



MAZING DVENTURES

THE FEAST OF BLACK ANNIS





THE FEAST OF BLACK ANNIS

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THE DEEPER DARK TRILOGY, VOL. 2: THE FEAST OF BLACK ANNIS

THE DEEPER DARK TRILOGY, VOL. 2

An **Amazing Adventures** Scenario for characters of levels 5-8
by Jason Vey

DISCLAIMER: The corrupt sect of druids and their demonic matriarch presented in this module is in no way intended to appropriate, reflect or represent any real-world druidic or other faith, be it ancient or modern reconstructionist. It's meant to reflect specifically what it is—a fictionalized cult of the Old Ones that arose out of a college fraternity playing with dark forces, assigning incorrect meanings, and not understanding what they've gotten themselves into.

However, it's also *complete fiction and fantasy in the Lovecraftian horror vein*, and should be taken in no other way. The author has formally studied religion and has the utmost respect and admiration for modern pagan religions. He does not wish to display any disrespect whatsoever to practitioners of these faiths. Again, this is pure fiction. Please take it as such.

For an excellent look at how to incorporate a more authentic version of Celtic mythology into your home games, please check out Troll Lord Games' outstanding **Codex Celtarum** for the **Castles & Crusades** role playing game, which is 100% compatible with **Amazing Adventures**.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to volume 2 of our Deeper Dark Trilogy, a series of adventure modules that are thematically linked by their Lovecraftian elements, and serve to introduce the mythos of H.P. Lovecraft (which the author called “Yog-Sothothery”) into your **Amazing Adventures** game. These scenarios were playtested at Gen Con 2015, to great success. We hope you enjoy them. While the general intent is that you have run your players through Vol. 1 of this series, entitled Don't Fear the Ripper, it's not remotely necessary to do so. Each of the adventures in this series is self-contained and can be run on its own. They should present an interesting challenge for PCs of the Brotherhood of William St. John, as presented in the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook, or for any other group of original PCs you choose to run.

The timeframe of these adventures is likewise kept vague; whether you're running in the 1920s or the year 2017, these should translate fairly easily, though the addition of mobile devices and cellular technology does indeed change the tenor of the game somewhat. The GM can compensate for this as needed by having the awful energies of the Deeper Dark interfere with cellular signals when needed.

QUICK SYNOPSIS

In this scenario, the PCs must investigate the disappearances of small children from all over the city, which they eventually trace to a corrupt druidic cult operating within a local park. These

“druids” have been misled and tainted and the goddess they worship is not Danu, but actually the Great Old One, Shub-Nig-gurath. The PCs must save the kidnapped children and defeat the cult's leader, Brigit, who may or may not survive to become a recurring nemesis for our heroes...

YOG-SOTHOTHERY IN YOUR GAME

What is popularly known as the “Cthulhu Mythos,” or “Lovecraft Mythos,” was, in fact, referred to by the man himself as “Yog-Sothothery,” after the nominal head of his demonic pantheon of Outer Gods, or Great Old Ones (In Lovecraft's own text, the terms were often mixed and matched). There are far better places to go for treatises on the nature of this approach to Cosmic Horror than we have space to provide here.

Suffice it to say, there are a number of different approaches. Often in “pure” Lovecraftian works, the PCs go gradually mad as they unravel the secrets of Things Man Was Not Meant to Know. Other authors in Lovecraft's circle—namely, people like Robert E. Howard—preferred their PCs to grab a six-shooter, sword or axe from over the fire place and blaze away, going down in a hail of blood, guts, and gunfire as they fought against these dark forces.

The author of this adventure prefers the latter approach, especially in an action-based game like **Amazing Adventures**. While it is assumed that you will use the rules for Sanity as presented in the AA core rulebook, it's not strictly necessary to run this scenario, though it will greatly change the feel if you don't include it.

The key to Yog-Sothothery is the idea that there are ancient and demonic beings of godlike power that exist outside of our own reality. They're not from Heaven or Hell; rather, they're from the Spaces between Spaces. They live in angles and shadows, in a realm we will call the Deeper Dark. They're not strictly evil, but they are as indifferent to humankind as we are to insects, and their very nature is so unnatural that just to be presented with evidence of their existence is a sanity-blasting experience. The horror of these things comes from their sheer unnaturalness. They are the Things That Should Not Be, antithetical to reality as we know it.

These creatures, called Outer Gods or Old Ones, once ruled our universe, until one day many tens of thousands of years ago, when a great cataclysm changed the very order of the stars in the sky. This sent the Old Ones into an eternal slumber in their other dimensions, until the day when the stars once again change and they can rise and consume all that we mere humans have built.

Until that day comes, the Outer Gods influence their cults through dreams, symbols, and ancient texts of great power that were left behind, and can manifest small slivers of their presence in our world. If too many of these slivers get through, the

Old Ones may awaken once more, and it is exactly this that our PCs must strive to prevent...

For more on Yog-Sothothery, check out the fiction of authors such as H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, August Derleth (who put his own spin on “codifying” Lovecraft’s mythos), Robert Bloch, and Clark Ashton Smith. There are many others who have taken up the torch since this “original” circle, and once you start reading, you’ll find everyone out there has their own opinion about the canon and who is the best of the Lovecraft Circle.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

As with most adventures, this scenario will present supplemental information and clues which will be set off for the Game Master, for easy reference.

BOXED TEXT

Boxed Text will appear in boxes like this and are intended to be read aloud to the PCs, to set flavor and tone of a given scene.

