

The ABYSS



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The Abyss

CENOTAPHIUM

Issue 4 ~ liber os abysmi vel daath

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Recommened for Mature audiences.

www.kult-rpg.org



All future issues of Cenotaphium are on submission basis through The Abyss site in e-mail to the co-ordinators.
Art, poetry, and literature will be featured in coming issues. The Abyss welcomes all submissions.

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Made for the Kult Roleplaying Game
For Mature Readers

"The Abyss is a not-for-profit worldwide corporation whose aim is to encourage a new publishing company to buy the rights to the Kult role-playing game and bring it back into print. We run an extensive outreach campaign to attract new gamers, and we produce high-quality new material and distribute it for free on the Internet in order to keep gamers interested."

~ www.kult-rpg.org ~

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Fiction

Joel Sammallahiti © 2000

Gym Bag

A man walks into a bar. It's a dark, gray place, sort of big with a lot of tables. Some mirrors and old photographs are hanging lazily on the walls. Cigarette smoke swims through the air like shining oil in some unlucky sea.

The man is tall and of strong build. He wears a dirty black overcoat on his body and a frozen expression on his ruggedly handsome but disturbing face. He has a large gym bag hanging from his left shoulder and the fingers of his left hand are slowly rapping on its surface. He looks at the people in the bar. There is a tired-looking woman in her thirties behind the counter, and several men of all ages sitting at tables, talking in a low voice and drinking. He walks to the counter and orders a bottle of some stingy-tasting hard spirit. His left hand is still resting on the gym bag. Taking a few sips and finally a gulp, he looks around at the other customers. Then he puts down the bottle and slips his right hand into one of the many Pockets of his coat, to pull out an old deck of playing cards. He holds the deck up and speaks.

"In this bag," he says, "I have half a million German marks in used cash. I will play a game of poker with any one of you. If you win, you will get this bag and everything in it. If I win, I will go to another bar and make my offer to the people there." His baritone voice is devoid of emotion, dry and harsh, not unlike a loud whisper.

Silence follows.

"Is there someone who will play with me?" He looks around, still wearing the same expression. Some turn back to the conversations they were having before this strange offer was announced. There is some murmur in the background, and it sounds like some do not believe there to be money in the gym bag. But just as the last people are about to turn their eyes from the man with the bag and the deck, one speaks up.

"I'll play with you." The speaker is a short man, perhaps in his 50's. He is completely bald, but has a large moustache and a goatee, both pitch black. He is wearing a black suit and has a tall wooden cane. He holds out his hand and introduces himself as the Devil.

"Charmed, I'm certain," says the man with the bag and shakes the Devil's hand, putting the deck back in his pocket for a moment. "Where shall our game take place?"

The Devil smiles a glad, honest smile, very unlike the grin one might usually picture the Devil with. His movements are graceful and elegant as he leads the man to an adjacent room. It is small and black, housing a fine red carpet upon which stand two large armchairs and a table, all grotesquely carved of what would appear to be the finest ebony. The Devil closes the door and they sit down. The man shuffles, and the Devil cuts and deals. Normal 5-card poker, deuces wild.



~::Edge of Passion by Peter Amthor::~~



Not surprisingly, the Devil wins the game. He and the man stand up.

"My... Prizzzzze?" The Devil eagerly hisses, his forked tongue momentarily writhing its way out between his pursed lips.

"Here you go," the man says, handing over the bag. "It's all there."

"No doubt."

The Devil takes the bag and places it on the table. He first observes its shape and size. Both seem to please him. Then he opens the zipper. Looking inside, he smiles a smile that almost reaches from one ear to another. Slowly, he peels the gym bag off what is held inside, uncovering a pale, stiff object half-covered in crumpled german notes. On the table is the corpse of a beautiful little girl. Her face is white and calm, and she is dressed in a light blue gown, the sort princesses in fairy tales invariably wear.

