



# HOCUS POCUS

BY

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# CREDITS PAGE

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE HOOK

Renowned magician and hoodoo practitioner Benjamin Rucker, known professionally as Black Herman, has a problem. A rival has a new act, and it's so sensational that it's starting to impact Black Herman's bottom line. Who is the King of the Cats, and what's his secret?

## THE AWFUL TRUTH

John Robinson, the so-called King of the Cats, is a man with a singular obsession. While working at the Natural History Museum he came into contact with an artefact supposedly from ancient Egypt which turned out to be an 18<sup>th</sup> Century forgery, so the Museum never put it on display. That item was a Child of the Sphynx, and the creature was clever enough to hide its true nature from almost everyone. When Robinson discovered its secret, the Child suborned him.

Robinson believed he had a sure-fire ticket to fame and fortune. He would reinvent himself as a hoodoo man and stage magician par excellence. Let others fiddle with trick cabinets and herbal remedies; he had the real thing, an actual walking artefact of times past.

The Child had other ideas. It was happy to help Robinson, so long as Robinson helped it escape from the Museum. It wasn't about to become some kind of permanent carny exhibit. It wants to establish a new Church for its mistress Bast – actually Nyaralothep, but Robinson has no way of knowing that - and to that end it has instructed Robinson in the methods of creating new Children. Its ultimate goal is to contact 'Bast', and with that ritual establish a mystic fane for its mistress.

Robinson now has four Children, and is making more. When he has six, the Children will begin the ritual – and then, as far as the Children are concerned, all New York will bow before its new God. Or Bast will take her revenge on an ungrateful city.

## HARLEM UNBOUND

This scenario does not use any material from Harlem Unbound, published by Darker Hue Studios and written by Chris Spivey. All such material is copyright Darker Hue Studios.

However, the author encourages anyone interested in the setting to seek out Harlem Unbound, as it is a splendid supplement, and includes rules conversions for GUMSHOE as well as Call of Cthulhu.

## RACE AND RACISM

Racism is not a topic lightly trifled with.

When playing in any historical setting, the players and Keeper must decide for themselves to what extent they intend to mirror the historical mores and attitudes prevalent at that time. Americans have perpetrated and suffered under endemic racism since the nation's earliest days. Harlem, and the people who lived, loved and died there, was not exempt.

For some groups, confronting the historical climate of the time is part of the attraction of roleplaying. For others, it is something best avoided.

Harlem is a big place. In period, whites own most of the businesses and the tenements, and rent to blacks. Many of the most famous Harlem speakeasies, like the Cotton Club, are run by white gangsters for white customers; blacks can serve, but they don't get to play. Marcus Garvey preaches black nationalism from Liberty Hall on W 138<sup>th</sup>. The National Negro Committee meets in New York and creates the N.A.A.C.P.; W.E.B. DuBois, one of its founders and the preeminent sociological scholar of his day, lives in Harlem. Professionals, well-to-do middle class, the working class, the working poor, sports giants and singers, dancers and accountants, clerks and train workers, tens of thousands, and hundreds more arriving each year, all call Harlem home.

In Harlem, Black Herman is king of hoodoo – but he faces a challenger.



# BLACK HERMAN

The scenario opens with an invitation from Benjamin Rucker, aka Black Herman, or Professor Black Herman, the famous stage magician: please come and see me at your earliest convenience.

The investigators may try to find out more about Benjamin Rucker before they visit him.

**Know:** Professor Black Herman is a wealthy and successful stage magician who's performed all over the United States. He has a very lucrative sideline as a conjure doctor, selling herbal remedies and telling fortunes.

**Know (Hard):** Benjamin Rucker is a very well-connected man in Harlem. He's a confidential advisor to Marcus Garvey, a member of several different influential fraternal organizations, a friend to politicians, intellectuals and churchmen, and an immensely popular figure.

**Occult:** Professor Black Herman's conjure doctor skills are famous across the nation. He sells pamphlets and instruction manuals, as well as roots and herbal cures. He claims to have learned his skill from Indian mystics, and his adventures in China and Africa, dodging assassins and performing miracles, are well known.

**Occult (hard):** Many people who call themselves conjure doctors cribbed their knowledge from other sources, but Benjamin Rucker's talent is undeniable. Other conjure doctors acknowledge him a leader in the craft.

**Law:** *Assuming this scenario plays out before 1927:* Anyone in Black Herman's position runs the risk of official censure. The powers that be don't like fortune tellers, and being a friend of Marcus Garvey and other influential people makes Rucker a tempting target. If he's not careful, he'll get arrested.

**Law:** *Assuming this scenario plays out after 1927:* Rucker's arrest on charges of fortune telling and practicing medicine without a license was embarrassing, but not a fatal blow. The more vexing development, from Rucker's point of view, is that several rival magicians used his name and reputation while he was in jail. One of them was even arrested for practicing medicine without a license.

Rucker's West 119<sup>th</sup> Street brownstone, within view of Morningside Heights Park, is a popular landmark and easy to find. People are gathered outside hoping to catch a glimpse of the famous Professor, and perhaps ask his advice.

Rucker's staff are expecting the investigators, and they are shown up to the great man's office. The walls and ceilings of the corridors leading to that office are painted with fantastical images, devils and angels both, and there are benches for people to sit on. This is where the more fortunate petitioners wait to speak with Black Herman, but today there are none; Rucker wants as few people as possible to know that he's talking with the investigators.

Rucker, an imposing man in Prince Albert coat, striped pants, and shoes polished to a mirror shine, greets them.

"I'll get straight to the point," he says. "I need you to find out everything you can about a man named John Robinson, who calls himself King of the Cats. He's got a new act I just can't beat, but what worries me is, I don't think he's playing with a full deck. He could be meddling with occult forces he doesn't understand. If he is, I have friends that can help me deal with him – but I need to know, before I get personally involved, whether what I think is so, is so."

**Psychology** shoes Rucker is sincere in everything he says, and is genuinely worried about Robinson. **Cthulhu Mythos (no check needed)** also notes that Rucker knows about the Mythos, and is very worried about what's going on.

Rucker says:

- Robinson came out of nowhere about four months ago. Nobody had heard of him before he rented space at the Renaissance Theatre for a performance.
- His act is hokey, for the most part; Robinson, for all his playacting, doesn't have stage presence and isn't good at legerdemain. His mind reading tricks with helper Madame Selene are passable, but if that was all he had going for him the so-called King of the Cats wouldn't be a problem.
- Robinson's big closer is a routine he calls Talking to the Queen. He claims to have rescued the mummy of an ancient Egyptian princess, and this mummy has the power to see into the future. He brings the mummy out on stage, the audience asks it questions, and Robinson interprets its answers.
- The mummy is both impressive and horrible. It's stick thin, tanned like an old bog corpse, with the head of a giant cat, possibly a lion. What makes it worse is it sometimes seems to move. It could just be a large puppet, but the effect is unsettling.
- The accuracy of its predictions are uncanny. All fortunetellers pretend a hundred percent success rate, but this thing is remarkably effective. The Devil himself couldn't know some of the things it does. On its first showing when one of the audience asked when he would die, the answer was, 'tonight.' That prediction came true; the doomed man was run over by a car soon after leaving the theatre.
- *Only available on **Hard Credit Rating**, or any display of **Cthulhu Mythos** knowledge:* There was a young man who worked for Marcus Garvey, who said he'd look into Robinson. That young man went missing. Rucker thought he saw him one night, outside his brownstone, but he's not sure – because the man he saw had the head of a horse.
- Rucker's happy to offer financial assistance, but he wants his name kept out of it, for the moment.



## HOODOO

Both Black Herman and The King of the Cats are hoodoo practitioners, and hoodoo plays a part in the plot. This section provides information about hoodoo for the Keeper's benefit. The information in this section can be revealed by players who make an **Occult** check.

Hoodoo is an American creation, derived from African traditional religion. Like vaudon, hoodoo was created by slaves and adapted to local conditions. However vaudon derives from Catholic traditions, so the loa in vaudon occupy much the same position as saints do in Catholic ceremonial rites. Whereas hoodoo adapted to a Protestant world, and consequently spirits and saints have a much reduced role to play in hoodoo.

