you can change the pretext for the party. One option is a housewarming party, which, of course, would not be a surprise. Small gifts are usually brought to such events, and a house-warming could easily be celebrated with a costume party. Tell the relative that he was evicted last week from his apartment for some reason such as making strange noises or having late-night visitors—both good reasons for the eviction of an experienced CoC investigator. If the investigator lives in a house, tell him that serious repairs are in progress and he was forced to move out while they were being made. (Perhaps the last summer storm brought his neighbor's tree down into the middle of his living room. The neighbor will pay for the repairs, but the house is temporarily untenable.) His friends have rallied round to welcome him to his new home.

Some of the investigators may be friends of the relative; others may be friends-of-friends. In any case, they will all be attending the party at the relative's apartment in the town of Danvers.

If the setting is a surprise birthday party, the relative should be told that he has a special dinner date with an attractive friend on Saturday, June 19, at 6:00. He and his date will return to his apartment at around 8:00 for coffee, and perhaps an (illegal) cognac. The guests will begin arriving around 7:30. At 7:55, the lights are turned off. There is much whispering and giggling as everyone waits for the relative's arrival. The Keeper may want to have the relative roll under INTx5 on percentile dice to see if he anticipates the party; if not, the Keeper may decide to have him hear noises before entering the apartment and otherwise maneuver him toward some paranoid reaction.

Everyone sings "Happy Birthday" and toasts the relative with illegally spiked punch. Then someone directs him to a pile of gifts on the table, and encourages him to open them. As the gift opening is going on, there is a knock at the door. It is Mrs. Peterson, a sweet, blue-haired old lady, who is carrying a flat rectangular box and a beautifully iced birthday cake. The box is tied with string and addressed to the relative, and Mrs. Peterson explains that the mailman left it on

top the mailbox, and she took it inside so that it wouldn't get rained on. She leaves after making her delivery.

If the setting is a housewarming party, the guests arrive around 8:00, in costume, bearing small gifts—potted plants, picture frames, *etc.* The Victrola is cranked up, and the party gets under way. At around 8:30, Mrs. Peterson appears, carrying the package and looking disapproving. She tells the relative that the noise is disturbing her budgies and that under the terms of the lease no noise is supposed to be audible outside the apartment at any time.

The Package

The package is from Fredrick Short, postmarked the day before. Inside is a small, worn, leather-bound book. A brief perusal will reveal that it is Uncle Freddy's diary.

"He sent you his diary?" asks one guest in the livery of Louis XIV.

"How odd!" exclaims a fairy princess.

"Is that all there is in the package?" asks a man who wears a turban, a long dark robe, and a full-face blank white mask. He speaks with a definite accent. Any investigator who makes a successful Idea roll will notice this fact. After receiving an answer to this question, the individual will drift away and eventually disappear from the party. If anyone questions him about who he is or why he is at the party, he will make evasive responses.

Uncle Freddy's Diary

Will the relative read Uncle Freddy's diary right away, or will he enjoy his party? Try to point out to the relative how anti-social it would be to dive into a book in the middle of such a terrific and festive occasion.

Uncle Freddy's diary is nearly full, written in a crabbed hand. Some pages have notes added later in the margins, or underlining to emphasize certain conclusions. It is written in English, and tells the story of how Uncle Freddy discovered the Thuggee plot and was convinced of its terrible potential.



The figure at the party.

An English-speaking investigator (with a 70% or better Read/Write English) will need 1D10 hours to read Uncle Freddy's diary cover to cover. SAN loss for reading Uncle Freddy's diary is 1D4/2D4; Cthulhu Mythos + 2%; spell: Destroy Gate of Kali. At the end of the diary is Player Aid #1.

Folded in the back of the diary are two loose sheets of paper covered with Uncle Freddy's writing. They appear to be notes, jotted down rather hurriedly in Player Aid #2 (p. 128).

At around 10:00, with the party in full swing, the relative receives a phone call from the county coroner. The coroner, a Dr. Franklin, sounds nervous and unhappy. He tells the relative that there seems to have been a terrible "accident" at the home of Mr. Frederick Short. The relative is requested to come as soon as possible to the morgue to identify the body. The relative is the closest relation who could be contacted, as Uncle Freddy never married and the investigator's parents (if alive) are on vacation at their summer home in the Adirondacks. Dr. Franklin will give no information about the "accident" over the phone. He merely insists that the relative must come immediately, and promises that he will be waiting. Concerned friends will naturally want to come with the relative to the morgue to lend moral support.

At the Morgue

The morgue is a small, one-story building, conveniently located next to the local hospital. It is white and antiseptic-looking, with two formal columns framing the entryway and large windows arranged symmetrically on either side of the double doors.

As the investigators enter, they face a secretary's desk, which, this late in the evening, is unoccupied. To the left is a glassed-in office with a discreet sign on the door reading "Dr. P. Franklin, Coroner." To the right is a small waiting room with chairs, a coffee table, a few magazines, a potted plant, and a door leading toward the rear of the building.

As the front door closes, a small bald man wearing a long white coat comes bustling through the door in the back of the waiting-room. He is patting his face with a crumpled handkerchief, which he uses to wipe his hand before offering it to the investigators. He introduces himself as Dr. Franklin and shakes hands all round.

A successful Psychology roll will reveal that Dr. Franklin seems to be a little unsettled. He is sweating, his hand is clammy, and his conversation is forced.

The investigators will of course want to know what has happened to Uncle Freddy. However, Dr. Franklin will not discuss the matter until the identification has been made.

After asking for identification from the relative, Dr. Franklin opens the door in the back of the waiting area and ushers the relative through. Dr. Franklin will not allow the other investigators to attend, as their presence is not re-

Player Aid #1—Uncle Freddy's Diary

May 14: Have discovered the gate-destruction ceremony. My God! It is so obvious, but there must be some alternative. I have set it down, though I already feel that its details are engraved upon my brain. Now the necessity to acquire the amulet is so much more pressing!

May 19: Istanbul at last. Boarding the Orient Express, I felt as if I was finally awakening from a terrible nightmare. Only the icy touch of the amulet beneath my shirt reminds me that the events of the last few weeks have been real. They say it will take only four days to reach London—I am constantly amazed by what technology has achieved, especially when I compare this with the depth of primitivism and the barbarity from which I have just escaped. If only I can find an alternative way to destroy the gate!

May 20: Have been suffering from evil dreams. Have I really escaped, or is their reach further than I had imagined? I fear to close my eyes, as whenever I do, I see and hear the black priestess calling to me to return, return....

May 21: The dreams continue. Yesterday I awoke to find myself dressed and wandering down the corridor of the train. Would I have disembarked if the train had reached a stop?

May 22: I have warned the porters about my "sleep walking." They have agreed to awaken me if they meet me in the corridor after I retire for the evening. I long to reach England. If only I can get a ship swiftly!

May 23: Arrived in London early today and have booked passage on the fastest ship leaving London in the near future—by good fortune, it leaves tomorrow morning. I find myself constantly looking over my shoulder. Of course, it is unlikely that they could have followed me this far, but the unlikely has occurred far too often of late.

May 23 through June 17 entries concern the passage, which appears to have been uneventful. Uncle Freddy continued to be plagued by dreams, but his sleep walking ceased.

June 18: (A hasty scrawl) Dearest _____: If you are reading this, the worst has happened. I had hoped to visit you on the afternoon of the 19th, and renew our acquaintance, but no one can foresee the future. I have done my best not to involve anyone in this affair, but yesterday, at the station in New York, I was struck by the sight of a peculiar face in the crowd. It seemed familiar, but I hoped I was mistaken. Now, I think I was not. I was driving down to pick up a few groceries, when I glimpsed the same man on a street corner near my house. I hope it is only paranoia, but it is too late to let all of my work be lost—think of this as a kind of insurance policy—only the diary, not the amulet. That is too dangerous. With the diary, however, it is still possible that something can be done. I will take it down to the post office and then return to pack a few things. Do whatever you think is best.

All my love,
Uncle Freddy

quired for the identification. However, the door at the back of the room is not locked, and the investigators may follow if they wish. Once Dr. Franklin and the relative have stepped through the back door, they are in a short hall. There is a hint of a rather unpleasant smell in the air. "I'm sorry about the smell," says Dr. Franklin. "You see, our refrigeration unit has broken down, and the replacement part won't be available for at least a week" (refrigeration of morgues was introduced in the U.S. shortly before the turn of the century). The hall is quite wide. At its end, there is a single small door with a window on the left, and at the far end, there are double doors on the left and the right, facing one another.

Dr. Franklin pauses for a moment in the hallway, wiping at his face again with the damp handkerchief. "I am afraid,"

he remarks, swallowing visibly, "this will be rather unpleasant. You see, the condition of the body is, uh, unusual." He then quickly turns to the small door and opens it. Inside, there is a table over which a lamp hangs and a sink counter nearby. Trays of surgical instruments lie neatly next to the sink. Next to the table stands a gurney with a draped body on it. On the right hand wall are double doors. There is a small window here, rather high up. If the relative thinks to ask, an idea roll will suggest that the window probably looks out onto the parking area. It is large enough for a medium-sized person to climb through, but awkwardly high.

Dr. Franklin moves to one end of the gurney and draws back the sheet. The relative (and any other investigators who may have crept behind and peered through the window in

Player Aid #2—Ceremony Instructions

To Destroy the Gate of Kali:

Perform outdoors on summer solstice; cleanse the altar (any table-like object will do); draw a circle around the altar with the knife to protect the celebrants; tie the victim to the altar; walk within the circle counterclockwise around the altar nine times, all the while chanting:

Ia Ia Kali!

...

Afterwards, make the blood offering—according to my studies, originally a hundred human sacrifices were offered, but it seems only the first is critical. The proper method is to throttle the victim into unconsciousness and then, using the knife with which the circle was drawn, remove the heart from the chest in as bloody a manner as possible. The amulet is placed in the mouth of the main celebrant, who then bites off a bit of the heart. As the priest chews, the others chant:

Baka Karda Kali!

Gumas Udar Gatu!

Tupa Karda Kali!

Baka Karda Kali!

Then the priest spits the amulet to the ground and all leave the ceremony without looking back.

the door) must make SAN rolls. The cost for the relative is 1/ID6; for other investigators, it is 0/ID3.

The body is indeed that of Uncle Freddy but so mutilated that the relative takes awhile to be sure. Most of the nose has been cut off, as well as both ears. There are lacerations at the corners of the mouth (an Idea roll will suggest that they were made by a gag). The relative should also make a CONx5 roll on percentile dice. If he fails, he faints. If he makes the roll, he is overcome by nausea, but manages to stagger out of the room. If any investigators were peering through the door, they will probably be discovered at this time. Dr. Franklin will be horrified and accuse them (accurately enough) of being ghouls.

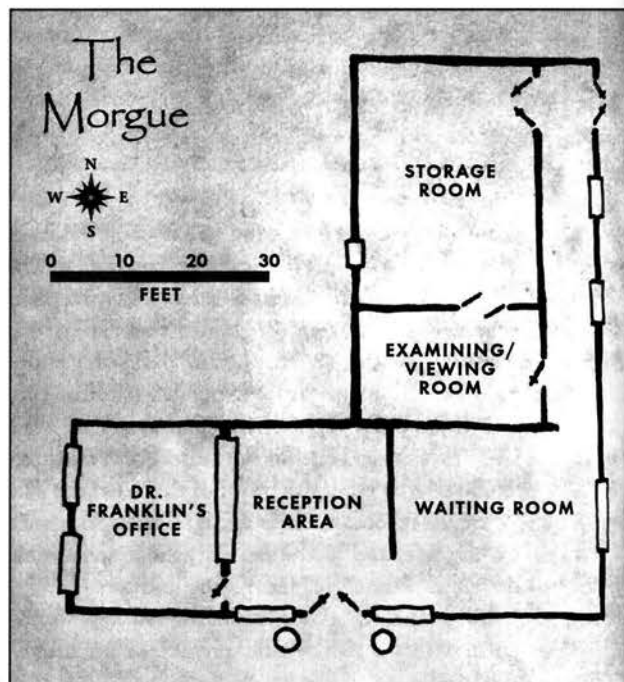
If the relative is conscious, Dr. Franklin will escort him back to his office. If he is unconscious, Dr. Franklin will enlist the help of one of the relative's friends to carry him back.

In his office, Dr. Franklin sits behind a neat, bare desk and in front of a large filing cabinet. There are only two extra chairs, so any excess investigators will have to stand.

If asked, Dr. Franklin will admit that the victim was found gagged, which accounts for the bruising and lacerations around the mouth. He will not speculate on what the purpose of torturing a man who was unable to speak might be. An Idea roll will suggest that the gag was certainly to prevent the neighbors from becoming suspicious. A successful INTx2 roll will suggest that either Uncle Freddy's murderers were merely interested in killing him painfully or hoped to extract information in some other way (such as by forcing him to write it down). If asked, Dr. Franklin will also reveal that the cause of death was strangulation.

Dr. Franklin says, however, that since the body has been examined and photographed, no autopsy is necessary. As it

is June and the weather is rather warm, he suggests that arrangements should be made as soon as possible for the funeral which, of course, will have to be closed-casket. Since the next day is Sunday, he observes that it would be convenient to announce the funeral at the early service and to hold it after the midday service, at around 3:00 in the afternoon. He offers to call the local funeral home to have the arrangements made. As it is now quite late (probably at least midnight), the investigators will probably all want to get some sleep.



The Break-in

When the relative is summoned to the morgue, the party is essentially over—having one's host called away to identify a body casts a certain pall over a festive event. All of the NPC guests will leave. However, any of the investigators who stay will witness a strange incident. (The Keeper is advised to send the player of the relative out of the room while the following is played out.)

The cultists know that the relative has received Uncle Freddy's diary, and they suspect there may be information in it that, for their purposes, would better remain a secret. Therefore, the cultist who appeared at the party as the mysterious guest casts Body Warping of Gorgoroth on himself and assumes the likeness of the relative. He then goes to Mrs. Peterson, the relative's landlady, and asks to borrow her copy of the key to the apartment, explaining that he has misplaced his own.

One of the investigators at the apartment—preferably one judged to be the relative's close friend—should be allowed to make an Idea roll when the cultist comes in. If the Idea roll is successful, the investigator realizes that there is something subtly but definitely wrong with the "relative"—for example, he has an odd mannerism or uses a peculiar turn of phrase. If the Idea roll is very good, the investigator might even discern that he has an indefinable trace of a foreign accent, or notice that he is now right-handed instead of left-handed, or vice versa. If an investigator physically attempts to detain the disguised cultist or stop his search, he will attempt to flee, attacking anyone who hinders him. In this situation, the cultist must either escape or end up dead. If he is killed, his body remains in the likeness of the relative.

If the investigator fails the Idea roll to notice something odd about the relative, the "relative" will ask them to leave, claiming he needs to be alone, since he is distraught over the murder of his uncle. He will then search the apartment. He searches thoroughly but carefully, attempting to replace things exactly as they were. Of course, small traces of the search remain—papers stacked in different order, pictures moved slightly, *etc.* The cultist leaves without returning the passkey.

The next day, Mrs. Peterson will approach the real relative and demand the return of her passkey. In the confusion that follows, she will describe how she lent it to the relative the night before. Mrs. Peterson is adamant that the person she spoke to the night before was the relative. "I don't give the key to just anyone, you know," she says. "I saw you standing there just as clear as I see you now. If you don't return the key, I'll have to have the locks changed and add the bill to your rent." The relative will discover the traces of the cultist's search in his apartment.

If the relative has left the diary at home but it has been carefully read by the investigators, it will be stolen by the

cultist however, if the investigators manage to kill a cultist in the graveyard encounter to come, they'll find the diary on his person. If the investigators haven't read the diary, the investigators may return fortuitously from the morgue while the search is still in progress. The cultist slips out the back door without being seen and without the diary. The conversation with Mrs. Peterson the next day occurs just as stated.

Uncle Freddy's House

The investigators will probably want to search Uncle Freddy's house to make sure the amulet is not there. There are a few good clues, all upstairs.

If the investigators try to visit the scene of the murder that same night, they will find police all over the house. The police will be polite, but very firm in refusing to allow anyone into the house. The police are still searching the area and taking photographs. If questioned about how the murder was discovered, the police will reveal that a neighbor called them, having noticed during the day that every light in Mr. Short's house was still burning. Approaching the house, the neighbor found that the front door had been left slightly open and so he entered and found the "mess" in the living room, whereupon he called the police. If pressed further, they ask the investigators to just let them do their job, and suggest that if the investigators come down to the station the next morning, they will be able to get a full report.

The next day, the door to Uncle Freddy's house is locked tight, and there is a placard nailed to it announcing that the house is the scene of a police investigation and may not be entered.

Like many houses, however, it is not really very secure. If the investigators go around to the back, they can easily raise a window and boost one of their number through to go around and open the back door. If they attempt to break in through the front, a neighbor will see them and call the police. If the investigators choose to enter Uncle Freddy's house from the back, they will find themselves in the kitchen.

Ground Floor

Kitchen: This room is very neat. There are no dishes in the sink. If investigators look in the ice-box, they will find it empty. There is a small table with two chairs, a door to the left, a door to the right, and one leading toward the front of the house.

Dining Room: The dining room has two doors, the left leading to the kitchen, the right leading into the living room. Windows are set into two walls and look out onto the garden in back. A large table with six chairs dominates the room. There are two paintings on the interior wall, both of which have been tipped sideways and slashed.

Living Room: This is the largest room on the ground floor. It has three doors: one to the back of the house, one to the front of the house, and one on the side. Comfortable-looking chairs and a couch surround a large fireplace. A large cabinet with its glass front broken away stands to one side of the fireplace. Lying within amongst the glass fragments are several *objets d'art* that Uncle Freddy brought back from his travels.

Anyone examining these objects who makes a successful Anthropology or Archaeology roll will note that most of them come from India and that some of them are quite old. Many have religious significance. There are five peculiar and rather unpleasant-looking small idols, three of soapstone and two of wood; three ceremonial daggers in elaborate sheaths; a brass bell; and a carved wood plaque with strange figures of humans and animals surrounded by a floral motif.

These objects are not valuable and none has magical properties. Basically, they are Uncle Freddy's souvenirs, collected as religious oddities. A small museum might be interested in the entire collection (in fact, Uncle Freddy bequeathed these items to the Miskatonic University Museum of Culture and History), but essentially they are just knickknacks.

There are large stains on the carpet and on the upholstery of the chairs and couch, and in some places the upholstery has been slashed so that tufts of the filling are visible. It is immediately apparent that this is where Uncle Freddy's body was discovered.

Upstairs

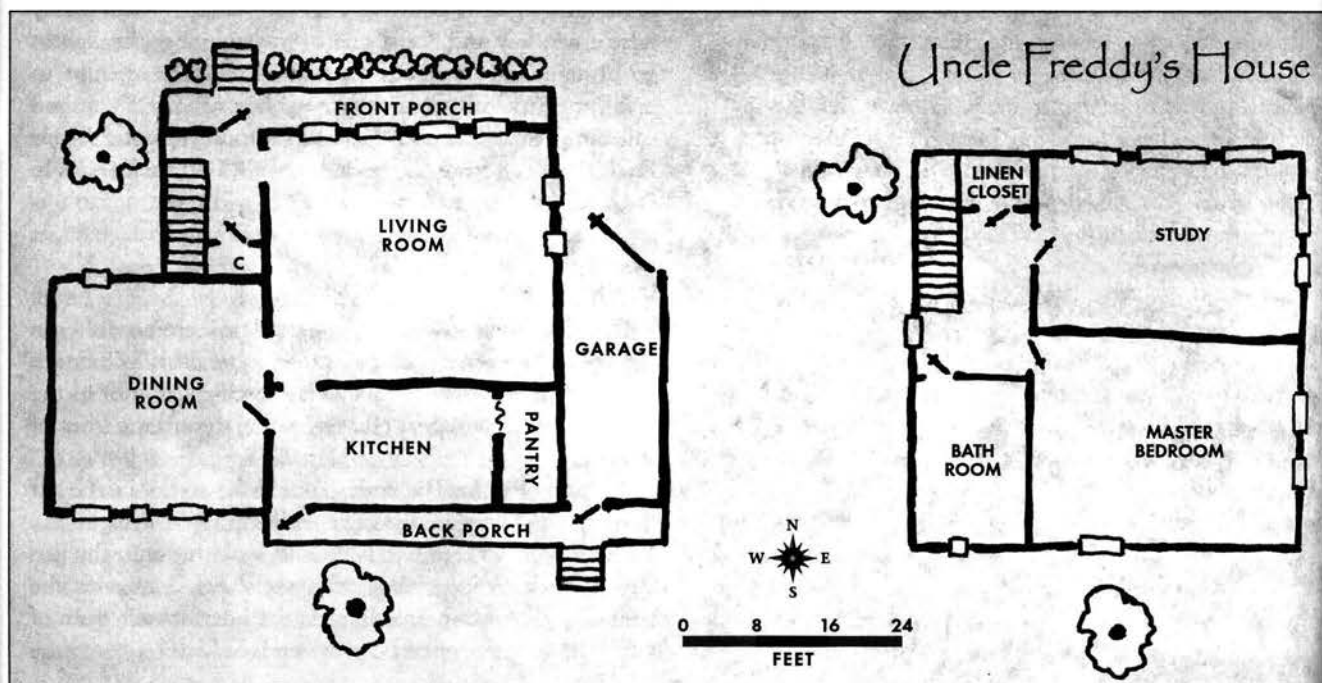
Uncle Freddy's Bedroom: Uncle Freddy's room is in disorder. A suitcase has been emptied across the floor, and

the clothes have been scattered and trampled. The bed cover has been ripped back and trails onto the floor. The armoire facing the bed has been wrenched open, and a few old suits have been thrown down into the bottom with their hangers.

Uncle Freddy's Study: This room was probably intended by the builders as a second bedroom, but Uncle Freddy always used it as a study. Bookshelves stand against all the open walls except for a section occupied by a large messy desk and a file cabinet. There is a partially full wastebasket on the floor next to the desk. A rich carpet covers the floor. This room has clearly been searched at least once. Papers lie scattered about and in piles on the carpet, the desk drawer is partly open, some books have been pulled off the shelves, and all three of the drawers in the file cabinet have been pulled out and overturned. A valise lies near the desk beside a pile of books that were probably emptied out of it.

A Library Use roll will reveal Uncle Freddy's book collection consisted primarily of works on the history of religion, specifically Indian religion. Titles include the following:

- *Religions of India* by A. Barth, translated by J. Wood, 1921
- *Religion and Folklore of Northern India* by William Crooke, 1926 (inscribed on the fly-leaf: "Hot off the presses! Thanks for your helpful suggestions! All my best, Bill.")
- *Modern Religious Movements in India* by J.N. Farquhar, 1915
- *Indische Religionsgeschichte* by Edmund Hardy, 1904 (German)
- *The Sun and the Serpent; a Contribution to the History of Serpent Worship* by C.F. Oldham, 1905



- *Sons of Death* by Jackson Elias, 1918

A Library Use roll on the books on the floor is more interesting. They include:

- A well-thumbed copy of the 1909 Golden Goblin Press edition of *Nameless Cults*
- A typewritten manuscript labeled: "The Cult of Kali in the Twentieth Century: An Account of the Survival of Certain Debased Sects" by Frederick Short. Tucked inside is a rejection note from an editor. It reads, in part: "Such sensationalist material is more appropriate for a pulp horror magazine than for a respected journal. Surely you cannot expect us to accept a single eye-witness account of activities as incredible as those you describe." Reading the manuscript takes ID10 hours. SAN loss for reading Uncle Freddy's manuscript: ID4/2D4; Cthulhu Mythos + 2%; no spells. Essentially, reading the manuscript is the same as reading Uncle Freddy's diary. Thus, an investigator who has already received the SAN loss and the Mythos points from the diary will not gain any benefit from the manuscript, and vice versa.

A series of Library Use rolls on the file drawers (one per drawer) will reveal tax documents, research materials, and background material for papers published by Uncle Freddy in various journals. A Spot Hidden on the desk will reveal nothing of interest. A search of the wastebasket will reveal: Thursday's newspaper, an empty packet of crackers, and a used tea bag. A Spot Hidden will also reveal a broken slender gold chain about eighteen inches long.

At the Police Station

If the investigators go down to the police station, they will be told to see Detective Samson. Even if the investigators visit on Sunday, Detective Samson, a heavy-set man with rumpled brown hair, is at his desk. It is early in the day, but very hot. Detective Samson's suit looks as if it was slept in (it was), and his tie is loosened. He is sweating ferociously and pecking at a typewriter, writing up the report of the Short murder. He greets the investigators brusquely, but if the relative is present, he grows slightly more cordial.

Detective Samson asks a few questions about Frederick Short: When did he return (the relative knows this if he has read the diary)? What was Mr. Short working on? Was he involved with any shady characters? Detective Samson will also answer a few questions about the crime scene. In particular, he mentions that a pen and a blank piece of paper were found near the body. Apparently the murderers were attempting to extract some information from the victim. Since he was still gagged when they found the body, and since the paper was blank, the torturers were apparently unsuccessful.

At the Funeral

The funeral is set for 3:00 P.M. It is held in the graveyard behind the church. Old and fairly large, the graveyard is surrounded by a six-foot-high wrought-iron fence. The oldest tombstones date to nearly three hundred years ago. Uncle Freddy's plot is in the back of one of the newer sections. The day is oppressively hot, and the few people who have elected to attend—four older couples and two single gentlemen—are all dreadfully uncomfortable in their dark clothing. Three of the couples are academics who live in Danvers and worked with Uncle Freddy at the university. The last couple are the neighbors who discovered the body. No one recognizes the two other gentlemen. They both have black hair, dark eyes, and dark olive skin. A successful Anthropology roll will reveal that the two single gentlemen are probably Indian. There is little talking. The ceremony is held rather informally at the gravesite. The priest reads the standard service, and the undertaker's assistant begins to shovel clods of dirt into the grave. They fall on the coffin with a disturbingly hollow sound.

After the service, everyone begins to drift away. If the investigators approach the Indian gentlemen, they find them willing to talk. Both speak English with an Indian accent overlaid by a weaker British accent. One introduces himself as Mr. Singh and the other as Mr. Patel. They say that they were research assistants of Mr. Short working at Miskatonic University and were shocked to read of his murder in the papers this morning (the murder is front-page news). They show a surprising amount of knowledge about Uncle Freddy's recent business. They know that he was in India investigating a cult of Kali. They want to know if he retrieved the amulet he traveled to India to find and, if so, what has become of it.

(These are, of course, two of the Thuggee cultists. If the investigators do not trust them, this is fine. They are at the funeral because they are still searching for the amulet. They know it is not in Uncle Freddy's house. Now they hope that the relative who received the diary may lead them to it. One of them will follow the investigators when they leave. A Spot Hidden will reveal him following in a dark car. If the investigators give any sign that they have seen him, he will turn a corner and disappear. However, if the investigators trust them, they are willing to join the party.)

There is a possibility that the investigators will intuit what has happened to the amulet before the funeral. If they do realize this, they may want to stop the funeral. At this point, the Keeper can choose to be hard-nosed about the whole thing and refuse, or he can allow them to succeed in getting the body sent back to the morgue, pending a court order for a second autopsy. Since it is Sunday afternoon, they will not be able to obtain a court order till Monday at the earliest. Therefore, the graveyard scene can simply be

transferred to the morgue. However, it is probably preferable to simply refuse, stating that one official autopsy has already been performed and that the investigators will have to get an official order from a sheriff, judge, or the county coroner for the exhumation of the body. In both cases, whoever the investigators appeal to to stop the funeral will be condescending and suggest that they are overwrought.

At this point, if the investigators have read the diary, they should be asking themselves what happened to the amulet. If they have been to see Detective Samson, they know that the cultists did not get the amulet or information about its location from Uncle Freddy. Since they have just seen cultists at the funeral, they should be aware that the enemy still does not have the amulet. If they have discovered the evidence of packing and the chain on which the amulet was hung, they should know that Uncle Freddy had the amulet while he was in the house, and probably found some place to hide it while in the study upstairs. And, if they have searched the study, they will know that the amulet is not there. But, if the investigators are still at a loss, the next day (Monday, June 21), they will find Player Aid #3 in the newspaper.

If the investigators then visit Detective Samson, he will listen sympathetically to their tale. However, he will refuse to exhume the body, claiming that it's police business. If they press him, he will promise to tell the officers on the beat to keep their eyes open. This should not be particularly reassuring to the investigators.

Robbing the Grave

By Sunday night, or Monday at the latest, the investigators should have decided to exhume Uncle Freddy and retrieve the amulet. This venture should certainly be attempted well after dark; in June this means around 9:00 at the earliest.

However, at this hour there is still a good deal of traffic on the streets, and people often indulge in long walks through the sultry evening, so later would be better. Ideally, the investigators will be in the graveyard unearthing Uncle Freddy at midnight, the witching hour. Play this up to add suspense. Let them make lots of Listen rolls: for example, "You hear a rustling in the grass . . . It's *probably* the wind."

The night is hot, and the air is moist. The sky is partly overcast, and occasionally clouds drift across the moon. The graveyard is dark except for the eerie intermittent silver radiance of moonbeams, which wash the tombstones and crypts and throw pitchy shadows behind them. Although during the day this scene gave an impression of restful peace, it now seems fraught with ancient horror. There are literally hundreds of places where someone . . . or something . . . could be hiding.

The earth over Uncle Freddy's grave is soft and easy to dig into. Two investigators, working hard with shovels, can unearth the coffin in half an hour. The coffin is sealed, but it is not difficult to break the seal with the blade of one of the shovels.

A terrible stench accompanies the opening of the coffin. The heat of June has not been kind to Uncle Freddy. The shadows partially conceal his mutilated face, but what is visible is rendered even more horrible by the macabre setting (anyone who did not see the body in the morgue, but does now, should make a SAN roll for 0/1D3). Uncle Freddy wears a dark suit and a white shirt, both covered with stains (blood). The shirt is slightly open at the neck. Uncle Freddy's hands are folded on his chest, and the investigators can now see that the fingernails have been pulled out.

Unless the investigators have brought ropes, someone will have to open Uncle Freddy's coat and shirt, cut his abdomen open, and remove the amulet from the noxious remains of Uncle Freddy's last meal while standing in the grave.

Player Aid #3—Newspaper Article

Attempted Graverobbery Interrupted

Unsavory Incident follows Respected Citizen's Funeral

At 8:00 P.M., as he was leaving the First Church of Danvers after the evening service, Reverend Jacobs noticed lights moving through the cemetery, which adjoins the church. He reports that, investigating, he saw several individuals who "seemed to be wearing some kind of foreign robes."

To his surprise, these individuals carried shovels and were attempting to unearth the grave of Mr. Frederick Short, who had been laid to rest earlier that afternoon in a brief ceremony.

Reverend Jacobs immediately returned to the church, where he telephoned the police. Arriving on the scene, officers discovered shovels and evidence of digging in the vicinity of the grave. However, the perpetrators of this outrage had apparently fled. Officers posted a watch for the rest of the evening, but noticed no other activity. Detective Samson at the Danvers station speculates that this incident may be connected with Mr. Short's gruesome murder. However, he was unable to explain how the two incidents might be connected. Anyone with information about this shocking crime is requested to contact Detective Samson as soon as possible.

Someone else will have to stand at the edge of the grave (or in it) and shine the light in.

The rigor mortis is already gone, so Uncle Freddy's arms can be moved easily. Opening his shirt reveals a surprising sight: Uncle Freddy's chest is decorated with a large, realistic tattoo depicting a monstrous female face adorned with a diadem, tusks, and great bulging, staring eyes. An Anthropology roll will suggest that this is probably Kali. Both eyes are damaged by recent burns, probably made with a cigarette. Other burns are scattered randomly across Uncle Freddy's torso. As the knife enters his belly, a small rush of noxious gas escapes. Anyone in the grave must roll under his CONx5 on percentile dice. If he fails, he adds the contents of his own stomach to this already disgusting scene. Continuing to open the body reveals the major organs: liver, lungs, heart, and stomach, and intestine. The stomach is fairly easy to identify. Cutting it open reveals the amulet.

Anyone who watches or participates in this grisly post-mortem should make a SAN roll. If the relative is participating or watching, he loses 2/ID8. Anyone else loses 1/ID6, unless he is a mortician, coroner, doctor, or nurse, in which case the loss is 0/ID3.

Once the amulet is cleaned, it is revealed to be a small triangular object with rounded corners, approximately an inch across. It is made of an unidentifiable black stone that is strangely opalescent and feels icy cold when held, no matter what is done to try to warm it. Carved on its surface are

three tentacles, which point toward the corners of the amulet and, at the apex of the tentacles, in the center of the amulet, is a horrible eye. A small gold loop to accommodate a chain is set into one corner. Looking at the amulet requires a SAN roll, and costs 0/ID3.

The Fight in the Graveyard

Unfortunately for the investigators, the cultists have also come to the conclusion that the amulet must have been buried with Uncle Freddy.

As the investigator who retrieved the amulet emerges triumphantly from the grave, shadowy forms rise from behind tombstones and crypts all around. These are the cultists, who have crept up on the investigators as they excavated the grave. As they approach, the investigators can see them clearly enough to discern that all wear long dark robes with hoods.

The number of cultists obviously depends on how many investigators are in the party and how well-armed they are. If they are lightly armed (shovels, knives, perhaps a handgun or two), an equal number of cultists will probably be fine. If they are heavily armed, the Keeper may need to double the number of cultists or add more nasty spell-casters. If they have brought extreme firepower (for example, one or more tommyguns), feel free to throw in a dimensional shambler or something else really unpleasant.



Meet the fate of the blasphemer.

New Spell

HANDS OF KALI: This is a variant of the Hands of Colubra spell peculiar to Indian cults. Not only do the forearms of the caster turn into snakes, but the caster sprouts four additional snake-headed arms as well. The spell costs 15 MP and 1D12 SAN to cast and lasts 1D3+1 combat rounds. Those who witness the effects of the spell lose 1/1D8 SAN.