"You naughty, naughty boy," The Devil says to the man, finally grinning as the devil should.

Briefly, the man's stringy expression is broken to show a smile, and then to consume his face again. He turns around, opens the door, and walks through the bar to the door he came in from. There he turns to look back at all the people for a moment; and leaves.

Little Nudges 1

The funeral was held in spite of obvious defects, for the sake of common decency. Afterwards Gregorias Torello had an abundant meal. The wind was wailing in a monotonous manner as it hastily traveled through the house, but mister Torello paid it no mind. The gastronomical delights slammed onto his silver plate: steaks, aspics, chops, fillets, collars, black puddings et cetera were disappearing each faster than the last into his maw. One should not suppose that mister Torello did not love his wife. Heloved her fiercely, each day and every night, but her lack of skill in the kitchen was simply too much to bear. "Irony?" mister Torello pondered.

Greasy fingers grabbed a bone with great fury and slipped it into his already gaping mouth, stretched by gluttony. Making disturbing sounds, he sucked the last bits of meat and sinew from the bone, not forgetting the delicious marrow. Plump hands were already fingering the next bit, as he prepared to spit the white refuse into the pile waiting at his side. It wasn't a big pile yet, but then again, mister Torello wasn't even halfway through.

"Jasper!" he hollered and burped in a waggish manner.

Jasper arrived without delay, the good servant he was. With dexterity he snatched the silver plate and rushed to the kitchen. His master had barely readjusted the position of the serviette on his lap, when the plate returned on the table before him. Waiting no longer, mister Torello resumed his supping.

Little Nudges 2

A crucifix hangs from my neck at the level of my genitals. I wear nothing more; I am dressed in the mercy of the Lord. Each morning I rise from my bed and go to the alley. There I wave the crucifix, a beautiful bronze image of Christ, begging for my daily bread. I say:

"Help ye, give ye and be blessed."

"These days there is not enough for ourselves," they answer.

"He will return," I call at their backs, while they huddle away from me.

Often the phalanxmen come and kick me. They beat me with their sticks and call me debased. I then recite His sacred word to them. They beat me more. Sometimes the Holy Spirit enters me and I fight back. Most times I merely turn the other cheek.

Once a small boy came to me, when I was lying in the gutter, bleeding. He asked, if I needed help. I told him the Father would help me.



He said: "My father is dead."

I yelled to him furiously, that the Father is not dead. For the Father can never die, He is almighty, eternally. I waved the crucifix. And what did he do? The boy cried! When I was preaching the gospel to him, the Lord's evangelion! So I grabbed him by the chest and began to cast the demons out of him.

Then the phalanxmen came. I have not seen the boy after what happened. I pray for him.

Little Nudges 3

Cut, cut and another one, yet a fourth cut and the first set of incisions was finished. The tall, leathery woman placed her dry fingers onto his chest and with slow care and precision removed the rectangle of skin separated by her knife. His wings were twitching a bit, but she calmed them with her cool touch like many times before. The skin resting upon the table's edge, she placed the blade on her own belly, and repeated the moves once again. Cut, cut, cut, cut. This piece was, in comparison to the other, discolored, thin and brittle. The shape was exactly identical.

Everything was as it should be. Pierce. Draw. Pat it a bit to make sure the contact between his flesh and her old skin was not broken. No air should be left between them.

The stitching did not require as much precision as the cutting, of course. It was more monotonous, more securely based on routine. She wiped the tears from his cheeks. "Hush. It's finished." He stood up, still weeping. As always, she wrapped the blade and the needle in the piece of skin she'd removed from his chest and left.



~::Lurker by Peter Amthor::~~



My own little lie

PeterAmthor © 2000

Contained within this section is bits and pieces of the way my Kult setting is portrayed. Little changes here and there. A tweak over there and over here as well. What do I disregard from the published material and what do I disregard from the net material. Each of runs out little part of reality a little different than everyone else. So here's my views and opinions. Hopefully each month I will be able to bring you a bit or two of information that may influence your thoughts or help generate some other ideas. Oh and if you have your own lies that you use please submit them in for everyone to gaze upon.

