HIS FLESH BECOMES MY KEY

Venger As'Mas Satanis

His Flesh Becomes My Key

This is an eldritch pulp / investigative horror scenario especially suited for *The Outer Presence* roleplaying game. A serial killer case opens up before the investigators and leads to something beyond the usual detective story.

THINGS ARE GETTING WEIRDER

This reality currently sits on a dimensional fault-line. It's been like that for thousands of years, perhaps from the very beginning.

In our day-to-day lives, everything is fine; nothing seems too strange or out of place. Human beings enjoy long stretches of peace and quiet. It is only when forces from outside intrude upon man's slumber that we find ourselves disturbed, our delicate equilibrium upset.

The actions of cultists, magicians, scientists, dreamers, artists, writers, and revolutionaries continually agitate consensual reality because they are extensions of that unnatural, outer force. They are the personifications of that alien presence which hopes to infiltrate and overthrow our ordinary lives, our mundane systems.

For example, the weird decadent fiction of Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy has had an appreciable effect upon the world. Devoted readers screaming, rioting, destroying property, committing heinous acts, opening up a space for what's to come.

Little by little, things shift and our position worsens, leading to all sorts of dark manifestations - gateways open, grotesque abominations slither out, people dissolve into nothingness. It happens more often than you'd probably believe and occurs more frequently as time goes on. At this very moment, the Great Old Ones are awakening and those who worship them rejoice in the existential upheaval they have caused.

SENSITIVITY TRAINING

The winds of change can be felt by sensitive individuals - especially those involved in the current investigation. There's a 2 in 6 chance per PC that they will experience one of the following phenomena throughout the scenario.

While my personal preference leans hard in the traditions of old school gaming, I still occasionally advocate for cooperative elements that engage players while sharing a fraction of the narrative burden. Since the GM's hands will be full running the scenario, have the players tailor their results as they choose, and allow details to be revealed by the characters' experience.

Roll	Result
1	Picking up on subtle vibrations.
2	Flashes of anonymous people fleeing in the dark.
3	Keep seeing the same person everywhere they go - but when they take a closer look, that person is not the same.
4	Barely audible reverberation, the faint wash of discordant sounds upon the beach of perception.
5	Occasional involuntary feelings of hostility - anger, frustration, and resentment.
6	Zoning out, lulled into a dreamlike state during normal daytime activities.
7	The feeling that you're being watched.
8	Terrorized by recurring nightmares.
9	Headaches when something unsettling occurs.
10	Can hear other peoples' conversations within your head.
11	Weird symbol appears as a frequent motif in daydreams.
12	Roll twice!



A CURIOUS SNOW GLOBE

The first moment of play, as the game begins and unfolds, revolves around a curious snow globe. One of the investigators finds it on the desk of another investigator's study. All the PCs are there in the study, drinking brandy and smoking cigars, but no one is the wiser as to where the snow globe came from. It's as if it suddenly appeared out of thin air, conjured from the aether.

Looking inside the snow globe, one can see several people lounging around what appears to be an office. The GM should describe the globe's interior according to whatever the makeup of PCs currently is. For instance, if there are 4 male PCs and 1 female PC at the scenario's start, then 4 gentlemen and 1 lady appear within the snow globe.

But just as the mystery solidifies, the phone rings...

THE PHONE CALL

Normally, Richard Black is upbeat, friendly, and always ready with a joke. But on the phone today, discussing the latest case that's crossed his desk, he seems like a different person...

I'm not sure what this latest serial killer wants. That's what I'm struggling with now, why I called you. His pattern seems random... and yet, there's something here, possibly something I can use to catch him.

This latest victim makes three - a young woman, a college student. She was returning home from a lecture at Miskatonic University. The bastard cut into her - mutilated her body with symbols. I'm still researching them.

Have you ever read the work of Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy? Here's a better idea - let's go over the case in person. Have your group meet me for coffee later tonight. I could really use a second opinion, any insight that'll help us track this son of a bitch down.

NO-SHOW

The PCs' friend, Richard Black, never shows up for coffee. In fact, no one's seen or heard from him in about 6 hours.