GAME MASTER’S INFORMATION

Text in boxes like this presents specific background and supplemental information for the Game Master’s eyes only, to help fill in the missing pieces of the puzzle. Such boxes will give insights into events taking place behind the scenes, ways to troubleshoot scenes that the PCs approach differently than written, rules information such as maps or special, situational rules, etc. Any game-related info that isn’t specifically tied into story events will most likely be in these sidebars.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF WILLIAM ST. JOHN

The Brotherhood of William St. John are the “iconic” PCs for the assumed **Amazing Adventures** “meta setting.” Character statistics for the Brotherhood and information about the Brotherhood itself can be found in the **Amazing Adventures** core rulebook, and the **Amazing Adventures** Companion. It is recommended that if using the Brotherhood in this adventure, the characters be advanced to levels 6-8; otherwise, the challenges herein may be exceedingly deadly.

- **Mackie Gleeson:** The leader of the Brotherhood of William St. John; a wealthy socialite with contacts everywhere. Also the pilot and “wheel-woman” of the group.
- **Maddie Black:** a P.I. in New Orleans and direct descendant of the original Medusa of Greek myth
- **Marie Laveau:** Yes. That Marie Laveau. She looks a lot younger than she is and pretends to be her own granddaughter.

- **Titanus Williams:** Another P.I.
- **Natalya Abramova:** Up-and-coming Hollywood starlet and secretly a former cat-burglar named The Fox.
- **Tennessee O’Malley:** A scholar and adventuring archaeologist.
- **Bucky Newsome:** An engineer and gadgeteer.
- **“Savage” Steve McPartland (and Bluto):** An Irish dock worker, pugilist and adventurer whose simple but unshakable sense of right and wrong makes him the moral core of the group. With his faithful Rottweiler Bluto, he’s been invaluable in many situations.

USING ANOTHER PC GROUP

While designed for use with the Brotherhood from the core rulebook, *Don’t Fear the Ripper* can easily be run using the group’s own characters, rather than the iconics. It will be very helpful if the group in question has at least one arcanist and one private investigator. If the PCs does not have access to an occult library or a mentalist or arcanist in their midst, introduce the Café Arcana, a local café and occult shop, as a resource for the PCs, and possibly an NPC with such a background to help provide some of the all-important clues as to what’s going on. Mackie and other members of the Brotherhood can also function as useful NPCs, providing resources and an occult library (see the **Amazing Adventures** Companion) as well as the potential to join the Brotherhood if they have not already through past adventures.

DETECTIVE JOE KNONAEM

A key player in the background of the Deeper Dark Trilogy, who can represent a crucial contact for the players in your campaign, is an NPC named Detective Joe Knonaem who is affiliated with the Police Department in whatever city you base your campaign. Det. Knonaem is a grizzled, heavysset detective in his 40s who works the homicide or major crimes division, and who also happens to be a contact of one or more of the PCs.

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

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

INTRODUCTORY TEASER SCENE

To start the game, read or paraphrase the following text to your players:

It was late when Asura came home, but the lights were still on in the house. In fact, it looked like every light in the house was on; she made a mental note to have a talk with Violet about that. Money was too tight these days to be running the electric up. Then again, maybe the girl just left the lights on to feel safer. Asura could forgive that. It was the first time Violet had been left alone to babysit.

"Violet? You here, baby? Any troubles with Sammy?" she called out. When there was no answer, she muttered, "Probably sleeping."

At least, she'd best be sleeping, or else Asura would be handing out a whipping. Violet had thrown a tantrum when she found out she couldn't go to the movies with her friends tonight, but dammit, Asura hadn't been on a date in a couple years, and she deserved one night. It wasn't easy having a daughter only thirteen years younger than you, and Asura had done a pretty good job raising two girls, if she did say so herself.

She climbed the stairs and peeked her head into Violet's room, at the top of the stairs. That was when the first alarm bells sounded in her brain. No Violet. The sobbing from Sam's room was alarm #2, and Asura tore down the hall into Sammy's bedroom, only to hear a half-human wailing that it took her a few seconds to realize was in fact her own screaming.

Violet sat on the floor, crying, staring at the curtains flapping over the broken window...and the bloody lines scrawled upon the wall.

put the puzzle together, figuring out the prophecy on their own by ordering the notes (though see the research roll section in Act Two if they need help).

ACTION

Mackie receives a phone call early in the morning from Detective Joe Knonaem, a contact of hers within the police force, asking if she has time to come down to look at a crime scene. He won't be specific, except to say that it is in relation to an inordinate number of kidnappings that have occurred lately, and that it has some trappings that are in the wheelhouse of the Brotherhood. The scene is in a small, run-down tenement home in the low-rent district of town.

Upon arrival, the PCs see an ambulance pulling away. The house is taped off with Crime Scene tape, but Det. Knonaem has left a uniformed officer waiting for them, who greets and escorts them through the house, upstairs to the child's bedroom. As they walk past the living room, a pretty young black woman looks up at them, tears streaming down her cheeks. She is being questioned by police.

The victim's bedroom is on the second floor of the tiny house, and aside from the broken window, shows no signs of struggle. There are strange, linear symbols painted on the wall in blood. Joe is in the room waiting for the PCs. He has the following information to share:

- The girl in question was Samantha Jackson, 5 years old.
- All the victims (Samantha is the sixth) so far have been between the ages of 3 and 10 years of age, and all girls.
- All have been taken from low-rent areas of the city.
- The blood symbols have been found at all the crime scenes so far. The police have no idea what they mean.
- The blood found at the site is not that of the victim, but is human. Or more specifically, a combination of blood from several humans.
- There have been identical letters left behind at each scene, always addressed to the victim's mother (which enraged one distraught parent—a single father—even further, by the implication that fathers can't be good parents). The letters are not ransom notes, but rather, read as follows: Honored Mother, Fear not the safety of your child. She goes to a greater purpose than you can ever imagine. The Mother of Life and Death will honor your great sacrifice when she returns to bless and purify this world. You will receive a place of honor by her holy side in return for the child you lose this night. Thank you, and may the Goddess bless you in all that you do. (See Appendix: Handouts) • Naturally, the police suspect a cult of some kind. The trappings aren't indicative of traditional Satanism, however, so exactly what cult may be behind this is still a mystery.
- Forensic psychologists in the police force believe that these kidnappers want to be caught; hence the "thank you" notes which are taunting the authorities. The immediate thought

