

FOUL CONGERIES III



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TRAIL OF CTHULHU



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FOUL CONGERIES

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KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

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Hideous Creatures: Introduction

Lovecraft created his various “shadowy congeners” because the stories of vampires, werewolves, and even ghosts had become too familiar and too formulaic to evoke true horror. Almost a century after he wrote, his own monstrous races have likewise begun to seem like comfortable story furniture rather than unnerving signals that the world is horrible and wrong.

Our goal with this series is to present a comprehensive look at Lovecraft’s hideous creatures, from as many angles as we can. Our goal is contradiction, surprise, and most especially the uncanny: the recognition of something familiar as something weird. As in the “Gods and Titans” section of the *Trail of Cthulhu* core book, this series deliberately contradicts itself, blurring boundaries and erasing certainties in the name of the uncanny. In your campaign, these variant truths might be misunderstandings, legends, heresies, or deliberate lies spread by the creatures to lull their foes into a false sense of familiarity.

Change anything and everything in these pages, most especially the ability scores. If you need a terrifying assassin, a brief but survivable fright, or a sanity-shattering horror, just add or subtract points at will.

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Foul Congeries

"BUT THE WORST WERE WHOLLY ORIGINAL ... AND REPRESENTED SHAPES WHICH NO TALE OF ANTIQUITY HAD EVER DARED TO SUGGEST. SEVERAL WERE HIDEOUS PARODIES ON FORMS OF ORGANIC LIFE WE KNOW, WHILE OTHERS SEEMED TAKEN FROM FEVERISH DREAMS OF OTHER PLANETS AND OTHER GALAXIES."

Welcome back again to Rogers' Museum of Monstrous Curiosities! As we did this time last year, we present still more burblings from the imagination of Lovecraft thus far untranslated (or at least un-compiled) into game-adapted beasts. That's right, three more neglected, honest-to-Yog Lovecraft monsters.

The previous iteration of *Foul Congeries* adapted its "Bat-Thing" and "Black-Winged One" from furtive mentions in "The Call of Cthulhu" itself, bolstered and shadowed by other apparitions in Lovecraft's poetry, notes, and commonplace book; its "Medusa" came from the dubious and problematic "Medusa's Coil." This assemblage slouches toward us from a Doylean Easter Egg buried in *At the Mountains of Madness*, a letter to Donald Wandrei, and straight out of the ghost-written masterpiece "The Mound." Again, a shout-out to obsessive illustrator Michael Bukowski, whose *Yog-Blogsoth* series helped me wrangle these specters.

For each creature, at least a few alternate possibilities present themselves. They don't get the full *Hideous Creatures* treatment, but at least they get to flop and gibber onto the table, emerging from "the obscurer corners" at last.

Scenario Starters

With Lovecraft's more familiar monsters, familiar scenarios immediately suggest themselves: the remote fishing village tainted with Deep Ones, or the Mi-Go keeping a

hyperspace gate open in the high hills. A cult of Druids summons a Dark Young; a mad biologist extracts shoggoth serum. For those creatures, new takes and new scenarios provide refreshing variety to the Keeper's palette.

But these obscurer creatures are barely present on our story horizon. For them, even the clichés remain fresh. This section in each creature writeup gives a few simple, punchy suggestions — "scenario starters" — pointing out the possible role of these new beings in Lovecraftian adventure stories, rather than full scenario seeds.

GASEOUS WRAITH

"THEIR HEIGHT, THEN, MUST HAVE BEEN TREMENDOUS BEYOND ALL COMPARISON—CARRYING THEM UP INTO TENUOUS ATMOSPHERIC STRATA PEOPLED ONLY BY SUCH GASEOUS WRAITHS AS RASH FLYERS HAVE BARELY LIVED TO WHISPER OF AFTER UNEXPLAINABLE FALLS."

– AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

Thirty thousand feet in the air, in the boundary zone between the troposphere and the stratosphere, the highest terrestrial and lowest cosmic forces combine to create a kind of parodic life. Composed of a cold plasma that resembles and feels like oily jelly, these beings spawned by ultraviolet light and cosmic rays take many forms: filmy plankton, gelid jellyfish, vaporous serpents, and the worst of all: the horrors of the heights, the gaseous wraiths.

– "THE HORROR IN THE MUSEUM"

A gaseous wraith shifts its elastic and gelatinous form like a shoggoth, but in its characteristic shape it resembles an enormous cloudy kite or manta ray, seemingly held aloft by three globular bladders full of hydrogen. Its four vast, shadowy plates (two on either surface) receive sensory input; its cruel bone-white beak sublimates between ice and cartilage. It moves with the air like a raptor, or by extending tendrils into the ultraviolet and pulling itself against those invisible geometries. When it spots a Euclidean target, it darkens and solidifies from a heliotrope glow into a dark, angry bruise color.

