



Adios, A-Mi-Go!

THE
WEIRD WEST

CALL of
CTHULHU



Deadlands™: The Weird West™ Dime Novel #8

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

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Time and space are wrong here.

They twist and topple each other like mad lovers.

Sometimes, what you see is what has been, and what you hear is what will be.

Pay attention. We're going backward.

CHAPTER ONE

It's the sensation of spinning, of weightlessness, of sick vertigo that just won't go away. Just on the edge of waking and sleep, that's where he is right now. He can feel something tickling his temple, just above his right eye. Sometimes, he remembers that it must be blood, but then the memory hides, and he's floating again. Other times, he can hear someone screaming his name. The high-pitched whine of bullets pierces the haze, but not enough, and he slips back into the spinning spiral.

He feels his hand twitch as his fingers kick up dust. Something kicks him. His eyes peel open, and he sees the floor and feet. He hears the voice again and the thunder of guns spitting lead and fire. Then, the haze grabs him with her sweet hands. *I won't let you go, she promises. I'll never let you go...*

Dreams flood into his mind, although they may be memories. He opens the door and lets them in. They rush into the vacuum in his head, and he can feel his lips slide into a smile. The warm blanket of dreaming covers him, and he nuzzles in.

A light—the light. The sun, bright and blazing, floods his vision. He reaches out to touch it, and it burns...

* * *

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...And it burns.

He tipped his hat lower over his eyes, cursing under his breath.

The man at his side turned slightly. "What's all that mess about?" he asked.

He dared a look up at the Yankee and bit back the temptation to lick his lips. "I never heard anyone mention anything about Death Valley, Mr. Lynch," he said.

Ronan chuckled, a sound more menacing than comforting. "Trust me, Reg, this ain't Death Valley. You'd know it if it was."

Reg shrugged. It was always amazing to hear the contrast in their accents. "In all my years serving Her Majesty, I cannot remember a place more miserable than this."

"You Europeans got a real problem with weather, I noticed." Ronan grumbled, adjusting the shotgun he had slung over his shoulder.

Reg emptied his third canteen and shook his head. "Hardly."

"Well, you better make sure you don't down all that water. We still got three days left to go."

"Miserable luck, that was," Reg muttered. Ronan dropped his gaze on the man, and Reg suddenly felt a cold chill race down his spine. "Stop that!" he barked. "It's not enough I have to deal with this intolerable desert, but your 'soulless stares' as well."

Ronan turned away. "Suit yourself."

Reg paused for a moment, then said, "Terribly sorry, old man. It's just that—well, I've been a bit edgy since that little ruckus in Tucson."

Ronan nodded. "Back luck," he whispered.

"No, it was more than that. There was something—something there. Something big. I've never seen a hex pull that kind of power before."

"I have," Ronan said, his fingers instinctively touching the handle of his pistol.

Reg didn't seem to notice. "I don't understand why it would come out this direction. Why not make its way Back East?"

"Makes perfect sense. Too much law and order Back East. Them critters like it out here on the frontier, where folks ain't got nothing to..." he paused, suddenly sitting up in the saddle "...fall back on."

Reg looked at Ronan. "Do you see something?"

Ronan dug into his saddle back and pulled out a spyglass. "Maybe," he said. "But it don't make any sense."

A moment passed. Dust swirled at their horses' feet. Reg licked his lips, then cursed himself for forgetting. Ronan put the glass on his lap. "I'll be damned," he whispered.

"What is it?"

Ronan shook his head. "Must be a minin' town," he said, putting away his spyglass and strapping up his saddlebag. "But I don't recall any mines 'round here."

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"Come along, dear fellow. You know these things pop up like pimples on a schoolboy's cheeks."

Ronan nodded. "But not that quick."

Reg laughed. "Mr. Lynch, do I hear a hint of fear in that grim voice of yours?" The big man turned and put his gaze on the Englishman again. "Come, come. It's a *mining town*. What harm can there be in stopping by to refill our canteens and perhaps spending the night in a warm bed rather than on this cold, hard desert floor, eh?"

"Plenty," Ronan said.

Reg's grin widened. "Concern? From you? I think you've been under the sun a few too many days."

Ronan looked down at the desert floor. A small lizard scrambled across his horse's hoof, then quickly disappeared in a sand trap. He thought he saw the legs of something dark and hairy grab the lizard just as it disappeared. Then he looked up at the silhouette of the town and grumbled, "One of these days, I'm gonna pay attention to what my gut tells me."

"Now *there's* a reasonable man!" Reg said. "Shall we?"

They rode toward the town just as the sun crept a little further toward nightfall.

* * *

Almost there now. The dream left him for a moment, and he felt someone dragging him by the shoulders. Something was spinning in his head... something...

He felt his head hit the hard ground, and his lips mumbled words he could not hear or remember, even though he mumbled them just a moment ago.

More thunder. More fire. More screams.

He needed to wake up. He needed...

CHAPTER TWO

"I need a drink!" Reg called out to the near-empty saloon. The man behind the counter looked up from his newspaper and then looked right back down.

Ronan walked in after the Englishman, his eyes keen on every detail. He saw a fat man in the corner, slumped over an empty bottle of whiskey. He saw a girl standing up in the balcony, watching him with open eyes and a broken smile. He saw a paper the man behind the bar was reading was over two years old. And he saw the door behind the bar slide quietly shut just as they entered. He made mental targets of each of them as Reg walked up to the bar and slapped a coin down, the sound ringing off the empty walls.

"Innkeep! Bring me a whiskey!"

Ronan winced at the sound of the his partner's voice in the moldy saloon. Something about the tone of it didn't sound right.

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Reg turned on his heel and looked at him. "Are you interested in any refreshment this evening?"

Ronan shook his head and took a seat at a table.

"Suit yourself."

Ronan watched the bartender pour Reg's drink. He'd seen mechanical men before—drilled lead in a few of their iron hides, even—and the man behind the bar reminded him of their clunky movements. He took a peek at the others sitting at the dusty round tables, and as he watched them, he could feel ice water running through his spine.

Reg plopped down next to him then, holding his whiskey high in the air. "Here's to you not lookin' at me, partner!" he said, then downed the drink with a flick of his wrist. Then he made a face that looked like he'd spent the last 20 years sucking on a rotten lemon.

"Ach!" he spat. "What the hell is that?"

"It's whiskey," Ronan whispered, his eyes on the woman watching them from above.

"It certainly doesn't taste like any manner of whiskey I've ever had the privilege of drinking."

Ronan let his right hand fall to his side. "What do you English know about drinkin' anyways?"

Reg suddenly straightened in his chair. "English? *English*? I will have you know, sir, that I am *Irish*."

Ronan shrugged. "English, Irish, what's the difference?"

Reg laughed. "I don't expect you to understand."

"Then don't blame me if I don't."

Reg waved to the bartender. "Good gentleman, could you send that bottle over here?"

As the Irishman poured himself another drink of the saloon sad excuse for whiskey, Ronan took a look at the bartender's eyes. His wide, yellowish eyes.

"I don't think we should stay here too long, Reg."

"And why not? Seems like a charming little village to me." Reg stood with the bottle still in his hand. "In fact, I think I'm going to head across the road there and get myself a haircut and a shave." He rubbed his gristly jaw. "You could do with a bath, you know. You smell like the grave."

Ronan didn't even blink, ignoring the barb. He watched Reg push himself from the chair and saunter across the street toward the barber's. He shook his head. "Bout time he got himself lost," he muttered. Then he looked up and saw every set of eyes in the place bearing down on him like vultures spying a hanged man.

"When am I gonna learn?" he muttered and pushed away from the table. He heard the legs of his chair scrape across the dusty floor, and he watched the three townsfolk move. The bartender slipped to the left, toward the door. The girl began her descent

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down the stairs. The old man at the table stood and pushed his chair to the side. Ronan lifted himself to his feet, his hands falling to his pistols.

Eyes dropped to where his hands lay. All movement stopped. A silent understanding passed between them. Then, all eyes turned to the window that faced west. Ronan paused. The three figures smiled heartless smiles. One look at the long shadow at his feet told him what summoned those smiles. A single unspoken word floated through the room, and Ronan knew that violence lay behind it.

Sundown, they told him.

Sundown.

* * *

It's almost clear now. Someone standing at his feet. His fingertips are burned by the hot metal of the pistols. His knee is screaming at him. He remembered Oliver's strong hands putting the bone back in place.

Oliver...

CHAPTER THREE

"A fine name, sir. A fine name, and never let anyone tell you differently."

The barrel-chested, bald man smiled. "Thank you." His thick fingers held the razor with a skill Reg had not seen since his trip across the pond.

When the man was done, he washed away the whiskers and cream and slapped a palm full of aftershave on Reg's cheeks. Then he turned the chair, and Reg looked at his trimmed beard in the mirror.

"Well done, sir. Well done." Reg ran his fingers through his freshly cut beard and whistled. "I haven't had a shave like that for a long time," he said, the memory of Linda's fine fingers suddenly at the front of his mind.

"I aim to please, sir," Oliver said, his eyes fixed on the dimming horizon. "When do you expect you'll be leaving?"

Reg pulled a cigar from his vest pocket and lit it up. The thick smell of sulfur from the match filled the small room. "I believe we're going to be spending the night."

Oliver nodded. "I see. Is your partner so certain?"

"Mr. Lynch?" Reg blew a circle into the air. "Mr. Lynch is one of those Americans who thinks that pain and suffering are beneficial to one's character."

"Uh-huh." Oliver's eyes remained fixed on the horizon, and he looked like he was about to say something.

Reg slipped his coat over his shoulders. "If he wants to stay out in the desert with the scorpions and the spiders and the wolves, well, that's just fine with me." He ran his finger along a

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wrinkle in the cloth and looked up with a smile. "But I am going to spend the night with a hot meal, a warm bed, and possibly some good company."

On that last syllable, sudden thunderclap made both men jump. Oliver fell backward, his huge frame knocking Reg to the ground.

Reg tried to rise, his hands reaching for his cards, trying to perform their arcane gestures, but all he could do was try to get the breath back that Oliver's massive girth had knocked out of him.

Another shot.

Another.

Reg knew that sound. He pushed the barber off his chest and scrambled to his feet, knocking the swivel chair into circles. And there Ronan was in the center of the street, pistols throwing fire and lead into the bodies of the townsfolk, knocking them back into the dust.

"Son of a—"

Reg's curse was cut off by a sight that would remain in the back of his head until the end of his days. A man flat on his back, bleeding his guts into the dust, sat up and rose back to his feet, his eyes glowing with a pale, yellow light.

"Oh my."

Reg heard the barber shuffling to his feet behind him. He spun about, five cards in his hands, each blazing with an unearthly fire. Oliver raised his hands to his eyes, begging off.

"No. Please. Don't hurt me. I'm not one of them."

Reg didn't let his guard down. "What are you, then?"

"Just a man. I promise."

Reg put up his left hand, pointing at the barrel-chested man. "Just stay right where you are. I don't trust you, and I'll fry you where you stand if you even look at me wrong."

Oliver swallowed. "Well said."

"Get down on the floor, and don't get up." The big man obeyed. "Good boy." Reg opened the door, his eyes on the barber. "Don't forget what I told you, cutter."

When he was beyond the door, Reg felt a cold hand snap on his neck. Without even thinking, he flicked his wrist, letting the eldritch fire in his hands loose.

He spun about, meeting the dead gaze of Mr. Ronan Lynch—a flaming hat at his feet and smoldering hair on his head.

"Look out!" Reg screamed, a bolt of energy ripping from his nimble fingers and dancing sharply over the dead man's shoulder.

Ronan ducked and spun, squeezing the triggers of the two pistols in his dead fists. Fire and lead flew into the bodies behind them, each erupting in a gory shower of blood and innards.

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Ronan dumped the empty shells from his pistols and reloaded. "I liked that hat," he growled.

"I'll buy you another," Reg replied, scanning the street for any sign of danger.

In a blink, Ronan was loaded and on his feet. "See anything?"

The huckster shook his head, still trying to catch his breath.

"No. Quiet as a grave."

"I don't think I like the way you put that, Irish."

"Come to think of it, neither do I." Reg kicked open the door under the barber sign. "Still in position, Oliver?"

The big man nodded, his face stuck to the floor. "Yes, sir. Yes, I am."

"Then get up and tell us the quickest way out of here."

Oliver pushed himself to his feet, shaking his head. "Not after dark. Not a chance. They know you're here, and they'll be looking for you."

"I can handle zombies," Ronan grumbled, his eyes still on the empty street.

"They aren't zombies," Oliver said. "They are something much, much worse."

Reg eyed Oliver with a slight smile. "You are something more than you appear."

"If he can get us out of here, I don't care what he is."

"We'll have to go to the heart of the problem." Oliver pointed west. "That's where we'll find them."

"Do we want to find them?" Reg asked.

Oliver picked up a black doctor's bag and hustled out of the building. "We'd better. You'll never leave here otherwise."

"And why is that, laddie?" Reg asked incredulously.

"Yeah, do tell," Ronan said.

Oliver shook his head. "Because this town is adrift. And the only way to anchor it is to stop them."

"But who are *they*, pray tell!" Reg nearly yelled.

"Why, the monsters, of course," Oliver said with a small smile.

* * *

...Monsters.

Wet wings and slavering tentacles. Slime. Stingers. Silver weapons.

Not monsters. Something worse. Like Oliver said. Something much, much worse.

The fog was back, hungry for his memories. He swallowed, ready to hold on to anything he could...

Then, a moment of clarity. As sudden as murder, it was there. He let go of his memories and reached out, grasping onto the edges of waking...

But he was slipping back...

Slipping back...

No. No! Hold on! Hold...

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CHAPTER FOUR

"Welcome back, Reg. Wanna reload those .45s for me?"

He blinked. Smoke clogged his throat and stung his eyes, blue smoke that smelled like bad cigars.

"Reg? You with me?"

He looked up. Ronan stood there, his left leg bleeding a black tarry substance, blazing guns in both hands.

And he was grinning.

Grinning like Jack the Ripper.

There was blood and burning all around, and in the middle of it was Ronan Lynch, laughing like Death himself, each squeeze of his fingers another little gift from the Grim Reaper.