~:: PeterAmthor::~~

Effects of Time and Space rituals

Whenever someone effects some of the main strands that make up the illusion they are in for a few more side effects than anything I found in the books. Without either of these in effect we would be able to sense that something was wrong and this would lead to us chancing upon awakening that much easier. Therefore in my games Time and Space are two essential principles that must always be taken note of. I added in a few side effects that come along with the process of messing with those two principles.

Its getting cold out here. Whenever time is slowed down the energy in the area is also slowed down as well. Now with the energy going slower that means that it will be generating less heat. This doesn't amount to much on the lower end of the scale in the rituals. A few degrees lower in the room is about all. But when you start climbing up towards the higher levels thats when things start to happen. Windows will start to frost over, the caster(s) will start to see their breaths. Even up to freak snow storms suddenly cropping up in the off season.

Did you feel that? When one becomes a user of time and space they become intimate with the very feel of its fabric. Its like a blanket that always surround them. What happens when someone nearby starts to mess with the blanket? In other words these conjurers have the ability to 'feel' when someone or something is messing around nearby. They usually don't know exactly where, who or what they are doing, they just know someone is doing something. The amount of disturbance they feel and how far away they will feel it is again based of the level of the ritual being performed.

How'd that crack get there? Changing the way things relate to each other in the illusions scale of space has the potential to cause some damage. If the location the spell is being performed in is unstable it may develop cracks in its surface causing its structural integrity to degrade. Glass may crack and break or develop that 'warped' look with a rainbow of colors in the light. High tech equipment may develop problems with problems in the silicon shifting. If its a person involved in the shift than any Global Positioning System equipment they have on them will be unable to figure out what happen and lock up.

Chokmah

This Archon is alive... sort of. He was one of the Archons that disappeared but was not killed. After the Demiurge vanished an open war between the Kether and Chokmah developed. This helped escalate the fight between all the others and with Astaroth and his Angels of Death. During this he disappeared. Many thought that he had been slain in the fight. In actuality he foresaw the war in true reality as a dead end. That the fight would be decided by who controlled the illusion and those contained within. What better place to control the illusion than from within it.

What he did next he did in total privacy. Telling none of his most trusted followers, allies or supporters he dissolved his consciousness into the very fabric of the illusion. This left his old shell behind to fall into ruin (his Citidel) letting the others believe that he was dead. Now he exists in all those who have faith in thier religion, well at least those created or supported by Chokmah. His effects in the war are subtle and hidden. He manipulates all religions toward a central



hidden goal as they gain more power once again. He is the Archon with the most control over the illusion as well as pulling off the second greatest faked death ever. Now you may wonder how does this affect the game on the pawn level?

Well having a character having faith in thier god takes on a new level of power. Chokmah now has a deeper and more full understanding of mankind. When they talk he listens and does whatever he can to bolster thier beliefs. Nothing real major. Every now and then a prayer will be answered. A leader will have a vision. A miricle happens. Something that will make his unknowing followers all that more dedicated.

Several Seraphim have found themselves with a new understanding and gaining in strength. As well as influencing humans Chokmah has also been secretly aiding a few other beings as well. The Seraphim serve as a tool to help fuel the Christian beliefs (one of Chokmahs greater successes). With them being used by whoever gained control over them could potentially harm this massive belief system. That would simply not do. Diverting some of the influx of power from the faithful into these beings along with some implanted thoughts and ideas he begin wrenching them from everyone elses control. Giving them more independent thought and healing them of the wounds they have suffered during thier time in the illusion. Now they strike out at those who captivated them. This could lead to some very interesting encounters if the players where nearby when one of these lashings out occured.