Its purpose is unknown, and malign.

Gaseous Wraith

Abilities: Athletics 25, Health 16, Scuffling 25

Magic: Unlikely, as gaseous wraiths are brute predators. That said, it would be just like the mi-go to have artificially fused a brain-plasm into a wraith to guard their mountain mines; a mi-go watch-wraith has Magic 6, Contact Mi-Go, and possibly Summon/Bind Hunting Horror or Summon/Bind Byakhee for reinforcements.

Hit Threshold: 2 (enormous, but gas bladder hits are +2 to Difficulty)

Alertness Modifier: +0

Stealth Modifier: +1 (silent)

Weapon: +5 (beak bite), tendril grasp (see below), vehicle attack (see box)

Tendrils Grasp: The wraith can shoot a tendril out of its body to grasp a target at up to Near range with a Scuffling attack. After being grasped, the target must defeat the wraith in a contest of

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Vehicle Attack

A gaseous wraith can grab, batter, or peck at an aircraft if it defeats the pilot in a contest of Athletics vs. Piloting. If the pilot wins, he may immediately try to escape the wraith: a second victory allows the craft to escape, probably by diving below the tropopause. (The pilot's Difficulty in this second contest increases by +1 for every wraith hunting his plane.) If the pilot loses, the wraith attacks with Scuffling. A pilot with Piloting 8+ gives a plane a Hit Threshold of 4; other craft have Hit Threshold 3. (Keepers may also lower the Hit Threshold for slow, clumsy planes or dirigibles.)

The effect on the aircraft depends on the number of times a wraith hits it:

No. of hits	Effect on Aircraft
1	One window, porthole, windshield smashed; wraith may make Tendril Grasp attack on someone inside next round
2	All windows smashed as above; sensitive instrumentation (cameras, radios, etc.) disabled; plane jerked upright and unsecured cargo and passengers tumble about
3	One wing or tail cracked, gasbag punctured (dirigibles); all Piloting rolls at +1 Difficulty
4	One engine knocked out, wraith takes +1 damage; any plane-mounted weapons dismounted; all Piloting rolls at +2 Difficulty; single-engine planes begin to fall out of sky
5	Two engines knocked out, wraith takes +1 damage; any plane-mounted weapons dismounted; all Piloting rolls at +3 Difficulty; two-engine planes begin to fall out of sky
6	Frame cracked, stabilizers gone, gasbag torn to shreds (dirigibles); any plane-mounted weapons dismounted; everyone in aircraft takes -1 damage; all Piloting rolls at +4 Difficulty; all aircraft begin to fall out of sky

In a round in which the wraith attacks an aircraft, the contest and attack are its only actions.

To ram a wraith, the pilot makes a Difficulty 4 Piloting test. If that test succeeds, she immediately rolls the die and applies the resulting "effect roll" to the plane as if that number of hits had occurred; she also applies twice the result as a damage modifier to the wraith. If the Piloting roll is an unmodified 6, the pilot may re-roll the effect roll.

Belle flies her Farman 402 into the monstrous gaseous wraith, spending 2 points of Piloting and rolling a 3. With a total result of 5, she hits the thing and rolls again: her effect roll is a 4. Her single engine is knocked out, and the wraith takes +9 damage (doubling her 4 yields +8 from the ram, +1 from the Effects column). Her Piloting rolls to glide to a safe landing are at +2 Difficulty. If she had rolled a 6 on her piloting test, she could have re-rolled the effect roll.



In a Pulp campaign, on an unmodified 6 the pilot applies the higher die to the wraith's damage and the lower die to the plane.

Pulp Belle got a 6 on her Piloting roll, and a 4 on her effect die. She re-rolls the effect die and gets a 2. Her Farman's windows and radio are smashed, but the wraith still takes +9 damage from her 4.

Keepers can apply this table to aerial attacks by shantaks, greater byakhee, flying polyps, shoggoths, hunting horrors, and other large creatures. For smaller attackers (byakhee, mi-go, etc.), two hits create the equivalent of one wraith hit.

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Athletics to avoid being yanked toward the thing's maw; on a success the target frees herself. After three contests failed by the target, the wraith makes a Bite attack on her; her attack on its beak in that round is at -2 Difficulty. A grasped foe has his Hit Threshold lowered by -2; a successful attack on the tendrils (+1 to Hit Threshold) also frees the target.