Reg looked around. He was in a cave large enough to hold a small town. Everything was on fire, burning blue. The screams surrounded him, and bodies were falling everywhere. Some of them had bullet holes. Most of them were torn to pieces.

His head began to swim again. The smoke filled his head, and he fell, the back of his skull hitting stone. As the darkness coiled in on his vision, his eyes fixed on one of the torn and twisted bodies lying at Ronan's feet.

Blank, dead, Asian eyes stared back at him.

"Xinjin," he whispered. Then the darkness reached out and pulled him back into its warm embrace.

* * *

The night was warm and humid, like a fevered embrace. Reg kept low and moved quickly. Ronan was right behind him, followed by Oliver. For last half hour or so, Reg had wondered exactly what was in that little black bag of Oliver's. It looked heavy. It jangled when Oliver moved too quickly. Tools, perhaps? Maybe. Whatever it was, it was definitely not medical equipment.

"Wait here!" Oliver said, and they stopped. They gathered in a small circle, and Oliver—all sweaty 300 pounds of him—gasped to catch his breath.

"You all right?" Reg asked.

He held up a hand. "Fine. Just need a moment."

As they talked, Ronan put his spyglass to his left eye and took a look around. "I don't think we're going the right way."

Reg looked up. "Why do you say that?"

He handed the spyglass to Reg. "Take a look. The stars ain't right."

"Let's hope that doesn't change," Oliver said.

Both Reg and Ronan took a long stare at him.

"Never mind. The place we're looking for should be nearby. We should have reached it by now. I don't understand."

Ronan looked at Reg. Reg looked at Ronan.

The gunslinger pulled a pistol.

The huckster's hands began to glow.

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Oliver tried to swallow. "No. Oh, please, no. Not now."

Neither of them were listening.

"Wait. We're on the right path. I know it! Its just that..." the fat mans brow furrowed intently. Then realization flowed over his face. "Oh my. Of course. That's it!"

"Get down. Down on your knees," Ronan said.

Oliver looked at Reg, but the Irishman shook his head. "Sorry, mate. It's our hides on the line."

"B-but... we are close. I know it! I know where to go now! You don't understand. Space-time—the very fabric of reality—is all twisted up! We've been going in circles, but I know how to move through it now! Please..."

The two moved closer. The barber fell to his knees. "Please," he whispered. "Don't make me..."

"Make you what?" Reg asked.

It wasn't Oliver who gave him his answer. It was a voice from the shadows, a soft voice almost on the edge of angelic, and it said: "Reginald Fitzpatrick?"

Reg spun. Ronan beat him to it.

"You can put away those guns, Mr. Lynch."

"I don't like people who I don't know knowin' my name."

Ronan whispered.

A figure stepped from the shadows. It was small and slender, more the size of a tall child than a small adult. Its hands were open and held out for all to see. "I have no weapon."

"That don't mean nothin'," Ronan grumbled. "I seen plenty of folks who don't need a gun to be dangerous."

The shadow slowed, approaching carefully. "I know you, Ronan Lynch. I know you, Reginald Fitzpatrick. I know you both, and I know why you are here."

Reg produced a fan of cards between his fingers, a stern look on his face. "Why don't you tell us then?"

"Summoning power here is dangerous, Mr. Fitzpatrick. I would not recommend it."

Reg's brow furled. "That's a Chinese accent," he said.

Ronan nodded.

The figure moved another pace forward, stepping into the silver moonlight. He was a small man with a round face and dark, dirty hair that spilled down his shoulders. His hands were black and bloody, and his feet were bare. His gait included a slight limp from his left, and one of his eyes was bruised the deep purple of plums.

"I am Xinjin," he said. "And I have been waiting for you."

* * *

"Xinjin," he heard his lips whisper.

He was scrambling across the dust, trying to gain his footing—like at the mouth of the cave.

"Ancestors," he remembered. "Who cares..."

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CHAPTER FIVE

"Who cares what dead men think?" Reg asked.

"I told you. Not dead men. My ancestors. They told me you would be here."

Ronan grumbled. Oliver coughed. The big man was still trying to catch his breath. Neither Ronan or Reg noticed the glances that the fat barber was exchanging with Xinjin.

They were standing on the edge of a cliff, and just below them was the opening of a dark, wet cave, an old mine entrance. A long rope reached down, held by a pulley on the cliff side. Ronan gave it a shake. It rattled like a snake.

"Don't look too sturdy," he mumbled.

"It will carry you," Xinjin promised. Everything about him—his eyes, his words, his movements—seemed as if they were meant to inspire confidence—or, at the very least, pity.

Reg sighed, then turned away. "Gunman, follow me for a moment, eh?" he said. Ronan turned away from the Chinaman and pursued Reg away from the cliff side.

"This is bad," Reg whispered.

Ronan shrugged. "I've seen worse. Remember Virginia City?"

"No, I mean it," Reg's gaze set on the dead man's eyes. "This is magic I don't quite understand. First zombies that don't die like zombies, and now the Chinaman's ancestors are spilling our destinies."

"Is that all it takes to scare an Irishman?"

A long moment passed between them. Finally, Reg nodded grimly. "All right. All right. Let me see if I get this straight. We wander into a town that isn't on the maps, that our employer does not bother to warn us about. It happens to be inhabited by zombies who aren't zombies, not to mention a barber who seems to know a Hell of a lot about what's going on here. Then, when we try to get clear of the town, all of our directions go foul, and not even the man who knows too much is sure where we're going. Am I good so far?"

Ronan nodded. "Don't let me interrupt you."

"All right then." Reg took a breath. "When we do get clear of the town, a little Chinese man who looks like he just fought his way out of Hell tells us that his ancestors want us to go down into a mine and free his mates from 'the Masters.' Does that sound square too?"

Ronan nodded again. "Right as rain."

"Don't you dare mention the 'R' word again," Reg said, pointing at the dead man. "That's the last thing we need."

Ronan said nothing more.

Reg shook his head, as if he were trying to shake the confusion loose. "We're out of our league here, Mr. Lynch. I don't know if we're gonna be seein' the sun again."

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Ronan smiled. "We will." He passed by the Irishman and headed for the rope. His hands wrapped around it, and he swung himself down. "Come on, Irishman. It'll be like Virginia City all over again!"

Reg saw the inquisitive look on Oliver's face, and he bit his lip. "That's what I'm afraid of," he said and swung himself down.

* * *

Closer now. Very close. The Masters...

Xinjin and his ancestors warned him. And he never thought he'd pull the Black Joker...

CHAPTER SIX

It was more like a tomb than a mine. It was littered with old mining equipment, and Ronan had even scrounged up some dynamite from one of the side passages.

"You never know when this stuff will come in handy," he had said with a grin that made Reg distinctly uncomfortable.

They had to burn away the spider webs with the torch that Xinjin carried. Reg had never been very good about spiders. And after that incident in Shan Fan, Ronan had decided it was just better not to take chances.

Xinjin pointed forward, and the three of them followed, their voices never raising above a whisper.

"So, fat man, what've you got in that little black bag then?" Reg asked.

"Tools," Oliver answered, his voice flat and matter-of-fact.

Reg nodded. "Tools, eh? What kind of tools? Never seen tools like that before, I must say."

"I can't tell you the whole story, but I guess you deserve to know a little."

"Great," Ronan grumbled. "We save his life, and he decides what we deserve."

Oliver ignored him. "My name is Oliver Wendell Pickman. And as far as I can discern, New Jerusalem is going under some rather dramatic changes."

"Oh, you noticed." Ronan's voice oozed with sarcasm.

They turned a bend in the cave, and Oliver continued.

"There's a mine under the town, but they are not mining gold, silver, or any other earthly material."

"Ghost rock, then?" Reg asked.

"You mean Shub Niggurath's eggs?"

The whole troop stopped and looked at the fat man. Oliver shrugged. "Sorry. Getting ahead of myself." The troop moved on.

"No, they aren't mining 'ghost rock,' as you call it either. They are mining something that cannot be seen by human eyes or touched by human hands."

"Then how do they mine it?" Reg asked.

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Oliver opened his black bag and pulled out a strange tool that was made of something that looked like quicksilver. "With inhuman tools."

Reg nodded. Ronan never looked back. The gunslinger's shotgun was ready, and he kept his eyes forward, walking just behind Xinjin.

"Are you familiar with *Wyrmus Mysteriis*, Mr. Fitzpatrick?"

"A grimoire then?"

"Yes."

He shook his head. "Can't say that I am. *Kells* is the deepest I ever got past Hoyle's. Is that one of Dee's books?"

"No," Oliver said. He reached deeper into his bag and pulled out a small leatherbound book wrapped in silk. "This is *Wyrmus Mysteriis*. I got my hands on it a few years ago and came out West to read it."

Reg stopped in his tracks, his eyes full of questions. His lips found only one. "Who the hell are you?"

Oliver smiled. "A traveler, Mr. Fitzpatrick. Here for only a very short time. I've been observing New Jerusalem for a few weeks, and I've come to the conclusion that the Masters' presence is causing the town—and the area around it—to shift in both space and time. And if we aren't careful, we could rip a hole here that may never be repaired."

Reg eyed him for a moment. Then he stepped close. "I'm not sure if I can trust you, barber. Give me a reason why I should."

"Because," Oliver said, "I believe I know what the Masters are. And if I am right," he tapped the moldy book in his hands, "I may be the only one who can deal with them."

Oliver turned back to the cavern before them. "Come along now. We're falling behind. And we don't want Mr. Lynch to meet the Masters alone, now do we?"

Reg looked at Oliver, his lips frowning. "No. No, we don't."

Oliver repacked his bag and moved toward the bobbing light of Xinjin's torch. Reg watched him waddle on, unsure if he should burn the barber now or later.

One thing was certain though. By hook or by crook, he would be reading that book tomorrow.

The cave finally came to an end. Heavy boulders stood in the way. Xinjin was pointing upward, and Ronan was strapping his shotgun to his back.

"He says we're going to have to climb through that hole," Ronan told Oliver and Reg.

"I don't think I can make it through there," Oliver said.

"Then we'll have to trim off some of the excess," Ronan smiled, pulling out his knife. Oliver took one step backward, his eyes wide. That was when Reg heard a sound that gave him shivers no sight or sound has ever been able to match.

He heard Ronan Lynch laugh.

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* * *

The last bit was the worst. They had to pull Oliver through the exit—which was harder than it looked.

"I think I left some of me behind," he said.

"Then it'll be easier to get you through it on the way back," Reg smiled.

Beyond the rocks, the mine tunnel changed into a large, round tunnel which looked almost as if it had been melted straight through the rock. Glowing growths that looked like some sort of fungus clung to the ceiling, giving off a pale green light that was barely enough to see by.

They moved down the passage with the stealth of great cats. Ronan had two guns in his hands, and Reg held a small ball of light in his. It flickered in his hands as if he held a snared lightning bolt.

Xinjin stopped at a turn and called the group up to join him. Ronan, Reg, and Oliver moved forward, peering around the corner. A small side entrance in the tunnel opened into a small cavern. Within the cavern were nearly two dozen silver canisters, each marked with characters from an alien tongue, set into niches in the wall. A large machine of some sort sat against the wall nearby.

While Xinjin watched the hallway, Reg moved in to get a closer look. Ronan gently tapped him on the shoulder and shook his head. He mouthed the words "No exit here."

Reg looked back at the canisters. Cables ran from each of the canisters to the hunk of machinery. The huckster's eyes fell on the letters—and for a moment, he could read them. Then the sight was gone.

His eyes lit up. His jaw dropped. He whispered to Ronan, "They're names! Names!"

Oliver moved forward, grasping Reg by the shoulder. The Irishman started at the contact.

"Some things you don't want to know about," the pudgy man said cryptically. Reg looked him directly in the eye, and saw something there—a look that spoke of something ancient. He pulled his arm away from Oliver's grasp.

Who Is There? said a flat mechanical voice from within the room.

Who Is There? said another.

Ronan and Reg just looked at each other.

Silence filled the room. One side hoping for an answer. The other, praying for no more questions.

Their prayers were in vain.

From one of the canisters, a voice identical to the others spoke:

Help Me.

Then another.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

Help Me.

A third, the voice the same, but the message very different.

Kill Me.

Another.

Kill Us. Please. Kill Us.

Then, the choir began. A suicide choir of two dozen voices, all begging with their mechanical, monotonous voices.

Kill Us Kill Us Kill Us

Reg put his hands to his ears, his eyes filling with tears. Ronan didn't move.

Kill Us Kill Us Kill Us

The gunman holstered his pistols and turned to Reg.

"You still got those doohickies we picked up in Virginia City?"

"Yes..." the Irishman. "But I'm *still* not sure they work."

"Give me one. It's time to test them," Ronan intoned gravely.

Reg searched his satchel until he found what he was looking for. He handed the small clockwork device to the gunslinger. Ronan used his belt to bundle it to the dynamite he had picked up earlier, set the clockwork timer and concealed it behind the alien machinery.

"How long we got then?" Reg asked.

"About 20 minutes. Probably less."

Reg nodded. Then, Xinjin leading the way, they walked away from the room. Reg knew he'd hear their voices even after the explosion silenced them forever.

* * *

Jumping... falling... water far below... time and space... bending... spinning... a sea... a whirlpool... every piece of him... torn to shreds... then put back together... again...

A long way to fall...

CHAPTER SEVEN

"Shh!" Ronan whispered. "Look at this."

They were on a small precipice overlooking a vast cavern. Hidden by tall rocks, they looked down to see dozens of workers, some Chinese, some not, holding picks, shovels, and objects not unlike the one Oliver had pulled out of his satchel. Several other of the workers held other devices, and stood over piles of ghost rock mined from the cavern wall.

"What the—?"

"This is where we have been, Mr. Fitzpatrick," Xinjin whispered. "I do not know for how long. It is difficult to remember."

"What kind of wacky science is this?" Reg asked.

"Alien technology," Oliver answered.

Both Reg and Ronan looked at him.

"You mean... not of this world?" Reg asked. Oliver nodded.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

"They're human?" Ronan said, nodding at the workers far below. Oliver nodded again. "Good," Ronan shrugged his shotgun into his hands. "Then they all bleed the same."

"You will find that they are all in the same state the townsfolk up above are in."

"Zombified," Ronan said.

"Exactly. Something has been done to them. Something I don't quite understand. I think it may be a surgical procedure, but I'm not quite sure."