At the beginning of the fight, one of the cultists hangs back behind the gravestones and cast Hands of Kali on herself (described later in the scenario). To do this, she first throws back her cloak and hood, baring her arms and revealing a horrifying black mask identical to the face tattooed on Uncle Freddy's chest. Stats for the cultists are at the end of the adventure. Having cast the spell on herself, the priestess wastes at least one combat round of the duration of the spell moving into hand-to-hand combat range. When the spell wears off, the priestess whips out her Enchanted Kukri and continues to fight normally.

If the cultist who assumed the form of the relative was not killed while searching the relative's apartment, he will also be present, adding an eerie element of confusion to the battle; he will at once attack the relative, crying, "Don't let him fool you; he's a spy—they captured me and have been holding me prisoner!"

The cultists are very determined to get the amulet, and will not begin to flee until two thirds of their number are dead or incapacitated (assuming that a similar number of investigators are not out of the action as well). If Uncle Freddy's diary was stolen by the cultist searching the relative's apartment, the investigators will find it either on his body or, for convenience's sake, on any random cultist they manage to kill in this encounter.

If, through bad luck, the cultists seem about to massacre the investigators to a man, the Keeper can choose to save what remains of the party by sending in the cavalry—either the two cops on the foot-beat near the cemetery or some who have been called from the station house to investigate a disturbance in the cemetery (by this time there will probably have been a very noticeable amount of noise and light). Of course, if any investigators are apprehended at the scene, it will be difficult for them to explain what they were doing robbing a grave and killing people in a cemetery.

The Ceremony

The summer solstice occurs, of course, on June 21. Don't worry that technically June 21 ends at midnight—any time during the solstice is fine. The investigators will have to find a place to hold the ceremony, something to serve as an altar, and (naturally) a victim. The best choice for a victim would be one of the cultists. However, this requires a good deal of forethought and, if they capture a cultist during their grave robbery on the night of the 20th, they will have to hold the

cultist prisoner during the entire day of the 21st. Otherwise they will have to find some other victim: a bum, an innocent passerby, someone they dislike, or even a volunteer amongst themselves. Committing murder in cold blood should not be easy decision for most of the investigators. The Keeper should not allow it to be easy, especially if the investigators have to get someone innocent for the sacrifice. Play up how the doomed victim begs and pleads, whimpering and sweating with fear.

Once the altar has been cleansed and the circle drawn, according to the instructions left by Uncle Freddy, the celebrants begin to circle the altar while chanting. As they circle, an eerie blue glow appears along the path that they march, growing brighter and taller until it forms a vast pillar stretching up through the clouds. Inside the circle, the air feels still and close and the voices of the celebrants seem to be amplified. After five circles, the amulet begins to glow and pulse. After seven circles, anyone who makes a Spot Hidden roll will perceive that a faint glow seems to pulse on the chest of the victim. A deep drum beat seems to accompany the chanting. It grows louder and louder as the circling and chanting continue. After nine circles, the victim's heart is glowing fiercely and pulsing in time with the amulet. It is clearly visible within the victim's chest. The heart is also apparently the source of the drumlike noise, which is now almost thunderously loud.

Once the nine circles have been completed, one celebrant chokes the struggling victim into unconsciousness. Even after the victim is unconscious, the heart continues to pulse brightly and the drum beats on. The main celebrant takes the knife used to draw the circle and slashes open the victim's chest. Dully audible beyond the veil of glowing haze, screaming winds begin to blow round and round outside the circle, counter-clockwise, lashing tree branches and raising dust and leaves.

The main celebrant puts the amulet in his mouth and cuts out the heart, which continues to glow and beat, writhing revoltingly in his hand. He then takes a bite of the heart and chews while the rest of the celebrants chant. When the chant is completed, he spits the amulet to the ground and casts down the heart. The blue glow of the circle dies with an amazing suddenness, and the wind in the trees ceases simultaneously, leaving a terrible calm.

At this point, the investigators are supposed to leave without looking back. As they flee, a wind begins to blow again, this time toward the altar. It lasts perhaps thirty seconds, rising almost to hurricane velocity. Then there is a



The consequence of failure.

staggering flash of blue light like a hundred lightning bolts striking at once and a deafening explosion. All of those running are thrown violently to the ground.

Anyone who watches what happens sees a spinning vortex of blackness form above the altar, sucking in all the winds. Within the vortex, unthinkable forms seem to writhe and toss, as if struggling to break through an invisible barrier from dimly glimpsed dimensions of mind-shattering horror. Blue flickers run through the column. Suddenly, the column collapses upon itself with a blinding flash and a dreadful explosion. Once someone has looked back, even fleetingly, he is captured by this horrible sight. He stops running and cannot turn away. He must make a SAN roll for 5/2D10, and roll under half his Luck. If he fails the latter, he is completely blinded by the flash. His vision will return slowly over 1D10 months. Such inquisitive characters also acquire 1D10 Cthulhu Mythos.

Anyone who goes back to the scene after the explosion finds a blackened pit ripped into the ground and no trace of the victim, the altar, or the amulet. The sides of the pit are hard and, in the light of a flashlight or of day, shiny—the earth has been fused by the enormous heat of the explosion. The foot-deep depression resembles a gargantuan, grotesque hoofprint.

Aftermath

Those who participated in the ceremony but neither strangled the victim nor served as the main celebrant should make a SAN roll and lose 3/1D10 SAN. The investigator who strangles the victim loses an extra point of SAN unless the victim is one of the cultists. The investigator who acts as the priest, cutting open the chest and taking a bite of the heart, loses 3/3D6 SAN.

If the investigators decide not to go through with the destruction ceremony, they get no SAN bonus. If they do destroy the gate, the SAN bonus is fairly modest since the gate was still closed. Award all of the celebrants except the high priest 3D3 SAN. Award the high priest 3D6. Award the relative an additional 1D3 for having avenged Uncle Freddy.

NPC Stats

PRIESTESS OF THE CULT

after Hands of Kali spell, age 25

Nationality: Indian

STR 9 DEX 10 INT 15 CON 10 APP 18 POW 20
SIZ 11 EDU 14 SAN 0 Luck 100 HP 11

Damage Bonus: +0

Skills: Climb 48%, Cthulhu Mythos 19%, Hide 52%, Listen 57%, Occult 61%, Persuade 45%, Sneak 56%, Spot Hidden 41%

Languages: English 60%, Hindustani 70%

Attacks:

Six cobra-headed arms 50%, 1D3 + POT 5 poison

Enchanted Kukri (knife) 45%, 1D4+2

Spells: Hands of Kali, Summon/Bind Dimensional Shambler, Flesh Ward

SAN loss: 1/1D6

Notes: The priestess will hang back at the beginning of the fight to cast her Hands of Kali spell, after which she will just have 5 magic points remaining. She will then close to hand-to-hand for the duration of the spell. After the spell's duration ends, she will continue to fight with her enchanted Kukri. Her Kukri adds +50% chance of success to the spell Summon Dimensional Shambler.

AVERAGE THUGGEE CULTIST

Nationality: Indian

STR 14 DEX 14 INT 11 CON 13 APP 12 POW 10
SIZ 14 EDU 9 SAN 0 Luck 50 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: None above grade school level, except for Mr. Singh and Mr. Patel who have finished high school.

Skills: Conceal 59%, Climb 59%, Hide 71%, Jump 52%, Listen 62%, Sneak 76%, Spot Hidden 61%

Languages: English 45%, Hindustani 60%

Attacks:

Thuggee Pickax 50%, 1D8 + db

Kukri (knife) 65%, 1D4+2 + db

Spells: None

Notes: These are the average rank-and-file cultists who will follow the priestess in order to recover the Amulet of Kali. Mr. Singh and Mr. Patel are just above average and more educated versions.





Dream Factory

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Dream Factory

JOHN TYNES

ILLUSTRATED BY DENNIS DETWILLER

Set in the fall of 1926, "Dream Factory" presents a byzantine tale of Hollywood intrigue and surreal horror. The focus of the scenario is Alexander Nikolai Solonitsyn, an exiled film-maker from Russia now making movies in Hollywood. Solonitsyn has developed an unusual motion-picture camera that contains machinery driven by supernatural forces. With this camera, he can drain human soul-energy and capture it in strips of film, imbuing the resulting movie with a strange, almost hypnotic vibrancy that has helped make his recent American works into popular successes. He can even capture a person entirely, erasing them from reality and trapping them on film to make the resulting movie almost overwhelmingly full of emotion and life. In addition to his peculiar camera, Solonitsyn has a small network of colleagues who join him in unpleasant occult practices. The strands of their crimes are intermingled but still distinct, leading the investigators into a tangled web of psychosis and exploitation in which every door leads to some fresh hell.

The initial impetus for the investigation is the disappearance of screen actress Laura Angel, a fresh-faced ingenue from the Midwest who seems destined for stardom in Solonitsyn's soon-to-debut film *Unbroken*. But nothing is simple. As the investigators look into the circumstances of Angel's disappearance, they will find numerous paths to explore and hideous acts to reveal that have little to do with Angel—and yet still require equal exposure and retribution.

The backdrop for this scenario is Hollywood at the end of the silent era, a point at which movie stars are just beginning to break out of the contract-bound studio system and score big money—and a point at which their private lives are fast becoming tabloid fodder. The scandals of the day pale in comparison with those to come in later years, but already the first grinding, bloody cogs of the dream factory are revving up. The maw of Hollywood is opening, and soon it will devour the American mindscape. The tragic fate of Laura Angel and the diabolical intrigues of Alexander Solonitsyn are grim portents of what is to come.

Background

"Dream Factory" has a very complex plot and an ensemble cast of major characters for the players to interact with. The intention of the scenario is to present a credible, realistic, freeform investigation that will truly tax the players' ingenuity. There are few planned events in the course of the sce-

nario, and most of the game will consist of the players driving the plot by interviewing people, doing research, and gathering evidence. The Keeper will need to orchestrate the actions of the NPCs as they act and react to what the players do. Each character's motivations and goals are explained clearly as guides for their behavior (p. 147), but it's up to the Keeper to pull their strings and make their decisions on an improvisational basis.

In playtesting, it took about twenty hours of real time to play through the scenario, and that was with an experienced and thoughtful group of players. Your results may vary widely. There are no easy clues or simple solutions here, since otherwise one could reasonably assume that the police would crack the case all on their own. Instead, the players will have to dig deep, sift through the evidence, and make intuitive leaps to solve the mystery.

The next several sections provide an overview of the scenario's main characters and narrative background. Some of this information will be repeated, in greater detail, in the main body of the scenario as the results of investigation. As an aid to the Keeper, a detailed timeline appears on p. 148.

Alexander Solonitsyn

Alexander Nikolai Solonitsyn was born in 1890 at the village of Zavrazhye on the river Volga near the town of Yuryevets. His parents were impoverished intellectuals who made a slight living as translators and editors. They taught young Alexander themselves, instilling in him a love of literature and art. As a young man, he attended college, studying poetry and painting.

By the time the Bolsheviks seized control in November of 1917, Alexander was working in Moscow as the assistant editor of *Photo News*, an upstart newspaper that used extensive photographs as its main selling point. Alexander was fascinated with cameras and photography, and took many of the paper's most popular pictures himself.

In the aftermath of the revolution, *Photo News* survived but a few short months. Its distribution had never really reached beyond Moscow, and the turmoil of the day made *Photo News* a luxury most Muscovites could not afford. However, Alexander had managed to become a favorite of the new rulers of the Soviet state, Vladimir Ilich Lenin and Leon Trotsky, taking frequent photographs of their ceremonies and proceedings for use in *Photo News* and official Communist Party publications.

The Skoptsi

But Alexander was far from being a loyal Bolshevik. In college before the revolution he fell under the influence of Larissa Yermash, a young woman raised in the traditions of the *Skoptsi* ("the Castrated"). The *Skoptsi* were a Russian cult of ancient origin, dating back to the 13th century. Although they clothed themselves in Christian trappings, the *Skoptsi*'s roots were in ancient mystery cults who promoted self-castration—the "baptism of fire" or "seal of God"—as a means of permanently rejecting the mortal sin of fornication. Behind their Orthodox Christian guise, the inner circle of the *Skoptsi* worshipped Shub-Niggurath, known to them as the "Black Mother." Converted by the persuasive Larissa, Alexander joined the *Skoptsi* and passed through the self-castration rites of the cult in 1912.

At the time Alexander joined, the *Skoptsi* were in disarray. Their inability to procreate meant that they could only gain successive generations of followers through conversion, and conversion to a castration cult had little appeal to most members of the Russian peasantry. Larissa had been sent to Moscow and to college with one goal: to find a new high priest of the cult, a man who would in some way stand out from his fellows and possess the mystical blessing of the Black Mother. Larissa decided that Alexander was this man, and in 1915 he was confirmed as the new high priest of the *Skoptsi*.

Although the cult was spread across Russia, Alexander remained in Moscow and signed on with the aforementioned *Photo News*. He seemed to take his role as high priest seriously, but in secret he merely wanted to use the cult and his role within it to further his own creative career as an artist. As the blessed of the Black Mother, Alexander believed that nothing would stand in the way of his ascension as the premier creative mind of Russia. Largely apolitical, he saw the revolution of 1917 as just another stepping stone on his road to triumph. The Bolsheviks had created a new Soviet state; Alexander was determined to become its leading creative light. He was a supreme egotist.

Post-Revolution

Following the revolution and the demise of *Photo News*, Alexander worked in a variety of capacities for the new Soviet government: writer, editor, photographer, and publisher, among other duties. He remained a minor favorite of Lenin and Trotsky, and his pictures of early Soviet rule appeared throughout the world—usually uncredited—as evidence of the triumph of the new Soviet state.

The period after the revolution brought another troubling development. The Soviets were opposed to religion, and began to persecute and exile religious leaders. Although the *Skoptsi* were far from true Christians, they had nevertheless retained a Christian guise and the Soviet rulership attacked them with equal vigor. Many were sent

to Siberia, to later side with the White Russians against the Bolsheviks. Alexander remained in Moscow, his association with the *Skoptsi* a closely held secret. He cared little for the fate of his fellow cult members; since he was the one chosen by the Black Mother, it mattered not what happened to the rest of the *Skoptsi*. He believed that he was the only one worth saving.

Remaining in Moscow for the next several years, Alexander was exposed to the work of the pioneering Soviet filmmaker Dziga-Vertov. Vertov's *Kino-Pravda* films were brief newsreels on the subject of life in the new Soviet state, and they enthralled Alexander with the nascent power of cinema. (Vertov is best known today for his 1929 film, *The Man with the Movie Camera*.)

In 1921, Alexander enrolled in the new Moscow Film School under the workshop tutelage of Lev Kuleshov. Alexander studied film-making techniques, including Kuleshov's pioneering theory of *montage*, in which images could be manipulated through editing to produce not just narrative structure, but also powerful intellectual and emotional effects by means of juxtaposition.

Alexander made his first feature film, *Triumph*, in 1922. *Triumph* was a rapturous exaltation of Soviet life and prosperity, intercutting new footage of Lenin with re-enactments of scenes from the revolution. The film was, needless to say, blessed by the Soviet leadership. Privately, Alexander derided the film, stating that he made it simply to please his government superiors and thereby gain the freedom he desired to make his second film.

This second film, *Betrayal* (1923), was to become his entry into world cinema. *Betrayal* told the simple story of a peasant woman who has an affair with her husband's brother. Though modest in scope, the film was elevated by sophisticated editing, achieving an unusually swift narrative pace and a powerful emotional depth unseen in most films from anywhere else in the world at this time. *Betrayal* helped bolster the artistic credibility of the fledgling Soviet Union, and the film toured the capitals of western Europe as well as New York and Los Angeles to rave reviews. The fact that *Betrayal* was a silent film—like *Triumph* and the rest of contemporary films—only aided in its universal appeal.

But there was more to *Betrayal*'s success than universal understanding.

The Camera & Projector

As film technology was in its infancy, early film-makers such as Alexander needed to know more than how to point and shoot. Between the making of *Triumph* and *Betrayal*, Alexander became obsessed with the mechanics of cinematography. By the time he was ready to film *Betrayal*, Alexander had created his own custom movie camera, which he allowed no one else to operate or inspect. The reason for this paranoia was simple: if a competent technician exam-

Hollywood in the Jazz Age

The Jazz Age of America lasted roughly from the onset of the Great War (1914) to the onset of the Great Depression (1929). In between was a time of breakthroughs in the arts and in society, a period of "wonderful nonsense" that would later be referred to as the Roaring Twenties or the Jazz Age. This period saw the first novels of authors Ernest Hemingway, John dos Passos, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Sinclair Lewis; the plays of Eugene O'Neill and George S. Kaufman; the poetry of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein; the music of Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Cole Porter, and George Gershwin; and finally the cinematic work of Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, D.W. Griffith, Buster Keaton, Rudolph Valentino, and many more.

The nascent art-form of "moving pictures" (as they were then known) had spread across the country as a genuine novelty around the turn of the century. (Even as late as 1938, the *World Book Encyclopedia* would say of moving pictures, "Here is something new and wholly modern.") What catapulted moving pictures from novelty to popular obsession was the release of *The Great Train Robbery* by director Edwin S. Porter for Thomas Edison's studio. This film was arguably the first example of truly cinematic storytelling, as it was the first to present an original, fictitious story. Films before it were largely documentary in nature, brief recordings of events with no narrative beyond what naturally happened in front of the camera. Porter's film was a story, planned in advance with characters and a narrative, shot out of sequence, and then edited together to make a coherent tale. This innovation became known as a "photo play"—requiring what we refer to today as a screenplay or script.

With the craze brought on by films such as *The Great Train Robbery*, Americans flocked to Nickelodeons starting in 1905. These were hastily assembled screening rooms that would show a variety of moving pictures for a nickel. Such films ran no longer than a single reel of film—about a thousand feet—which took roughly fifteen minutes to show. The films of the time were almost exclusively silent, with title cards intercut between scenes to explain specifics of action or to state dialogue. Live music frequently accompanied the silent moving pictures shown at the new movie palaces that followed the Nickelodeons, beginning with the Strand of New York in 1914; these were gaudy amphitheaters built solely for the projection of films.

Although moving-picture production had initially sprung up on America's east coast (largely following Thomas Edison's lead), by 1910 some studios were filming in Los Angeles because of the city's excellent weather and local scenery. Universal Studios erected some of the first permanent studios there. By the late 1920s, the vast majority of moving-picture production was occurring in Los Angeles—and specifically, in the suburb known as Hollywood.

Meanwhile, the one-reel short films were falling out of favor. Multi-reel European films such as 1912's *Queen Elizabeth* (starring stage legend Sarah Bernhardt) and 1913's *Quo Vadis* were great successes, despite running times of an hour or more. The success of these films broke the mold, setting the stage for D.W. Griffith's 1915 twelve-reel, three-hour masterpiece, *Birth of a Nation*.

As Americans turned out in droves for the new entertainment, the media were there to feed the frenzy. The first moving-picture fan magazine, *Photoplay*, was launched in 1912. It and other similar magazines accompanied the rise of the first moving-picture stars, creating the new cult of celebrity that has come to dominate American society in our time.

ined the camera, he would quickly realize that it couldn't possibly work.

Yet it did.

Alexander had hit upon a union of simple mechanics and supernatural power. He incorporated elements of Skoptsi magical rituals into the camera's construction, granting it abilities that went far beyond simple photographic reproduction. Alexander's magical camera actually drew power from the souls of those it filmed, pulling the raw material of their willpower into the celluloid and infusing it with a heightened, primal sense of drama and emotion. Those who watched a film—any film—shot with Alexander's camera could be powerfully moved by the images flickering on the screen.

Betrayal was shot with a primitive version of this process. Following *Betrayal*'s success, Alexander embarked on a series of refinements and progressions of his original camera, each of which was tested with a short experimental film.

Besides improving his camera, Alexander also continued to improve his grasp of film-making and *montage*.

Moreover, Alexander developed a bizarre projector that had neither light nor lens. If one of the magically augmented films were run through the projector, it would immerse those nearby in a three-dimensional hallucination in which they could interact with the people and props of the film—except that the entire experience would be in black and white.

Exile

Alexander's career arc as the premier artist of the Soviet state seemed certain, until fate interceded. Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin was in poor health as 1924 arrived, the result of a failed but still damaging assassination attempt in 1918 and a subsequent series of strokes that had left him partially paralyzed for the previous twenty months. In mid-January of

The stars of the day were not free agents, however. Studios instituted what became known as the "studio system" in which actors, actresses, and filmmakers were kept under contract to a single studio and put to work on whatever projects were currently underway; they were paychecked employees. It was only with the emergence of true stars such as Charlie Chaplin that filmmakers began to wrest a measure of independence from the studios. In 1919, for example, Chaplin formed United Artists with director D.W. Griffith and actors Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks; they would make their own films, and UA would distribute them without interference. But such independence was beyond the reach of the vast majority of actors and filmmakers.

By 1926, Hollywood moving-picture studios were producing hundreds of feature films a year, and many more short films. A typical feature film cost anywhere from \$50,000 to several times that number. 1926 saw the release of the legendary film *Ben Hur*, as well as the *Moby Dick* adaptation *Sea Beast* starring John Barrymore as Captain Ahab. (The previous year introduced genre classics *The Phantom of the Opera* with Lon Chaney and *The Lost World*, a dinosaur thriller by Willis O'Brien that beat Michael Crichton and Steven Spielberg to the punch by seven decades.) A handful of sound films were released in 1925 and 1926, generally short novelties that offered sound for sound's sake but were not narrative films; a typical sound short featured crusty author George Bernard Shaw saying a few remarks to the viewer. The sound equivalent of *The Great Train Robbery* was still to come.

Given the influx of money and notoriety in a short space of time, it is perhaps not surprising that Hollywood soon had its share of scandals, as well as a mounting reputation for vice. An early scandal came in 1920, when beloved actress "Little Mary" Pickford went to Nevada for a quickie divorce from her husband in order to marry leading-man Douglas Fairbanks three weeks later. In September of 1921, popular movie comic Fatty Arbuckle threw a party at San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel. A female guest, Virginia Rappe, was found dead the next morning in her room, allegedly raped by Arbuckle with a champagne bottle. (Three trials and two hung juries later, Arbuckle was finally acquitted, but his acting career was finished.) In 1922 actor Wallace Reid died, and allegations of his drug use shocked the public. Director William Desmond Taylor died the same year, implicating two actresses in a gossipy stew of sex, murder, and drugs. In reaction to these scandals and to some increasingly salacious films, the studios hired Will H. Hays—a respected public official—to head the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. The "Hays Office," as it became known, did its best to promote good publicity for Hollywood and was the distant forerunner of today's film-ratings board, the MPAA.

Hollywood itself was a suburb of Los Angeles, California, the largest city west of Chicago. Located 484 miles southeast of San Francisco, the city in 1926 was a rapidly growing metropolis with a population of over one million people and an area of more than four hundred square miles. Los Angeles was widely regarded as a beautiful city, with buildings frequently emulating the Spanish mission style of architecture and graced by extensive beaches and ocean frontage. The city was served by several railroad companies, including the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, the Southern Pacific, and the Union Pacific. It was also home to a number of colleges, including the University of California at Los Angeles, Occidental College, the University of Southern California, Southwestern University, Immaculate Heart College, Mount Saint Mary's College, and California Christian College.

1924, as his death approached, Lenin called on his favorite photographer/film-maker for a private audience. Alexander was roused early in the morning and brought to Lenin's residence with his personal movie camera in tow.

Lenin desired to make a final statement, a benediction of sorts, to the Soviet people—and he wanted Alexander to record it on film. Alexander complied.

The Soviet leader got as far as about two minutes of speech-making before he collapsed. The magical drain on his soul by Alexander's camera was too much for the weakened ruler. Canny to the end, Lenin told Trotsky that he blamed his final collapse on Alexander; when Lenin died two days later (on January 21st), the Soviet secret police (known as the *Cheka*) arrested Alexander and put him through three days of brutal interrogation. Alexander withstood the worst that the *Cheka* had to offer, but his ritual castration was revealed during a strip search and Alexander was subsequently discredited as a follower of old Czarist religions.

Despite the cavalier attitude of their high priest, the Skoptsi were not willing to take Alexander's punishment by the *Cheka* without opposition. They got him out of the *Cheka*'s grasp by means of magic, and then smuggled him to America by way of Japan. Alexander, his camera, his projector, his films, and two Skoptsi acolytes arrived in Hollywood while *Betrayal* was still playing in Los Angeles theaters. A month later he signed a contract with Mintz Brothers Studios, a major player on the Hollywood scene.

Hollywood

Ensconced in L.A., an ocean away from the search parties of the *Cheka*, Alexander got busy. In June of 1924 he made his first feature for Mintz Brothers, the melodrama *Unfaithful*—a brassy, clumsy remake of his own *Betrayal*. *Unfaithful* did well in theaters, and the film even won plaudits from religious leaders who praised its heavy-handed Chris-

tian morality. Once again, Alexander was simply making a film to please his superiors so that he could gain the freedom he cherished.

This second Hollywood film was *Black Mass*, a grim tale of Satanism, corruption, and redemption, based (without permission) on the novel *La Bas* by the French writer Huysmans. Released in the fall of 1924, the film proved resoundingly unpopular, its upbeat, sanitized ending a poor match for the decadence of its middle section. Most Americans who saw the film thought it was boring at best, and blasphemous at worst. Even Alexander's camera could not compensate for the corrupt self-indulgence of the project. (The film did include some subtle references to the Skoptsi, including the use of Skoptsi religious items and icons as props for scenes of the black mass itself.)

Chastened, Alexander made his third and fourth Hollywood films—*The Ranch* and *Two Bits*—as westerns with stock heroes, heroines, and villains. Their commercial success in the spring and summer of 1925 restored Alexander's standing at Mintz Brothers and once again gave him the freedom to try something different.

Throughout this time, Alexander continued to use his unique camera, always improving it. The failure of *Black Mass* made him realize that the audience would remain impervious to his camera's magical abilities if the film itself were not sympathetic, so he made formula westerns while he refined his technique.

The Moon

In the fall of 1925, buoyed by the success of *Two Bits*, Alexander embarked on his next personal project. *The Moon* was a fantasy, in the vein of French fantasist/film-maker Georges Méliès. Improbably, Alexander managed to weave extensive Black Mother imagery into a wholesome, uplifting cinematic adventure. The plot concerned a group of scientists who fly a great bird to the moon, where they are tempted by the charms of a harem of moon-vixens. Overcoming temptation, they press on into the caves of the moon's interior—past a canyon of flame—until they reach the hall of the Moon Mother, a wise and kindly woman who praises their fortitude and bestows upon them her blessing. The men return to Earth to spread the good word of the Moon Mother (named "Mary" in an obvious sop to Christian audiences) and to preach a sketchy doctrine of salvation.

The Moon was released in January of 1926, to great popular success. On Easter Sunday, Alexander appeared on the national *Mercury-Ovaltine Radio Hour* to wish everyone a happy holiday and offered a charming prayer in halting English for the well-being of the nation. Aristocratic, handsome, and dashing exotic, Alexander was confirmed as a Hollywood celebrity. Denied the pre-eminence he sought in the Soviet Union, Alexander appeared to have found it in the United States.

The Net

As Alexander grew accustomed to life in newly glamorous Hollywood, he acquired a group of friends who wanted a touch of what he had to offer: a form of success and confidence beyond the reach of most people. This circle of comrades became known informally as the Net, after something Alexander liked to say: "I cast my net deep but not wide."

These associates included some of Hollywood's elite—or soon-to-be elite—including the following.

Miles Desmond

Miles Desmond is the writer-director of a string of successful melodramatic films from Mintz Brothers Studios, including *Her Lonely Ways*, *Regrets and Sighs*, *The End of Love*, and *All Aboard!* He hates the rank and file of humanity with a mocking arrogance that occasionally slips around the edges of his films and spills onto the screen—not that anyone really notices. He's a notorious womanizer and near-constant drunk, and several times the chief of security at Mintz Brothers (Ward Fredrick) has had to intervene to prevent some petty scandal involving Desmond from reaching the public.

Last May, Desmond fell under the sway of Alexander. He worships the Russian director, believing he sees in Alexander's films all of the lofty artistic goals that he could never achieve himself. In truth, Desmond's fragile mind shattered under the influence of Alexander's magic-enhanced movies, and he has become Alexander's most loyal acolyte. Playing Renfield to Alexander's Dracula, Desmond no longer has a will of his own; his master's word is law. Alexander has initiated him into the mysteries of the Skoptsi, and a few weeks ago Desmond became the first American to undergo the self-castration rite.

Desmond had never physically hurt anyone before he met Alexander, but his latent propensity towards sadistic violence was there, waiting to emerge. Alexander recognized it and nurtured it, and then finally blew it wide open by giving Desmond access to his magical projector and films. In the safe confines of Alexander's cabin retreat, Desmond played the immersive films and committed endless acts of consequence-free rape and murder on the illusory characters of the films—who were restored to life and health every time the film was re-run. Entire days spent in hallucinatory blood-spattered acts of sadism and perversion have pushed Desmond over the edge and he has lost the ability to distinguish between reality and his twisted black-and-white fantasies. Real flesh-and-blood crimes of violence are the next step for the swiftly disintegrating director.

Oswald Laemmle

Owner and manager of Laemmle Pictures, Oswald Laemmle is a rising star in the new field of motion-picture

animation. His *Harry the Hare* short cartoons have met with great success.

Laemmle, a Kansas native, has a strange fascination with death and morbidity. He has been known to spend an hour peering into a garbage can, sketching the lively movements of maggots. A recent *Harry the Hare* cartoon, *The Graveyard Ghouls*, was rejected by some distributors as too bizarre and unwholesome for release.

Alexander and Laemmle met at a rather debauched Hollywood party in March of 1926. Discovering that they were of similar mindsets and levels of egotism, the two formed a swift friendship. In the summer of 1926, Alexander revealed his connection with the Skoptsi and began to initiate Laemmle into the fold. Laemmle—generally an asexual ascetic—was initially intrigued by the morbid, exotic promise of Alexander's strange cult, but has been putting off the castration ritual for weeks. He is now having second thoughts about his friendship with Alexander, but is too spineless to do anything about his misgivings without outside influence.

The two are also collaborators. Laemmle contributed some high-quality animation to Alexander's new film, *Unbroken*, to achieve some visual effects otherwise impossible.

Clara Negri

Clara Negri is the newest "it girl"—an actress who has striking sexual appeal. Her latest Mintz Brothers film, *Con-*

queror of Venice, has done terrific business and has made her a star.

Negri is a native of Germany who came to the United States three years ago. Raised an orphan on the streets of Frankfurt, Negri led a hard life and has grown into a hard woman. Early in life she developed a predilection towards cruelty, as a way of striking back at the harsh world around her. Today she is a violent sadist, occasionally engaging in brutal murder to sate her childhood appetite for vengeance against all of humanity. She uses her fame, beauty, and power to draw unsuspecting victims to her and then murders them in cheap hotels.

Alexander met her in February of 1926 and sensed her dark interior. He drew her close with intimations of violence, then delivered by accompanying her on a kidnapping/murder weekend in San Francisco. She has joined Alexander's coterie of Skoptsi in Hollywood, and the two have become a celebrity couple. Alexander plans to have her star in his next film—and to sacrifice her before his sorcerous camera.

Negri has no idea of the fate that lies in store for her. She believes that Alexander will marry her and anoint her as the high priestess of the Skoptsi, and that they will continue their occasional practice of brutal murder together for the rest of their lives. Negri is a badly damaged individual and an alcoholic, prone to wild mood swings and random accusations. She is desperately loyal to Alexander.



The Net: Solonitsyn, Negri, Desmond, and Laemmle

The Disappearance

In the late summer and early fall of 1926, Alexander shot his latest film, *Unbroken*, at Mintz Brothers Studios. Said to be his masterpiece, the film is scheduled to open in November. A major reason for the anticipated success of the film is the charisma of its star, twenty-one-year-old Laura Angel. (Laura Angel is her stage name; her real name is Laura Moscovitz.) Laura is a naive but willful young woman from Missouri who came to Hollywood in June of 1925 to seek fame and fortune as a movie star. She was discovered by Mintz Brothers casting agent Morris Harrison, who met her when she was waiting tables at a Los Angeles diner in October of 1925. Laura appeared in bit parts in several films before winning a supporting role in the melodrama *The End of Love* (by Miles Desmond). The studio and the public both liked her, and she was next selected to appear as the lead character in *Unbroken*.

Unfortunately, Laura is gone. Convinced of his new film's potential to catapult him into posterity, Alexander chose to use his magic camera to its fullest potential. Normally, the camera simply drained magic points from those who appear before it, imbuing the footage with a heightened sense of drama and emotion. This time, Alexander secretly arranged to meet with Laura for some re-takes after production closed. Then he allowed the camera to consume her completely, erasing her body and absorbing her soul into the very celluloid that ran through the mechanism. With this magically augmented footage—which serves as the climax of the film—Alexander felt assured that his conquest of cinema would be complete. Naturally, he cared nothing for the fact that Laura was trapped within the frames of motion picture film.

The Cover-Up

Laura and Alexander met at Mintz Brothers Studios on September 25, 1926—a Saturday. It was there that they re-shot the climax of *Unbroken*, and it was there that Laura was consumed by Alexander's camera. Sign-in logs at the front gate record their arrival and Alexander's solitary departure a few hours later; Laura apparently never left. When she missed a meeting the next day, she was reported missing to Hollywood police. The head of security for Mintz Brothers, Ward Fredrick, got involved.

Fredrick saw the sign-in logs and questioned Alexander about his meeting with Laura. Alexander convinced Fredrick that he and Laura were having an affair and simply met at the studio for a rendezvous. (Laura presumably left without signing out, a not-uncommon occurrence.) Fredrick agreed to keep the meeting quiet, since Alexander and Clara Negri are a popular celebrity couple and Mintz Brothers didn't need a scandal. He took the sign-in sheets from Saturday evening and made forged replacements that made no men-

tion of either Alexander or Laura. He also changed the work log to show that a different guard (one more amenable to bribery and deceit) was working the front gate that night and transferred the real gate guard to quiet duty guarding the props department.