Hoodoo is folk magic. It adopts some of the tenets of organized religion, but adapts aspects of Christianity and casts it in an African light. It also adopts parts of Native American religion and pagan folklore from European immigrants. The result is a mixture of faiths with a heavy emphasis on curses, cures, and spells of various kinds.

If you want to know where your bad luck's coming from, you go to a hoodoo doctor. If you want to know what your lucky number is so you can play it in today's bolita, you go to a hoodoo doctor. If you want a root or salve to quicken your virility, a powder to make you well, a means of misdirecting the devil's malignant glare, or to help you gamble, you go to a conjure man, and hope you've chosen a powerful one.

Some of the most important books in hoodoo are copied from European occult practice. Albertus Magnus and Moses are often quoted, and the so-called Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Books of Moses are some of the most revered grimoires in hoodoo. Only the Bible has greater significance.

Hoodoo is sometimes linked to more bloodthirsty arts, such as animal sacrifice, but this is a mistake. Hoodoo does not involve blood ritual of any kind.

Hoodoo shops are quite common in black neighborhoods, and sell dream books, magic grimoires, roots, herbs, potions, poultices, candles, oils, floor washes, and patent medicines. Some may also sell graveyard dirt, rabbit's feet, raccoon penis bones, peppers, spices, and mineral stones. However some of these items, like the graveyard dirt, can be used to cast curses - a highly dangerous branch of hoodoo.

The chief thing to bear in mind is that as hoodoo is folk magic, it lacks structure. This is magic for the masses. Anyone can pick up a hoodoo dream book, and start predicting the future. Which is exactly why practitioners like Black Herman can make so much money: selling books and magic ingredients is big business. Black Herman's autobiography and hoodoo manual is sold across the United States. A large part of his personal fortune comes from this, and he is not alone. L.W. de Laurence in Chicago is making a fortune selling Books of Moses, cribbed from Europeans like A.E. Waite, and Golden Dawn creator MacGregor Mathers. The Clover Horn Company in Washington D.C. is busy selling hoodoo candles and cosmetics, and Clover Horn was founded by Memphis-born Jewish Americans.

Hoodoo is big money. By encroaching on Black Herman's territory, the King of the Cats is directly threatening his income. This is part of the reason why Black Herman is so concerned. If the King of the Cats is allowed to get away with this now, who knows where it will stop?



## NUMBERS

The King of the Cats has forged an alliance with Casper Holstein, the Bolito King. The Keeper needs to know what the numbers are.

This is a form of gambling. People bet on which number is likely to come up, and the one who gets it right, scoops the pot.

The way the numbers are generated will depend on the game being played. In Bolita, or Bolito, play is very similar to bingo; there are a hundred balls, the balls are put into a sack, and whichever is drawn out is the winner. However there are as many different ways to play the numbers, also known as policy, digits, or the Kentucky lottery, as there are gamblers. The lucky number can be based on the closing digits of the daily Dow Jones, the amount of money bet at a particular race track on a particular day, or any other thing.

Cheating is common. In Bolita, this is sometimes done by putting weights in the ball, so it sinks to the bottom of the sack, or by chilling it, making it easy to pick out by touch.

It's very popular in working class neighborhoods because it's easy to play, and cheap. Bets as little as a penny are accepted. In Harlem, policy kings like Casper Holstein become richer than potentates off these penny bets. This is why established bootleg kingpins like Dutch Shultz move in on Harlem after Prohibition ends; easy money is like blood in the water to sharks like the Dutchman, in search of a new racket to replace his booze profits.

## ASKING AROUND

The investigators will want to find out as much as they can about John Robinson. They might start by asking any or all of the following groups about him:

- People who've been to one of his shows.
- The management and staff at the Renaissance Theater, where his first performance was held.
- Harlem actors, performers and club owners, who might have worked either with Robinson or his mind reading partner, Madame Selene.
- Martinka's Magic Shop, or members of the Society of American Magicians.
- People who've been to Robinson's place of business.

## Those Who've Seen His Work

Several hundred people have seen Robinson's new act, and it's not difficult to find one willing to talk. **Charm** or **Credit Rating** works best here.

The investigators may find out the following:

- Robinson's new act is a sight to see! The magic routine isn't up to much, but boy, that closer! You'd think that thing was really real.
- **Psychology**: the speaker's frightened by what he or she saw. It's not just stage-induced, or Grand Guignol thrills; this person is terrified, and the fear lingers.
- **Spot Hidden**: the investigator may notice a large black cat hanging around, as the investigator talks to this witness. If they notice the cat, it slinks away.

## The Renaissance Theatre

This club, on Seventh Avenue between 137<sup>th</sup> and 138<sup>th</sup> Streets, is the only one open to black customers. All the other clubs in Harlem, especially the big three, Cotton Club, Savoy, and Connie's Inn, are strictly white only. They might hire black entertainers and wait staff, but that's as far as it goes.

Whereas the Renaissance's 900 seat theater, casino and ballroom are open to all Harlem. Built by three immigrants from the West Indies in 1921, it is the only black owned business of its kind in New York. The architect, Harry Creighton Ingalls, intended it to look as if it had been built in Africa. It has strong Islamic influences, particularly in its decorative tile work. In addition to being a meeting hall, theater and casino, it's also home to the Big Five, or the Renns, one of the dominant professional basketball teams of the period.

The second floor ballroom is where Robinson's performance was held. This ballroom plays host to just about everything from sweet sixteen parties to boxing matches. It is built above a billiard parlor, shops, and a Chinese restaurant, and the street is busy at all hours.

**Fast Talk**, **Charm**, or **Art: Acting** are the best abilities to use here; **Art: Acting** presumes that the character is trading on her reputation as a performer. The investigators may learn:

- Robinson's act isn't the kind of thing the Renaissance normally does, but Robinson's got friends in Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, and the three owners of the Renaissance are all UNIA members.
- Setting up the act was a real chore. Robinson wouldn't let anyone except himself or Selene lift, or even touch, his precious mummy, either before or after the show.
- The performance was eerie. The lights dimmed, but the mummy seemed to glow with its own light – smart money says it was Radium paint. **Psychology**: the witness was scared out of her mind by what she saw.
- After the show one of the audience members – the one who the mummy predicted would die that night – went outside and was run over by a car, just in front of the Chinese restaurant. Funny thing; there was a cat stood right next to him when it happened, just as if it was watching him.
- **Spot Hidden**: the investigator may notice a large black cat hanging around, as the investigator talks to this witness. If they notice the cat, it slinks away.

## Fellow Artists

The investigators may talk to some of the many performers in Harlem, hoping to get some information about Robinson. **Fast Talk**, **Charm** and similar work best. If they have **Art: Acting**, **Dancing** or similar **above 20%**, the investigators get a **bonus die** on any personal interaction rolls with performing artists.

They may learn:

- Robinson's always been a hard-luck, no-talent bum. He had a good job at the Natural History Museum, and he should have stuck with it.
- His recent performances have everyone talking. Nobody knows how he does it. He must be driving other magicians crazy; they're all going to want to know his secret!
- Robinson's popular with Marcus Garvey's UNIA crowd, because he kisses up to Garvey every chance he gets. Robinson would like to replace Black Herman as Garvey's advisor on matters spiritual and philosophical. So far, Garvey's stood firm, but he has used his influence to help Robinson get a shop front.

## Martinka's Magic Shop

This 5,064 square foot establishment at 304 W 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Chelsea is New York's home of legerdemain, and probably the most famous magic shop in America. The Society of American Magicians was founded in its back room. Everyone who has even a passing interest in magic, whether professional or starry-eyed amateur, comes to Martinka's. It's a pretty good bet Robinson does too; **Idea**, if necessary, to think of this, but **no die roll needed**.

Founded by German brothers Francis and Antonio Martinka in the 1860s, at the time of the scenario it is owned by Frank Ducrot (pronounced Du-crow), aka Brooklyn-born T. Francis Fritz, who bought it from Houdini. The great escapologist bought it from the Martinkas, but found that being a business owner was completely incompatible with the travelling lifestyle of a top-ranking professional magician and film producer. The shop still has a bust of Houdini at the door, greeting patrons. Ducrot, himself a professional magician but plagued with rheumatism, and so unable to perform at Houdini's level, has proved a more successful businessman. Martinka's is as popular as it ever was, and the Performance Hall at the back of the shop is a favorite venue for would-be masters of magic.

