

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY JASON MORNINGSTAR

Many Fires



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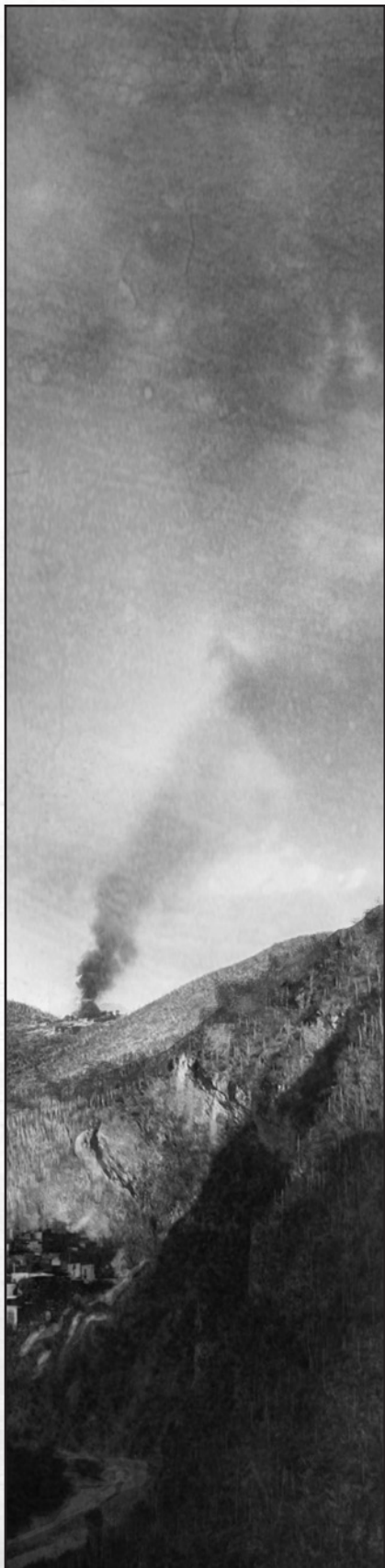
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TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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Introduction

In the mountains of northern Mexico, something ancient and obscene lies smoldering among ruins older than the Aztecs. In the green valleys beneath the Chihuahuan peaks, the problems are more modern - and they wear gun-belts. Do an unlikely band of Investigators have the courage to tackle the last remnants of Pancho Villa's bandit army? What secrets do they bring to the task? And what will they do when the trail of clues takes them into dangerous territory they cannot even imagine?

Many Fires is an adventure for Trail of Cthulhu. Taking place in the hills and valleys of the Mexican state of Chihuahua, it will introduce the Investigators to a surprising cast of characters and strange new weapons to employ in an epic struggle against an implacable and deadly enemy known as *Kqu lă* - Many Fires.

As always, abilities necessary for the revelation of various clues should be played flexibly - multiple approaches will work, depending on the situation. Consider those offered as suggestions and adapt as necessary.

DISCLAIMER ONE

This is a pulp adventure - there will be shooting, and evil magic, and burning men cartwheeling out of windows - it is emphatically not for the fish-hearted or the purist. If your Investigators play their cards right, they may be able to punch an evil god straight back to Fomalhaut.

DISCLAIMER TWO

Much of the information presented in this adventure is true. The history is factual as far as fact will carry in such a tumultuous time and place. The names of real people, are used extensively. As far as I know, there is no villainous fire cult in the mountains of northern Mexico, nor did anyone on either side of the Mexican Punitive Expedition traffic in the diabolic and unearthly. John Pershing in particular gets his name and reputation dragged through the mud for your entertainment, and his fictional representation here bears no bearing on the real man, who didn't need magic to do amazing things. I also apologize in advance to any Chiricahua speakers.

THE HOOK

It is late fall, 1928. A ragged band of Investigators with strange ties to General John J. Pershing and the mountains of northern Mexico are returning one last time to the Sierra Madre del Norte. On the surface, their plan is to finish what Pershing started in 1916 - to kill or capture the last surviving Villista commander, "Major" Marcano Chimones. But beneath the surface lie conflicted loyalties and far stranger goals...

THE HORRIBLE TRUTH

Up in the Sierra Madre del Norte there is an ancient fire cult, active since pre-Columbian times. They worship an unspeakable being and his burning otherworldly servitors.