Having bought Alexander's story, Fredrick decided that it would be a good idea for Alexander to leave town for a little while. He whipped up a quick east-coast publicity tour and put Alexander on a train to New York the night of September 27th.

The Firebug

Director Miles Desmond has lost his fragile grip on sanity. His recent self-castration, combined with his strong sexual drive, has pushed him into new depths of frustration and madness. Until Alexander left on his publicity tour, he could keep Desmond in line. But without Alexander there, Desmond can't take it anymore.

The night after Alexander left, Desmond hooked up with a prostitute at a dirty hotel. When the prostitute discovered his recent castration, Desmond was humiliated, frustrated, enraged, and aroused all at once. He beat her to death with a lamp, his first real-life killing, his first in glorious full color. Attempting to rationalize the murder, his disordered mind decided to make it a ritual act demonstrating his loyalty to the Black Mother and to Alexander. Desmond took out his pocketknife and performed a rough castration on the dead woman, ineptly cutting out her clitoris. Then he emptied the fluid from his lighter onto the sheets of the bed and set them on fire, in a crazed symbolic recreation of the Skoptsi "baptism of fire" he had been through himself just a few weeks earlier. With the bed in flames, he fled the hotel.

His mania sated, Desmond calmly resumed his life and work—but not for long. Three days later, on September 31st, he did it again. The cops are calling him "the Firebug" and soon the newspapers will, too. He will strike again.

Getting Started

It is Friday, October 1, 1926. The investigators are brought into the case by a woman named Virginia Morgan. She claims to be a cousin of Laura Angel's, just arrived in town on behalf of Laura's parents. She recruits the investigators through whatever means are appropriate and charges them with finding Laura—or finding out what happened to her. She provides them with a recent photo of Laura and a key to Laura's apartment, which she has obtained from Laura's apartment manager.

In truth, "Virginia Morgan" is really Sally Ellison, a bit player for Mintz Brothers Studios and the niece of Morris Harrison. She didn't really know Laura personally. Morris has put her up to this ploy because he's genuinely worried

Quick-Reference Summary

This summary of "Dream Factory" is provided as a reference for Keepers during play. The characters are each described briefly along with their motivations, their goals for this scenario, and what they know about the mystery.

Investigator Goals

Rescue Laura Angel, a young actress magically trapped into a strip of motion-picture film. Expose the actions of Alexander and his fellow cultists, and solve two sets of serial murders—the Firebug Killings in Los Angeles and the His & Hers Homicides in San Francisco.

Antagonists

Alexander Solonitsyn: Russian immigrant, Hollywood film director at Mintz Brothers Studios, Skoptsi cultist, and (with Clara Negri) responsible for the His & Hers Homicides.

Alexander's Motivations: Arrogance, art, and cruelty.

Alexander's Goals: Avoid exposure and prosecution, destroy anyone who threatens him, keep his hands as clean as he can.

Alexander's Knowledge: He knows everything about the disappearance of Laura Angel and the His & Hers Homicides. He does not know about the Firebug murders until whatever point Miles confesses to him—probably whenever Alexander returns from the east coast.

Miles Desmond: Hollywood film director at Mintz Brothers Studios, Skoptsi cultist, and the Firebug killer.

Miles' Motivations: Loyalty to Alexander, sadistic violence.

Miles' Goals: Protect Alexander. Satisfy his need for killing.

Miles' Knowledge: He knows that Alexander used his magic camera to make Laura disappear, but not the details of time and place. He knows how to rescue Laura from the film. He knows in general about the His & Hers Homicides and who is responsible but no dates or names. He knows that Alexander intends to sacrifice Clara in his next film the way he sacrificed Laura for the current one.

Clara Negri: Hollywood actress at Mintz Brothers Studios, Skoptsi cultist, and (with Alexander Solonitsyn) responsible for the His & Her Homicides.

Clara's Motivations: Toughness, survival, sadistic violence.

Clara's Goals: Protect herself. Protect Alexander unless she stops trusting him.

Clara's Knowledge: She knows nothing about Alexander's magic camera or the disappearance of Laura. She knows nothing about the Firebug murders. She knows everything about the His & Hers Homicides.

Oswald Laemmle: Animator and reluctant Skoptsi cultist

Oswald's Motivations: Morbidity, status, success.

Oswald's Goals: Protect himself.

Oswald's Knowledge: He knows that Alexander used his magic camera to make Laura disappear, but not the details of time and place. He does not know how to rescue Laura

from the film. He knows in general about the His & Hers Homicides and who is responsible but no dates or names. He knows nothing about the Firebug murders.

Ward Fredrick: Head of security for Mintz Brothers Studios, duped orchestrator of cover-up of Alexander's role in Laura's disappearance.

Ward's Motivations: Loyalty to Mintz Brothers Studios.

Ward's Goals: Protect Mintz Brothers Studios from scandal. Keep Alexander's meeting with Laura on the day of her disappearance a secret. He will not cover up murder or other extreme acts, however.

Ward's Knowledge: He knows Alexander and Laura were at the studio on the day of her disappearance. He believes (wrongly) that Alexander and Laura were having an affair and that Alexander wants it kept quiet to avoid upsetting his steady girlfriend, Clara. He knows nothing about the truth behind Laura's disappearance, Alexander's magic camera, or any of the murders.

Supporting Cast

Morris Harrison: Casting agent for Mintz Brothers Studios, mentor of Laura Angel, kindly middle-aged man hopelessly in love with young Laura.

Morris' Motivations: Loyalty to Laura, doing the right thing.

Morris' Goals: Find Laura, keep his involvement in the investigation a secret from the studio to avoid losing his job.

Morris' Knowledge: He knows nothing about Laura's disappearance or the murders.

Sally Ellison: Struggling actress at Mintz Brothers, niece of Morris Harrison, poses as "Virginia Morgan" (a fictitious cousin of Laura's), and hires the investigators for Morris.

Sally's Motivations: Help her dear old uncle.

Sally's Goals: Find Laura.

Sally's Knowledge: She barely knows Laura. She has occasionally dated Miles Desmond but thinks he's a heel. She knows nothing about the murders.

Haley Roads, Detective: Cop responsible for the Laura Angel investigation, takes payoffs from studios to keep minor scandals hushed-up.

Haley's Motivations: Make some dough, be successful, only work hard on high-profile cases.

Haley's Goals: Protect Mintz Brothers Studios and stone-wall the investigators unless it looks like Laura's disappearance involves a serious crime.

Haley's Knowledge: He knows that Ward Fredrick wants to keep Laura's disappearance a secret.

Timeline

May 5, 1923:	Clara Negri arrives in Los Angeles from Frankfurt, Germany.
April 8, 1924:	Alexander arrives in Los Angeles with two Skoptsi acolytes.
May 11, 1924:	Alexander signs a directing contract with Mintz Brothers Studios.
June 2-26, 1924:	Alexander makes <i>Unfaithful</i> .
August, 1924:	<i>Unfaithful</i> is released and becomes a success.
September 13, 1924:	Negri murders Burke Jenkins, a porter, in San Francisco at the Marcus Hotel. She takes his pocketwatch, engraved with a sentiment from his father, as a souvenir.
October 6-31, 1924:	Alexander makes <i>Black Mass</i> .
December, 1924:	<i>Black Mass</i> is released and flops.
February 20, 1925:	Negri murders Peter Lowenstein, an accountant, in San Francisco at Lowenstein's apartment. She takes the change in his pocket as a souvenir.
March 2-13, 1925:	Alexander makes <i>The Ranch</i> .
May, 1925:	<i>The Ranch</i> is released and is a modest success.
June 3, 1925:	Laura Angel arrives in Los Angeles from Missouri.
June 5, 1925:	Laura gets a job at the Starlight Café in Los Angeles.
June 9, 1925:	Laura moves into the Hi-View Apartments.
June 15-29, 1925:	Alexander makes <i>Two Bits</i> .
August, 1925:	<i>Two Bits</i> is released and is a modest success.
October 5-30, 1925:	Alexander makes <i>The Moon</i> .
October 16, 1925:	Morris Harrison meets Laura Angel at the Starlight Café and arranges an audition at Mintz Brothers.
October 26, 1925:	Laura signs an acting contract with Mintz Brothers Studios.
November 7, 1925:	Negri murders Richie Gaynor, a sailor on shore leave, in San Francisco at the Seaside Inn. She takes his gold-loop earring as a souvenir.
January, 1926:	<i>The Moon</i> is released and becomes a big success.
February 1-23, 1926:	Miles Desmond makes <i>The End of Love</i> , with Laura Angel in an important supporting role. Sally Ellison appears in a bit part; during filming, she has a couple of dates with Desmond.
February 12, 1926:	Alexander and Negri meet at a party. The two begin dating.
February 27, 1926:	Alexander and Negri spend the weekend in San Francisco, where they murder Larry Fellows, a handsome young waiter, at the Carlton Hotel. Negri takes a napkin from his pocket as a souvenir.

about Laura, but also aware that the studio—in the person of security chief Ward Fredrick—may try to control the investigation if it threatens to uncover scandal. He figures that an independent third party has a better chance of getting to the truth than the studio-friendly Hollywood cops do. The key was indeed obtained from Laura's apartment manager, but Morris did this, not Sally.

Morgan/Ellison has a room at the West End Hotel, a mid-range hotel popular with budget-minded tourists. She stays there every night in case the investigators need to reach her, but spends her days working at Mintz Brothers and frequently stops by her apartment. The hotel room contains clothes, toiletries, and a copy of Ellison's next film in script form which she's currently studying (*Train of Destiny*, a love story written and directed by Sherman Coen).

Exposing Sally

There are a number of ways in which the investigators might learn that their client isn't really who she says she is. These are summarized below.

- **Laura's parents.** If the investigators contact Laura's parents at some point, they don't know anything about Virginia Morgan. Laura has no cousins.
- **Laura's apartment manager.** The manager is Barton Diggler, who lives in a house a few minutes from the apartment complex. He didn't really know Laura, but says that the rent was paid by Morris Harrison of Mintz Brothers; Laura tended to forget about making the payments early in her tenancy, so Morris took care of it for her once she joined the studio. After Laura's disappearance Barton gave Morris the spare key that the investigators now have. He's never met Virginia Morgan (or Sally Ellison, for that matter) and doesn't know how she came to have the key.
- **The cops.** If the investigators speak with Detective Haley Roads of the Hollywood police precinct—he's in charge of Laura's case—and mention Virginia Morgan, he doesn't know anything about her. He's spoken with Laura's parents several times and they've said nothing about sending any cousin to Los Angeles. He'll offer to call them immediately and get to the bottom of this.

March 8, 1926:	Alexander meets Oswald Laemmle. The two become friends.
April, 1926:	<i>Conqueror of Venice</i> , with Negri in her first starring role, is released and becomes a success. Alexander reveals the secrets of the Skoptsi to Negri and she passes the first initiation. <i>The End of Love</i> is released and becomes a success. On Easter Sunday, Alexander does a radio address on the <i>Mercury-Ovaltine Hour</i> .
May 3, 1926:	Alexander meets Miles Desmond at a party.
May 15, 1926:	Alexander and Negri murder college student Jason Andrews in San Francisco at the Richardson Hotel. Negri takes his UC-Berkeley pencil as a souvenir.
June, 1926:	Alexander reveals the secrets of the Skoptsi to Laemmle and Desmond and they join. Alexander selects Laura Angel as the star of his next film, revealing to Desmond his plan to capture her soul.
July 10, 1926:	Alexander and Negri murder Philip Partridge, a dockworker, in San Francisco at the Seagull Inn. Negri takes his ivory-handled knife as a souvenir.
July 26–Sept. 3, 1926:	Alexander makes <i>Unbroken</i> , starring Laura Angel, with visual effects by Laemmle.
September 15, 1926:	Desmond passes the second initiation of the Skoptsi and undergoes the castration ritual. Laemmle is supposed to but stalls.
September 24, 1926:	A first-cut preview screening of <i>Unbroken</i> is held at Mintz Brothers Studios for the cast, crew, and studio execs. Alexander, Laura, Laemmle, Desmond, and Morris Harrison are present. Afterwards, Alexander signs out several thousand feet of raw film stock for use on his secret re-shoot.
September 25, 1926:	Laura calls her parents to tell them how terrific her new film looks. Alexander and Laura meet in secret to re-shoot the climactic scene of <i>Unbroken</i> . Laura is trapped on film.
September 26, 1926:	Laura fails to keep a lunch meeting with Harrison. That evening, she is reported missing. Ward Fredrick discovers that Laura and Alexander were at the studio the day before, but after talking with Alexander he forges the sign-in sheets to cover up the visit.
September 27, 1926:	Alexander departs via train for an east-coast publicity tour and sightseeing trip, hurriedly arranged by Ward Fredrick.
September 28, 1926:	Desmond goes to the Palm Rooms hotel with Sarah Archer, a prostitute. He beats her to death with a lamp, castrates her, and then sets the bed on fire.
September 31, 1926:	Harrison convinces his niece, Sally Ellison, to pose as Laura's cousin and recruit some investigators to find Laura. Desmond goes to the Desert Inn hotel with Patricia Campbell, a prostitute. He stabs her to death, castrates her, and then sets the bed on fire.
October 1, 1926:	Scenario begins. In the evening, Alexander arrives in New York City.

Detective Roads will be very interested in this situation since he'll want to know if this Virginia person knows anything about Laura's disappearance.

- **See her at the studio.** Although the studio is a large place, it's still possible that the investigators will bump into Virginia while they're visiting. Each time they visit, call for a party Luck roll (that is, have the player with the lowest Luck score make a Luck roll). If the result is a critical success (20% or less), then the investigators spot Virginia on the lot. Sally may try to pretend she's still Virginia and is looking for Laura, but depending on the circumstances she may just give up and admit the truth.
- **The Firebug.** At some point in the scenario, Miles Desmond murders Sally when he thinks she suspects his knowledge of Laura's disappearance. Sally's picture appears on the front page of the morning paper as the latest victim of the Firebug killer, and the investigators are bound to recognize their client. This is detailed under "Killing Sally Ellison" on p. 158.

If Virginia is confronted and exposed, she'll break down and reveal the ploy, swearing that she's just trying to help her uncle, Morris Harrison, because he's worried sick about this poor girl. She explains that Morris knows the studio's head of security, Ward Fredrick, makes payoffs to the Hollywood precinct cops to keep minor studio scandals quiet and figures the cops aren't going to work very hard on Laura's case—at least, not without evidence of foul play. If the studio learned that Morris had brought outside investigators into the case, he could lose his job.

Facts in the Case

When Virginia Morgan recruits the investigators, she can relate to them the basic facts in the case, as follows. Much of this information should be delivered as answers to questions in a conversation, not a detailed A-Z briefing. Virginia doesn't need to be as specific as this list is, but the details are there in case the investigators question her closely or do follow-up research later on.

- Laura Moscovitz was born and raised in Hannibal, Missouri. She's an only child. Her parents, Harold and Rachel, own a paper mill and are very prosperous.
- In June of 1925, a starstruck Laura moved to Los Angeles (against her parents' wishes) in the hope of becoming a movie star.
- Laura got a job at the Starlight Café, an all-night diner, and began going to auditions.
- In October of 1925 she was discovered at the diner by Morris Harrison, a friendly casting agent from Mintz Brothers Studios. He arranged for a screen test and the studio hired her as a contract player shortly thereafter. She left the diner and took the stage name of Laura Angel.
- From October of 1925 to January of 1926, Laura played bit parts in several films.
- In February of 1926, she won an important supporting role in a film called *The End of Love*, by writer-director Miles Desmond.
- In June of 1926 she got the lead role in *Unbroken*, by writer-director Alexander Solonitsyn.
- From July 26th to September 3rd, she made *Unbroken*.
- On Friday, September 24th, she was present at a first-cut preview screening of *Unbroken* at the studio.
- On the morning of Saturday, September 25th, she called her parents to tell them how happy she was with the film.
- On the afternoon of Sunday, September 26th, she missed a lunch meeting with Morris Harrison, her mentor at the studio. Unable to find her, Morris reported her missing to the Hollywood police precinct that evening around nine.
- No one has seen Laura since the screening in the afternoon of the 24th. No one has spoken to her since her parents in the morning of the 25th.
- The police found no evidence of foul play at her apartment. Laura does not own a car.
- The consensus theory is that Laura, giddy from the screening of her first starring role, has taken off with some unknown boyfriend for a romantic getaway.
- She was not known to be dating anyone recently, as she was very serious about her demanding work on *Unbroken*.
- Laura is described as a somewhat naive but very talented and friendly woman. She goes to parties to socialize but is not much of a drinker and rarely dates. She is twenty-one years old.

Stage One: First Steps

The early stages of the investigation will probably focus on establishing the particulars of Laura's life and disappearance, and building a master list of people involved and possible suspects.

Research: Laura Angel

Investigators seeking to do research on Laura Angel will turn up little. Her name is favorably mentioned in a few reviews of *The End of Love*, her first supporting role. No other articles about her exist. She's never been arrested and owns no real estate or car. She's lived at the Hi-View apartments since she moved to Los Angeles in June of 1925.

Search: Laura's Apartment

The investigators have a key to Laura's apartment, provided by their client, Virginia Morgan. Laura lives at Hi-View Apartments (63 Palm Court #12). The Hi-View is a two-story, U-shaped building with apartments all looking onto a long central courtyard dotted with palm trees. Access is through a decorative wrought-iron gate that is kept unlocked from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. There is no parking lot. The Hi-View accepts only single female residents, but has no restrictions on overnight visitors and so forth.

Laura's ground-floor apartment is a tidy affair with a living room, bedroom, small kitchen, and bathroom. There are closets in the living room and bedroom and a pantry in the kitchen.

As noted by the police, there are no signs of foul play or burglary. The cops gave the apartment a cursory search and then left it as they found it.

Nothing suspicious can be turned up. Laura was a clean-living gal, not entirely grown up, and her apartment reflects that. Well-worn stuffed animals (brought from Missouri) litter the bed, while photos of home, family, and high-school friends decorate the bedroom walls. The living room has framed photos of her new Hollywood friends at parties and on the set, plus a framed poster from *The End of Love* with Laura's name listed in the credits. Stacks of movie-fan magazines such as *Photoplay*—some dating back three years and brought from home—are stored in a cabinet, evidence of Laura's infatuation with Hollywood. Another stack, this one of photoplays (the 1926 term for "screenplays" or "scripts") from movies Laura has been in or wanted to be in, is kept nearby. (Copies of *Unbroken* and *The End of Love* are present.) Above the kitchen sink is a framed copy of the Lord's Prayer.

Her one indulgence seems to be clothes. A battered trunk beneath the bed contains tightly-packed and somewhat plain clothing from Missouri and her early days in Los Angeles, but her closet is full of stylish new clothes purchased in the last six months. None of them are especially daring or sexy and they aren't the *most* expensive clothes in Hollywood by a long shot, but they do paint a clear picture of a happy young woman in the first flush of success.

There is no sign of keys, a purse, a pocketbook, or other such items, suggesting that Laura had left the apartment with them before she disappeared. There is an address

book by the phone. It contains numerous handwritten listings both in Missouri and in Los Angeles, including many of the leading actors and filmmakers at Mintz Brothers. No special inscriptions accompany the names. (Miles Desmond, Morris Harrison, and Alexander Solonitsyn can all be found within, if the investigators check at some point.)

Interview: Laura's Neighbors

Laura's neighbors at the Hi-View will answer polite questions from well-dressed investigators, especially if some sort of official credentials are flashed. All are single women, ranging in age from nineteen to forty-five. All know who Laura is, since she's the only "movie star" any of them know. Most have seen her film *The End of Love*. They have only good things to say about her, and several make a point to mention that she never brings men home overnight. In general, they all think Laura is really swell.

Only one neighbor noticed anything of interest on the day of Laura's disappearance. Eugenia Martin (apartment 23, above Laura's) is a thirty-four year-old secretary for an accounting firm downtown. On Saturday, September 25th, she heard a car horn from the street outside the gate around 9 P.M., followed by the sound of Laura leaving her apartment and hurrying out to the car. The car door opened and shut and the car drove away. Eugenia sighed in friendly envy and imagined that Laura was heading off to some gala Hollywood party. She didn't actually see anything, and can only assume it was Laura who left the apartment in response to the car horn. Should the investigators ask, Eugenia will tell them that she gave this information to the police detective who came by.

Outside the Hi-View, there are a number of houses across the street where the investigators can ask questions. No one noticed Laura's departure or any car in particular; it's a fairly busy street and no one pays attention to the cars that come and go. Plus, it was a Saturday night and lots of folks were out on the town.

Interview: Detective Haley Roads

Detective Haley Roads of the LAPD (Hollywood Precinct) is in charge of the Laura Angel case. He'll speak with the investigators if they tell him they've been hired to find Laura Angel.

In brief, he can relate to them the basic facts of the case as described earlier. He can also describe Eugenia Martin's testimony about Laura's departure from the apartment building Saturday evening, but will only mention this if the investigators specifically ask. Roads has questioned several people at the studio, including head of security Ward Fredrick and Laura's friend and mentor Morris Harrison, and he's of the opinion that Laura is off on a celebratory fling with some unknown boyfriend and will turn up shortly. She just finished a long movie shoot, it's her first starring role, she's an attractive and friendly young woman, and so

forth. As far as Roads has been able to learn, Laura didn't have any creepy friends, wasn't into the wilder side of the Hollywood scene, and was something of a starstruck romantic. So far, he's turned up nothing particularly suspicious.

As mentioned earlier, the investigators may realize that their client, Virginia Morgan, is lying to them about her identity if they mention her to Detective Roads. Roads will get very interested if this happens and will pursue the issue vigorously.

Studio Bribery

Secretly, Roads is in the pocket of Ward Fredrick, the head of security at Mintz Brothers Studios. So far he's managed to keep any mention of Laura's disappearance out of the newspapers. He'll tell Fredrick about the investigators right away, along with anything they tell him, and he'll do his best to quietly stonewall their efforts.

His loyalty to Fredrick is only ironclad as long as he thinks Laura's disappearance is relatively innocent, however. If the case appears to involve any serious crimes such as murder or kidnapping, he'll do his job for real, regardless of what Fredrick has to say. Roads knows nothing about Alexander Solonitsyn's involvement or the cover-up that Fredrick is running.

Should the case turn serious, Roads may well treat the investigators as valuable allies, and he's not above encouraging them to do things he legally can't—such as breaking into private property and searching for clues. Roads isn't a huge stickler for proper procedure.

Research: Cab Companies

The investigators might check with local cab companies to see if it could have been a cab that picked up Laura outside her apartment on the night she disappeared. There are eighteen cab companies in Los Angeles. Getting any information out of them will have to be done in person and will require either some form of law-enforcement or private-detective credentials, or else a small bribe—a couple dollars will do.

The dispatcher at the Sunshine Cab Company will find Laura's name and address in his records. She called them at 3 P.M. on Saturday, September 25th, and requested a cab at her address for 9 P.M. that evening. The destination is listed as Mintz Brothers Studios. No return pick-up was arranged, and Laura does not appear in their logs again.

The driver, Horace Beasley, remembers the fare because she was a pretty girl and she was going to a movie studio. Laura told the driver she was starring in a new movie coming out soon and jokingly encouraged him to tell all his friends to go see it when it came out. She didn't say anything about why she was going to the studio. He dropped her off at the front gates and drove away. No one was waiting to meet her, as far as Horace could tell, though there was a guard on duty in the booth beside the gates.

Research: Mintz Brothers Studios

Mintz Brothers Studios was founded in 1917 by Bill and Sal Mintz, two brothers who had achieved success with a line of women's clothing stores in New York City. They invested some money in a couple of movies, made a tidy profit, and decided to get into the film business. The pair moved to Los Angeles and started their studio in a drafty warehouse. Several successes followed, and by 1926 the studio has a big new spread of offices and sets. The studio is releasing twenty-five shorts and fifteen features a year. They've built the careers of a couple of stars, including actress Clara Negri, a sultry German woman who is fast becoming a new sex symbol. Their specialty is romantic melodramas and slapstick comedy shorts. They're not among the front-runners of Hollywood studios, but they're doing pretty good.

Interview: Morris Harrison

Morris Harrison is the head casting agent for Mintz Brothers Studios. This means he's responsible for finding new actors and actresses to appear in Mintz Brothers films. He looks through endless submissions of photographs, attends auditions, conducts screen tests, and cruises Los Angeles nightspots, looking for men and women who might make it in pictures. Morris is forty-seven years old, and has worked as a talent scout for most of his life, first in vaudeville and the theater, and now in motion pictures. He's a nice guy and a lifelong bachelor.

Morris will meet with the investigators, but only in the evening and only away from the studio. If his ploy with his niece Sally Ellison hasn't been exposed (or he doesn't think it has) then he'll play dumb about the investigators' client.

He first met Laura when she was working as a waitress at the Starlight Café, a diner he frequents. She had that special quality he looks for in a movie actress, and her subsequent screen test suggested that she had real potential. He got her signed up with Mintz Brothers and has served as her mentor at the studio. He thinks Laura's a great kid with a bright future ahead of her, and he wishes her the best.

Morris is concerned about her disappearance. He was the one who went to the cops and reported her missing. He doesn't buy the consensus theory that she's off with a boyfriend—he's convinced she would have told him, or at least put off their Sunday lunch meeting—and is worried that she's in some kind of trouble. As far as he knows, she isn't dating anyone right now. He knows that in the past she's briefly dated three different guys, all actors at Mintz Brothers: Nathan Armbruster, Bobby Hendricks, and Reginald Tyler. None of them are big stars, none of them are missing, and as far as he knows they're all okay guys.

If asked about the directors Laura has worked with, he'll say that he thinks Morris Desmond is a drunk and a

creep, but doesn't think he ever bothered Laura. Alexander Solonitsyn is a bit arrogant and demanding, but then he's a genius—Morris was at the preview screening of Solonitsyn's new film *Unbroken* (with Laura in the lead role) and swears it's the best movie he's seen this year and it's going to make a star of Laura. Morris will gush effusively about how terrific *Unbroken* is, thanks to the supernatural power of Alexander's film.

Should the Virginia Morgan/Sally Ellison ploy be exposed, Morris will admit that he put his niece up to the job. He was afraid of losing his job if the studio learned he was mucking around with a potential scandal.

Psychology rolls made on Morris reveal that he's genuinely worried about Laura, probably more than he's letting on. Moreover, there's a good chance that he's in love with her. This is indeed the case, but Morris will be loath to admit it. If strongly confronted, he'll admit that he is in love with her but that he can't help it and has never done anything about it. Morris is just a harmless old bachelor in love with his latest discovery.

Interview: Ward Fredrick

Ward Fredrick, head of security at Mintz Brothers Studios, will agree to an interview. He'll then completely stonewall the investigators. He'll say that everything's fine, Laura's a good kid who's probably off with some boyfriend, and so forth. His job is to protect the studio, and he's good at his job. Only if the situation appears to involve a serious crime will he let down his guard and deal straight—and then only with the cops. The investigators can take a powder for all he cares.

If the investigators know about Laura's cab ride to the studio and confront Fredrick with this, he'll continue to stonewall them. He assures the investigators that he's checked the sign-in sheets for that day and that Laura didn't enter the studio. He says Laura probably arranged to meet her unknown boyfriend outside the studio, and that there's no way she would have gotten on the lot without signing in at the front gate. He won't show the sign-in sheets to the investigators, saying they're confidential and that only the police can have access to them.

Should an investigator attempt a Psychology roll on Fredrick, compare the investigator's Psychology skill rating against Fredrick's Fast Talk skill rating of 63% on the resistance table, then use the investigator's Psychology die roll to see if he can overcome Fredrick's smooth lies. Don't tell the player that's what you're doing—just allow the Psychology roll as normal and ask what the roll is. (Even if the player fails his Psychology roll, he can still succeed because this isn't really a Psychology check—it's a resistance-table check in disguise.) If the player overcomes Fredrick's attempt, he's sure that Fredrick is lying; otherwise, he buys the man's story.

Option: Fredrick Sends Thugs

If the investigators continue to be annoying or persistent, Fredrick may decide to offer them a bribe to drop the case. He'll do it subtly, maybe couching it as an offer of freelance employment with the studio as detectives or even (perhaps ludicrously) suggesting a screen test. He *won't* act scared or nervous—Ward Fredrick is a cool customer and an experienced operator in this sort of situation.

Potentially, Fredrick will escalate the situation and have some hired thugs rough up an investigator. They won't do anything serious, but they'll hit him a few times and recommend he find a new line of work. Should things go badly for the thugs, they may be revealed as Archer Lewis and Tex Abrams, two burly, former Mintz Brothers bit players fired for being drunken idiots. Fredrick threw this job at them as a way to get back in the studio's good graces. Their stats appear at the end of the scenario; neither are killers.

Interview: Laura's Boyfriends

If the investigators are interested in tracking down Laura's past boyfriends, they can get a list of names from casting agent Morris Harrison. The Keeper can also choose to have some other source provide this information, if desired.

The three old boyfriends are Nathan Armbruster, Bobby Hendricks, and Reginald Tyler. All three are contracted actors with Mintz Brothers Studios. None have anything to do with Laura's disappearance and can quickly be eliminated from the suspect list. None know anything about who (if anyone) Laura might have been dating lately.

Interview: Nathan Armbruster

Nathan went out with Laura from July through September of 1925, when she was still completely starstruck. In fact, Laura lost her virginity to Nathan, who is something of a heel. He dumped her to pursue another actress. Nathan is proud of having deflowered Laura and will act as if he did her a favor. He'll make snickering comments about having "broken her in" and "showed her the ropes." She hasn't spoken to him since he dumped her. The day of her disappearance, he was fishing with some friends.

Interview: Bobby Hendricks

Bobby and Laura dated from December of 1925 to February of 1926. They were never very serious. Bobby says Laura was a nice girl, but they just liked going out to fancy restaurants and ritzy clubs, nothing romantic. Bobby is a good-looking kid from Wisconsin and was just as starstruck as Laura was. They never slept together and parted ways when Laura met Reginald Tyler. Bobby and Laura have had lunch a few times since they broke up and are still pals. Bobby is a nice small-

town boy, still rather wet behind the ears. He's probably too handsome for his own good. The day of her disappearance, he was out with his new girlfriend, a secretary at Mintz Brothers named Jane Douglas.

Interview: Reginald Tyler

Reginald and Laura met in February of 1926 and dated until June. Reginald has been an actor with Mintz Brothers for three years, getting steady work in supporting roles as a tough guy. Laura fell for him when they were both shooting *The End of Love* for director Miles Desmond. They began dating and were pretty serious for a few months, but Laura finally decided that she wasn't ready to go steady with anyone and wanted to spend more time on her acting, since she was about to star in *Unbroken*. Reginald, an easy-going, rangy fellow from Oklahoma, took it in stride and bears her no ill will. They did sleep together numerous times, but Reginald won't admit this without coercion; he will blush if asked, however, which is probably answer enough. The weekend of her disappearance, he was in New Mexico competing in a rodeo.

Interview: Rupert Askew

Laura's first place of employment, the Starlight Café, is an all-night diner in Los Angeles. The clientele varies widely throughout the day, from blue-collar workers getting breakfast to secretaries eating lunch to rumpled salesman getting dinner to drunks and musicians having coffee at 3 A.M. The diner is owned by Rupert Askew, a beefy fifty-something ex-con with tattoos up and down his arms. He's been running the diner for fifteen years since he won it in a poker game. He plays tough, but that's just part of the diner's color. Rupert is a fair boss, and very protective of his youthful waitresses; somewhere or other (he doesn't know where) he's got a daughter their age, so he doesn't tolerate any customer who gets fresh with the help. (They're *all* his daughters, as far as he's concerned.) He has six part-time short-order cooks, all Hispanic, who work a varied schedule with him in the kitchen slinging hash.

Rupert is normally short on conversation, but he lights up at any mention of Laura. He'll say she's a great kid, just as sweet as can be. She stops in at the diner every month or so to chat with him and the waitresses, telling them about life in the movie business over coffee and eggs. Rupert thinks it's especially swell of Laura to keep coming in to visit now that she's becoming a star and all. He doesn't know anything about her being missing, and if he's told about her disappearance, the look on his face goes from fatherly pride to stone-cold menace. He'll start jabbing questions at the investigators—what happened, who's responsible, on and on. Soon he'll start cracking his knuckles and doing a slow burn, and will tell the investigators flat out that if anything's hap-

pened to Laura, he'll take a piece outta whoever did it and ta hell with what the cops think. On the spot, Rupert offers his free services as muscle should the investigators need any help. He says he was a boxing champ in prison (he was in the Texas state pen from 1902-1910 for armed robbery) and is handy with a gun; he certainly looks like a tough guy. He writes down his phone number, the diner's phone number, his address, the diner's address, and emphatically tells the investigators to call him anytime, day or night, if Laura's in a jam and there's someone that needs some hurtin'.

The investigators may be caught off-guard by the virulence of Rupert's protectiveness. Successful Psychology checks reveal that Rupert is the real thing: a rough-and-tumble ex-con who would never hurt a dame and who is fiercely protective of his surrogate daughters. Rupert is as good as his word, and if the investigators call him for help they'll have a tough ally on their side. If the situation is especially dire, Rupert can call in three or four old buddies of his (also aging ex-cons) who'll hurt whoever they're told for a couple bucks and keep their mouths shut about it afterwards. His stats, and stats for his pals, appear at the end of the scenario.

Interview: The Waitresses

Rupert's waitresses aren't quite so gung ho, but they like Laura, too. They're a little envious of her success, but apparently she's a nice girl who hasn't let Hollywood go to her head. They know all about her new film, *Unbroken*, and are looking forward to seeing it next month.