Armor: Only impaling hits to its eyes or gas bladders (both +2 to Hit Threshold) or beak (+3 to Hit Threshold), or fire attacks, do any damage to the jellylike flesh of the wraith. Subtract twice the Health damage done to bladders from the wraith's Athletics. Hitting all three bladders sends it tumbling out of the stratosphere.

Stability Loss: +1

Alterations

Even without any genetec-technical alteration by the mi-go, the gaseous wraiths can always get worse.

Even Bigger Than That: Athletics 35, Health 26, can use Tendril Grasp at up to Long range.

Flock Attack: Up to four wraiths may attack a single aircraft-sized target in one round. The plane's Hit Threshold drops by -1 against the third, and by -2 against the fourth gaseous wraith.

Madness of the Air: The cold and merciless eyes of the wraith can break the spirit and soul of even the doughtiest aviator. It locks the vicious hatred of its gaze on a target's eyes, spends at least 4 Scuffling points and rolls a die. The total spend and roll becomes the Difficulty of

the Stability test to resist the thing's stare. On a failure, the witness loses 2 Stability and goes into a dreamlike, confabulatory state resembling sleep, drunkenness, or the like; his mind blanks out all memory of the wraith, perhaps replacing it with a screen memory of clouds or owls. All Piloting and other General ability tests are at +2 to Difficulty; a further Stability test (Difficulty 4) is needed to come to your senses and remember to pilot the plane in the first place.

Tendrils Whip: After a Tendril Grasp, the wraith can hurl the victim up to 100 yards away by whipping its tendrils and paying 2 Scuffling. This usually hurls him well away from any rescuing aircraft, to fall to his death.

Possible Variations

"THE THIRTY-THOUSAND-FOOT LEVEL HAS BEEN REACHED TIME AFTER TIME WITH NO DISCOMFORT BEYOND COLD AND ASTHMA. WHAT DOES THIS PROVE? A VISITOR MIGHT DESCEND UPON THIS PLANET A THOUSAND TIMES AND NEVER SEE A TIGER. YET TIGERS EXIST, AND IF HE CHANCED TO COME DOWN INTO A JUNGLE HE MIGHT BE DEVoured. THERE ARE JUNGLES OF THE UPPER AIR, AND THERE ARE WORSE THINGS THAN TIGERS WHICH INHABIT THEM."

-- SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE,
"THE HORROR OF THE HEIGHTS"

These theories, truths, revelations, and lies are intentionally contradictory. They are intended to keep over-reductive Investigators (and Keepers) on thin ice -- and in thinner air.

- The gaseous wraiths are devolved flying polyps, left behind or created by that race during its final war with the cone-beings of Yith.
- The gaseous wraith is a minor predator of the ultraviolet driven into our infraviolet space by competition with the still greater, more horrible Forms that haunt the tropopause in that dimension.

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- Gaseous wraiths and the tropopausal ecosystem in general are extraterrene life brought to Earth by meteors.
- Gaseous wraiths are the devolved remnant of the First Root Race, the Polarians. These etheric beings resembled vast amoebae; sightings of the wraiths or their kindred explain UFOs, per cryptozoologist and pilot Trevor James Constable in 1957-1959.
- Gaseous wraiths parasitize on — or are sentient extrusions of, or both — the blue bioenergetic orgone field postulated by Wilhelm Reich in 1939.
- The gaseous wraith is a servitor race of Hastur, released from its sacred mountain-tops in Antarctica and Leng to watch the world below. Or to make war on the winged star-spawn of Cthulhu.
- Mi-go built the wraiths as biotech aircraft in gas giants; the fungi park them in the Earth's atmosphere between trips to Saturn and Uranus.
- The wraiths are the spawn of S'ngac, a "violet gas" opposed to Nyarlathotep. The Denebian gas being seeds them on all planets where the Crawling Chaos has manifested, to slay those bold and lonely enough to worship the Black Pharaoh.

Investigation

This section provides some possible clues to the gaseous wraith or its activities. Feel free to adjust them to suit your campaign or your conception of the monster. Quotes are from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's underrated 1912 tale of cosmic horror, "The Horror of the Heights."

Evidence Collection: The fragments of aircraft found scattered over the crash site don't really make sense. There's no burning or scorching damage to the metal, but the whole fuel system is missing. It's like the parts holding kerosene simply evaporated. (Physics, Piloting as Investigative ability)

Forensics: "Myrtle, who was attempting the height record, fell from an altitude of something over thirty thousand feet. Horrible to narrate, his head was entirely obliterated, though his body and limbs preserved their configuration. ... Do you really believe -- does anybody really believe -- that a man's head could be driven clean into his body by the force of a fall? Well, perhaps it may be possible, but I, for one, have never believed that it was so with Myrtle. And the grease upon his clothes — 'all slimy with grease,' said somebody at the inquest. Queer that nobody got thinking after that!"