"You've been keeping track?" Reg asked.

"Taking notes from observations is all."

Reg nodded. "Then how do we stop them? The ones above didn't seem to notice much when we hurt them."

"I would assume disconnecting the brain functions from the rest of the body would be a good start. It may not take effect immediately, but it should stop them eventually."

Ronan checked the ammo in his shotgun. "Then this will work just fine."

"But the Masters..." Xinjin chimed.

"Yes," Oliver paused. "I haven't forgotten about them. Just still trying to figure out a way to deal with them."

Oliver turned to face Xinjin. "How many Masters have you seen?"

Xinjin's face contorted as he tried to figure the number in his head. "Ten... I think."

Oliver nodded and turned toward Ronan. "That's too many. We have to figure out a way to keep them from coming into the cavern."

"It would help if we knew what they were," Ronan said.

Oliver thought for a moment, then turned to his little black bag. The black knobby object he produced made Reg start. He didn't see Ronan's reaction, but the only time he'd seen Ronan react to anything was when that saloon girl sat on his lap and sang "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

"They can fly. Their bodies can adjust to fit through tight places. They have talons and use weapons like this one. And they are very intelligent."

"They got a name?" Reg asked.

Oliver looked at them. "I don't know your word for them. We call them t'schlanscheei."

Ronan and Reg stared at him.

"I think we'll call them the Masters for right now, how's that for you, Irish?"

"Sounds good to me."

Ronan fingered the shotgun's trigger "This work on 'em?"

Oliver shook his head. "I don't know. I've never seen your weapons used against them before."

Ronan shrugged. "Well then. There's only one way to find out."

But it all went wrong.
The Masters were ready for us.
We tried, Xinjin. If only we had listened.
I'm almost ready. I can feel myself clawing upward. The darkness has lost its hold on me. I'm almost there, Ronan. Hold on. I'm almost there...

CHAPTER EIGHT

The plan was simple.

Ronan would provide cover for them up high in the precipice while Reg made his way down through the shadows toward the Masters' caverns. Xinjin told him where he could pick up some dynamite. Reg would set the dynamite and use another of the clockwork gadgets to give it a two-minute timer.

Xinjin would return to his post and spread the word. Once he got the signal from Reg, he would move his people away from the explosion. Then, in the chaos, Ronan would shoot down any victims who got in their way.

"I count about twenty-two," Ronan said, loading his .45s and Reg's. The Irishman seldom used his guns anyway. "Take me about thirty seconds to put a bullet in each of their brains." He looked at Oliver. "Think that'll stop 'em?"

Oliver nodded. "It should. Be prepared to improvise."

"Don't worry," he said, putting himself into position. "Improvise is my middle name."

He watched Reg make his way through the rocks, toward the caves that led to the deeper catacombs. Watching the Irishman move was like watching a dancer. Every single step was calculated. It was like he was walking half an inch above the ground, not disturbing a single speck of earth below his feet.

"Meet the Irish ghost," he whispered to himself with a smile.

Ronan saw that Xinjin had moved into position. He moved among the workers, blending in with the rest of them. The Chinaman never looked up, never gave away Ronan's position. "Good boy," he whispered. "You'll see the signal. I guarantee it."

Ronan waited. Reg was moving slow. Maybe a little too slow. Ronan kept his sights on the huckster, ready to put a bullet in the head of anything that got in his way. Nothing did.

Reg slipped from a nearby shadow, plucked a handful of dynamite right out of the barrel, then fell back into the darkness. It was the smoothest pull Ronan had ever seen. "You done earned it twice today, Irish. Three's the magic number."

Ronan spoke a little too soon.

Beside him, he heard the sound of whimpering. "What the Hell is it, barber?" he growled. Oliver whimpered again. Ronan felt a pebble fall on his shoulder. He didn't bother looking.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

The six-guns fell from his fingers and the shotgun was in his grip in a heartbeat. He spun about as he dropped one and swung up the other. Three actions in a single breath, all performed with the same speed and eloquence that Reginald Fitzpatrick had just demonstrated a few hundred feet below him. Ronan squeezed the trigger without even looking. The explosion resonated all through the cavern, shaking dirt loose from every corner. He felt the ground tremble and knew he had made a mistake...

...and then he saw the thing.

He felt his fingertips freeze as it oozed from the tunnel.

His eyes opened wide as its tendrils whipped about.

His jaw trembled as its spiderlike legs pulled the rest of its mass from the fissure.

And its head—its quivering, veined, pink mass lined with thousands of tiny, slimy hairs.

"T'schlanscheei!" Oliver screamed.

Ronan didn't bother screaming anything more coherent. He felt his throat tense and the air pass through his vocal cords as the thing whipped out at the two of them. It fell on Oliver first, and Ronan heard the sick sounds of bones breaking like wet two-by-fours snapping over a knee, of its legs ripping away flesh like peeling skin off a chicken hot off the fire, and the wet, gurgling sounds of Oliver's death.

His body moved out of instinct. His hands worked the lever on the shotgun, and he pulled the trigger without even thinking. The shotgun bucked in his hands again and the shot hit the thing's skin, but it was like dropping a pebble into pudding.

Ronan blinked.

The thing turned and membranous wings folded out behind its ridged back.

Ronan blinked again, unconsciously cocking the shotgun.

The thing raised its legs and stood up, standing like a man.

Ronan blinked and worked the lever on his shotgun.

The thing showed its drooling mandibles just under the mass of flesh that the gunslinger guessed could be its head.

And Ronan squeezed the trigger again.

The explosion knocked him backward and he fell. Hard.

He went blind for a moment, but felt his body tumbling head over boots down the steep slope toward the zombies below. He reached out for a handhold, found nothing, and slammed into a boulder twice his size. His shoulder went numb and hung limply at his side, the fingers twitching involuntarily. He bit his lip, wrapped his good hand around the shotgun and used it to push himself back up to his feet.

That's when he finally noticed that his leg was bent at an unnatural angle. Ronan shouted a curse that would make a sailor blush and looked up just in time to see the thing fall on his head.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

* * *

I remember now.

I remember how I got here.

I remember who I am.

I remember where I am.

Ronan is standing over me, shouting at me. He needs someone to reload his pistols.

There's no time to think.

I grab the ammo belt and the empty guns and start shoving cartridges into the chambers. The guns are hot and scorch my fingers, but I ignore that.

We're going to die here. In this miserable little cave. Things that have names I can't even pronounce are going to kill us. Put us in those... those...

Oh, Oliver. I'm sorry.

CHAPTER NINE

When Reg heard the shot, he looked up and saw the thing fall down on Oliver. He saw Ronan's two shots and what effect they had on it. Mercifully, he could not see all of it. It moved too fast for him to get a *good* look. But the look he got was enough.

He dropped the dynamite. He heard it hit the ground. He watched the thing taking Oliver apart. The rocks were too tall to see the whole mess, but he saw Oliver's hand twitching and the blood spraying onto the rocks.

His eyes fixed on the thing and would not leave. It was like a visual puzzle that was partly invisible and only partly real. His eyes could only see it if they stared a certain way, and once they did, he realized it was not a puzzle, but a trap.

Only a moment too soon. He ripped his gaze away from the thing, cursing himself under his breath. "It's faerie glamour," he said. "The critters are using some kind of illusion trap on you, Reg-boy. You know better now. Don't get caught again."

Reg then realized that he was not alone.

Five of the miners stood about him, one from each compass point, and the fifth at northeast. Reg's hands instinctively went to his jacket. Cards flashed into his hands instantly.

He remembered Xinjin's warning just as he looked at the hand. Aces. Eights. Joker.

For the second time in his life, Reginald Fitzpatrick felt his stomach lurch into his throat. He hadn't liked it the first time.

Very suddenly, the shadows deepened, like curtains of black velvet, blowing in the midnight wind. Everything turned red. He saw Xinjin far away, looking up and around. The Chinaman's eyes fixed on him, and the little man's face turned sad. He said something, but Reg couldn't figure out the words. It didn't matter. He wouldn't have understood them anyway.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

* * *

It was dark. Cold. Like a torrent of pain.

It filled me up before I even had a chance to block it.

Never call up something you can't put down, my grandfather used to tell me.

I guess I should have listened. Xinjin even took the liberty of reminding me and I forgot.

Sorry, grandfather.

I should have listened.

At least I came out alive.

CHAPTER TEN

Ronan felt the wave of cold topple over his head and shoulders and chest and legs, and it pushed him down to the ground, sucking the breath from his body. He tried to raise his hands, but he could not. He couldn't even turn his head. He saw the thing. And saw what the darkness did to it.

He saw Reg. Saw his skin turn black and his eyes shine red. His mouth wide open, that same blood-red light shining from his mouth as well. Reg's lips weren't moving, but a voice was speaking through them. A deep, unearthly voice that did not belong to Reg.

The thing fell to the earth, lowering its wings as it scuttled in the dust. It clicked at Reg—at the thing Reg had become—and the huckster roared back. It clicked, and Reg roared again. One more set of clicks, and Reg belched the blood-red light from his throat, enveloping the thing. Right before Ronan's eyes, the thing melted like a candle, making noises that Ronan was convinced could only be interpreted as screams.

Then the thing that Reg had become turned to him.

He tried to move, to raise his hands, but he could not. The thing that Reg had become floated just above him and looked down with its hate-filled eyes.

YOU KNOW ME.

"Well, you look a lot like my pal, Reg. But I don't think that's who you mean."

YOU KNOW ME.

Ronan said nothing more.

MY TIME IS COMING, AND YOU ARE A PART OF IT. YOU ARE A PART OF ME.

The thing that Reg had become descended, his lips wide open, as if he would swallow Ronan whole. The gunman felt his eyes falter, but he would not let them shut.

YOU ARE A PART OF ME.

Closer.

YOU ARE A PART OF ME.

Closer.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

* * *

When Ronan was a little boy, his father once told him about the Devil. He said that sooner or later, everybody's gotta face the Devil. "And that's the only time any courage you muster will count, boy," Ronan's father said. "When the Devil's staring you in the face and you know he's won, there's nothing you can do but not give him the satisfaction of beating you. The Devil will always find a way to win, but never ever let him beat you.

"You understand, boy?"

Ronan nodded and told his father he understood.

He was wrong.

Only now—just now—did he understand.

* * *

"Go piss on yourself!" Ronan bellowed, looking up into the thing that had Reg's eyes.

Ronan felt the skin on his body begin to blister as the light from the thing that was Reg's eyes and mouth fell down on him.

"I'm ready," Ronan cursed. "I'm ready, you bastard. You better make it good, 'cause if you don't kill me, I'll be killin' you for a long, long..."

A voice rang out from high above them. The crimson light died and the thing that was Reg screamed.

A shining shaft of silver fell down from the precipice, and Ronan looked up. There was Oliver, chanting in some language Ronan was convinced he'd never be able to mimic, holding something high over his head while he held a tiny book in his other hand. Horrible wounds stood out all over his body where the Master had torn at his flesh.

The thing that was Reg screamed again and flashed up toward Oliver.

Suddenly, Ronan could move.

He pushed himself up and charged up the steep hill toward the wounded barber.

Oliver never looked up. He continued reading from his book and chanting in his unpronounceable tongue as the shining box clenched in his fist gained the brilliance of the North Star. And just as the thing that was Reg reached him, just as Ronan was halfway up the hill, his leg dragging him down all the way, Oliver spoke one powerful syllable, and a clap of thunder stole away Ronan's sight and thought.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

And here I am, filling Ronan's guns. He woke before I did, pulled me into the precipice, and now he's taking potshots at the miners as they crawl up the hill. Something's wrong with my head. I can't quite put my finger on it. Leastways, I'm in one piece, something I can't say for poor Oliver.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

I leaned over him for a moment as his life flittered away from him. He looked up at me, and I saw it draining away. "Don't mourn me, friend," he told me. "I'm going to a better place."

"You think so, eh?" I said, trying to smile.

"Yes," he said. "I know so. I told you I was a traveller. Well, my means of transportation has broken, and now I have to go back home. Keep an eye out for me, Reg. I'll be seeing you sooner than you think."

He winked at me then, and I remembered thinking something about courage in the face of death, or some such silly thing like that. And then his eyes changed, and his face filled with bloody terror.

"Where am I?" he screamed at me. "Where the hell am I?"

I tried to calm him, but he'd have nothing of it. He ripped at my clothes and my hair, screaming, "Who the hell are you? I'm dying! Oh sweet God in Heaven, I'm dying!"

"I know, my friend," I said as kindly as I could.

He kept up the screaming, then finally his life gave out on him, and he whispered one word to me. "Yith," he said flatly. That was all.

I didn't have time to grieve. Ronan was on me for the ammo. I was jamming cartridges into his pistols, and he was throwing them down as quick as I was throwing them up.

"See any of those flying things?" I said.

Ronan shook his head. He was too busy shooting to be talking to me. To be fair, I should have been too busy loading his guns to be talking. But I'm Irish, and talking is just something that comes natural, even when you're looking down the face of Old Scratch himself.

"How're we to get out of here, Mr. Lynch?" I asked.

"Cave behind us collapsed," he said. "We'll have to find another way out."

"What if there isn't one?"

Ronan threw down two red-hot pistols and as he took the fresh ones from my hands, he looked into my eyes and said, "Then we'd better improvise somethin', hadn't we?"

I took up the hot pistols and started reloading. My mind was racing, but I didn't see any way to get out. There were the caverns, but who knew where those went? We couldn't dig our way out. I didn't dare pull a hex. The backlash from that last one was beyond anything I've encountered—before or since.

"Well, dump a barrel of white rose whiskey on my head, I ain't got a single, damn idea in my wee head. How about you?"

Ronan shrugged. "The tunnels. It's our only chance."

"You know," I said, "that's what the hero always says in those cheap dime novels just before things go from really bad to complete—"

"Don't say it," Ronan said. "Just don't say it."

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

* * *

Two more rounds of switching guns and the miners gave up on us. We were wondering what would be safer: taking off or staying in our strategically superior position.

"They can fly," Ronan said.

"Which eliminates our strategically superior position," I said.

"Then I vote we run."

"So do I, lad."

We looked at each other for a moment, and I thought we were ready to run, when Ronan said, "What did you do in Ireland?"

He caught me completely off guard. "What was that?"