By tomorrow morning, he's presumed missing. While finding Black is a priority, the station's manpower is

focused on catching the blood magic killer. Incidentally, it was Black who came up with "blood magic killer."

BLACK'S PARTNER

Even though Richard Black had a partner for the better part of a decade, Black and Cecil Slandy didn't see eye to eye.

Cecil keeps to himself and when he does speak, he goes off on the kind of open-minded, esoteric, and some might say "supernatural" police work that Richard Black uses to track down criminals drawn to occultism.

According to Cecil Slandy, Black was a sensationalist, exploiting victims in order to forge his reputation as the man who could catch the Devil himself. Slandy even believes that Black was writing a book chronicling some of his more thrilling cases.

When asked about Richard Black's disappearance, about as much as investigators are liable to get is a brusk "Good riddance." Cecil has no time to waste chasing after Black's ego.



Cecil is tall, thin, clean-shaven, wears a suit and tie, rarely without a pair of sunglasses or his signature watermelon-flavored lip balm.

The last time Cecil and Richard were together was last week's murder. An older man in his fifties was mutilated like the others - weird symbols carved into his flesh. Blood was spattered everywhere. Black believed the blood on the walls echoed the symbols on the victim's body. However, Slandy wasn't so sure.

As usual, Cecil disagreed on how the case should be pursued and they followed separate paths trying to solving the murder individually. Cecil Slandy looked into the victim's history while Richard Black went off to research whatever he thought he saw painted in blood.

BLACK'S FRIEND

Detective Fontineau is a mutual acquaintance and a good cop. He knows the investigators' relationship with Richard Black and is willing to let them check out Richard's desk. Maybe he was closer to finding the killer than he thought... perhaps there's even a clue to his whereabouts spread out over the papers, folders, post-it notes, coffee cups, candy wrappers, empty bag of chips, etc.

The first thing that catches an investigator's eye is Richard's black notebook - it's lying open-faced on top of a stack of papers. He used this as a personal journal, allowing him to record and reflect all the wild speculation that popped into his head while working a case.

A bit of prose written at an odd, angle curving in on itself is the only thing visible when the notebook is first seen...

"...rarely without a pair of sunglasses or his signature watermelonflavored lip balm." He comes from a realm of shadow Some call him Master He answers to Others Those from Outside Outside the walls Never to be heard from within All of them met their cruel fate He wrote on them - why? What is the message? Why are they his messengers? How many more will have to be sacrificed? I need to find him. I know he has answers He can tell me more about what is to come....

RICHARD BLACK'S NOTEBOOK

Many topics are mentioned, but only a cursory examination is ever provided. The following subjects, accompanied by fragmentary notation, can be found within Richard Black's personal journal...

Theta Chartreuse - some kind of end-of-the-world cult, possibly a government agency? Why do they call themselves that? What's the significance of "theta" and "chartreuse?" Could they be referring to quantum waves penetrating the boundaries of dark matter that separate dimensions?



H.P. Lovecraft - is his work fiction? Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy seems to have tied into his weird audience. Modern times means a larger, more rabid fanbase with greater understanding of things from outside.

Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy - the first three victims all had a connection to this scifi/horror author. Is there a reason why he'd be killing those around him?

There's something else of importance contained within Black's notebook. It's a green flyer - crumpled and faded from exposure - looking for individuals to join some kind of group called The Brotherhood of Gleaming Divulgence. The flyer briefly mentions a fast approaching global holocaust of emerald fire. At the bottom, the typed message appeals to an esoteric teaching that will protect one from annihilation.

Richard Black circled the phone number provided on the flyer - next to it he wrote "Disconnected."

Investigators who use the police's resources to trace the flyer's phone number find that it leads to a downtown apartment from a couple years ago, #111. No one remembers who the tenants were, not even the landlord. However, either a current tenant or landlord does vaguely remember a man in his thirties who was living in the building at that time - seen going in and out at odd hours. Overall, his appearance was nondescript, except for his eyes; they looked right through you, there was something disturbing or creepy about him.

