

# The Camping Trip

by Samantha Hancox-Li



"I'll tell you more later — I must have a long rest now. I'll tell you something of the forbidden horrors she led me into — something of the age-old horrors that even now are festering in out-of-the-way corners with a few monstrous priests to keep them alive. Some people know things about the universe that nobody ought to know, and can do things that nobody ought to be able to do. I've been in it up to my neck, but that's the end. Today I'd burn that damned *Necronomicon* and all the rest if I were librarian at Miskatonic."

—H.P. Lovecraft, "The Thing on the Doorstep"

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## The Three Musketeers

Between 1910 and 1930, the Green Mountain Club built the Vermont Long Trail, a hiking trail stretching 273 miles along the spine of the Green Mountains from Williamstown, Massachusetts to North Troy, Vermont. In 1927, three young women — Catherine Robbins, Hilda M. Kurth, and Kathleen Norris, known as "the Three Musketeers" — hiked the length of the trail. They carried wicker and wax-canvas packs, each loaded with about twenty-five pounds of supplies, including food, tents, tools, spare clothes, and one ukulele to pass the time with. They resupplied at various towns along the way, and completed the trail after 27 days of hiking and 5 days of resting.

Their trip was widely publicized in the local press, and the investigators, a group of friends, have been inspired to recreate the Three Musketeers' journey. Starting in Williamstown on July 25, 1928 (just like the Musketeers), they head north into the wilderness.



**Overview for the Keeper.** This adventure is straightforward: the investigators go on a hiking trip, and encounter something awful along the way. Play can be divided into three phases, with the first being the mundane details of hiking the Long Trail. The overall goal of the Keeper in the first phase is twofold: first, create a sense of *isolation in the wilderness*. Second, suggest to the investigators that *there is a monster in the woods, possibly connected to ancient hilltop rituals*. There are numerous scripted and optional encounters provided (see p. 17 and following); the Keeper is encouraged to pick those that are best responsive to the players' experience of the scenario.

The second phase of the scenario begins when the players encounter an old stone well on the side of the trail. After this, the investigators will find themselves unable to escape the

general vicinity of the well, and will encounter Anne Waxman, the not-quite-human caretaker of the monster in the well; she will (eventually) explain the predicament the investigators are in, and insist that one of the investigators offer themselves to the thing in the well. The Keeper's goal in this phase is to communicate a sense of *rising dread*, as the full horror of their situation slowly becomes apparent to the investigators.

The final phase of the scenario is determined by *how the investigators respond to their dilemma*. They may fight Anne and the monster (difficult), accede to Anne's demands (horrifying), or find the narrow path that will see them safely out of the woods (if they are very clever).

**Starting Out.** The adventure begins in Williamstown Massachusetts, a scenic college town in the Berkshires. The investigators have the opportunity to purchase any special supplies at local stores before leaving. However, rare or unusual equipment will be hard to come by; in 1928 Williamstown has a population of just under four thousand people. Each investigator is already carrying:

- Food for six days, including bacon, cheese, chocolate, and other dehydrated food. They intend to rest and resupply in Manchester in five days, and have one spare day's worth of food.
- A skillet and utensils
- Blankets
- Pup tent(s), divided among the investigators. A single tent divides into three pieces (two side tarps and a tarp floor, plus stakes and ropes), and can sleep two comfortably, three spooning, or four absolutely miserably.
- An ax, a pocket knife, and matches
- A map and a compass
- A Kodak Brownie camera (six exposures per roll of film; each investigator has three rolls)
- One change of clothing
- A canteen, capable of carrying enough water for one day's hiking, excluding meals in camp

If they elect to carry more than that, they are overburdened: the Keeper should feel free to assign a penalty die on CON and other rolls.

**Pace.** The average person can travel approximately ten miles a day in rough terrain without too much difficulty; this is the pace the Three Musketeers set. Doing twenty miles is physically grueling, and about the limit that the average person can do before sunset. Traveling at night through dense woods without lights is almost impossible. Current world-record through-hikers can travel forty or fifty miles in a day, but this also involves very lightweight modern equipment not available in the 1920s.

Moving around ten miles a day, if the investigators are not delayed, they arrive at camp in the early afternoon, with plenty of time to make their camp, rest, relax, and cook dinner. If they are delayed, they arrive as the sun is going down behind the mountains; if they are badly delayed, night falls while they are still on the trail. Increase the difficulty of rolls as appropriate for activities performed in the dark. Note that it can be **very** dark in the woods at night, depending on the weather, the moon, and the thickness of the canopy; most physical tasks will require Hard or even Extreme successes.

**Out from Williamstown.** July 25 dawns hot and clear. The Pine Cobble Trail out of Williamstown runs towards the spine of the mountains, then meets the Long Trail, which follows the ridge north. There are a number of scenic views here where the trail runs along the tops of cliffs, including of Williamstown, laid out in its entirety below. The trail is badly overgrown, and the white paint blazes are faded and worn; call for Track or Spot Hidden rolls. If the investigators fail their rolls, they get lost. Give them a nasty Wilderness Encounter (p. 14), or they lose daylight following a false trail and are forced to backtrack after it peters out.

The trail mostly avoids any marshy valleys, though mud may be unavoidable after (or during!) a rainstorm. It also largely avoids towns, though tiny hamlets can occasionally be seen in the valleys below. But these hamlets are rare: the investigators are deep in the Vermont wilderness, with green forest and rolling mountains as far as their eyes can see. The path is narrow and occasionally rocky and is frequently rough going. Water can be had either at the numerous streams that run through the Green Mountains or from pump-wells near each campsite. The Keeper should spice up this journey with some of the Wilderness Encounters — and of course should feel free to invent their own! July weather is generally hot and often humid, interspersed with both nicer days and serious thunderstorms. The Keeper should feel free to adjust the weather as needed.