When the investigators arrive, the front desk is manned by Daisy White, a voluptuous redhead and former vaudeville performer, who used to be Ducrot's assistant. These days she demonstrates the items on sale at Martinka's, and keeps the shop's books, among other things.

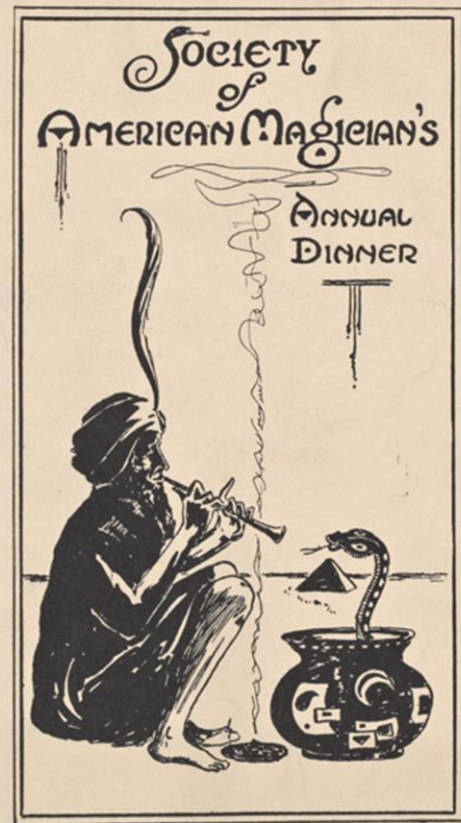
Investigators interested in the Society of American Magicians should visit Martinka's, as the Society was founded in Martinka's back room. To this day, the greatest in the profession lecture and demonstrate the art for those keen to learn.

Race and class aren't important here; what matters to magicians is whether or not you're a member of the craft. Any investigator with **Sleight of Hand above 20%** gets a **bonus die** to any social interaction at Martinka's. Otherwise, all attempts to use **Charm**, **Credit Rating** or similar are **Hard difficulty**, and any attempt to use **Intimidate** backfires, as they call the police. Magicians know a lot of influential people; they can cause social and legal trouble, if roused.

The investigators may find out the following:

- Robinson's well known among magicians as an enthusiastic amateur. He loves the craft, but he doesn't have the work ethic.
- Robinson used to have a good job at the Natural History Museum; he should have stuck with it.
- Nobody knows where he got his new effect. There isn't a soul at Martinka's who thinks he developed it himself; he's tried to build his own tricks before, but always failed miserably.

- Madame Selene, aka Gertrude Fetterman, is a former chorine who used to have a dance act back before the War, but her zaftig figure and poor-little-girl act doesn't go down well in the age of the sexually aggressive flapper. Her hooking up with Robinson doesn't surprise anyone at Martinka's; the desperate joining forces with the desperado.
- **Hard check, regardless of Sleight of Hand:** the investigators get Gertrude Fetterman's home address.





## Robinson's New Store

Thanks to his friendship with Marcus Garvey, Robinson was able to get a shop front on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 166<sup>th</sup> Street. From here he operates a herb doctor hoodoo house, where customers can come for what he calls 'secret knowledge,' and advice on what number to pick.

Because he's offering numbers advice he's got an arrangement with Casper Holstein, the so-called Bolito King, and a small numbers operation runs out of Robinson's back room. See page 13.

Robinson isn't here during the day. One of his assistants, or occasionally Madame Selene, is. The assistants are people he hired through UNIA, and they know next to nothing about his plans. Madame Selene knows more, but she's not about to blab to investigators. See also page 12.

In one of the back rooms, only opened by a key which Madame Selene keeps on her person (or **Locksmith**), a Child of the Sphynx waits. The room is always kept shut up, with curtains drawn and lights off, so even in daylight the place is dim and dismal. The Child sits on a throne of gold and glistens, as it's been touched up with glow-in-the-dark Radium paint.

This is for those clients who are prepared to pay a lot of money to talk to the Powers. Madame Selene leads them in here, and acts as go-between. The petitioner asks his question, she relays it to the Child, and the Child's answer is relayed back through Selene.

The investigators may, through bluff and lots of cash, persuade Madame Selene that they are legitimate customers who seek the Child's advice. Doing so gets them into the ritual room, where they are granted an audience. The experience costs **1/1D8+1 SAN**, and may earn the investigator a special clue – see below.

If attacked, this Child responds in kind. See page 19 for statistics. This Child is not the original; that one is kept safe elsewhere. The Child here is one of the new creations.

Any attempt to use interpersonal skills here is at **Hard difficulty**. The investigators might try talking to customers, or they could go in posing as customers themselves. **Fast Talk**, **Spot Hidden**, **Psychology** and **Occult** are all relevant skills.

The investigators may learn:

- The King of the Cats is a great man, a powerful man, and can help you achieve success both professional and personal – if you can afford it.
- **Spot Hidden** notices the tell-tale signs of a numbers racket operating on the premises. Gamblers come here to place their penny bets, which are held in a back room and later sent out to one of Casper's stash houses. If the investigator makes it too obvious that he's seen this, the policy operators may retaliate. See page 13.

- The King of the Cats doesn't live on the premises. He has an apartment up in Sugar Hill. **Keeper's note:** this is a lie. He has an apartment on W 144<sup>th</sup> Street, just shy of Sugar Hill, but Robinson likes the social clout that goes with having a Sugar Hill address.
- Miss Selene doesn't live on the premises. She has an apartment on E 95<sup>th</sup> Street.
- If the investigators concentrate on hoodoo, **Occult** shows that the cures and palliatives on offer are pretty cheap stuff in fancy packaging. Calling it second rate would be too kind.
- **Special Clue:** Whatever this thing is, it's recently created. It moves as if it's alive, and gleams with what can only be Radium paint. But that animal head still has blood encrusted on the neck – could it have come from a meat packing plant?

## TAKING STOCK

By this point the investigators will have found out a few things, and may have provoked a response.

The investigators may have discovered:

- That Robinson used to work for the Natural History Museum.
- That the Children are doused with Radium paint.
- That animal parts are somehow involved, and there may be a meat packing plant connection.
- Madame Selene's address.
- Robinson's address.

They may have provoked reactions from:

- Casper Holstein, if his numbers operation has been interfered with in any way.
- Bast, if one of the Children has been injured or destroyed.

## American Natural History Museum

Built in the 1870s, this Victorian Gothic masterpiece on 79<sup>th</sup> Street, Central Park West, has been amazing and educating the public for over fifty years, by the time of the scenario. It not only houses exhibits, it funds expeditions, such as the groundbreaking Jesup North Pacific Expedition that took place twenty years ago. Even today, Roy Chapman Andrews, (a future director of the museum), is leading the Central Asiatic Expedition through the Gobi desert, discovering dinosaur fossil after fossil; he won't stop until the border closes in 1930. Margaret Mead, an anthropologist famous for her work on cultural evolution and revolution, starts work at the Museum in 1926.

There are any number of academics, craftsmen, explorers, sponsors, staff, and other people the investigators may ask about Robinson. Alternatively, if they have sufficient **Credit Rating** or an academic background, they may be allowed to have a look at the Museum's archives.

Interpersonal abilities that will be useful here are **Persuade**, and **Credit Rating**. **Fast Talk** has its uses but should an investigator fail a **Fast Talk** check all future interpersonal skill checks have a **penalty die**. Museum officials don't like flim-flam artists.

Checking the Museum's exhibits and records requires more hands-on investigation, with **Spot Hidden**, **History** and **Library Use**.