Chokmah doesn't have one central body any longer. Instead he is present in several of the core religious buildings around the world. Cracks that have existed for centuries slowly 'heal' up. Those inside are a little harder to be controlled by any outside forces. Anybody not of the religion that the building is dedicated to seem to get the feeling of always being watched by someone unseen.



~::Altar by Peter Amthor::~~



The Art of Hunger

Matthew Boroson © 1998

You can play this scenario two different ways, depending on how much you trust your players. Ideally, your players are excellent, and you can situate "The Art of Hunger" in the anacalyptic dreamworld of Nywere; they have lost their memories, and while they wander this surreal, ravaged desert, they play out most of the scenario in "flashback," as they try to recover their memories and figure out what they must do to get back to the waking world.

In this case, the characters wander through this dreamworld, not knowing how they got where they are. They wander around a gray-sanded desert, a crashed plane, a black ocean. Submarines emerge from the sand and then descend again. Wispy children can be seen, but they disappear before you reach them. A man has grown into the ground. After a few minutes wandering aimlessly, you can lead them through the rest of the adventure, as a flashback.

Otherwise, with a group you don't trust so much, you can just start at the beginning. There are three parts to "The Art of Hunger," one in the PCs' home town, one in Nigeria, and one in the dreamworlds.

Part I

This part focuses on one of the PCs, preferably a female character with high comeliness. A psyphagus kidnaps the dreamself of this PCs; if there are no female characters, she will go after the male with highest comeliness.

The psyphagus had been human once, a woman named Eileen Ptalis, whose eating disorder starved her out of the waking world. When she has control of the PC's body, she will begin her self-destructive pattern again, starving again, except for the drinks men buy her in clubs.

The PC, meanwhile, remains imprisoned in the world of dreams. Her prison is in the shape of an enormous mouth--the floor is salivating--except there are steel bars where the teeth would be. Behind the bars, an awestruck crowd watches her with perverse admiration while a carnival barker shouts out facts about "the hunger artist," a la Kafka, who has gone seventy, eighty days without eating. The PC's dreamself begins to wither.

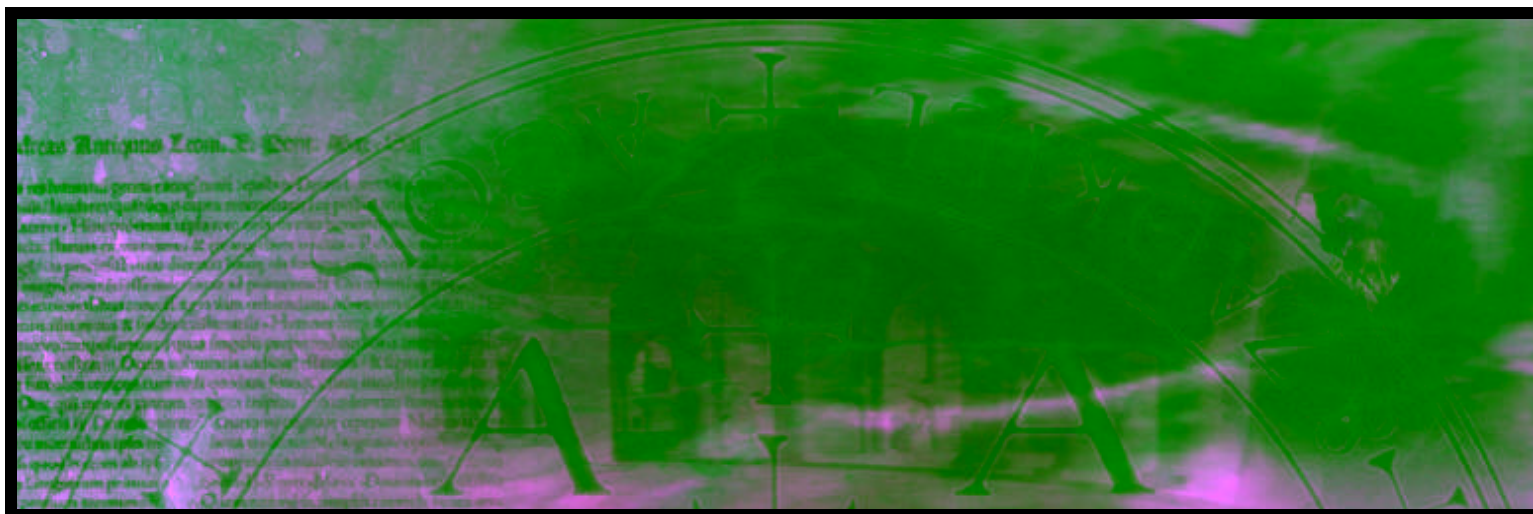
Meanwhile, the psyphagus is doing more and more self-destructive things with her host-body. The other PCs are bound to notice she's acting strangely, but they won't understand the reasons. She goes to a club one night and agrees to join five men for a gang-bang. While there, she learns something she isn't supposed to know, and they kidnap her.