Then-Lieutenant John J. Pershing, hunting Chiricahua Apache in the Sierra

Madre del Nortes in 1886, stumbled onto the evil band. He witnessed them summoning the terrible entity *Kqu lă* and forced the cultists to reveal their secrets. He learned their magic, then had his friend Julius Penn return to silence them forever.

Some survived.

Pershing's star rose. He used his magic against the Spanish in Cuba and the Moro in the Philippines. The cult regrouped, gathered strength, and punished Pershing. They burned his family alive.

Pershing returned in 1916 for the Mexican Punitive Expedition, determined to finish destroying the cult, by using their magic against them. It didn't work.

Now the General is an old, broken sorcerer, and his secrets have not been as closely held as he thinks. Obsessed with the terrible failures of his early career but too old, broken and frail to enact revenge or finish what he started, Pershing has dispatched surrogates - some half-knowing the truth and others completely ignorant.

THE SPINE

The characters must:

- Discover the dark secret of Pershing's past, and confront the forces that would keep it hidden forever
- Defeat the last of the Villista bandits and mount an expedition into the Sierra Madre
- Confront Many Fires, destroy el Castillo Rojo, and break the fire cult forever

Many Fires

Conflicting loyalties and ambitions will come into play as the Investigators are forced to make difficult choices about their own courses of action. To whom are they most loyal - themselves? The expedition? Pershing? Or something less savory?

Many Fires as Part of a Campaign

Using established Investigators removes the adversarial element built into the pre-generated set, but will otherwise have no impact on play. Any hook that gets your campaign's Investigators in contact with the ailing General Pershing will be satisfactory. Consider choosing the pre-generated character you find most interesting, who by default has extensive experience in northern Mexico, to be the emissary of the General and a capable guide to the region. His agenda, whatever it is, can provide some interesting spice and confrontation as well.

Many Fires as a One-Shot

When running this adventure as a one-shot, or for convention play, you'll need to truncate things quite a bit. Begin in media res, starting in San Antonio, and make the cult more aggressive than you would otherwise.

REASONS TO JOIN PERSHING'S SECRET EXPEDITION

If you aren't using the pre-generated characters, you'll need an excuse for Pershing to assemble your player's Investigators into an expedition. Here are some suggestions.

Alienist, Doctor, Nurse

Competent medical professionals are an obvious choice for a dangerous trip into lawless, unsanitary places. An alienist would be a somewhat unsettling but prescient addition to the team - the sort of detail Pershing might well want covered.

Antiquarian, Archaeologist, Professor, Scientist

The troubled history of northern Mexico flows back for thousands of years, and untouched sites and artifacts remain, particularly high in the mountains. Her native people, similarly, follow a lifeway not far removed from their pre-Columbian ancestors. There's research gold in those forbidding mountains, not to mention priceless artifacts. Experience in the region, or in hard travel in remote locations, or perhaps just fluency in Spanish might be all it takes to get Pershing's attention.

Artist, Author, Dilettante, Journalist

A plausible cover story is essential, and what is more plausible than privileged Americans descending on northern Mexico to plunder, gawp at the beauty, and to make asses of themselves?

Clergy

Someone with missionary experience - particularly experience in Mexico or Central America - would be an odd but valuable addition to the expedition, provided they were willing to be somewhat liberal in their interpretation of scripture.

Criminal, Hobo, Military

Pershing knows a lot of soldiers, and not all of them have taken to civilian life successfully. They are still hard men, though, and their experience facing the horrors of the battlefield, combined with a sense of obligation, might get them on the team.

Police Detective, Private Investigator

Anyone operating along the US-Mexican border will be a treasure to the expedition, and Pershing might seek out a Texas Ranger or border P.I. to join the expedition. It's also possible that old military friends of his have adapted to civilian life in these roles, and would make logical additions to the team.

Parapsychologist

Although a parapsychologist straddles the line between "plausible cover story" and scientist, Pershing has an open mind and might seek out a specialist in this fringe field - particularly if he knows them from their military service.

Pilot

Airfields are limited but oat and bean fields abound - getting around by plane makes some sense, and Pershing has always been enamored with air power. Tapping a pilot for the expedition (preferably one with his own plane) is a natural.