Neither Rupert nor the waitresses are much help as far as clues go. They don't know a lot about Laura's social life, and while Laura tells them about her work in Hollywood, she mostly tells innocent stories about parties, practical jokes, and who's the cutest guy on the lot this month. If asked specifically about one person or another, the waitresses might have something to say, as follows:

- **Miles Desmond.** He directed Laura in her breakthrough film, *The End of Love*. Laura didn't seem to like him too much. She said he was dating one of the other actresses in the movie, which she thought was unprofessional. (They don't know who.) A couple times he came to the set drunk.
- **Morris Harrison.** Laura had nothing but good things to say about the casting agent who discovered her. He's been her mentor, helping her choose roles and rehearse.
- **Alexander Solonitsyn.** Laura said her director for *Unbroken* is brilliant but not very friendly. She did mention that he was very handsome. The waitresses all know that he's been dating Clara Negri, one of Mintz Brothers Studios' star actresses. They don't like Negri much because she's German and looks like a vamp.

- **Nathan Armbruster.** A real creep. Laura said he was a jerk and she never should've gone out with him.
- **Bobby Hendricks.** Nice guy, but didn't light her fires. Still a pal.
- **Reginald Tyler.** She fell for him at first, but decided she wanted to focus on her acting and skip the whole boyfriend thing. Swell guy, though.

Research: Laura's Filmography

The investigators may want to take a look at Laura's filmography for possible suspects or sources. Her films and the principals in each one are listed in this section. Names in *italics* are of some importance and are described elsewhere in this scenario. All other names are irrelevant to the case and have nothing in particular to say about Laura except that she is professional, talented, friendly, and so forth. They are not described elsewhere, but their names are listed here so the Keeper doesn't have to make a bunch of names up on the fly. All the films listed are Mintz Brothers Studios productions.

Love At Last (1925)

Length: One hour

Director: Vincent Stewart

Writer: Manny Goldman

Starring: Darryl Thurmond and Belinda Sweeney

With: Jimmy Garrett, Sam Sloan, Dorothy Chambers, *Laura Angel*

Synopsis: A beautiful but shy librarian (Belinda Sweeney) keeps men at arm's length, swearing she'll know the right man when she meets him. When she encounters a charming professor (Jimmy Garrett) she thinks he's the one and they start a whirlwind romance, but when she discovers that he has a wife (Dorothy Chambers) her life falls apart. At her darkest hour, the friendly library janitor she's always ignored (Darryl Thurmond) is there to help—and she realizes her true love was right in front of her the whole time.

Knock Out (1925)

Length: Two hours

Director: Robin Paulson

Writer: Jonathan Pileggi

Starring: Buck Prince and Lisa Frothingham

With: Neal Vincent, Gordon Cooper, Vicky Lee, *Laura Angel*

Synopsis: An ambitious young boxer (Buck Prince) has to decide whether or not to take a dive so he can have the money to get his brother (Neal Vincent), an idiot man-child, out of the hospital. His sweetheart (Lisa Frothingham) wants him to stay honest, but the gangster who wants to fix the fight (Gordon Cooper) kidnaps her an hour before the match, leaving the boxer with a tough decision to make.

Next Stop, Spookville (1925)

Length: Fifteen minutes

Director: Will B. Good

Writer: Sam Austin

Starring: Max Fairfield and Sonny Brother

With: Raymond Rogers, Jessica Parks, *Laura Angel*

Synopsis: The fifteenth installment in the Mintz Brothers' popular "Max and Sonny" comedy shorts finds the pair on a train to the Klondike. When they get off at the wrong stop, they meet a crazy magician (Raymond Rogers) with a haunted castle and two gorgeous ghosts (Jessica Parks and *Laura Angel*).

Next Time I'll Know Better (1925)

Length: One hour

Director: Rich Hermann

Writer: Bill Elliot

Starring: Ricardo Esposito and Claire June

With: Sam Jones, Marsha Campbell, Fred Bellamy, *Laura Angel*

Synopsis: A naive but wealthy young Spanish college student (Ricardo Esposito) is taken for a ride by a beautiful lady con artist (Marsha Campbell). When he meets the woman of his dreams (Claire June), he's convinced she's just another schemer. It's up to his new American friends (Sam Jones and Fred Bellamy) to show him the light and get these two crazy kids together.

Our Valley Days (1926)

Length: One hour

Director: Barry Blackwell

Writer: *Sherman Coen*

Starring: Lisa Frothingham and Eleanor Eschenbach

With: Harry Rogers, Vincent Malone, Jessica Parks, *Laura Angel*

Synopsis: Two beautiful young sisters from the heartland (Lisa Frothingham and Eleanor Eschenbach) leave home to seek their fortune, and find romance and adventure on opposite coasts. One falls for a struggling writer dying of consumption (Harry Rogers) while the other gets mixed up with a charming pair of bank robbers (Vincent Malone and Jessica Parks). Eventually fate brings them back to the valley they once called home.

The Doctor (1926)

Length: Fifteen minutes

Director: Will B. Good

Writer: Sam Austin

Starring: Max Fairfield and Sonny Brother

With: Raymond Rogers, Winnifred Major, *Laura Angel*

Synopsis: The latest installment in the Mintz Brothers' popular "Max and Sonny" comedy shorts finds Max with a belly-ache and Sonny trying to get his reluctant buddy to see a doctor (Raymond Rogers). A beautiful but near-sighted nurse (Winnifred Major) and a patient with her leg in a cast (*Laura Angel*) add to the hijinks.

The End of Love (1926)

Length: One hour

Director: *Miles Desmond*

Writer: *Sherman Coen*

Starring: Rex Deacon and Sandra Llewellyn

With: *Laura Angel*, *Sally Ellison*, Jimmy Garrett, Harry Rogers, Gracie Smithers, *Reginald Tyler*

Synopsis: A famous writer (Rex Deacon) loses his wife in a tragic skiing accident. Embittered, he writes a best-selling book called *The End of Love* in which he claims that love is useless in today's modern world. His perky younger sister (*Laura Angel*) and her world-weary pal (*Sally Ellison*) help him find love again in the arms of a beautiful but lonely heiress (Sandra Llewellyn).

Unbroken (1926)

Length: Two hours

Director: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Writer: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Starring: *Laura Angel*, *Larry Anderson*

With: Minnie Reiser, Sal D'Amato, Timmy Glass, Norman Osborne, Raymond Rogers

Synopsis: A beautiful and courageous young woman (*Laura Angel*) leaves college and takes charge of the family farm when her parents (Minnie Reiser and Norman Osborne) are killed by a tornado. With the help of her two kid brothers (Sal D'Amato and Timmy Glass), she saves the farm from foreclosure by a greedy banker (Raymond Rogers) and finds love in the arms of a brawny cowherd (*Larry Anderson*). Tragically, she dies of scarlet fever, but not before the cowherd and her brothers vow never to give up the farm she worked so hard to save.

Interview: *Larry Anderson*

Larry is *Laura*'s co-star in *Unbroken*. He's a decent, soft-spoken guy, and his demeanor belies his sturdy farm-hand appearance. Larry is very polite and doesn't have a negative word to say about anyone. He describes *Laura* as very talented, and predicts that *Unbroken* will make her a star. If asked about the film itself, Larry will grow very animated, stating that it's the best film he's been in, that Alexander is a brilliant director, that it's going to be a smash, and so on. His enthusiasm for *Unbroken* may remind the investigators of Morris Harrison, who had a similar reaction; both were affected by the film's supernatural power. Larry has nothing else of note to say.

Investigators who succeed in Psychology rolls may get an inkling that Larry is hiding something when he talks about *Laura*. No amount of badgering will loosen his tongue. All Larry is hiding is that he's a homosexual, and he gets nervous when asked to talk about his female co-stars because he's afraid he'll say something unconvincing that will give away his secret. He's being a little paranoid, but *Unbroken* is his first big film and he's really worried that his private life will be exposed and wreck his career just as it's

starting to take off. No one at Mintz Brothers knows Larry's secret, except for Ward Fredrick—who knows lots of people's secrets, and whose job it is to keep them all quiet. Larry has nothing to do with Laura's disappearance and doesn't really know her very well.

Interview: Sherman Coen

Sherman was the photo-play writer on *The End of Love* and all of director Miles Desmond's other films, as well. He's a hard-working, little-noticed fellow whose career has been hitched to that of Miles Desmond, much against his wishes. Sherman dislikes Desmond intensely, regarding him as a drunk, a womanizer, and a hack. He tries to keep his feelings to himself, but if questioned about Desmond he'll probably let his opinion slip.

As far as the investigation goes, Sherman knows that Desmond was sleeping with Sally Ellison during the filming of *The End of Love*. He says Sally is a nice old-fashioned girl but not much of an actress; she'll always be a second-stringer. He doesn't know much about Laura except that she's a good kid and a talented actress.

In a few weeks, Coen will be directing his first film, a tear-jerker called *Train of Destiny*. He's hoping to establish himself as a director and get away from working with Miles Desmond. Sally Ellison has a small part in the film. (A copy of the script is in her "Virginia Morgan" hotel room.)

Interview: Miles Desmond

Desmond directed Laura Angel and Sally Ellison in *The End of Love*. Of course, he also knows the truth about Laura's disappearance, and by the time the investigators get around to talking to him, he will have killed Sally (see "Killing Sally Ellison" on p. 158).

Desmond is between films right now and is taking a vacation at home, where he will receive the investigators. (He stops by the studio every day or two to check on some of his projects and socialize.) No matter what time of day they show up, the investigators find Desmond dressed in a bathrobe and drunk. He'll offer the investigators drinks and make another one for himself while he's at it.

The interview with Desmond needs to be handled carefully. He should come off as a loser and a drunk, but he also shouldn't act so outrageous that the investigators immediately peg him as a major suspect. He's crazy as a bedbug and psychotic to boot, but drinking tends to calm him down and smooth him out so that won't be as apparent. However, successful Psychology rolls will indicate that not only is Desmond lying, but he may be unstable as well. His possible comments are summarized in this section.

- **Laura Angel.** Great kid, terrific actress, going to be the next big thing. He'll say that "Alex" is going to make her a star.

- **Sally Ellison.** He takes a drink and pretends not to know she's dead, claiming that since he's on vacation, he hasn't been reading the papers or socializing. He says he's not surprised. He claims Sally was a no-talent slut who'd sleep with anyone, and she probably went home with a mean sailor or something. He says he never dated her. The one moment when his psychosis slips past his alcohol is when he slurs, "Sluts get what sluts deserve."
- **Alexander Solonitsyn.** His eyes light up. He says "Alex" is a genius, the best director ever to bear the title. *Unbroken* is going to be a huge hit because it's the best film ever made. He says if he could be half as good a director as Alex, he could die happy.
- **Clara Negri.** He makes a face. She's okay, he says, but she's over-rated. Still, she's going to be the star of Alex's next film and he'll make her look good.
- **Sherman Coen.** Decent writer as long as he has plenty of Desmond's expert guidance. Coen's about to direct his first film and Desmond caustically (and somewhat resentfully) predicts it'll be a disaster.

Research: Alexander Solonitsyn

Alexander left on a train to New York on September 28th for a publicity tour, getting the word out about *Unbroken*, so he won't be available for an interview. Attempts to interview him by phone invariably fail; he might get on the line and speak for a moment, but he always gets interrupted by an assistant and has to delay the interview until the following day. The investigators can instead learn about him by questioning colleagues or reporters, and doing research at the library or the newspaper morgue. The following list of facts (or rumors) should be dispensed as the Keeper sees fit. Some might be the result of Library Use rolls, while others can be gleaned from conversations. None of these items are provided as player aids, since that would be too great of a tip-off to the players that Alexander is important to the scenario.

- Alexander Nikolai Solonitsyn was born in Russia and worked as a writer, editor, photographer, and finally as a film-maker. He is thirty-six years old.
- His first film, *Triumph*, was some sort of propaganda film for the new Soviet government.
- His second film, *Betrayal*, was a drama that played in Europe and America to rave reviews.
- He emigrated to Hollywood in 1924, apparently because he had some kind of falling-out with the Soviet authorities.
- Mintz Brothers Studios hired him and his first film, *Unfaithful*, was a success.
- His second film was a spooky drama called *Black Mass*. It was panned as boring and overlong. Some critics complained that it glorified Satanism, despite its good-beats-evil ending.

- After *Black Mass* tanked, the studio had him make two run-of-the-mill westerns (*The Ranch* and *Two Bits*), which did decent business.
- Back in the studio's good graces, Alexander made the delightful fantasy *The Moon*. It was a smash success.
- About the time that *The Moon* was released, Alexander began dating Clara Negri, one of Mintz Brothers' big stars. They frequently spend weekends in San Francisco or at Alexander's cabin hideaway.
- Alexander is good friends with Mintz Brothers director Miles Desmond and pioneering animator Oswald Laemmle. The three of them, plus Negri, are often out on the town together.
- His new film, *Unbroken*, is expected to be Mintz Brothers' biggest success ever, and it should make Laura Angel a star.
- Alexander ("Alex Solo" to his friends) is tall, handsome, dashing aristocratic, but a little unfriendly. Those sympathetic to him claim his unfriendliness is just because he's self-conscious about his mediocre English.

Interview: Clara Negri

The investigators don't get an interview with Negri—she grants them an *audience* instead. Imperious and short-tempered, she knows nothing in particular about Laura Angel but will be jealously dismissive of her talent. She makes a point of noting that it will be her, not Laura, who will star in Alex's next film, sure to be even better and more successful than *Unbroken*.

Negri will cut the interview short if questioned about anyone other than Laura. She'll say she's tired, that she doesn't know anything helpful, and orders the investigators to leave.

Successful Psychology rolls will only reveal that Negri is arrogant, jealous of Laura, and has a terrible temper.

Interview: Oswald Laemmle

Laemmle is the head of Laemmle Pictures, a successful animation studio that releases about two dozen short cartoons a year. These cartoons play before feature films and help to comprise an evening's entertainment at moving picture shows. Laemmle's star is an animated rabbit called Harry the Hare, popular with children and adults across America.

The investigators may become interested in Laemmle because he's a friend of Alexander Solonitsyn, Miles Desmond, and Clara Negri. They can easily arrange for an appointment with his secretary at Laemmle Pictures.

Laemmle is a small, lean, precise man with deft hands and an intense gaze. He smokes constantly and buzzes his secretary for refills of coffee several times during the interview. His office doubles as his studio, and the desk is littered both with distribution reports and sketches of Harry the Hare and other characters. In one corner of the office is a small glass

terrarium with a wire-mesh top; inside, a mass of beetles scuttle over a haunch of rancid horseflesh. (If asked, Laemmle evinces enthusiasm for beetles and their movements; he produces a sketchpad and shows exaggerated, swooping coils of lines and blobs representing his busy beetles.)

The investigators may choose to ask Laemmle about a number of the people encountered in their investigation. His likely comments are summarized in this section.

- **Alexander Solonitsyn.** Laemmle says that "Alex" is a brilliant director and a good friend. He mentions that his studio produced some very high-quality animated visual effects for Alex's new film, *Unbroken*—specifically, a sequence involving a tornado destroying a farmhouse.
- **Miles Desmond.** He chuckles and says that Miles is a lively soul, fond of parties and fun.
- **Clara Negri.** Attempting to sound gallant and failing, Laemmle calls her the eighth wonder of the world and the most beautiful feature in all of Los Angeles. He praises her talent and says she and Alex are devoted to each other.
- **Laura Angel.** Laemmle says he doesn't know her except by reputation and that they've never met. He hears her performance in *Unbroken* is tremendous. (If asked, Laemmle says he hasn't seen the film and was unable to attend the first-cut preview screening on the 24th due to a prior commitment; in truth, he's scared of the film's supernatural power.) He learned of Laura's disappearance from Alex the night he left for the east coast, and claims the director was terribly upset.

As noted earlier, Laemmle is having second thoughts about his association with Alex and the Net. He will be, perhaps, a little over-eager to praise his "friends" and this may be noticed with a successful Psychology roll.

If the investigators lean on Laemmle, he grows agitated and defensive, talking strangely about how he doesn't get out much these days. He'll ask the investigators how *they* would feel if people came into your office and began threatening you as if you were a bug. Laemmle's reaction is likely to be disproportionate to the investigators' treatment of him—he'll react strongly to even mild tactics of coercion or intimidation. His speech will grow more and more nonsensical, interlaced with bizarre references to bugs and women, until he finally orders the investigators out, buzzing in his secretary to show them the door.

If the investigators treat Laemmle kindly and sympathetically, he'll be grateful and pathetic. He'll ramble on a bit about how he doesn't really want to be Alex's friend and how he's really too busy to socialize. He compares human friendships to the insect world, noting that a beetle doesn't need a friend, just a task or a goal. He ends the conversation by whimpering slightly and dragging on his cigarette, then thanking the investigators for their courtesy and insisting that he must get back to work.

As the investigators are leaving, call for Spot Hidden rolls. Should any player roll under half of his Spot Hidden score, he notices something disconcerting as he heads out the door. Laemmle is sitting at his desk, his legs visible through the cut-out front. His right knee is jerking up and down, twitching with nervous energy from the constant flow of coffee and cigarettes. From his pants cuff spill several living beetles, who drop onto his shoe and then to the floor where they scuttle around. The investigators may make of this what they will; the peculiar Laemmle enjoys keeping a handful of beetles on the inside of his clothes while he works so he can feel them crawling on his skin.

Laemmle will not spill the beans about Alex, Laura, and the magic camera at this meeting. However, the investigators will have gained some insights into his character and may be able to manipulate him further at a later point. If skillfully manipulated or intimidated, Laemmle will admit that Alex had something to do with Laura's disappearance, and recommend that the investigators visit Alex's cabin if they want to see a real good show sometime. If brought to the attention of the police, he could potentially be coerced into testifying, though the chance of his committing suicide or simply having a nervous breakdown are high.

Stage Two: Events

A number of things are likely to occur in the course of the initial investigation. Although these events are grouped here as the second stage in the scenario, they may well occur at any point in the preceding material. It's up to the Keeper to decide just when these things happen, but guidelines are provided where appropriate. All of these events involve Miles Desmond.

Event: Killing Sally Ellison

In the days leading up to the start of the scenario, crazed director Miles Desmond has murdered two prostitutes in a dramatic pair of crimes that are becoming known as the Firebug murders. Sally Ellison, the actress who hired the investigators in the guise of "Virginia Morgan," will be the third victim.

Timing this murder is important. Ideally, Ellison should die on the evening of the same day that the investigators discover the "Virginia Morgan" ruse, so that they are denied the opportunity to question her. This isn't that important to the plot—she can't tell them anything that Morris Harrison couldn't—but it will be dramatic to have the investigators' client revealed to be using a false name and then dying before they can question her. Ellison's death should also draw the investigators' attention to the Firebug killings; the morning after her death, her photo appears on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*. This article appears as Player Aid #3 (p.

160). Later that day, Morris Harrison contacts the investigators and confesses the Morgan/Ellison ploy if they don't already know about it. He tearfully begs them to continue the case and find Ellison's killer as well as solving the mystery of Laura's disappearance.

How it Happens

On the day of her murder, Ellison runs into Miles Desmond, whom she dated briefly during the filming of *The End of Love*. Desmond is harried and drunk. When Ellison mentions that Laura Angel is missing and asks Desmond about it, he acts furtive and suspicious. Naively playing detective, Ellison suggests they meet that evening at her apartment. (If the investigators are watching Ellison's apartment, have the couple meet at Virginia Morgan's hotel room instead.)

Desmond arrives at whatever time the Keeper finds convenient. Ellison brings up the topic of Laura Angel again, and Desmond flips out. He threatens her with a butcher knife and forces her to tell him what she knows about Laura—including the names of the investigators and the fact that Morris hired them. Satisfied, Desmond stabs her to death and throws her body on the bed, then performs a rough cliterectomy. He ransacks the place (whether it's her apartment or her hotel room) in the hopes of finding anything related to Laura. That done, he sprinkles lighter fluid on the bed, sets it alight, and flees the scene.

Conceivably, the investigators might be lucky enough to intervene. Avoid this if possible, since it's more interesting and challenging for them to investigate the Firebug murders and ponder the connections between the killings and the disappearance of Laura Angel.

After the murder, Desmond goes to either Ellison's apartment or Virginia Morgan's hotel room (whichever he hasn't been to) and ransacks it, as well. He might do this right away, or wait a few hours or even days—essentially, he does so whenever the location in question isn't being watched, unless the Keeper is ready for the investigators to confront Desmond. Once he's ransacked the place, he stabs the bed multiple times with his knife in frustration, then sets the bed on fire as usual. Note that if it's the hotel room he's ransacking, he might slip right past anyone in the lobby watching for Virginia Morgan/Sally Ellison if they haven't met Desmond yet and aren't somehow watching the hotel room itself.

Event: Desmond Prowls

If all went well with the murder of Sally Ellison, Miles Desmond now knows the identities of some or all of the investigators. Irrational and desperate to protect Alexander, Desmond will begin harassing the investigators. The nature of this harassment is up to the Keeper. Initially, Desmond will break into one of the investigators' homes. Just as with

Ellison, he'll ransack the place and take anything that looks like it has to do with the case, then stab the bed several times and set it on fire.

Past that point, Desmond might do the same to other investigators' homes. Alternately, he might sabotage their cars, leave them threatening, crazed, anonymous letters, or something else altogether.

However, Desmond doesn't have to do any of these things. The Keeper can elect to skip some or all of the harassment and proceed directly to the next event, "Desmond Flees."

Event: Desmond Flees

At some point, Desmond is able to reach Alexander in New York City by phone and fill him in on what's going on. (This should be after he kills Sally Ellison.) Desmond tearfully confesses the Firebug killings and begs for Alexander to tell him what to do. Alexander instructs Desmond to get a key to the cabin from his Skoptsi servants and hide out there for a few days, where he can play with the projector and avoid getting into further trouble. Alexander says he'll return shortly.

Restored with confidence, Desmond does as he's told. He grabs some clothes, stops by Alexander's house to pick up the key, and drives like a madman out to the cabin. He'll stay there for the duration of the scenario, unless the Keeper has other plans.

Event: Alexander Returns

When the Keeper is ready for it to happen, Alexander Solonitsyn can return from his east-coast publicity tour. Although it took him several days to get out there by train, he can make a secret return much more quickly with his Gate spell.

His version of Gate (described on p. 177) requires that someone create a matching set of sigils at the desired destination. Whenever Desmond reaches him by phone in New York City and tells him what's going on, Alexander calls his Skoptsi servants at his house. One of them immediately drives to the cabin and inscribes the necessary sigils on the side of the stone altar located in the woods nearby. With this done, Alexander can create the entry gate at his end and transport himself home whenever he likes.

Alexander will prefer to remain in NYC for as long as he can, since it gives him a very solid alibi for whatever is occurring back home—and it also gives him a measure of safety from capture. If he has to come back, however, he'll keep a low profile on the west coast and then return by gate to NYC to maintain his alibi. He constructs the entry gate (and a return gate) in a hotel room he rents for one month in advance under a false name, not the hotel room he's staying in. (Each gate costs him three magic points—if he has to cast more spells in the next twenty-four hours, keep this in mind.) Since each gate is good for only one use, he'll avoid

moving back and forth repeatedly if possible, especially if his Skoptsi servants are dead, under arrest, or being watched; without them, he can't use the spell in the first place.

(To get from NYC to LA, he makes an entry gate on his end and his servants make an exit gate on their end. To get from LA back to NYC, he makes an exit gate in NYC before he leaves, and then makes his own entry gate in LA to get back east. His exit gate in NYC will only last a week, so if he's going to stay in LA longer than that, he'll pop back to create a fresh one.)

Stage Three: In Deep

Once the investigators get past their initial examination of the facts and people involved in the disappearance of Laura Angel, they'll be ready to look deeper into the situation. The topics covered in this stage go beneath the surface. Note that the investigators may well jump back and forth between the topics of stage one and the topics here, with the events of stage two intermingling among them. This stage simply focuses on topics that the investigators are unlikely to examine until they have first looked at related topics in stage one.

Research: The Firebug Murders

There's a killer on the loose in Los Angeles, and the newspapers are calling him "the Firebug." He murders women and then sets their beds on fire. The Firebug, of course, is director Miles Desmond. He has claimed three victims so far: two prostitutes and now, actress Sally Ellison.

With the death of Ellison, the investigators are likely to look into the Firebug case. Three player aids (#1, #2, and #3, p. 160) present newspaper articles about the murders. The basic facts of the crimes are summarized in the nearby boxed text.

Interview: Det. Smith, LAPD

Detective Ed Smith of the LAPD is in charge of the Firebug case. He'll have little interest in sharing information with the investigators unless they demonstrate some involvement, such as knowing Sally Ellison or if one or more of their homes have been assaulted by the Firebug. If the investigators are on good terms with Detective Haley Roads in Hollywood, he'll make a call to Smith and encourage him to work with the investigators. On the other hand, if Roads is still in the studio's pocket and is stonewalling the investigators, he'll call Smith and tell him the investigators are irresponsible and so forth. Should that happen, Smith will probably haul them in for rough questioning and a night in a holding cell before kicking them back out onto the street.

In truth, Smith can offer little information in any event. A man was seen with each prostitute and he paid for the rooms, but he has not yet been identified. Smith is presently

The Firebug Victims

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Date
Sarah Archer	24	Prostitute	Palm Rooms Hotel	9/28/26
Patricia Campbell	17	Prostitute	Desert Inn	9/31/26
Sally Ellison	27	Actress	victim's apartment	10/??/26

Player Aid #1—Los Angeles Times, September 29, 1926

Hotel Murder

Sarah Archer, a guest at the Palm Rooms Hotel, was found murdered last night after a fire was reported in her room. The clerk on duty, Reginald Wiggins, responded to a guest's complaint of smoke in the hallway and discovered that the bed in Ms. Archer's room was on fire and her lifeless body lay in it. This morning, police announced that Ms. Archer had been stabbed to death and her body left to burn by an unknown assailant.

Police are seeking a man described as average height and build with dark hair and a light beard. He accompanied Ms. Archer to the hotel and paid for their room, leaving a false name and address with the clerk.

Sarah Archer, 24, was a resident of Los Angeles. No relatives have been identified as of yet. She is said to work nights.

Player Aid #2—Los Angeles Times, October 1, 1926

Killer Takes Second Victim

Police believe that the City of Angels is home to a multiple murderer, following the discovery last night of young Patricia Campbell, 17, slain in the Desert Inn Hotel. Another guest of the hotel smelled smoke and alerted the front desk clerk, who found that Ms. Campbell's room was on fire and her body lay on the bed—brutally stabbed and then left to burn, possibly still alive as the flames engulfed her.

A similar fate befell Sarah Archer on the night of September 28, when she was likewise stabbed and her room set on fire at the Palm Rooms Hotel. Police believe that the similar nature of the two crimes and what they described as "the mania of the perpetrators" suggest that one man killed both women. Such a man was sighted with both victims just prior to their deaths. In both cases, the man accompanied each woman to a hotel, paid for their room, and left a false name and address. He is described as average height and build, with dark hair, unshaven.

Ms. Campbell ran away from her parents' home in Alameda last July and her present address is not known. Like the previous victim, Ms. Campbell was said to be a woman of the streets. Police believe that the killer selected the two victims in the course of their work, luring them to hotels and then striking when their guard was down.

Player Aid #3—Los Angeles Times, October __, 1926

ACTRESS SLAIN BY "FIREBUG"

Third in Murder Spree

Police say the "Firebug" multiple murderer has struck again, this time at the heart of Hollywood: Sally Ellison, a 27-year-old actress with Mintz Brothers Studio, was murdered in her apartment last evening. After he killed her, the "Firebug" set the apartment on fire and fled unseen.

The first two victims of the "Firebug" were Sarah Archer and Patricia Campbell, both slain in recent days. In each case, the killer struck and then set the scene on fire before leaving. Ms. Archer and Ms. Campbell were both said to work the streets; Ms. Ellison, by contrast, was a reputable actress with a solid career. Police suspect she met the killer at some evening establishment, possibly a restaurant or theater.

Sal Mintz, co-founder of Mintz Brothers Studio, expressed his shock and sorrow at the crime. "To think that this could happen to a sweet girl like Sally, it just breaks my heart." Ms. Ellison has appeared in a variety of Mintz Brothers productions, including the recent hit *The End of Love*.

combing through the files of known sex offenders, but has no real leads beyond a general description of the suspect. (Miles Desmond fits the description, but so could many other people.) The one thing Smith knows that isn't in the newspapers is the genital mutilation that the killer performs after each murder. If he's on good terms with the investigators, he may make a guarded statement that the victims were mutilated in what appears to be a sexual context, but he will not give details.

Search: Mintz Brothers Studios

At some point, the investigators are likely to try a clandestine search at the Mintz Brothers Studios. They can get passes from Morris Harrison which will allow them onto the lot, even after hours. (They will need to sign in, but they can use false names if desired—security isn't all that tight.) Alternately, they could simply make an appointment with Harrison or Ward Fredrick or whoever, and then just stick around (maybe hiding out in an unused area) until the time seems right to go on the prowl.

The only useful target of a search at this point is to examine the sign-in sheets from the day of Laura's disappearance. The forged sheets can be either in the front-gate guardhouse or in Ward Fredrick's office—wherever the investigators look first. If they're in the guardhouse, the investigators might get the guard on duty to let them see the logs with bribery or a Persuade or Fast Talk attempt. The logs aren't really considered confidential—they're just daily paperwork. Fredrick's office, however, has a secure lock (-10% to Locksmith efforts). Inside, his filing cabinets are all locked (also at -10%), and none are labeled on the outside. Within can be found personnel files for every employee, as well as miscellaneous records such as old sign-in sheets.

The forged sheets omit any mention of either Alexander or Laura on the day of her disappearance (September 25). However, they *are* forgeries, and might be revealed as such. An investigator with Forgery skill or with a background in such matters could make an appropriate roll. Otherwise, it takes a critical success on an Idea roll (20% of the normal level) to notice that the handwriting for all the signatures looks a little similar. No skill rolls are necessary if the investigators think to compare the sign-in sheets from that day with those of other days, however; anyone with that much initiative deserves to realize that the signatures on September 25th are bogus—decent forgeries, but still bogus.

The real sheets are in Fredrick's filing cabinets, inside Alexander's personnel file. These clearly show that Alexander checked into the lot at 6 P.M. on Saturday, September 25th, and checked out at 1 A.M. that night. Laura Angel checked into the lot at 9:20 P.M. and never checked out. Alexander's file is otherwise clean.

The real sheets also record a different guard on duty than the forged ones. The replacement guard is loyal to



The Firebug strikes.

Fredrick and will swear that he was working and didn't see Alexander or Laura. The real guard is something of an idiot and will admit to seeing them as recorded if he's leaned on.

If the investigators check other personnel files, they won't find much of interest except for Miles Desmond's file. His folder is full of arrest reports for public drunkenness, consorting with prostitutes, and so forth. All of the arrests were kiboshed by Detective Roads and are no longer in the public record; he delivers all such files to Fredrick for safekeeping. The reports could be used against Roads, if desired.

Research: Alexander's Filmography

By this time, the investigators are probably narrowing on Alexander Solonitsyn as a possible suspect in Laura's disappearance. Even if they haven't found the forged logs, his suspicious trip to the east coast and the strange circle of people around him should draw their attention. Basic research on Alexander was covered earlier, but now the investigators may be interested in checking out his films. Morris Harrison will be happy to arrange screenings of any or all of Alexander's six films for Mintz Brothers (including *Unbroken*). The investigators will be unable to find copies of Alexander's two Soviet films, however, except for the ones kept at his cabin. Details of those films appear in the section "Search: Alexander's Cabin" on p. 168.

Alexander's films and the principals in each one are listed in this section. Names in *italics* are of some importance and are described elsewhere in this scenario. All other names are irrelevant to the case.

Unfaithful (1925)

Length: One hour

Director: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Writer: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Starring: Alan Ledford and Lucy Horton

With: George Haynes, Tracy Collins, Jeremy Seagar

Synopsis: A decent but naive architect (Alan Ledford) falls in love with a sassy hustler (Lucy Horton), but when she has an affair with his boozy gambler brother (George Haynes) his life falls apart. She leaves him, taking his money and breaking his heart. He hits bottom, drinking too much and losing his job, until he ends up on the streets. A kindly young volunteer at a street mission (Tracy Collins) helps him rebuild his life and heal his heart with her love.

Black Mass (1925)

Length: One hour

Director: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Writer: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Starring: Donald Thoreson and Samantha Salle

With: Dorothy Chambers, Paul Hernandez, Kathleen Whalen

Synopsis: In this loose adaptation of J.K. Huysmans' novel *La*

Bas, a repressed Paris academic (Donald Thoreson) falls in love with a mysterious society woman (Samantha Salle) who slowly draws him into the Satanic underworld of Paris. Shadowy meetings with strange, decadent fringe dwellers spark the academic's curiosity, but before he knows it he has become a participant in bloody rituals to the devil. Driven by obsessive love and liberated by this strange underworld, he finally feels at home—until a visit by his sister (Kathleen Whalen), a kindly nun, rekindles his conscience. He leads the Paris police on a daring midnight raid against the Satanists and bests the devil himself in a strange game of riddles.

The Ranch (1925)

Length: One hour

Director: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Writer: Jonathan Pileggi

Starring: John Colvin and Buck Prince

With: Neal Vincent, Glen Buchanan, Debbie Allard

Synopsis: Two brothers (John Colvin and Buck Prince) head out west in search of work as cowboys. They hire on at a cattle ranch run by a charismatic rascal (Neal Vincent), but as the weeks pass the pair realize that the ranch is really a hotbed of illegal activity. Deputized by the ineffectual sheriff in exchange for a bottle of booze, they bring six-gun justice to a lawless land.

Two Bits (1925)

Length: One hour

Director: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Writer: Jonathan Pileggi

Starring: Gordon Cooper and Dorothy Chambers

With: Vicky Lee, Floyd Magley, Ryan Myrick

Synopsis: Suckered into a poker game, a city boy out west (Gordon Cooper) loses big and can't pay off what he owes to a nefarious saloon owner (Dorothy Chambers). She hires him to run errands, but it's all a ploy—he's the spitting image of her rustler boyfriend (Floyd Magley) and they conspire to throw the city boy in the path of a wily bounty hunter (Ryan Myrick), hoping that a fatal case of mistaken identity will get the rustler off the hook. But this city boy has a few tricks up his sleeve.