Eventually, the PC will try to escape the nightmare's mouth, where she's held captive. If she goes to the back of the tongue, forces her way down the throat, the dreamprison will vomit her out--it is, after all, bulimic. Even if the PC thought of this right away, several days will have passed in the waking world. Now she can take control of her body again.

Yes, take control of her body, held captive by hit men, because the psyphagus that had possessed her learned something that the PC doesn't know. Take control of her body, already weak and withered from a few days' debauchery and starvation.

If the other PCs aren't hot on her trail by this point, then you should allow her to make contact with them; they can rescue her or help her escape, but it shouldn't be possible for her to escape without assistance.

But even once she has escaped, hit men are sent after her and the PCs. The PCs are hunted by the police; they've been identified as the ones who robbed the local headquarters of Hayward Emergency Aid, killing two people along the way. The PCs need to realize that some powerful people think they know something that they don't.



~::Apotome by Jason Just::~~

They need to return to the dreamworlds and confront the psyphagus Eileen Ptalis--what did she see? She'll only tell them if they agree to find another body for her, a skinny one--any player with a sense of irony will enjoy this later on, in famine-stricken Nigeria.

The men who gangbanged the psyphagus were hit men. They'd been given a contract to go to Nigeria and kill a man named Maoro Nakemi, a charismatic African leader and an inspiration for the Pan-African movement. When Nakemi disappeared in the 1950s, he wasn't a young man, so it seems strange that someone would go to all these troubles to kill him.

It isn't strange. Nakemi was the envoy of the archon Chesed. When Nakemi vanished, so did the archon; and now Gamichicoth, as Jonathan Hayward, wants to make sure Chesed doesn't return.

Maoro Nakemi was a man of action and also a man with a dream, a dream of a unified Africa. But the dream also had its despair, its nightmare, in which Africa was torn with civil war, devastated by disease and hunger. He slipped into this despair, and found its mirror in the dreamworlds of Samara Nyeme. He's been there for almost fifty years now.

The psyphagus can give the PCs a vivid image of all the hit men who were dispatched to kill Nakemi, which will prove to be a great advantage. She can tell them the name of the Nigerian village where the hit men went. She can also tell them that she's seen Nakemi before, somewhere in dreams.

Part II

The characters need to go to Nigeria. How they do this is up to you.

Nigeria is not an easy place to be. The following statements are excerpts from the U.S. State Department's Consular Information Sheet on travel in Nigeria: "The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the dangers of travel to Nigeria. Nigeria has limited tourist facilities and poses considerable risks to travelers. Violent crime, practiced by persons in police and military uniforms, as well as by ordinary criminals, is an acute problem throughout the country. Use of public transportation throughout Nigeria, including taxis, is dangerous and should be avoided. Nigerian airlines have aging fleets, and the U.S. Embassy is concerned that maintenance and operational procedures may be inadequate to ensure passenger safety....



