



# **Chicago**, 1924



Lucas "Lucky" Sullivan, one of Capone's lieutenants, broke into the wrong warehouse and opened the wrong crate. Now possessed by Kutothankenum, an elder god from Egypt, Lucky had begun slaughtering people and leaving grotesque remains. J. Edgar Hoover has asked you to investigate the murders to find out what's going on and stop it if you can.

A Savage Worlds Adventure of true crime and cosmic horror for *Herald: Lovecraft & Tesla - The Tabletop Roleplaying Game.* 







An exclusive Savage Worlds adventure for Herald: Lovecraft & Tesla, the Tabletop Roleplaying Game.

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# Using this Adventure

"A Fistful of Dholes" is a gangster-inspired Herald adventure that players can resolve in one or two sessions of play. Challenges include raw detective work, interrogation, insanity, car chases, deadly gangsters, and lethal combat with the cosmic horrors of the Mythos. GMs are advised to tailor the story to the PCs. If the group craves quick action, amp up the combat encounters; if they prefer dramatic storytelling and investigation, increase scene conflict with more NPC hostility or a few red herrings. Give the players what they want, respect their agency, and roll with it. Welcome to the Roaring Twenties of Herald: Lovecraft & Tesla!







# BACKGROUND: Chicago, January, 1924

For years, Chicago corruption has grown as networks of criminal families supply a steady flow of vice to the people in the wake of Prohibition. That's about to change now that an upstart agent from the General Intelligence Division has been promoted to Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a Mr. John Edgar Hoover. Tasked with eliminating public and private corruption and the spread of prohibited sources of alcohol, Hoover keeps a close eye on Chicago. But Hoover has another task, a secret one that that more closely aligns to his scientific work with the GID: the prevention and containment of the Mythos in all its forms. Like you, he is a member of the Mythos Resistance.

As 1924's New Year celebration approached, legendary strategist and "business man" Al Capone decided to aggravate his moonshining competitors, the Genna Brothers, by destroying a shipment of high-grade hooch intended to fetch a decent price for the holidays. Capone sent his most trusted lieutenant, Lucas "Lucky" Sullivan, known for his uncanny ability to escape the law, to destroy the shipment and send a message to the Genna Brothers.



The car was gassed, the guns loaded, and the axe sharpened. However, one of Lucky's men read the address incorrectly. When they arrived at the Genna Brothers' row of warehouses along the Lake Michigan waterfront, instead of busting up the liquor crates in Hall 6, Lucky smashed open a bound sarcophagus in Hall 9. This released the trapped spirit of Kutothankenum, an ancient Egyptian skin spinner who eats his prey's organs and leaves a mark on the victim's chest, a disc with eight outstretched arms (see illustration).

If a victim's corpse is left to decompose for more than 48 hours, a number of young Dhole Worms erupt from the carcass, eventually burrowing underground and reaching full size (200+ feet) over a few years.

Once his sarcophagus was smashed open, Kutothankenum realized his chance and leapt into Lucky Sullivan's body, taking partial control of the gangster and attacking Capone's men. Two were killed before the third, Vin Drucci, escaped into the darkness. He was picked up by police the next day after witnesses reported a priest babbling about murders at the docks. Drucci was almost immediately transferred to FBI HQ, still dressed in his priest's costume, raving about "unspeakable things older than the stars".

The Genna Brothers, who had planned on selling the smuggled sarcophagus' inlaid gemstones, sent workers to move the stolen artifact and found the dismembered remains of Lucky's crew scattered around Hall 9. The terrified workers tried to flee the scene so quickly that they crashed, then abandoned, their automobile. This ruckus drew the attention of the police to the Genna Brothers' warehouses. Now the FBI is involved.

# **INVESTIGATION, PART I**

Open the session rooted in the backgrounds of your PCs. If one is a jazz musician, begin with the group attending a performance at a speakeasy; if one is a scientist, begin with the group assisting an experiment at the lab, etc. Try to set the scene near Chicago using whatever excuse you need. However it opens, the characters will receive a call from J. Edgar Hoover, who says the following:

Listen. Are you there? It's me. I'm on a secure line but I'm going to make this quick. Meet me at my office on Ogden Avenue. We've got a body, and I need your help. This is Hoover, damn it, get here quickly.



#### A Fistful of Dholes



#### **FBI Headquarters**

When the PCs arrive at the Chicago FBI headquarters, they're escorted to the lavish office of J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover will be paranoid that they've been followed but eventually informs them that the chewed-up remains of two men have been found in a warehouse along the downtown docks in Hall 9. The FBI learned about this from Vin Drucci, a raving mad gangster pretending to be a priest. Drucci is shaken but has blurted details to the Feds between bits of nonsense. Hoover tasks the PCs with discovering whatever killed these two men and, if possible, bringing it back alive.

The characters can attempt to get equipment from Hoover—firearms, ammunition, etc.—with a difficult Persuasion check (-2). Hoover will be concerned that the characters won't bring back the equipment in good working condition.

If the characters wish to speak with Drucci, they're taken to a small room where he's handcuffed to a radiator, still wearing a ragged priest costume.

Drucci drools occasionally and his left eye moves independently from his right. Before he went mad, Drucci would often don a priest's collar and convince passersby to contribute to his fake church. He's clearly gone mad now from the encounter with Kutothankenum, and his main concern is to convince the characters that the apocalypse is at hand. Until the PCs express sympathy (genuine or feigned) for his impending sense of Armageddon, Drucci will spout two nonsense statements for every third honest one. If they play "good cop," he will be more forthcoming, but his hair-pulling mania should always include a little delusion, even when he's trying to be helpful. Whether lying or accidentally telling the truth, Drucci avoids any details that might tip off the characters too soon as to what's really going on.

#### Nonsense Statements

"This all started when I decided to steal the crown jewels from the Tower of London."



"The jewels aren't real. It's just bits of glass." "Don't believe these government types. My name is not Vincent Drucci."

"I'm the mayor of Chicago."

I in the mayor of Chicago

"I'm a man of the cloth."

"Have you ever flown over a bridge? I did once." "I could teach you how to fly, but you have to get me out of here."

"My parish wouldn't listen to me." "They're all going to die. Just like you."