ACT ONE: MURDER MOST UNUSUAL

RUNDOWN

The PCs get a call from their police contact, to investigate a crime scene with occult overtones. There have been a rash of kidnappings lately, young children and infants all, and all of the disappearances have similar trappings: strange, runic symbols painted in blood on the walls of the children's bedrooms, and mysterious "thank you" notes left for the parents. Some research reveals that the inscriptions are ogham, the ancient language used by the druids. Further research reveals that there is a druidic "secret society" active in the local park. [SIDEBAR]

HANDOUTS

See the "Handouts" Appendix for the letter left at the crime scenes, the specific ogham writing found at each crime scene, as well as translations of what it means, Brigit's diary entries (found later) and the medieval journal entry (found later).

In reference to the crime scene runes, it's intended that the GM copy, scan or otherwise print these out, then cut them up by crime scene and hand them to the PCs as they visit or gain photos of each crime scene. Do the same thing with the translations as they work out what the ogham means. Allow the players to

is that it's a power thing, where they are challenging the police much like serial killers do, looking for attention from the police and media.

- The ambulance (if the PCs ask) contained Samantha's sister Violet, aged 13, who was babysitting when the abduction occurred. Violet was found semi-catatonic and largely non-communicative. She's off to the hospital for examination, then possibly to a local sanitarium for evaluation. If they can get her talking, she's the only eyewitness to any of the abductions so far.

The PCs will be permitted to question Samantha's mother (the woman downstairs), named Asura Jackson, if Asura consents to talk to them (which requires a Charisma check at CL3 to overcome the woman's suspicions). Asura is a single mother (the father abandoned her just after Sam was born) of the two girls, and is only 25 years old (she was 12 when Violet was born). Asura will tell the PCs she was out on a date while the incident happened, and had left Violet at home to babysit her younger sister.

This wasn't the first time Violet had been left to babysit, but the older girl had made it clear she didn't like the responsibility; she would rather be out running the neighborhood with her friends. Asura found Violet sitting on the floor by the doorway of Sam's room, staring at the broken window and quietly crying. She was unable to get Violet to speak coherently, though the girl seemed uninjured. All Violet kept saying was, "my fault," over and over again. Mostly Asura just wants her baby back.

Joe is willing to give copies of the letter and photographs of the crime scene to aid in the PCs' research, so long as they keep it on the D.L. Their involvement is strictly off the books, as the Brotherhood has a somewhat acrimonious relationship with the police. He asks the rest of the police to clear the room so he can talk to the PCs alone.

The department, he explains, has traditionally been somewhat tolerant of his unorthodox methods because he tends to get results, even if those results are the mysterious stoppage of crimes on occasion, rather than an arrest. However, they're starting to get suspicious due to the lack of arrests on a few high profile cases (which the Brotherhood had a hand in), and it seems that his department is facing an audit, with certain higher-ups accusing the police of corruption and stepping outside the law whenever it suited them.

As a result of this, Internal Affairs may be called in. He desperately needs the PCs to handle this delicately and keep him in the loop. Above all, he needs an arrest on this case, not a stack of bodies to explain away.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Not a lot to troubleshoot in this scene; the PCs get a call to investigate a crime scene, has a talk with the witnesses, the detective, and the CSI, and then goes off to do their own investigations.

ACT TWO: COMPLICATION

RUNDOWN

In this act, the characters conduct research that leads them to an archaic religion...or at least a modern mockery of a long-dead archaic religion. They question Violet, which turns out mostly to be a dead end, and have a run-in with some cultists. Action

Hitting the Books: Researching the symbols can reveal the following information, based on the CL of an Intelligence check, as listed below. Characters with occult knowledge or backgrounds, or those with crypto-linguistics will be especially useful and should gain bonuses to the roll accordingly, possibly even granting automatic "levels of success."

THE SYMBOLS:

CL 0: The symbols are some kind of runes. They didn't radiate any power, but it's impossible to translate them or even denote their origin. They must be fairly obscure.

CL 1: The symbols seem to be Gaelic in derivation. The dialect, however, is impossible to determine. A dead language, perhaps?

CL 2: The symbols are ogham, the ancient secret language of the druids. This language has supposedly been dead for well over a thousand years. Either someone has designed a new dialect, or the old one isn't as dead as everyone thought. No translations are available.

CL 3: The runes refer to the coming of something called the "Black Mother." It's difficult to ascertain any more than that.

CL 4: The runes read: "At the birth of the season of life, the Black Mother will rise"

CL 5: The runic inscription appears to be incomplete. Gathering photos of the other 5 crime scenes completes the prophecy: "...her thousand children spring forth from the blood of the Seven." (Crime Scene 1) "...A fortnight hence the Baptism of Blood," (Crime Scene 2) "...the Fire will leap forth from the Second Mouth of the Beast" (Crime Scene 5) "...to cleanse the world," (Crime Scene 4) "...and from the darkened Waters Life shall grow anew." (Crime Scene 3)

See **Appendix: Handouts** for copies of the prophecy in both ogham and English. These should be cut up and given individually to the players, to allow them to piece together the prophecy on their own. Putting the prophecy together in proper sequence, then, is a puzzle for the PCs to solve. If they seem incredibly stumped, allow Intelligence rolls for each clue to place them in the proper order. If the PCs don't make their intelligence checks high enough to puzzle out this bit, Detective Knonaem can get back to them with information about the runes and their translations from his P.D. contacts, who have managed to translate them, thus allowing the players to gain this information even if they don't glean it on their own. Alternately, as the GM, you can simply feed them the information above either based off of a simple Intelligence check or however you want.