"Violent crime affecting foreigners is an extremely serious problem, especially in Lagos and the southern half of the country. Visitors, as well as resident Americans, report widespread armed muggings, assaults, burglary, carjackings and extortion, often involving violence. Carjackings, roadblock robberies and armed break-ins occur often, with victims sometimes shot by assailants for no apparent reason. Reports of armed robberies in broad daylight on rural roads in the northern half of the country appear to be increasing. Law enforcement authorities usually respond to crimes slowly, if at all, and provide little or no investigative support to victims. While tighter security measures have reduced the danger of pickpockets and con artists inside Murtala Muhammad Airport, such persons are still commonly found outside the terminal building.

"In addition to harassment and shake-downs of U.S. citizens by officials at airports and throughout Nigeria, there have been isolated but troubling reports of violent attacks by purported government officials on U.S. citizens and other foreigners. The Nigerian government has not responded meaningfully to complaints by the U.S. Embassy in Lagos and the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. concerning these abuses and attacks, nor is there any indication that the officers involved have been disciplined. Upon arrival in Nigeria, U.S. citizens are urged to register at the U.S. Embassy in Lagos where they may obtain current information and advice on minimizing risks....



~::Nomenclature of Subject No. 6 by Jason Just::~~

"Nigeria experiences civil unrest, violence and strikes. The causes and locations vary. Locations where outbreaks of violence have occurred include the Lagos area, southwestern Nigeria, the oil-producing states in the southeast, and Kaduna State. The number of unauthorized automobile checkpoints has increased. These checkpoints are operated by armed bands of police, soldiers, or bandits posing as or operating with police or soldiers. Many incidents, including murder, illustrate the increasing risks of road travel in Nigeria. Reports of threats against firms and foreign workers in the petroleum sector recur from time to time. Chadian troop incursions have occurred at the border area in the far northeast, near Lake Chad. Incidents also occur in the southeast in the disputed Bakassi Peninsula at the border area between Nigeria and Cameroon.

"U.S. citizens have not been specifically targeted in such disturbances, however, they and their vehicles may inadvertently become caught in a demonstration or disturbance. Tensions resulting from fuel and electricity shortages, and the delayed process of transition from military rule to an elected government, heightened by death sentences announced in April 1998 for alleged coup plotters, may result in further unrest and disturbances. For example, the period around June 12 (the anniversary of the 1993 annulled presidential election), is a time to be especially mindful of security concerns, to exercise particular caution and to avoid public gatherings....



"Safety of Public Transportation: Poor

"Urban Road Conditions/Maintenance: Poor

"Rural Road conditions/Maintenance: Poor

"Availability of Roadside Assistance: Poor

"Roads are generally in poor condition, causing damage to vehicles and contributing to hazardous traffic conditions. Excessive speed, unpredictable driving habits, and the lack of basic maintenance and safety equipment on many vehicles are additional hazards. There are few traffic lights or stop signs. Motorists seldom yield the right-of-way and give little consideration to pedestrians and cyclists. Gridlock is common in urban areas.

"The rainy season from May to October is especially dangerous because of flooded roads. Night driving should be avoided for several reasons. Bandits and police roadblocks are more numerous at night. Streets are very poorly lit and many vehicles lack one or both headlights. From time to time, chronic fuel shortages lead to long lines at service stations, disrupting or even blocking traffic for extended periods.

"Public transportation vehicles are both unsafe and overcrowded. Passengers in local taxis have been driven to secluded locations where they are attacked and robbed. Several of the victims have required hospitalization. The Embassy advises that public transportation throughout Nigeria is dangerous and should be avoided.

"Medical Facilities: Medical facilities are limited; not all medicines are available. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate or sometimes prior cash payment for health services...."

As you can see, travel through Nigeria is going to offer your players different challenges from any that they are used to. If the PCs go to Nigeria, they will learn how inhospitable the country is to foreigners--pickpockets, corrupt police and officials, armed bandits on the roads who ambush travelers. Luckily, the hit men--who had a few days' head start--have encountered these same travails. The PCs might learn that the hit men have received support from Hayward Emergency Aid officers here in Nigeria.