If the apartment is thoroughly searched, a couple of loose floorboards reveal a sealed letter. Inside, a typed prose poem...

Does man deserve the stars? Hath he the capacity to understand their terrible beauty? I think not.

l've seen the glowing in my dreams A strange kind of glimmer Secrets let out of the bag a summer too soon

I shall begin The Great Work when the stars are right My special plan for this world As a greenish fire consumes us

BLACK'S APARTMENT

At least one of the investigators has been to Richard Black's home in the last few months. He lives in a twobedroom apartment on the first floor of a four-story building. Richard lives alone, but frequently has female company. The signs are there - women's clothing, tampons, an open bottle of white wine in the fridge, etc.

Richard sleeps in one of the bedrooms, the other he uses as an office. The desk is rather tidy compared to his desk at the precinct. The only noteworthy clue is a small idol sitting between the stapler and pencilsharpener. The statuette is of some monstrous amphibian or possibly reptilian creature, the suggestion of arachnoid features making it seem even more unreal and terrifying.

Why he has the statuette is a mystery. No one on the police force is aware of it coming from a previous or current investigation. There's nothing written about it in his office. But there is a short passage in the black notebook...

A merchant sold me the likeness of Tal'jezakbahr, and I stare at it nightly - waiting for some kind of inspiration or possibly even demonstration of its loathsome influence.

Buried in the back of Richard Black's bedroom closet is a worn wooden box about half the size of a briefcase. A simple latch keeps it closed. If the PCs open it, they find an odd assortment of items:

- A crucifix made of ivory
- A corked clear vial of liquid with a cross in it.
- Various smaller vials containing a variety of what looks like small stones.
- A beat-up pocket-sized Bible. Flipping through the pages, it is clear that Richard has used it to jot various notes in the margins. Passages are underlined and still other pages have been ripped out completely... all seemingly at random.
- Parchment etched with chalk. These pages contain demonic glyphs along with various phrases written in Latin (something along the lines of "Save me from the luminous green flames that shall cleanse my soul").

If the PCs empty the entire box, they notice a false bottom containing random bits of currency, a false passport, and one more parchment piece... this one is like the others, except inked in blood.

BLACK'S LOVE INTEREST

Richard Black has a thing for prostitutes. In his younger days on the force, he'd use the authority of his badge to exact favors from working girls. Black enjoyed their flesh just as much as he enjoyed using the moral power vested in him to satisfy his darker impulses.

Black's current girlfriend, Treena, is a prostitute, but she pursued him just as much as he manipulated the law in order to sleep with her. She's staying at Richard's apartment.

Treena is both sexy and sexual. She doesn't believe in subtlety, all of her charms are front and center for everyone to see. Dark hair, athletic build, large breasts for her slender frame, long legs, mysterious eyes, and multiple tattoos - her ink vaguely resembles the strange symbols found on those three bodies. If asked, she replies that she's a big fan of Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy. The glyphs are vividly described in his seventh horror novel -*Signs of the Apocalypse Approacheth*.

One clue she can provide is that a horror convention is being held right now in the city. Black was going to attend on the off chance that Thomas Lovejoy himself might be there, or perhaps an author of minor renown following in Lovejoy's literary bloody footprints... Anthony Harris, for instance.

Besides that, Treena doesn't have much to offer the investigators presently, but she'll take their card and call them if she hears from Richard or discovers anything of value. The next day, Treena will call the investigators with some knowledge she wants to share - someone is following her. A weird looking guy with curly hair, mustache, and leering eyes.

If the PCs immediately drop whatever they're doing and rush over to her, they will prevent her from coming to harm. If they delay or decide her information is more valuable than protecting her, Treena will become the next victim.

If killed, one of Treena's eyes is scooped out and inserted within her vagina. There's a slim chance (1d6, 5 or better) that one or more PCs realize that a similar ritual killing occurred in one of Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy's books. What this says about the killer, Treena, and the Lovejoy Mythos is up to the investigators to figure out.

DID RICHARD BLACK GO NATIVE?