Approximately ten miles out from Williamstown, the investigators come to Seth Warner Camp, their first destination. There is a wooden shelter here: a lean-to, one side open to the elements with four bunk beds, though there are no mattresses, only wire frames. As night falls, call for Listen rolls: a car is coming, quite the surprise in the deep woods. It arrives bearing the brothers Samuel and Oswald Borrow and their friend Craig Stevens, three college boys looking for a fun night in the woods (see p. 21 and following for descriptions of all NPCs). If the party has any women, the boys will insist on sleeping in the thicket outside the shelter. The boys will be boisterous and cheerful, and if asked about the trail or the wilderness, will cheerfully share ghost stories, such as the tale of the Bennington Monster (see p. 20). Afterwards, they grill steaks for dinner; as the investigators have been hiking all day eating dried food, the aroma is overwhelming. During the night, a storm breaks; if the boys are sleeping outside, they run hollering for the shelter.

In the morning, the investigators' boots are swarming with porcupines licking up the oil and sweat-salt. Call for a Spot Hidden roll from the first investigator to get up. On fail,

they get quills in their foot — 1D2 damage. The boys bid them farewell, and get in their car to return for their morning classes.

The trail continues to be difficult to follow; the Keeper should provide Wilderness Encounters as suits their fancy. As the sun is going down behind the mountains, the investigators come to a mile-long meadow full of wildflowers. The trail peters out. If the investigators fail to find where it picks up on the other side, they can hear the sound of the cars on Route 7 in the valley below; they can hike along the highway towards Bennington and arrive after nightfall.

If they do not get lost, they will soon come across the side-trail down to Bennington. Going to town is optional; if they continue on the trail, they come to Hell's Hole Camp (see below). If they go down to Bennington, they discover that it is a charming mountain town, noticeably larger than Williamstown with a population of ten thousand. If they wish acquire information about the trail (perhaps information about some strange encounter they've had), there is a chapter of the Green Mountain Club in town. The trail steward will scoff at any superstitions, though he will admit that people do sometimes go missing on the trail — "That's just the wilderness for you." There are also various stores and hotels, if they wish for new provisions, equipment, or proper beds for the night.

Returning to the Long Trail from Bennington requires an arduous climb back to the ridge. Call for CON rolls (see p. 14). A few miles further on, the investigators come to Hell's Hole Camp. The campsite is filthy, with discarded equipment, men's clothing, and trash everywhere; the shelter is mostly collapsed. There is no sign of any other campers. If they did not sleep in Bennington, this is the investigators' intended campsite. It is also a good place to seed paranoia among the investigators: rolls will be unable to determine precisely what destroyed the camp.

After Hell's Hole, the investigators begin their approach to Glastenbury, hoping to make it across Glastenbury Peak and to Caughnawaga Camp by nightfall.

## Glastenbury

Glastenbury is a nearly abandoned logging town deep in the Green Mountains. Once the investigators arrive in Glastenbury, the woods are crisscrossed with old roads, use trails, and game trails. Call for Navigate or Survival or Track rolls, or the investigators get a little lost and encounter the Bootlegger's Shack (see below). Otherwise, they proceed directly to the ghost town of South Glastenbury. Either way, the woods are full of strange sights; use some of the Glastenbury Encounters (p. 17), or create your own.

**The Bootlegger's Shack.** If the investigators become lost, they take the wrong trail and come across an old logger's shack — just a plain log cabin with a dirt floor. A modern truck is parked outside, and a rutted track leads into the forest. The shack is tended by Henry Martens, a bootlegger armed with a pump shotgun. He runs a small-time operation moving whiskey down from Canada to various hill towns in Vermont; this cabin is his hideout. A bit on the short side, when the investigators encounter Martens, he is dressed in nothing but a sweaty pair of long johns: he was not expecting company. Initially surly and hostile, if the investigators can convince him that they are not with the law, he will become quite friendly, offering them a sip of uncut Canadian whiskey, as well as directions to South Glastenbury. He will also urge them not to tarry on Glastenbury Peak, suggesting that the Indians used to perform blasphemous rites on it, and that the place "is still a bit wrong." Other than that, he does not know much about the region or its history; he is not a local.

**Charcoal Kilns.** Whether or not the investigators pass the Bootlegger's Shack, they come across a strange sight (no need for a roll): a little ways off the trail there is a row of strange stone structures. They appear to be big stone eggs thirty or forty feet in diameter, half-buried in the earth. Exploration will reveal that each has a small doorway leading to a hollow interior, with a few tiny windows high on the structure. History or Archeology will reveal that these are charcoal kilns, used to produce charcoal from local wood, which was then shipped to refineries and foundries elsewhere in the state. Otherwise their appearance is alien and inexplicable.

**South Glastenbury.** After passing the kilns, the investigators come on South Glastenbury, the second settlement in Glastenbury, the first being Fayville northwest of Glastenbury Peak (note that Fayville is not on the Long Trail). South Glastenbury sits where two streams come out of the mountains and converge to form Bolles Brook. A narrow-gauge electric railway terminates here, with a trolley car sitting at the station. The tracks are washed out in the wilderness south of town, and the wires no longer electrified, though this is not obvious without investigation. There is also an old road out of town, slowly being taken over by vegetation. There are two main buildings: the old company store, converted into a casino, now abandoned, and the old loggers' boarding

house, still maintained as a hotel and general store by Thomas Greene. The boarding house is a substantial building, with wraparound porches on two stories, an attic level, and space for at least a hundred lodgers. But it is well past its heyday. The offerings in the store are meager, including only very basic dry goods and a few boxes of ammunition (mostly 12-gauge birdshot, .22 LR, and .30-30).



Greene is an old man with a pronounced gut who uses a cane of gnarled and polished hardwood to get around; he'll be lounging in an Adirondack chair on the boarding house porch when the investigators arrive. He is an old Glastenbury native and will gladly talk the investigators' ears off if they let him. There is not much going on in Glastenbury these days, and he is very glad of the company and the chance to talk with new faces. However, if the Keeper wants a slightly more realistic encounter, then if the party contains either a) both men and women, unmarried or b) nonwhite investigators, Greene will be suspicious and unpleasant, and require significant charming before opening up. On the other hand, all-female parties will be treated to some of the ice cream he has made from local strawberries (it's delicious).

Greene is not formally educated, but he is sharp and possessed of a deep well of local knowledge. Thus, if asked about any strange occurrences, Greene will present local folkloric answers (see p. 18) with the aim of spooking the investigators as much as possible. If they get suckered by his tall tales, he will give a good guffaw at their gullibility — but Psychology will reveal that, on some level, he entirely believes in these occult explanations.