The village they're heading to is different. It's a crossing-point between the waking world and the world of dreams, Samara Nyeme's dreams. Starvation is widespread here (anybody wanna find that psychophagus a new body, a skinny one on the edge of death? She'll see her lean, emaciated arms, and thank you for it before she dies). Hauries abound, and violence, but the townspeople are benevolent, even kindly; after all, they're victims. Many of them worship termites, actually worshipping Pazuzu.

Many children die young, because they are spirits that have made a pact to return to the spirit world as soon as they can. One of these children befriends the PCs, and then dies a few days later. The next day, his spirit approaches the PCs and show them "the road under the road," which leads more fully into the dreamworld.

At a nightmare market, the PCs find many strange things for sale: a dragon's soul in a jar, tea brewed from the sweat of angels, the history of the world told from the point of view of a crocodile. A shriveled purple jack-o'-lantern may approach them, offering to buy their death for eighty pounds; if the players agree, they each gain a Hero Point. After some time exploring the strange place, the heroes find Nakemi, and the assassins find everyone. A shootout ensues, with the PCs and the hit men trying to kill each other, the hit men trying to kill Nakemi while the PCs try to protect him, and strange African dreamthings scrambling for safety or trying to stop everyone.

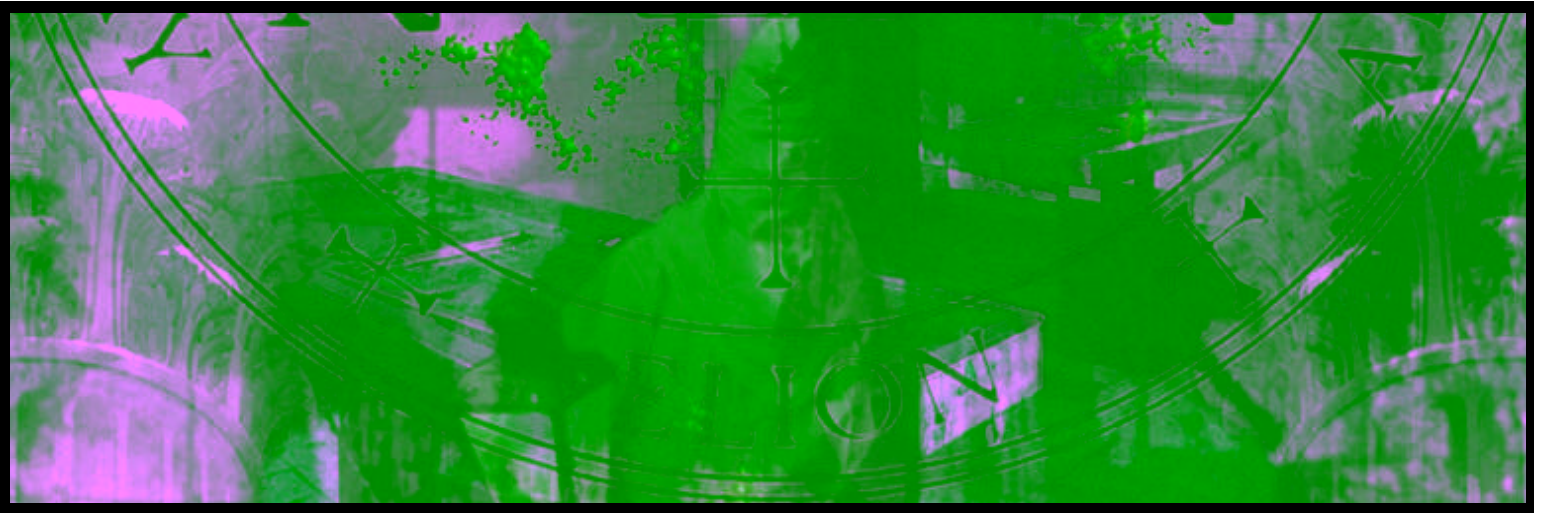


Nakemi is convinced that Samara Nyeme's dream is reality, is what has happened to Africa. If the PCs convince him otherwise, they can bring him out of the dream, and he will recommence his lifelong crusade to unify Africa.