There is a bit of speculation on whether Richard Black could have fallen in with one or more organizations determined to hasten the apocalypse. But why? Are the lures of power, notoriety, or survival controlling him somehow?

> If the investigators attempt to track down the man Richard Black was supposed to meet the night he disappeared, they can do so. The information could be in his notebook or Black's informant - Jay Harango - may contact Cecil Slandy, Detective Fontineau, or even one of the PCs looking into Black's disappearance.

> > Jay Harango is a contact who works in government; he was going to tell Black about a para-military agency that specifically mentioned the Lovejoy Mythos in its statement of intent (a memo telling certain individuals why the organization was recently formed). The only thing that sticks in his mind is the statement's goal - To see the

earth cleansed of unworthiness via spectral green flame.

Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy - prolific, speculative science-fiction and horror author who is currently hard at work on his 17th novel - *The Whispering From Outside*. Thomas is in his mid-forties, average height and build. He's won several prestigious awards for genre fiction over the last decade.

His last couple books delved into the resurrection of an ancient, malevolent god and the cult that worships him. Readers find the works of Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy strangely compelling, though many are not sure quite why they're so responsive to his writing. Most frequent commentary on his work: he makes the implausible seem plausible.

PRIOR VICTIMS

Cynthia DeMoines - Thomas Lovejoy's sister who changed her name after she married.

Conrad Sappling - Thomas Lovejoy's literary agent of almost twenty years.

Susan Kozinski - a former girlfriend of Thomas Lovejoy. They dated for a few years but they mutually ended the relationship over a year ago. Prior to her death, Susan was in a relationship with a mutual friend and colleague of Lovejoy - Anthony Harris.

FUTURE VICTIMS

Anthony Harris - a fellow writer and even collaborator on a horror novel with Thomas Lovejoy towards the beginning of his career. That particular book was not as successful and Lovejoy hasn't co-authored a book since then.

Harris is currently in the city because of a horror convention, which makes him an enviable target for Stanton LaVry.

If the PCs wait too long before finding and confronting the serial killer, Anthony Harris will be found skinned in a hotel room above the main convention hall. Harris' skin will also have symbols carved into it. Stanton believed that wearing this author's flesh might also grant him special powers... unfortunately, it doesn't. He needs to wear the skin of Thomas Lovejoy. **Thomas Alhazred Lovejoy -** Lovejoy is, indeed, shook up about the murders connected to him. If no investigator has contacted him and Anthony Harris is killed, he will go to the police - assuring them that he's not the murderer, but someone might be targeting him.

Up until Harris' death, Lovejoy will be at the horror convention, signing books, heading panel discussions, and talking to fans.

After Anthony Harris is murdered, the killer intends to cut those same glyphs into Lovejoy himself, then skin him and wear the author's flesh like a wet and sticky cloak of gore. The killer believes that wearing Lovejoy's flesh will favorably mark him, allowing Tal'jezakbahr to recognize his greatness so that his worthy servant may pass into the darkness between worlds - liberated from the emerald inferno that will surely come!

STANTON LaVRY

This is the bug-eyed, black-clad weirdo who reads too much scifi and horror and has saturated himself in the apocalyptic occultism of fringe political groups and religious sects.

It all became real for Stanton when he called upon a minor demon that Lovejoy wrote about in one of his many books. The demon actually appeared and convinced Stanton to sign his name into an ungainly, moldering tome of hideous blasphemy. After signing his name, he became a pawn in the game for man's continued survival.

The serial killer is murdering all the people close to the author in order to manifest the fictional reality of Thomas' novels. The killer believes that as Lovejoy's dread rises, the author's fear will start the change... essentially making the apocalyptic world of Lovejoy's writing come to life. A crazy idea, to be sure, however a prominent theme in Lovejoy's novels is the unstable nature of reality, that it is malleable, susceptible to the oldest and most powerful emotion - fear; especially, fear of the unknown. When the stars are right, reality is subject to the whims of madmen, sorcerers, and high priests.