THE DRUIDS

Once the group figures out that the line patterns are Druidic runes, they may want to investigate the history of Druidism, and cross-reference with local occurrences. Another Intelligence check reveals that there is a “secret society” of druids active at several local colleges, which is more of a fraternity than a genuine secret society. In the past, these Druids have conducted midnight parades through the streets, their faces veiled and robed. No one knows who the members of this cult are, but they’ve never been implicated in any criminal activities.

Characters with occult, arcane, religious or historical backgrounds will know that historically the druids functioned as the high priests, lawmakers, and teachers of the Celtic peoples. While mostly a peaceful sect (they were as much political as religious-based) they did engage in sacrifice of both animals and, it is rumored, human beings. It is likely, however, that traditionally such sacrifices were voluntary. The druids were mostly a peaceful sect, and this prophecy and these abductions don’t seem to fit with the traditional ideology of druidism.

THE PROPHECY

Obviously, the PCs need to figure this out, fast. The prophecy indicates “the blood of the Seven,” and if the PCs haven’t realized that six children have been kidnapped, well...maybe they’re a little slow to be doing battle with the Forces of Darkness. This leaves one victim left. The “Fortnight hence the baptism of blood” would seem to imply a sacrifice to precede the end of the prophecy. Again, characters with arcane backgrounds will piece together that two weeks from this Sunday is the Vernal Equinox: the birth of the season of life and a time of power.

That would seem to indicate that the PCs have three days’ time to solve this mystery and save the children. But what about the “Second Mouth of the Beast?” It would seem to indicate the location of the sacrifice and “Cleansing”, but where is it? For that matter, what is it? Obtaining the answer to this question is difficult at best, requiring a CL 10 Intelligence check and access to an occult library to find an obscure reference in the *Codex Intuneric*, an ancient Romanian journal of a group of vampire and demon hunters from the mid-1500’s.

The book discusses a center of mystical convergence (that’s a Hellmouth, to the uneducated out there) located in the Black Forests of Wallachia, and a group of Knights Templar and a druidic pilgrim were allied with a young demon hunter and her Watcher to defend the portal. They fought many battles and obtained great victories. Unfortunately, the entire group met a tragic end from a massive demonic assault they never saw coming, after they believed they had sealed the portal. The last entry is in the hand of the druid, and reads as follows (See **Appendix: Handouts**):

Soon shall the forces of the Outer Dark be upon me. I am all that remains of my intrepid band of warriors, for in our shortsightedness we became complacent, convinced that the gates to the Beyond had been forever shackled and barred. Even when we sensed a new rise of mystical energy did we fail

to take proper precautions. So long as we guarded the portal, we knew that our safety, and the safety of the region, would be secured.

What fools we were not to see.

The black-hearted Prince of Wallachia, the dark Impaler, called together the blackest magicians in Europe to drive us from his forests. In their black visions, they uncovered something none of us in our wildest nightmares would’ve imagined, but that makes perfect, terrifying sense.

The convergence is not limited to one spot. Hell springs forth from elsewhere, now; the Beast has a second mouth.

The demons came at us in the night, an army that even the chosen one and her intrepid band of Knights Templar could not ward away. They came from the rear, having spilled forth from the second Mouth of the Beast even as we guarded the seal upon the first.

The battle quickly became a slaughter.

I am all that remains.

But not for long. I hide this tome in the walls of a ruined castle in the hope that some future generation will find and remember our valiant struggle, and that our experiences may save others from the same fate.

Adair, Keeper of Law and Wisdom

Month of Cui-the

1532, Gregorian Calendar

Finally, it seems that the most logical place for a druidic sect to be operating would be in the midst of the local park, a stretch of land comprising several hundred acres, much of which is wooded. At the heart of the park, deep within the woods, is an area known as The Hollow, which is a large natural pond fed by an underground spring. Surrounding it, artisans have crafted traditional statuary, columns and the like, intending it to be a place of peace where picnics could occur, hikers could take refuge, and the like. It is also, occult-oriented characters will know, the nexus of several ley lines that pass through the city.

A TRIP TO THE HOLLOW

A trip to The Hollow during the daytime yields what it usually does: not a whole lot. Aside from a distinct sense of mystical power that any mystically-oriented character will sense, it’s peaceful and pretty to look at: a small lake, a nearby pond with a memorial, woods, a walking path. But here is where it gets interesting, nevertheless.

As the PCs explore the area, looking for clues, a voice rings out of the forest, saying, “You won’t find anything.”

At this point, a young man of about nineteen emerges from the forest. He’s got tousled, sandy brown hair, blue eyes, and wears a red hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, and hiking boots. He looks like any normal college student: handsome, but not drop-dead gorgeous; somewhat preppy, and casual. His hands are stuffed into his pocket. He walks up to the PCs, attempting to maintain an air of casualness, but wisdom checks will pick up the fact

that he's nervous. His eyes keep darting around, as though he expects to be assaulted at any moment.

When he reaches the PCs, he extends his hand to whoever the most approachable member seems to be and says, "Hi, I'm Greg. I think I know what you're looking for...and I think I can help. But not here. They could be anywhere."

He's willing to talk, and in fact is willing to spill his entire story without any sort of coercion, but wants the PCs to take him somewhere safe. If they ask who he's running from, he replies, "from my brothers."

The young man is Greg Stoltz, and the brothers he's talking about aren't blood relatives. Greg is a (now former) member of the Tao Delta Delta fraternity, a newish organization on campus, having only been chartered in the past two years. Some basic research reveals that there are no other chapters of Tao Delta Delta anywhere in the United States.

The kicker is this: Tao Delta Delta is a druidic fraternity, with all members required to be baptized into the druidic religion. It's also co-ed, with both male and female members, something that is practically unheard of. Only the male members live in the frat house for the organization - at least, formally or as far as anyone outside the fraternity knows. Certainly the female members keep enough of their stuff there, just in case they need to crash after a kegger...or a ritual. Regardless of gender, all members of the fraternity are called "brother."