History: Studying patterns of missing aviators, during the Great War and afterward, a few potential "jungles of the air" emerge: in Europe, over the Pau-Biarritz district of France, over Wiltshire in England, and in the Homburg-Wiesbaden district of Germany. (Research)

Oral History: "There were several other similar cases, and then there was the death of Hay Connor. What a cackle there was about an unsolved mystery of the air, and what columns in the halfpenny papers, and yet how little was ever done to get to the bottom of the business! He came down in a tremendous vol-plané from an unknown height. He never got off his machine and died in his pilot's seat. Died of what? 'Heart disease,' said the doctors. Rubbish! Hay Connor's heart was as sound as mine is. What did Venables say? Venables was the only man who was at his side when he died. He said that he was shivering and looked like a man who had been badly scared. 'Died of fright,' said Venables, but could not imagine what he was frightened about. Only said one word to Venables, which sounded like 'Monstrous.' They could make nothing of that at the inquest. But I could make something of it. Monsters! That was the last word of poor Harry Hay Connor. And he *did* die of fright, just as Venables thought." (Piloting used as Interpersonal ability)

Sense Trouble: "Dr. Middleton, of Amesbury, who was watching the flight with a telescope, declares that just before the clouds obscured the view he saw the machine, which was at an enormous height, suddenly rise perpendicularly upwards in a succession of jerks in a manner that he would have thought to be impossible."

Scenario Starters

- The heavier-than-air altitude record increases from 31,230 feet in 1919 (French air ace Jean Casale, who died in a crash in 1923) to 56,046 feet in 1938 (Italian Lieutenant Colonel Mario Pezzi, over Rome in an experimental Caproni Ca.161 biplane; that record still stands for propeller craft). The years 1936-1938 are especially competitive in altitude flying: British, Italian, German, and American pilots routinely pierce the 30,000 and even 40,000-foot barrier. One of them sees something and either dies leaving a mysterious manuscript, or survives to call in the Investigators.
- The mysterious manuscript proves surprisingly similar to the so-called Joyce-Armstrong Fragment, found in 1926 in the Lower Haycock field west of the village of Withyham on the Kent-Sussex border and long considered a tasteless hoax promulgated following the disappearance of James Joyce-Armstrong over Wiltshire in September of that year. Someone in Project Covenant thinks it's authentic, anyhow; U.S. Army aviator-spy James C. Albright contacts the Book-Hounds to find the original copy of the Joyce-Armstrong Fragment and any other books Joyce-Armstrong may have left behind. His estate and aircraft laboratory at Devizes is guarded by mysterious Special Branch agents, but with enough American dollars and low Celtic cunning, you can surely overcome such obstacles.

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- A gaseous wraith hovers over the campaign city, dropping eerie pieces of mi-go tech (and mi-go) onto it. It must have captured something fascinating in its horrid tendrils — but how can we get up there to find out? Perhaps Wentworth Kingston, the eccentric inventor of a “whistling engine,” can help out — although he’s recovering from a serious bout of amnesia ...

RAKTAJIHVA

“I LEAPED UP AT ONCE AND RACED MADLY OUT OF THAT CAR AND ACROSS ENDLESS LEAGUES OF PLATEAU TILL EXHAUSTION FORCED ME TO STOP-DOING THIS NOT BECAUSE THE CONDUCTOR HAD DROPPED ON ALL FOURS, BUT BECAUSE THE FACE OF THE MOTORMAN WAS A MERE WHITE CONE TAPERING TO ONE BLOOD-RED-TENTACLE.”

- “THE THING IN THE MOONLIGHT”

This hideous avatar of the Bloody Tongue appears in dream-states tangent to the mind of Nyarlathotep. Following the Crawling Chaos’ apocalyptic revelations, certain humans receptive to his caresses take on this seeming: a cone of a face, tapering to one blood-red tentacle. Some inhabitants of the Dreamlands walk about with seemingly human faces that they can tear away to reveal the Bloody Tongue beneath.

They have many names among their cults and those who fear them: the *tafodrudd* among the debased Druids of the Dark Ages, the *chimamire no shita* in the sadistic courtesan sects of Heian Japan, or the *raktajihva* among the worst of the Thuggee. All these names simply mean “bloody tongue.”