The old and evil godlike being is named Tal'jezakbahr and his worshipers are called The Brotherhood of Gleaming Divulgence - they are the soothsayers who



know the end is coming and celebrate earth's destruction... burned to a cinder by otherworldly green flame.

WHAT HAPPENED TO BLACK?

Richard Black was banished to the chartreuse zone underneath The Chamber. Stanton LaVry decided to punish Black for meddling in higher (or lower, perhaps) affairs, rather than kill him outright. Stanton also wanted a guinea pig to test the book's powers of teleportation before he used it himself.

THE RITUAL ROOM

Stanton LaVry will attempt to shanghai Lovejoy either after Anthony Harris' murder or if his attempt on Harris' life fails.

If Lovejoy is protected from harm, Stanton will rely on his grandfather's book of demonology and spells summoning tentacles to erupt out of the ground and steal the coveted author away. Shooting the tentacles does nothing to slow them down and might harm Lovejoy if he's already being carried off by one or more of them. The PCs will need to use some kind of mystical weapon to cut through the tentacles' slimy, suckered green flesh.

If Lovejoy is taken by the tentacles, investigators may be able to sense where he is. Those who already have the gift or PCs who are sensitive to the world slowly sliding into a chasm of irrevocable horror can attempt to focus their mental energy to feel the author's presence.

If he has anything to say about it, Stanton's last stand will take place in the attic of his current home - an apartment complex called The Wayne building. If there are intruders, Stanton will use a dagger kept in a sheath strapped to his belt.

Within the ritual chamber, the PCs will find Lovejoy bound by the aforementioned tentacles, Stanton LaVry, and Stanton's familiar - a satanic little imp who can transform himself into a black cat at will. Of course, the book will also be there - perched upon an ornate lectern and surrounded by the dim and sinister light of green lamps.

THE BOOK

Investigators examining the book will see their names written in blood upon its yellowed, crumbling pages. Once an investigator reads his name within the book, a small black shadow appears upon a nearby wall. The shadow is utterly devoid of light. In fact, one can pass through the blackness. If a hand goes inside, it disappears. If a person steps entirely inside, he can see what is beyond.

Any PC who brings the book along or tarries a few moments to skim that section of the book will come across a passage that describes imprisonment and a freedom that can only be earned by wearing the skin of one's oppressor.

'Investigators examining the book will see their names written in blood upon its yellowed, crumbling pages.'

THE THRESHOLD

The investigators find themselves in a darkened room, but not an ordinary dark room... this place is special. For a few moments, everything appears purest black, unadulterated void.

Then a door opens on the far side of the room. There's a soft yellowish-green light coming from whatever is beyond. A man steps into the doorway. Most of his features are cloaked in shadow, yet there's something unsettling about his silhouette. Just as soon as he appeared, the shadowy man disappears in the blackness.



The doorway on the far side of the room is still open, still throwing unsettling chartreuse illumination into the void. Walking to the other side of the room and moving through the doorway will bring investigators to The Chamber.

THE CHAMBER

This area is not all black, but made of stone and mortar. Upon the flagstone floor is carved a strange symbol containing jagged lines that almost form a five-pointed star with tentacles hanging down from it. The incomprehensible glyph glows a sickly yellowgreen which provides enough illumination to see the entire room.

Those investigating the carved symbol on the floor notice one of the flagstones is cracked and loose. Removing a fragment of stone from the floor reveals intense chartreuse light. Once that stone has been extracted, others can more easily be lifted out and removed.

BENEATH THE CHAMBER

From a bird's eye view, investigators can see nothing but endless cacophony deep within a vast cavern. Everything is bathed in a demoniacal radiance of chartreuse, without a discernible point of origin. There are human beings killing each other, as well as, those engaged in orgiastic exertions. Ecstatic screams are heard and many visibly suffer from some form of madness. Aside from murder, investigators watch rape, torture, corpse desecration, self-mutilation, and cruelty of all sorts - every horror and pleasure imaginable is being perpetrated before their very eyes.

Investigators will notice steps going from their lofty perch down to the outskirts of this free-for-all.