Many Fires

BACKGROUND

The general background to current events in northern Mexico isn't secret. Any interested Investigator can dig up the relevant facts. The application of any appropriate skill (some obvious suggestions follow each below) will yield the pertinent information.

About Northern Mexico (History, Geology, Biology, Library Use)

The state of Chihuahua covers nearly a quarter of a million square kilometers and is sharply divided between east and west. In the west lie the Sierra Madre del Norte, rugged mountains reaching as high as 3,300 meters and home to the indigenous Tarahumara and Chiricahua peoples. In the east, Chihuahua is composed of broad desert punctuated by fertile valleys. The climate is temperate and dry - apple orchards aren't out of place in the protected lowlands, for example.

About Pershing (History, Library Use)

John J. Pershing was a soldier's soldier, fighting with the American army in every major campaign from 1886 to 1918. He began his career as a horse soldier with the sixth cavalry, being cited for bravery in battles with the Apache in Arizona and northern Mexico. He was present as a Second Lieutenant at the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890. He fought in Cuba and the Philippines, being cited again for bravery, and was a Brigadier General by 1905. During this period he served as an observer and military attaché across the globe, from the Balkans to the Russo-Japanese War. In 1914 he was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas and charged with maintaining security along the Mexican border.

It was at Fort Bliss that Pershing learned of the tragic deaths of his wife and three daughters in a fire in San Francisco. Only his son Warren survived the blaze.

This event marked Pershing, deeply affecting him for the rest of his life. He went on to lead the Mexican Punitive Expedition and serve as Commander of the American Expeditionary Force during the Great War. He retired from active military service in 1924.

About the Villistas (History, Bureaucracy, Library Use)

As the tides of Mexican politics shifted in the early twentieth century, Pancho Villa was at various times a cattle thief, murderous outlaw, revolutionary General and political juggernaut. At the peak of his power, Villa was the governor and undisputed ruler of Chihuahua, a Robin Hood-like figure and a brilliant tactician in command of a formidable, US-supplied army. He died a folk hero, assassinated in 1923 after intimating that he might end his retirement and return to the national stage.

Major Marcano Chimones was a key Villa lieutenant, and the last remaining Villista of any import. His "soldiers" have devolved into a large bandit gang that continue to terrorize the Valle de Bustillos and all of southern Chihuahua. He operates out of Villa's old rancho at the northern tip of Lake Bustillos.

About the Mexican Punitive Expedition (History, Library Use)

In 1916, furious over what he considered betrayal by the US government for their support of the Carranza regime, Villa ordered attacks on US interests and then on American towns. On March 9, 1916 Villistas raided Columbus New Mexico, killing 18 Americans. This incursion, coupled with continued cross-border attacks, prompted what became known as the Mexican Punitive Expedition.

The Mexican Punitive Expedition was the proving ground for another ambitious young officer, an Army

Lieutenant named George Patton. He endeared himself to the American press by launching a surprise raid by touring car that resulted in the death of Pancho Villa's personal bodyguard, Julio Cardenas. Patton made the most of the ambush, displaying Cardenas' corpse strapped to the hood of his car and taking the man's sword and saddle as trophies. Again the real target - Villa's right hand, "Major" Marcano Chimones, escaped.

Pancho Villa mocked the Americans and escaped justice, a hero to many in hardscrabble northern Mexico. He was finally assassinated in 1923 by parties unknown. The Villa organization disintegrated. Villistas, little more than bandits even under his command, became barbaric packs who answered only to themselves. Marcano Chimones, more powerful than most, still manages a shadowy feifdom in the Valle de Bustillos west of Chihuahua city.

About unusual and unexplained events in the Valle de Bustillos (Occult Studies, Anthropology, Library Use)

The forbidding Sierra Madre del Norte Occidental has been feared for centuries by the lowland natives and Spanish conquerors alike - in the steep and difficult terrain, expeditions have been known to vanish without a trace. Rumors of Satanists and other degenerates using the Sierra Madre as a hideout are rife.

Many Fires

SECRET BACKGROUND

This is GM-eyes-only material.

Secret Disclaimer

The pre-generated characters designed for this adventure represent something of a departure from traditional Trail of Cthulhu play - they begin pointed at each other and each one has secrets; some have very dangerous and troublesome secrets. One of them is a clandestine Sháa cultist, one of them might consider joining the cult, and the opportunity for player versus player excitement is high. You know best whether your friends will enjoy that or loathe it - plan accordingly.