Unfortunately, the appearance of the Bloody Tongue is not restricted to nightmares and apocalypses. Bubbles in time and perception float toward sensitive minds who open themselves to the Black Pharaoh’s delambations;

their skin drinks his wisdom-spittle and their faces change. The raktajihva become his creatures, wizards and tempters who move about unseen until, in the moonlight, their true faces emerge from the gelid pool of their skin.

Raktajihva

Abilities: Athletics 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6

Magic: A raktajihva in the waking world is almost certainly an adept devoted to Nyarlathotep, capable of moving about in daylight with a normal-appearing human face. Magic 5-10+ and Contact Nyarlathotep (or other patron entity), usually Create Hyperspace Gate and Howl of Pan. The raktajihva has any other spells the Keeper desires.

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness Modifier: +2 (sniff-tastes the air)

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapon: -1 (implacable fist or kick), -2 (warm yet horrid oozing lick) plus disorientation as below

Disorienting Lick: The blood-saliva of the raktajihva deranges humans touched by it, exposing their flesh to urges or coloring their eyes with strange visions. The victim makes a Health test against a Difficulty equal to the raktajihva’s Scuffling spend + roll; on a failure, he loses Stability equal to that Difficulty. At the Keeper’s discretion, the licked one may suffer paranoia, disabling hunger pangs, uncontrollable desire, or any other base urge. (Perhaps tie the urge to the victim’s Drive.) Regardless, the victim is **shaken** until treated.

A lick in the eyes (a roll that hit with a margin of 3+, or while the victim was helpless to move her head) reveals horrendous visions that last as long as the tainted eyes do, overlaid on mundane Euclidean “reality.” +2 to all visual Difficulties and a 3-point Stability test (Difficulty 5) every time the victim opens her eyes.

Armor: None.

Stability Loss: +1

Constrictor

Or sure, the “blood-red tentacle” might just be a tentacle, and not a tongue at all. Use this build for a raktajihva whose crushing attack is more physical and less psychical.

Constriction: With a successful Scuffling attack, the thing’s tentacle wraps around a victim at Point-Blank range and squeezes (+0 damage modifier). Each round thereafter, continued constriction automatically does -1 more crushing damage. The snared character must make an Athletics test against a Difficulty equal to the creature’s initial Scuffling attack result (die plus its spend) to break free (or at that Difficulty -2 to use weapons against it). While crushing the life out of its victim, the raktajihva cannot attack another target until its victim escapes or dies.

Possible Variations

These theories, truths, revelations, and lies are intentionally contradictory, all the better to keep the thing in the moonlight hidden in the shadows.

- The raktajihva is the result of an alien plague spread by the so-called “Black Wind.” Those caught in the wind inhale spores or germs and their soft tissues explode through their faces — Lovecraft dreamed of an apocalyptic future where the Black Wind plague had spread to Providence.
- The Bloody Tongue is a human misunderstanding of the caltrop-shaped figure known as the Dweller in Darkness, an extrusion of Kali-Shub-Niggurath. Raktajihva are actually wooden fetiches, simulacra of humans made of Her woody spall. Witches make stick poppets to represent or to summon the Dweller.
- Raktajihva are a race of Dreamlands creatures that have infiltrated the waking world to harness its power over the

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Dreamlands. They serve Mormo, Lady of the Moonlight.

- The howling, slaving raktajihva is but another form of the Wendigo, its entire being shaped into a ravenous Tongue.
- The Wood of N'Gai is the sacred grove of the Dweller (or Howler) in Darkness; it appears tangent to the Black Forest in Germany, to the woods of Thessaly in Greece, to post-glacial forests in Wisconsin or Canada, and elsewhere.

Investigation

This section provides some possible clues to the raktajihva or its activities. Feel free to adjust

them to suit your campaign or your conception of the monster.

Anthropology: Miss Cantwell's description recalls not only the tribal god of the so-called "Bloody Tongue" cult in central Kenya, but also the "Howler in Darkness" that supposedly haunts the woods around Rick's Lake in upper Wisconsin. Professor Upton Gardner, the University of Wisconsin folklorist, is the expert on those latter legends.

Evidence Collection: There are no mirrors in this guy's house — what are we dealing with, a vampire?

Forensics: The dead man clearly committed suicide — a dozen witnesses saw him scream and run into the path of that truck. But

there's blood in what's left of his face that isn't his.