Something that vaguely resembles a gargantuan, corpulent toad-spider sprawls out at the center of this nightmare. The creature gazes at the hideous spectacle all around it, a red forked tongue lolling back and forth, salivating with unwholesome anticipation.

A circle of pale, nubile witches dance around the immense beast, their lithe bodies shiny with perspiration. Frequent shouts of "Tal'jezakbahr" can be

heard as the witches lasciviously gyrate around their batrachian-arachnid master. The witches frolic and sway to the distant sound of flutes and drums and dissonant reverberations echoing throughout the alien-lit cavern. Just outside the witch-circle stands an extremely tall humanoid who is either wearing a mask or has a visage of distorted flesh. Unlike his god, it appears that this strange servitor is attempting to direct the nightmare in some fashion.

Keen-eyed investigators will spy Richard Black ducking, dodging, hiding, and moving away from the crazed humans in this greenish hell-pit.

Assuming the PCs don't take immediate action... a couple minutes later, one of the cavern's humanoid inhabitants sees the investigators. He points, shouting something unintelligible. When his gaze meets that of the investigators, the chartreuse-hued dweller of the cavern begins to melt into a pool of liquid flesh.

Meanwhile, the chaos witches circling Tal'jezakbahr turn their lustful attention to these interlopers. They motion for the investigators to join them in their libidinous dancing. Investigators with sufficient willpower may attempt to resist traveling below to join the brides of Tal'jezakbahr.

It just so happens that the only way out of this new reality is to find The Servitor amongst the revelers. Roll

'When his gaze meets that of the investigators, the chartreuse-hued dueller of the cavern begins to melt into a pool of liquid flesh.'



a d6 on the following table for each investigator who walks among the pandemonium.

AMIDST THE THRONG

Roll	Result
1	Several men are yelling at each other about something written down in a holy book. It looks as though they are about to fight to the death.
2	A woman is raping a man with a phallus while he's fornicating with another woman and about to cut her throat with a dagger.
3	A humanoid that seems neither male nor female is ripping out the guts of a giant toad with their bare hands.
4	Two men are taking turns whipping a woman; dozens of lash marks are visible upon her back and legs.
5	Several men and women are engaged in feverish copulation.
6	A man heats a piece of metal in greenish flame, then proceeds to gouge out his eyes with it.

THE SERVITOR

After their random encounter, the investigators see the humanoid standing just beyond the circle of dancing witches. He is nearly 8' tall and wearing a strange mask that makes his appearance seem inhuman. The Servitor faces Tal'jezakbahr with arms outstretched.

The Servitor is annoyed if interrupted. He's basking in the glory of Tal'jezakbahr in hopes of gleaning yet more knowledge that can only exist beneath our universe's surface.

If questioned, The Servitor will gladly volunteer that only he has the ability to send the investigators back to their home world, except, of course, for his god. However, The Servitor demands a toll in exchange for their deliverance.

Whatever is offered (unless it's their souls) makes The Servitor laugh uncontrollably and is dismissed without a second thought. When the PCs have finished, The Servitor takes off his mask and looks straight into their eyes. His face is a hideous parody of the human form... then it begins to melt; the oozing strips of flesh revealing an inconceivable void beneath.

HORRIFIC REVELATION

In that moment, the investigators snap back home, finding themselves again in the PC's study - drinking brandy, smoking cigars, and lounging in their wellappointed office. Nothing seems amiss. The events of the last couple days are fresh in everyone's mind, and yet... it all seems so distant and dreamlike.

Slowly, everyone's perspective pulls back, revealing the investigative team inside a snow globe. There are people looking at the snow globe from the outside they look very much like the investigators themselves.

Then the phone rings; it's Richard Black and the scenario carries on just as it did originally. The only way to break the cycle is for at least one investigator to skin The Servitor and wear his flesh. If the PCs get stuck the first time around, they'll have another chance to make things right... and another... and another.

Skinning and wearing The Servitor's flesh will send the PCs back home the right way - not cursed to live inside a snow globe and endlessly repeat the last 48 hours forever.

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