#### Honest Statements

"We were only looking for the hooch." "Boss said to loosen up their stock."

"I didn't break it open. Don't blame me."

"The devil is in Hall 9."

"I escaped after he got hungry."

"He wasn't speaking English no more."

"A mouth came out of the box and took him."

"I guess his luck finally ran out."

"Nobody was supposed to get hurt."

When the PCs are done with the FBI and Drucci, Hoover directs them to the crime scene, providing a ride if necessary.

# J. Edgar Hoover

Attributes: Agility: d4, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d8, Strength: d6, Vigor: d6 Skills: Fighting: d4, Healing: d10, Intimidation: d4, Investigation: d6, Notice: d4, Persuasion: d6, Repair: d6, Swimming: d4

**Charisma:** +1; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 5 **Edges:** Charismatic, Mover-Shaker, Connections **Hindrances:** Code of Honor (major),



Xenophobe (minor), Vengeful (minor) Gear: "Stinger" .22 caliber one shot "Pen Gun"

# VINCENT DRUCCI

Attributes: Agility: d4, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d8, Strength: d6, Vigor: d6 Skills: Fighting: d4, Notice: d6, Persuasion: d6, Taunt: d8, Streetwise: d6 Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5 Hindrances: Misled (Obsessed with

Kutothankenum Apocalypse)





# **THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT**

(See combat map, page 23)

Two squad cars with flashing lights are parked in front of a big warehouse marked "Hall 9". The Chicago PD is clearly on the scene, led by Detective Maria Treviño. Treviño is hard-nosed professional and doesn't want anyone messing with her crime scene. Chicago PD is treating this as a gang-related murder and doesn't suspect anything unnatural. Should the PCs invoke Hoover's authority to gain access to the warehouse, Treviño will become more difficult as she doesn't respect the federal government encroaching on what should be a local matter. She also doesn't respond warmly to questions about the fact that female police detectives are very rare in 1924 Chicago. Or the fact that she is wearing a man's overcoat and fedora like everyone else. Her ability to lead an investigation is evident, she knows it, her fellow detectives and cops know it, and any talk otherwise is a waste of time.

The PCs may try to Persuade Treviño to get inside the warehouse (at a -1 penalty), or they might try to use Stealth to sneak around the back of the warehouse as she is distracted with other cops. If the PCs convince her to let them in, they'll get more time to explore the scene. If they sneak inside, they'll only have a few rounds to look for clues before Treviño and a crime scene photographer arrive.



# **DETECTIVE MARIA TREVIÑO**

Attributes: Agility: d6, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d8, Strength: d6, Vigor: d6 Skills: Fighting: d6, Notice: d8, Shooting: d6, Persuasion: d8, Taunt: d8, Investigation: d10, Streetwise: d8 Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5

Edges: Investigator

**Hindrances:** Doubting Thomas **Gear:** Police issue .38 Revolver (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1), notepad and pen

Once the characters are inside the warehouse, read the following description:

As you enter the Hall 9 warehouse, the first thing you notice is an pungent licorice smell. Two light bulbs dangling on opposite walls barely illuminate the room but reveal a maze of crates and boxes. In the warehouse's center, a stack of boxes has tumbled and broken, spilling cigars on top of a shredded human torso wearing a suit jacket. The blood and viscera of the victim are spread on the floor, mixed with torn scraps of wool and paper. Trails of blood from the torso lead separately to arms and legs, stopping at a broken box with an axe blade lodged in it.

As the characters investigate, clues from the list below can be revealed, either through successful ability checks or direct exploration. The first 5 clues relate directly with the mission. If your players are more puzzle-oriented, clues # 6 - 11 are marked in parenthesis as "red herrings."

#### **Clues:**

**1.** The cigars in the boxes are El Rey Del Mundo, but if the characters are brave enough to search the torso, they'll find a bent Partagas cigar. Both Treviño and Hoover would know these are the kind enjoyed by Capone and his men.

2. If the characters remove the heavy limestone sarcophagus from the broken box (a Strength test with a -1 modifier), they'll see the symbol of Kutothankenum on its top: a disc with eight drooping arms, along with a row of encrusted green serpentine and blue lapis lazuli gems. Two of the jewels have been pried off. (See illustration 1



#### handout on page 20)

**3.** The ripped bits of a receipt for plumbing and heating services are scattered on the floor. Characters can piece it together and decipher the handwriting to get the address of the Genna Brothers gambling den, 2222 South Wabash Ave.



#### (See illustration 2a/2b handout on page 21)

**4.** The ripped label on the sarcophagus box reads "Property of The University of Chicago History Department," but to the characters will read as:



#### (See illustration handout 3 on page 22)

**5.** The body's torso, high on the sternum, has the symbol of Kutothankenum carved into it. Characters will notice that the scarring on the skin radiates a fair amount of heat. (See illustration 1 handout on page 20)

**6.** The label on the axe's handle shows it was manufactured by "Monarch," (*red herring*, but the axe is perfectly functional, [Str + d6]).

7. The victim's shoes are still on his feet; they are a size 10 (*red herring*).

**8.** A few boxes have bullet holes in them; those boxes contain wedding dresses, now ruined (*red herring*).

**9.** The victim's gun, a .44 Derringer (Range 5/10/20, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1), is still clutched in his hand with one bullet remaining (red herring).

**10.** The padlock to the warehouse, a "6 Lever Sargent," lies broken nearby (*red herring*).

**11.** If the characters dare to look inside the sarcophagus, they'll find a hieroglyph depicting a setting sun and a snake underneath a throne (*red herring*).

After an appropriate time has passed, have Detective Treviño and the crime scene photographer come into the warehouse. The photographer is a young man with shaky hands and round wirerimmed glasses. Treviño will bark at the PCs to leave so they can do their job. As the photographer bends down to take a photo of the mutilated torso, read the following:

The photographer leans over the torso to take a shot and you could swear the torso shivers a little. As the flash of his camera blinds you for an instant the torso ruptures, and three arm-length Worms attack the photographer, pinning him to the ground and gnawing at his face, neck, and chest with mouths full of small razor-sharp teeth.