"What did you do in Ireland that was so bad you had to come here?"

I felt my face twist into a smile—and it hurt. Damn him. "I was fighting for liberty for me and my kin. You know, against English tyranny and all that."

"You get caught?"

I shook my head. "Nah. Just got bored. Everybody fighting for the wrong reasons."

"What's the right reason?"

"Everybody wanted to free Ireland for religion, for politics, all that blarney." I smiled. "Me? I just wanted to kill Englishmen."

He looked at me then, and for the second time in my life I heard Ronan Lynch laugh.

CHAPTER TWELVE

They stood on the edge of an abyss, hot air sucking them downward. Ronan dropped a lit cigar and watched it fall. Reg counted quietly. They both gave up after 50.

"What the hell do we do now?" Reg asked.

"One thing's for sure. We don't panic."

"Go back is what we ought to do. There's plenty of passages back the way we came."

"Yeah, like that one filled with something looking like living oil. That was downright charming."

Reg threw himself down on the edge of the abyss. "Hell and fire, Ronan. What are we doing to do?"

Ronan looked down at the Irishman. "That's the first time you've ever called me by my name, by the way."

Reg almost laughed. "Yeah. I know. It slipped. Normally I'm not such a pansy-faced amateur."

"How's that?"

Reg looked up. "Never call anyone by their first name, lad. It makes him a person. Someone to care about. You start worrying about someone as much as yourself, and you're done for."

Ronan crossed his arms. "Is that right?"

"Yeah. At least, that's what my mum told me."

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

Ronan smiled. "You know something, Reg?"

"I know a lot of things, Yank. Educate me."

He put his big hand on the Irishman's shoulder and squeezed it. "I think I'm beginning to like you."

Reg nodded and pushed himself back up. "Yup. That's it. One of us is going to die, Mr. Lynch."

* * *

They were moving fast, too fast as it turned out. They were out of the tunnel and into the cavern before they knew it.

It was a dead-end chamber, and a poisonous, yellow-green light suffused everything. The two men stared in wonder at the light's source: a roughly circular hole in the air. The green light poured from the hole, and strange shapes twisted and squirmed hypnotically before Ronan and Reg's eyes. The coruscating energy field was contained by a ring of silvery metal encrusted with glyphs and signs. The air had a metallic taste to it, and there was a sulfurous smell.

The two men tore their gaze away from the portal. The rest of the vaulted cavern was filled with alien devices, lab tables, and shelves. Another of those infernal canisters sat on a table next to a human form covered by a metallic-looking sheet. There was the smell of death in room.

Several massive banks of machines stood along the walls, hooked up to the gate. And that's what it was, Reg now realized. He could hear the demons he was all too familiar with howling beyond it.

"No wonder I called up more than I expected," he breathed almost to himself. "Damned if there isn't a gate straight to Hell in here."

A sinister keening and chittering rang out through the cavern, and both men wheeled around lightning-quick.

Three of them stood by one of the massive machines, crouched on their chitinous legs, head tentacles glistening and waving as they observed the men. Two held what had to be weapons, a strange twisted silver gun in one's claws, a smaller black ovoid in the others. They flexed their tattered wings menacingly.

The two armed ones hefted their devices meaningfully, and the unarmed one chittered again as the creatures moved forward. Their head tendrils waved as they advanced, and their pincers clacked. It was as if they were trying to herd the men—and the only thing behind them was the gate!

"You got a watch on you, Reg?" Ronan asked as the two men backed slowly away from the beasts.

"Are you daft, man?" the huckster said edgily. "This is a Hell of a time to ask me question like that!"

"Just wondering, Irish," the gunslinger said with a grin.

"Because its about time for—"

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

Realization dawned on Reg at the last moment, and he threw himself to the ground, covering his head with his hands.

BOOM!

The explosion rocked the room like the Great Quake itself. There was cracking noise as portions of the ceiling gave way, and a hail of stone came down on the room and its occupants.

Both man and creature were knocked off their feet by the blast. A massive chunk of rock tore itself loose from above, and one of the alien guards screeched as it was crushed with a sickening crunch. Smaller rocks rained down, and sparks began to sputter and crackle from the alien machinery, as it was battered and dented. The sickly-green light flickered as the portal began to blink in and out of existence.

Both monstrosities and men struggled to their feet. One of the things, the unarmed, one was on its feet with an unholy speed. It chittered shrilly—almost angrily—and scuttled into the glowing portal.

That left one.

Ronan dove for his pistols, an agile somersault bringing him up into a crouch with one of them at the ready, and then it was on him. Ronan unloaded 12 shots into the thing, and still it burned at his dead skin.

Reg snatched up the crushed creature's weapon, the small black pod. He shoved it up against the thing, desperately squeezing it, pushing each warty protrusion in a desperate bid to work the thing. Suddenly, there was the distinct smell of ozone and burning hair, and a bluish bolt of electricity cracked across the creature's carapace. The insides the slimy beast glowed like a light bulb.

Ronan was screaming under its weight. Reg squeezed the device harder, driving it into the hellish insectoid. He felt more current run through device, then suddenly the Master's body shuddered—then exploded! The spray of organic material knocked Reg back into the stone wall. For the third time today (was it still today?), he felt the queasy sea of unconsciousness sweep over him. But he fought his way to his feet, only to fall down next to Ronan's frantic chest.

"You still with me, lad?" he asked.

Ronan swallowed hard and nodded.

"We got to be more careful, eh? We'll die down here."

"There has to be an exit. They leave, don't they? How do—"

Ronan stopped. Reg nodded. They said it together.

"Up."

With a final sputter, the portal winked out of existence, casting them both into darkness.

* * *

Think it's too easy?
You're right.

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

They carried each other back to the abyss. Their way was lit by the fading light on the fungal growths in the ceiling, which looked as if they were slowly withering and dying. The two men left little drops of blood in their wake. Reg coughed once or twice and tasted something foul on the end of it. He kept that to himself. No need to bother Ronan with it.

Ronan could hear the wind from the abyss and whispered to Reg, "Just a little further." Reg nodded and coughed again. Ronan saw a little blood in the Irishman's beard. He shook his head and kept moving.

Round the corner.

Down the corridor.

He didn't look at the chamber with the living ooze, and he hoped it didn't look at him.

Finally, the abyss.

Ronan looked up. Reg saw it, too. There was a ladder set into the wall of the shaft. A ladder of the silvery alien metal. They could climb up to the shaft of dawn that fell from above. If they could climb.

Reg shook his head, sliding to the floor of the cavern. "Not a chance of me making up there, mate. You're on your own on this one, you are."

"We're both going up, Ronan grumbled, pulling the rope out of Reg's bag.

"Not a chance. I can't climb, and there's no way you can carry me."

Ronan grabbed a loose rock tied one end of the rope to it.

"You made a mistake, Irish," he said, hauling Reg to his feet. "You saved my life."

Reg shook his head. "Both of us are gonna get killed if you keep this up, Mr. Lynch."

"Like you said a while back, Irish. Stop soundin' like one of them cheap dime novels and give me a frickin' hand here, would ya?"

Reg couldn't help but smile. "All right then. What's your plan?"

Ronan took the rock and threw it as hard as he could, high above his head. It took a couple of tries, but it eventually looped over one of the rungs, far above in the darkness. The rock and attached rope plummeted back down to the two men, falling on the backside of the ladder. In a few seconds the rope was back in Ronan's hands, hanging over the rung.

Reg smiled. "I'd forgotten about Santa Fe."

"You shouldn't have. It was your idea."

"Maybe I've been distracted."

Ronan tied the rope to the Reg's belt and helped the wounded huckster to his feet. "Get climbing," he said.

ADIOS, AMIGO!

Reg grabbed the first rung, and Ronan pulled. Reg lifted up off the ground. He tugged on the rungs, and Ronan hauled on the rope. Slowly, Reg started to move up the ladder.

Reg kept his focus on movement. He tried not to think about the faces of Xinjin and Oliver, torn apart by the flying thing. He tried not to think of their screams. He tried not to think of the voices of the silver canisters, calling out for his mercy. He just gritted his teeth and climbed.

Ronan kept his focus on the rope—and the long, black corridor that Reg and he had to navigate to get to the abyss. He knew that something would come barreling down that corridor, something that the shadows would hide from him until the very last second. Something that should remain in the shadows. Something that should remain unseen.

And he was not disappointed.

It was a shifting of shadows first, something that Ronan could dismiss as a trick of shadow. Ronan kept his eyes on it, knowing that he was wrong, but praying he was right. Then, it took a more substantial shape. Still just a hint, hidden by the darkness, but a shape nonetheless.

"Reggie," he said, as loudly as he dared. There was no answer but the Irishman's labored breathing.

The thing came closer toward the chamber, suggestions of form turning into suspicions of shape. Ronan felt his chin quiver. His fingers gripped the rope so hard, he felt he would rip through it.

"Reg, you'd better hear me." No answer.

Its legs came into view like a spider's legs, grasping the sides of the wall, moving the thing down the corridor with a deliberate speed. The mass of quivering hairs shone in the silver darkness.

"Hold on to that ladder, Irish. I don't know how long I'm gonna be able to hold on to this rope."

He could have gone for his guns, but every pull put Reg further away from here and closer to there. He had to keep pulling. He had to...

"Stupid son of a—"

Ronan tugged on the rope three times. He did it again. Hopefully that gave Reg the warning he needed.

The thing erupted into speed, spurred by Ronan's quick, jolting movement. It rammed into him, throwing him backward. He kept one hand on the rope, letting it slip between his fingers, burning the dead skin on his palms. The other hand reached back for the shotgun strapped to his back.

Ronan felt the legs dig into his sides. He screamed. He pulled the shotgun out and rammed the barrels into the thing's brain-like mass.

Ronan gritted his teeth against the pain, and as he pulled the twin triggers, he whispered, "Adios, amigo."

ADIOS, A-M-GO!

He felt the fire of the explosion. Felt the grip of the thing slip. He kicked, and it let go. Ronan watched it fall as he began to swing back to the edge of the abyss. It plummeted downward, into the endless blackness.

Then a second thing slammed into him. He was swinging again, toward the other edge of the abyss. The shotgun had to be reloaded. He cursed. The thing's legs reached up and pulled at his arms. The it's brain-tendrils extended and touched him, and suddenly his whole body went numb. He felt his strength fading. Heard something buzzing and clicking in his head, as if his brain had just turned into a clock.

His vision went dark. His heart slowed. He was losing his grip on the rope and the shotgun. Voices in his head. Sleep. Sleep... Awake.

The tendrils retracted.

The thing let him go.

It hovered in the air before him as he hung, losing his grip...

Then, suddenly, he was pulled straight upward, toward the shaft of light far above him. The rope was pulling him. His grip was slipping. His hand was bleeding. *Lose the gun or lose the rope*, the voice in his head warned him. He dropped the shotgun, put both hands on the rope, and hung on.

In the dim light, he saw a figure tied to the other end of the rope and descending quickly. "Damn Irishman," he thought, but he hadn't the strength to make his lips move. He watched it plummet, but he realized as it passed him, it wasn't Reg.

It was another man—with lifeless yellow eyes. The back of his skull was missing, and blood and ooze dripped from the opening.

He looked up, his head swimming with a voice, speaking in a steady, rhythmic tone. Like a clock.

Fire gone, it said, its voice in his mind. *Useless*.

It kept up its chant all the way up, when hands grabbed him and pulled him into the warm, soothing light.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

And here is where we begin.

We came from the light. We go back to the light.

At least, that is what we tell ourselves when the darkness comes a little too close, when we can ignore the shadows no longer.

"The shadows fade, but the light will always be there, ready to welcome me back."

That is the lie we tell ourselves. That is the dream we live with so the shadows do not swallow our hope.

Well.

It's wake-up time.

Ronan.

Ronan, you've got to wake up.

Ronan, I can't carry you. You've got to...

"...wake up."

He kicked himself backward, falling into Reg's arms. The Irishman lifted him as he stood himself up. His face was wet, and an empty canteen was in Reg's hands.

He blinked in the bright light, suddenly realizing where they were.

It was the surface.

They were out of the mine.

Just them. No Chinese. No other survivors.

"Guess we got lucky," he whispered.

Reg lifted him the rest of the way up. "Guess again," he whispered.

Ronan let his vision clear. Then he saw them, walking slowly toward them.

The townsfolk. All of them. Nearly 30 or so. All with their strange, yellow eyes.

And grins.

Ronan turned to look. Reg's feet were standing at the edge of a steep cliff, a river running far below.

"You got any more bullets in those six-guns of yours, lad?"

Reg asked.

Ronan shook his head. "Not enough."

"Don't think I've got the courage to try a hex. Not after what just happened below."

"I'd shoot you if you did," Ronan said.

"Comforting."

The yellow eyes blinked in unison, all at once, like clockwork.

Ronan pushed himself back up, leaning on Reg. "Don't think I like the looks of this," he said.

"I must say, it does look rather grim."

Ronan took a step back and nearly fell off the side of the cliff. He laughed. "We could jump."

"Don't think I could survive a fall like that."

"Consider the alternative."

"I'm considering it."

The yellow eyes blinked again. Then they began to move forward.

"I'm done considering," Reg said.

"So am I."

They turned together, then Reg put his hand on Ronan's shoulder. "You do know how to swim, don't you?"

Ronan nodded. "Yeah. Why?"

Reg shook his head. "Because, mate, I sure as hell don't."

The Irishman grabbed him, and they jumped.





A-DIOS A-MI-GO

THE ADVENTURE



Welcome to *Adios, A-Mi-Go!*, the *Deadlands/Call of Cthulhu* adventure. By now, you may suspect that this is not your standard run-of-the-mill *Deadlands* adventure. (But are any of them?) While the action is still two-fisted and fast, the mood and atmosphere are much darker, and even more dangerous. The little town of New Jerusalem has many terrible secrets, even more than Ronan and Reg discovered.