Exploring the hotel will reveal rows of musty old hotel rooms, full of rat droppings and spiderwebs, along with the strange detritus of a ghost town — old photographs, a broken comb, empty bottles lined up on a windowsill — and an image of a fanged, horned man, carved on the headboard of a moldy bed.

## Waxman's Farm

After leaving South Glastenbury, the trail begins ascending towards Glastenbury Peak. The Keeper may provide further Wilderness Encounters here, or instead proceed directly to the following encounter:

**The Old Well.** As the Long Trail runs along the edge of a grassy meadow, the investigators come upon an old stone well, quite large — maybe 6 feet in inner diameter. There is however no sign of a bucket. Currently, the well is covered by wooden planks, splintered and weathered to an ashy grey color; Archaeology will reveal these planks to be decades old. Shifting the planks aside will reveal steps circling down into the darkness, and a rock dropped in will reveal that the well is dry and perhaps 40 feet deep.

Spot Hidden rolls will reveal a thin use-trail running through the meadow from the well. Following the trail will lead to Anne Waxman's house, where she'll be found working in her vegetable garden. Anne is a merry spinster, middle-aged, lean and hearty. She lives alone in the woods, manages a small farm and garden, and does some hunting too. The Keeper should play her as cheerful, friendly, and witty. If asked, she'll gladly point the investigators on their way to Glastenbury Peak, and also provide them with some fresh apples for their hike.

**Twisting Paths.** After the well and the meadow, the ascent to Glastenbury Peak proper begins. The way is rocky and heavily tangled; a Natural World roll will reveal that this is new growth following the end of logging on the peak. As the investigators continue on their way towards Glastenbury Peak, give them a Wilderness or Glastenbury Encounter or two, then call for a Navigate roll. Succeed or fail, the investigators will find themselves back at the old stone well, not the peak. If they succeeded on their roll, they lose 0/1 SAN at this inexplicable turn of events. Otherwise, they believe they simply got lost. Either way, they notice the trail to Waxman's house without the need for a roll.

Continue allowing the investigators to attempt to cross the peak. Give them various wilderness encounters, and allow them to attempt various navigational stratagems (Ariadne's string, or Hansel and Gretel's bread crumbs, or careful map-and-compass work). But no matter what, once they have encountered the old well, they will be unable to leave Glastenbury until the resolution of the adventure. The paths twist imperceptibly beneath their feet, and the investigators inevitably return to the old well, losing 1/1D4 SAN with each iteration.

**Anne Waxman.** Beyond the old well is a grassy meadow; near the tree line on the other side is a small farm, consisting of Anne Waxman's house and a nearby barn. Anne can be found working in the vegetable garden. If the investigators explain their plight, Anne

will suggest that things sometime get a little twisted up around the peak, especially at certain times of the year. She'll give them explicit directions over the peak, as well as some mint tea if they like, but notes that there'll be a storm this evening, and they won't want to be on the mountain when that comes through, so they'd best hurry.

The barn is in a traditional New England style, with a gambreled roof and sliding doors. At present it is largely empty, with a few old tools hanging from the walls and musty straw strewn across the floor. The hayloft is full of hay and little else. Art/Craft (Farming) or similar rolls will reveal that the barn recently held livestock, including goats and a milking cow, but there is currently no sign of them.

The area around the barn and farmhouse contains a well-tended vegetable garden as well as a small fruit orchard, primarily apples. The garden contains several cold frames; close inspection will reveal that these are full of delicate fungi unidentifiable by Biology. The house itself is a plain two-room farmhouse, with a large kitchen / work area in the front and a smaller bedroom in the back. A trapdoor leads down into a root cellar, currently well-stocked with a variety of food: onions, potatoes, pickled vegetables, and cured meat. Anne's bedroom is well-made but unadorned, with a wardrobe, a chest, and a simple bed.

The main area of the house is clean and well-kept, with a fireplace, an iron stove, a single large table, and some comfortable chairs. There is a double-barrel twelve-gauge hunting shotgun on a rack just by the door (damage 4D6). The shotgun is currently unloaded, but this is not obvious unless the shotgun is broken open and examined. The investigators will have to ransack Anne's house to find the shells in a cabinet. In other words, the shotgun is a decoy for the investigators. If they should grab it and get Anne under their guns, she will pretend to be cowed until it's a good time to pull the rug out from under the investigators.

The room is also full of books and curios: there are shelves on almost every wall, and they all appear to be full. Occult or Appraise will reveal that her library is esoteric and extremely valuable, including copies of *Al-Azif*, *Livre d'Ivon*, *The Far-Traveler's Guide*, and other books in no human language at all (e.g. a slate-paged book written in Abyssal). The shelves also contain some curious objects: a metal cylinder (containing Ban Zhao's brain; see p. 23), some inscrutable devices, heavy gold jewelry of unnerving design, and other Mythos-related objects at the Keeper's discretion. Electrical Repair will suggest that the devices are perhaps a speaker and a recording device, though the cylinder remains unidentifiable. Appraise or Art/Craft (Fine Arts) will reveal that the jewelry is of exquisite craftsmanship and highest art, though it belongs to no known school of design.

**Dinner and the Bargain.** At the Keeper's discretion, the sun begins to set and rain begins to fall. Anne Waxman will invite the investigators to dine with her and sleep in her (warm and dry) barn until the strangeness passes and they can get on their way. Anne will serve a simple but surprisingly elegant meal of roasted vegetables and stewed wild turkey. She will prove to be a charming conversationalist, with a curious and insightful mind, happy to discuss whatever catches the investigators' fancy — local history, current

events, etc. If asked about any tall tales or strange events, Anne will give candid explanations of the truth behind the superstitions (see p. 15 for some suggestions). Whatever Mythos tales Anne tells, a key point for Anne is that there is intelligent life in the universe — quite a lot of it, actually. They mostly can't be bothered with humanity. "Something about the human brain leaves it physically incapable of grasping reality. It seems to invariably retreat to ignorance and horror when confronted with truth." Throughout these stories, the Keeper should portray Anne as a woman who finds the hideous universe to be a fascinating place full of inviting mysteries — rather like an entomologist who delights in the intricacies of parasitic wasps or the *Cordyceps* fungi. Even the darkest and most awful secrets are glorious to the understanding. Whether the investigators will feel the same is uncertain, especially when Anne explains how the evening will end.