Pharmacy: Whatever that red liquid we found on her face is, it's full of the most powerful psychoactive compound I've ever seen. It seems to be an exceptional isomer of cathine, the active ingredient in the East African stimulant khat. It could stimulate murderous frenzy, sure — or ecstatic bliss, orgiastic lust, or sheer terror. The ancient Egyptians supposedly chewed khat to commune with their gods; this stuff practically opens the door and invites them in. (Chemistry)

Sense Trouble: Spotting a raktajihva by day is impossible, but under the moonlight her face seems to waver a bit, like it was merely a reflection in oily water. Difficulty to spot the telltale shimmer is 8 in the new moon, 6 in the crescent, 5 in half or gibbous moonlight, and 4 by direct full moonlight.

Scenario Starters

- The local Nyarlathotep cult has opened a time-gate into the devastated future described in "The Thing in the Moonlight" and "Nyarlathotep" (and perhaps in *Cthulhu Apocalypse*). Their goal? To summon a raktajihva back from that glorious aeon to our own, to lead them into the literally lunatic future. Perhaps they already have, and the Investigators discover that the Reverend David Drudd has literally no history in this world.
- Digging the new streetcar and subway tracks has disturbed an ancient fane of Nyarlathotep, opening a pathway into his shadowy realm in the Dreamlands. Sleepers in the city begin to have nightmares of the streetcars fallen into ruin, and the subway motormen begin to hear voices under the earth, voices promising them things ...

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Y'M-BHI

"HE LIKEWISE OBSERVED THE MORE MANLIKE SHAPES THAT TOILED ALONG THE FURROWS, AND FELT A CURIOUS FRIGHT AND DISGUST TOWARD CERTAIN OF THEM WHOSE MOTIONS WERE MORE MECHANICAL THAN THOSE OF THE REST. THESE, GLL'-HTHAA-YNN EXPLAINED, WERE WHAT MEN CALLED THE Y'M-BHI—ORGANISMS WHICH HAD DIED, BUT WHICH HAD BEEN MECHANICALLY REANIMATED FOR INDUSTRIAL PURPOSES BY MEANS OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND THOUGHT-POWER. ... THOSE WHICH MOST REPELLED ZAMAONA WERE THOSE WHOSE MUTILATIONS WERE GREATEST; FOR SOME WERE WHOLLY HEADLESS, WHILE OTHERS HAD SUFFERED SINGULAR AND SEEMINGLY CAPRICIOUS SUBTRACTIONS, DISTORTIONS, TRANSPOSITIONS, AND GRAFTINGS IN VARIOUS PLACES."

— "THE MOUND"

The sadistic K'n-Yani use lost Serpent Folk technology recovered from Koth to alter their slave caste after death makes them briefly useless. The *y'm-bhi* they industrially mold the corpses into can perform any sort of work when directed telepathically, or carry out rote instructions such as "guard this passage" or "rebuild this wall" for months or centuries. They act as telepathic receivers and transceivers (to the K'n-Yani overseers, or to each other), but they cannot read the minds of, or send thoughts to, any other creature. Unless the K'n-Yani installed that module, of course.

Y'm-bhi source biostock comes from ancient conquered enemies both human and humanoid, outer-world stragglers, recovered Serpent Folk gene-plasm, and on occasion from inferior or traitorous K'n-Yani elites. Combined by an atomic process that breaks down and reassembles bodies on a sub-cellular level, and galvanized into quasi-life by nuclear and telepathic energies, the

resulting slaves are almost completely immortal. They do not rot, starve, or succumb to diseases or toxins — only physical destruction returns them to raw flesh. They resemble mutilated corpses, annealed or grafted together in a grotesque fashion just short of arbitrariness. Some are missing heads, individual or paired limbs, or other parts; others, of course, receive extra.

On some occasions, the K'n-Yani even implant mechanical technology into the flesh of a *y'm-bhi*, but such graftings must serve a vital or artistic purpose to be worth such base use of material.

Y'm-bhi

Abilities: Athletics 10, Health 10, Scuffling 13

Magic: Y'm-bhi have insufficient intellect (or selfhood) for magic.

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapon: +1 (fist, kick, bite)

Armor: all weapons do half damage; shotguns do 2 points of damage maximum; other firearms do 1 point of damage maximum.

Stability Loss: +1 or +2 (for extra-horribly altered *y'm-bhi*)

Ghast

Something very similar to the *y'm-bhi* haunts the Vaults of Zin, roaming between the Dreamlands and K'n-Yan. More bestial than the *y'm-bhi*, the ghosts may be one of the hairy species of sub-men the K'n-Yani destroyed in their conquest of Yoth. True cannibals, ghosts eat each other as well as men, *gyaa-yothn*, horses, or anything else warm and running away.

Ghosts are larger than humans, about the size of small horses, with thick kangaroo-like hind legs and flat but queasily human faces. Despite having no noses, their sense of smell is powerful. They speak in "coughing gutturals."