About the Cult

The cult that is gaining power in the Valle de Bustillos is as old as the surrounding mountains. Originating with a degenerate tribe called the Sháa, today they embrace all ethnicities and their leader is a Hispanic Mexican - Major Marcano Chimones.

Entry into the cult requires confronting the living flame they worship - the horrific and unimaginable sentient ball of fire they call **Kuu ɬa** - who "marks" converts with third-degree burns. **Kuu ɬa** appears only during certain unspeakable rituals that occur beneath a notched peak high in the Sierra Madre, at the cult's ancestral home - Castillo Rojo, the Red Castle, a structure older by far than even the Mogollon and the Olmec. He comes to that place when Fomalhaut is high in the night sky. Those who have been touched by dread **Kuu ɬa** can sometimes call upon his servants, the incorporeal Yaa **Kuu ɬá**, to do their bidding.

The cult is growing, and among both the Mexicans and the newly-arrived Mennonites rumors circulate about "Satanists" high in the mountains. The native Tarahumara know about the Sháa all too well, having lived in the same region for generations.

About Pershing

Pershing first came in contact with the Sháa while chasing Geronimo in the late 1880s. He was inducted into the cult (he's hidden the savage burn scars on his back ever since) and learned how to summon the terrible Yaa **Kuu ɬá**, a trick he has used all over the world to further his career and destroy his enemies. Pershing tried to exterminate the cult after tapping their secret knowledge, but ultimately failed. They struck back in 1915 and murdered his family. Now Pershing is old and largely insane - and he wants revenge on the cult and the remnant Villistas - who happen to be one and the same.

About Sháa Magic

The Sháa have three spells at their disposal. Not every Sháa knows all three; most know only the group ritual to summon **Kuu ɬá**. **Kuu zááyé**, "to make the small fire".

The caster makes a quick motion with both wrists, and droplets of molten liquid materialize from the fingertips and are flung outward, ideally into an enemies face or something flammable. Casting **Kuu zááyé** permanently scars the fingertips of the caster and causes incandescent pain. Stats for this spell are included in the Magic and Monsters section at the end of this document.

Bik'ai Yaa **Kuu ɬá**, "to call the Lice of Many Fires".

The caster summons one or more Yaa **Kuu ɬá**, which follow his general instructions - provided his general instructions involve killing people in agonizing pain and destroying property. The casting ritual requires the caster to be savagely burnt, which can be accomplished alone or with the aid of other cultists. The number of Yaa **Kuu ɬá** summoned, and their attention span, is proportional to the severity of the injuries inflicted upon

the caster. It is entirely possible to burn normally-concealed areas. A truly skilled sorcerer can summon the Yaa **Kuu ɬá** to enter our dimension from a point of ingress inside living beings. It is a slow, tortuous process, not nearly as easy as materializing in the open air but invariably deadly. Stats for the summoned Yaa **Kuu ɬá** can be found in the Magic and Monsters section at the end of this document.

Bik'ai **Kuu ɬá**, "to call Many Fires".

Summoning Many Fires is a serious ritual requiring many cultists, proper astronomical conditions, a roaring bonfire, and human sacrifice on a grand scale. What the Tarahumara Know

Any Tarahumara encountered in this adventure (there are three) knows all about the cult. Their name for **Kuu ɬá** is Na'á, which means simply "fire" but is better translated as "the incinerating blaze" - it is all in the delivery. His minions, the Yaa **Kuu ɬá**, are called Ba'yo Suwé - "Beautiful Death". Their contemptuous name for the Sháa themselves is Na'árami, which means "The Burned Ones". A Brujo or Bruja can use certain plants to escape Na'á's wrath. If anyone asks, they'll relay these facts in a straightforward way. Nobody knows exactly where El Castillo Rojo is - deep in the mountains, beneath a notched peak. The Tarahumara call it the Place of Carnage, Chi'ibú Ichirúami. The red walls, they believe, are regularly painted with the blood of the Sháa's enemies.

Kuu What?