At an appropriate moment (determined by the Keeper), Anne will introduce the last dinner guest: Ban Zhao, ancient Chinese scholar and cylindered brain (see p. 23 for details on Ban Zhao, and p. 20 for some background on the Mi-Go). Anne will plonk the strange metal cylinder on the table and deftly hook up the strange devices to it (these being Zhao's sensory and speech apparatuses), and a moment later, Zhao's staticky voice will emerge from them. Zhao, steeped in Mythos lore, traveler of the cosmos, will confirm all Anne has said about the true nature of reality. When portraying Zhao, it is critical that the Keeper also make it clear that she hasn't been back to Earth for nearly a thousand years, and is desperately curious to learn more of what's happened in her absence — and that this desire is a source of tension between herself and Anne (see A Way Out below).

Either at the Keeper's discretion, or if suspicious investigators press the point, Anne will explain what is going on with the investigators' inability to leave Glastenbury: her friend who lives in the well has got her hooks in the investigators. "She likes the smell of you, I suppose, and once she's set on someone there's no putting her off. But she'll only want one of you, I expect. So who's it to be?" (Alternatively, the Keeper may pick a specific investigator to be a target of the thing in the well — the weakest one in the herd, so to speak.) Anne's basic goal here is to get the investigators to acquiesce to walking out to the well with her and allowing her to feed one of them to her friend. She will do this by offering the remaining investigators a bargain: all the secrets of the universe, in exchange for their friend's life. Less metaphorically, if the investigators wish to travel the stars and meet alien cultures, she'll provide an introduction with the Mi-Go who live under Round Hill. If they're drawn to the ocean, to art and beauty such as few humans have ever encountered, she has some contacts down Innsmouth way. And if they're interested in becoming, like her, both more and less than human, she'll teach them how to commune with the Black Goat.

On the other hand, the investigators may not particularly like these bargains. If they fail, Anne will resort to persuasion: "There's no getting away from her once she's got her hooks in you, only wasting your time. Come along and we can get this over with." If persuasion fails, Anne will fall back on threats and force: she's carrying a loaded revolver in her pocket, and she's a very good shot.

**The Thing in the Well.** If Anne by one of these means persuades the investigators to accede to her plan, she puts on her rain slicker and good cap and escorts the investigators into the night. Whether they are afforded the same courtesy rather depends on how things have gone so far. Outside, the rain is pouring down, and the night is soaked and dark. Anne carries an old oil lantern, which provides perhaps ten or fifteen feet of good light before the dark cuts in like a wall. She leads the investigators along the trail across the meadow and to the old well. She'll have them pry up the old boards, and then *something* comes out of the well and attempts to seize the unfortunate investigator. "A convoluted slimy being, contorted and tangled in impossible dimensions, covered in red blisters and eyes and pulsing organs of unknown purpose. And as its — *feelers* — *fronds* — I don't have the words! — infiltrated him, I saw them probing every nook and cranny of his flesh, not just now but — always! His past! His future! All devoured!" Lose 1D8/1D20 SAN for this utterly horrifying sight.

On the other hand, there are a number of other things the investigators might do: fight, or flee, or collapse into gibbering insanity. Either way, it is pitch-black and pouring rain; ordinary tasks require Hard successes, and investigators should face DEX rolls to keep their footing and CON rolls to avoid hypothermia. Moreover they face a fundamental problem: until the chosen investigator gets devoured by the thing in the well, any attempt to escape will inevitably lead them back to the well. (Please note that pushing Anne into the well will not result in the thing eating her. They are friends, after all.) They must either defeat the thing (a difficult proposition) or acquiesce to Anne's plan. If they do acquiesce, both Anne and the thing will let them go. Here it is up to the Keeper to decide what happens next. Perhaps the remaining investigators stagger back to Bennington, shivering, maddened wrecks. Perhaps they elect to travel the stars as cylindered brains. Or perhaps they make their escape, passing by numerous familiar landmarks — South Glastenbury, the charcoal kilns, Hell's Hole camp — before rounding a bend in the woods to discover themselves standing at the edge of a grassy meadow, next to a old, familiar well.

**A Way Out.** Despite all this adversity, there is one path out of this desperate situation, albeit a narrow one. There are two key items in Anne's home that may allow the investigators to escape their predicament. The first is a book, *The Far-Traveler's Guide*, an English volume that discusses various path-related magics, including the following spell.

For the players: The author Vellit Boe writes "For the far-traveler, being lost is not a condition but a state of mind. When I understood this, I knew how I would escape. I fixed the sigil clearly in my mind, and no longer being lost, proceeded directly out." Facing that page is a series of diagrams of a strange four-dimensional geometrical pattern.

For the Keeper: When cast, this spell prevents the caster from losing their way. No matter how difficult or hidden it is, they will find the true way to their intended destination. Cost: 5 MP. Casting time: a minute or two. Duration: 1

hour. Consult the *Call of Cthulhu 7<sup>th</sup> Edition* p. 177 for the rules concerning casting a spell for the first time.

The second key item is Ban Zhao, who is desperate to learn more about the modern world. If the investigators promise to take her with them, she will point them towards *The Far-Traveler's Guide* and aid them in learning the spell. Learning the spell from the book requires a Mathematics or Hard INT roll; learning it with Ban Zhao's help requires no roll, but may leave Zhao with permanent access to her pupil's mind. Either way, casting the spell will allow investigators to break free of the thing in the well's strange effect and successfully flee through the rainy night to Bennington. Running through the woods at night in a rainstorm is a very fraught proposition, and the Keeper is urged to keep up the tension (and the possibility of pursuit by Anne) until the investigators reach the lights of Bennington.