Greg joined the fraternity on a whim as a freshman (he's currently a sophomore) and at first was quite taken in by the rituals and rites they performed. He found the secret meetings and magical ceremonies exciting, and the whole "magick" thing was fun and mysterious.

But then, about six months ago, a girl named Brigit Cleary was elected president of the fraternity (High Priestess inside the frat house walls), the first time a woman had reached that height. Almost right away, Brigit began talking prophecies and cleansing. She claimed that the Earth Mother, Black Annis, was angry at the complacency of the druids, and that it was time for them to take back the world. She claimed that she had seen Annis in her dreams, and had been promised wealth and power to all who followed her teachings. She claimed that she had been granted power over life and death...and then proved it by performing bizarre rituals in which she created grotesque, new life forms.

Such a promise of power instantly lured many of the brothers to Brigit's call, but even more disturbing was the fact that those who spoke out against her simply vanished. Greg believes they were subject to dark, late night experiments. After the first few disappearances, Greg decided to keep quiet until he saw a chance to get out.

Then the kidnappings started. Brigit was ranting about a great "Cleansing," and a prophecy about Black Annis being made flesh. Suddenly this wasn't the peaceful mother deity that Greg had come to know as Danu, but something much darker and

more sinister. He knew that he couldn't stand against Brigit, but he had to get out and find someone who could. He's been in hiding ever since, and when he saw the PCs here, it didn't take much to put two and two together, that they were some sort of investigative team.

Then Greg drops the real bombshells. The first is that he knows where Brigit works; she's a secretary at an accounting firm in the downtown area. The second is that he knows where the children are being held! They're in the basement of the Tao Delta Delta fraternity house. He is willing to testify against his fraternity brothers, but will not come forward until after they're arrested and in prison without bail.

The PCs now have a few choices: call the police, check out the Tao Delt house themselves, or talk to Brigit. Any choice will lead to the demon attack that night. Brigit doesn't take kindly to her plans being interrupted.

GREG STOLTZ (*This N human has vital stats HD1d6 (4 hp), AC 11, Move 30ft. His primary attributes are Dex 13, Int 13, Wis 11. He has no attacks and carries no special equipment.*)

TALKING TO BRIGIT

Brigit is a pretty girl of Irish descent, with curly, flaming orange hair, gray eyes, freckles, and glasses. She works at the accounting firm of Katstag and Byrd downtown as a secretary, helping to maintain the company's records and support the president, who she has successfully seduced. This also means she has access to all of their resources, and she has pulled off a fairly brilliant money laundering scheme. She's got more than enough resources to disappear for a couple of weeks until her ritual is complete and Black Annis comes forth.

If the PCs decide to question her, Brigit will take an early lunch and accompany them. Her story is that Greg is a liar, jealous because she spurned his advancements and angry because he was, in fact, rejected for admission into Tao Delta Delta.

The very idea that the fraternity are some kind of druidic cult is ludicrous; they're a service fraternity, and she can provide numerous examples of the different community service projects the frat has undertaken, from cleaning up parks in the poverty stricken areas of the city, to repairing low-rent housing to litter cleanup projects to time spent working in homeless shelters. All of these claims will check out; Tao Delta Delta has indeed done a great deal of community service work.

If the PCs mention the kidnapped children in connection with Tao Delta Delta, Brigit will begin talking lawsuits for slander, and Katstag and Byrd will happily bring in their legal team to help. In any case, Brigit will always seem genuine and friendly to the PCs; if she needs to, she'll cast her Influence spell, though she'll only resort to using it if the PCs seems suspicious (she's also a naturally convincing liar).

However, the moment the kidnappings are mentioned, Brigit will make every effort to end the conversation; she has realized that there's now a real danger of discovery and wants to



expedite her plans. If unable to end the conversation, Brigit will excuse herself to go to the bathroom; if a Hero accompanies her, she will use her magic to deal with the hero, even spending a Fate Point if she must. In any case, Brigit vanishes shortly after the PCs speak to her.

Stats for Brigit, the Spawn of Black Annis, and the demonic assassins can be found in Act Three.

THE TRUTH ABOUT BRIGIT

The truth is that Brigit is a half-demon; her father was human and her mother is a succubus assassin who was lured from the pits of hell into the service of the Great Old Ones, and founded a sect of half-demon assassins comprised of her own children, known as the Sisters of Black Annis. Brigit began receiving visions from her “goddess” at an early age; these visions slowly corrupted her and drove her quite insane.

Her mother, in turn, recognized Brigit as something special and instead of training her as an assassin, had her trained in the dark arts by a demonic ally from the pits of Hell itself. Brigit was abused by this tutor even as she absorbed his knowledge and combined with her feeling that her father abandoned her (not true; her mother consumed her father’s soul) has grown to blame men for all the world’s evils.

She is obsessed with bringing Black Annis into the world at any cost. Her eventual plan is to destroy all the men in the world (including those who have helped her achieve her goals) and believes that Annis has the same goal. She has spent much of her life cultivating the worship of Annis among anyone she could, and eventually found a path to execute her plans when she fell in with a girl from the Tao Delts.

It wasn’t difficult to twist their goddess Danu into Brigit’s ideal of Black Annis and she used her emotional influence to work her way up to president of the Fraternity. Now the time has come to finalize her plans.

SEARCHING THE FRAT HOUSE

The PCs may decide to check out the Tao Delta Delta frat house. This is not necessarily an easy prospect, as the brothers certainly aren’t going to let strangers in to just wander around. If the PCs pull the “working for the police” routine, the members will be happy to comply...the moment they have a search warrant.

Breaking in is certainly an option if the PCs have the skills to do so. However, they will find no evidence of the children in the basement of the frat house—Brigit is already onto Greg and expected him to squeal, and she’s made arrangements to deal with him and his betrayal. With a successful CL 4 Wisdom check, however, the PCs will find a discarded doll and a baby blanket half-hidden under a shelving unit.