# YOUNG DHOLE WORM (X3)

Attributes: Agility: d6, Smarts: d4 (A), Spirit: d4, Strength: d4, Vigor: d6 Skills: Fighting: d6, Notice: d4, Stealth: d4 Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5 Special Abilities:

• **Fear :** These unnatural creatures are hideous and force a Fear check for all PCs that have never seen a Dhole Worm before.

• **Bite:** Str+d4

• **Burrow (6"):** Young Dhole Worms can burrow through normal earth at their standard Pace, but cannot penetrate stone, concrete, etc.

• Size -1: These hatchlings are only 3 feet long.

• **Small:** Attackers subtract 2 from their attack rolls to hit the creatures.

• **Purple Mist:** After 2 turns of combat, the Dhole Worms will attack by spraying a purple mist



into the air (Small Burst Template). Any character caught in this mist must make a successful Vigor roll or suffer a random effect which lasts 1d4 hours after the encounter . GM: roll a d6, then discreetly inform the affected character which ailment they are suffering, without letting the other players know.

#### **Purple Mist Ailments (roll d6):**

**1.** Player/character can only speak in single-word sentences of single-syllable words.

**2**. Player/character can no longer use specific nouns: book becomes "the thing," Hoover becomes "that guy."

**3.** Player/character can no longer pronounce vowels.

4. The character will vehemently agree with whichever player/character/NPC spoke last.5. The character becomes brutally honest and cannot lie or make deception checks.

**6.** The character feels a deep sense of dread and will not be able to successfully pass any Fear checks until the ailment wears off.

The GM can increase/decrease the number of Dhole Worms, depending on how well-equipped the group is for combat. Should the characters require help (to prevent an early-night TPK) have Treviño and another cop join the fight, either drawing the Worms' attention or adding bullets to the mix.

If cornered and in danger, the Dhole Worms will squirm out of sight. Remove their tokens/figures from the map and continue the combat for 1d4 turns, with anxious characters tiptoeing around the warehouse, only to have the Worms drop from a stack of crates onto one of the PC's shoulder (perhaps just as the GM tosses a novelty spring snake on a player who isn't paying attention.)

Once combat is concluded, assuming characters are still standing, the characters have two locations to explore:

A. Investigate the University of Chicago's History Department.

B. Investigate the gambling den owned by the Genna Brothers.

NOTE: If the characters were unable to discover the clues that would lead to these locations, you can have Detective Treviño (if alive, or another cop if not) feed them the clue after the battle. If the characters try to break into Hall 6 (which sits at the end of the block, just three warehouses down from the crime scene in Hall 9), they'll find a simple liquor storage warehouse of quality whisky that will be of great interest to Hoover but little value to the story. There are no Genna Brothers gangsters anywhere, since the cops are there investigating Hall 9.

# **INVESTIGATION, PART 2**



#### A: University of Chicago's History Department

If the characters wish to question someone about the Egyptian origins of the sarcophagus, they can easily navigate a campus map of the University of Chicago to find the History Department. Once there, a secretary can direct them to Dr. Douglas Tyson. As the characters approach his office, read the following:

The secretary directs you to Dr. Douglas Tyson, the only Egyptologist at the University of Chicago. When you get close, a student dashes out of his office, clutching a few books and wiping tears from his face. He turns to you and says, "He's a monster!"

With his back to you, Dr. Tyson calls out into the hallway. "Next!"

Stepping inside, you're impressed with the height of his precariously stacked books and journals. His walls are lined with framed degrees, photographs of archaeological expeditions he's participated in, mounted masks, and strips of hieroglyph rubbings.

As you marvel at the decor, Dr. Tyson spins in his seat, annoyed at yet another disturbance.



Dr. Tyson is a curmudgeon who hates just about everything and has no patience for ill-spoken, disrespectful, or unread people. He will be openly hostile, arrogant, and rude. The GM is advised to sneer constantly while interacting with the PCs, however famous/well known they may be. Tyson will be completely unresponsive to any attempted intimidation and if physically threatened, will call security.

However difficult he may be to talk to, Dr. Tyson knows the symbol, its origin, and the legend of the skin spinners of ancient Egypt, particularly Kutothankenum, who was spoken of only in whispers and shadows. The professor will naturally be suspicious of the characters asking questions about Kutothankenum, so soon after the shipment containing the sarcophagus and other artifacts went missing. The characters must explain that, while the sarcophagus has been found, it is currently being held by the Chicago Police as evidence in an ongoing murder investigation. The professor will be quite upset about this information being kept from him, and this will require the characters to make a Persuasion roll to assure him that the museum property will be delivered as soon as possible.



Even after the professor is successfully assured of the sarcophagus' return, he will still be upset that the museum cannot have the item immediately. The key to Dr. Tyson's cooperation is to praise his work, either the many books he's authored lining his shelf or his office decor, which is fitting for an Egyptologist who has spent his fair share of time mucking about in the sand.

Once Dr. Tyson's begrudging cooperation has been "unlocked," he will lecture the characters in a voice that should be condescending and dry:

Let me see here. Interesting. This is the symbol of Kutothankenum, a skin spinner, and one of the worst. I'm sure you're unfamiliar with them, so I'll go slowly. Pay attention. Skin spinners are mythological creatures, which means they're not natural. Not natural... Unnatural... [He trails off, lost in thought. There's a long pause, until a PC dares to speak, then:] Don't interrupt me! Before a pharaoh could ascend to the heavens, they would need to shed their sins as a mortal lest those sins weigh down their hearts during their judgment by Anubis. Those cast-off sins became skin spinners, nasty little spirits that amplified the weaknesses the pharaohs left behind. Are you getting all this? Because I won't repeat myself. They were borne of lust, greed, sloth—and each was later fashioned into a kind of parable to teach the people and future rulers how best to govern. Some in the priesthood went so far as to stage murders or animal mutilations or whatnot to prove their existence, but the concept of a skin spinner was, from an anthropological perspective, simply a way for the nobility to safely criticize a ruler after their death. Sit still over there, I'm not finished. Now, Kutothankenum was rumored to be the hunger of the Pharaoh Qa'a of the First Dynasty. This was, of course, around 2880-2900 B.C. when humans were often sacrificed during the burial rites. Now, Qa'a was a competent ruler, I suppose, nothing suggesting he excelled at anything, but his wife died of a parasitic illness, and shortly after, Qa'a developed a rather rapacious appetite, almost exclusively for meat. Quail, ostrich, beef, even hedgehog-and very often raw. It may have been a manifestation of a nervous breakdown, but his eating habits were highly irregular and people began to whisper. So many of the details are lost as to Qa'a's demise, but one rumor suggests the inner circle of priests



poisoned him and demanded to be buried with their Pharaoh to soothe his hunger. In doing so, since their bodies were no longer consecrated, they gave Kutothankenum another source of food to grow stronger. And of course he then escaped from the tomb and supposedly caused a pestilence which slaughtered the livestock of the Kingdom, etcetera etcetera. The whole concept is quite preposterous, but I'm sure it gave parents an adequate story to get their children to...eat...their...vegetables.