This effectively concludes the adventure; all that's left is to wrap things up — with trips to the police, the hospital, or the asylum as needed. If the investigators then choose to return to Anne's farm, authorities (or dynamite) in hand, there are two possible outcomes. If they acceded to Anne's bargain and fed one of their own to the creature, they will find themselves unable to return to the well or the farm — the paths twist under their feet, always taking them to the wrong place no matter their efforts. If however they escaped with Ban Zhao and *The Far-Traveler's Guide*, they will be able to return — only to discover a farmhouse empty of so much as a shriveled onion; the well is likewise dry and

empty. Stranger still will be the fact that locals like Greene and Martens, if questioned, will have no memory of Anne at all, insisting that the farm has been abandoned for decades. However, a lone clue may be discovered at the farmhouse with Spot Hidden: a single strange print, like a three-toed claw, in the soft earth by the now-empty cold frames. If asked, Ban Zhao admits that this shows all the usual signs of a Mi-Go clean-up job.

At this point, while Anne and her friend in the well have vanished, the investigators are possessed of both Ban Zhao and a book of useful magic, either of which may be a good hook for a further adventure of the Keeper's devising, perhaps further exploring the Mi-Go's activities in the hills of Vermont.

## Wilderness Encounters

**CON Roll.** Hiking over rough country with a heavy pack can be quite grueling. CON rolls may be called for in various circumstances: on a hot afternoon, ascending a steep slope, or other strenuous activity. On a failure, the investigator must take a penalty die on all subsequent rolls until they either rest or lighten their load by abandoning some equipment.

**DEX Roll.** It's easy to stumble when scrambling over rocks or across muddy sections of trail. On a failure, the investigator takes 1D3 damage in a nasty fall.

**Scenic View.** The woods break near the top of a cliff. The investigators may go out on the rocks for stunning views of the valley below and the mountains beyond. The green hills roll towards the horizon, with lakes and streams glimmering in the sunlight.

**Summit Path.** The investigators pass a side trail to one of the numerous mountain peaks in the area. It promises stunning views but a steep ascent; DEX or CON rolls may be called for.

**Game Trail / Use Trail.** Investigators come to a fork in the trail. Navigate or Natural World will reveal which trail is the Long Trail. If the investigators follow the wrong trail, either a) the trail peters out, if it is a game trail or b) the trail ends at an old cluster of buildings, a water source, or a scenic view, if a use trail. In either case, the investigators must backtrack to the true trail, losing daylight doing so.

**Heat.** The air is sticky and dank with humidity, thunderstorm weather. CON rolls are made with a penalty die.

**Thunderstorm.** Investigators take a penalty die to any physical activity performed while exposed, including Listen and Spot Hidden. When moving quickly, roll DEX or take a nasty fall, 1D3 damage.

**Trail Washed Out.** A rainstorm has washed the trail out as it traverses a steep slope. Roll DEX to pass the washout without incident. After passing the wash-out, roll Navigate or Spot Hidden to find the trail again.

**Wildlife.** In 1928, Vermont is home to a wide variety of wildlife, including eagles, black bears, porcupines, beavers, and deer. Some of these are dangerous animals, but all will generally avoid humans. Call for Spot Hidden rolls. On a success, the investigators see one of these animals at a distance.

**Cougar.** Call for a Hard Spot Hidden. The cougar is perched on a branch above a faint game trail, a little ways off the Long Trail. It clearly sees the investigators, but makes no move to approach, and will flee if they come towards it. If the investigators encounter the cougar, the Keeper is encouraged to bring it back later as needed to foul up the investigators' plans or give them a scare. In either case, cougars are stealthy predators; if one is stalking the investigators, call for Spot Hidden or Survival rolls to spot it. See p. 21 for the cougar's statistics and behavior.

**Dead Bear.** The carcass appears to have been torn to pieces and partially eaten; it is now rotting and putrid. Biology or Natural World will suggest a large, sharp-toothed predator — perhaps a particularly aggressive cougar attacked a sick bear?

**NOT THE BEES!** Roll Listen. On a fail, as the investigators clamber over a fallen log, they tread on a wasps' nest, and are swarmed by angry, stinging wasps. Lose 1 HP.

**Something in the Night.** While the investigators are sleeping, call for Listen rolls. On a success, the investigator wakes, hearing something moving through the woods around their campsite. It appears to prowl in a half-circle, before the noises cut off and silence returns. It's just a possum, but the Keeper should allow the investigators' imaginations to run away with them, if they seem inclined.

**Cairn.** Some ways back from the trail, deep in the woods — call for Spot Hidden rolls. The cairn is perhaps three feet high and wide, circular, and composed of carefully stacked local rocks, now heavy with moss. Natural World or Biology will reveal that the cairn is at least a century old, while Survival will reveal that there is no earthly purpose for such a cairn to be in such a place.

**Bones.** A whole wash of decayed skeletons and rubble, all tangled up in vegetation. Careful inspection will reveal a large amount of odds and ends tangled up with them, including scraps of cloth, pieces of furniture, and rusting flatware — in general, all the random knickknacks that were once in a house. An INT roll will reveal that these are at the higher water mark, and were likely deposited here by the November 1927 floods. Archeology or another relevant roll will reveal that these are human bones: lose 0/1 SAN.

**Whippoorwills.** A flock of whippoorwills fills the trees round the investigators, calling out in eerie unison. An INT roll will reveal that they are calling in time with a specific investigator's breaths — lose 0/1 SAN. An Occult roll will reveal the local superstition that whippoorwills flock around the dying, hoping to devour their souls on death — lose 0/1 SAN. If the Keeper means to pick a specific investigator to be the thing in the well's target (see p. 10), this is a good place to foreshadow that.

**Hill Noises.** During the night, inexplicable rumblings, crackings, and hissings emanate from the mountaintops, with no pattern discernible. If the investigators are awake, they hear them easily; otherwise call for Listen rolls from sleeping investigators. An Occult roll will reveal the local legend that these are the echoes of sacrificial rites performed long ago on these hilltops (see p. 18 for some relevant tall tales); lose 0/1 SAN.

**Lights in the Sky.** If the investigators are awake during the middle of the night, call for Spot Hidden rolls. On a success, they notice lights flickering in the sky, very far to the north. Streaks of lavender, chartreuse, and ultraviolet seem to stream through the air. Meteorology or related rolls will reveal that these are entirely inexplicable; they appear to be a heretofore unknown meteorological or astronomical phenomenon. Occult rolls will reveal that according to Vermont folklore, these lights the Visitors returning home (see p. 18. (In point of fact, they are Mi-Go transiting the Earth's atmosphere, though the investigators have no way of knowing this.)