The investigators may discover:

- *Interpersonal:* Robinson was one of the skilled craftsmen employed to build and maintain exhibits. He had a natural talent for tricky and intricate work; the Museum was sorry to lose him.
- *Interpersonal:* Robinson wasn't popular with his workmates. He kept trying out his magic tricks and card manipulation on them, which wouldn't have been so bad had Robinson been a better performer. He stank.
- *Interpersonal:* There was talk, after he left, that Robinson might have stolen an exhibit from the Museum. However since the exhibit had already been exposed as a fake the Museum wasn't that interested in following up. The police never proved anything and, as the item was effectively worthless, it seemed a waste of time pursuing the matter.
- *Investigation:* According to Museum records, at about the same time Robinson left an item was taken from the Museum's collection. This exhibit, acquired in the 1870s and intended for the Egyptian displays, is described in the catalogue as 'Herodotus second process amalgam mummy, New Kingdom.'

- *Investigation:* A Herodotus second process mummy is created by slightly cheaper means, as described by the ancient Greek chronicler Herodotus in Book II of his Histories, Euterpe. It's cheaper and easier than the whole canopic jars, brains-hooked-out-nose business rich people and the elite are fond of. If you are a solid middle class citizen and want a modest but stylish eternity this is the option you choose. A corrosive mixture derived from cedar oil is injected into your abdomen, and prevented from running out the other end by a rectal plug. The body is then placed in natron (naturally occurring sodium carbonate, chloride and sulfate mix) for a period of days, after which time the preserved body is removed, the liquefied organs poured out, and the mummy placed in a modest tomb.
- *Investigation:* In this instance, amalgam refers to the mummy's head. 'We could have called it a chimera,' say Museum scholars, 'but this seemed more appropriate.' The head was that of a lion, not a human, and was expertly attached. Had the mummy been real, this would have been a unique find, worth of display.
- *Investigation:* Unfortunately, soon after its acquisition in the 1870s this mummy proved to be a fake. Tentatively dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and not the Nineteenth Dynasty of Ancient Egypt as had been believed, the disgusted museum curators decided it had been faked up to sell to some credulous European antiquarian, or possibly one of Napoleon's officers. 'Just like P.T. Barnum's Fiji hoax!' say Museum scholars.
- *Investigation:* Loath to destroy it, fake or no, the Museum kept the mummy in storage. When Robinson took the mummy – if it was he – it came as a relief to the Museum, which always suffers from a space problem. The curators, while publicly decrying its loss, promptly filled the space with something more useful.



## Radium Paint

Radium, at the time of the scenario, is a new discovery. First identified by Marie Sklodowska-Curie and her husband Pierre Curie in 1898, the new element soon became popular and was used in a variety of ways, from health drinks to toothpaste, hair tonic, bath salts, and luminescent paint. The Curies received the Nobel Prize for their contribution to science.

Radium is radioactive, and toxic, but in the 1920s this was poorly understood. One man, Eben M. Byers, drank Radithor health tonic almost daily, and by the end had transformed from an athletic dilettante to a ninety-two pound cadaver, his diseased bones splintering under the weight of his own body. The Radium Girls were even less fortunate. Working in a factory painting luminous dials on watches, they licked the tips of their brushes to achieve a fine point. Their jaws rotted away, and their bodies withered.

This is only partly understood by the mid-1920s, when the Radium Girls' story first breaks. It's not until later in the 1930s, when rich young Byers dies, that radium health tonic is banned. News coverage really begins in 1928, when the Radium Girls finally take their employers to court. The investigators have no way of knowing about the more harmful properties of radium, unless they make a **Hard Chemistry check**. If they know radium at all, it's probably because of the Radium Club in Harlem, where dancing girls parade in luminous paint.

However if they track down the likely sources of radium, and who's been buying it – **Library Use, Accounting** or **Chemistry** will be helpful here – they discover that Robinson has been buying large quantities of two things: radium, and natron.

Radium has several uses, but natron has very few. It has been used in industrial processes, but by the 1920s other compounds have replaced it. Artists sometimes use it to make paint, but not in the quantities Robinson's been purchasing.

Of course, if Robinson knows how to make a mummy, then natron would be a vital ingredient in the process. Realizing this connection costs the investigator **1/1D4+1 SAN**. Is this how he's creating these strange-headed Children?

## Meat Packing

The Meat Packing District in Manhattan, below 14<sup>th</sup> Street and stretching West to the river, is where New York City gets its freshly killed cuts. Formerly a residential district, this neighborhood is home to hundreds of slaughterhouses and meat packing plants, as well as a number of other industrial concerns, like automobile repair and marine supplies. However meat is what the district is known for, and visitors can smell the district long before they get to it.

Investigators with high **Credit Rating** may be intimidated by the rough workers and sodden streets of the District. This isn't a place for well-polished shoes, or shrinking violets. There's a lot of traffic all the time, and when the rains come or the snow melts the whole District is awash with mud. This is true Upton Sinclair country, rats and all, where men can fall into steaming lard vats and be fished out later, all but gone, their flesh made into produce and sold to the public.

Useful skills here include **Fast Talk, Persuade, Spot Hidden**.

The investigators may discover:

- Robinson comes here regularly, always to buy heads. He's a funny one, that mook. Doesn't care what the price is, so long as it's in good condition.
- Robinson never takes the heads himself. He has them shipped up to an address in West Harlem, a warehouse near the river in Manhattanville, not far from the Hudson River Railroad hub.
- **Spot Hidden** notices a head being packed up, to be shipped off to Robinson's warehouse. This one's unusual: it's a Florida alligator. Following the delivery truck will take the investigators right to the warehouse; **Drive Auto** required.



## Madame Selene

Madame Selene, aka Gertrude Fetterman, is Robinson's assistant in his magic act. She used to be a chorus girl before the War, but she's put on weight since then and her act doesn't go over with the same zing. She's worked as a magician's assistant for several other performers, but she doesn't have the talent or the personality, so she's usually fired after a few shows. This run with Robinson has been her most successful.

They perform mentalism, pretending to be clairvoyants and diviners. Madame Selene is the caller, relaying information to an 'entranced' Robinson. It's not a great act to watch; anyone with any **Art** skill involving stage performance will poke holes in it easily.

However Robinson needs Selene not for her performance skills but as a deputy. He can't be everywhere at once. Someone has to look after the store when he's not there, and run errands. That person needs to be completely under Robinson's control; he can't afford a traitor, or a backslider. That's why he chose Fetterman. He thought someone as desperate as she so obviously is won't object to anything he tells her to do.

He hasn't taught her any **Cthulhu Mythos** or any magic, but she's seen enough to pick up some information. She won't say anything to anyone if they interrogate her at the store, since someone's likely to see her talking and tell Robinson. However if the investigators track her down to her apartment on E 59<sup>th</sup> Street, and use **Intimidation** or similar tactics, she'll break under the pressure.

Her apartment is a dim and chintzy place, where the curtains are always drawn. There's too much furniture, and she never has time to clean any of it. She and her Pekinese, Ko-Ko, live here alone. Her neighbors have little to say about her. She keeps such odd hours, they hardly ever see her.

The Keeper should assume that if Madame Selene talks Robinson finds out about it. Madame Selene is kidnapped soon afterwards and taken to the West Harlem warehouse, to be turned into one of the Children.

If interrogated, the investigators learn:

- The Children are alive! She doesn't know how, nor does she want to, but Robinson knows how it's done – and he's making more.
- Robinson's taking all his orders from the original creature, the one he took from the Museum. He calls it Mother Cat; Madame Selene calls it Hell Bitch.
- Whatever they're planning, it has something to do with the warehouse in West Harlem, where Robinson makes the creatures. The mummies are building some kind of temple there; she doesn't know what.

## Robinson's Sugar Hill Apartment

Technically Robinson's apartment is just shy of Sugar Hill, but that's not what he tells people.

Robinson would love to live in a building with a doorman and an elevator. He has to settle for an elevator and no doorman. The neighborhood is very pleasant, and the folks next door are comfortably middle class. However it doesn't quite have the social cachet that comes with living next door to Duke Ellington, or W.E.B. DuBois.

His neighbors don't care for him very much. He keeps odd hours, and some of the show business people he deals with just aren't up to neighborhood standards. However because he isn't in too often they've learned to tolerate him, though if he puts a foot wrong the next meeting of the tenant's association will be all about him. **No dice roll needed** to find this out; anyone asking about Robinson will get told all the grim details.