In their own language, the thing the Sháa worship is **Kuu ɬá**, "Many Fires", which can be approximated by a nasal "Kuu" sound followed by a high-toned, descending "Thaa". The thing's servitors are Yaa **Kuu ɬá**, "Many Fires' Lice".

Many Fires

About Fire

Fire and its effects - on the environment, on the human body - is a central element of this adventure. As GM it is imperative that you spend a little time thinking about fire and ways to make it genuinely scary. Never describe fire as a strictly visual phenomena. Remember that you can feel its warmth, often before you can see it. You can smell the changes it makes to material (burning human flesh bears a disturbing resemblance to roast pork). You can hear it suck the air out of a room, or race across a floor in an orgy of rapacious combustion. Smoke has an unpleasant, acrid taste, and the smoke of burning chili bushes can be lethal. Strive to include at least two senses beyond sight in every description of fire, and go particularly over the top when describing the alien menaces that are, themselves, living, intelligent spheres of radiant energy.

The Yaa Kqu íá and their terrible master are plainly alien in every aspect. They don't follow the rules of fire. You can understand fire in mathematical terms, assigning variables to the heat source, local flammability, and so

forth. All that is out the window when confronted by these monsters, and that should be skin-crawlingly terrifying if you do your job right.

Investigators whose Sanity is damaged during this adventure may well have fire-related neuroses and illnesses. Phobic individuals may react to the smallest source of flame, or even visual representations of flame, with terror or nausea. They may go to great lengths to "protect" themselves from fire, making elaborate plans to avoid or survive potential fires.

Antagonist Reactions

The cult is advised of the expedition well in advance. They are waiting in San Antonio, and Schönwiese with operatives, fellow travelers, and summoners. The Chimones compound at Bustillos is a cult satellite in the lowlands.

At each step in the expedition they will harass and intimidate through the use of threats and direct force against the Investigators and those around them, as

well as Yaa Kqu íá when circumstances allow them to be called.

Chimones' gang can be pressed into service as a blunt instrument for violence, working to keep the Investigators out of the mountains.

The Red Castle, a pivotal ceremonial site, is filled with both cultists and gangsters, with Yaa Kqu íá available to set the pine forests ablaze.

Victory Conditions

There are two threads - the destruction of Chimones' gang and the dispersal of the fire cult. They are tied together and likely to be achieved together if at all. Each Investigator is more or less invested in each of these goals. Some are also invested in recovering Villa's gold or revealing the truth about General Pershing.



The Trail of Clues

THE VALLEY

Getting Around

The adventure begins on the way from Ciudad Chihuahua, the capitol of the eponymous state, into the Valle de Bustillos. Having arrived by rail from El Paso or Veracruz or by plane from points further afield, transportation in the rugged and somewhat primitive region west of the capitol takes one of three forms.

By plane: If the Investigators include a pilot, or someone wealthy enough to charter, say, a lumbering Fokker Tri-motor, Chihuahua's well-tended gravel airfield is convenient and offers modern facilities. Landing in San Antonio or Schönwiese is only possible in a Mennonite oat field, which presents some interesting opportunities for conflict. Landing along the dirt road between Chihuahua and San Antonio, perhaps near the ghost town of Bustillos, is possible but hazardous. Landing anywhere else mentioned in this adventure will be risky and permanent.

By motor vehicle: Trucks and private cars are available for hire or purchase in Chihuahua. There is no bus service to San Antonio. The roads are so dreadful that the average speed is fifteen miles per hour, and anything but a motorcycle is useless off the roads and trails. Even motorcycles are stymied by the Sierra Madre.

By horse: The most practical way to get around the Valle de Bustillos is on horseback. Excellent horses are available in San Antonio and good horses are available in Chihuahua.

Horses can handle any terrain in this adventure.

The action can skip around between any of the four locations. If this adventure is to be played in convention mode, give the players any information they would have learned in San Antonio or the canyon and focus on Bustillos, Schönwiese and the mountains.

There are four locations of interest in the Valle de Bustillos: The central town of San Antonio, the twin villages of Guerrero and Schönwiese, the ancient ruins in the Cañón el Nogal, and the ghost town of Bustillos. They can be approached and explored in any order, although the main road leads directly to San Antonio and it is a good place to start.