## Glastenbury Encounters

**Ruined Church.** The steeple is collapsed, and the cross has been inverted, and the walls are covered in graffiti, including a fanged, hairy man, here depicted standing on a mountaintop with winged figures circling behind him.

**Abandoned Sawmill.** Close on by the path, there is an old sawmill. The roof is still intact, and surprisingly the millrace is running and the waterwheel in good condition. If the gears are engaged, the old circular saw starts up with a whine. There are no other sounds in the forest, just the humming of the deadly steel blade. Investigation will reveal that everything in here is surprisingly well-maintained, including numerous old tools, such as axes, hand-saws, and woodworking equipment, despite the mill being entirely deserted.

**Rusting cars.** A few rusting cars and trucks, their tires flat and sunk half a foot into the earth. The paint has entirely peeled off each car, with dark red rust scale crawling across the remaining steel.

**Ruined House.** A deep square pit, walled with stone. The bottom is full of debris — rotting wood, shards of ceramic, rusting tools. A search of the ruins will reveal an inexplicably pristine statue of carved soapstone, maybe six inches tall, depicting a man with fangs and horns.

**Loggers' huts.** Crude wooden dwellings. There are five of these all in a row, the log walls now mossy and rotting, roofs collapsed, garbage-strewn interiors moldering. Some appear to have been deliberately demolished with savage force, doors smashed in and holes torn in walls.

## Tall Tales

**The Bennington Monster.** "The monster's real, no doubt in my mind. My daddy's uncle was a coach driver back in the day, used to run all over these hills, and he saw the thing, back when he was young. He was driving his coach on those nameless mountain roads outside of Bennington, when he was forced to stop in the night by a tree fallen cross the road. And he got out and starts clearing the brush, and as he's doing it, he's thinking, there was no storm today. Who in the Hell cut down this tree? But it wasn't cut down, he saw, it was ripped down — and that's when his skin starts crawling and then he sees something by the trunk. A big footprint in the mud, not a man, not a bear, nothing he'd ever seen before — and that's when he decides, alright, we're taking the other road. And the moment he turns for the coach he sees, off in the dark where his lantern caught it, two eyes flashing back at him. And he froze solid, right there, because those weren't the eyes of a beast, but a man — or so he thought. Then there was this roar, like thunder without a storm, and the thing comes at the coach, and with three might blows knocks it clean over and sets about tearing it open like it's shucking an oyster. That's when my daddy grabs out his revolver and fires two shots at it, and before he can fire the third it's gone, dashed off into the woods. So, if you ever hear of someone going missing in these hills — and people go missing round here all the time, believe me — well, you know where they're at. In its belly!"

**The Last Shaman.** "Long time ago, maybe hundred, hundred fifty years, back before the Indians left these hills, their last great shaman saw the future. He saw the white man coming and the red man leaving, and so he went up on the mountains, and he prayed to the old gods, the gods of earth and wind and the spirits of the hills. He prayed for them to give him something to change his fate, to drive off the white man. Thing is, the old gods ain't to be called on lightly. Because this time, they answered. The sky split open, the Outside poured through, and for a hundred miles everyone locked their doors and shut up their houses and huddled close round their fires. Up on the mountain the trees were blasted, the rocks were scorched, ain't nothing'll grow right up there anymore. So when you see those lights, you know that's just the echo of what was done up there long ago. What happened to the shaman? Well, I did say he was the *last* shaman, didn't I? Because whatever he called up didn't much mind whether its meal was red or white or yellow! Ha!"

**The Visitors.** "They ain't from around here. They're visitors from another place, where things work different than they do around here. They live in the deep woods, where the pines are so thick the sun never touches the earth, in the shadows of the cliffs of certain mountains. And if you go there when the stars are right, on Beltane or All Hallow's Eve, then they'll whisper to you in darkness, tell you anything you ever wanted to know. They know every secret in the world and keep them in great libraries under the hills. Thing is, the secrets they keep, we weren't meant to know. The black thoughts get into your mind and wriggle. When the night comes and the house is quiet and you can't sleep for

thinking. That's when you get up and go back to the woods, the deep places under the pines, and you beg them to tell you more. You get one taste and you're hooked, and then the day'll come you go into those deep places and you don't come out. So if you hear a buzzing voice in the shadows, whispering secrets — you just look straight ahead, keep on walking, and don't look back!"

## Mythos Tales

**Mi-Go.** If asked about the lights in the sky (p. 16), the strange metal cylinder on her shelf, or the tiny fungi in the cold frames outside, Anne will tell the investigators about the Mi-Go. The lights were signs of Mi-Go transiting the Earth's atmosphere, she'll explain. They keep a garden under Round Hill, and when the stars are right they travel between there and their colony on Yuggoth.

The metal cylinder is a brain case containing Ban Zhao's brain (see p. 23 regarding Ban Zhao). The Mi-Go might be capable of traversing the void on their transmundane wings, but your average human would be burned by radiation and seared by hard vacuum. In order to bring passengers along safely, the Mi-Go extract their brains and place them in cylinders — they are masterful surgeons and biologists — and then the cylinders are equipped with appropriate sensory and motor devices on arrival. Anne offers to demonstrate, deftly hooking the cylinder up to various strange devices, at which point Ban Zhao's staticky voice comes out, confirming what Anne has relayed, and extolling the virtues of seeing Yuggoth and its eons-ancient cities and rivers of black tar. Anne will offer to make an introduction to the Mi-Go, if the investigators are interested in interstellar travel.

**The Black Goat of the Woods.** If asked about the Bennington Monster or the depictions of the fanged man, Anne will dismiss it all as tall tales and superstition — especially the bit about the Indian shaman. She'll explain that the local Mahicans knew of the Black Goat, but had no truck with her; indeed her cultists were anathema and banished whenever discovered. So they'd never conjure up any monster. If asked what she means by the Black Goat, Anne will explain that she is a sort of ur-organism, the root from which all Earthly life springs. We are a sort of a growth on her extradimensional body — "a bit like pimples on God's ass," Anne says with a wink. There's an echo of her in all her children, and she can be called to the surface by appropriate rituals — "though they tend to be a bit messy." If the investigators are interested in communing with our mother more deeply, Anne can teach them a ritual to invoke her essence.