The Moon (1926)

Length: One hour

Director: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Writer: *Alexander Solonitsyn*

Starring: Darryl Thurmond and Fred Bellamy

With: Frank Willis, Sam Sloan, Vicky Lee

Synopsis: Two handsome scientist/explorers (Darryl Thurmond and Fred Bellamy) capture the legendary Phoenix—a giant bird—and fly on its back to the Moon. There they are hailed as heroes by a decadent culture of hedonists in a seeming paradise. An evening's entertainment at a harem of beautiful women turns murderous, and the pair flee their two-faced hosts. They pass through a canyon of

flame which the hedonists will not cross and arrive at the vast cavern home of Mary the Moon Mother (Vicky Lee), a friendly goddess who summons their phoenix and sends them home with a message of love to the people of Earth.

Unbroken (1926)

Length: Two hours

Director: Alexander Solonitsyn

Writer: Alexander Solonitsyn

Starring: Laura Angel, Larry Anderson

With: Minnie Reiser, Sal D'Amato, Timmy Glass, Norman Osborne, Raymond Rogers

Synopsis: A beautiful and courageous young woman (Laura Angel) leaves college and takes charge of the family farm when her parents (Minnie Reiser and Norman Osborne) are killed by a tornado. With the help of her two kid brothers (Sal D'Amato and Timmy Glass), she saves the farm from foreclosure by a greedy banker (Raymond Rogers) and finds love in the arms of a brawny cowherd (Larry Anderson). Tragically, she dies of scarlet fever, but not before the cowherd and her brothers vow never to give up the farm she worked so hard to save.

Screenings: Alexander's Films

The investigators may be interested in watching some or all of Alexander's films. As noted earlier, his Soviet films are unavailable (except for the copies in his cabin). However, all six of his Mintz Brothers films are available for screening at the studio. Morris Harrison can easily arrange for such a screening after hours or on a weekend, and he'll meet the investigators at the front gate to lead them to a screening room.

Harrison will join the investigators for the screenings to make sure everything goes smoothly and to ward off any other employees who might poke their noses in to see what's going on. But he also really wants to see *Unbroken* again, something he'll probably mention if the investigators want to watch that film. The film affected Harrison powerfully, thanks to its magical nature—acting in tandem with the romantic attachment he already had for Laura.

The Keeper can summarize the plot of each film using the synopses given in the previous section, elaborating if desired. Only two points of real interest arise:

- If the investigators have already searched Alexander's cabin (described later) and found his ceremonial Skoptsi items, they may recognize them in the film *Black Mass*. These are the implements used by the leader of the Satanic cult in his evil rites. (Alexander used them in the film as a grim private joke.)
- If the investigators watch *Unbroken* and Morris Harrison (or another studio NPC) is present, he'll notice something interesting that the investigators wouldn't have been aware of: Laura's death scene has changed

from the version that was shown at the preview screening the day before she disappeared. At that screening, Laura's death scene had her in bed surrounded by her brothers and her lover. Now, however, the film has been re-edited and the scene replaced with one of Laura dying in bed by herself. The scene is overwhelmingly powerful. Call for POWx5 rolls; investigators who fail the roll begin weeping uncontrollably when Laura's character dies.

Harrison will express surprise at the new version of the scene. He says that no one at the preview screening indicated that there was a problem with the original version or that there were plans to change it. (Alexander re-edited the master negative to splice in the magically augmented version of that scene after his camera consumed Laura, then produced a new print himself to see the effect.)

If the investigators want to follow this up, they can check the paperwork on file at the studio's film laboratory. (Harrison will mention this if the investigators are wondering how they can learn about what happened.) The records there will show that Alexander signed out several thousand feet of film on September 24th, the day of the preview screening; it is allocated to the budget of *Unbroken* for accounting purposes. There are no records regarding the processing of any new footage from Alexander, however, since he did all the work himself. The master negative can be located, and the newly spliced footage unspooled if desired. Should anyone handle or just look at the negative film stock of the scene, call for a Sanity check (o/1 loss); the investigator is suddenly overwhelmed with a disturbing sense of loss and fear. If any of the lab workers are questioned about the altered ending, they'll be shocked—no one is supposed to be mucking around with the master negative except them.

The altered print of *Unbroken* is critical to the scenario. To rescue Laura, the investigators must run the footage of the death scene through Alexander's magic projector (described later, under "Search: Alexander's Cabin"). They can use either the print they viewed or the negative; both will serve to free Laura from Alexander's nitrate prison. If all the prints and the negative of *Unbroken* are destroyed, Laura is forever lost.

Search: Clara Negri's House

If the investigators become suspicious of Negri, they may decide to break in to her house and check the place out. Negri lives in a gracious but not palatial two-story house with an Egyptian motif throughout; she bought it a year ago and had it remodeled to suit her tastes. The exterior is a mock sandstone with tall, narrow windows and columns painted to discretely resemble those of Egyptian temples. Inside, bands of hieroglyphs decorate the walls while plaster statues of Anubis and other Egyptian bric-a-brac litter the

floors. Negri refers to her home as "my temple," a facetious and egocentric statement but that nevertheless may give investigators pause. Her choice of decor has nothing to do with the occult; Carter's discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb was just three years ago, and Egyptian styling is trendy.

Negri has no full-time staff. She has a Japanese gardener who comes by twice a week to handle landscaping chores in her yard and small garden, and a maid who comes by three times a week to clean up, do laundry, and so forth. Both are scheduled in such a way that Negri never has to see them, which generally means that when they're working, they're present from about 11 A.M. until 3 P.M., and only on weekdays. The maid has a steady schedule of Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, while the gardener chooses his days arbitrarily, based on the needs of Negri's lawn and his work for other clients.

The doors (front, back, and a side door from the kitchen) are usually locked, but when the maid is working she tends to open all the doors to air the house out—Negri smokes potent, foul-smelling cigarettes from her native Germany, and she smokes a lot of them. The gardener never goes inside, as he brings his tools with him in a pickup truck.

Inside, the investigators can waste a lot of time. The only areas of interest are her bedroom and her study.

Search: Negri's Bedroom

The nightstand by her bed has a flip-up top, covered in magazines, unwashed glasses, and a small lamp. Inside is a Po8 Luger semi-automatic pistol that she brought with her from Germany. It's kept fully loaded, and two additional magazines (also loaded) are present as well. She takes the pistol with her on trips to San Francisco, but has never had to use it on those visits. Also present is a switchblade, another item brought across the waves. It's seen a lot of use in San Francisco—this is the weapon she uses on every one of her thrill killings. Ample quantities of dried blood can be found incrusting in the hilt and the spring action. If Negri believes she's in some sort of trouble, she may take to keeping both the gun and the switchblade in her purse at all times.

Search: Negri's Study

Her study contains several bookcases full of volumes, almost all in German. They are heavy reading, by and large; classic literature, philosophy, and so forth. Included are well-read works by Friedrich Nietzsche (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Ecce Homo*), Goethe (*Faust*), and the 1926 edition of *Mein Kampf* by one Adolf Hitler (this latter title would not appear in English until 1939, and Hitler at this point is not well-known outside of Germany, so the investigators may well not be familiar with it or its soon-to-be infamous author). No occult-related works are present save Sir George Fraser's twelve-volume anthropological classic *The Golden Bough*.

A roll-top desk in one corner contains Negri's meticulous records of contracts, income, household expenses, and so forth. None are of real interest except for her appointment books, the first of which begins with an entry on May 5, 1923: "Los Angeles." Even these are mundane except for the fact that they list her murderous trips to San Francisco. No mention of crimes are made, of course, but the dates are important evidence. They show that her solo San Francisco trips were: 9/12/24–9/14/24, 2/20/25–2/22/25, and 11/6/25–11/8/25. Her trips with Alexander Solonitsyn (listed as "Alex") to San Francisco were: 2/26/26–2/28/26, 5/14/26–5/16/26, and 7/9/26–7/11/26.

In one drawer of the desk are six small black varnished boxes, of Japanese manufacture and available in any import shop. The contents are a bit puzzling. They include:

- a pocketwatch inscribed "To Burke, from your loving father, Harold"
- six pennies and three dimes, none dated later than 1924
- a thick gold-loop earring, of the type traditionally seen on sailors
- a crumpled napkin from Larry's Grill, San Francisco
- a worn pencil with "Library of UCB-Berkeley" printed on the side
- an ivory-handled file knife with the initials "PP" carved roughly into the hilt

These are the souvenirs taken by Negri from her murder victims. For more information on the sources of these items and where investigation of them may lead, see the next section, "Research: The His & Hers Homicides."

There is nothing else of interest in the study.

Research: The His & Hers Homicides

Since September of 1924, someone has been murdering handsome young men in San Francisco. As of last July, there have been six known victims. (Clara Negri is responsible for all six murders, although she has been joined by Alexander for the last three.) There are no suspects in the crimes. All six victims were stabbed to death, but the last three were also castrated *post mortem*. In two instances, a personal item of the victim is known to be missing. (Something was actually taken from every victim, but the other items were too commonplace for their absence to be noticed.) Player Aids #4–9 (pp. 166–67) are newspaper articles describing each murder. (For the Keeper's reference, the nearby boxed text summarizes the major particulars of each crime.) Detective Martin Williams of the San Francisco Police Department is in charge of the case.

The investigators might get interested in the crimes if they learn about Negri & Solonitsyn's trips to San Francisco, something that is common knowledge thanks to gossip columns in the newspapers and movie-fan magazines. The

dates of their trips can be learned from Negri's appointment books at her home, or assembled from records at Mintz Brothers Studio (Morris Harrison could figure this out). A gossip columnist could also dig up the information from his files. Checking out the San Francisco newspapers for events on the weekends of the couple's trips will quickly turn up the murders. Alternately, the investigators could check with the SFPD or a San Francisco reporter about dramatic unsolved murders in the area—perhaps hoping for a Firebug lead. This could turn up news of the His & Hers Homicides, which could in turn prompt the investigators to figure out when Negri & Solonitsyn were there.

Interview: Det. Williams, SFPD

Getting an interview with Detective Martin Williams is dependent on the investigators' professional standing and possibly their use of skills such as Persuade or Fast Talk. (If the investigators cannot plausibly get help from Williams, they can instead talk to Barry Owens, crime reporter for the San Francisco *Herald*. He can tell them substantially the same thing, but will want something in return—information, or maybe just a steak dinner.)

The police did not initially connect the first four murders. It was only when the fifth murder occurred—the second involving castration—that the SFPD looked back and decided that all five killings were probably the work of the same person. Detective Williams worked the fifth murder, and was the one who put the pieces together. He's now in charge of the overall investigation.

In each case, the victim was an unmarried man in his late teens or twenties, handsome, and with no criminal record. Each man was known to be social and frequented a variety of social clubs. Each dated often but had no steady girlfriend at the time of death. All were gainfully employed residents of San Francisco with the exception of Richie Gaynor, who was a sailor on the merchant vessel *Cambridge* in town for a few days. (The ship has long since left port and is somewhere in Asia.)

Jenkins and Gaynor each checked into a cheap hotel with a well-dressed, attractive woman who was wearing sunglasses; her appearance (hair color, make-up, apparent age, and clothing) is somewhat different each time. Their whereabouts on the evening prior to that point are unknown, and the woman has not been identified. None of Lowenstein's neighbors noticed him coming home on the night of his death and do not know if he was accompanied or by whom.

The last three victims—Fellows, Andrews, and Partridge—each checked into a cheap hotel, but were accompanied by a man. The descriptions of their companions vary, with a variety of glasses, facial hair, and even heights, but Detective Williams believes it is the same man in disguise—just as with the woman in the first three cases. A bum sitting in the lobby of the Richardson noticed a well-dressed, attractive woman wearing sunglasses who entered the hotel about fifteen minutes after Andrews and the unknown man did. She was not known to be a guest of the hotel but went straight towards the rooms. Detective Williams believes that she and the man are accomplices in the crimes, and that had better investigation been done earlier then a witness might have turned up who spotted the man arriving later to join the woman and the victims. (Detective Williams does not know that the woman, Clara Negri, committed the first three murders alone.) Two of the victims had a personal item taken, but Williams will not reveal what these items were. The last three victims were also fully castrated—the complete set of genitals was removed with a knife. Williams will not mention this aspect of the case unless it seems directly relevant to something the investigators are telling him.

With the murder of Philip Partridge, the case broke in the papers and caused a brief sensation. Things have been quiet for a couple of months, but if another murder occurs it's bound to draw lots of attention.

If the investigators suggest Clara Negri as a possible suspect, Detective Williams will find the idea absurd without something to back it up. A log of her trips to San Francisco—which tallies perfectly with the murders—will get him inter-

The His & Hers Homicides Victims

Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Date	Notes
Burke Jenkins	18	Porter	Marcus Hotel	9/13/24	a
Peter Lowenstein	26	Accountant	victim's apartment	2/20/25	
Richie Gaynor	23	Sailor	Seaside Inn	11/7/25	
Larry Fellows	25	Waiter	Carlton Hotel	2/27/26	
Jason Andrews	19	Student	Richardson Hotel	5/15/26	
Philip Partridge	28	Dockworker	Seagull Inn	7/10/26	b

a Burke Jenkins' pocketwatch was stolen. It was a gift from his father and is engraved, "To Burke, from your loving father, Harold."

b Philip Partridge's ivory-handled knife was stolen. His initials are carved into the hilt.

Player Aid #4—San Francisco Examiner, September 14, 1924

Man Slain Downtown

Burke Jenkins, an 18-year-old porter at the St. James Inn, was murdered last night by an unknown woman. The pair checked into the Marcus Hotel downtown, signing in under false names and addresses. Police believe the motive was robbery. The woman is described as being in her 20s, dark-haired, attractive, and well-dressed.

Player Aid #5—San Francisco Examiner, February 21, 1925

Accountant Murdered at Home

The neighbors didn't notice anything amiss, yet Peter Lowenstein was murdered in his apartment last night around 9 P.M. A co-worker of Lowenstein's, Jack Gittes, stopped by to pay a visit and found the body of the accountant sprawled on the floor. No one else at Lowenstein's apartment recalled seeing him come home or receive visitors. Police suspect robbery as the motive.

Player Aid #6—San Francisco Examiner, November 8, 1925

Sailor Ashore For Good

Richie Gaynor, a young commercial sailor in town on shore leave, checked into the Seaside Inn with a female companion last evening. Two hours later, a clerk found his body and discovered that the woman was gone. Police say the unidentified woman is a suspect in the case, but they haven't ruled out the possibility of a third person being involved. "We think she may have just been the bait to get this guy off-guard," Detective Larry Charles said, "and then maybe let the real killer in to do the job." Gaynor's family has been notified and are traveling from Pennsylvania for the funeral.

Player Aid #7—San Francisco Examiner, February 28, 1926

Waiter Brutally Slain

Larry Fellows, a waiter at Bill's Grill on the waterfront, was murdered last night in the Carlton Hotel. The witness who discovered the body described the scene as "horrible." Joseph Buford, a salesman in town for the week, knocked on Fellows' door to borrow a cigarette. Finding the door open and sensing that something was wrong, he looked inside.

"I was in the war, and saw some action," Buford said. "But let me tell you, the kind of deliberate, heartless cruelty I saw done to that poor guy just shocked me."

Police say that Fellows, 25, checked into the Carlton with an unidentified male companion. The man is described as being in his 50s, with a gray beard and thick silver hair. Both appeared to be coming in from a jovial night on the town. The motive for the crime is as yet unknown.

ested in a hurry. If the investigators took the murder souvenirs from her house, he'll be interested but also angry; the evidence is useless to him in court unless he can find it in Negri's house himself. He may ask the investigators to put the items back where they found them so he can find them officially later on.

It's possible for the investigators to forge a good working relationship with Detective Williams if they have valuable information. He'll be especially interested in any connections they might make to the Firebug killings. He's heard of them, but since the victims in his cases are all men and the victims of the Firebug are all women, and since his cases don't involve burning beds, he hasn't put them together. Information on

the Firebug's habit of genital mutilation will get his attention (though of course, different killers are at work here).

Search: Alexander's House

Alexander Solonitsyn lives in a one-story ranch-style house in an upper-middle-class residential neighborhood of Los Angeles. He shares the house with his two Skoptsi acolytes, who act as servants and guards as necessary. The house is in the Spanish mission style, with a paved rear patio and red-tile roof. Four doors allow entry: the front door, the side door into the kitchen, a rear sliding-glass patio door, and a door that leads into the enclosed garage alongside

Player Aid #8—San Francisco Examiner, May 16, 1926

Student Murdered in Hotel

Jason Andrews, a freshman at UC-Berkeley, was stabbed to death last night in the Richardson Hotel downtown. Andrews took a room in the company of an unidentified well-dressed man around eight o'clock. Witnesses at the hotel said the pair appeared jovial, and were joined by an unidentified woman about fifteen minutes later.

At approximately ten o'clock, the guest in the room next to Andrews' complained to the front desk about an odor. A clerk entered Andrews' room and found the body of the young man on the bed, his companions missing.

Police believe the motive was robbery.

Player Aid #9—San Francisco Examiner, July 11, 1926

HIS & HERS HOMICIDES

Mystery Couple Sought In Six Deaths

Police believe an unidentified man and woman are responsible for the brutal murders of six San Francisco men over the past two years. Said to be well-dressed and attractive, the couple take their victims to cheap hotels and then stab them to death.

Although some items belonging to the victims are missing, police do not believe robbery is the motive. "These people are thrill killers," Detective Martin Williams of SFPD-Homicide said. "They're animals, and we're going to bring them to justice."

The latest victim of the mystery couple is dockworker Philip Partridge, 28. Partridge checked into the Seagull Hotel last night around 6 P.M. and was found dead the following morning when a maid came to clean the room.

He was accompanied by an unidentified man, believed to be the same man seen in two previous murders: those of Larry Fellows on February 27 and Jason Andrews on May 15. In the case of Andrews, he and the man were joined by an unidentified woman, herself seen in the company of three earlier victims: Burke Jenkins on September 13, 1924; Peter Lowenstein on February 20, 1925; and Richie Gaynor on November 7, 1925. Police now believe that the man and the woman committed all six murders.

All the victims were single men between the ages of 18 and 28, with no criminal records. All are described as handsome, hard-working, upstanding citizens of the bay area.

the house. All exterior doors, including the door into the garage, are kept locked.

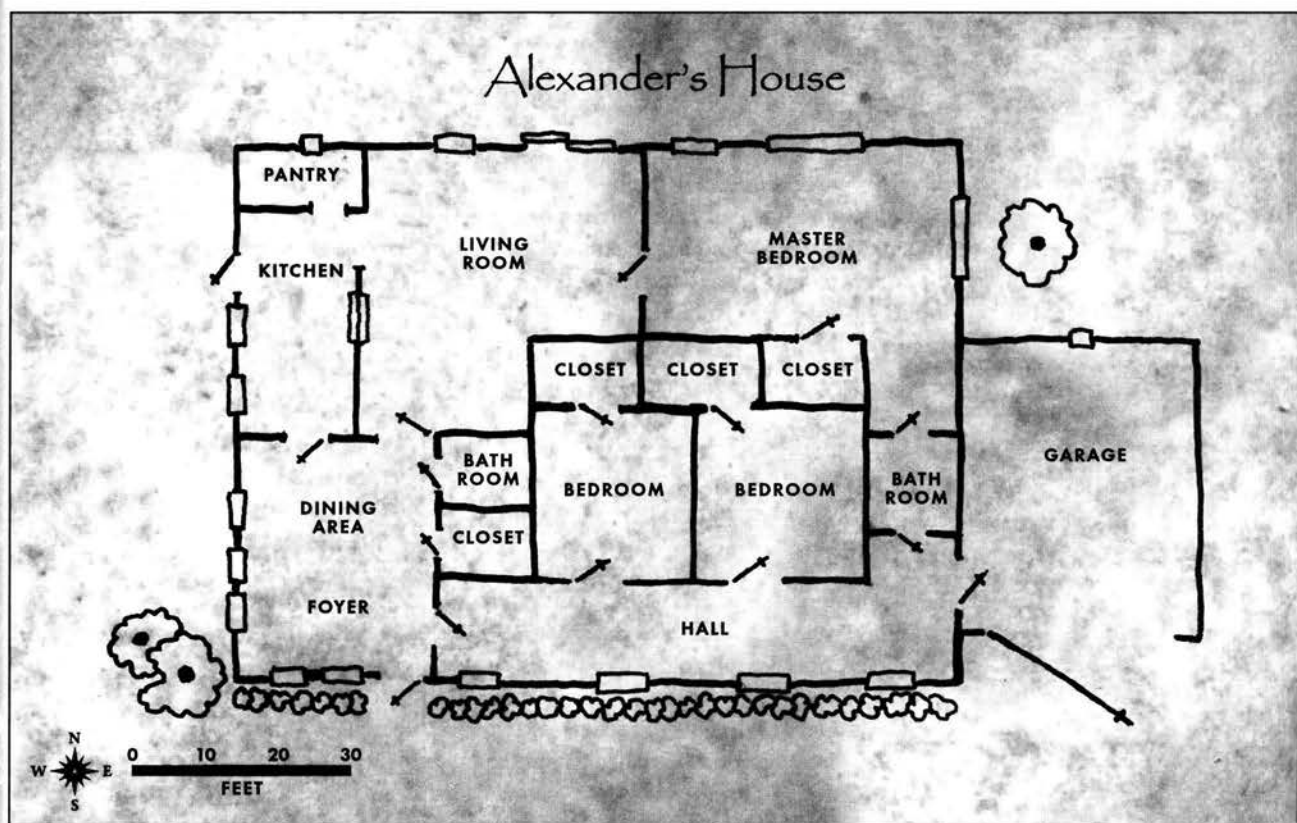
Barring extraordinary circumstances, there is *always* at least one Skoptsi servant in the house. They take turns running errands such as buying groceries, putting gas in the cars, and so forth. Both servants are armed at all times, keeping revolvers concealed in their clothing. They speak little English and are suspicious of everyone except Alexander and Miles Desmond, whom they know to have passed through the self-castration ritual.

Should the investigators choose to search the house, they will have to contend with one or both of the Skoptsi servants. There is little of interest to the investigators in the house; what is present is summarized in the following list.

- The garage is kept closed and locked—both the door into the house and the large door to the outside—and contains a 1925 Ideal Stutz Bearcat car and a Ford Model T truck. The truck has mud splattered across the bottom and in the wheel wells; Alexander uses it to travel to his cabin.
- Alexander's personal papers are kept in his large bed-

room closet, inside a leather satchel. These include minutiae such as his contract with Mintz Brothers and the ownership papers for this house and for his cabin; the latter will describe its location if the investigators don't know where it is.

- The house is decorated with Russian items, ranging from reproductions of famous icons to folk dolls and the like. Besides such bric-a-brac, however, the walls of the house are littered with framed photographs taken by Alexander. These are all artistic photographs of the people and places he has encountered in California, and offer no special insights. Clara Negri appears in many of the photos.
- The bedrooms of the Skoptsi servants include additional ammunition for their revolvers, books and old newspapers in Russian, and stacks of English crossword-puzzle books—they are using these to help them learn the language of their new home. Each of their bedrooms also contains a small shrine consisting of an original Skoptsi religious icon ringed by candles. These icons depict a vague feminine form outlined in gold leaf with a crowd of peasants bowing before her.



- Alexander keeps nothing here that would tie him directly to the Skoptsi or to the crimes he has committed. All such items are stored at his cabin, instead.

If the investigators attempt a search, they may have to deal with the servants. This pair will shoot first and bury the bodies later, assuming that any trespassers are out to harm their high priest. If possible, the servants will cast Wrack to disable lone intruders for later questioning. They will not call the police, however, if at all possible. Besides having little understanding of English, they also have little experience with American customs and are very paranoid of attracting attention that they won't understand. Even if one of them is badly wounded, they will try to call Alexander in New York and ask him for instructions rather than going straight to a hospital. Their obedience to their high priest is both ignorant and absolute.

Search: Alexander's Cabin

Alexander owns a cabin—he calls it his *dacha*—about two hours' drive from Los Angeles, in a hilly, forested area with little development. He built it a year and a half ago, performing much of the labor himself with his Skoptsi servants during the period when he was cranking out a pair of westerns for Mintz Brothers. At the time he was unsure if his dreams of artistic renown would ever come to pass, and building the cabin allowed him to focus his restless energy into some-

thing more enjoyable than the cowboys-and-horseshoes films he feared he would never escape.

The cabin is comprised of a single story plus a basement. It's a rich brown in color with small windows and peaked roofs, in the style of the Russian rural cabins of his youth. He uses it not only as a retreat from the bustle of Los Angeles, but also as a worship center to his goddess, the Black Mother. The cabin is framed on three sides by forest, and about a hundred yards into the trees directly behind the cabin is a rectangular poured-concrete altar that Alexander and his servants constructed before they started on the cabin. Alexander uses the altar for rites to the Black Mother, and has been joined in such rites by his servants as well as by Desmond, Laemmle, and Negri.

The investigators can learn about the cabin and discover its location in a couple of ways. Its existence is common knowledge among Alexander's colleagues, since he often speaks of his need to get out of town to his cabin after a long week on the set. It's also known to the public, thanks to gossip columnists who refer to his romantic weekends with Negri at the cabin. As for its location, that's not so easy to ferret out. Negri, Desmond, and Laemmle know where it is. The country records contain his deed of ownership which includes the site's location. And finally, Alexander's copy of the deed in the closet of his house also notes where to go.

There is no electricity or running water in the cabin. An outhouse stands at the treeline, while a manual pump pro-

trudes from the ground near the kitchen door. Inside the cabin, oil lamps and candles abound. Two heavy-duty flashlights hang from the wall just inside the front door.

The cabin contains a number of items of interest to the investigators, as described in the following list.

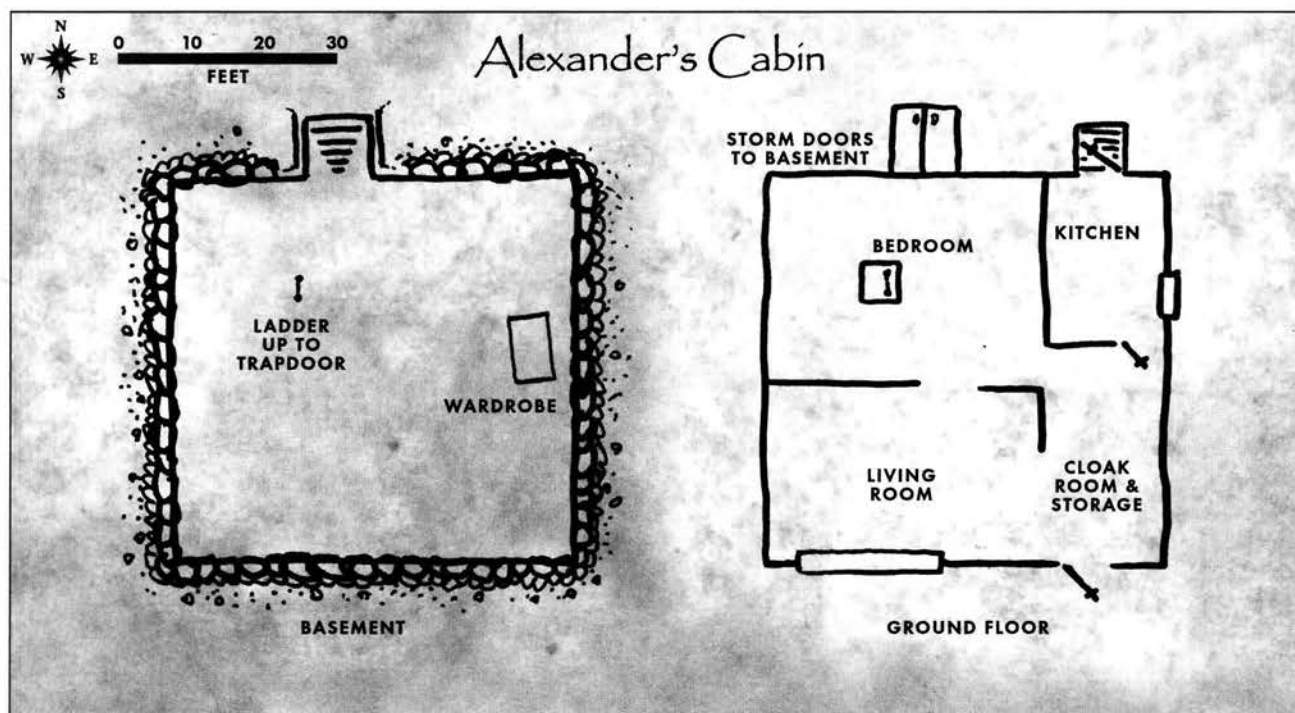
- In an area off the living room, Alexander stores his Skoptsi ritual items. To some extent, these mimic the ritual items of the Russian orthodox church. Included are a cup, a pair of knives, and a cloth stola worn about the neck. These items are centuries old and are made of precious materials: gold, jewels, silver thread, and so on. All of the items include the golden-haloed female figure seen on the Skoptsi servants' icons, though she has a variety of forms and poses. The knives have a small amount of dried human blood incrustated into the ornate hilts.
- The basement is accessible through exterior storm doors (padlocked) or through an unlocked trapdoor in the bedroom. The only furniture down here is a small bare table, a half-dozen chairs, and a large freestanding wardrobe. Four Skoptsi religious icons hang on the walls (one apiece). These depict disturbing scenes: self-castration by the faithful, a human sacrifice, a burning church, and what appears to be a large, many-breasted creature giving birth to a grown man. The icons are hundreds of years old. If the wardrobe is examined, the investigators discover that it is in fact a custom padded shipping case for a moving-picture camera, projector, and two dozen reels of film. These are described further in the section entitled "Examination: The Magic Camera."

Note that the cabin might well be inhabited when the investigators arrive to check it out. This possibility is covered in Stage Four, "Resolutions."

Examination: The Movie Equipment

Alexander's personal camera and projector look relatively normal at first glance. Both are hand-cranked. Both are beaten and worn, and have the appearance of being frequently patched, repaired, jury-rigged, and otherwise tended to. On closer inspection, something appears to be wrong with the projector: there is no lens for the film to be projected through. It's simply an enclosed box with two arms for the film reel and the take-up reel to be attached to. Both the camera and the projector require keys to open their case and examine their machinery. If they are opened, a successful Mechanical Engineering roll will determine that both items are inoperable. Their internal mechanisms are nonsensical and in no way resemble a normal camera and projector; they shouldn't do much of anything, in fact.

As for the reels of film, the Skoptsi sent these (as well as the equipment) to Alexander from Russia in this custom shipping case. Included are Alexander's two Soviet films—*Triumph* and *Betrayal*—as well as a number of one-reel experimental films that Alexander made to try out different improvements on his personal film-making equipment. Each film can has a label (in Russian) identifying it as having been processed by a film laboratory in Moscow. Each also has a handwritten title on the side, also in Russian. If translated, these titles can be read as follows, in no particular order: *Triumph*, *Betrayal*, *Boy on a Raft*, *The House of Four*



Dogs, Library Shelves, The Train, Nostalgia, Sixteen Doors, The Passion According to Andrei, Objects in a Stream, The Drowned Cathedral, The Longing, Raining Indoors, The Woman in the House, Stalker, Vladimir Ilich Lenin, Mirror, The Violin, and The Room of Five Houses. Lacking the ability to translate the titles from Russian, the investigators may still recognize the significance of the title *Vladimir Ilich Lenin* if they are educated or read the newspapers; even in Cyrillic lettering, Lenin's name is recognizable.

Screenings: Normal Projector

Should the investigators wish to watch the films, they will play normally on any standard projector. The short films are all simple presentations of simple subjects with no plot or titles. Synopses of these films are not provided for the Keeper, but they are generally self-evident. (*Boy on a Raft*, for example, documents a boy's rafting trip on a slow-moving forest stream.) The only films of real interest to the investigators are *The Woman in the House* and *Vladimir Ilich Lenin*.

The Woman in the House. This film is a continuous recording of a Skoptsi ritual to the Black Mother, led by Alexander and assisted by a beautiful Russian woman the investigators have not seen before. (This is Larissa, who initiated Alexander into the cult and who remained behind in Russia.) The ritual—held within the ruins of an old stone cathedral (also seen in *The Drowned Cathedral*)—lasts ap-

proximately ten minutes. At the end of the ritual, Shub-Niggurath manifests in the air above the celebrants, descending partially through the collapsed roof. The sight is terrifying, no less so because of the Skoptsi cultists' clear joy at beholding their goddess in the flesh. No one will sanely believe that the hideous sight is some sort of film-making trick. (1/1D10 Sanity point cost.)

Vladimir Ilich Lenin. This film runs only two minutes. It shows the former leader of the Soviet state, Vladimir Ilich Lenin, sitting upright in bed, pale and sickly. He starts a speech (in Russian) that is, of course, inaudible. (Lenin intended to have the text of the speech cut into the finished film on title cards, accompanied by stirring live music.) Towards the end of the film, Lenin pales and collapses, then props himself up on one elbow and appears to begin shouting angrily. The film then ends.

Screenings: Alexander's Projector

If any of the cabin films (except for *Triumph* and *Betrayal*) are played through the peculiar projector, something very unusual happens. Although there is no lens or light for beaming the film through, the film *does* play. It completely surrounds those in the room, forming a fully immersive hallucination. To the viewers, it seems as if they are in the film. They can walk about freely in the scene, manipulate objects, feel the sunshine, converse spontaneously with the charac-



The Skoptsi at the cabin.

ters in the film, and even *hear*—when played through the projector, the films gain sound. What they do not gain, however, is color; the entire experience plays out in subtle hues of black and white. It lasts as long as someone continues to hand-crank the projector. The experience is profoundly unsettling, carrying with it a terrible sense of dislocation and loss of control. The Sanity point cost is $ID2/ID3+1$, every time the experience occurs. This penalty is never lowered due to repetition.