The Altkolonier

North and west of San Antonio are sprawling new settlements of German-speaking Altkolonier (Old Colony) Mennonites, only a few years old. The largest, named after the Canadian province from which the settlers recently removed themselves, is called Manitoba. Oats, beans, and corn are already being harvested on land purchased tax-free from the Mexican government. The Mennonites are a deeply religious people who are very thoughtful about incorporating technology into their lives, rejecting most. Their relations with the local Mexicans is collegial, and they've been quick to share their resources in a display of goodwill wherever practical. Anyone traveling from Chihuahua will see signs of the Mennonite colonies - half-finished buildings on the horizon, pale men in straw hats and old-fashioned clothing

hauling freshly-cut lumber in horse-drawn carts, and others bartering in broken, German-inflected Spanish in San Antonio and Guerrero.

The Mennonites themselves are insular and shy, deeply religious and resourceful. They prefer to do their business with the outside world through representatives - Isaac Dyck in San Antonio and Klaas Heide up in the foothills - but won't hesitate to aid a person in distress.

THE TOWN

San Antonio

San Antonio de los Arenales is the commercial center for the Valle de Bustillos region, 50 miles west of the state capitol of Chihuahua. It is a semi-desert region, and where there is no irrigation there is cactus and rocky scrub. The sky is a preposterously vibrant blue. The ridges of the Sierra Madre del Norte dominate the western skyline. Unless the Investigators befriend Dyck and the Mennonites, there is only one place in town for guests to stay - the dilapidated Hotel Colibrí, run by San Antonio's Mayor, Jesús Herrera.

[Core Clue] Marcano Chimones and his thugs are operating out of Villa's old rancho north of Lake Bustillos.

Cop Talk, the patient application of **Oral History** or **Reassurance** will glean San Antonio's core clue. It can also be learned from Isaac Dyck or Jesús Herrera more directly. A one-point **Streetwise** spend (perhaps over some tequila) will be enough to gather the local gossip: Chimones has Pancho

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Villa's last shipment of gold out at the old rancho, taken from his estate at Canutillo at the time of his death. Chimones' bandits have become very dangerous around Guerrero, usually hitting the city on their way into and out of the mountains for purposes unknown.

The Watcher

San Antonio has many beggars, a common sight all over Mexico. Unlike Chihuahua, Ciudad Juarez or Mexico City, however, San Antonio's beggars invariably bear the keloid scars of severe burns. One in particular will discretely observe the Investigators; Sense Trouble will peg him as a tail; Streetwise or Cop Talk will shed some light on him. His name is Pedro Gaheh, an indigent burn victim and drunkard. A mestizo Chiricahua fallen on very hard times, a little crazy. Although nobody will say this, he is also a cultist and quite mad.

Confronting Pedro Gaheh is possible; play him as a lurching, foul-smelling, combative drunk. If the Investigators well and truly toss him at any time, Evidence Collection will let them find the tattered pages from Pershing's diary and newspaper clippings that he's recently stolen from El Politécnico (see appendix). If Interrogated, Gaheh will laugh and curse the Investigators in broken Spanish, telling them that they should return to America, that they tamper with things they don't understand, that their hands will be burned and they will recoil in agony all the way back to El Paso anyway. Under duress he'll confess everything he knows, which isn't much (everything in the "What the Tarahumara Know" section) before starting a possibly suicidal fire. Ideally, when the time is right, he will try to burn the Investigators alive (See "The Attack" below).



Jesús Herrera

Jesús Herrera is the Mayor of San Antonio but the position is an honorary one; as a man of privilege and means, Herrera speaks for the town on matters pertaining to state and federal government but wields no real power. He's a friendly, welcoming man who will make rooms available at the Colibrí and express a keen interest in the Investigator's plans in the Valle de Bustillos. He's also an inveterate gossip, so any information passed along to him will be public knowledge in 24 hours.

Anyone interested in Herrera can find out more directly from him (using Flattery or Reassurance), from anyone else in town (Streetwise or Reassurance) or from the little-used library (Library Use). Herrera, the lone surviving member of what was once a prosperous and powerful clan, was Villa's sworn enemy and attempted several times to assassinate him from 1919 – 1923. The Herrera family had been loyal Villa supporters at the outset of the revolution: Maclovio and Luis Herrera had been officers in his army. They betrayed him, however, and joined Carranza. Maclovio and Luis were killed at the Battle of Torreón. Villa captured

Many Fires

José de Luz Herrera in March of 1919 and executed him and his two sons. His hatred for Marcano Chimones runs deep and anyone looking to break the Villista bandit is a fast friend of Herrera.