**The Ones in the Deep.** If asked about the strange jewelry, Anne will explain that she traveled off the coast of Massachusetts some time ago, studying the ecology. To her surprise, she was not the only explorer there: a sentient aquatic race dwelt in the deep. She visited their glorious city of Y'ha-nthlei, learning of their people and the true history of the Earth. The Deep Ones taught her that humanity is a passing fancy in the long arc of Earth's history, merely a peculiarly advanced predator that will drive itself to extinction in a century or two. In the meantime, the Deep Ones live their immortal lives beneath the waves, creating exquisite art while they wait for their great priest to rise from his long slumber.

## Non-Player Characters

**Samuel Borrow** (20), **Oswald Borrow** (19), and **Craig Stevens** (20), boys from Williams College

Samuel and Oswald Borrow are brothers from an old Boston family. Their parents have sent them off to Williams College in the hope of keeping their youthful indiscretions secret from polite society. Unfortunately, they have become fast friends with Craig Stevens, son of a local logging magnate, who's only encouraged them. These characters have identical stats; the Keeper is encouraged to personalize them in other ways.

STR 55  
CON 75  
SIZ 65  
DEX 55  
APP 85  
EDU 55  
INT 55  
POW 45

HP 14, Move 7, Damage Bonus 0, Build 0  
Armor: 0  
Skills: Latin 50, Greek 50, History 50

**Cougar**, a cougar

Cougars are natural predators, not monsters or cultists. They prefer to spring from ambush on weak or separated individuals, and will quickly flee from combat if injured or frightened.

STR 80  
CON 50  
SIZ 70  
DEX 95  
POW 65

HP 11, Move 11, Damage Bonus 1D4, Build 2  
Armor: 1 point of thick skin and fur  
Attacks per round: 2  
Fighting 60 (30/12), damage 2D6+db  
Dodge 25 (12/5)  
Skills: Stealth 40, Track 30

**Henry Martens** (28), bootlegger

Martens is a small-time bootlegger from Saratoga, New York. After too many run-ins with the law, he fled across the state line to Vermont, where his cousin tapped him in to a source of Canadian whiskey. Martens now runs a small-time operation from the back woods, trying to build up his nut until he's got enough cash to make it big. Unfortunately for him, he tends to drink his profits away.

A bit on the short side, when the investigators encounter Martens, he is dressed in nothing but a sweaty pair of long johns: he was not expecting company. Initially surly and hostile, if the investigators can convince him that they are not with the law, he will become quite friendly. Note that if the investigators turn to Martens for help after night falls, they will discover that he is both very drunk and very eager to help. This is not an entirely good combination; he'll shoot at shadows and crash his truck in crisis situations.

STR 35  
CON 60  
SIZ 55  
DEX 55  
APP 45  
EDU 65  
INT 85  
POW 55

HP 11, Move 8, Damage Bonus 0, Build 0  
Armor: 0  
Firearms (12 gauge pump-action shotgun) 50 (25/10), damage 4D6  
Fighting (brawl) 65 (32/13), damage 1D3+db  
Skills: Drive Auto 50

**Thomas Greene** (71), tale-telling local

Thomas Greene was born in Glastenbury in 1857. His father was a logger and his mother did piecework; when he was a teen, he lucked into a job at the company store. He's been there ever since, unwilling to leave his home even after the town went bust. For him, Bennington is "the city," to which he's rarely been. Greene is an old man with a pronounced gut. He uses a cane of gnarled and polished hardwood to get around. While not formally educated, he is highly intelligent, and will both welcome the investigators to Glastenbury and do his sly best to give the newcomers a good fright with an appropriate tall tale (p. 18). While he is deeply immersed in local folklore, he knows nothing of the true nature of the Mythos. But he knows just about everything about Glastenbury. He also trusts Anne implicitly; he's known her for most of his life, and she has always been a charming, reliable presence in their remote community. Thus, if the investigators turn to Greene for help after night falls, it will take a lot of convincing and hard evidence before he takes their side over Anne's.

STR 50  
CON 25

SIZ 60  
 DEX 45  
 APP 15  
 INT 85  
 POW 35  
 EDU 70

HP 8, Move 3, Damage Bonus 0, Build 0  
 Armor: 0  
 Fighting (brawl) 25 (12/5), damage 1D3+db  
 Skills: Fast Talk 50, Charm 65, Occult 45

### **Ban Zhao**, cylinderead brain

Zhao was a scholar in ancient China, born in the year 45. In 115, she participated in a journey into the Tibetan plateau, investigating reports of strange astronomical phenomena. While there, she encountered the Mi-Go, and elected to be cylinderead in order to see the stars. She has traveled extensively, including Yuggoth and points beyond, and is currently in Glastenbury to help Anne with her studies of extra-dimensional geometry.

The key roleplaying hook for Zhao is *curiosity*. Like Anne, she delights in sharing fascinating tales of the universe; unlike Anne, she is desperate to learn more about contemporary events on Earth, and will press the investigators well past the point of politeness for details about themselves, their lives, and the fate of the Middle Kingdom.

INT 80  
 POW 70  
 EDU 90

HP n/a, Move 0, Damage Bonus n/a, Build n/a. Zhao's brain cylinder is indestructible by mundane means, but she is incapable of independent movement.

Skills: Mathematics 80, Physics 75, Mythos 60.

SAN Loss: Lose 0/1D6 SAN to speak with Ban Zhao.

### **Anne Waxman**, the outsider

Anne Waxman was born Anne Delano in Barnstable, Plymouth Colony, 1646. In 1662 she married John Waxman, eventually bearing two sons and a daughter, only one of which — James Waxman — lived to adulthood. She was a farmer's daughter and a farmer's wife and she expected her son to be a farmer too.