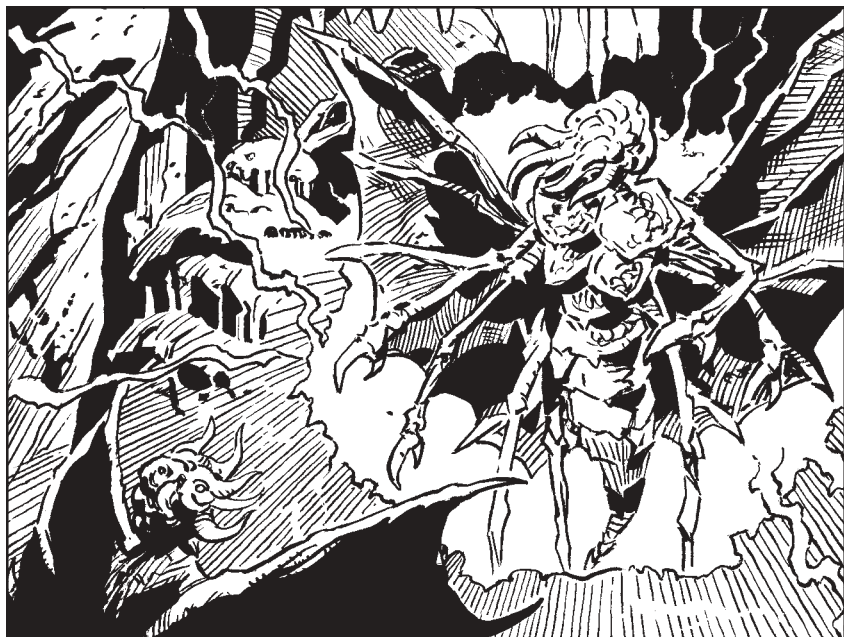
While *Deadlands* is a game that has many horrific elements, "Adios A Mi Go" allows you to bring those elements into the forefront. Your players are about to confront a terror that does not recognize humanity as important or significant.

THE STORY SO FAR

The plot of *Adios, A-Mi-Go!* is very simple. A posse of heroes stumble into a small town somewhere in the Weird West—a strange little hamlet called New Jerusalem.

The fact of the matter is that New Jerusalem isn't supposed to be there, no matter where it is. Originally located somewhere in the wilds of Colorado, it's been torn loose in space and time by a race of alien beings called the mi-go.

The mi-go intrusion into this dimension has caused some serious damage to the fabric of reality, and things are not



operating exactly as they should. We'll show you how to take full advantage of that rift (and give you some hints on how the heroes can fix it) on page 36.

But before we get to that, let's get a little background under our belts, shall we?

UNWELCOME VISITORS

The small town of New Jerusalem has been invaded by an extra-dimensional species known as the mi-go, or the Fungi from Yuggoth.

The mi-go hail from another reality, one in which a whole range of alien beings exist (the Earth of the Cthulhu Mythos,

in which the *Call of Cthulhu* RPG is set), occasionally worshipped by humans as gods. While their main settlement is on the planet Pluto (not discovered by the residents of Earth quite yet), it is not their native planet. They have been colonizing the Earth since prehistoric times but have generally remained unseen by humanity.

For more thorough information on the mi-go, see page 46. For now just understand that they're evil, completely alien, and possessed of technology that would make even Dr. Darius Hellstromme drool.

FUN GUYS FROM YUGGOTH

So, we hear you asking, what are a bunch of evil fungoid creatures from the Cthulhu Mythos doing in the Weird West? Good question.

One of the mi-go's quasi-technological developments (most mi-go science is a combination of science and "magic") are gates, portals that allow travel between incredibly distant places. For whatever reason, whether by accident or by design, one of the mi-go gates managed to punch through to the Hunting Grounds and from there into the Weird West.

The gate opened deep inside a ghost-rock mine near New Jerusalem, Colorado. The gate ripped the town loose from its moorings in reality, isolating it from the outside world.

The mi-go that first penetrated the gate were fascinated by the black mineral (ghost rock) that they found, and they immediately mounted a small scientific expedition through the gate to mine and study the new mineral.

They also used this opportunity to try out a new bioorganism that they have developed, one that erodes the minds of humans, rendering them tractable. The mi-go released it when they arrived, and within about two days they had an entire town of easily controlled slaves to help

them out with their rapidly expanding ghost-rock mining operation.

That was six months ago. The mi-go operation has continued unhindered.

A TOWN ADRIFT

The mi-go gate's incursion into the Weird West has brought a small pocket of the world of the Cthulhu Mythos with it and has, as a side-effect, ripped the town loose from its moorings in the fabric of reality. New Jerusalem is adrift, appearing in one place for a while, then fading out and moving to another. It wanders about the Weird West a kind of doomed Brigadoon.

The gate's effects also trap anyone entering the town there. Folks trying to leave the three-mile-diameter chunk of territory that's encompassed in the effect simply find themselves walking in circles, always ending up back in New Jerusalem. Folks can still enter the town where it appears. They just can't leave. Until the gate is shut down or destroyed, nobody gets out.

As folks have wandered into town, the mi-go have used them to replace the workers that die. (The miner virus is ultimately fatal, although the mi-go have a habit of saving the victims' brains.) They simply permit the virus to take effect and let the infected



wander about in the town until they need them. The brain-damaged folks try to go through the motions of normal life, but when the sun goes down—well, more on that in a bit.

FLIES IN THE OINTMENT

The mi-go are far from the only alien race running around in the world of the Cthulhu Mythos, and one in particular has a vested interest in keeping an eye on the mi-go: the Great Race of Yith.

Without getting into their arcane origins too extensively, the Great Race exists in the distant past of Mythos Earth

and has mastered techniques of time travel by projecting minds into the future and the past. The Great Race found out about this particular mi-go operation and due to its extra-dimensional nature, they don't like it one bit.

The mi-go have been tampering with the concept of time travel (a secret the Great Race guards jealously), and the Great Race dispatched an agent to make certain they do not discover it. A Great Race mind has possessed Oliver Pickman, New Jerusalem's barber (and coincidentally an amateur occultist). "Oliver" (actually the Yithian mind

possessing him) has been observing the mi-go operation and has come to the conclusion that the mi-go are learning too much. The gate must be closed.

OUTSIDE HELP

Oliver's only problem is that he needs help. The Yithian mind had counted on using some of the local humans to help him shut the mi-go down, and he has tried to organize a couple of groups to attack the mine, but they've always succumbed to the miner virus before they could actually make any kind of serious move. Being a superior life-form, Oliver has been able to preserve his own mind with little trouble.

Of course, this is where your posse comes in, Marshal. Oliver needs the heroes' help to penetrate the mi-go mine and shut down the gate. Even though they may not know it, they need Oliver's help as well. Without it, they'll eventually be virus-zombie miners like the rest of the town's inhabitants.

Oliver attempts to make contact with the players as soon as events permit (meaning as soon as he can get alone with one of them). See page 43 for details on how Oliver makes contact.

Oliver isn't in on this alone, but even he doesn't know that. His compatriots in the distant

past have become worried, as his mind has not returned. They've dispatched another Yithian mind to help him.

You guessed it: Xinjin has an alien riding around in his head too. He shows up after night has fallen or in the unlikely event that Oliver gets killed. If that happens, he takes over where Oliver left off, with one difference. He unleashes the whole truth on the heroes. Whether they believe it or not is up to them.

THE YITHIANS

Both Oliver and Xinjin have been possessed by alien creatures from another dimension.

If either ever comes to any danger, he simply allows his Yithian consciousness to slip out of his Terran bodies and return home. The Terran mind then returns to his body on Earth, only to likely wake up just as some awful creature is about to swallow his head.

While both of the Yithians have access to rather substantial magical powers, they are reluctant to use them due to the delicate balance between the Mythos and Weird West realities. Only in dire emergencies will the Great Race use their powers.

Use Oliver's stats for Xinjin, but get rid of the *big 'un* Hindrance and reduce his Size to 5.

OLIVER PICKMAN

Corporeal: D:1d8, N:2d4, S:1d4,
Q:1d6, V:2d4

Mental: C:2d12, K:4d10, M:1d6,
Sm:4d10, Sp:1d8

Academia: occult 7d10, area
knowledge: New Jerusalem
1d10, demolition 2d10,
language: English 1d10,
medicine: general 3d10,
professional: barber 1d10,
science: alien physics 6d10,
science: engineering 4d10,
tinkerin' 4d10

Wind: 12

Edges: Keen

Hindrances: Big 'un

Special Abilities:

Alien Magic: The Yithian
mind effectively has
access to the following
black magic spells: bolts
o' doom 2, spook 3, stun
3. He uses his *science*:
alien physics Aptitude
instead of *faith* to use
them.

Body Control: Treat Oliver
as if he were Undead for
damage and Wind
purposes.

Gear: Leather satchel, stolen
mi-go mining tools, electric
gun, copy of *Wyrmus*
Mysteriis (no occult value in
the Weird West, but worth
\$300 to a collector).

Description: Oliver is a rather
fat balding gentlemen, with
black hair and mustache. He
carries a leather satchel. His
eyes have a disturbing look
in them.

AN ALIEN PRESENCE

The mi-go and their gate
have changed a couple of
things with their arrival in
town. Here's the scoop on what
these aliens have done.

THE MINER VIRUS

The infectious agent the mi-
go brought with them from
Mythos Earth has wreaked
havoc on the people of New
Jerusalem. In the normal reality
of the Weird West, the
organism would quickly; as
long as the gate remains open,
the alien virus thrives.

The mining virus reduces
the cognizant thought in the
human brain, turning humans
into little more than zombies.
The early stage of the disease
just makes the subject
tractable and easy to control.
Those who are infected with it
seem to be dull and listless—at
least during the day.

Once the sun sets, however,
those infected begin to feel the
pangs—hunger pangs! The
virus compels the infected to
sate their hunger by devouring
anything—even human flesh.

There is no cure for mining
sickness. Once the infection
has run its course (when the
Cognition hits 1d4), the brain
and body are permanently
altered.

Victims of the sickness
suffer from a number of
mutations. The first is a

complete deadening of the nerves. In other words, virus victims are just too dumb to feel any pain. The second involves a swelling of the skin. A thick layer of puss forms under the skin, giving them a kind of natural armor.

When the heroes arrive in New Jerusalem, they are infected with the virus. It permeates everything in the area, so it's impossible to avoid. Harrowed are the only ones that are spared. The miner virus has no interest in dead flesh.

Every six hours after the (living) heroes arrive in New Jerusalem, have them make a Hard (9) *Vigor* check. If they fail, lower their *Cognition* die type by -1 step. If a hero's die type ever hits d4, then she starts losing -1 point of her *Cognition's* Coordination. If a hero's *Cognition* ever hits 1d4, she becomes a virus victim, an extra under the Marshal's control.

The effects of the disease quickly reverse themselves after the gate is destroyed and the virus dies. Lost *Cognition* levels return at the rate of +1 per hour. If the disease has run its course, however, the damage is permanent.

However, the fully infected victims (including characters reduced to 1d4 *Cognition*) cannot live without the virus anymore. They die in 1d6 hours.



The mi-go are quite satisfied with the virus's performance. As the miners slowly succumb to the mining sickness, the mi-go remove their brains and place them in silver canisters for further study. Their bodies are fed to the black ooze (see page 52).

TWISTED REALITY

The world of *Call of Cthulhu* and the world of *Deadlands* have their own unique set of metaphysics—and neither of them get along very well. While there may appear to be many cosmetic similarities, in fact, the two worlds couldn't be more different.



This clash creates a surreal landscape of events and geography. New Jerusalem can appear anywhere in the Weird West. The mi-go gate does not belong here, and the Weird West is doing its best to kick it right the Hell out. In the meantime, space twists into a pretzel, and distances and directions are all mixed up.

The concrete upshot of this is that anyone walking past the edge of the dimensional disturbance finds herself reentering on the other side of it. For instance, if the heroes walk off the north edge of the map on page 41, they reappear at the corresponding point on

the south edge. Exiting off the west edge of the map brings a hero back on either the north or south edge, whichever she was closest to.

Exiting off the cliff to the east (by jumping into the river) is a really bad idea, and you may want to have Oliver drop that hint to your posse. Since the river isn't a fixed point, reality there is in severe flux. Anyone jumping into the river is physically dumped into the Hunting Grounds.

All of these bizarre events are caused by our uninvited guests. Use them to throw characters off balance, to get them to doubt their own

senses, even their own sanity. Once they doubt their eyes and ears, they'll begin to doubt everything else.

Including each other.

SPIRITUAL DANGERS

One final thing that is important to note: The combination of Mythos and Weird West realities has created a magically volatile environment. The TNs of all magical tasks are at a +2 while in the dimensional pocket that is New Jerusalem. This applies to shamans as well as hucksters. Hucksters also must to add +4 to any backlash rolls. Finally, mad science devices have their Reliability lowered by -2.

THE SETUP

Now that you've got a good idea of what's going on in New Jerusalem, let's move on to how to get your posse there, Marshal.

The best way to get your heroes to New Jerusalem is just to place it in their way. Since the town's location is not fixed, you can have it appear wherever you like.

Maybe the heroes are on their way from Tombstone to the Great Maze, or from Deadwood to Santa Fe. It really doesn't matter. New Jerusalem can appear wherever you need it.

CHAPTER ONE: NEW JERUSALEM

NEW JERUSALEM

Fear Level 2

New Jerusalem could be any small town in the Weird West, but it just happens to be one that has become enslaved to the mi-go. It's teetering on the edge of becoming a ghost town, and ironically enough, it's the mi-go who are keeping that from happening.

One small physical sign of the unnatural doings here is how strangely silent the town and surrounding area is. Also, there are no echoes, even from loud noises, like shouting and gunshots.

IMPORTANT PLACES

BANK

Description: By far the most impressive building in town, the New Jerusalem Bank has definitely seen better days. Security is lax to say the least, and the closet-sized vault is open at all times of the day and night. It contains about \$250 in gold, five pounds of ghost rock, and \$500 in US currency.

Occupants: Amos Leech, a wizened husk of a man, and a large bruiser named Clem run the bank.

JAIL

Description: The jail is a one-story, mud-brick building with barely room enough for two cells inside, let alone the cramped marshal's office.

Occupants: Bill Parsley, an itinerant miner, has taken over the Marshal's duties. All he really does is swagger around town and leer at people.

BARBER SHOP

Description: This is a small, dilapidated storefront with a faded barber's pole outside of it. It looks slightly better kept than the other structures in town—but only slightly.

Occupants: As mentioned earlier, the barber shop's proprietor—Oliver Pickman—is of special note. See *Flies in the Ointment* on pages 34–36 for more details on him.