This is plenty to go on, to call the police, though of course they’ll want to leave the evidence exactly where they found it and call in an anonymous tip. Any other effort will ruin the important evidence—it’s up to the GM whether you want to allow an Intelligence check to consider this fact.

In Brigit’s room (assuming the PCs can get there without problems) is the girl’s “Book of Shadows,” her diary which contains several entries talking about her rise to control the fraternity and her plans for the ritual. See **Appendix: Handouts** for the important contents of the diary. If the GM wishes, it’s also possible to have the diary also be in the basement, having been accidentally dropped by Brigit earlier.

If the PCs choose to call the police after investigating the frat house, see the next section.

CALLING THE COPS

If the PCs call the police, Detective Knonaem gets a search warrant and a team invades the Tao Delta Delta frat house. The children are gone by the time they get there, however (see “Searching the Frat House,” above). Even still, the police find left behind a Barbie doll and a baby blanket. They arrest all of the occupants of the house based on the evidence, and send in a crime scene team to sweep for evidence (which is plentiful; the Tao Delts haven’t had time to properly clear the scene.)

Det. Knonaem calls the PCs and gives them the report, that the children have been moved. Brigit is nowhere to be found, but they have her book of shadows, which the detective will turn over to the PCs. The book contains valuable information, including a description of the ritual that Brigit plans to use to baptize the Hollow, and the ritual she plans to use to call forth her goddess. He’ll go to work on the Tao Delts, but wants the PCs to keep their investigation going. If this kidnapping ring is broken up, he’ll see to it that they get their proper accolades.

For the notable contents of Brigit’s Book of Shadows, see **Appendix: Handouts**.

BLACK ANNIS

It’s possible that the PCs will wish to research Black Annis. Intelligence rolls provide the following information, based on the final CL of the check:

CL 1: Black Annis is one of the many names for the Celtic Goddess Danu. Other names include Gentle Annis, Anu, and Anna.

CL 2: Black Annis in Celtic legend is a crone who lives on the Scottish moors and is said to eat children.

CL 3: Black Annis is said to turn to stone in the sunlight.

CL 4: Black Annis can be held at bay by certain combinations of common herbs, which act towards her like crosses do to vampires.

CL 5: Throughout the years, bizarre cults worshipping perverted, tentacled demons have claimed to be children of Black An-

nis. These cults often refer to themselves as Tuatha De Dannan, after the mythical god figures of ancient Ireland. Many cults have tried to bring forth an ancient prophecy that the goddess will come forth from her realm beyond the world to cleanse the earth of the filth of man, and restore the planet to a pure form.

Characters who have the Forbidden Lore knowledge skill have access to additional information which regular research cannot reveal:

CL 1: Black Annis is the name by which some obscure cults refer to the Great Old One, Shub Niggurath.

CL 3: Most Great Old Ones, and servitors of the Great Old Ones, can be repelled or held at bay by the Elder Sign.

CL 5: Black Annis is not Shub Niggurath itself, but an avatar of the Old One who represents the corruption of life. As with many avatars of the Old Ones, she could be considered to be a herald of the coming of the true Old One, which would be catastrophic for humankind.

THE DEMON ATTACK

By now the PCs are just itching for some action, and Brigit doesn't like having her plans interrupted. That night, the PCs come under assault by a group of elite Assassins hired by Brigit. Their orders are simple: kill them all, then find and kill the cop leading the investigation. The number of Assassins should vary based on the number of PCs, and the average power level; figure one per character, depending on the average party level.

The demons are vicious, but not stupid or suicidal. If they're badly overpowered, or it looks like they're going to lose, they'll make good their escape. It's not outside the realm of possibility for the PCs to get a prisoner. What happens in this case is entirely up to the Game Master. How much does she know? What's she willing to tell? Does she spend a Fate Point to escape? A prisoner scene could very nicely send the PCs running to Detective Knonaem's rescue just as another group of assassins attack him.

SISTERHOOD OF BLACK ANNIS (*These CE demons have vital stats HD 6d8 (33 hp), AC 17, Spd 40, SAN 1d6/1d8. Their Primary attributes are Physical and Mental. They attack with two swords for 1d8 damage or by spell-like abilities. Their special qualities are deepvision 120ft, see through magical darkness, damage resistance to nonmagical weapons not made of silver, vulnerability to cold iron, immune to heat and cold, hide and move silently as an 8th-level hooligan, sneak attack as an 8th-level hooligan, spell like abilities: arcane bolt (3 bolts as 5th-level caster) at will, charm person at will, hold Person 2/day, teleport without error 2/day. They have 2 Fate Points each. Their XP value is 918 each.*)

AFTERMATH

The following morning, another kidnapping will be reported. Brigit has vanished, and all seven victims have been obtained. The inscription on the seventh victim's wall reads, "Today is born the seventh one; the circle is complete."

If the PCs have not yet brought Detective Knonaem into the game, then Greg (if he survived the battle) can inform them that the ritual to sacrifice the children must be performed at midnight; the blood of the children is to be used to baptize the Hellmouth so that it might open a gateway to Black Annis' dimension. Brigit plans to call forth her goddess to cleanse the world of the filth of humanity; she believes that Annis' chosen, the druids, will be raised up to rule as gods amongst men.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The key to this scene is getting Greg involved, and that's not all that difficult. If the PCs fail to translate the runes, Greg knows the prophecy. If the PCs fail to determine that there is a second Hellmouth in Pittsburgh, Greg knows that The Hollow is a "center of mystical convergence." Greg can be used to fill in any vital information the Game Master wishes to convey that the PCs fail to gain through their research. He's the plot device lucky break.