But in the spring of 1675, a strange sickness began spreading among the Wampanoag, the nearby Native tribe. The stars had turned against them, their women said. As the summer came, that same sickness began spreading through Plymouth Colony. A killing

fever descended on the men, and all during that long hot summer, there was killing, and often for the least reasons — for an overturned bucket, for a side-eyed glance, or sometimes just because. And when it seemed it could get no worse, the men left and began killing the Wampanoag.

There were strange lights in the sky, stars in daytime, new constellations at night. The preacher talked endlessly of the punishment of God and the hosts of Heaven descending on the heathens. A strange new mood came over Anne, and she walked the fields, the shorelines, drifted through the salt marshes. One day, after a particular extremity in the heavens, she came across a strange thing quivering under a rock. She took it home, and gave it milk and eggs. When it consumed them, she decided it was alive.

She soon found the creature's companionship preferable to that of her fellow Pilgrim women. For once she could escape the endless worrying over their men, and instead finally — after so many years silent — share the strange thoughts that came to her sometimes. She tucked the creature in her apron and talked to it on her walks beneath the technicolor sky, as the Outside seethed and flamed above them, finally finding an audience who would not condemn her for her questions. Sometimes she fancied the creature answered back, in its own strange language of pulsation and color and presence. She had never had a better friend.

In August 1676, the men had killed enough Wampanoag, or killed the right one, or maybe the stars had just turned again. A new treaty was signed, and her men returned. But they were different, or she was, or the world. Nothing quite fit properly anymore. There was too much of the outside in her, and there was a hollowness in them. She asked them about the war. Why they had fought. They told her the Indians had turned on the colonists, and it was time to clear them off and make room. It was hard for her to see the world that way any longer. She had been knocked askew in some unknown dimension, and now she saw things sideways on. But her men were... *incurious*. Like they lived in the world but could not see it; like they merely went through the motions of life with neither understanding nor feeling.

So it seemed rather obvious her men would be better put to use feeding her new friend. The killing wasn't hard. And her friend quite liked the taste, far better than milk or eggs.

The whispers that had begun during her strange summer walks, that had grown with her queer and unfaithful questions, swelled rapidly to shouts and torches following the disappearance of her husband and son. There were no bodies to be found, but in those times faith counted much more than evidence: and besides, the mob wasn't wrong. Anne Waxman was drowned in a salt marsh in 1677 and her name stricken from all records.

To her surprise, this did not kill her. She supposed a bit of the Outside had found its way inside her, filtered in through strange thoughts and strange conversations, and now she was no longer entirely human.

In 1691 she grew bored with the bottom of the marsh and all the strange life that flourished there. She swam to the surface and returned to her old home, now fallen to

ruin and shunned by the colonists. She dug up her friend from the rancid soil beneath the barn, and together they traveled to Plymouth, Boston, Y'ha-nthlei. After drowning, she found it easier to talk with her friend. The language came naturally to her — as did other tongues. She spoke to the stars, and the weather, and the Abyssals who lived off the coast.

She no longer seemed to age. She drifted, wondering and wandering and occasionally helping her friend find a meal, especially in summer when the old stars were in the sky. The world had become a fascinating place, far stranger and far vaster than her untainted mind had ever imagined. She visited the Mi-Go in their lightless gardens, and the Deep Ones beneath the sea, learned the true history of the people of Earth, the membranous connection between our world and the many Outsides, of Lost Yhtill and the names Azathoth and Nyarlathotep and Shub-Niggurath. Life was a grand adventure.

But by 1877 her friend had grown to loathe the surface. The stars had turned against her, she said. They settled in a rocky, remote part of Vermont, forbidding and mostly useless to humanity, where they might wait out the centuries, until the stars turned right again and they could resume their travels. In the meantime her friend rested in a deep well, moldering and growing in the endless damp of subterranean Vermont. For Anne's part, the farm had a good view of the stars, easy access to the Mi-Go stronghold under Round Hill, and plenty of the solitude her esoteric studies required.

STR 55

CON 85

SIZ 35

DEX 65

APP 45

INT 110

POW 150

EDU 75

HP 12, Move 9, Damage Bonus 0, Build 0

Armor: 0

Fighting (brawl) 50 (25/10), damage 1D3. Anne does not carry melee weapons, but may improvise as necessary using the various tools available on her farm.

Firearms (.45 Revolver) 75 (37/15), damage 1D10+2.

Skills: Track 50. Anne is an experienced hunter and will pursue the investigators if they run.

Immortal: Anne is not quite as human as she used to be; her body is animated as much by her extradimensional will as by earthly biology. If the investigators kill her, she will appear dead according to any mundane examination. But she will also be able to get back up when she needs to, returning as an animate corpse with a much fiercer light in her eyes.

SAN loss: Lose 1D4/1D8 SAN to see a revived Anne Waxman.

**The Thing in the Well**, senescent horror

The Thing is a vast tangle of feelers, fronds, and pseudopods, looping and twisting partly through the three Earthly dimensions and partly through alien dimensions and extra-material reality. It will not leave its well, but waits for food to be brought to it, whereupon it deconstructs and disassembles its prey's entire being and consumes it.

STR 125  
CON 125  
SIZ 250  
DEX 50  
INT 70  
POW 80

HP 32, Move 0, Damage Bonus n/a, Build 5. If defeated, the Thing withdraws into the well to recuperate.

A armor: 4 points of strange, lichenous hide. Moreover, the Thing is not entirely present in the three earthly dimensions. For any given attack, roll Luck: on a fail, the attack passes harmlessly through its other-dimensional body.

Entwine 65 (32/13), damage special. The Thing unfolds its wrongly-moving tentacles and begins to pull an investigator into the well. This does no regular damage, but while entwined, the Thing permanently drains 1D10 points from each attribute per round.

Investigators must pass an opposed STR roll to escape.

Mesmerize: the Thing unfolds a flower of such exquisite beauty that it captures the mind. Investigators who look upon the flower are entranced, moving closer to study it. Make a hard POW roll to resist.

SAN Loss: Lose 1D3/1D20 SAN to see the Thing in the Well.

## About the Author

Samantha Hancox-Li is a failed academic, a bad writer, and a good cook. Follow her on Twitter as @perdricof, or check out her lame-o blog at [sjshancoxli.com/blog](http://sjshancoxli.com/blog).