When/If the characters press Dr. Tyson for more information, the crotchety professor will question how well characters were paying attention to his lecture. If they can't answer two of the following three questions, he'll dismiss them angrily.

1. If you care so much, tell me, when was the First Dynasty? Answer: 2880-2900 BCE.

2. What did Qa'a's diet consist of? Answer: Quail, ostrich, beef, hedgehog.

3. How did Qa'a supposedly die? Answer: Poisoned by his priests.

If they succeed, he can offer the following very helpful advice:

They can't be killed, if that's what you're asking. They're a literary construct; an idea. I've heard it said that you can't kill an idea, but I don't believe that. I've seen my share of lecture hall students have their own ideas killed by distraction, embarrassment, and forgetfulness. Of course, the best thing to kill an idea would be another idea. If Kutothankenum or any skin spinner would have an enemy, it would be Ammit, a.k.a. "The Devourer of the Dead." Some sources called her a goddess, some a demon, but they all seemed to agree on her form. She had the head of a crocodile, the foreparts of a lion and the hindquarters of a hippo. Of course, that would be the standard procedure for creating a ferocious monster to populate your mythos-combine the three largest natural man-killers in your world into one monster, topped off with a royal "nemes" headscarf, of course. It was her duty to devour the hearts of those deemed too sinful to pass on, which is

why the pharaohs sought to shed their sins in the first place. Once a sinful heart was devoured by Ammit, the soul of the deceased would be cursed to roam the Earth as a restless spirit forever, unable to pass on to the afterlife. If you happen to have a mythical chimera-goddemon figure in your pocket, well then you might stand a chance against a skin spinner. If you're looking for a silver bullet as a mortal, however, I know the priests used to chant "Tannash Neffer" at the time of Qa'a's death. That means, "Forget the god." Chew on that.

If the characters get all three questions correct, award one of them an extra benny.

As the characters are about to leave, Dr. Tyson gives them one final warning (assuming they haven't already mentioned it): "Oh, and those aren't arms in the symbol. They're worms."

# **DR. DOUGLAS TYSON**

Attributes: Agility: d4; Smarts: d8; Spirit: d6; Strength: d6; Vigor: d6 Skills: Investigation: d8, Knowledge (Egyptology): d10, Knowledge (Anthropology): d10, Notice: d4, Intimidation: d8 Charisma: -2, Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 5 Edges: Linguist: English, Ancient and Modern

Greek, Ancient Egyptian (Hieroglyphs and Demotic script), Aramaic, Hebrew, and Arabic (several dialects).

Hindrances: Mean (minor)

#### B: Gambling Den - 2222 South Wabash Ave.

(See combat map, page 23)

The bits of ripped-up receipt left on the warehouse floor can be assembled to show the address of a gambling den owned by the Genna Brothers and operated by Julia McKinney.

Getting inside the gambling den is surprisingly easy. The door-bouncer, Sean, is a ham-fisted crook who will open the door for even the smallest bribe. However, until the characters offer him money, or figure out how to convince him otherwise, Sean will lean against the door and ignore them. Once Sean let's the PCs inside, read the following:



The door opens, and a nervous host in a shabby tuxedo leads you past a coat-check girl down a hallway that opens into a large room with slot machines, blackjack, and poker tables. The room is shoulder to shoulder with sour-faced degenerates sipping cheap booze and coughing in a fog of cigar smoke. The host motions you toward the bank counter, where a man even larger than Sean the bouncer stands, glaring. He holds his giant hand out.

The PCs will need to cough up some cash or collateral for chips to stay at the gambling den. Any attempt to "just ask questions" will be met with cold stares from the patrons and staff: "Pay to play, buddy, we all got families to feed." If the characters persist in not gambling, or if they fork over something of value to get a handful of chips, the dour-faced manager of the establishment, Julia McKinney, will approach them with the following:

"Well hello hello, aren't you all dressed for an exciting evening. Welcome to my little slice of the city. My name is McKinney: I'm the presenter, proprietor, and protector of this place. I've got two rules: everyone plays, nobody fights. Remember that and you can walk out of here a spot richer than you are now."

McKinney's first concern is maintaining the safety and continued operation of the gambling



hall. Second to that, she'd like to keep any illicit activities of the Genna Brothers. quiet by refusing to discuss anything that might find its way to the press or police. If the characters ask her questions about the case, the warehouse, or the body, she'll divert the conversation to gambling and challenge them personally to a few rounds of poker. The minimum bet for a hand starts at \$2, and there's no upper limit to raises. GMs should pick a version of poker that everybody already knows to keep play moving quickly.

She will be more compliant if the PCs win a few hands of poker. During the game, each successful Gambling roll will make her more cooperative. After three successful rolls, she will become helpful, or if they fail three rolls, she will become bored and leave the table. Characters who are caught cheating will immediately be thrown out.

McKinney won't risk more than \$200 of the house's money on any hand. However, if the PCs win a pot worth \$100 or more, she will be impressed and let some information slip. She will (correctly) surmise that the dead men at the warehouse were Capone's men sent to disrupt the Genna Brothers' "business concerns." She won't offer much more than that for fear of incriminating her gangster bosses.