Because he's often out, breaking in ought to be easy – and so it would be, were it not for all the nosy neighbors. **Locksmith** or **Fast Talk**, (to persuade the Building Superintendent that the investigators have a legitimate reason to get in), works best. However a failure means that the police are called, and since this is a good neighborhood, the police will show up quickly.

If the investigators have not already provoked a reaction from Bast, breaking into this apartment provokes one. They will also see (no dice roll required) the black cat lurking around. See further page 13.

If the investigators try to question or interrogate Robinson, he threatens them with both occult and more direct retribution. He says he'll let loose all the spirits and demons in the canon to torment them, and also that he'll get his gangster friends to cut their throats. **Intimidation** does not work on him, nor will **Persuade** or any other interpersonal approach – unless the investigators have a little **Mythos**.

If an investigator has **Cthulhu Mythos**, and tries to use this information as a means of persuading Robinson that the investigator's on Robinson's side, then the investigator needs to make a **Hard Persuade** or **Fast Talk**. This only has a chance of success if the investigator has **5% or more Mythos**. Success means that Robinson takes the investigator into his confidence, reveals the entire scheme, and offers to take the investigator to the West Harlem warehouse.

It's always possible the investigators may kill or otherwise incapacitate Robinson here, before dealing with the West Harlem warehouse. The Children of the Sphinx don't really need him at this point; there are enough of them to carry on the work themselves, and they can create more Children with the materials they have on hand.

Those who break in while Robinson is out find (**Spot Hidden** or similar tactics):

- Invoices and other financial papers that show Robinson's been buying a lot of natron and radium paint; see also page 11.
- A rental agreement for a warehouse in West Harlem.



- Invoices and other financial papers that show Robinson's been buying a lot of construction materials, delivered to the same warehouse in West Harlem.
- Robinson's copy of the Seventh Book of Moses. See page 20, New Tomes, for further information about this book.
- Robinson's Dream Book. See page 21, New Tomes, for further information about this book.

### Casper Holstein's Reaction

Casper Holstein runs a Bolito game from the back of Robinson's shop. This, Robinson hopes, is enough to earn Holstein's favor, and buy a measure of protection against official interruption.

Truth be told, Holstein doesn't care much one way or the other about Robinson and his hoodoo. However Holstein is impressed by the Children; he's had several conferences with them, and what with their bizarre appearance and uncanny fortunetelling, he's willing to believe there's something in Robinson's spiel.

So if the investigators upset Holstein, he'll intervene on Robinson's behalf. This means sending as many gangsters as are necessary to beat the tar out of them, with baseball bats and brass knuckles. Holstein doesn't want them dead; he wants them silenced.

Holstein won't go so far as to have the investigators killed, not unless they pose a very serious threat to his operation.

He's far too important to meet the investigators face-to-face. That's what underlings are for.

### Bast's Reaction

Robinson believes he is acting on Bast's behalf, that the Elder God who dwells both in Egypt and in the Dreamlands is the one who created the Child, his prophet. As learned students of the Mythos know, this is not so. The Children of the Sphinx serve the great Beast, and that Beast is Nyarlathotep.

However the Crawling Chaos doesn't care whether Robinson calls it Bast or the Black Man, so long as Robinson does as he is told. Any chance to spread chaos and despair is a chance worth taking.

It's thanks to Nyarlathotep that the Children can foretell the future. No spell required here; Nyarlathotep spreads truths as well as lies, when they suit Its purpose. However this is why any conference with a Child – see page 9 – causes a SAN loss; the questioner is communing, albeit indirectly, with a God.

The investigators may have noticed black cats in certain scenes. This is a minor avatar of Nyarlathotep: the true King of the Cats.

The King is a large black cat with a mutation: it has loose folds of skin on its back and shoulders, resembling wings. It cannot fly, but it can make the folds of skin expand. It is much larger than other cats. Bold, insouciant, and supercilious, it cares nothing for humans. Its chief form of attack is magic.

It might:

- **Dominate** a car driver and force him to run the investigators over (**1D10 damage, Hard Dodge avoids, Dodge halves damage**).
- Create a **Cat Swarm** and send it after the investigators.
- Use **mental suggestion** to instill a terrible fear in its target, causing the investigator to lose **1/1D10 SAN**.
- Cast **Evil Eye**, which lasts until the following week.

### Bast's Other Reaction

Bast is an Elder God. Like Nyarlathotep, She dwells in the Dreamlands and in Egypt. The cat god is not as puissant as the Crawling Chaos, but that doesn't mean Bast will sit quietly while Nyarlathotep takes Her name in vain.

The real Bast intervenes on the investigators' behalf, if one or more of them seems worthy. Treating cats with proper respect is a good start. Ultimately what counts as worthy is up to the Keeper, but the favor of an Elder God is not to be thrown about on a whim.

If Bast intervenes, She does so through dreams. She draws the investigator to Ulthar in the Dreamlands, but only very briefly; long enough to confer Her favor.

Investigators who gain Bast's favor **increase Cthulhu Mythos by 5%**, gain immunity to Nyarlathotep's **Evil Eye**, and gain **a bonus die to all Luck rolls** for the duration of the scenario.



In addition, the cat Bast chooses to speak through will truthfully answer any one question about Robinson or his scheme the investigator cares to ask. However, before answering, the cat warns that doing this will incur a penalty. If the investigator agrees, she **loses 1/1D4 SAN**, and gets an answer.



## THE TEMPLE

By this point the investigators should have gathered the information they need to find Robinson's warehouse in West Harlem, near the riverside. They may or may not have already dealt with Robinson himself.

The Children of the Sphynx are hard at work creating a temple worthy of their Master. If the investigators are to succeed, they need to deal with these creatures and destroy the Temple.

## Manhattanville

West Harlem is the first station on the Hudson River Railroad running north from the city, and is a hub for omnibus, street car and coach lines. If you ship it, haul it or drive it into New York, and it hasn't come across the ocean, chances are it goes through West Harlem.

Only a few short decades ago much of this was still farmland, and the city's comfortable middle class took great delight in touring its bucolic byways. The city had to expand, and by the 1890s those byways were absorbed into the expanding metropolis. The Germans and Irish who lived here in the 1850s were displaced and replaced by Jewish immigrants after the Civil War, accompanied by a smattering of rich mansion-building social climbers. These would-be gentrifiers wanted the prestige of a 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue address but lacked the cash to purchase a more fashionable home further south.

Times change. Manhattanville is much busier, and while some remnants of West Harlem's farm community can still be seen, it is buried under an active transport hub that stretches all the way to the river. Almost all that's left of it is the street layout, which is at odds with NYC's grid system, and some outcroppings of granite.

## Robinson's Warehouse

Formerly the Henshaw Brothers Pure Milk warehouse, this building has stood vacant since the Henshaw Brothers went out of business two years ago. They speculated unwisely, and refused an opportunity to merge with a larger milk business. The competition froze them out.

In its day the warehouse was part storage, part laboratory. The Henshaws were keen to develop new methods of pasteurization and held daily demonstrations and meetings so they could tell new mothers the latest childcare techniques. The main warehouse is a large brick-built 1890s structure, while the laboratory, a smaller modern building, is attached. The signage still reads Henshaw Brothers, and there's a faint smell of spoiled milk.

Investigators who ask around (**Persuade**) or who scope out the place (**Spot Hidden**) soon work out that the warehouse has been closed for some time. It has that unmistakable air of neglect, and some of the windows are broken. The people who live and work nearby all assume that the place has been taken over by bootleggers. They see trucks coming at all hours delivering industrial supplies; they figure some booze baron is using it to manufacture beer or some such. Though if it is a booze plant, it's odd that the characteristic sour mash smell is absent.

The laboratory is where Robinson has been making his mummies. He cleared out some of the equipment and replaced it with large stone sarcophagi he had made for the purpose. He fills these with natron for preservation of the bodies, and he bought embalming equipment from a mortician so he could administer the corrosive fluid. However he's not a neat worker, so there are spills of natron, corrosive fluid and other raw materials on the floor. The stink of all these chemicals combined with a rich overlay of decaying flesh is enough to make anyone queasy, but anyone who looks in the closed sarcophagi finds one or more Children in the final stages of preparation. This provokes a **0/1D6 SAN penalty**. The Child is not ready yet, and will not rise from its grave.