A ghost can leap up to 10' vertically

and 20' horizontally (or go from Near to Point-Blank in a few quick leaps in one round) for 2 Athletics points.

Ghosts are Photosensitive (see page 11) with a Difficulty 8 Health test to move into or through direct sunlight.

Abilities: Athletics 14, Health 13, Scuffling 13

Magic: Fortunately, devolved ghosts are bestial, but dreams of Tsathoggua or Yig might awaken Serpent-Folk tweaked genes in an atavistic ghost. Such a speaker to titans has Magic 5-7, the Contact spell of her deity, and one other especially horrid rite.

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: +0 (kick), +2 (bite) only on prone or otherwise helpless targets; after two successful kick attacks against the same target, he must make an Athletics test against a Difficulty equal to the total damage of both kicks to avoid being knocked prone; prone targets lose -1 from Hit Threshold

Armor: -3 (fur and hide)

Stability Loss: +0

For smaller but weirder ghosts, see the writeup on p. 122 of *Dreamhounds of Paris*. Consider those the "pure" Dreamlands strain, if it matters. Or welcome the contradictions.

Gyaa-Yothn

This smaller, domesticated, semi-bipedal version of the ghost serves the K'n-Yani as a riding mount. Its black fur covers its back and head only, leaving the pale white flesh bare elsewhere, especially its anthropoid face. It has a stubby horn in its forehead.

Abilities: Athletics 12, Health 11, Scuffling 10

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +2 (horn), +0 (kick, bite); a horn attack can knock a foe prone as per the ghost's kick attack (Athletics test difficulty is the damage from one horn hit, not two successive kicks).

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Armor: -3 (redundant vital organs, congealed blood)

Stability Loss: +0

Alterations

In their indolence and sadistic ennui, the K'n-Yani torture-engineers might have added any sort of Mythos monster power or technological ability to their corpse-machines. Mi-go or Yithian tech, lloigor effects, and shoggoth plasm seem most appropriate for the capricious underworlders; here are some specific possibilities at least hinted at in Lovecraft's story.

Cave-Adapted: Their masters imprinted the full pattern of the

caverns around K'n-Yan and Yoth on the y'm-bhi. They can never get lost here, and add +1 to both Alertness and Stealth modifiers in their home caves. They also never suffer penalties for darkness.

Feed-Human: These are the pure slave stock of the K'n-Yani. These values can also apply to the cattle-things beneath Exham Priory in "The Rats in the Walls." Lower all Abilities by 5; Hit Threshold becomes 3; Alertness Modifier becomes -1; attacks do -2 damage.

Horned: Like its gyaa-yothn cousins, this y'm-bhi has a short horn in the center of its forehead. It does +1 damage and can knock a foe prone as per the ghastrs's kick attack;

Difficulty of the Athletics test is the damage from the horn attack, +1 for a successful horn attack in the previous round.

Partially Dematerialized: This is a K'n-Yani citizen turned into a y'm-bhi as a punishment. A roll of 1 on an attack test automatically misses; it can reach through walls, doors, etc. If its fist attack succeeds with an unmodified 6, it does two instances of damage by dematerializing some portion of its target.

Photosensitive: Y'm-bhi must make a Difficulty 6 Health test to move into or use their abilities in bright, direct sunlight.

Reptilian: The y'm-bhi retains more of its reptile ancestry, adding a thermosensor and forked tongue. Its Alertness modifier increases to +2 against foes warmer than the background air, and against moving or odoriferous foes. However, it is cold-blooded: for every 5°F below 40°F reduce all ability ratings by 1. Its Hit Threshold drops to 3 at Athletics 4 and to 2 at Athletics 1.

Quadrupedal: A quadrupedal y'm-bhi has Hit Threshold 3 but can attack twice in a round for free.

Sting: The y'm-bhi has an implanted sting in a knee, elbow, hand, heel, tail, tongue, etc. A successful Scuffling attack with the sting does +2 damage and breaks the skin. Every round after that, the target must make a test of Health or Stability (Keeper's choice) with a Difficulty equal to the total damage done by the strike as the agonizing pain burns through his veins. Only blessed unconsciousness ends the torment.

Twitch Fibers: The K'n-Yani interwove electrical receptors and transmitters in the y'm-bhi's muscles. Its reaction time improved, it can strike more than once in a round, for a cost of 2 Scuffling or Health for the second attack, 3 for the third, etc. It can also increase its Hit Threshold by +1 for one round by spending 2 Athletics or Health.