If the characters are able to raise her attitude to Helpful, she will tell the characters that they are most likely looking for Lucky Sullivan, an enforcer for Capone who was spotted recently in the warehouse district.He is the most likely suspect from Capone's organization to have attacked the Genna Brothers' warehouse. She may offer a reward to the characters if they disrupt Capone's operations. McKinney suggests the Hotel Atlantic speakeasy, where Lucky's girlfriend works as a singer.

If the characters directly mention Vincent Drucci, McKinney's attitude will change dramatically:

That no-good, back-stabbing, frock-wearing grifter! Of all the greasy, low-life, good-for-nothing losers, you bring up that priest-impersonating snake in my place?

McKinney will be angry, but it will not be at all difficult for the characters to convince her that they



are not on his side, as Drucci is almost universally despised. If the characters mention definite knowledge that Drucci was involved with the incident at the warehouse, she will instantly become Helpful towards the characters, regardless of what the gambling outcomes were. She will tell them that Lucky Sullivan seems to be the only serious player in town that will actually put up with Drucci. She will then tell the characters about the Hotel Atlantic and Lucky's connections there.

Finally, McKinney will mention that someone recently gave her a small Egyptian statuette (especially if the characters spoke about the sarcophagus or anything having to do with Egypt). She will not divulge where she got it, but she will happily turn it over to the characters. Now that news of the warehouse massacre is spreading, she is anxious to get rid of any evidence that might link her to a crime. At the GM's discretion, she may even offer the statuette as an ante in a hand of poker. This eight-inch long by four-inch high statue appears to have been carved from a single piece of hippo ivory, though any appropriate Knowledge Skills like Zoology or Biology would clearly point out the odd fact that it would have been a larger hippo than was ever known to science. The carved statuette depicts a strange creature seated on its haunches with the head of a crocodile, the forelimbs of a lion, and the hindquarters of a hippo. It wears a nemes (striped Egyptian head-cloth) made of inlaid gold and lapis lazuli, and its mouth is slightly open, revealing a hollow that appears to run deep inside the body of the statuette.

At any point during this encounter, if the PCs become too aggressive toward McKinney or anyone else in the gambling den, or if they decide to argue too forcefully, read the following:

The room suddenly goes silent, and all you can hear are a few dozen clicks of pistols and shotguns being readied to fire. Before anyone knows what's happening, each PC sees a number of guns pointed at their head as the drunks and gamblers collectively react to defend their moneyed queen.

Assuming your group isn't suicidal enough to press the matter, McKinney will defuse the situation, but not before letting the PCs know who's boss around here. She will then most likely attempt to divert the action back to gambling. Or she may even call in the hulking guard at the door, Sean, to remove them physically without killing them.

## JULIA MCKINNEY

Attributes: Agility: d4, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d6, Strength: d4, Vigor: d8 Skills: Driving: d4, Fighting: d4, Gambling: d6, Intimidation: d6, Lockpicking: d4, Notice: d4+2, Persuasion: d6, Shooting: d4, Stealth: d4, Streetwise: d4, Taunt: d6 Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 6 Edges: Alertness, Connections (Gangster Underworld) Hindrances: Loyal Gear: Steel-ribbed Chinese hand-fan (Str+d4)

#### **SEAN THE DOOR-GUARD**

Attributes: Agility: d6, Smarts: d4, Spirit: d6, Strength: d8, Vigor: d6 Skills: Driving: d4, Fighting: d6, Intimidation: d6, Shooting: d6, Streetwise: d4, Taunt: d6 Pace: 6; Parry: 4; Toughness: 7 Hindrances: Loyal Gear: Luger (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6, RoF 1)

#### **C:** The Speakeasy at the Hotel Atlantic

(See combat map, page 24)

The Hotel Atlantic (formerly the Kaiserhopf Hotel) is home to one of Al Capone's speakeasies. Nathan is a chatty bartender who won't give details on any criminal dealings, but he has no problem spilling about Lucky being missing. He is extremely friendly and will show off his excellent homemade hooch proudly. He will also let the characters know that Lucky's girlfriend, Laura, is about to sing onstage, and she is probably the person who saw him last.

Laura slinks into the spotlight in a red dress, but her sallow face and sunken eyes do not seem normal to the characters (no Notice roll needed). She collects herself, and the band starts up a jaunty song that sounds vaguely Egyptian (as many popular songs did after Howard Carter's 1922 excavation of King Tutankhamen's tomb). Laura steps up to the microphone and begins singing:





Three thousand years ago, King Tutty reigned, you know

He must have travelled greatly in his time For in his tomb out there was gold and silverware From big hotels of every land and clime While going through his royal robes, they found up in his sleeve

The first fig leaf that Adam gave to Eve In old King Tut-Tut-Tutankhamen's day Beneath the tropic skies King Tut-Tut-Tut was very wi...

In old King T... khamen's d...

("In Old King Tutankhamen's Day," (1922) music by Harry Von Tilzer / lyrics by William Jerome)

Laura begins to fumble the lyrics halfway through the chorus, and she collapses in a seizure on the next line. Her eyes roll over white, and she bares her teeth while her mouth chomps hungrily at empty air. When one of the musicians onstage drops his clarinet and goes to check on her, she sits bolt upright and clamps her mouth onto his neck, tearing off a small piece. He staggers backwards, and another musician is right there to apply pressure to his neck-wound with a handkerchief. Laura, meanwhile, is suddenly thrust upright as if being pulled up by invisible strings. Her arms stretch out at the crowd, and she begins to float upwards until she is levitating about two feet above the stage.

Panic and screaming ensue as tables are upset and patrons attempt to flee. She begins speaking in a guttural, unnatural voice. Her words are Ancient Egyptian (not that anyone would recognize it: even Egyptologists have only ever read it, so true pronunciation remains a mystery). Laura's head whips towards the open doors of the room, and they slam shut at her telekinetic command. As combat begins, Laura's first action will be to telekinetically draw the closest audience member up in the air towards her mouth to bite their face. Everyone but the PCs flee the room or hides.

# LAURA COOGAN

Laura is possessed by a shadow of the spirit of Kutothankenum, but appears to be trying to fight it.. Special Abilities listed only apply to Laura Coogan in her possessed state.