So what if the PCs don't go to The Hollow? The easiest solution is to have Greg approach them somewhere else. Choose somewhere that the PCs are largely alone and away from prying eyes: a parking garage, a knock on a Hero's back door (assuming they live in a house) or apartment door. If the PCs run a private investigations agency, Greg can simply show up there looking for help.

What if the PCs don't trust Greg? That's a bit more difficult. In this case, Greg will make good his escape (particularly if the PCs act outright hostile to him) and phone in an anonymous tip about the Tao Delts to the police. Detective Knonaem will then call the PCs and inform them about the tip, after the cops raid the Tao Delts' house. Greg will still be hanging around and will later come forward again to admit to having phoned in the tip, to prove he was telling the truth.

ACT THREE: CLIMAX

RUNDOWN

The PCs arrive at The Hollow to defeat Brigit's ritual, only to discover that she is not there; some quick thinking (and possibly appropriate SIEGE checks) reveal that she has opened a portal through which she can conduct the ritual. The PCs face Brigit in her basement temple and does battle with her servants from the Outer Dark as she attempts to affect the ritual murder of the innocents. Hopefully, in the end they save the day.

ACTION

The police are frantically attempting to find Brigit before midnight, thanks to the evidence in her journal and the information provided by Greg and the other cultists. The next morning, Brigit's photo is all over every newspaper, telephone pole, and in every shop window in the city. She is the subject of one of the largest manhunts in history. On the PCs' recommendation, the police will close off the park for the night; Detective Knonaem will manage to clear the PCs through as "special consultants," and see to it that they make their way to The Hollow.

11:00 comes and goes, with no sign of Brigit or the children. By 11:20, the PCs should be getting worried; after all, Brigit has seven children to secure and a rather complicated ritual to set up, which must be started at exactly midnight.

At 11:30, they get their answer, and it's not the answer they were hoping for. PCs with a mystic orientation are the first ones to notice the strange ripple in the air, a disturbance that generally means a portal of some kind is opening. Moments later, the portal is visible to the naked eye, its edges glowing red, though it is only a fraction of an inch in diameter and never seems to widen. Those same mystically-oriented PCs will soon detect a flow of tainted mystical energy flowing through the portal from The Hollow. Brigit is drawing energy from the place through the portal to conduct her ritual!

Peeking through the pinhole is possible; PCs who do will see what appears to be a basement filled with discarded crosses, an old, tarnished golden tabernacle, and various religious odds and ends. They can see the edge of an altar, upon which a statue of the Virgin Mary has been set up and cleaned off... and painted black. A couple of the children are clearly visible, tied down and gagged, tears streaming down their faces. Quiet chanting sounds from within.

Now the PCs are in a bind; they have several options. Obviously, they need to get to Brigit. But where is she? If the PCs don't figure it out on their own, an Intelligence check (CL 4) reveals that the contents of the room include dusty and broken-down religious iconography as well as old furniture, everything covered with dust. The whole would seem to indicate the basement of an abandoned, or at least old and unkempt, church.

Intelligence checks (CL 5) by anyone with any sort of arcane knowledge or background will reveal that the spell Brigit used to create this portal is powerful ritual magic, and would need to be relatively nearby to work (it's not long-range mojo). It's also extraordinarily dangerous—the kind of spell that responsible casters never use as it threatens to tear a hole in reality itself.

Each CL on the roll reduces the area by 1 mile, starting at 5. Thus, a single success reveals that she is within five miles of the PCs, while five or more successes reveals that she is within a mile. A quick call by Detective Knonaem can call up all the abandoned churches in the area; there are three within four miles, two within two miles, and only one within a mile of the PCs' location.

Arcanists or occultists can attempt to close the portal via attempting counter spell. This requires spending at least 10 MEP and making an intelligence roll at a CL of 15. This at least will buy the PCs some time, while Brigit has to tear open the portal again.

The church Brigit is using is in a run-down area of town, the windows boarded up and the door barred from the inside, requiring a CL 10 Strength roll to break; up to three characters can try simultaneously to do so, with each additional character adding their strength bonus to the roll. Brigit is in the basement, the children all chained to the ground in a 3/4 circle around the base of the altar. Brigit sits on the altar, covered in blood.

A sheep lies dead on the altar, its throat cut. She smiles at the PCs as they walk in.

"Hello there. I've been expecting you," she says. "But not alone."

She waves her hands, and shadowy portals open up around her. From the shadows step more Assassins. The fight is on.

Brigit is seriously juiced up with dark magic. She has both Shield of Faith and Armor active, raising her AC by 5, can perform Arcane Bolt attacks at will (she is 8th level, granting her 4 bolts). On the down side, she is subject to all of the weaknesses of Black Annis (if the PCs researched the demon); this means if they have made the appropriate talismans, Brigit cannot approach them; in addition, any hero possessing such a talisman or even under the effects of a Bless spell gains +4 to resist any of Brigit's powers, and her supernatural attacks deal half damage against them. The Elder Sign has the same effect. Likewise, sunlight and fire affect Brigit as they do vampires.

The Assassins are well under Brigit's control; unlike those that assaulted the PCs earlier, these ones are fanatics, and are in love with Brigit. They will fight to the bitter end.

The PCs have played right into Brigit's hands. It's true they've foiled her plan to summon Black Annis into the world physically; But for her backup plan she's already gotten what she needed from the children; later examination of the kids reveals that while they are largely unharmed, each has a pinprick on their inner elbow, just as one would expect to find when blood had been drawn at a blood bank. The blood is hidden inside the pond at The Hollow. Now all Brigit needs is the blood from the Assassins.

The GM should describe the blood flying everywhere as the PCs do battle with the Assassins; the PCs and Brigit are all soaked in the stuff. When half the Assassins are dead, Brigit laughs maniacally, throws her hand forth, and a portal appears behind her...back to The Hollow. Brigit jumps through. Successful Dexterity rolls will allow the PCs to follow before the portal closes.