GENERAL STORE

Description: This is a wood-frame structure with a large front porch. The shelves are well-stocked with all manner of supplies. One strange thing: All the unpreserved food in here has spoiled, and there is no meat—preserved or otherwise—to be found in the entire store.

Occupants: Leopold

Stankowski, a traveling salesman, has set himself up as the new shopkeeper. He is incredibly unhelpful, and has no knowledge of his stock whatsoever.

POST OFFICE

Description: The post office is a standard wood-frame building. It stands derelict and empty.

Occupants: None.

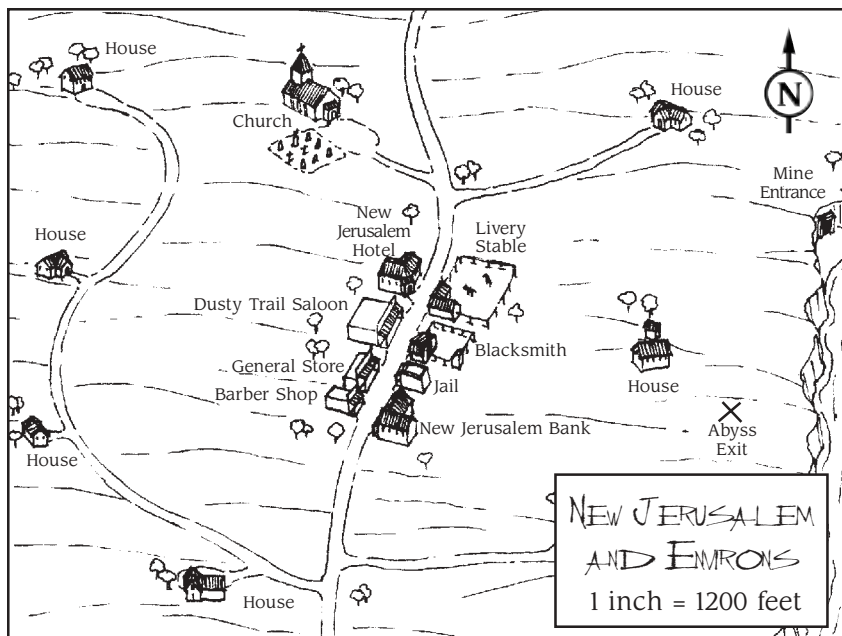
DUSTY TRAIL SALOON

Description: This stereotypical western saloon looks like it has seen better days.

Occupants: During the day, this is the hangout for the majority of the town population. At any given time there are at least five virus victims hanging out in here. The bartending position has been taken over by Gerald Conroy, a noted bank robber. Any law man recognizes Conroy with an Onerous (7) *Knowledge* check. Conroy (like all virus victims) has no memory of his life—beyond his name.

NEW JERUSALEM HOTEL

Description: Calling this place a hotel is a bit grandiose. The wooden building has only four rooms for rent on its second floor, and they're all pretty small. There are a



lobby and sitting area downstairs, and the proprietor's quarters are in the back.

Occupants: Clyde Bolling, a former freelance correspondent for the *Tombstone Epitaph*, now runs the hotel. Any muckraker may recognize Bolling on a *Onerous* (7) *Knowledge* check.

BLACKSMITH

Description: This building is little more than a small barn. The front is open, and the forge lies just inside.

Occupants: None. The building is abandoned.

LIVERY STABLE

Description: There are no horses in evidence in the stable. Anyone poking around finds a sloppily concealed pile of horse bones in a dark back corner of the building. The bones have been completely stripped of meat, and they've been cracked open and the marrow has been sucked out. Anyone stabling his horse here may get a shock after sundown. The virus victims' first move when newcomers arrive is to eat their horses.

Occupants: Horace Marley now runs the Livery Stable.

Marley was a drifter and sometime horse thief who wandered into New Jerusalem. His past habits naturally drew him into running the livery stable.

THE CHURCH

Description: The church and graveyard are located about a quarter of a mile outside of town, next to the church. A low wrought-iron fence encloses about 30 graves. A close inspection (a Fair (5) *search* check) reveals that the graves have all been disinterred recently, but all have been reburied. Anyone ghoulish enough to go digging in one of these freshly disturbed graves finds the gnawed bones of the grave's occupants just below the surface of the ground. The bones have also all been split open, and any remaining marrow has been sucked out. As for the church, it hasn't been used in months. There's about a half inch of dust on everything inside.

Occupants: A fellow answering to "Old Jake" has taken on the role of the graveyard's caretaker. He answers any questions about the disturbed graves with a vacant stare and a stupid grin. Old Jake lives in a small shack behind the church.

HOUSES

Description: The houses scattered around New Jerusalem are a variety of simple wooden structures.

Occupants: Various virus victims, eight in all between all the houses.

THE MINE ENTRANCE

Description: This roughly rectangular entrance to the ghost-rock mine is situated on a ledge about 20 feet below the edge of the cliff.

Occupants: See page 49 for complete details.

THE VILLAGE IDIOTS

The folks that still reside in the town are mostly consumed with the mining disease. They all look a bit disheveled and have distinct body odors, like they haven't washed in a week.

They talk to characters, but the virus hasn't made them excellent conversationalists. Most questions get a "yup" or "nope," and everyone in town seems about as sharp as the corners of a round table. In addition, nobody here seems to know or remember anything about the town itself.

Questions in that direction usually draw a blank stare.

The entire populace act as if they had half a mind on anything they're doing, and some seem to have a woefully inadequate grasp of whatever

their job is. That's because they do. All these people are merely going through the motions, the last vestiges of their intellect driving them to fill some sort of role in the town, no matter who they might once have been.

Some have taken on roles that they always fantasized about (like the town marshal), while others have just randomly fallen into a "useful" role. The mi-go have been studying this unintended by interesting side-effect of the miner virus, but are unsure what about the disease causes the behavior

The townspeople take no offensive action against the posse (at least not during the day), but astute heroes (who make an Onerous (7) *scrutinize* check) may notice the townspeople's strange habit of blinking in unison.

See Chapter Two (page 45) for details on the virus victim's actions after night falls.

In addition to the specific inhabitants listed in this chapter, there are about 10 additional folks wandering around the New Jerusalem vicinity.

From the statistic below, you may note that the victims aren't really that tough. The problem is that there are almost thirty of them, and they don't go down easy. They may not be the brightest or most

deadly opponents, but they more than make up for that with persistence.

VIRUS VICTIMS

Corporeal: D:2d8, N:2d4, S:3d6, Q:1d6, V:2d4

Fightin': *brawlin'* 2d8

Mental: C:2d12, K:4d10, M:1d6, Sm:4d10, Sp:1d4

Size: 6

Wind: —

Terror: 0 at day/5 at night

Special Abilities:

Damage: Fists (STR+1d8)

Armor: 1

Undead: A maiming wound to the head of a virus victim puts him down—eventually. The virus infesting his body keeps him fighting for two rounds afterward. If a wound to the head destroys the victims' eyes (1-2 on a d6), the poor wretch suffers a -4 penalty to his *fightin'*: *brawlin'* checks, and he gets no Defensive Bonus.

Gear: None. Actually the virus victims have plenty of gear, but they're not smart enough to use it.

Description: The virus victims look like normal people—except for their eyes. The whites of their eyes are all a pale yellow color. This is almost unnoticeable during the day, but at night they glow with a poisonous inner light.



OLIVER'S GAMBIT

As mentioned earlier, Oliver has to lay low when he's around the virus victims, but he desperately needs to talk to the posse, before the virus affects them too badly. Make sure he doesn't get a chance until late in the day, when sunset is approaching. We wouldn't want to deprive the posse of interacting with the scintillating town residents, would we?

When Oliver does finally manage to get the heroes (or even just one of them) alone, He tells them a substantially edited version of events, saying

just that "a force of evil" has invaded the ghost-rock mine, and it's affected the townspeople. He knows the way to drive the evil out: destroy the portal (located deep in the mine) that brought them into the world.

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

The heroes are likely to have a whole lot of questions for Oliver, such as why he's unaffected by the virus, and just how he knows so much.

Oliver is evasive to say the least, insinuating that he keeps himself healthy through certain "arcane methods" that only work for him. Oliver claims that he's laid low and watched the "strange bug-things" for about a month now and has even snuck into the mine once. But he needs help to destroy them.

Oliver also claims that this is the only way to stop the mining disease and allow anyone to leave New Jerusalem. (This last fact may be news to anyone who hasn't tried to leave the area yet.)

Hopefully, the fact that the heroes can feel their minds being eaten away by the virus should be enough to get them on Oliver's side. If not, Oliver doesn't push the issue. He knows that all he has to do is wait for sunset and the virus victims to do the persuading for him.

CHAPTER TWO: AFTER DARK

Well, the posse should be fit to be tied about now, Marshal. At the very least they should be frustrated, having dealt with the exceedingly dim-witted town residents all day. They may also have discovered that they can't leave New Jerusalem. Plus, they have Oliver's story to consider, assuming he's been able to convey it to them.

Then, when the sun sinks low in the sky, its time for the real fun to begin. The virus infecting the town's inhabitants switches into its nocturnal phase, turning its victims from listless ciphers to cannibalistic psychopaths!

There are 26 virus victims in town, all of them hungry for human flesh. They are not organized, just very enthusiastic. They pursue the heroes at a stately walk, knowing that there is nowhere to run to. They don't communicate. They do push each other around, however, and they can be made to fight each other if characters are clever enough.

But, in the end, there are still 26 virus victims, all immune to pain and looking for human flesh to devour.

It might be time to get out of town.

GETTIN' OUT

If Oliver hasn't been able to meet with the posse yet, or he was rebuked before, he makes his move now. Whether it's saving the heroes' butts from the virus victims or merely leading them out of town depends on how things are going for the posse.

CHINESE SURPRISE

Once outside out the town proper, Oliver quickly starts leading the posse toward to the mine entrance. The virus victims may be close behind, so he urges them to move fast.

Then Xinjin makes his appearance (at a suitably dramatic moment). This little Chinese fellow knows all of the heroes' names and a few secrets about them as well, all thanks to the powers of Yithian science. (Don't ask.) At first, Oliver doesn't know that Xinjin is another Yithian, but he quickly figures it out and urges the posse to help Xinjin out.

Regardless, Xinjin should impress (and possibly freak out) the posse. He tells of how he and his companions were railworkers heading East when they stumbled into New Jerusalem, where they fell ill and were enslaved by the "bug-men." It's tough for a bunch of rowdy, rough-cut hero-types to turn down the opportunity to save a bunch of slaves, right?

CHAPTER THREE: DOWN BELOW

Between Oliver and Xinjin, the heroes should end up at the mine entrance sooner or later. We'll give you the lowdown on what lies within the mine in a moment. First of all, let's meet the mine's "proprietors."

MEET THE MI-GO

The mi-go are an alien species hailing from another dimension—that of the Cthulhu Mythos.

Mi-go were thousands of years old when humanity was

just a colony of microscopic amoebas swimming around in Earth's blossoming gene pool. In their species' lifetime, the mi-go have seen the births, lives, and deaths of thousands of races. Humanity is just another one. We'll be gone soon enough, but while we're here, the mi-go intend to exploit us.

Brain collecting also seems to be a hobby of the mi-go. Brain canisters—like the ones Reg and Ronan found—are very common among the Fungi. Using surgical techniques yet unknown to humanity, the mi-go are able to remove a person's brain and place it in a canister without compromising the brain's intelligence or sentience. At least, that's how the theory works. In reality, there is about a nine in 10 chance of the disconnected brain going insane with the realization of its fate. No one is certain why the mi-go collect human brains. Perhaps they are mining for another element that we're unaware of. Or maybe it's just the cruelest kind of humor, a thought that is too cold to contemplate for very long.

Mi-go biology is odd. They are not biological beings in a terrestrial sense of the word, but a complex order of fungus. Thus, blades and bullets—designed to rip apart internal organs—have very little effect



on them. There are seven mi-go in this particular expedition. Three act as warriors, three as workers, and one is a scientist, the leader of them all.

Mi go have crustacean-like bodies, with articulated legs and membranous wings. Their heads are an ovoid mass of small antenna.

WARRIOR MI-GO (3)

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:1d8, S:3d10, Q:1d8, V:3d12

Dodge 2d8, fightin': brawlin' 4d8, shootin': mi-go weapons 3d10

Mental: C:2d10, K:2d8, M:3d4, Sm:4d6, Sp:1d8

Size: 6

Terror: 7

Special Abilities:

Damage: Claws (STR+1d6), grapple (STR+1d4+1d6)

Dual Brain: A mi-go may make two separate and different attacks on each of its actions.

Damage Reduction: Bullets and bladed weapons do only half damage to mi-go (round down).

Flight: Pace 16

Gear: Two have electric guns, and one warrior has a mist projector. All three wear web armor. See Mi-go Technology on page 48.

WORKER MI-GO (3)

Use the stats for the warrior mi-go, but drop both of their

fightin' Aptitudes to 2d8, and eliminate the *shootin'* Aptitude. They carry no weapons, but they do wear web armor.

SCIENTIST MI-GO (1)

Corporeal: D:2d6, N:1d8, S:2d6, Q:1d8, V:2d6

Dodge 2d8, fightin': brawlin' 4d8, shootin': mi-go weapons 3d10

Mental: C:3d10, K:4d10, M:2d12, Sm:3d10, Sp:2d10

Academia: human

anthropology, 3d10 academia:

mi-go anthropology 5d10,

academia: occult 5d10, faith:

Shub-Niggurath 5d10, Human

Anthropology 3d10 language:

English 3d10, language:

Spanish 3d10, medicine:

general, surgery 3d10,

science: physics 3d10, search 3d10

Size: 5

Terror: 7

Black Magic: Bolts o' doom 4, cloak o' evil 1, spook 3.

Special Abilities:

Damage: Claws (STR+1d6), Grapple (STR+1d4+1d6)

Dual Brain: A mi-go may make two separate and different attacks on each of its actions.

Damage Reduction:

Bullets and bladed weapons do only half damage to mi-go (round down)

Flight: Pace 16

Gear: Electric gun and web armor.

MI-GO TECHNOLOGY

The mi-go have several devices at their disposal that are beyond known technology. Here are the details on these otherworldly devices.