The effect works on those within the same room as the projector, or within a 20-foot radius, whichever is smaller. Anyone not affected by the projector simply sees the projector, the person cranking it, and the others affected ambling about, talking to people who aren't there, and so forth.

The physical environments of the films are reproduced and expanded, but in a strange way. The viewer's mind fills in the space not captured directly by the camera, but it does so with as little work as possible. In the case of the film of Lenin, for example, the part of his bedroom viewable in the film when run through a normal projector is the only part to be decorated when the film is run through the magic projector. The rest of the room is a continuation of those walls, seamless, with no doors or windows. In the case of *The Woman in the House*, the rest of the ruined cathedral is likewise free of exits and distinguishing features; it is simply a stone wall identical to that in the main part of the scene. In each film, the viewer's mind will fill in the rest of the scene as simply as possible while still maintaining a semblance of credibility.

Likewise, the people in the films can be interacted with, but only to a limited degree. The camera captures a surface impression of the people at the time of filming, but does not probe deep. In *Boy on a Raft*, the boy can happily answer simple questions—in Russian, of course—about the immediate situation. He'll comment on how warm the sun is, how beautiful the forest is, and so forth, but cannot say his name, explain where he comes from, or anything similarly personal. Vladimir Lenin does have a lot to say, however. The investigators will be able to hear the first part of his speech (also in Russian), in which he praises the Soviet people and the Communist party, and offers a sort of hopeful benediction to future generations of Russians. After a minute and a half or so, he'll collapse and then begin begging for help, wailing, "That man is killing me with his machine! He is taking my mind!" before the film (and the immersive hallucination) are cut short. The people in the films can also be beaten, killed, or worse, and they are back to normal the next time the films are played; Miles Desmond has used this feature to engage in days-long orgies of rape and murder perpetrated on the people in these films.

A terrible fate awaits investigators who play *The Woman in the House* through Alexander's special projector. The scene, of course, is suddenly very real (though still in black and white) and if the investigators stick around until the Black Mother appears, the Sanity point cost will be $ID6/3D10$, as

even a fragment of Shub-Niggurath's essence captured on the magic film is still a hideous thing. Should an investigator drop to zero Sanity points, he joins the Skoptsi cultists in their ritual and is trapped within the film forever, endlessly summoning Shub-Niggurath; he can never be rescued.

Unbroken. The investigators may try playing some or all of Alexander's new film, *Unbroken*, through the magic projector. This is, in fact, the only way to save Laura Angel. This possibility is covered in Stage Four.

Research: The Skoptsi

If the investigators find the Skoptsi ceremonial items and religious icons from Alexander's cabin, they may want to find out a bit more about them and what they might say about their owner. Any scholar of Russian culture can examine the items and tell the investigators a few things from the history books. These tidbits are summarized in the following list.

- The items and/or icons are relics of a small Christian sect of Czarist Russia. This sect was known as the *Skoptsi*, which means "the castrated."
- Although they worshipped Christ and practiced Christian rites, their beliefs were filtered through a strange obsession with the sin of fornication. Devout members of the sect would castrate themselves, to forever avoid the sexual act. There were two stages of this castration: the Lesser Seal of God in which men would cut off their testicles and women their clitoris, and the Greater Seal of God where the man's penis or woman's labia would be removed. This process was referred to, in a more general, symbolic sense, as the Baptism of Fire through which sinners passed to be redeemed in the eyes of God; a red-hot iron poker was sometimes used in the castration process.
- Never a very popular sect, the Skoptsi somehow survived from the middle ages to the early twentieth century, occasionally enjoying the favor of Czars but usually suffering as the targets of sporadic pogroms. The final blow came just a few years ago, when the Skoptsi—along with many other Russian Orthodox sects—were persecuted and slaughtered by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution of 1917. If any Skoptsi still live, they are either in hiding somewhere in Russia or have fled to other parts of the world.
- The academic does not know for sure who the female figure on the relics is, but suggests the Virgin Mary as a likely candidate.

At the Keeper's discretion, the investigators could find someone with direct knowledge of the Skoptsi. This would not be an American academic, however. A Russian immigrant, preferably a Russian Orthodox priest, would be much better suited. Such an immigrant would take some more



The woman in the house.

work to locate, but if the investigators think to do this they should be rewarded.

The priest—Father Konstantin Mamontov—heard tales of the Skoptsi when he was a child, from his father and grandfather who were priests before him. His understanding is that the Skoptsi were not Christians at all, but were a heretical pagan sect who worshipped a vengeful goddess known as the Black Mother. It was said that although the Skoptsi were castrates and thus sterile, they could somehow fornicate with goats to produce blasphemous, inhuman offspring. Of course, he never met a Skoptsi and considers these tales of them to be little more than bogeyman stories—but he does recall how much his grandfather's grave look and haunted eyes as he spoke of the Skoptsi frightened him terribly as a child.

Stage Four: Resolution

This section deals with the possible ways in which the investigators (or their opponents) might conclude the scenario. The preceding sections generally covered research and investigation. Now it's time to discuss the merits of direct action.

First and foremost, there is no pre-ordained climactic scene and no particular ending that the Keeper is expected to work towards. It's up to the players to make decisions and up to the Keeper to choose the decisions of the antagonists. If the investigators don't do their job or give up, Laura Angel will never be found and Alexander and his associates will continue their acts of insane violence unchecked.

Resolution: Oswald Laemmle

Laemmle isn't guilty of any crime other than accessory to murder and kidnapping, since he knows the circumstances of Laura's disappearance and the murders committed by Alexander Solonitsyn and Clara Negri. As noted earlier, Laemmle is having second thoughts about his involvement with Alexander's Skoptsi crew and could be bullied or persuaded to cooperate with either the investigators or the police. He's just a neurotic, spineless coward with an unhealthy morbid streak who's in over his head.

Laemmle might not get to testify, however. If Miles Desmond is stalking the investigators for a while, he might see them conferring with Laemmle and get paranoid. When Alexander slips back into town through his magical gate, he and Desmond might spring a surprise visit on their buddy Laemmle. Using his Dominate spell, Alexander can get Laemmle to spill the beans about his involvement with the investigators. He immediately sends Desmond out to a bar so the director has an alibi, and then uses Dominate again to coerce Laemmle into writing a confession, claiming that he murdered Laura Angel and dumped her body in the ocean. With this completed, Alexander coerces

Laemmle into slitting his wrists in the bathtub. Alexander then flees and uses the gate to return to New York City, in the hopes that all will be well.

Resolution: Clara Negri

As noted in the section on the His & Hers Homicides, it is possible for the investigators to convince the SFPD that Negri and her lover should be suspects in the case. If that succeeds, the police can take over this particular plotline. They'll have the LAPD arrest Negri and begin running mug shots of her past their witnesses. The murder souvenirs she has in her house will be the clincher.

If Negri suspects that she's in trouble, she'll pack up and flee the country for her native Germany, emptying out her bank account and returning to Frankfurt as a wealthy woman in a depressed economy. This may well place her out of reach of the investigators, unless they intercept her before she leaves town. She'll pass through New York on her way back and will attempt to rendezvous with Alexander there, hoping to persuade him to join her; his decision is up to the Keeper, but a cross-country or even cross-continent pursuit may be the result.

Should Negri be cornered, she won't hesitate to whip out the Luger or the switchblade and take on all comers. She's an experienced dirty fighter from her days on the streets, and she has a taste for blood. Frankly, she'd rather die fighting than flee to safety, if the opportunity arises and she can take somebody with her.

Resolution: Miles Desmond

Desmond is likely to end the scenario in a casket. He's violently unstable and may choose to assault one investigator after another, jumping each at a point of vulnerability. If the investigators surprise him, he'll go for his knife at the first opportunity and revel in bloodletting. This could be helpful for at least some of the investigators, since if he brings any one assailant down, he'll forget about the rest and focus on savagely stabbing the downed investigator again and again, foaming at the mouth and shrieking, until he's stopped. Alexander might even turn Desmond loose on the investigators, figuring that no matter who dies, he'll be better off.

One strong possibility is that the investigators will encounter Desmond at Alexander's cabin, where he goes to hide out at some point after he knows that the investigators are snooping around. If so, they'll find him in the cabin's basement with one of Alexander's Skoptsi servants or perhaps Alexander himself. The other man will be cranking the magic projector while Desmond—naked, castrated, and crazy-drunk—commits all manner of sadistic brutalities on the black-and-white people of Alexander's experimental films.

Resolution: Alexander Solonitsyn

Whenever Alexander returns from New York, he'll take whatever secretive action he can to save himself. His goal will be to get off the hook for Laura's disappearance, which means he'll either seek a scapegoat (such as Oswald Laemmle) or will try to dispose of the investigators. If he's taking the latter option, he might sic Desmond on them, or his servants. He might even set up a trap of some sort in which he, Desmond, and the servants can jump one or more investigators at the same time.

His approach will probably involve he and the servants each casting Wrack on the investigators, to hopefully disable as many as three victims who can then be dispatched with a bullet in the head or a knife in the throat. They will be absolutely ruthless and will pick off investigators individually if they can. Should things disintegrate to this point, the investigators had better get the police involved, and fast.

Speaking of the police, the investigators can alert the SFPD to the likelihood that Alexander and his lover are responsible for the His & Hers Homicides, as discussed earlier. While the LAPD are picking up Clara Negri, the SFPD will contact the NYPD and have them pick up Alexander—but at the Keeper's discretion, Alexander can be warned (perhaps by Ward Fredrick, if he doesn't yet trust the investigators) and use his gate to slip back into Los Angeles.

Alternately, the investigators can convince Ward Fredrick to turn in Alexander for the disappearance of Laura Angel—using the original sign-in logs and Fredrick's own testimony as the keys—if he believes that something truly awful is going on. The His & Hers Homicides could do this, as could a demonstration of Alexander's magic projector. If Laura has been rescued, of course, she's the perfect witness for the cops.

Finally, it might be that the investigators surprise Alexander, probably at his cabin hiding out with Desmond. Dramatically, this is a tidy and satisfying ending, though it misses out on the opportunity to use Alexander as an implacable, ruthless opponent working to murder the investigators.

Resolution: Laura Angel

Laura can be rescued if either the master negative or the print of *Unbroken* is run through Alexander's magic projector. (Should these be destroyed—perhaps by over-zealous investigators unsure of their course of action—Laura is gone for good.) Specifically, it is her re-shot death scene that needs to be projected. Whether it is the negative or the print makes no difference; both look the same visually when the hallucination kicks in. When that footage is run through the projector, the investigators find themselves in the farmhouse bedroom of Laura's character in the film.

For a few moments she plays the scene as recorded. Then suddenly, she seems to see the investigators for the

first time. She begins pleading with them to get her out of bed and starts pushing at the covers helplessly. If the investigators pull back the covers and help Laura out of the bed, she begins crying, saying that Alexander trapped her, she wants to go home, and so forth. All it takes is for someone to stop cranking the projector while another investigator is holding Laura. That physical connection is enough to bring her back when the film stops. At that point she collapses and will be unconscious for several hours.

Once she awakens, she'll remember only that she met Alexander for re-shoots. She can't remember anything after they shot the scene—including her rescue—but is nevertheless positive that Alexander kidnapped her and will testify to that fact if needed. She is supremely grateful to be back among the living.

Aftermath

Ideally, Laura Angel will be rescued, Oswald Laemmle will be brought back into the light of justice and reason, and Alexander Solonitsyn, Clara Negri, and Miles Desmond will be dealt with in some fashion—whether that be on the wrong side of prison walls or at the wrong end of a smoking gun.

Of course, whether the conclusion is ideal or not is up to the investigators and to the Keeper. A less-than-ideal ending is quite possible, given the complexity of the case.

In playtesting, the investigators had a showdown with Alexander and Desmond at the cabin, in the company of a bushel of cops. Several Dominate spells made short work of the officers, leaving one investigator to shoot Alexander in the back and drop Desmond as the director ran at him with a butcher knife. The investigators took no casualties. However, they never discovered the His & Hers Homicides, and Clara Negri went on with her life and her murders undetected. They also never hooked up with Oswald Laemmle, leaving him to tread his own uncertain path. They did manage to rescue Laura.

Regardless of the particular outcome of your sessions, one result remains unchanged: *Unbroken* is a flop. On October 6, *The Jazz Singer* opens on Broadway. Although not the first sound film, it is the first sound film to use sound to tell a story rather than for simple novelty purposes—this is the sound equivalent of *The Great Train Robbery*. The film becomes a smash success during the next several months, catapulting singer Al Jolson to stardom and laying waste to the competition—including *Unbroken*. Mintz Brothers finds that theaters rush to get *The Jazz Singer* on the bill, and *Unbroken* plays briefly where it plays at all. Compared to *The Jazz Singer*'s boisterous theatrics, *Unbroken*'s downbeat drama lacks mass appeal. Although those who see it find it a powerful film, the power of sound proves mightier than Alexander's sorcery.

SAN Rewards & Penalties

Rescue Laura	+1D6
Arrest or kill Alexander	+1D3
Arrest or kill Desmond	+1D3
Arrest or kill Negri	+1D2
Convert Laemmle	+1D3
Arrest or kill Laemmle	+1
Fail to rescue Laura	-1D3
Each known escaped villain	-1D2

NPC Stats

ALEXANDER NIKOLAI SOLONITSYN

Skoptsy high priest & Hollywood director, age 36

Nationality: Russian

STR 13 DEX 14 INT 16 CON 12 APP 15 POW 24
SIZ 12 EDU 16 SAN 0 Luck 95 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Literature B.A., University of St. Petersburg;

M.A. Film, Moscow Film School

Skills: Art (Filmmaking) 76%, Astronomy 12%, Chemistry 24%, Cthulhu Mythos 16%, Drive Auto 33%, Electrical Repair 28%, History 31%, Listen 42%, Mechanical Repair 35%, Occult 12%, Photography 57%, Pontificate Obscurely 48%, Psychology 22%, Ride 39%, Spot Hidden 44%

Languages: English 38%, Russian 87%

Attacks: None

Spells: Bless Blade, Call Magna Mater (Shub-Niggurath), Dominate, Seal of the Goddess, Summon/Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, Wrack

Indefinite Insanities: Megalomania

MIKHAIL CHOKOV & ANDREI LOMONOSOV

Skoptsy Servants of Alexander Solonitsyn, ages 47 & 45

Nationality: Russian

STR 15 DEX 14 INT 12 CON 14 APP 8 POW 22
SIZ 16 EDU 6 SAN 0 Luck 95 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: None

Skills: Astronomy 5%, Climb 43%, Cthulhu Mythos 6%, Dodge 37%, Drive Auto 25%, Hide 36%, Martial Arts 32%, Medicine 12%, Navigate (Land) 33%, Occult 22%, Ride 49%, Sneak 51%, Spot Hidden 34%, Swim 36%, Throw 47%, Track 35%

Languages: English 15%, Russian 73%

Attacks:

Fighting Knife 64%, 1D4+2+db

Fist/Punch 54%, 1D3+db

Grapple 46%, special

Mauser M1878 Zig-Zag Revolver 43%, 1D10

Spells: Bless Blade, Call Magna Mater (Shub-Niggurath), Wrack

MILES DESMOND

Skoptsy initiate & Hollywood director, age 34

Nationality: American

STR 14 DEX 13 INT 14 CON 13 APP 16 POW 22
SIZ 11 EDU 14 SAN 16 Luck 95 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Journalism B.A., University of Missouri-Columbia

Skills: Art (Filmmaking) 36%, Bargain 44%, Credit Rating 38%, Cthulhu Mythos 3%, Drink Heavily 36%, Drive Auto 43%, Fast Talk 29%, History 32%, Persuade 57%, Pharmacy 12%

Languages: English 78%

Attacks:

Butcher Knife 43%, 1D6+db

Spells: Call Magna Mater (Shub-Niggurath)

Indefinite Insanities: Criminal Psychosis

OSWALD LAEMMLE

Skoptsy initiate & Hollywood animator, age 25

Nationality: American

STR 10 DEX 16 INT 14 CON 10 APP 9 POW 14
SIZ 10 EDU 14 SAN 25 Luck 70 HP 10

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: unfinished Illustration B.A., Chicago Academy of Fine Arts

Skills: Accounting 24%, Art (Cartooning) 54%, Bargain 18%, Chemistry 32%, Cthulhu Mythos 3%, Fast Talk 23%, Law 10%, Photography 24%, Spot Hidden 64%, Twitch Nervously 44%

Languages: English 79%

Attacks: None

Spells: None

Indefinite Insanities: Morbidity Fetish, Entomophilia

CLARA NEGRI

Murderess & movie star, age 27

Nationality: German

STR 12 DEX 14 INT 16 CON 12 APP 16 POW 15
SIZ 11 EDU 12 SAN 15 Luck 75 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: none

Skills: Art (Acting) 36%, Bargain 36%, Credit Rating 48%, Cthulhu Mythos 3%, Drive Auto 32%, Fast Talk 44%, Hide 39%, Jump 32%, Law 8%, Listen 33%, Locksmith 22%, Persuade 55%, Sneak 43%

Languages: English 43%, German 76%

Attacks:

Fist/Punch 43%, 1D3

Grapple 55%, special

Kick 62%, 1D3

Po8 Luger Pistol 38%, 1D10

Switchblade 57%, 1D4

Spells: None

Indefinite Insanities: Sociopathy

MORRIS HARRISON

Casting agent for Mintz Brothers Studios, age 44

Nationality: American

STR 9 DEX 11 INT 14 CON 11 APP 10 POW 10
SIZ 14 EDU 12 SAN 43 Luck 50 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +0

Education: high school

Skills: Accounting 21%, Bargain 23%, Credit Rating 34%,
Drive Auto 29%, Fast Talk 39%, History 38%, Law 23%,
Persuade 66%, Photography 18%, Psychology 36%, Spot
Talent 68%

Languages: English 74%

Attacks: None

Spells: None

WARD FREDRICK

Chief of Security for Mintz Brothers Studios, age 34

Nationality: American

STR 16 DEX 15 INT 15 CON 16 APP 12 POW 13
SIZ 16 EDU 11 SAN 57 Luck 65 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: high school

Skills: Accounting 15%, Conceal 22%, Dodge 38%, Drive
Auto 44%, Fast Talk 63%, Hide 42%, Law 38%, Library
Use 43%, Locksmith 36%, Martial Arts 35%, Persuade 24%,
Photography 26%, Psychology 18%, Sneak 43%, Spot Hid-
den 48%

Languages: English 64%

Attacks:

Fist/Punch 65%, 1D3+db

Grapple 37%, special

Smith & Wesson Perfected Model Revolver 34%, 1D10

Spells: None

ARCHER LEWIS & TEX ABRAMS

Failed actors and thugs, ages 36 & 29

Nationality: American

STR 16 DEX 13 INT 10 CON 16 APP 9 POW 10
SIZ 14 EDU 8 SAN 50 Luck 50 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: High School

Skills: Art (Acting) 8%, Climb 47%, Dodge 32%, Drive Auto
39%, Hide 14%, Jump 31%, Mechanical Repair 26%, Sneak
17%, Throw 32%

Languages: English 46%

Attacks:

Fist/Punch 47%, 1D3+db

Grapple 42%, special

Spells: None

Notes: Archer and Tex worked as bit players for Mintz Brothers Studios until they were fired for incompetency and showing up to work drunk. They're dim-witted thugs desperate for work. Ward Fredrick may hire them to rough up an investigator.

RUPERT ASKEW

Owner of the Starlight Café

and defender of young women, age 56

Nationality: American

STR 15 DEX 13 INT 13 CON 13 APP 12 POW 14
SIZ 14 EDU 10 SAN 63 Luck 70 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Vocational Training

Skills: Accounting 22%, Credit Rating 18%, Drive Auto 29%,
Electrical Repair 38%, First Aid 33%, Law 12%, Mechanical
Repair 43%, Operate Hvy. Machine 24%

Languages: English 62%

Attacks:

Fighting Knife 41%, 1D4+2+db

Fist/Punch 67%, 1D3+db

Grapple 53%, special

Smith & Wesson 44 New Century Revolver 43%, 1D10+2

Spells: None

PALS OF RUPERT ASKEW

Well-meaning old ex-cons, ages 47-54

Nationality: American

STR 14 DEX 12 INT 11 CON 15 APP 11 POW 13
SIZ 15 EDU 10 SAN 57 Luck 65 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Education: Vocational Training

Skills: Climb 43%, Conceal 26%, Credit Rating 8%, Dodge
31%, Drive Auto 35%, Hide 23%, Locksmith 28%, Sneak 19%

Languages: English 58%

Attacks:

Fist/Punch 44%, 1D3+db

Grapple 47%, special

Handgun 39%, varies

Spells: None

Notes: These guys are the ones that Rupert Askew will call on if he's recruited by the investigators to help with the Laura Angel case. They're loyal to Rupert, and will be gruffly pleased to help a nice girl in trouble, but they're not going to take a bullet if they can help it.

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New Spells

CALL MAGNA MATER (SHUB-NIGGURATH): This ritual—recited in Russian—works identically to the Call Shub-Niggurath spell described in the *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook, but carries with it a further consequence. It brings the Magna Mater to the summoner as normal, then entices the Magna Mater to consume, gestate, and rebirth the summoner as one of the *Gof'nn Hupadgh Shub-Niggurath*, the Blessed of Shub-Niggurath. These are ageless, monstrous creatures who retain their full human intelligence and awareness. Transformation into a *Gof'nn Hupadgh Shub-Niggurath* results in the following physiological and psychological changes:

SAN Loss: -1D20/-1D100. Furthermore, each day that the victim exists as one of the *Gof'nn Hupadgh Shub-Niggurath* costs an additional -1D2/-1D4.

POW: +6

CON: +6

APP: -2D6

Regenerate 1D6 hit points per round until dead.

Immune to the effects of old age.

Claw 30% 1D6+db

Bite 30% 1D4

Spells: Call Shub-Niggurath + other Shub-Niggurath-related spells, as per the Keeper's discretion.

CREATE ONE-WAY GATE: This spell is a variant of Create Gate. It requires two spellcasters, one to create the entry gate and one to create the destination gate. Although anyone can use the gate, it only works in one direction and it only works once. However, it is less costly to the spellcasters than the traditional Create Gate spell and costs nothing of the user except Sanity.

Each spellcaster casts the spell on his end, typically inscribing the necessary sigils with something simple such as chalk, charcoal, or even ink. (This takes about ten minutes.) Neither spellcaster needs to know where the other end of the gate is, but both have to know who their fellow spellcaster is on the other end; they customize the vocal elements of the ritual by identifying the other spellcaster, and that serves to link the two gates. The gates may be created as much as a week apart, but the sigils must remain intact at both ends until ready for use. If any sigil is disturbed, the gate is destroyed. The gate remains potent indefinitely, until used or disabled.

The cost of creating each gate is identical to that given in the rulebook for Create Gate, except that the cost of creation is measured in magic points rather than in points of POW. The cost of travel is merely one Sanity point. Once used, the gate immediately closes. The sigils remain until removed by accident or design; they are powerless, but may serve after the fact as evidence to snooping investigators. A used gate cannot be reactivated by spending more magic points; either new sets of sigils need to be created elsewhere, or the existing sigils need to be removed and new ones put in their place.

SEAL OF THE GODDESS: A ceremony whereby a Skoptsi initiate castrates himself or herself while in the presence of Shub-Niggurath and flings his severed penis and testicles (or in the case of female cultists, her severed clitoris and labia) into one of the Magna Mater's maws. The ceremony costs the castrator 1D20 SAN (plus 1D10/1D100 for seeing the Magna Mater), plus 1D10+3 hit points. The high damage is to reflect the very real possibility that the castrated will bleed to death or die of shock. The Skoptsi usually have someone trained to deal with such trauma on hand to ensure the initiate won't die. These Skoptsi are referred to as "mid-wives."

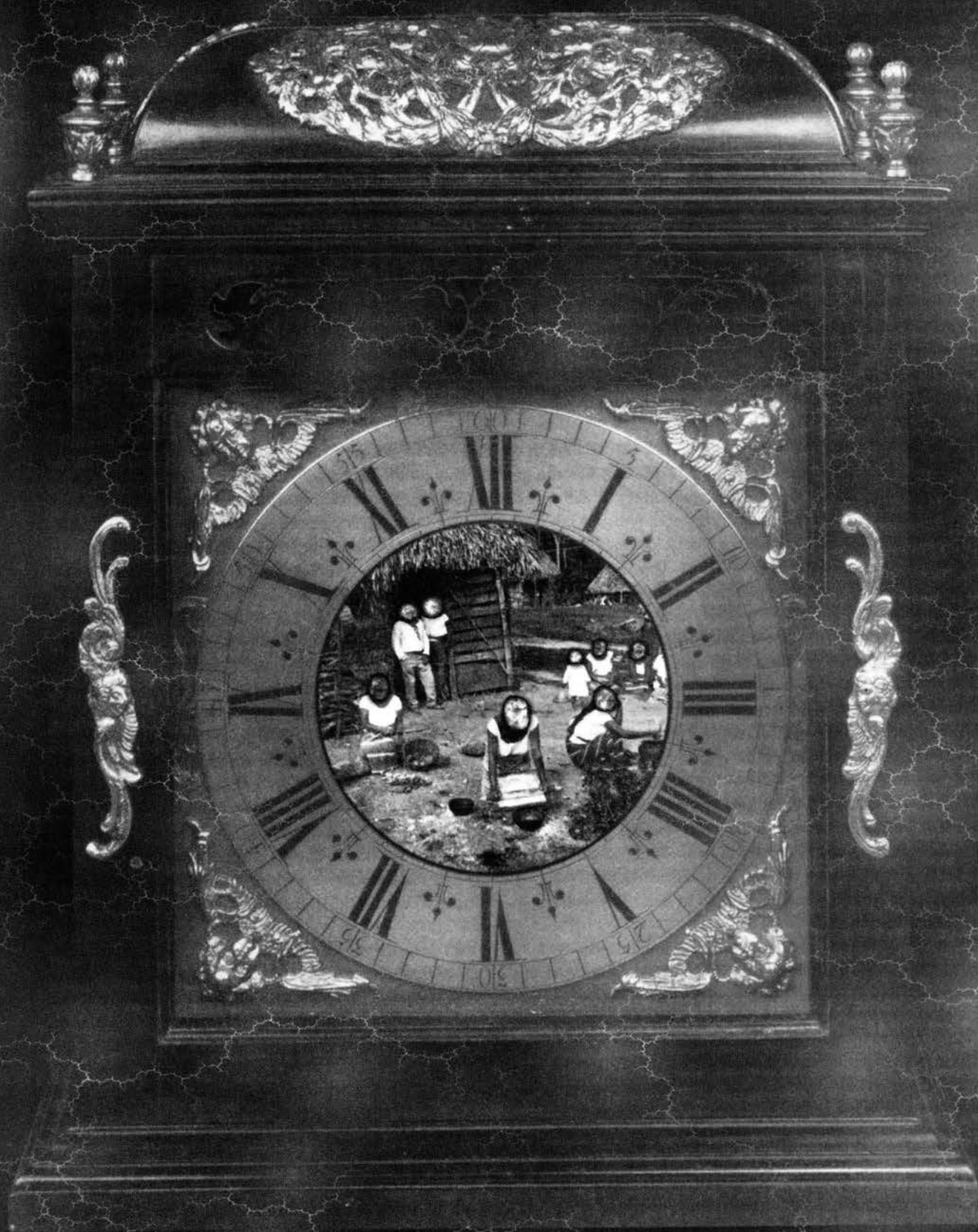
When the ceremony is completed, the initiate gets +6 POW and an automatic +50% when performing the spell Call Magna Mater (Shub-Niggurath). The spell bonus applies even if the cultist accepting the seal does not yet know the spell.

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Mysteria Matris Oblitae

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Mysteria Matriis Oblitae

DENNIS DETWILLER

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

Turning up at the University of Mexico City in the summer of 1929 is a truly odd photograph received by postal courier from the town of Tula, Mexico. This photograph shows a bizarre creature surrounded by Mexicans and Indians. The beast, a pale misshapen alien thing, obviously succumbed to some sort of gunfire which wracked and punctured its odd crustacean-like body. It is clearly dead, and the locals show no fear in their expressions, only awe towards the beast which is approximately the same size as a medium-sized dog.

The letter which accompanied the photograph was from a Dutch priest, Father Korgel Korstiaan. Korstiaan is the local pastor and doctor for the small village of Neuvo Voso near the town Tula. The creature in question, the pastor claims, was shot and killed in a nearby patch of jungle by several local men. They have no idea what it is. The religious locals have left the matter up to the clergy, and Korstiaan at a loss has forwarded the matter to Mexico City University.

The letter asks for a sincere and immediate investigation into the matter by the proper academic authorities.

Background

In the jungles outside of Tula lies the secret site of Matriis Oblitae, the "Forgotten Mother," a portion of the ancient God Abhoth. Since time immemorial it has dwelled in its shaded grotto within a cave in the depths of the rainforests, untouched. In the late eighteen hundreds this site was stumbled upon by locals who were collecting rubber in season. There, in the shaded cave, they were consumed into the fleshy body of the god, and were reborn.

These men now served the Mother, and at its whim they acted. They collected servants, people of power to preserve the secrecy of the Mother's location, and to serve its blind will. The Catholic clergy in the local town of Huetamo de Nunez, were its favorite "converts." All, in turn, from this small town found their way to the Mother's embrace. Through them, the surrounding towns were controlled carefully. The Mother was safe for a time. In 1910, with the revolution of Francisco Madero, things began to change. The rapid succession of leaders, governments and bureaucracy led to several policies which endangered the Mother. Also by this time, the Government and the church had taken the roles of adversaries, and many Catholics were openly persecuted.

The Mother, fearing discovery in this new and dangerous time, consolidated its holdings by burning all but one of its villages to the ground one night in 1915. In these towns which dotted the rim of the Huetamo de Nunez valley, the villagers set fire to their own homes, the Mother's mass fled from their bodies, and they sat quietly in their churches waiting for death.

With the change in policy towards both the Church and the ruling class the Mother's plans were placed in jeopardy by the expansion of the common man. Many new farms appeared in the years following the revolution, slash and burn policies cleared much of the surrounding countryside of its native flora, slowly closing the Mother within its small patch of jungle. The Mother could not keep up with the increase in population in the area, and chose only to convert the towns nearest to it. In the hopes it could head off any further advances, it began to scout the area trying to understand the changes which had wracked its. Afterwards it would start again, spreading slowly outward once more.

About the University of Mexico City

Sixty years before the settlers landed in Massachusetts, Mexico already had a university, the University of Mexico City. Renown for its anthropology and archaeology departments, it has remained a beacon of learning throughout the turbulent history of its country.

Under government subsidy in 1929, the university enjoys a large amount of grants and scholarships encouraging an increase in the relatively small learned class in Mexican society. Also as a propaganda tool, all discoveries linked to the university are in turn the discovery of the government which funded such inquiries. Important breakthroughs and revelations will no doubt be exploited by the politicians which made them possible, possibly at the expense of the university and the scientists involved.

Departments exist in almost every conceivable subject. Help sought at the university on any number of subjects can yield an immense amount of useful information.

Mexico and the Mexican Revolution

The entirety of Mexico was reshaped by the 1910 Mexican Revolution headed by Francisco Madero. In this conversion from the Imperial age of Maximilian to that of the Republic, many people died and many ideals changed. With the rise of Madero, Mexico's former leader Diaz fled to Paris when he realized how powerful the revolution had become. Madero was elected president in a landslide victory in 1911. Immediately there were problems. Further revolts continued in distant locales which were difficult to put down. The government's new stance on religion was contrary to the public's opinion. The Catholic church, a powerful organization in the Mexican state was seen as a potential enemy. Many priests and Catholics were tortured and killed. Madero's government was doomed due to its overambitious scope, and soon after his resignation in 1913, he was shot and killed.

The acting general of the Mexican military, General Victoriano Huerta, filled the void as Mexico's leader. Numerous revolts and organizations, which the acting government was still incapable of putting down, continued to fight for political acceptance and power.

The Huerta faction made a foolish mistake in 1914, when several American Marines were arrested by its forces in Tampico. The result was the invasion of the port of Veracruz by the Marines. Huerta resigned that same year.

Carranza had been leading a small and stable government for some time before Huerta's resignation, and was finally recognized by the United States in July of 1914 as being the legitimate government.

A smaller Mexican faction led by Pancho Villa invaded and raided Columbus, New Mexico, in October 1915. The U.S. government did not hesitate and set up over 107,000 Soldiers to guard the Mexican frontier. Villa's force was soon eradicated.

Carranza was finally elected in March 1917, the first truly elected president since the assassination of Francisco Madero. A new constitution was drafted. In the following years many of the articles dealing with land ownership were interpreted and changed, leading to an incident involving oil properties in Tampico. The government claimed that all the oil properties of the area actually belonged to the government and not to the foreign owners who had purchased them under previous regimes. Although England and America protested, nothing changed. The foreign powers that owned these properties just shifted their investments to other cities and settlements.

Public unrest began to rise in the early 1920's due to various infrastructure problems, and Carranza was seen as its source. Forced from the capitol, Carranza died in battle near Puebla in May 1922. Obregon was elected later that year.

In 1924 Calles was elected president, the first strong Mexican leader since Diaz, his iron grip reunited the factionalized Mexican Federal government through his formation of the Party of the National Revolution. During the Calles administration, the problems with the Catholic church began anew. Many devout Catholics and clergy suffered from random acts of terror perpetrated by the very forces who were supposed to protect them.

In 1928 Obregon was once again elected president but was assassinated before he could assume the office. Emilio Portes Gil assumed the presidency in 1928 and will remain in office until 1932.

One of its inhuman young, the creature depicted in the photograph, was shot and killed by several local farmers as it scouted the outer limits of the territory controlled by the Mothers' influence.