Whether or not there is more than one body here depends on the investigators' actions. If Gertrude Fetterman blabbed, then she likely ends up here. Other NPCs who vanished might be here as well, with new animal heads. A captured investigator might also be in a sarcophagus, though it may be better to find them tied up but still alive rather than headless with a bellyful of corrosive fluid.

This is where Robinson stores sealed bottles of Paut, a brew used in Egyptian magic. Making this is arduous and expensive, and it tastes vile. However those who drink it regain 1 MP per ounce consumed, and Robinson has about 40 ounces on hand plus materials to make more. Given he's storing the stuff in booze bottles this could be mistaken for a bootlegging operation, albeit on a very small scale.

The main warehouse floor is where the Children build their Temple to Nyarlathotep. Unmistakably Egyptian in design, with a shrine as its centerpiece, it has already been christened more than once. The dark stains of spilt blood spatter across its entrance, the remains of the sacrificial victims carelessly flung to one side.

The cult image is a large statue of a faceless Sphynx, sculpted from a massive piece of granite. Unadorned, it projects an aura of cold menace. Where its face should be there is nothing but a blank front, without even an attempt to carve features. Investigators who spend too long looking at it get the uncomfortable feeling it moves when they aren't looking directly at it. Potential **0/1D4 SAN loss**.

When first built Egyptian temples were colorfully decorated, and while this is no exception it has been decorated exclusively with Radium paint. Since the warehouse windows are always covered over this means the temple glows in the dark, its least decorative carving a glistening snake in the shadows.

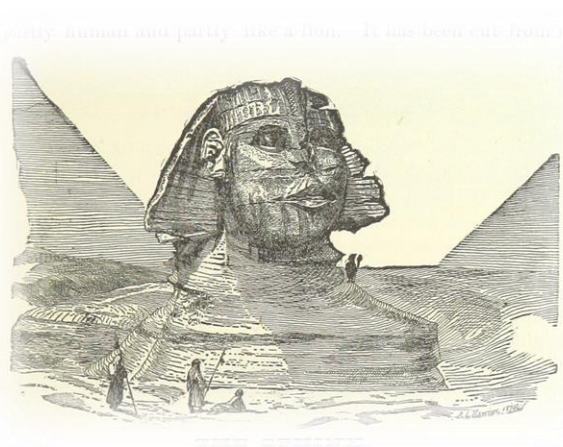
The Children are constantly at work, painting, carving, building. At night they go out to capture more sacrificial victims. So far they have not been noticed, but the time will soon come when their actions draw the attention of the authorities. If Robinson is dead this will happen very soon, but if he is alive then he's able to keep everything covered up until the end.

The carved Sphynx is similar in some respects to the Beast of Giza, though much smaller. It too is reclining, paws outstretched in front of it. However unlike the original it has not suffered centuries of weathering.

**Cthulhu Mythos** will know that there are cults dedicated to awakening the Sphynx of Giza and sending it to ravage the world. Certain blasphemous magics are supposed to be able to do this, with the appropriate sacrifices. In theory this can only be done at Giza to the original Sphynx. Theories are all very well when the things they talk about are thousands of miles away, but it is difficult not to wonder whether a malignant life stirs in this stone creature. Painted across its chest in Coptic Egyptian are the words Father of Terror.

This creature will never rise to destroy cities, but the spell Contact Nyarlathotep will work on it. If cast, its blank face melts into blackness and swirling, alien constellations. The Elder God speaks through its avatar for up to five minutes at a time, with a potential **1D4/1D10+2 SAN loss**. Other effects may include bloody noses and ruptured eardrums.

This cult is small, with no more than a handful of worshippers that come to the factory by night to pay homage. If Robinson dies, the cult will never grow larger. Should the keeper wish to involve cultists from Chaosium publications like Masks of Nyarlathotep or the Brotherhood of the Beast campaign, these links with more established cults are minor at best. The other brotherhoods need to be convinced that there's something worth pursuing here.



## Endgame

The investigators have several options open to them.

If they just deal with Robinson but not the Temple, then after a few months the Children attempt to summon Nyarlathotep through the Sphynx they have built. This attempt does not go well. The warehouse is destroyed, as is the Temple and the Children. However everything nearby is devastated and there are many deaths; fifty four in all, with several hundred wounded. The authorities say a gas leak caused an explosion, but witnesses report a giant black lion roaming in the smoke. Black Herman realizes that this is because the investigators botched the job, and he does his best to tarnish their reputations. **Credit Rating in Harlem is reduced by 20%, and 10% nationwide. SAN loss is 1D10.**

The investigators may decide to leave Robinson alone, or let Robinson escape. If this happens he just sets up shop elsewhere, perhaps in Chicago. He already knows how to create Children, so all he really needs is a place to work and some money to pay the bills. This will take him several years to arrange, but he gets there in the end. If he's sent to prison or a sanitarium the same thing happens, but it takes even longer since he has to break out first. The Investigators' **Credit Rating** is unaffected, but they **lose 1D10 SAN** when they realize what Robinson's done. That probably happens when his second Temple self-destructs, with significant loss of life.

The investigators may go to Black Herman for help once they discover the Temple. He can lend them some muscle if they need it. However accepting his help reduces the SAN award, since the investigators didn't do the heavy lifting themselves.

If the investigators defeat Robinson and his Children then they get a SAN reward of 1D6, increasing to 1D10+1 if they did so without Black Herman's help.

If Bast involved herself then she follows the investigators' careers. It may suit her to keep in contact with them. A God can never be sure when a willing and biddable mortal might come in handy. This may lead to further adventures, particularly in the Dreamlands, where Bast spends most of her time.



If Robinson is dealt with Black Herman becomes an ally, and possibly mentor. He has many contacts in Harlem from civic leaders to numbers kings, and if he favors the investigators then they get a **20% boost to Credit Rating in Harlem and 10% nationwide** so long as he lives.

### Aftermath

In game, Black Herman has some knowledge of the Mythos and is willing to act on it. He's already gathered a small group of people to help him exterminate Mythos threats. If the Keeper wishes the investigators can join that group, as per Chapter 6 of the Keeper's Guide. If that happens then the existing members are happy to let the investigators take the lead. They have their own lives to live. The Keeper should feel free to use these NPCs as assistants in future scenarios, or fade them out if need be.

New York's existing cults are unsurprised that the King of the Cats' fledgling group was defeated. However they take note of the investigators, and pay attention to their future activities. After all, there's no telling what this rag-tag bunch might get up to next. This may lead into other scenarios, or even campaigns. Masks of Nyarlathotep is an obvious choice, and the role of Jackson Elias could easily be taken over by Black Herman or one of his friends. The Keeper is free to choose.

If other events do not intervene, Black Herman dies in 1934 under mysterious circumstances. His most famous illusion involved him rising from the dead, and he did this so often that when he unexpectedly died at the age of 44 of heart failure at a friend's house nobody believed it. Black Herman couldn't die. It was all a gag.

To capitalize on this, and prove once and for all he really was dead, his assistant Washington Reeves arranged a public viewing of the corpse. Harlem flocked to the undertakers to see the famous magician lying in state, and paid a small gratuity for the privilege.

Thus passed Benjamin Rucker, magician, huckster, hoodoo man.





## PEOPLE AND CREATURES

Only the key skills expected to come up in play are provided. The Keeper should feel free to adjust and add skills as desired.

### BENJAMIN RUCKER AND ALLIES

#### Black Herman

The greatest magician Harlem has ever seen. He has some knowledge of the Mythos, but keeps it to himself. He knows how dangerous meddling with those powers can be.

STR 50    CON 40    SIZ 60    DEX 85    INT 70  
APP 60    POW 70    EDU 60    SAN (55)    HP 10  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 8    MP: 14    Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl                      55%, (27/11) damage 1D3+DB

Armor: none.

Skills: Charm 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Fast Talk 75%, Occult 45%, Sleight of Hand 65%, Spot Hidden 55%

Spells: no Mythos magic, but a deep understanding of stage magic and trickery.