It's going to be tough to take down Brigit; no villain worth her salt goes in without a backup plan; if Brigit failed to sacrifice the children and open the gateway in a literal sense, she can still draw forth her goddess' essence from it, into herself, making her a living embodiment of Black Annis.

When she arrives back at The Hollow, Brigit leaps into the pond. A few minutes later, she bursts forth from the water, floating in the air and covered with weeds and muck. Her eyes are coal black, and her hair hangs in strings around her face. She holds a sealed bottle filled with blood aloft and upends it, drinking the blood she drew from the children. If she succeeds in this task, she becomes Black Annis, though it will take several weeks for her powers to manifest fully; until then, she needs to lay low.

Even still, the fight isn't close to over when the PCs follow Brigit through the portal; once in natural surroundings, she has the

power to create spawn of her goddess. She holds her hands out and calls to the forest to rise, and all around the PCs, mounds of muck, ichor, and rotted plant life ooze together to form grotesque horrors, covered with twisted mockeries of undulating mouths that make horrific sucking and smacking sounds as the things move forward.

There should be at least one of these spawn per Hero; any Hero who happens to die from battling these monstrosities is absorbed into the mass, which grows larger and more powerful (gains the Hero's hit points in addition to its own).

If the PCs manage to stop Brigit from drinking the blood (say with a well-placed gunshot at a -8 penalty) she's been beaten, but she's still got enough magic left to summon a few spawn and open up one last portal, through which she disappears (this one opened well out of reach of the PCs). Likely she'll be back to cause trouble in the future.

Brigit is set up to be a recurring villain. For Game Masters who want this to be more of a one-shot, the PCs can defeat her with something as simple as a gunshot to the bottle; this ends her magic powers, leaving her a pumped-up combatant, but not with unlimited access to demonic powers.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest potential problem here arises if the PCs fail to look through the Portal to the church; in this case, the police can receive an anonymous tip. If the PCs choose not to pursue Brigit to the Church, the police certainly will; unfortunately, the Assassins will make short work of the police. Still, the interruption will be enough to save the children. Brigit will still leap through the portal to face the PCs at the Hollow, likely with several Assassins in tow. Whether the children are rescued in this case, or whether the Assassins decide that the girls make good recruits is up to the GM.

BRIGIT (This CE 8th-level Wisdom-based half-demon Arcanist has vital statistics HD 8d6 (31 hp), AC 19, Spd. 30, SAN (when juiced) 1d6/1d8. Her notable attributes are Dex 16, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 16. Her Primes are Dex, Wis, Cha. She attacks with 2 claws (1d6) or by spell. Her special abilities are: Access to all spells, Spell-like ability (gate 1/day). Her spells are 0-level – Blinding Flash, Detect Magic, Endure Elements, Influence, Know Direction, Light, Message, Prestidigitation; 1-level – Arcane Bolt, Command, Cure/Inflict Light Wounds, Obscuring Mist, Shield of Faith; 2-level – Armor, Charm Person or Animal, Darkness, Entangle; 3-level – Animate Dead, Cure/Inflict Serious Wounds, Remove/Bestow Curse; 4-level – Summon Spawn of Shub-Niggurath. She has 31 MEP and 5 Fate Points. She is worth 3,848 XP)

SPAWN OF SHUB-NIGGURATH (Greater): (These N plants have vital statistics HD 8d8 (34 hp), AC 20, Move 20ft. Their saves are Physical. They attack with 2 slam for 2d8. Their special qualities are Blend, Constrict (1d8), Electrical Conversion, Regeneration 2, Resistant to Cold and Fire, Twilight Vision. They have 3 Fate Points).

SPAWN OF SHUB-NIGGURATH (Lesser): (These N aberrations have vital statistics HD 4d8 (23 hp), AC 19, Move 10ft., 20ft (Swim). Their saves are Physical. They attack with 6 bites for 1d6 and spittle for 1d4 acid (Dex save or blinded for 1d4 turns). Their special qualities are gibbering (Wis or confused), blood drain 1d3/turn (after successful bite; Str save neg), Engulf (after 3 bites; CL 6+1/bite Str Save escape; fail=12 bite attacks next round. They have 2 Fate Points).

ACT FOUR: RESOLUTION

RUNDOWN

Brigit makes good her escape, the park is cleansed, the PCs get some ominous news and some long overdue accolades.

ACTION

Following the battle at The Hollow, there are still the children to deal with. The PCs can return to the abandoned Church, to find Detective Knonaem already there with a team; if the Assassins haven't decided to kidnap and raise the girls, all are safe. Though for some of the older ones, it will take therapy to get over what they've been through.

Another journal is found at the site, this one the beginnings of a Book of Shadows, detailing the 2-part ritual to summon forth Black Annis and the backup ritual that enabled Brigit to summon the goddess' power into herself. The PCs should be left wondering if Brigit succeeded (even if she did not); the final part of the notes discusses an Ascension rite that will allow Annis to rise through Brigit if the original ritual fails. Brigit could be out there somewhere, still...

The next morning, the PCs get a call from Det. Knonaem asking if they can meet him at City Hall at noon. When they arrive, they discover to their surprise that the mayor, the media, and a crowd of people are waiting for them. They are to be presented the keys to the city and given Civilian Awards for heroism.

In addition, the police department wants to keep the PCs on retainer as independent consultants for unusual and occult-related cases such as these. At least in this city, for any characters involved with the Brotherhood of William St. John, this will nullify their penalty for dealing with law enforcement as detailed in the **Amazing Adventures** Companion.

TROUBLESHOOTING

There's no handout for the second ritual; it is included simply as a dangling plot thread, should the GM wish to bring Brigit back as a recurring villain, and the details are left to you and your campaign to work out as you like!

If you've enjoyed these first two adventures delving into the horrors of the Deeper Dark, be sure to check out **Volume 3: The Nightmare Children**, coming soon!



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