The Mother now waits in its grotto, its alien mind contemplating the many possibilities open before it. In time, it will choose a course of action.

Getting Started

This scenario works best if the players design investigators affiliated with the University of Mexico City, either from the Zoology or Botany department, who are sent to check up on the odd specimen recovered at Nuevo Voso. Other options exist of course, the investigators may be associates of Father Korstian and may have received a copy of his photograph along with his odd letter in the post. Or perhaps the investigators are Government agents investigating the same strange

report, or the lack of information on Huetamo de Nunez. Any number of possibilities exist to bring the investigators (and indeed replacement investigators) into the mystery.

What works best however is the hook of scientific discovery. The investigator as scientist is a beautiful way to motivate the actions of the playing group through a subtle and clandestine means. Seemingly innocent facts and occurrences pile up until the true picture is gleaned, and if it is not already too late, the Players may act to resolve the situation.

Previous knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos by investigators is not only *not* recommended, it is strongly advised against. Instead the investigators should look at the odd occurrences around Nuevo Voso and Huetamo de Nunez as *natural* events. Of course there is a scientific explanation! It's the twentieth century for Gods sake! When no good explanation can be discovered, and the danger has grown, let them discover the Cthulhu Mythos and wish that they had never tried to understand what was going on at all.

Player Aid #1—Father Korstian's Letter (in Spanish)

12 July 1929
Nuevo Voso, Mexico

To whom it may concern at your wonderful University:

On this day I was brought a most unusual specimen of animal by two local men who are known to me to be trustworthy and honest. The photograph enclosed gives a good idea to what I speak of, but does not do the creature justice. The beast was shot on a ridge near the town of Nuevo Voso (my parish) on the edge of the jungle while it was attempting to make off with some livestock.

I have been unable to identify this creature in any of my books, and hope that I am not making a fool of myself when I ask you gentlemen:

Would you come and identify the creature and make sure its so odd remains are cared for properly before they rot beyond recognition?

I am far from sure of myself, but it seems to me to be a remarkable discovery. Who knows what other secrets the jungle holds!

Your friend in science,
Father Korgel Korstian

Player Aid #2—Photograph of the Scout Creature



Father Korgel Korstiaan

Father Korstiaan is a Dutch priest from Amsterdam. He was moved to the Catholic mission in Mexico City in 1903 from Europe, and has led the Nuevo Voso Parish since 1909. Over the years he has slowly become an accepted member of the largely Catholic town of Nuevo Voso, the locals now respect and trust him.

Korstiaan is a quiet older man who speaks English and Spanish with a slight accent. He is large, and is quite strong, which suggests his physical nature. As a youth he worked as a longshoreman on the many channels of the Danish countryside. Today, he still is seen working alongside his parishoners, constructing homes, working on barns, enjoying the clarity that physical labor grants him.

Korstiaan is a great believer in the sciences and is an amateur radio enthusiast. He knows a little about a great many subjects and holds those of the scientific bend in great esteem.

The creature brought to him on July 12, 1929, was like nothing he had ever seen; indeed, everyone in the valley was at a loss. To Korstiaan, the creature appeared fundamentally crustacean, with many bits seemingly from other types of animals. However, when he made preliminary forays into the subject, it fit neither the arachnid nor crustacean family. The creature possessed an amazing number of limbs, twenty-two to be exact.

Korstiaan wrote the University in Mexico City simply because he has no idea what else to do, and with the Government in the state that it is in 1929, he does not want to draw unwanted attention to the area.

Korstiaan knows all in his parish (359 souls), but does not wander far from town. In all of his years here he has but once been down the road to Huetamo de Nunez, which he found quite pleasant. He visited with the local priest, Felix Fernandez, and spent a fine afternoon talking with the man. The following week, he recalls, several townsfolk from Huetamo de Nunez stopped by Nuevo Voso for mass. They appeared ill, and left rapidly. Since that mass, he has heard nothing from the town.

Korstiaan has noted Huetamo de Nunez's insular nature but thinks little of it, since the revolution many towns have become introverted. Korstiaan has not considered the fact that although Nuevo Voso area has celebrated one hundred and forty two weddings in the past twenty years and four hundred funerals, he has not heard of either a wedding or a funeral from Huetamo de Nunez; this in spite of the fact that news of the kind spreads in the small communities rapidly. Also in this rural area of Mexico, it is quite common for families to be spread across several towns, marrying and moving away, but no one in the area he knows has family in Huetamo de Nunez.

If his attention is brought to all these facts, and he has time to consider them along with any further evidence the investigators uncover, Father Korstiaan may become their greatest ally.

Nuevo Voso

Nuevo Voso is a small farming town on the edge of the jungle. Most of the area surrounding the town has been cleared away using slash and burn techniques, and much of that farming area has been cleared only since President Emilio Portes Gil has taken office. Growing mostly corn and cotton, the locals often travel into Mexico City or Tula to trade. Some even supplement their income by tapping rubber trees in the jungle when it is in season.

The town itself is little more than a conglomeration of rag-tag wood buildings and the church, the Iglesia del Risco. The main town is surrounded by more than thirty farms and mills, each isolated on their own lot of land. The people are friendly but wary of outsiders, especially those from the government, fearing a continuation of the dark days of the early revolution where Catholics lived in fear of the army.

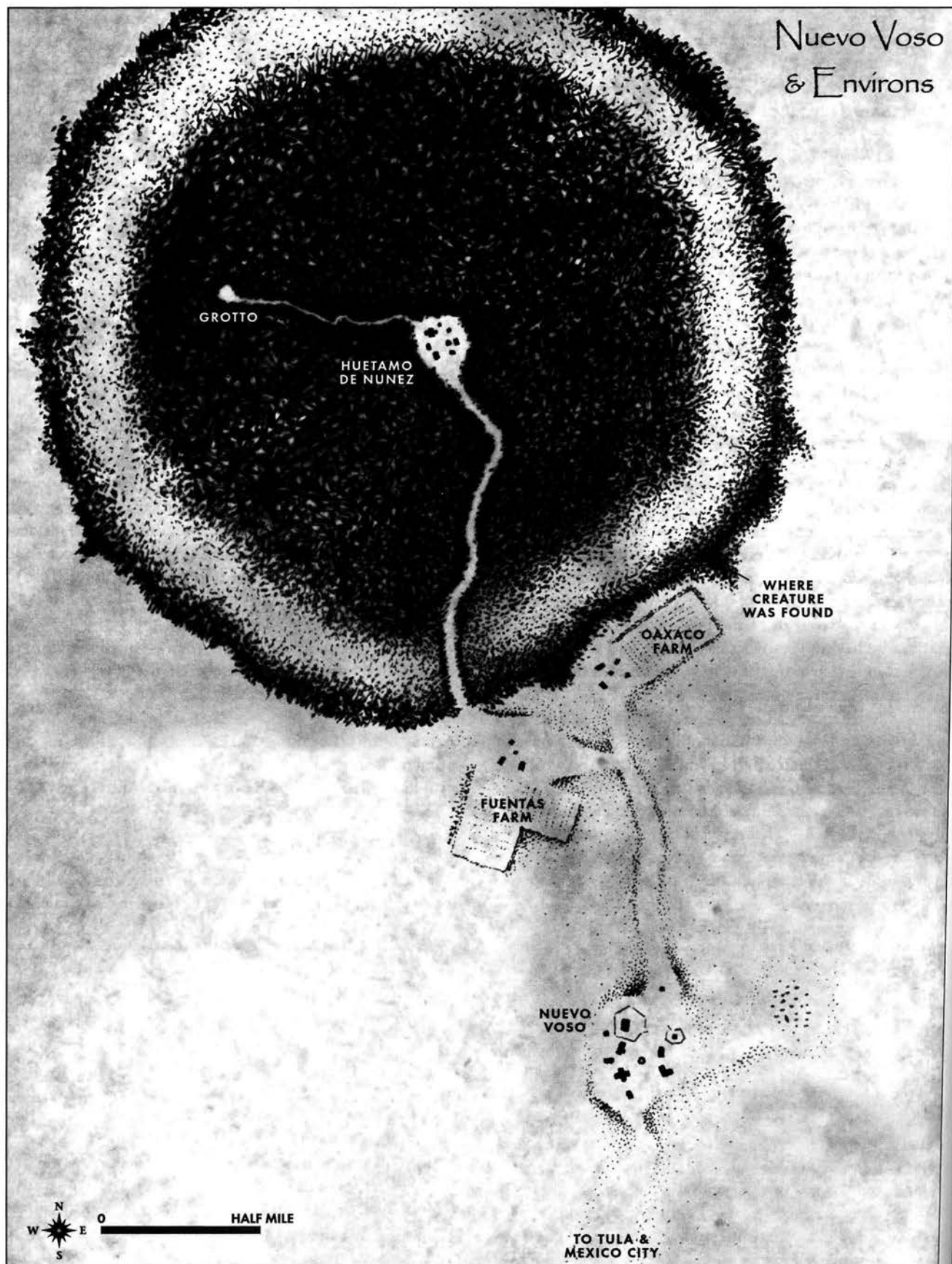
Iglesia del Risco

This small church is the sole stone building in Nuevo Voso and is run and maintained by Father Korstiaan. Dating back

The Burned Towns

Dim in the memory of those in neighboring Nuevo Voso are the two towns which once existed on the lip of the Huetamo de Nunez valley. Coyama and Tenamo were destroyed by the Mother in 1910 at the beginning of the Mexican Revolution after several attacks in the area by Government forces. The villagers of Coyama and Tenamo, puppets of the Mother set fire to their own towns, the flesh of the Mother which was contained in their bodies fled back to its source before the fire could consume it. The empty shells of the villagers died in the all consuming blaze. The Mother thought that destroying those two towns would cause the Government to cease all operations in the area and not come any further into the valley. In this respect it was correct, the village of Huetamo de Nunez was completely overlooked by Federal forces.

All that remains of the two towns are a few charred cinders almost completely overgrown and reclaimed by the jungle. Nothing of any importance can be found in the ruins. Most in the Nuevo Voso area believe that government troops burned and looted both Coyama and Tenamo during the height of the revolution, and few want to draw any attention to themselves by asking further questions.



to 1834, its name means "the Church of Broken Porcelain," and comes from the fact that not long after its opening, the porcelain tiles which lined its walls were shattered in a serious earthquake.

The first floor is the composed of the church itself and a small office in the rear of the narthex. Beneath the church is a large cellar which has been re-dug and cleared out into additional space for Father Korstiiian. It is down here he maintains his library (about six hundred volumes on all manner of subjects), and his Sears Home Shortwave Radio which is wired to the large iron cross upstairs. A simple cot in the corner serves as his bedroom.

It is also here that the creature has been stored for lack of a better location. Beneath the stairs in the dark under a dirty canvas tarpaulin the pale rotting form of the beast has been laid to rest. The smell it gives off is overwhelming in the small alcove which leads into the basements, but Korstiiian confesses he has gotten used to it. During its stay, the Scout Creature will disgorge ID6-2 Sentries, who will crawl to dark corners and watch, transmitting all visual information back to the Mother.

If the investigators require a place to stay, Korstiiian will offer either cots in the upper offices or his room in the basement, depending how taken he is with them.

The Creature

The creature, a child of the Mother, is about the size of a large dog. It is pale, near translucent skin shows a startling array of dim organs within, and its underside is a hanging mass of chitinous claw-tipped legs, twenty-two in all. No sense organs can be located. There are no eyes, ears, ear canals, olfactory or heat pits visible to initial investigations. Scattered about its body are grey-green lumps of rough organic material, much like warts or scales. Several large pits can be seen as well which appear to have once contained similar warts, but which have been removed, leaving a pock mark.

The cause of death is an obvious seven inch hole through the creature's profile which was caused by a close range 10 gauge shotgun blast. Inside the hole, a mass of black and bluish tubes form a nightmare of anatomy. No blood can be found, although the creature exudes a clear viscous liquid with the consistency of soup.

This beast was created by the Matris Oblitae to scout out the area surrounding Huetamo de Nunez, and to drop "sentries" at various points to warn of impending danger. These sentries are the small warts on the back of the creature, which at various points were dropped off in its journey forming a rough circle around the grotto. They are actually independent creatures themselves, each hangs onto the beast with a half dozen tiny clawed legs concealed beneath the wart like covering.

Although their beast of burden is dead, the little sentries continue to subsist on the rotting remains of their



The Scout Creature.

What is it?

Scientific inquiry into the structure and function of the Scout Creature will reveal some severe oddities. Oddities which place the creature somewhere between the plant and animal kingdoms. This fact alone makes the creature a fantastic find, and the only known creature of its type in 1929.

The cells of the creature show mostly animal characteristics, but have cell walls, not cell membranes. These odd cells also have deposits of photosynthetic materials *and* mitochondria, which makes the animalistic consumption of nutrients possible.

Needless to say a find like this will bring reporters from all over the world (and a huge increase in budget and tenure for the investigators involved!).

A freak of nature or a new type of life form? It's up to your players to decide.

Chances are their theories will not predict the outcome.

mount. They are capable of no independent action until they are removed from their parent. Once independent of their host they are free to scamper about on their own, but will last only a short period anywhere farther than Nuevo Voso from Huetamo de Nunez, as they are a great distance from the Mother.

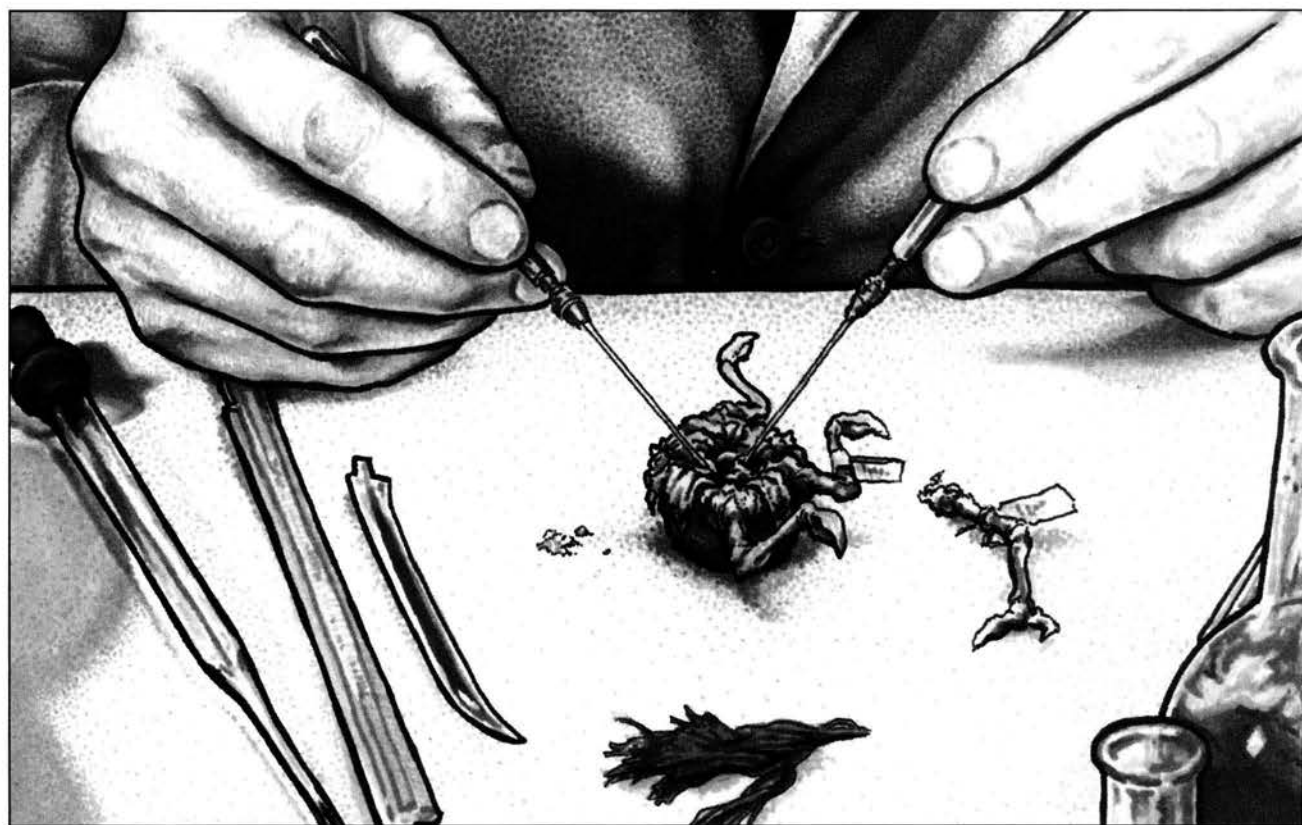
The Farmers

The two farmers, Carlo Fuentes and Arturo Oaxaco, who shot and killed the creature live nearby on the edge of town. Their farm lots are next to each other, and border the road which leads into the valley of Huetamo de Nunez. They grow corn and beans on farms created recently on slashed

and burned land with their families after being relocated by government officials from the city.

Carlos and Arturo were outside on the day of the 12th, poking about for some sort of creature (a dog they thought) which had been at their chickens. They found a dead dog on the edge of the jungles on the ridge of the Huetamo de Nunez Valley, which had been ripped up by what seemed to be birds. Something bolted past them at that point, and Fuentes fired, killing the creature in one shot. They brought it to the parish simply because they knew of nothing else to do with it.

If Korstian accompanies the investigators, the men will be most helpful, showing them around the area, even re-walking the path they took looking for the dog. The dog, by



A sentinel on close inspection.

that time, is little more than bones. If these bones are examined at length by a Zoologist or Veterinarian, it becomes obvious that the dog was killed by the Scout Creature due to a comparison match between the markings on the dog's bones and the pinchers of the creature.

The men are hesitant to go into the jungles and know many stories of men who have gone in and never come back from the Huetamo de Nunez valley. Each of the men are relatively new to the area however, and know nothing of Huetamo de Nunez the town, other than it is a quiet town which trades little with the outside world.

Huetamo de Nunez

Seven miles up the road from Nuevo Voso in the midst of the jungle is the small village of Huetamo de Nunez. Inhabited by thirty-four villagers, the town can be said not to be inhabited at all, in the most common sense of the word. The entirety of the town was long since converted to the whim of the Mother.

To get there requires a laborious walk or dangerous drive across the ridge which overlooks Neuvo Voso, and the valley of Huetamo de Nunez. Once over the ridge, a barely maintained dirt road winds its way down into the bowl-shaped valley. The entire valley is filled with all manner of plants and animals. The jungle here is untouched, and is rarely entered by anyone, save the residents of Huetamo de Nunez, who, with the help of the Mother, have little to fear.

The village itself is nothing more than a dozen run-down buildings and a carefully maintained church. The few people to be seen in town are quiet and kind, offering any help they can to the investigators . . . unless of course the investigators enter the town alone.

Oddities

Initially unremarkable, Huetamo de Nunez has several odd features which can be discovered only by the more observant investigator.

- The townsfolk seem well fed and healthy, devoid of the common ailments found throughout provincial Mexico in the 1920's. There are no deformities, skin rashes, or diseases like lupus or polio evident in the population.
- Huetamo de Nunez has no agricultural base. There are no lots of arable land, no livestock, no grain mills. The town itself is surrounded by nothing but unmo- lested jungle. Food is just not seen (in truth, the residents live only off of the Mother). Food served to outsiders is unusual in that it is canned food, rarely seen in such a rustic locale.
- No fire of any sort is seen at any time in the town. Electric lamps and lights are common however, another bi-

zarre feature considering even America has not completed rural electrification. No flammable substance or fuel can be found anywhere in Huetamo de Nunez, and all the hearths and stoves throughout the village show a level of disuse associated with abandoned buildings.

- Huetamo de Nunez also lacks graveyards.

If any of these touchy subjects are brought up to the townsfolk, the Mother will immediately become suspicious of the investigators, or if already suspicious, will attack.

The Townsfolk

Simple Mexican folk, their bland smiles and empty stares reveal little to the untrained eye. In truth, each is a vessel for the Mother, and in turn, the Mother sees, hears, and feels everything they do. In addition, the Mother can control any number of them at once, using them as scouts, agents of disinformation, or weapons. If these vessels travel much further away from the Mother than Nuevo Voso, they begin to suffer from withdrawal, and soon after this sickness, death.

Also, since every member of the town is in constant psychic contact with the Mother, all knowledge gained by one member of the town is instantly transferred to all others. Verbal communication is no longer needed by the townsfolk, and when their cover as innocent villagers is compromised, they will cease talking all together, each acting in perfect unison with the other, all actions simultaneous and perfect. This complete simpatico between town members is disturbing to watch.

Since their baptism in the Mother, the townsfolk are effectively unaging, and don't have to eat or excrete anything except the flesh of the Mother.

Internally the townsfolk are odd. If shot or stabbed, instead of blood, they leak an odd, milky-white substance which has the consistency of pudding. These wounds will close up nearly instantly unless grievous. The pudding like fluid will move with a life of its own, attempting to go to ground and hide. Attacks on the townsfolk which would usually send gouts of blood flying (*i.e.* machete, shotgun, *etc.*) will instead spawn a huge creature composed of the white substance. If an autopsy is performed on anyone from Huetamo de Nunez, the results are bizarre and frightening. The bodies are mostly composed of an unidentifiable milky white substance contained within a bag of skin. There are no bones, organs, or blood vessels left within the "shell." When the villager is dead and is cut open, the body will deflate like a tire.

Fire is deadly to them. The townsfolk are incapable of confronting flame and will retreat to a safe distance from any heat source no matter the circumstance. If the villager is unable to escape (*i.e.* they are tied down *etc.*) the flesh of the Mother which has joined with their bodies will flee instead. The milky white substance will rush out of every avail-

What Runs the Generator?

"If there is no flammable material in Huetamo de Nunez then what runs the generator?" the investigators may ask. Like most questions involving Huetamo de Nunez, the answer is not a good one.

The ancient rickety generator at the back of the Iglesia del Matris looks like it should have broken down long ago, but it steadily rocks back and forth, not making any noise besides a slight metallic thump with each stroke of the engine. It is obviously running, but no gasoline or kerosene can be smelled. In addition, the silence of the machine is disturbing. Generators of this type are usually so loud that you can't hear anything else nearby, but it quietly rocks back and forth without exhaust or noise or smell.

A portion of the Mother flesh spins the turbine in the generator, continuously churning up and down to spin the magnets and produce electricity.

If the investigators become too nosy and decide to look inside the housing of the machine, the creature will attack, leaping out and attempting to climb into the first person it can subdue (use the statistics for the Wine creature provided at the end of the scenario).

able orifice, instantly killing the villager, and will rush away from the flame as rapidly as possible.

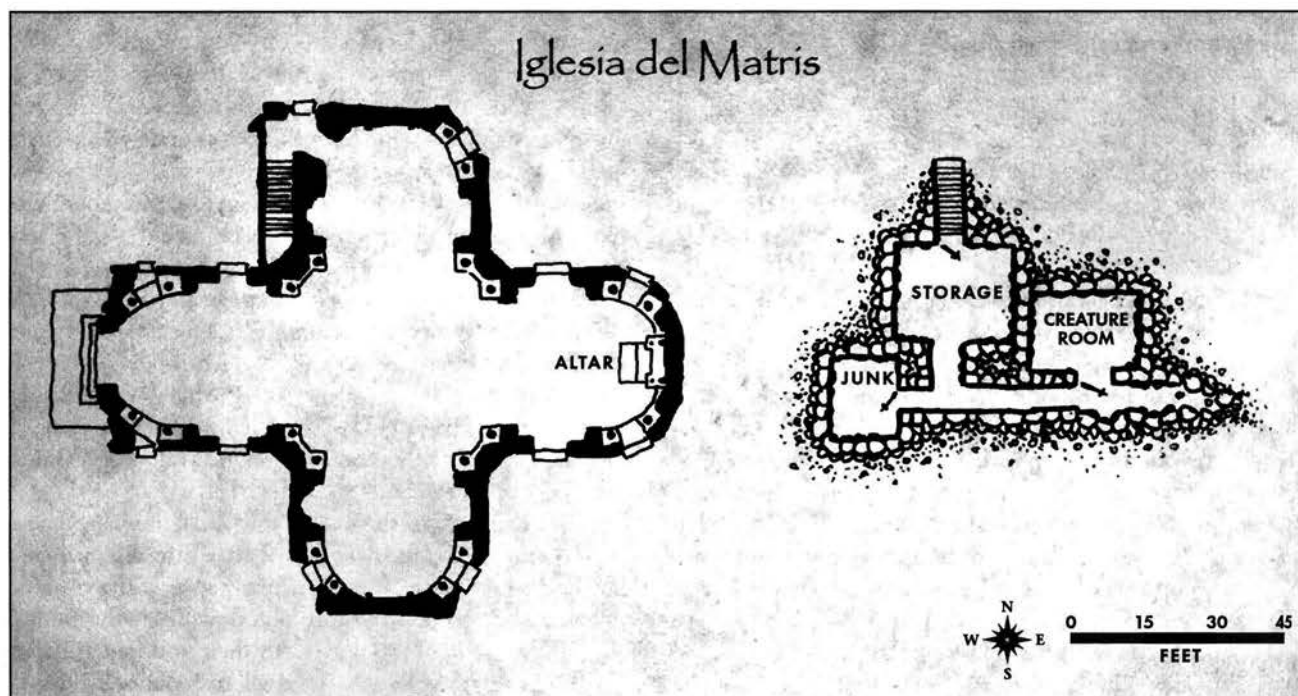
Investigations into Huetamo de Nunez are a dangerous proposition for obvious reasons. If the investigators come in numbers, they are in little danger if they do not reveal why they are there. Then again, if they directly handled the sentries, the Mother will know what they look like and be very suspicious of their motives. They will be followed everywhere in town, quietly monitored and judged before they leave. If the risk seems too great, the Mother will attack, hopefully subduing them and dragging them to the grotto, if not, their death is an adequate outcome.

If an investigator comes alone, he will immediately be assaulted from all sides, bound, gagged, and dragged to the grotto to be reborn inside the body of the Mother.

Iglesia del Matris

This small church was constructed in the late 18th century, and in that time, has seen little change. The tiled plaque over the front entrance reads "Iglesia del Matris" (Church of the Mother) in an odd mix of Spanish and Latin. It is a stone and mortar building with tiled roofs and wooden crossbeams. The interior is odd only that it has no pews, a common feature in such rustic surroundings. Off the narthex a small wooden staircase descends into a rough hewn basement. Father Fernandez makes his residence in a small wooden addition which is entered from the outside.

In the main narthex at the altar is a large leather bound bible (a Spot Hidden or a Halved Idea roll will indicate it is not a common bible). This is the cult's holy book, *Nova*



New Mythos Tome

Nova Mysteria Matris Oblitae

("The New Cult (or Church) of the Forgotten Mother")

"From her the world gains life, from her blood and flesh we gain life eternal.

Through our eyes she sees the world, and through our hands we make the world in her image."

(Latin, +3% Cthulhu Mythos, -1/1D4 Sanity, x3 spell modifier, study time: 2 weeks, skill checks: Latin)

Spells: None

A thick handwritten tome, this poorly made book has assorted pages of notes inserted at random intervals throughout the bound sheets of vellum. The thin, tiny writing is in church Latin, and those with a Catholic background will recognize the earmarks of that style. No dates exist to indicate when the book was first conceived and written, but the writing is the same throughout the four hundred and fifty four page book. The inserted pages are covered in notes and broken paragraphs with many words crossed out. These inserts seem to be extensions and notes on the text written in a cramped and rushed style.

Forty fresh pages have been sown into the binding at the points marked by the inserted pages, which presumably will soon be filled with the modifications worked out on the scrap pages.

The book itself contains a warped version of the story of creation, where the people of Huetamo de Nunez are "reborn," given the gift of immortality, and the protection of the Mother while the world outside ages and dies. Their "rebirth" is linked blasphemously to the Christ myth, as is the Grotto of the Mother to the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth. The two towns of Tenamo and Coyama (see the section entitled "The Burned Towns") are of course compared to Sodom and Gomohra. Other links between this book and the Holy Bible are evident in every page, and anyone reading it at length will come to the conclusion that it must have been written by someone with extensive knowledge of the Old Testament and New Testament.

It has little specific information in it at all.

There are no pictures in the book.

Mysteria Matris Oblitae, "The New Cult (or Church) of the Forgotten Mother." If strangers are in town, this book is placed beneath the podium.

Beneath the podium is where the ceremonial "wafer" and "wine" are kept, both are portions of the Mother and are independent creatures. The "wine" kept in an ancient cracked green bottle, is a viscous pus-like liquid which never quite settles, small bits of detritus and debris can be seen floating in it that never cease moving, no matter how long the canister is observed (SAN loss 0/1). The "wafers" are thick, milky-white portions of what look like wet, uncooked dough. If scrutinized at length they can be seen to be moving in tiny pulsating spasms, as if they were breathing (SAN loss 0/1).

If the Mother has grown suspicious of the investigators and finds them in her Church examining her holy items, she will attack. Although the "wine" and "wafer" are far from deadly, the entire town will be closing in on the church as the attack begins.

The Church Basement

The basement of the Iglesia del Matris is three rooms dug into the soft earth and shored up by slats of wood. These rooms are filthy, and a haze hangs in the air of rot and death. The entire floor is covered in rotting clothing, equipment, and supplies. Most of the debris is covered in a milky white residue like moss. The clothing and equipment is from

people who have wandered in Huetamo de Nunez in the past and met their fate there. Their clothing was ransacked for valuables and left in the basement of the church, in case they could possibly be used further.

In the many years that the clothes have been thrown down here, the bits of Mother flesh which have congealed on it have gathered and taken on a life of their own. It lives in the basement of the church now, beneath the rotting clothing and junk, waiting for its orders from the Mother.

The Grotto

This cave sits to the northwest of Huetamo de Nunez on the upward slope of the valley. Concealed beneath the jungle canopy, a small well worn path leads to the opening from the north end of the village of Huetamo De Nunez. This path is covered in many of the Sentry creatures, which will allow the Mother to ambush anyone it deems a threat, well before they reach its lair. If investigators are observed moving towards her lair, the entire town of Huetamo de Nunez will be there to meet them.

The mouth of the cave is quite small and is concealed beneath a large patch of fern plants. It is difficult to discern even when actively searching for it and can only be located with a successful Spot Hidden roll.

The interior of the cave is a low ceilinged downward sloping passage which comes to an abrupt end about fifty

feet in. The light from the outside world rapidly decreases as one descends into the interior of the cave. At the deepest point in the cave the Mother rests within her pit. The bulk of its body covers approximately thirty feet in a rough circle and weighs almost 30 tons. Innumerable creatures are continuously expelled from its fleshy, doughy mass. Some are reabsorbed as they try to scuttle away, others live out their entire blind existence in the dark of the cave.

Anyone coming too close to the pit of the Mother (if they get that far at all) is likely to be physically or psychically attacked, see "Tactics of the Mother" for details.

The Ritual

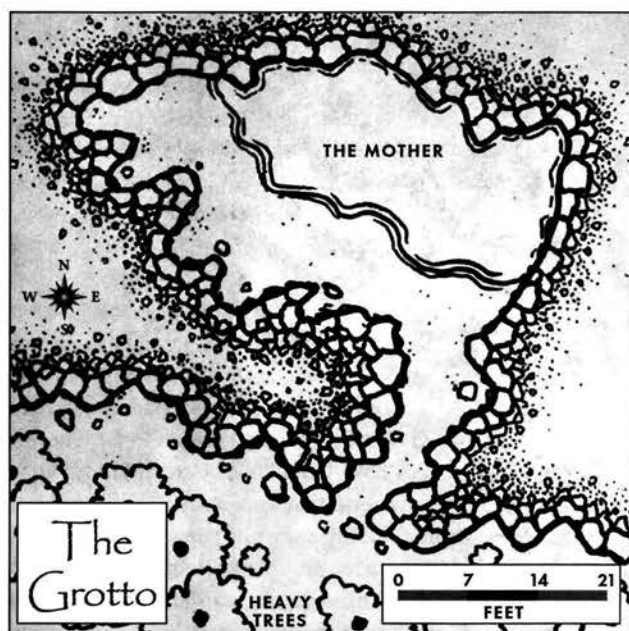
The people of Heutamo de Nunez can go for no more than two days without feeding from the Mother. Without the flesh of the Mother they are soon overcome by sickness, followed rapidly by an agonizing painful death.

Every night the townsfolk march to the Grotto of the Mother to feed. They file into the Grotto single file, not talking, all standing identically still. Each person enters the cave one at a time, strips, and leaps into the mass of the Mother's flesh. They remain submerged for more than a minute. When this is done, the person dresses and returns to town, freshly gorged on Mother flesh.

The Mother

The Mother is what remains of a portion of the Outer God Abthoth which was severed from its parent mass in ancient times. The Mother was a probing pseudopod that was cut away from its source in the ancient pits of N'Kai by an immense earthquake. In the time since, it has developed on its own. Cut off from its birthplace and parent, it has had to improvise. Since it has discovered humanity on the surface, the Mother has utilized a simple form of trial and error to exploit them as much as possible. The Mother realizes that it is trapped near the surface, and that there is no place for it to go (the earthquake closed off all exits to the underworld long ago). It also realizes that it is vulnerable to fire. It understands that the humans have extensive access to fire and fire making technologies.

In the past fifty years the Mother has absorbed and converted three towns including Huetamo de Nunez in the vicinity of the valley. During the time of the Mexican Revolution however, the Mother became nervous of all the strange activity of the government and military, which in addition to threatening its village and villagers, even setting flame to one of its churches. It became so nervous that it decided to level all but one village in a blaze of fire. The two towns which once rode the lip of the ridge were called Coyama and Tenamo and their ruins can still be found in the jungle (see



the Burned Towns). It did this because no one from the government ever found their way to Huetamo de Nunez, and the Mother believes this point to be suitably distant from the bueracracy. Now, the Mother guards the lip of the ridge with its sentries, and the only path to the grotto with its one village, Huetamo de Nunez.