ELECTRIC GUNS

These weapons look like lumps of black metal about the size of a doorknob, with strange lumps, much like warts, all over them.

The electric gun fires bluish bolts of electricity that acts something like the Smith & Robards Electrostatic Pistol. Well, except it can kill you. The electric guns do 2d10 damage, ignoring metal Armor.



Also, anyone hit by a bolt from one of these guns must make a stun check at -4. Harrowed still take the standard damage, but they obviously don't have to make the stun check.

The weird technology and configuration of these strange weapons are so alien that, in human hands, the device only has a Reliability of 6. Make a Reliability check every time that the weapon is fired. If the check fails, the weapon doesn't malfunction. It just doesn't work.

The electric gun has a ROF of 1 and a Range Increment of 3. It's ammunition is unlimited. It draws power from the users own bioelectric field. Harrowed cannot use these weapons, since they're dead.

MIST PROJECTORS

These twisted collections of shiny metal tubes spit forth a cloud of freezing fog 10 feet across, which lasts for an entire combat round. Anything caught in the cloud takes 1d20 Wind from the cold. Harrowed and heroes who happen to be wearing winter clothing (and why, might we ask?) take half damage.

Firing this weapon is a very complicated procedure, and anyone attempting it must make an Onerous (7) *Cognition* check *each* time he wants to do so. This doesn't get easier

with practice—these things are complicated.

In mi-go hands the things have a Speed of 2, but for humans the Speed is 3. The ROF is 1, and the Range Increment is 5. If the heroes capture one of these weapons, it has 1d10 shots left in it. (Don't tell them that, though, Marshal.)

WEB ARMOR

Web armor is a semi-luminous, green slime that the mi-go wrap around their torsos to protect them from attack. The slimy webbing provides Armor 4 versus all normal damage (fire, cold, blunt impact, and so on), with the exception of blades and bullets. The web armor covers the upper guts, lower guts and gizzards on the mi-go.

Humans can wear the foul stuff if they like, and it protects two adjacent locations. However, humans do not excrete the proper nutrients from their skin to care for the webbing properly, so it loses 1 Armor point each week after it's found.

The web armor also tends to adhere to skin. Whenever a person peels it off, she takes a wound to each of the body locations that it was covering. Web armor does not work for Harrowed. The stuff slides right off of their undead hides.



THE MI-GO MINE

Fear Level 3

The entrance to the mine is a small tunnel, just barely noticeable from the top of the cliff above the river. It's about a 20-foot climb down to the ledge that holds it.

THE TUNNELS

There are two kinds of tunnels down in the mi-go mine. The first are the tunnels originally excavated by the human miners, starting at the cliffside. These only go as far as the main mining chamber. These tunnels look much like any other mine tunnels,

supported by wooden timbers every 20 feet or so.

The second type of tunnels are the ones excavated by the mi-go. These are roughly cylindrical, with a 10-foot diameter. They look like they've been melted out of the rock by some great heat. These tunnels are illuminated by slimy fungal growths clinging to the high ceiling, which give off a sickly, greenish-blue glow.

THE MINE

THE MINE TUNNELS

These tunnels lead about 500 yards from the mine entrance down into the earth underneath the town. The mine looks like the workers just up and stopped what they were doing one day, and a variety of mining tools lie about. A Fair (5) *search* check locates a crate of 20 sticks of dynamite in a side tunnel along the way. The tunnels terminate at a narrow fissure in the rock. Beyond the fissure lies the main mining cavern.

Normal-sized folks can fit through the crack with no problem, but heroes with the *big 'un* Hindrance have a tougher time of it. In noncombat situations they can squeeze through with just a bit of extra effort, but it takes a Hard (9) *Nimbleness* check to get through it in a hurry. A

botch means the poor cowpoke gets stuck, and needs to make an Onerous (7) *Strength* check to pull herself free.

SILVER CANISTER CHAMBER

As described in the story, this chamber is filled with the famous mi-go brain canisters.

Fifty niches are carved into the stone walls of the chamber, and about 40 of them have a canister in them.

Each of the canisters has a human brain perfectly preserved within its silver walls. (You can see the brains through a glass plate in the top of each canister.) Each brain has its own sensory equipment that simulates human sensory organs (at least, to the degree that mi-go understand them), and a little metal speaker that it can talk with.

The brains in the canisters sense any entry into the room and try to communicate. They speak in flat, mechanical monotones, at first asking questions and then making demands.

The brains' are those of the original inhabitants of New Jerusalem, as well as about 20 other people that the mi-go have used since then. They have all been driven insane by their ordeal. In a short they, begin to beg for death.

In fact, they will beg for death loudly. For every minute the brains beg, make a Hard (9) *Cognition* roll for the mi-go. If a roll succeeds, a worker comes to check the brains in 1d4 minutes.

Killing all those brains may not be easy, but promising them death is enough to shut them up (or at least reduce them to mechanically whispered thanks).

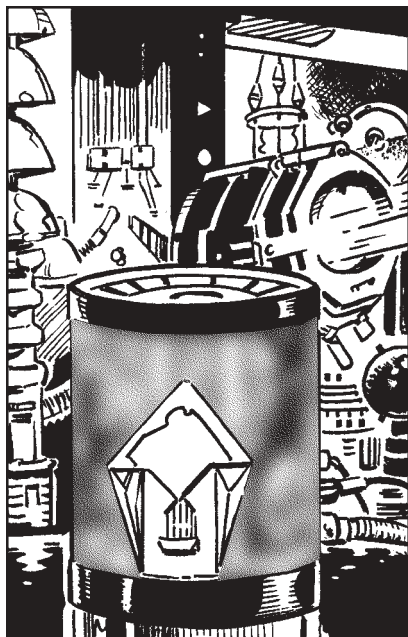
Putting a bullet into a canister is a sure way to kill it, but bringing the roof down in the room might be the easiest way to make sure all of the brains die.

If some callous soul decides to cart along one of the brain canisters with him, he could sell it for up to \$500 to the right buyer.

THE MAIN MINING CAVERN

On the other side of the fissure is a sight worth waiting for: a huge, open cavern sprawling out below a tiny precipice at the top of a pile of stones cut from the cavern's walls.

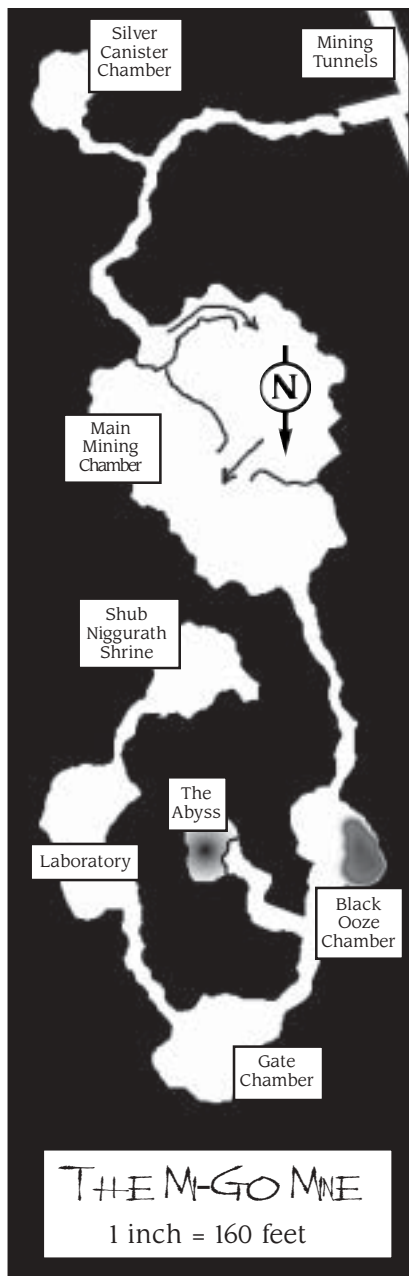
There are tinges of blue smoke in the cavern and the smell of a storm that has just passed. There is one other visible exit from the cavern, in the far side from the opening the characters just crawled through. Like a great spiderweb, beams and ropes cross the cavern, all holding



the delicately balanced ceiling from falling down on everybody's heads. A successful Hard (9) *science: engineerin' or trade: minin'* reveals the webwork's weak spots to the heroes. Well placed dynamite could probably bring that ceiling down...

The cavern is dimly lit by the green fungus mentioned before, and all sight-based rolls in here are at a -2.

In the cavern, 20 workers cut away at the walls with tools both mundane and, well, not so mundane. The alien objects appear to be made of a silvery material that has a rather



hypnotic shine. The item requires two hands to hold and appears to do nothing but vibrate when its triggers are depressed. An alien tool is worth about \$250 to the right people (like Smith & Robards).

The men working the tools are mostly Chinese and they are all fully infected with the mining virus. This means they follow orders without question. Use the statistics for the virus victims on page 42.

There are two workers and one warrior mi-go overseeing the miners. The workers are inspecting a large pile of ghost rock in the center of the room. The warrior is on a ledge above the exit to the room. Spotting him requires an Onerous (7) *Cognition* check.

Three successive Hard (9) *sneak* rolls are required to get across the cavern without being noticed. Don't forget to have the heroes make Terror checks when they see the mi-go for the first time.

If the heroes are spotted, see page 56 for how the mi-go react.

BLACK OOZE CHAMBER

One of the chambers has a sunken floor with a small walkway winding around a pit filled with pulsing black ooze. The chamber is approximately 60 feet square and smells awful. Any character entering

the room must make an immediate Onerous (7) *guts* check to hold down his lunch.

Any characters foolish enough to enter this chamber soon learns their very last lesson. The ooze is a (barely) sentient "pet" of the mi-go, and is very hungry. The mi-go toss the carcasses of the depleted miners in here after they've removed their brains.

The ooze strikes out anyone coming within 10 feet of the edge of its pool, attempting to grab him with a pseudopod and suck him down into its great mass. The ooze's touch is corrosive, of course, and human flesh that comes into contact with the ooze begins to dissolve.

If a hero is not able to escape the thing's grasp, he's sucked down to the bottom of the ooze creature and painfully digested over a period of 24 hours. Not a pleasant way to die.

Escaping from the thing's grasp requires an opposed *Strength* check. Also, any hit from a mi-go weapon causes the thing to recoil into its pool. It's been trained well by its alien masters.

Fortunately, the ooze can only reach 10 feet from the edge of its pool, and it can't really move its great bulk. Fleeing the chamber is the best way to deal with the blasphemous thing.

THE BLACK OOZE

Corporeal: D:3d10, N:1d8, S:5d10, Q:1d8, V:8d12

Fightin': brawlin' d8

Mental: C:1d12, K:1d6, M:1d4, Sm:1d12, Sp:1d4

Size: 12

Wind: —

Terror: 6

Special Abilities:

Corrosive Touch: At the beginning of each round, the ooze's touch does 3d8 damage to any hit location it is in contact with. Armor does protect against this damage but it burns away at the rate of 1 point per round.

Immunity: All. The creature is so big that it's pretty much impossible to hurt or kill. The best way to combat it is just to stay away from it.

Tentacle Grab: If the ooze gets a raise on its *fightin' brawlin'* check, it has grabbed its target. It begins to do its corrosive-touch damage on the next round. The ooze is also at +2 to hit the hero with another tentacle on its next action. Escaping from the ooze's clutches requires a contest of *Strength*, but other heroes can help their compatriot out, adding their *Strength* roll to hers. Each success breaks the grip of one tentacle.

THE ABYSS

This is the long drop. The abyss in this dead-end chamber seems to have no end. Characters peering into its bottomless gloom see nothing but inky darkness stretching downward, seemingly into forever.

There is a ladder made of silvery metal set into the wall to one side of the passage that enters from the main mining cavern. The mi-go use it to get the miners down into the mine. The ladder is difficult to spot in the dim glow of the fungus lights, and a casual glance around the chamber is likely to miss it.

Characters who wish to go downward into the chasm are welcome to. It's about 500 feet down, and there's nothing but blackness and bare rock at the bottom.

The climb is nearly 50 feet up on the narrow ladder. Sounds like two Onerous (7) *climbin'* checks.

GATE CHAMBER

This room is filled with silver instruments beyond human comprehension, a huge bank of alien machinery and a large, metallic frame surround the crackling field of the interdimensional gate. The air tastes metallic in here, and the bizarre, rippling field of the gate can make a cowpoke nauseous (a Fair (5) *guts*

check). One other exit leaves the room, heading to the Laboratory (see below).

If the heroes have made it this far without being detected by the mi-go, their in for a bit of a rude surprise here. The two other warriors are both stationed in here, guarding the gate. Any combat here draws the attention of the scientist and worker in the laboratory.

A hero can close the gate in one of two ways. The first is by using the alien machinery to shut it off. This requires an Incredible (11) *tinkerin'* check, and four actions.

The other method is the time-honored one of blowing the gate all to Hell. Treat the gate and machinery as having a Size of 12 and Armor of 3 for damage purposes. It takes five wounds to render the gate inoperative.

Brute force has its consequences, however. Destroying the mi-go gate machinery sets up a self-destruct sequence in the mi-go complex, collapsing the gate chamber, laboratory, and the Shub-Niggurath shrine.

This self-destruct sequence starts off as a low, pulsing thud, that grows louder and louder over six combat rounds. Also, the strange fungal lights in the ceiling begin to blink on and off erratically, and the mi-go machinery (what's left of it) starts to sputter and spark.



At the end of the sixth combat round of this, everything explodes in these chambers, and the roof falls in. Anyone still in the chambers without magical protection of some sort is dead. Don't even bother to roll for damage if the heroes are foolish enough to still be standing around when things go kaboom. They've had more than enough of a hint.

This collapse also brings down the ceiling in the main mining chamber.

Of course, your posse might be the troublesome sort and want to through the gate. See *To Infinity and Beyond!* on page 57 for details on this.

LABORATORY

Down the tunnel leading to this room, the walls of the mine change. They gain a pinkish hue and seem to breath and pulse with a life of their own. Veins line the walls, pumping some unknown fluid to an invisible but audible heart. Witnessing this scene means a Hard (9) *guts* check.

The tunnel empties out into a vaulted chamber where the scientist lurks, along with one of the workers. A series of tables seemingly grown out of the floor of the chamber are covered with piles of ghost rock, and strange silvery tools of alien manufacture.