Attributes (Normal): Agility: d6, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d4, Strength: d4, Vigor: d6 Attributes (Possessed): Agility: d8, Smarts: d4, Spirit: d10, Strength: d12+4, Vigor: d8 Skills (Normal): Driving: d4, Persuasion: d4, Notice: d6, Persuasion: d6, Streetwise: d4, Taunt: d6 Skills (Possessed): Fighting: d8, Throwing: d8, Notice: d4, Intimidation: d10 Charisma: 2 (-2 when Possessed); Pace: 6 (2 when Possessed); Parry: 2 (6 when Possessed); Toughness: 5 (9 when Possessed);

**Edges:** Attractive, , Connections (Gangster Underworld)

# Hindrances: Clueless

- **Special Abilities:** 
  - **Bite:** Str+d4

• **Telekinetic Tricks:** This is an unnatural ability. Possesed Laura can manipulate simple objects at will (slamming and locking doors, etc.)

• **Telekinetic Toss:** This is an unnatural ability. Possesed Laura can telekinetically lift and throw improvised weapons up to medium size at



#### A Fistful of Dholes



single targets. Being struck by one of these blunt projectiles inflicts Str+1d4 damage.

• Telekinetic Grapple: This is an unnatural ability. Possesed Laura can grapple with a single target, as per the standard grappling rules. Targets captured in this way are automatically drawn within range of her Bite by the next round.

• Telekinetic Push: This is an unnatural ability. Possesed Laura can telekinetically push single targets from across the room, as per normal push rules.

• Levitate: Possessed Laura floats about two feet above the ground and moves only by slowly floating in the direction desired. This brings down her Pace to 2.

The PCs have a few options:

They may physically incapacitate Laura's body and then chant the words "Tannash Neffer" if they remembered them from Dr. Tyson's lecture.

Repeating this chant several times will drive the spirit out of Laura's body and allow the characters to heal her normally before questioning her.

If the characters have the statuette of Ammit (the ivory statuette from B: Gambling Den ) and they bring the statuette within sight of the possessed singer, the statuette will self-activate, drawing the spirit of Kutothankenum out of Laura. The drawingout process requires two full rounds to complete, during which time the character holding the statuette must effectively dodge any attacks. If an attack causes a character to drop the statuette, it must be picked up, and the two-round procedure must begin over again. After the spirit is successfully drawn out



of Laura, she will collapse and be Shaken (if not further physically damaged by the battle).

They may kill the possessed Laura in combat, but this should be a last resort for the PCs, unless they're the lawless, bloodthirsty types. Physically killing her body will dissipate the spirit of Kutothankenum, but it will not allow the characters to question her about Lucky's whereabouts.

If the characters manage to subdue Laura without killing her, give each of them a Benny! She is exhausted, groggy and unaware that it was she who caused the mess, but is able to communicate with the PCs. They may now question her as to Lucky's whereabouts. She will mention that he came home the night before but was not acting like himself asking all sorts of strange questions about the meatpacking district. She thought this was especially strange since Lucky has a regular circuit collecting union kickbacks and protection money from various packing plants in the area. Once she told him about the layout of the district, he smiled strangely and kissed her, and that is the last clear memory she had until just after the fight. She hasn't seen or heard from Lucky all day or night.

It's not long before the sounds of fastapproaching footfalls are heard. Alphonse Gabriel Capone, having heard the commotion of the fight from outside, bursts in through the back door of the speakeasy, flanked by two gorilla-sized gangsters



with Tommy guns drawn. He will initially be very suspicious of the strangers in his speakeasy and will have his knife out, ready to deal with the characters himself. It will require testimony from Laura or one of the bystanders to convince Capone that the PCs interest in Lucky is in pursuit of something unnatural and not a direct threat to his organization. He tells the PCs that he is considering letting them live. It's disturbingly clear that the longer the PCs remain in Capone's presence, the more likely they are to be killed.

If the characters ended up killing the Possessed Laura, this will be an extremely tense and difficult negotiation with Capone and his men, most likely ending with the PCs fleeing a hail of bullets.

# AL CAPONE

Attributes: Agility: d6, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d8, Strength: d8, Vigor: d6 Skills: Fighting: d6, Notice: d6, Shooting: d6, Persuasion: d8, Taunt: d8, Streetwise: d8+2 Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5 (3) Edges: Command, , Connections (Gangster Underworld) Hindrances: Stubborn

**Gear:** Stiletto knife (Str+d4), Colt 1911 (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1).2d6+1), bulletproof vest (Armor +3 against bullets).

# **CAPONE'S PERSONAL BODYGUARDS (X2)**

Attributes: Agility: d6, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d6, Strength: d6, Vigor: d8 Skills: Fighting: d6, Shooting d6, Intimidation: d6, Driving: d4. Charisma: -2, Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 6 Hindrance: Mean Gear: Tommy Gun (Range 12/24/48, Damage

**Gear:** Tommy Gun (Range 12/24/48, Damage 2d6+1, RoF 3).

# **INVESTIGATION, PART 3 The Meatpacking District**

Lucky Sullivan is laying low and will remain hidden during daylight hours, during which time the characters may use Investigation or Streetwise rolls to gather information about where he was last seen. Success will find that Lucky arranged for the





Sinclair Meatpacking plant to close down operations for a few days. Investigations into the plant during the day will find nothing out of the ordinary and no one on site.

# The Sinclair Meatpacking Plant

(See combat map, page 24)

A stakeout or other night-based investigation will find this isolated stockyard illuminated from within by flickering firelight. Characters venturing inside will find that a few of the butchering tables have been arranged to create a makeshift altar illuminated by two braziers of burning beef tallow. The mark of Kutothankenum will be inscribed on the altar and the walls of the factory in cow blood, and Sullivan himself will be performing some kind of dark ritual there, speaking in the same Ancient Egyptian language that Laura used at the speakeasy. He will be wearing only a white kilt and a klaft (a white Egyptian headcloth), and his upper body will be smeared in blood. He is offering sacrifices to various dark spirits while ritualistically consuming the raw flesh of many of the hanging cow carcasses that surround him. This horrific scene forces a Fear check (-2) for the PCs.