Part III

Now Nakemi needs to resurrect Chesed; he knows the rituals he needs to perform, but he needs the PCs' help. He's willing to tell them the following: his country, the Republic of Nywere, was demolished by U.N. troops, and it no longer exists on any map. Nakemi wants to bring his country back, and restore a vanished, benevolent power to the world. He needs to undergo a ritual for this, and he needs the PCs' help with it. This is as much as Nakemi is willing to share.

For the player characters' part, Nakemi has given them a handful of seeds. They have to enter the world of dreams, traveling the Interstices to where an anacalypse used to dream of Nywere, the African country that was once the center of Chesed's power and the Pan-African movement. In the dream, the player characters need to plant the seeds in order remind the anacalypse of its purpose somehow, make it dream the lost country back into reality. Once they have planted the seeds, nature will return to that region; plants will grow back, and so will villages and towns, huts, houses, and modern buildings. They will need to plant the seeds in at least six different places, before they have re-seeded the desert dreamscape.



~::The Subgenius Expression by Jason Just::~~

Since the lictors had the country destroyed and all memory of it abolished, the anacalypse who used to dream it has spun off into its own private dreamings. These look like vast desert emptinesses, mirrors that reflect things only dimly, trees that flicker for a moment and then vanish, hails of artillery fired from midair and disappearing in midair, submarines rising up from the sand, wispy African children appearing and disappearing in the desert wind. There are several landmarks in the dream: there is a downed plane, a French fighter pilot from the 1950s, still burning; a ruined hotel; the rubble of a grade school, where sirens are always ringing; a steaming black ocean by a beach where thousands of dead fish are rotting, burned alive in the sea; and a man with burned skin, who has grown into the ground.

The PCs also have to perform one other duty. In a ritual designed to bind the anacalypse away from the waking world, the lictors drugged and tortured a French pilot, burning him alive into the dreamscape. This man is the center of nature here. He has grown roots that reach down into the desert, and sparse grasses grow from his body, where hair should be. Insects roam these grasses. From his forehead antlers emerge, spiderwebs spun between the eighteen points. Insects wander from his grass into the web, and unfamiliar birds swoop down to eat the spiders. The birds soon die and fall to the ground, where they decompose swiftly. Only here is the earth fertile, around the former pilot and his ecstasy of predation. He draws his sustenance from the earth; insects draw their sustenance from him; spiders eat the insects; birds eat the



spiders; the birds fall and are eaten by the earth. This man binds the anacalypse's dreams away from the real world.

The PCs need to kill him.

When these two tasks are finished, the dream will be real. The characters will no longer be in a dream of Nywere; they'll be in Nywere, which will suddenly emerge on the African coast. They'll arrive just as Nakemi's ritual is about to end, and just as any surviving hit men from earlier arrive on the scene, with a Razide.

Nakemi's ritual involves him hanging by one foot for nine days; at the end of this time he'll penetrate reality to a degree that he understands its basic principles, its Logos, the Word. He will gain hold of Reality Magic, in the form of runes, the True Language, and this will make him an Archon. In his hands there will be ten stones, each with a strange, dizzying sign inscribed on it. One of these signs will be inscribed upon Nakemi's chest, at the end of these ten days. Nakemi will have become the archon Chesed; he no longer has the identity of Maoro Nakemi.

If the hit men and the razide prevail quickly, they will be able to stop Nakemi's ritual from succeeding. If the PCs manage to hold them off for a long time, then Nakemi will complete his ritual, cut himself down from the tree, and reduce the razide to cinders with a glance.