#### Samuel Johnson

Ex-soldier turned bellhop, who acts as leader of Benjamin Rucker's problem-solving group. After some unnerving experiences at 224 Lenox, he's willing to suspend disbelief when it comes to the Mythos but is otherwise hard-headed.

STR 60    CON 60    SIZ 70    DEX 35    INT 40  
APP 40    POW 50    EDU 40    SAN 50    HP 12  
DB: +1D4    Build: 1    Move: 8    MP: 10    Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl                      55%, (27/11) damage 1D3

.32 Revolver              50%, (25/10) damage 1D8

Armor: none.

Skills: Climb 45%, Dodge 25%, First Aid 45%, Survival 45%.

#### William Henry Bullard

Ex-soldier now on the wrong side of the law, whose skill with a knife is fearsome. In the trenches he and Johnson formed a fast friendship, but he doesn't know what to think about Johnson's talk of Mythos entities.

STR 60    CON (70)    SIZ 50    DEX 75    INT 45  
APP 50    POW 50    EDU 40    SAN 50    HP (12)  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 9    MP: 10    Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl                      55%, (27/11) damage 1D3

Bowie Knife              70%, (35/14 ) damage 1D8+2

Armor: none.

Skills: Climb 65%, Dodge 45%, Fast Talk 55%

Notes: suffering from early stages tuberculosis, which hasn't affected his CON and HP stats yet but will soon.

#### Sidney Gilpin

A clever old fellow who's seen a thing or two in his day. He knows just enough about the Mythos to get into trouble, and isn't so old that trouble scares him.

STR 20    CON 60    SIZ 40    DEX 65    INT 50  
APP 60    POW 40    EDU 40    SAN 40    HP 10  
DB: -1D4    Build: -1    Move: 3    MP: 8    Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl                      55% (27/11) damage 1D3

Bowie Knife              60% (30/12) damage 1D8+DB

Buntline Special        40% (20/8) damage 1D10+2

Armor: none.

Skills: Appraise 45%, Cthulhu Mythos 4%, Charm 65%, Disguise 20%, Dodge 45%, Fast Talk 65%, History 30%, Natural World 20%, Psychology 20%, Sleight of Hand 55%, Spot Hidden 40%, Stealth 40%, Survival 30%.

## CRIMINALS

#### Casper Holstein

Casper Holstein, Bolito King, has a very lucrative business running numbers in Harlem. He uses that money to fund his social and political projects, and is beloved in Harlem for his sponsorship of good causes. He won't jeopardize that for anyone, but the Children of the Sphinx have sufficiently impressed him that he's willing to help Robinson. Given enough time, he might become a cult member. If so his thugs become cult enforcers.

STR 50    CON 60    SIZ 60    DEX 45    INT 60  
APP 55    POW 60    EDU 60    SAN (50)    HP 12  
DB: 0    Build: 0    Move: 8    MP: 13    Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl                      45%, (22/9) damage 1D3+DB

.32 Revolver              55% (27/11) damage 1D8

Armor: none.

Skills: Credit Rating 70% in Harlem, 50% outside Harlem. Dodge 45%, Fast Talk 45%, Intimidate 40%

## Typical Thug

Casper Holstein uses these thugs to enforce his will. He prefers a beating to a killing whenever possible; murders are bad for business.

STR 40	CON 50	SIZ 50	DEX 45	INT 30
APP 25	POW 40	EDU 40	SAN 30	HP 10
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 8	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl	35%, (17/7) damage 1D3+DB
Switchblade	35%, (17/7) damage 1D4+DB
Baseball Bat	40%, (20/8) damage 1D8+1+DB
.32 Revolver	45% (22/9) damage 1D8

Armor: none.

Skills: Dodge 35%, Fast Talk 15%, Intimidate 30%, Jump 30%, Stealth 35%.

## COPS

### Patrolman

The cops will only get involved if something has gone badly wrong, or if someone carelessly starts shooting.

STR 45	CON 55	SIZ 50	DEX 45	INT 30
APP 30	POW 30	EDU 40	SAN 30	HP 10
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 6	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl	35%, (17/7) damage 1D3+DB
Nightstick	45%, (22/9) damage 1D6+DB
.32 Revolver	40%, (20/8) damage 1D8
Shotgun 12-gauge	40%, (20/8) damage 4D6/2D6/1D6

Armor: none.

Skills: Climb 30%, Dodge 30%, Intimidate 25%, Jump 30%, Law 10%, Spot Hidden 40%.

## KING OF THE CATS AND ALLIES

### John Robinson, aka King of the Cats

A failed stage magician who has turned to dark powers.

STR 40	CON 60	SIZ 50	DEX 55	INT 50
APP 40	POW (10)	EDU 40	SAN (30)	HP 11
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 8	MP: 12	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl	45%, (22/9) damage 1D3+DB
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Armor: none.

Skills: Charm 35%, Cthulhu Mythos 8%, Fast Talk 45%, Medicine 15%, Occult 25%, Sleight of Hand 45%, Spot Hidden 35%

Spells: Brew Paut, Create Child of the Sphinx

Note: due to repeated castings of Create Child, Robinson's POW has significantly decreased. He refuses to acknowledge this, and the symptoms are similar enough to Radium poisoning that **Medicine** might mistake one for the other. Symptoms include anemia, bone degeneration and necrosis.

### Madame Selene aka Gertrude Fetterman

A former chorine who's fallen into bad company. She might give the investigators information, but if the King of the Cats finds out then she'll become one of the Children.

STR 40	CON 50	SIZ 60	DEX 65	INT 40
APP 55	POW 40	EDU 40	SAN (20)	HP 11
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 8	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl	25%, (12/5) damage 1D3+DB
.32 Revolver	25% (12/5) damage 1D8

Armor: none.

Skills: Charm 55%, Cthulhu Mythos 2%, Fast Talk 35%, Occult 15%, Sleight of Hand 55%, Spot Hidden 45%

### The Real King of the Cats

Minor servant of Nyarlathotep, temporarily assigned to assist Robinson.

STR	15
CON	65
INT	80
POW	90
DEX	320
HP	8
MP	14

Attacks 1

Bite	55% (27/11) 1D4, no damage penalty.
Claw	55% (27/11) 1D3, no damage penalty
Rip	80% (40/16) only happens after a successful claw attack, 2D3

Special	Evil Eye, Summon Cat Swarm, Mental Suggestion
Spells	Dominate

**Evil Eye:** the target must make a Hard POW check. Failure means the target has a penalty die for all future physical actions, or anything involving Luck. This penalty die lasts for one week. Costs 4 MP. The effect can be cancelled out if someone makes a Hard Occult check and spends 8MP. If the Occult check fails, the victim remains cursed and MP spent trying to break the curse do not come back until the Evil Eye effect ends.

**Mental Suggestion:** by making eye contact the King of the Cats can implant a mental suggestion. The suggestion is never explicit, and cannot make the target do anything. However the target is overcome by eldritch-inspired terror, and **loses 1/1D10 SAN**. This can only happen once per person, and costs 4MP.

**Cat Swarm:** the King of the Cats can summon one swarm per 2 MP spent. Swarms act on its orders for no more than four rounds before dispersing.

SAN Loss: 0/1D3

### Cat Swarm

These are similar to Rat Packs, with the following differences:

- Assume six cats per Swarm.
- 1D4+1 damage per round.
- 65% chance to hit per Swarm.
- If the investigator successfully hits a Swarm she chases away the cats.
- While Bast would normally be upset when a cat is injured, combat with a Nyarlathotep-inspired Swarm does not anger Bast. She accepts the cats were being controlled by Something else.
- A cat swarm will not attack anyone protected by Bast.

## CHILDREN OF THE SPHYNX

The entity that Robinson found in the Natural History Museum is the only one that knows spells. It is also the only one to have been created properly; Robinson's lack of **Medicine** meant that all subsequent Children have flaws. Each Child has been decorated with Radium paint, and while this does not affect its stats this does mean it is an eerie thing to see at night or in semi-darkness. This means the SAN penalty for seeing one is slightly adjusted at night.

The Children want to build their Temple and foster worship of the Elder God Nyarlathotep. That means they need worshippers, and some kind of high priest to keep making Children. This does not mean they need Robinson; he can be replaced, and given his deteriorating physical condition will have to be replaced sometime soon.