Characters will most likely want to attempt to stop the Kutothankenum-possessed Sullivan from completing the ritual, though he will not respond to any verbal attempts. Characters may attempt to use the statuette of Ammit on him, but his possession is too strong for the statuette's unnatural powers. After a brief, sputtering attempt to draw the spirit out, the statuette will stop, then begin wriggling and growing, taking three full rounds to completely transform into a full physical manifestation of the monstrous Ammit. In the meantime, Kutothankenum will attack the characters.His first action of combat will be to awaken the Dhole Worm larvae that have been gestating inside the various hanging beef carcasses. There should be two to three Worms within each carcass, with one infested carcass per character.

As the possessed Sullivan continues to attack the PCs, Ammit, devourer of the dead finishes manifesting. The unnatural beast rears back her head to howl, forcing yet another Fear check at -2 for the PCs. Ammit's glistening hide is thick and resembles a hippo with crocodile's bone-like scutes forming an effective armor. The PCs will likely perceive her as a threat, however with the Knowledge: Mythos skill, a PC will realize that Ammit, being the devourer of the dead, will focus her attacks on other unnatural creatures with the smell of death... such as a decaying Sullivan possessed fully by the dark spirit of Kutothankenum. Even if the PCs don't realize this at first, it soon becomes evident that she is assisting them in combat, not harming them. The PCs have an unnatural ally on their side now.

# KUTOTHANKENUM-POSSESSED LUCKY SULLIVAN

Kutothankenum has completely possessed the physical body of Lucky Sullivan, and there is none of the original human being left to save. His voice is low and gravelly, sounding barely human. **Attributes:** Agility: d8, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d10, Strength: d12+3, Vigor: d12+2 **Skills:** Fighting: d8, Throwing: d8, Notice: d4, Intimidation: d10 **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 17 **Edges:** Brawny

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty

**Gear:** Huge meat cleaver (Str +d6) and meat hook (Str+d4)

#### **Special Abilities:**

• Fear (-2): This unnatural possession is terrifying, requiring a Fear check (-2) for the PCs.

- Bite: Str+d4
- Improved Frenzy: He may make two attacks





per round (any combination of melee and telekinetic powers) without penalty.

• **Hardy:** A decisive blow is needed to bring Kutothankenum-Possessed Sullivan down. If he is Shaken, further Shaken results have no further effect-- they do not cause a wound.

• Fearless: Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

• **Telekinetic Tricks:** This is an unnatural ability. He can manipulate simple objects at will (slamming and locking doors, etc.)

• **Telekinetic Toss:** This is an unnatural ability. He can telekinetically lift and throw improvised weapons up to medium size at single targets. Being struck by one of these blunt projectiles inflicts Str+1d4 damage.

• **Telekinetic Grapple:** This is an unnatural ability. He can grapple with a single target, as per the standard grappling rules. Targets captured in this way are automatically drawn within range of his Bite by the next round.

• **Telekinetic Push:** This is an unnatural ability. He can telekinetically push single targets from across the room, as per normal push rules.

# Manifestation of Ammit, Devourer of the Dead

Her actual physical manifestation is more ferociously terrifying than the depiction of the statuette would have people believe, though it follows the basic form described. Her hide is thick and resembles a hippo's all over with the addition of a crocodile's bone-like scutes, like interlocking studs, forming an effective armor. In combat, she will ignore the Dhole Worms, focusing on Kutothankenum until his defeat. Despite her animalistic appearance, she is quite intelligent and can be reasoned with, provided the being speaking with her has not been judged unworthy by Anubis. Attributes: Agility: d8, Smarts: d6, Spirit: d12+4, Strength: d12, Vigor: d12+4 Skills: Fighting: d8, Notice: d8 Pace: 6; Parry: 6; Toughness: 15 (3)

# **Special Abilities:**

• Fear (-2): Her awe-inspiring appearance is enough to force a Fear check (-2) for all who see her.

- Bite: Str+d8
- Claws: Str+d6

• **Immunity (Telekinetic Push)** and **Immunity** (**Telekinetic Grapple):** Ammit is not physically affected by either.

• **Armor +3:** Thick hide studded with crocodilian scutes.

• **Size +2:** Ammit is slightly larger than a hippopotamus.

• **Large:** Attackers add +2 to their attack rolls to hit.

• Fearless: Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

• **Immortal:** Though this physical manifestation can be defeated normally, as an unnatural Mythos entity she can never truly die. She can also never forget someone who injured her manifestation. Upon her "death," or once a threat is eliminated, the manifestation will revert to the ivory statuette.

# YOUNG DHOLE WORMS (2-3 per character)

Attributes: Agility: d6, Smarts: d4 (A), Spirit: d4, Strength: d4, Vigor: d6 Skills: Fighting: d6, Notice: d4, Stealth: d4 Pace: 6; Parry: 5; Toughness: 5 Special Abilities:

• **Fear:** These unnatural creatures are hideous and force a Fear check for all PCs that have never seen a



Dhole Worm before.

• **Bite:** Str+d4

• **Burrow (6"):** Young Dhole Worms can burrow through normal earth at their standard Pace, but cannot penetrate stone, concrete, etc.

• Size -1: These hatchlings are only 3 feet long.

• **Small:** Attackers subtract 2 from their attack rolls to hit.

• Fearless: Immune to Fear and Intimidation.

• **Purple Mist:** After 2 turns of combat, the Dhole Worms will attack by spraying a purple mist into the air (SBT). Any character caught in this mist must make a Vigor roll, this time at a -2 penalty, or suffer a random effect which lasts 1d4 hours after the encounter. GM: roll a d6, then discreetly inform the affected character which ailment they are suffering without letting the other players know.

#### **Purple Mist Ailments (roll d6):**

 Player/character can only speak in singleword sentences of single-syllable words.
 Player/character can no longer use specific nouns: book becomes "the thing," Hoover becomes "that guy."

**3.** Player/character can no longer pronounce vowels.

4. The character will vehemently agree with whichever player/character/NPC spoke last.
5. The character becomes brutally honest and cannot lie or make deception checks.
6. The character feels a deep sense of dread and will not be able to successfully pass any Fear

checks until the ailment wears off.