Hideous Creatures

Possible Variations

"AFTER A MOMENT SOMETHING ABOUT THE SIZE OF A SMALL HORSE HOPPED OUT INTO THE GREY TWILIGHT, AND CARTER TURNED SICK AT THE ASPECT OF THAT SCABROUS AND UNWHOLESOME BEAST, WHOSE FACE IS SO CURIOUSLY HUMAN DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF A NOSE, A FOREHEAD, AND OTHER IMPORTANT PARTICULARS."

-- THE DREAM-QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH

These theories, truths, revelations, and lies are intentionally contradictory. Some unknown force has mutilated and manipulated the true nature of the y'm-bhi.

- The y'm-bhi take their name from the Martian cavern Yoh-Vombis, which connects hypergeometrically to the vaults of Yoth and Zin. Their unlife resembles that of the vampiric leeches who dwell therein; the K'n-Yani may have a colony on Mars.
- The word "zombie" comes not from the Kongo word *nzambi*, meaning "god" or "divine power" but from the term *y'm-bhi*. A Yig-cult of necromancers spread from the Southwest to the Caribbean before the coming of the Spanish, who accidentally destroyed it with smallpox. The cult's remnants in Hispaniola taught the escaped African slaves the art of y'm-bhi creation, with reptile poison and dead flesh.
- Herbert West's reptile flesh medium, from which he distilled his reanimating reagent, was the serpent flesh the K'n-Yani use to knit together the dead parts of their slaves. Perhaps a lone K'n-Yani even now seeks to recover it from Arkham.
- Y'm-bhi are an attempt by the Cthulhu-worshipping K'n-Yani to reverse-engineer a shoggoth: made of random pieces of empty

flesh, telepathically controlled, and servile. More progress may have been made since 1545, deeper in blue-litten Tsath.

- The telepathic energies animating the y'm-bhi are the sendings of formless Tsathoggua, neglected god of K'n-Yan. Their existence amplifies the sadism and decadence that have reduced K'n-Yan to a single inert city, punishing the god's former worshippers.

Investigation

This section provides some possible clues to the y'm-bhi or their predations. Feel free to adjust them to suit your campaign or your conception of the creatures.

Archaeology: It looks like these skeletons were all shot full of arrows; I've never seen so many arrowheads mixed in with the bones before. But there aren't any around the burial site, which almost makes it look like the bodies kept walking away from the battlefield somehow. Also, a lot of these bodies are missing some long bones, or have too many, and I'm sure something has happened to half the skulls.

Evidence Collection: Look at these tracks: some are one-footed, others bipedal, this one looks dragged along — but they're completely in step with each other. (Outdoorsman)

Forensics: The whole family looks like it was simply torn to pieces. The bodies were bent or broken, limbs dislocated and wrenched out of the sockets — but most of the bites that chewed the parts apart were post-mortem. Most of them.

Oral History: By gathering the tales of the Old Ones from aged Wichita and Pawnee on reservations all over the West, you can piece together a common narrative: "They had frightful beasts with a faint strain of human blood, on which they rode, and which they employed for other purposes. The things, so people hinted, were carnivorous, and like their masters, preferred human flesh; so that although the Old Ones themselves did

not breed, they had a sort of half-human slave-class which also served to nourish the human and animal population. This had been very oddly recruited, and was supplemented by a second slave-class of reanimated corpses. The Old Ones knew how to make a corpse into an automaton which would last almost indefinitely and perform any sort of work when directed by streams of thought." (Anthropology, or possibly Reassurance with a single centenarian medicine man)

Sense Trouble: "Then there *was* a sound—a flopping; a padding; a dull, advancing sound which heralded beyond question a being as structurally material as the pickaxe and the shovel—something wholly unlike the shadow-shapes that ringed me in, yet equally remote from any sort of life as life is understood on the earth's wholesome surface."

Scenario Starters

Any scenario with y'm-bhi in it can easily become a zombie apocalypse, at least on the local scale of one town or one small tribal reservation.

- The y'm-bhi working on a forgotten K'n-Yani tunnel break out into an isolated Western town. Without telepathic orders, they revert to defensive programming: dismember anything not a K'n-Yani master, and assemble the parts into more y'm-bhi. Irksomely, they have to brew their own *quh'mbri* -- a powerful animating adhesive — in the distillery (or moonshinery) first.
- A surgeon in remote Anadarko, Oklahoma has a remarkable success rate at restoring limbs and -- they say -- even restoring life after accidents that would be fatal anywhere else. An avid outdoorsman, he's happy to talk to the Investigators, possibly during one of his regular rides to the so-called "ghost mound" out in the hills. He sleeps there at night and returns so very inspired, so full of wonderful new surgical ideas ...