The Children are not criminal masterminds or sophisticated planners. They build temples and demand worship, because that is what they were created to do. Given this it is likely that their plans will fail unless someone helps them – but the fallout from that failure is likely to cause significant loss of life.

There are seven active Children including the original. Depending on the events of the scenario, one or more other Children might have started but not completed the transformation. A Child is no longer the human it once was and cannot recognize former friends or family. Appeals to its humanity will not work; it is no longer human in any meaningful sense.

STR	70
CON	65
SIZ	75
INT	65 (the original) or 50 (all others)
POW	65 (the original) or 45 (all others)
DEX	35
HP	14

Move	7
Build	1
DB	1D4

Attacks	1
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Fist	50% (25/10) 1D3+DB
Kick	25% (12/5) 1D6+DB
Bite	45% (22/9) Lion-head original, 1D3
Bite	55% (27/11) copperhead snake, 1D3 + poison, see below.
Bite	35% (17/7) horse head, 1D8
Bite	35% (17/7) donkey head, 1D8
Bite	35% (17/7) alligator head, 1D10
Bite	40% (20/8) dog head, 1D6
Gore	35% (17/7) bull head, 2D6+DB

Spells: Brew Paut, Create Children of the Sphynx, Contact Nyarlathotep. Note: although their fortunetelling ability could be described as a form of Contact Nyarlathotep it is not a spell, and whether or not it works depends on Nyarlathotep's whim.

SAN Loss: 0/1D8, or 1/1D8+1 at night or in semi-darkness.

Flaws: the original is without flaw. The others were not created as carefully, and have defects as follows:

- *Copperhead* freezes and will not attack in the first round. Its Poison attack does 1D10 damage (vomiting, convulsions).
- *Horse* panics at loud noises and lashes out at anything near, friend or foe.
- *Donkey* will run away if any of the other Children are seriously injured or killed.

- *Alligator* moves rapidly away from humans unless attacked or approached, at which point it launches an all-out assault.
- *Dog* can be distracted by treats.
- *Bull* rapid movement provokes an all-out attack.

## NEW TOMES

There are two new tomes in this scenario, both found at Robinson's apartment: the Seventh Book of Moses, and the Dream Book.

Both tomes exist in the real world, and are used in hoodoo. The statistics given here are for game purposes only. Each tome has also been annotated by Robinson, which is why they contain Cthulhu Mythos knowledge. Without those annotations, they would be relatively harmless occult grimoires.

### THE SEVENTH BOOK OF MOSES

Moses is, to conjure doctors, a wonder-worker of renown, and he passed on the wisdom of God so that men could recreate the miracles found in the Bible.

The secrets found in the Book are a mixture of Talmudic lore and Western occult wisdom brought to America by German hex doctors, probably in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Reprinted many times, one of the most popular versions used by conjure doctors is that produced by L.W. de Laurence of Chicago, who published it through De Laurence, Scott & Co.

De Laurence pretended to be a Hindu mystic, though he was born in Cleveland, Ohio, 1868, to a Canadian father and Pennsylvania Dutch mother. He also founded the Order of the Black Rose, which he said was intended to elevate African Americans. It consisted of de Laurence and a select group of acolytes. This was one of many such occult organizations that flourished in Chicago in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

De Laurence was arrested in 1912 for mail fraud, and offences under the Mann Act, aka the White-Slave Traffic Act of 1910. In the end he was only charged with mail fraud, and fined \$200. It emerged during the trial that de Laurence had surreptitiously recorded his acolytes' conversations, which allowed him to pretend to be able to read their minds.

This was not de Laurence's only brush with the law. In 1911 a disagreement with a disciple, who claimed de Laurence had tried to hypnotize him and beat him with a chair, forced de Laurence to pay out another \$150. In 1919, the Post Office charged him with more counts of mail fraud.

By this point he had a very successful mail order business worth \$40,000 gross per annum, and was considering opening a brick-and-mortar retail outlet; the charges could have ruined him. Though he gave up on the store, he survived the 1919 charges and continued to make a very good living selling occult books and supplies through the mail. To this day, his works are banned in some parts of the Caribbean and West Africa. He died in 1936, at the age of 68, comfortably well off.

Investigators will know about the German origins of the Seventh Book if they make an **Occult** check; **Law** is needed to find out about de Laurence's arrests.

Robinson's copy of the Seventh Book is a de Laurence imprint. Unlike the pulp imprints popular in other publishing houses, de Laurence, Scott & Co. offers handsome leather-bound editions, with gold embossed occult symbols on the cover, and pages allegedly made of 'virgin' paper.

An ordinary de Laurence copy of the Seventh Book of Moses is:

- written in English
- Sanity Loss: none
- Occult: +4%

The annotations in Robinson's version are:

- Inspired by Robinson's Nyarlathotep-induced dream visions.
- Cthulhu Mythos: +2%
- Mythos Rating: 10
- Study time: 2 weeks
- Spells: Create Child of the Sphynx (incomplete, will not work, but will cause **1D6 SAN loss** if attempted).
- SAN Loss 1D4





## DREAM BOOK

In America, dream books are published by many small press publishers, and have been since the Revolutionary War. In this instance, it has been produced by De Laurence, Scott & Co. – or so Robinson thinks.

A Dream Book helps the owner interpret her dreams, for fortunetelling purposes. Usually they are attributed to some cunning root worker or other mystic seer.

Aunt Sally's Dream Book, first published 1889, is one such; 'Aunt Sally', like Aunt Jemima and any number of other postbellum Aunties, is meant to evoke the wisdom of the older generation, specifically the antebellum Mammy stereotype beloved in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Aunties were presumed to have some kind of spiritual link both with the 'good old days' and with hoodoo. For similar reasons, many root doctors adopt the honorific Professor. It sounds right, and impresses people. Professor Uriah Konje, aka Herbert Parris, was another popular dream book author of the 1920s.

Typically a brand name of this type – which is all the Aunt and Professor honorifics ultimately are – gets used to sell all things hoodoo, not just dream books. If you bought and enjoyed Aunt Sally's Dream Book, why not also buy her incense, tonics, and herbal remedies?

Dream Books serve a dual purpose; they help the owner interpret dreams, and also pick lucky numbers for the lottery. Dream of a cat, then the number is 14, and so on.

Of course since this is gambling and the lottery houses cheat, working out which number to bet on is an all-consuming and ultimately fruitless endeavor. Not that this has ever stopped anyone playing, or consulting Aunt Sally and her cohorts as to which way to bet.

For purpose of this scenario a fictitious De Laurence publication is used; it came from no human publisher.

*Professor Joubert's Dream Book* is a handsome, leather-bound volume, with gold embossed lettering and mystic symbols on the cover. Robinson owns the only copy of this book; though he thinks he bought it from de Laurence, it does not appear in De Laurence, Scott & Co.'s catalogue. However it does resemble similar books from that publishing house, so whoever made it was familiar with L.W. de Laurence's work.

Much of it is stylistically similar with other hoodoo dream books of the period. However those with **Cthulhu Mythos** (no check required) see disturbing hints of secret knowledge, and some of the secret names of Nyarlathotep – the Beast – are mentioned. There is a lengthy section that describes how the owner of the book may access forgotten Egyptian wisdom, through dreams.

- Sanity Loss: 1D4
- Cthulhu Mythos +1/+3%
- Mythos Rating: 14
- Study: 3 weeks, or 1 nightmare costing 1D8 SAN. The nightmare can be induced by the owner, following the book's meditation instructions.

- Spells: Contact Nyarlathotep – described in the book as *Communing with Your Higher Power, Through Dreams*.

*Communing with Your Higher Power, Through Dreams*, costs **5 POW, and 1D6 SAN**. When the ritual is complete, the dreamer finds himself transported to a land of wonders, where his Higher Power – his idealized self, stripped of all imperfections and self-doubt – instructs him on how to improve his life. In practical terms, this allows Nyarlathotep to instruct the petitioner, say, on the best method of creating Children of the Sphinx, or anything else Nyarlathotep wishes. Should Nyarlathotep be angered, or bored, then the Beast smites the petitioner psychically, **inflicting 1D10/1D100 SAN loss**.