A man's naked corpse lies strapped to one of the tables, and the scientist mi-go is just removing the fellow's brain, with the help of a worker. An empty brain canister sits ready nearby. The whole gruesome scene is worth an Onerous (7) *guts* check.

SHUB NIGGURATH SHRINE

The very last chamber in the mi-go complex is the shrine to Shub Niggurath, one of the alien "gods" of the Cthulhu Mythos. This room is booby-trapped to kill anyone who comes close to the shrine. The mi-go take their deity very seriously, and they aren't about to let a bunch of hairless apes mess with it.

The shrine itself is a horrible sight. It's made of a black stone with a strangely smooth surface that reflects light oddly. The twisting, tentacled body of the Black Goat is portrayed, but it seems to shift slightly while the eye rests upon it. Looking upon the loathsome shrine provokes a Hard (9) *guts* check.

The shrine is located at the northern end of the chamber. Anyone who comes within five feet of the shrine feels his whole body, down to his bones, begin to vibrate. If he does not immediately retreat, he explodes. Period. No damage roll. No *dodge* roll. Just blown up character.

RUNNING THE MI-GO

While the descriptions above list where the various mi-go are to be found when the heroes first penetrate the mine, they don't necessarily stay there. The mi-go are not dumb. They have mastered space travel, are on the brink of conquering time travel and don't intend to be thwarted by a bunch of backwater savages.

When they detect the posse (and they will), the mi-go attack intelligently and mercilessly. Feel free to rip up Oliver or Xinjin to let the heroes know the mi-go are playing for keeps.

Gauging your posse's strengths is up to you. You know your players better than we do. There are seven mi-go in the mine, overseeing the workers. Three of them are workers, three are warriors, and one is a scientist.

The virus victims are the first weapon that the mi-go have in their arsenal. The mi-go use the virus victims to stall and harass the heroes. They don't expect the virus victims to actually stop anyone that they consider a real threat.

In combat, the mi-go, especially the unarmed workers, use their flight as a weapon, sweeping down from the tall walls at high speed, picking up characters (on a successful *fightin': wrasslin'*

check), swooping back up to the ceiling, and dropping them.

Two of the warriors and the scientist are equipped with electric guns, and one warrior carries a mist projector. They use their weapons first, only getting into melee combat if it is unavoidable.

Meanwhile, the scientist tries to avoid combat, only pitching in if it looks like things are going badly for the mi-go. Then it weighs in with full force, using its electric gun and spells to best effect. If things look really bad, the scientist heads for the gate, calling a retreat as he goes.

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!

Characters may be intrigued with the gate and might even decide to chase the mi-go through the gate. The crackling energy field hides what lies on the other side, and you've got a choice to make, Marshal.

Option number one is that the gate leads into the Hunting Grounds—and not the nice part, either. See *Ghost Dancers* for how to handle this.

The other option is that the gate leads to the Earth of the Cthulhu Mythos (through the Hunting Grounds, of course.) Should your posse choose to pass through the gate to this other Earth, see the rules in the back of this book for how to convert heroes to and from the *Call of Cthulhu* system.

AFTERMATH

With the closing of the gate, the intrusion of the Mythos reality into the Weird West ceases. New Jerusalem immediately picks a location and grounds itself.

Where the town lands is up to you. It to end up next to a river, but other than that it can materialize anywhere. This can be a neat way to get your heroes to a new part of the Weird West, if you've tired of their current environs.

No matter what, the virus victims are alive and kicking for another 1d6 hours, so things are not totally safe in New Jerusalem. Smart posses should move on, putting as much distance between them and the dead town as possible.

BOUNTY

Surviving this particularly difficult ordeal: 1 point of Grit.

The posse closes the mi-go gate: 1 blue chip.

The posse defeats the mi-go workers: 1 white chip for each mi-go defeated.

The posse defeats the mi-go warriors: 1 red chip for each mi-go defeated.

The posse defeats the mi-go scientist: 1 blue chip.

The posse ends the misery of the canned brains: 1 red chip.

CONVERSION



MARSHAL: 60



CONVERSION NOTES

THE MYTHOS MEETS DEADLANDS



Pulp author H.P. Lovecraft wrote a series of stories in the 1920s that would later be called "the Cthulhu Mythos." Lovecraft's intention with most of his stories was to invoke a sense of horror from one simple realization: Humanity mercifully does not understand how insignificant it is.

When we look up at the stars, we see a ceiling, not the vast, endless void of space. Our idea of nostalgia, as Harlan Ellison puts it, is "what we had for breakfast." Our concepts of time and space, science, philosophy and religion are so self-centered, that if we were to actually get a glimpse at how huge and menacing the universe is, it would break us in two.

However, the most important element of Lovecraft's fiction was its not its terror, but its elasticity. When other authors asked to partake in Lovecraft's unique vision, he was overjoyed. In fact, it could be said that the Cthulhu Mythos was the first "shared universe." Authors such as Robert Bloch, Robert E. Howard, Lin Carter, and others all added their own gods, evil tomes, and creatures to Lovecraft's universe.

Adding to the Cthulhu Mythos became a game, and many found the desire to play. Since Lovecraft's death, dozens of authors have added to his vision. Such names as Stephen King, Clive Barker, and director John Carpenter have added to Lovecraft's Mythos.

This is the theme of the Cthulhu Mythos,: We are, in fact, a very tiny and unimportant species that was more than likely a genetic mistake—one that will soon be corrected by one of the more ancient and advanced species that inhabit the universe.

While Lovecraft's vision is one of the most bleak and joyless philosophies in science fiction, it also presents a unique kind of heroism. While most of humanity remains blind to the truth, those who do see it have a duty to protect the rest of us from the terrors that linger just on the edge of perception. Because Lovecraft's heroes are the only ones capable of handling the truth, because they can see the threat of the Mythos, they must thwart the plots and plans of those races, even if it means their sanity or even their lives.

Weird West heroes who stumble across the Cthulhu Mythos enter into a world with some very different rules, but the two worlds do have something in common. In both, a small group of heroes must thwart the plans of creatures beyond their reckoning. They may not understand the things they fight or why they are fighting them, but they must try or all is lost. There is more at stake than their own lives here—much, much more.

TRANSLATING CHARACTERS

Translating from *Deadlands* to *Call of Cthulhu* or from *Call of Cthulhu* to *Deadlands* may seem to be a tricky procedure, but it can be handled with a little bit of effort. You need copies of the *Call of Cthulhu* and *Deadlands: The Weird West* rulebooks nearby to help you with the conversion.

While you've certainly got your favorite game system that you're going to want to use, no matter what we might tell you to do, we're nice folks, and we're going to make it easy for you either way. These simple guidelines can be used to convert characters in any direction you like.

THE NORMAL STUFF

The first thing we need to convert are the hero's basic physical and mental abilities, as well as their skills.

TRAITS

Here is how the Traits and attributes in the two games are related to each other. In cases in which two separate *Deadlands* Traits equate to one *Call of Cthulhu* statistic, use the higher of the two. In the world of *Call of Cthulhu*, investigators need all the help they can get.

CONVERSION

TRAIT CONVERSION

Deadlands	Call of Cthulhu
Cognition	Intelligence
Deftness	Dexterity
Knowledge	Education
Mien	Power
Quickness	Dexterity
Smarts	Intelligence
Spirit	Power
Strength	Strength
Vigor	Constitution
Vigor	Size

There is no *Deadlands* equivalent to *Call of Cthulhu's* Appearance attribute. Assume that a hero has a 10 Appearance unless she has an Edge like *purty*, which adds +5 to this attribute, or a Hindrance like *ugly as sin*, which subtracts -5 from it. To find the value of your new *Call of Cthulhu* statistics, look at the table below.

TRAIT VALUES

Deadlands	Call of Cthulhu
d4	6
d6	9
d8	12
d10	15
d12	18

For every 3 points of Coordination in a *Deadlands* Trait, add +1 to the statistic.



To convert statistics in the other direction, just flip the chart around. Numerical stats convert directly to Traits of the listed die type, with a basic Coordination of 1. The Coordination can be raised by dropping the die type. For each die type level dropped, the Trait's Coordination goes up by +2 levels. So, a *Call of Cthulhu* attribute of 18 can be converted to a *Deadlands* Trait of 1d12, 3d10 or 5d8.

APTITUDES TO SKILLS

Deadlands Aptitudes like *survival*, *streetwise*, *science*, *dodge*, *sneak*, *disguise*, *artillery*, *climbin'*, *bow*, *gamblin'* and so

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on translate cleanly into the *Call of Cthulhu* Skills of the same name. Some of the others aren't quite as obvious, so we've provided a handy conversion chart for these on page 64.

Some Aptitudes don't have Skills that directly correspond. That's okay. It's easily dealt with. Just make up a new skill with the same name and translate it over.

The same can be done when converting from *Call of Cthulhu* to *Deadlands*. In both cases, you need to define the exact parameters of what the new skill or Aptitude does, and how the hero can use it.

Aptitudes and skills should translate directly, no matter which way you're converting.

To convert the value of a *Deadlands* Aptitude to a *Call of Cthulhu* skill, use the chart below. If you happen to have multiple Aptitudes that translate into the same skill, use the highest of the two to get the skill's base level. Then add +10% to the final result. Remember, no *Call of Cthulhu* skill can be higher than 99%.

Now that you've determined the skill's base level, add +5% to your percent value for each dice allocated to the *Deadlands* Aptitude. So, if you have an Aptitude at 4d10, you would have a Skill at 70% (d10=50%, then add 20% to that number because you roll 4 dice).

SKILL CONVERSION

Deadlands Aptitude	Call of Cthulhu Skill Value
d4	20%
d6	30%
d8	40%
d10	50%
d12	60%

Since a *Deadlands* Aptitude's die type is decided by its governing Trait, converting the other way is even easier. For every 20% a hero has in a *Call of Cthulhu* skill, he gets +1 die in the corresponding *Deadlands* Aptitude.

FAITH AND GUTS

Faith is a powerful force in *Deadlands*, but not so much so in *Call of Cthulhu*. However, it can have a small impact on the character's Sanity. In order to see what kind of impact your *faith* Aptitude has on your Sanity, make *one roll* and add that result to your character's Sanity score. The same technique can be used with *guts*. Remember that he maximum Sanity that your heroes can have is 99.

You may note that most folks from the Weird West tend to start out with a really high Sanity. That's because these *Deadlands* heroes are more used to facing the strange and unusual—and being able to do

CONVERSION

something about it. They have a bit more confidence that they really can make a difference against the ancient evils that plague them.

Call of Cthulhu investigators entering the Weird West can convert Sanity into the *guts* Aptitude using the skill conversion rules listed above.

THE WEIRD STUFF

Now we get to the stuff that just won't translate over neatly and cleanly.

EDGES AND HINDRANCES

We don't have the space to dedicate full conversion rules for Edges and Hindrances, but a healthy dose of common sense (and some help from your the Marshal) will let you translate these advantages and disadvantages to your *Call of Cthulhu* character sheet.

For example, the *big 'un* Hindrance might add +2 to the hero's Size, or *bad eyes* might reduce his Spot Hidden skill by 20%.

HUCKSTERS, SHAMANS, AND MAD SCIENTISTS

Here's some bad news for the heroes. Some stuff just doesn't exist on Mythos Earth, and easily attained magical power is one of them.

The bottom line is this: hucksters, shamans and mad

scientists have no special powers in the world of the Cthulhu Mythos. None. They still retain all the knowledge and skills that they had before, it just doesn't do anything for them there.

All relics or mad science devices are also rendered inert when brought to Mythos Earth. The laws of physics are a bit more stringent in Lovecraft's world. If these items are later returned to the Weird West, they resume functioning normally. Well, as normally as they ever do.

Hucksters and shamans do have a lot of experience with magic though. Whenever a huckster or shaman attempts to learn a spell from a Mythos tome, she may add +1 to the spell multiplier of the tome.

Mad scientists may reroll their Knowledge roll once anytime they're trying to figure out alien machinery or devices. It's not much of an ability, but it's better than nothing.

MYTHOS MAGIC

Just as *Deadlands* magic doesn't work in the world of the Mythos, Mythos magic is useless in the Weird West.

Call of Cthulhu spells and magic items are powerless in the Weird West. As with Weird West items in the Mythos realm, the magic items resume functioning when returned to their proper world.

CONVERSION

APTITUDES & SKILLS

Deadlands	Call of Cthulhu
Academia	Occult/History/Archaeology, etc.
Animal Wranglin'	Animal Handling
Area Knowledge	Area Knowledge
Arts	Art
Bluff	Persuade
Demolition	Demolition or Mechanical Repair
Drivin'	Drive Horse/Auto
Faith	See Faith and Guts (page 62)
Fightin'	Hand-to-Hand or Weapon
Filchin'	Sneak or Pickpocket
Guts	See Sanity (above)
Horse Ridin'	Drive Horse
Language	Other Language
Leadership	Psychology or Leadership
Lockpickin'	Locksmith
Medicine	Medicine
Performin'	Art (Acting)
Persuasion	Persuade
Professional: Detective	Law
Professional: Law	Law
Professional: Occult	Occult
Professional: Politics	Politics
Scrutinize	Psychology
Search	Spot Hidden
Trackin'	Track
Trade	Bargain
Overawe	Persuade
Quick Draw	Pistol
Ridicule	Persuade
Search	Spot Hidden
Shootin'	Pistol or Rifle
Sleight o' Hand	Sneak or Sleight of Hand
Speed Load	Pistol or Rifle
Swimmin'	Swimming
Tale Tellin'	Art (Storytelling)
Teamster	Drive Horse
Throwin'	Thrown Weapon
Tinkerin'	Mechanical Repair

DEADLANDS

There's Fungus Among Us!



Worse yet, it's some of that alien Fungi from Yuggoth!

Time and space are bent all to Hell when members of some elder races from H.P. Lovecraft's Mythos stories suddenly turn up in the Weird West™. When the undead gunslinger Ronan Lynch and an Irish huckster named Reg get tangled up in this web of interdimensional intrigue, it's up to them alone to terminate the mi-go's mysterious experiments with ghost rock and boot their alien butts back home once and for all.

And if they should fail, the Reckoners are going to have some bad company!

This Dime Novel™ includes a full-length novella and an official *Deadlands™: The Weird West™/Call of Cthulhu®* adventure.



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