It has no plans *per se*, and only hopes to survive, keeping the encroaching tendrils of Human society from destroying it.

Tactics of the Mother

The Mother is far from stupid. It has a motivation to survive and eventually to expand once it deems it is safe from the outside world of humanity. The entirety of Huetamo De Nunez is the Mother's personal army. They have no lives past a fanatical and complete motivation to protect the Mother from all harm. Women will gleefully fling babies into battle as a distraction to confuse their foes, men will blindly rush gunfire based on the knowledge that a gun can only be fired a finite amount of times before it must be reloaded.

The Mother can perceive through the eyes and ears of all its creations and will maintain a ongoing list of opponents, capabilities, and weaknesses to be exploited at its will. This is why it has seeded the surrounding hills with its sentries. All movement through its territory will be noticed, and it hopes this forewarning will give it an advantage.

Anyone who makes it to the Grotto without being intercepted will be considered a grave threat. The Mother has many defenses, not all of which are physical. The Mother may overwhelm a single target with its mind, piercing the intellect with a terrible barrage of alien imagery. It may do this once per round to anyone in its cave grotto.

While the target is stunned mentally the Mother then attempts to engulf them.

Anyone taken into the mass of the Mother will be 're-born' or 'baptised' as a servant of the Mother in 1D3 rounds. For those unfortunate investigators who find themselves submerged in the Mother, describe the sensation of drowning in pudding, and the feeling of thin tendrils crawling into every available orifice of their bodies. If somehow freed in under 1D3 rounds (with fire, *etc.*), the target will still suffer 0/1D4 SAN from the horrible sensations experienced in the pool.

As a last resort, the Mother will bargain, using one of its villagers as a mediator. The town of Huetamo de Nunez has collected many valuables over the years, considering that material wealth means nothing to the villagers any longer. The Mother offers a sizable sum in gold and silver if the investigators will leave it and its town alone. If they agree, the investigators are brought to the basement room of the Church, where the Mother's largest motile creation resides. Needless to say, the Mother does not intend on keeping her bargain.

Expelling the Mother Flesh

Once the human body is invaded by the alien flesh of the Mother, a rapid series of changes lead to the total reconfiguration of the organism. The Mother flesh enters

through any available orifice, and from there insinuates itself through the bloodstream throughout the body nearly instantly. It then begins to consume the internal structure and organs of the human, converting them to Mother flesh, which in turn speeds the change. Eventually all but the outer skin and fat layers of the human are consumed and converted by the Mother Flesh. Although liquid in the center when the transformation is complete, the Mother Flesh congeals to a thicker consistency towards the outer layers under the skin. When the brain begins its conversion, the Mother is given access to all memories and skills the person may have. These in turn are re-encoded into the Mother Flesh within the human vessel, so that they may continue to act more or less "human" to the outside observer.

Early on the infection may be halted through the application of fire or extreme heat. Any direct application of fire or searing hot materials to a human which contains Mother Flesh will result in the alien organism expelling itself out of the body through any available orifice. Extended application of heat (*i.e.* subject held over a fire, placed in scalding water, *etc.*) will also eventually lead to expulsion of the alien material. Once the alien material is expelled from the system, the Human is freed from the influence of the Mother. However, if the Mother Flesh has already converted most of the body to its whim, this procedure will only end up killing the human. The body will empty completely of the Mother Flesh, which will then attempt to flee.



A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.

A Note about Fire

Fire, no doubt, will come into play within this scenario. As a weapon, fire is a tricky tool, and can injure the user just as easily as the intended victim. Molotov Cocktails and gasoline or kerosene soaked torches are all viable (and quite dangerous) weapons for use against the Mother.

Molotov Cocktail. This is a bottle filled with some sort of flammable liquid, such as kerosene or gasoline. A dry swatch of cloth stuffed in the mouth of the bottle is used as a wick. The wick is lit and the bottle thrown at the intended target. The base percentage for the attack is the investigators Throw skill. On a fumble, the Molotov Cocktail ignites *on the investigator*. The damage is 2D6 HPs initially, plus the target must make a successful Luck roll or suffer an additional 1D6 damage until the fire is extinguished. The fire will burn for 1D8 rounds if the Luck roll is failed, if the Luck roll is fumbled, the fire will burn for 1D10 rounds.

Kerosene or Gasoline Soaked Torches. Wood wrapped in cloth coated in gasoline or kerosene will burn for 1D8 minutes and gasoline for 1D4 minutes. To attack with this rather primitive weapon requires a Club attack roll. If a flammable target is hit, and fails a Luck roll, it will burn for 1D8 rounds inflicting 1D6 HPs damage per round. If the Luck rolled is fumbled the target will burn for 1D10 rounds. If the Club attack roll is fumbled, the attacker has managed to light himself on fire and must make a similar Luck roll with similar circumstances.

Resolutions

Other options exist to resolve this scenario.

- The Mexican army can be brought in. This will most likely result in the wholesale destruction of Huetamo de Nunez, and a new wave of paranoia and fear of the Catholic church, which may well lead to the death of Father Korstian.
- The entire jungle bowl can be put to flame. This is a difficult task, but it is possible. If a fire is set which consumes both the grotto and Huetamo de Nunez, the scenario is effectively over. There is nothing left to be found.
- If a large team of scientists travels to Huetamo de Nunez, the scene may rapidly descend into a bloodbath which will result in the army being brought in. Again, this will lead to the complete decimation of Huetamo de Nunez and the possible death of Father Korstian.

SAN Rewards & Penalties

Destroy the Mother	+1D20 SAN
Trap the Mother in a cave-in	+1D6 SAN
Destroy Huetamo de Nunez	+1D4 SAN
Each Huetamo de Nunez Villager slain	+1 SAN
Survive an Infestation by the Mother	+1D4 SAN
Each investigator lost to the Mother	-1D4 SAN
Father Korstian is lost to the Mother	-1D4 SAN

NPC Stats

FATHER KORGEL KORSTIAN
Catholic Priest

Age: 50 Height: 5'10" Weight: 192 lbs.

Race: Caucasian Build: Athletic

Description: Father Korstian has sandy blond hair fading to grey at the temples and clear blue eyes. He is in fantastic shape for his age, and has calloused, rough hands reflecting his love for hard labor. Often in full priestly garb, he can sometimes be found wearing only work pants, a undershirt and the roman collar. Father Korstian can speak and write Dutch, Latin, German, French and a little Italian.

STR 13 DEX 12 INT 13 CON 12 APP 10 POW 11
SIZ 11 EDU 19 SAN 35 HP 11

Skills: Anthropology 11%, Art 31%, Bargain 22%, Biology 9%, Chemistry 12%, Climb 43%, Drive Auto 23%, Electrical Repair 21%, First Aid 35%, Geology 7%, History 38%, Law 10%, Library Use 41%, Listen 29%, Mechanical Repair 31%, Medicine 8%, Natural History 31%, Dutch 95%, Latin 80%, German 64%, French 62%, Italian 12%, Physics 12%, Swim 46%.

Attacks: None of any consequence.

THE SCOUTS

STR 12 DEX 11 INT 6 CON 12
POW 10 SIZ 4 Move 9 HP 8

Attacks: 4 Claws 50%, 1D4

Skills: Dodge 45%

SAN Loss: 0/1D6

Notes: This creature, and others like it, were used by the Mother to plant sentries around the perimeter of the Huetamo de Nunez valley. If cornered with no possibility of escape, it will attack.

THE SENTRIES

STR 2 DEX 16 INT 3 CON 10
POW 7 SIZ 2 Move 9 HP 5

Attacks:

Claws (x2) 50%, 1D4-3

Skills: Dodge 65%

SAN Loss: 0/1D6

Playtest Notes

Several unusual and funny situations arose during the playtesting of this scenario. The group of investigators was composed of a team of scientists from the University of Mexico City, answering the entreaty of Father Korstiaan. Two were Zoologists, one the department head, the other the goofy son of a party official who had been granted his degree as a political favor. The third member was a botanist, taken along due to the unusual nature of the creature in question.

The investigators were sure they had come across a new species of animal. The fun began with their investigations of the jungle, the discovery of the Sentries. Things got serious quickly as they crossed the ridge.

When they wandered into Huetamo de Nunez and talked with Father Fernandez all hell broke loose. They were attacked from all sides and managed to shoot their way out.

Some memorable moments follow:

- Early on back in Mexico City during the autopsy of the Scout creature, the entire room of scientists was thrown into disarray when one of the Sentries disconnected itself from the corpse and attempted to run away.
- The investigators took to carrying around fire-extinguishers to immobilize the sentries. One was even used as a make-shift bomb on the townsfolk of Huetamo de Nunez.
- When the Mother realized the investigators were scientists, it manufactured more Scout creatures and using its townsfolk attempted to convince the investigators that the creatures were indeed a natural occurrence. The Scouts set up "nests," killed "prey," and acted socially. In fact, it was all a ruse, perpetrated in the hopes it would satisfy the humans' curiosity. It didn't.
- At one point the goofy Zoologist stuck his head out the church to look around and was greeted by an ancient musket pointed in his face. But the villager rolled a 98 and the gun jammed. Needless to say, the zoologist shut the door.
- The goofy Zoologist retreated during the fighting to the basement of the church and hid in the room filled with discarded clothing and equipment. He soon discovered the creature which lived amidst the debris. The slime slid up his leg and attempted to penetrate his body through a most unnatural entry point. He was discovered by the other investigators madly pawing at his pants leg, trying to keep the gelatinous mass at bay by keeping the cloth held tight to his thigh.
- One of the investigators confided within "earshot" of the Mother's "Wine": "I hope they (the villagers) don't sabotage the car." They were then greeted by the sounds of the enraged townsfolk pounding away at their truck outside.



In the arms of the Mother.

Notes: These creatures are designed to observe. In the jungle they look like large greenish rocks and are quite difficult to spot (Spot Hidden rolls -10%). When alive, they display some odd behavior if one is placed next to another. One of the two creatures will immediately get up and run a set distance, then hunker down again. Groups of them promptly split into evenly spaced lines if left to their own devices.

Also, if observed closely, dozens of tiny pin point holes can be seen in their "head," which open and shut like tiny sphincters, these eye holes track any movement or light in a 360 degree arc around its body. These eyes instantly transmit all visual images to the Mother, no matter the distance.

Internally, the creatures are little more than a musculature for locomotion, nerve tissue for their many eyes, and brain. Proportionally the creatures brain is about two fifths its body weight. The smaller sentries display a tiny mouth at their base, where they feed off the Scout's body, the larger ones have no mouth at all. They display no hunting behavior, no feeding behavior, and no natural flight behavior, unless directly physically attacked. In the wild, they feed by photosynthesis.

Sentries brought any further than Nuevo Voso will begin losing 1 CON point per hour, when their CON reaches 1, they enter a state of stasis and begin losing 1 HP every 3 hours. When their HPs reach zero, the creature violently expels its internal organs, dying immediately.

Like their Mother, the sentries are extremely vulnerable to fire, they take double damage from any flame based attacks. In addition, they are susceptible to cold, and can be immobilized or killed by fire extinguishers, ice or cold water.

THE TOWNSFOLK

	STR	DEX	INT	CON	APP	POW	SIZ	EDU	HP	DB
#1	9	12	10	13	10	10	12	5	13	-
#2	11	9	12	11	11	9	9	7	10	-
#3	18	12	9	10	10	10	12	7	11	+104
#4	10	14	12	12	10	11	11	5	12	-
#5	11	11	13	10	12	10	13	7	12	-
#6	13	11	11	15	16	13	10	8	13	-
#7	17	11	11	10	9	11	15	9	13	+104
#8	10	10	9	9	11	11	9	5	9	-
#9	11	15	10	12	8	11	13	7	13	-
#10	9	11	17	15	10	12	11	5	13	-
#11	18	12	11	10	10	9	9	6	10	+104
#12	11	9	10	12	11	11	16	5	14	+104

Skills in Common: Dodge (DEXx2)+10%, Hide 35%, Spanish 55%, English 12%.

Attacks:

Punch 65%, 1D4+DB damage.

Knife 48%, 1D4+2+DB damage.

#4,9 Musket (DEX x1)+25%, 1D10+4 (.58 Springfield)

Notes: The villagers automatically regenerate 1 HP of kinetic damage every 5 rounds. Fire and Magic damage heal normally.

SAN loss: Every 3 points of damage done to the villager causes a maximum of 1 point of SAN lost if a SAN roll is failed. In other words causing 10 points of damage to a villager would cost 1D3 SAN if a SAN roll failed. Each attack that causes damage to a villager requires a SAN roll. This reflects the inhuman way the villagers are damaged, and the alien nature of their blood.

"WAFFER"

STR 2 DEX 16 INT 3 CON 10
POW 7 SIZ 1 Move 9 HP 6

Attacks:

Spines 50%, 1D4-2 + POT II Poison (Paralysis)

Skills: Dodge 65%

SAN Loss: 0/1D6

Notes: These small discs of Mother flesh will attack only if picked up. A sharp sting will be felt followed by a rapid paralysis of the limb stung. If more than one is picked up, each will sting, with a cumulative effect.

"WINE"

STR 3 DEX 11 INT 3 CON 9
POW 10 SIZ 1 Move 6 HP 5

Attacks:

Forced Ingestion 30%, see below for damage.

SAN Loss: 1/1D6

Notes: If the bottle containing this creature is opened, it will attack, launching itself towards any body opening it can locate (eyes, nose, mouth, anus) and will then insinuate itself into the bloodstream of the victim. This causes incapacitation in the victim for 1d6 rounds, after which the victim must match his Magic Points vs. those of the Mother. If failed, the investigator is now the puppet of the Mother and must do her bidding.

THE BASEMENT CREATURE

STR 34 DEX 12 INT 8 CON 40
POW 12 SIZ 21 Move 8 HP 31

Attacks: Pseudopod pummel 60%, 2D6+3D6.

SAN Loss: 1/1D8

Armor: No weapon using kinetic force can harm the Basement Creature permanently. The Creature regenerates at the rate of 1 point per melee round. Fire or magic cause normal damage.

THE MOTHER

STR 40 DEX 1 INT 13 CON 100
POW 50 SIZ 80 Move 0 HP 90

Attacks:

Appendage 60%, Grab and Absorb in 1D3 rounds.

Psychic Assault 65%, 1D6 SAN loss.

SAN Loss: 1D3/1D20

Armor: No weapon using kinetic force can harm the Mother permanently. The Mother regenerates at the rate of 20 points per melee round. Fire or magic cause normal damage.

age. Unlike its parent mass, the Mother cannot retreat if subjected to serious flame or magical attack, and will instead perish if reduced to 0 HPs.

The Mother Flesh

STR 1 DEX 1 INT 1 CON Var

POW 1 SIZ 1 Move 1 HP Var

Attacks:

Convert to Mother Flesh. Roll on the resistance table, the Mother Flesh's CON vs. the infected Human's CON once per day. Failure indicates the Mother Flesh gains an additional CON point. When the Mother Flesh's CON is equal or greater to the infected Human's CON, the Human is completely converted.

SAN Loss: 1/1D4

Armor: No weapon using kinetic force can harm the Mother permanently. The Mother regenerates at the rate of 20 points per melee round. Fire or magic cause normal damage. Unlike its parent mass, The Mother cannot retreat if subjected to serious flame or magical attack, and will instead perish if reduced to 0 HPs.

Notes: When the Mother Flesh flees its vessel, or is spilt, it will attempt to link up with other portions of Mother Flesh which may be nearby. Keep track of all HPs spilled in battle with the townspeople, each HP equals 1 of these creatures. Multiply the characteristics of the Mother Flesh by the number of HPs spilt to calculate the statistics of the creature which will emerge (and possibly attack).

Special Thanks

My most sincere thanks to Metta Williams, a friend, scholar, and all around cool person. Her help in the creation of the title of the scenario was unusually helpful in bringing this whole project together. Thanks Metta!

APPENDIX

Player Aids

A Murder of Crows

PHOTOGRAPHIC AID #1
PORTRAIT OF DAVID CROW



PHOTOGRAPHIC AID #2
PORTRAIT OF ALLAN CROW



PLAYER AID #1—THE LAST LETTER OF DAVID CROW
(Postmarked Morgan City, Louisiana, 6 April 19__.)

April 4, 19__

Dear Dad,

This should be one of my last letters to you. As you know, we are due to return home sometime in the next few weeks, and all we need to do at this point is make travel arrangements. Both of us are looking forward to getting out of Louisiana; the weather is hot and muggy and the people haven't been exactly friendly.

As usual, our research has not progressed very far. The people here don't trust strangers and refuse to speak with us. Nothing we do seems to gain their confidence. Many seem to be afraid to even be near us. This place is very forbidding; I can understand why they act the way they do. The ominous feel of this town has even gotten to us. If it weren't for the cooperation we have received from a handful of locals, we would have packed up and left long ago.

Allan's finger is doing much better now. I keep kidding him about being more careful when closing doors. The doctor had little trouble setting the break; even I could have done it.

We're still running down leads here, but will hopefully be able to return on time. At this point, we may have to request an extension, since evidence seems to come only in bits and pieces. Anyway, Allan says "hello," and he'll write soon. We'll let you know if we end up staying longer than planned. Take care of yourself and don't worry about us.

Love,
David

A Murder of Crows

PHOTOGRAPHIC AID #3
UNDEVELOPED PLATE IN ALLAN CROW'S CAMERA



Keeper's note: When the photo is developed, a poor image is revealed. No amount of tinkering with the plate and developing methods will enhance it. It was taken at night and was a rush job on the part of the photographer, who was in no mood to stay outdoors. The photo appears to be of a swamp scene and shows trees and vegetation, including a lot of Spanish moss. A hunched figure can barely be seen in profile among the trees and its extremely vague facial features appear to be canine. The Keeper may either provide this photo as an aid to the players or may withhold it and only describe it. Of course, if they are provided the photographic aid, many will assume it is vitally important and will examine it more closely than their investigators would in the actual situation. One option is to describe it, allow the appropriate skill rolls, then provide it.

Vigilante Justice

NOTABLE DATES—USE WITH CALENDAR ON INSIDE BACK COVER

Friday, April 6, 1900: First Quarter Moon
Sunday, April 15, 1900: Full Moon
Sunday, April 22, 1900: Third Quarter Moon
Sunday, April 29, 1900: New Moon

A Murder of Crows

PHOTOGRAPHIC AID #4—PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CULT VILLAGE FROM MURAT'S COLLECTION



Nightcap

PLAYER AID #2— AN EXCERPT FROM "SUPERSTITION AND FOLKLORE"

One very old woman in Sylvanville, a Mrs. Letitia Harpwood, had a very odd tale to tell concerning the rough hills in southern Leshay County, near what is now the new mining town of Heighton. Before the Civil War, the area had been remote wilderness, visited only by hunters and trappers. To a great extent it remains so, though local hunters and trappers shun the area because of persistent rumors that the woods are haunted. Mrs. Harpwood's husband had run a profitable trapline in the area for black bear in the Twenties and Thirties, but abandoned it after a frightening experience in 1835.

One day in October of that year, Mr. Harpwood trapped a bear late in the day and having taken until after dark to butcher the creature, he camped in the woods for the night. Harpwood returned without the bear the next day, his clothes ripped and soiled, and a wild, frightened look in his eyes. Harpwood said that he had had a weird nightmare in the woods, in which he saw "horned and hooved devils with forked tails and burning pitchforks" dancing around a bonfire and yelling to the sky in some demonic, un-Christian language. They saw him and stopped their dancing when their leader, a tall, bearded man in a scarlet robe, pointed at him and shouted for the others to "seize the sacrifice and take him to the monastery." Harpwood abandoned his gear and ran all night through the wilderness to get home. The "devils" chased him for several miles, howling like rabid dogs.

When I asked Mrs. Harpwood how her late husband's clothes had gotten torn after he awoke from his dream, she gave me an odd, confused look, and would say no more to me...

Nightcap

PLAYER AID #I—A PHOTOGRAPH



PLAYER AID #3—A LETTER IN THE DEATH-CERTIFICATE FILE AT THE LESHAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

November 17, 1842

To: County Coroner, Leshay County, Kentucky

Dear Sir,

I am conducting a confidential, official inquest into the disturbing death of Mr. Ephraim Peabody, late of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Mr. Peabody is believed to have spent the past summer on business in Leshay County. Any information you might be able to provide on his activities or whereabouts this past summer would be greatly appreciated by the Commonwealth and by

Your Humble Serv't

Hartford Waite
County Examiner
Berkshire County, Mass.

WHAT DO I DO
WITH THIS? L
Just put this in the records. M.

Nightcap

PLAYER AID #4

FROM THE BERKSHIRE COUNTY DISPATCH, 11/15/1842

PEABODY, Ephraim. Mr. Ephraim M. Peabody, 44, died suddenly at home on November 13th. Services will be private at the request of the coroner's office.

PLAYER AID #5

THE LIST OF JURORS FOR CASE NO. 134

1. Cabot Snow, 13 Elm St.
2. Percival Osborne, 58 Broad St.
3. Wilcox Smith, River St.
4. John Peters, 28 Broad St.
5. James Abbott, 57 Elm St.
6. Robert Dunning, Dunning's farm.

We Have Met The Enemy

PLAYER AID #1—TRANSCRIPTS FROM UNCLE FREDDY'S DIARY

May 14: Have discovered the gate-destruction ceremony. My God! It is so obvious, but there must be some alternative. I have set it down, though I already feel that its details are engraved upon my brain. Now the necessity to acquire the amulet is so much more pressing!

May 19: Istanbul at last. Boarding the Orient Express, I felt as if I was finally awakening from a terrible nightmare. Only the icy touch of the amulet beneath my shirt reminds me that the events of the last few weeks have been real. They say it will take only four days to reach London—I am constantly amazed by what technology has achieved, especially when I compare this with the depth of primitivism and the barbarity from which I have just escaped. If only I can find an alternative way to destroy the gate!

May 20: Have been suffering from evil dreams. Have I really escaped, or is their reach further than I had imagined? I fear to close my eyes, as whenever I do, I see and hear the black priestess calling to me to return, return....

May 21: The dreams continue. Yesterday I awoke to find myself dressed and wandering down the corridor of the train. Would I have disembarked if the train had reached a stop?

May 22: I have warned the porters about my "sleep walking." They have agreed to awaken me if they meet me in the corridor after I retire for the evening. I long to reach England. If only I can get a ship swiftly!

May 23: Arrived in London early today and have booked passage on the fastest ship leaving London in the near future—by good fortune, it leaves tomorrow morning. I find myself constantly looking over my shoulder. Of course, it is unlikely that they could have followed me this far, but the unlikely has occurred far too often of late.

May 23 through June 17 entries concern the passage, which appears to have been uneventful. Uncle Freddy continued to be plagued by dreams, but his sleep walking ceased.

June 18: (A hasty scrawl) Dearest _____: If you are reading this, the worst has happened. I had hoped to visit you on the afternoon of the 19th, and renew our acquaintance, but no one can foresee the future. I have done my best not to involve anyone in this affair, but yesterday, at the station in New York, I was struck by the sight of a peculiar face in the crowd. It seemed familiar, but I hoped I was mistaken. Now, I think I was not. I was driving down to pick up a few groceries, when I glimpsed the same man on a street corner near my house. I hope it is only paranoia, but it is too late to let all of my work be lost—think of this as a kind of insurance policy—only the diary, not the amulet. That is too dangerous. With the diary, however, it is still possible that something can be done. I will take it down to the post office and then return to pack a few things. Do whatever you think is best.

All my love,
Uncle Freddy

We Have Met The Enemy

PLAYER AID #2—CEREMONY INSTRUCTIONS

TO DESTROY THE GATE OF KALI—

PERFORM OUTDOORS ON SUMMER SOLSTICE

CLEANSE THE ALTAR (ANY TABLE-LIKE OBJECT WILL DO)

DRAW A CIRCLE AROUND THE ALTAR WITH THE KNIFE TO PROTECT THE CELEBRANTS

TIE THE VICTIM TO THE ALTAR

WALK ~~AROUND~~ WITHIN THE CIRCLE COUNTERCLOCKWISE AROUND THE ALTAR NINE TIMES,

ALL THE WHILE CHANTING:

IA! IA! KALI!

AFTERWARDS, MAKE THE BLOOD OFFERING—ACCORDING TO MY STUDIES, ORIGINALLY A HUNDRED HUMAN SACRIFICES WERE OFFERED, BUT IT SEEMS ONLY THE FIRST IS CRITICAL. THE PROPER METHOD IS TO THROTTLE THE VICTIM INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND THEN, USING THE KNIFE WITH WHICH THE CIRCLE WAS DRAWN, REMOVE THE HEART FROM THE CHEST IN AS BLOODY A MANNER AS POSSIBLE. THE AMULET IS PLACED IN THE MOUTH OF THE MAIN CELEBRANT, WHO THEN BITES OFF A BIT OF THE HEART. AS THE PRIEST CHOWS, THE OTHERS CHANT:

BAKA KARDA KALI!

GUMAS UDAR GATU!

TUPA KARDA KALI!

BAKA KARDA KALI!

THEN THE PRIEST SPITS THE AMULET TO THE GROUND AND ALL LEAVE THE CEREMONY WITHOUT LOOKING BACK.

PLAYER AID #1

LOS ANGELES TIMES, SEPTEMBER 29, 1926

HOTEL MURDER

Sarah Archer, a guest at the Palm Rooms Hotel, was found murdered last night after a fire was reported in her room. The clerk on duty, Reginald Wiggins, responded to a guest's complaint of smoke in the hallway and discovered that the bed in Ms. Archer's room was on fire and her lifeless body lay in it. This morning, police announced that Ms. Archer had been stabbed to death and her body left to burn by an unknown assailant.

Police are seeking a man described as average height and build with dark hair and a light beard. He accompanied Ms. Archer to the hotel and paid for their room, leaving a false name and address with the clerk.

Sarah Archer, 24, was a resident of Los Angeles. No relatives have been identified as of yet. She is said to work nights.

PLAYER AID #3

LOS ANGELES TIMES, OCTOBER __, 1926

ACTRESS SLAIN
BY "FIREBUG"

THIRD IN MURDER SPREE

Police say the "Firebug" multiple murderer has struck again, this time at the heart of Hollywood: Sally Ellison, a 27-year-old actress with Mintz Brothers Studio, was murdered in her apartment last evening. After he killed her, the "Firebug" set the apartment on fire and fled unseen.

The first two victims of the "Firebug" were Sarah Archer and Patricia Campbell, both slain in recent days. In each case, the killer struck and then set the scene on fire before leaving. Ms. Archer and Ms. Campbell were both said to work the streets; Ms. Ellison, by contrast, was a reputable actress with a solid career. Police suspect she met the killer at some evening establishment, possibly a restaurant or theater.

Sal Mintz, co-founder of Mintz Brothers Studio, expressed his shock and sorrow at the crime. "To think that this could happen to a sweet girl like Sally, it just breaks my heart." Ms. Ellison has appeared in a variety of Mintz Brothers productions, including the recent hit *The End of Love*.

Dream Factory

PLAYER AID #4

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, SEPTEMBER 14, 1924

Man Slain Downtown

Burke Jenkins, an 18-year-old porter at the St. James Inn, was murdered last night by an unknown woman. The pair checked into the Marcus Hotel downtown, signing in under false names and addresses. Police believe the motive was robbery. The woman is described as being in her 20s, dark-haired, attractive, and well-dressed.

We Have Met
The Enemy

PLAYER AID #3—NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

ATTEMPTED
GRAVEROBBERY
INTERRUPTED

*Unsavory Incident follows
Respected Citizen's Funeral*

At 8:00 P.M., as he was leaving the First Church of Danvers after the evening service, Reverend Jacobs noticed lights moving through the cemetery, which adjoins the church. He reports that, investigating, he saw several individuals who "seemed to be wearing some kind of foreign robes."

To his surprise, these individuals carried shovels and were attempting to unearth the grave of Mr. Frederick Short, who had been laid to rest earlier that afternoon in a brief ceremony.

Reverend Jacobs immediately returned to the church, where he telephoned the police. Arriving on the scene, officers discovered shovels and evidence of digging in the vicinity of the grave. However, the perpetrators of this outrage had apparently fled. Officers posted a watch for the rest of the evening, but noticed no other activity. Detective Samson at the Danvers station speculates that this incident may be connected with Mr. Short's gruesome murder. However, he was unable to explain how the two incidents might be connected. Anyone with information about this shocking crime is requested to contact Detective Samson as soon as possible.

PLAYER AID #2

LOS ANGELES TIMES, OCTOBER 1, 1926

KILLER TAKES SECOND VICTIM?

Police believe that the City of Angels is home to a multiple murderer, following the discovery last night of young Patricia Campbell, 17, slain in the Desert Inn Hotel. Another guest of the hotel smelled smoke and alerted the front desk clerk, who found that Ms. Campbell's room was on fire and her body lay on the bed—brutally stabbed and then left to burn, possibly still alive as the flames engulfed her.

A similar fate befell Sarah Archer on the night of September 28, when she was likewise stabbed and her room set on fire at the Palm Rooms Hotel. Police believe that the similar nature of the two crimes and what they described as "the mania of the perpetrators" suggest that one man killed both women. Such a man was sighted with both victims just prior to their deaths. In both cases, the man accompanied each woman to a hotel, paid for their room, and left a false name and address. He is described as average height and build, with dark hair, unshaven.

Ms. Campbell ran away from her parents' home in Alameda last July and her present address is not known. Like the previous victim, Ms. Campbell was said to be a woman of the streets. Police believe that the killer selected the two victims in the course of their work, luring them to hotels and then striking when their guard was down.

PLAYER AID #5

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, FEBRUARY 21, 1925

Accountant Killed at Home

The neighbors didn't notice anything amiss, yet Peter Lowenstein was murdered in his apartment last night around 9 P.M. A co-worker of Lowenstein's, Jack Gittes, stopped by to pay a visit and found the body of the accountant sprawled on the floor. No one else at Lowenstein's apartment recalled seeing him come home or receive visitors. Police suspect robbery as the motive.

PLAYER AID #6

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, NOVEMBER 8, 1925

Sailor Ashore For Good

Richie Gaynor, a young commercial sailor in town on shore leave, checked into the Seaside Inn with a female companion last evening. Two hours later, a clerk found his body and discovered that the woman was gone. Police say the unidentified woman is a suspect in the case, but they haven't ruled out the possibility of a third person being involved. "We think she may have just been the bait to get this guy off-guard," Detective Larry Charles said, "and then maybe let the real killer in to do the job." Gaynor's family has been notified and are traveling from Pennsylvania for the funeral.

PLAYER AID #7

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, FEBRUARY 28, 1926

Waiter Brutally Slain

Larry Fellows, a waiter at Bill's Grill on the waterfront, was murdered last night in the Carlton Hotel. The witness who discovered the body described the scene as "horrible." Joseph Buford, a salesman in town for the week, knocked on Fellows' door to borrow a cigarette. Finding the door open and sensing that something was wrong, he looked inside.

"I was in the war, and saw some action," Buford said. "But let me tell you, the kind of deliberate, heartless cruelty I saw done to that poor guy just shocked me."

Police say that Fellows, 25, checked into the Carlton with an unidentified male companion. The man is described as being in his 50s, with a gray beard and thick silver hair. Both appeared to be coming in from a jovial night on the town. The motive for the crime is as yet unknown.

PLAYER AID #8

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, MAY 16, 1926

Student Murdered in Hotel

Jason Andrews, a freshman at UC-Berkeley, was stabbed to death last night in the Richardson Hotel downtown. Andrews took a room in the company of an unidentified well-dressed man around eight o'clock. Witnesses at the hotel said the pair appeared jovial, and were joined by an unidentified woman about fifteen minutes later.

At approximately ten o'clock, the guest in the room next to Andrews' complained to the front desk about an odor. A clerk entered Andrews' room and found the body of the young man on the bed, his companions missing.

Police believe the motive was robbery.

Dream
Factory

PLAYER AID #9

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, 7/11/26

**HIS & HERS
HOMICIDES****Mystery Couple Sought
In Six Deaths**

Police believe an unidentified man and woman are responsible for the brutal murders of six San Francisco men over the past two years. Said to be well-dressed and attractive, the couple take their victims to cheap hotels and then stab them to death.

Although some items belonging to the victims are missing, police do not believe robbery is the motive. "These people are thrill killers," Detective Martin Williams of SFPD-Homicide said. "They're animals, and we're going to bring them to justice."

The latest victim of the mystery couple is dockworker Philip Partridge, 28. Partridge checked into the Seagull Hotel last night around 6 P.M. and was found dead the following morning when a maid came to clean the room.

He was accompanied by an unidentified man, believed to be the same man seen in two previous murders: those of Larry Fellows on February 27 and Jason Andrews on May 15. In the case of Andrews, he and the man were joined by an unidentified woman, herself seen in the company of three earlier victims: Burke Jenkins on September 13, 1924; Peter Lowenstein on February 20, 1925; and Richie Gaynor on November 7, 1925. Police now believe that both the man and the woman committed all six murders.

All the victims were single men between the ages of 18 and 28, with no criminal records. All are described as handsome, hard-working, upstanding citizens of the bay area.

Mysteria Matris Oblitae

PLAYER AID #1—FATHER KORSTIAN'S LETTER (IN SPANISH)

12 July 1929

nuevo voso, Mexico

to whom it may concern at your wonderful university:

on this day i was brought a most unusual specimen of animal by two local men who are known to me to be trustworthy and honest. the photograph enclosed gives a good idea to what i speak of, but does not do the creature justice. the beast was shot on a ridge near the town of nuevo voso (my parish) on the edge of the jungle while it was attempting to make off with some livestock.

i have been unable to identify this creature in any of my books, and hope that i am not making a fool of myself when i ask you gentlemen:

would you come and identify the creature and make sure its so odd remains are cared for properly before they rot beyond recognition?

i am far from sure of myself, but it seems to me to be a remarkable discovery. who knows what other secrets the jungle holds!

your friend in science,
father korgel korstian

PLAYER AID #2—PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SCOUT CREATURE



[illegible]