The combat will be deadly, with Kutothankenum-Possessed Sullivan and the Dhole Worms fighting against the PCs and Ammit. Once Kutothankenum-Possessed Sullivan is defeated, Ammit will pounce on the physical remains of Kutothankenum that will attempt to wriggle free of the now-empty Lucky Sullivan shell. The wriggling beast is made of swirling colors and screams as Ammit consumes it. Ammit will then thank the characters in their own human language, which heals anyone who was wounded in the battle. She will then slowly shrink and revert to her ivory-statuette form.

If the PCs want to stick around until the cops show up, they may choose to do so, but that might require some explanations that no one (except maybe Detective Maria Treviño) will accept. Returning to (or telephoning) J. Edgar Hoover with the details of the mission and being rewarded is the logical end to this adventure, but not mandatory. Depending on what the PCs have discovered on their own, they may feel that while J. Edgar is their Mythos Resistance superior, they no longer trust him and may go directly to someone else in the leadership (like Mark Twain). This is entirely up to the PCs, but either way, they will be able to fulfill the mission and get their rewards.

# WHAT'S NEXT?

The characters may want to return the opened sarcophagus to Dr. Tyson at the University of Chicago, especially as it no longer carries anything unnatural. The statuette of Ammit, however, may need to go back with them to be examined more thoroughly by the Mythos Resistance. Mark Twain is especially interested in powerful and ancient items like this.

This adventure may also introduce many potential allies or enemies for the characters in future game sessions. Much depends on whether or not they agreed to accept the offers for gang-related jobs on behalf of either the Genna Brothers or Al Capone. One way or another, the information they end up with is of particular interest to J. Edgar Hoover.

#### **Further Suggestions for GMs:**

• It's 1924 in Chicago, and Prohibition is just a few years old. Chicago gangsters are already in control of almost all of the illegal booze traffic, and a young up-and-comer named Al Capone has just been put in charge of one of the largest and most bloodthirsty outfits in town.

• This adventure is set in January, a very cold month in The Windy City. Any chance to remind the players of this is a great opportunity to immerse them further into the story.

• Speakeasies, gambling dens and other gangstercontrolled places were extremely dangerous, as rival gangs were always trying to muscle in by taking out the competition. Finding the location of a Speakeasy or gambling den wasn't easy, and the locations often had to change at a moment's notice. Secret knocks,



people in the shadows, whispered passwords... Keep the PCs feeling on edge, as if at any moment, a Tommy Gun might be leveled at them from out of a passing Model T Coupe.

• If the PCs are really getting into the Cosmic Horror/Mythos aspects of the game, you might consider adding a confrontation with a Mythos creature or weird, Unnatural item from the Herald: Lovecraft & Tesla corebook. All of these experiences are part of what will be reported back to J. Edgar Hoover (or another Mythos Resistance leader) at the end of the adventure. The Mythos Resistance is always looking to add more knowledge about their unnatural enemies and other weird threats.

• Background music: Instrumental Jazz music from the 1920s is a terrific choice, as many players find it difficult to focus with sung/spoken words in the background. But it doesn't just have to be Jazz. Other types of atmospheric music work very well.

• For the Spec-History buffs:

• January 1924 was when many of the major U.S. harbor industries were a tinderbox, then an explosion of labor strikes. Chicago was hit hard, and the striking dock workers and "scabs" were often fighting each other in the streets. Now add gangsters fighting each other, good cops and corrupt police fighting each other, even the FBI and local law enforcement fighting each other. This carnage and strife has given rise to a handful of Mythos cults in Chicago.

• January 1924 was also when Calvin Coolidge had just been elected President. He even delivers a radio broadcast from the White House, which Mark Twain himself wrote. Maybe the PCs can hear this address on the radio and there will be a hidden message in it for all the secret Mythos Resistance members around the globe. A message of hope for the future. Both Twain and Coolidge are major leaders of the Mythos Resistance.

• J. Edgar Hoover is intensely disliked and distrusted by many members of the Mythos Resistance. It is he who gave the PCs their mission, and he that they must report back to. They may decide that they want to bypass him entirely, or even start unraveling threads about how he really isn't a good person to have in the Mythos Resistance group. Mark Twain and Sophie Tucker are the leaders of the Mythos Resistance that the PCs can turn to with these concerns.

• This is the Jazz Age! GMs are strongly encouraged to tie in as many notable figures of the scene. Chicago in 1924 was a crossroads of the burgeoning U.S. Jazz club circuit and many great singers, musicians and composers played in small venues packed to the brim with guys and dolls. The song that Wildcard Laura Coogan sings in this adventure is an actual song called "In Old King Tutankhamen's Day" and was made popular by the inimitable entertainer Sophie Tucker. Sophie Tucker is one of leaders of the Mythos Resistance, along with Mark Twain. Maybe the PCs will want to tell Sophie that her song was part of the unnatural possession of Laura Coogan, and that might spark even more ideas.

# HANDOUT ILLUSTRATIONS

**1. The symbol of Kutothankenum** (bellow) is a disc with eight drooping arms, along with a row of encrusted green serpentine and blue lapis lazuli gems. Two of the jewels have been pried off.



**2a & 2b. The ripped bits of a receipt** for plumbing and heating services. Characters can piece it together and decipher the handwriting to get the address of the Genna Brothers gambling den, 2222 South Wabash Ave.

GMs are encouraged to actually print out and rip up the receipt (fig. 2a), having each piece be found by the PCs through regular search related checks. Another method would be to give the players all the scraps at once by showing them the ripped up version (fig. 2b). Either way, have the PCs work together as a group.



## A Fistful of Dholes

	7 19
Mr Mm Jeigler TO L. L. ZANN,	
<u>CONTRACTOR</u> ,	
PLUMBING AND HEATING, Stove Repairs, Wholesale and Retail,	
Terms:	
Side of Store, Aun St Sheets 40 lbs Tim 27	1,62
Mail order paper.	130
A	2.92
laid	-040
	141
Delivery: 2222 South Wabash Are.	

Fig. 2a (complete receipt)



**3. Ripped label** on the busted shipping box in Hall 9 that held the sarcophagus:



#### Map: Warehouse- Hall 9



# Map: Genna Bros. Gambling Den







Map: Capone's speakeasy in the Hotel Atlantic

Map: The Sinclair Meatpacking Plant



CARCO E24 BOOMS