Should anyone bring up Anthropology or Occult Studies, Herrera will warn the Investigators not to trust the Tarahumara, citing their bloody uprising in 1690. "Go out to Cañón el Nogal," he'll say, "see what they did to Mission San Rafael. They are primitive devil-worshippers and they'll do it again if we let them."

Isaac Dyck

Isaac Dyck is an elder of the Manitoba colony and the community's point of contact with the outside world. Dyck will be eager to meet Americans or Europeans, who rarely venture into the Valle de Bustillos. "Unless they are chasing Pancho Villa", he'll say with a laugh.

Dyck's primary interest is keeping Manitoba and the other Mennonite settlements safe, followed by growing them economically. While friendly, he's not stupid, and his priorities are firm. He won't hesitate to invite Investigators out to see the colony if impressed by them (Reassurance or the public application of any Technical or Academic skill would do it), and will encourage them to visit Schönwiese, which is lovely (and in need of American capital). He'll recommend Klaas Heide as a guide, should they express any interest in heading up into the Sierra Madre.

The peaceful Mennonites have become a target for Chimone's thugs, and Dyck will be interested in plans to deal with the old Villista. Although he can't condone violence directly, Dyck is more than happy to pass along information, intelligence and tacit encouragement. He's actually a good source of information - the Core Clue for San Antonio could easily be supplied by him.

El Politécnico

San Antonio boasts a small trade school, specializing in occupations related to agriculture - machining, metalwork, engine repair and construction. El Politécnico was built on the grounds of a Spanish mission, and the old mission building itself - an imposing adobe structure more than two hundred years old - was built for defense. Although two more modern buildings and the adjacent hospital complete the campus, the mission houses the school's library, which includes a treasure trove of Spanish conquest codices and other documents of great antiquity.

Heriberto Uriarte

The Headmaster of El Politécnico San Antonio is Heriberto Uriarte, a man of arts and letters with a magnificent mustache who laments his position as the overseer of a trade school for carpenters and machinists. Uriarte loves the school's library and will proudly show it off. With Uriarte, Flattery will open any door - including the door to the library.

Should Investigators be interested in the history of the region, Library Use will dig up the Lumholtz snippets (see appendix) almost immediately.

An additional one-point Library Use spend will enlist the assistance of Uriarte in tracking down the Bartolomé de las Casas narrative (see appendix) as well.

Dr. Uriarte also has some Pershing memorabilia, should Investigators ask after him. "His diary from the American invasion in 1916," he'll say, unlocking the wooden case where it is stored and, to his embarrassment, finding it missing. Forensics will reveal scratch marks - the lock was clumsily picked.

Hospital de San Juan Bautista

The tiny hospital in San Antonio, Hospital de San Juan Bautista, stands next to El Politécnico. It is largely funded by the Mennonites but remains free to all. Unusually for a facility of its size, San Juan Bautista has a dedicated burn unit. The Chief of Quemar la Clínica, the burn unit at San Juan Bautista, is a no-nonsense nurse named Gabriela Pinzón.

Anyone accustomed to rural hospitals will immediately know that the clinic is extremely unusual - there are far too many burn patients for such a small community. Nurse Pinzón is a busy woman and a tough nut to crack. Practicing Medicine and assisting her is the best way to gain her trust, although Pharmacy or even Chemistry could be put to good use in the clinic. An additional one-point spend in any of these areas (or Intimidation perhaps) can persuade the nurse to take a break and talk about her work. She doesn't understand the prevalence of burns in the valley, and she finds it a little frightening. There is talk of devil-worship in the foothills, strange lights in the Sierra Madre. Of her patients, some are farmers, burned in mysterious fires after being threatened by the Villistas. Some are Tarahumara Indians who refuse to discuss the origins of their burns. The only patient willing to talk to Investigators is a Tarahumara named Makúsuwa, and Nurse Pinzón will quietly warn the Investigators that he is not to be trusted - a spinner of tall tales.

Makúsuwa

Also known as "Carlos", Makúsuwa's name means "finger", assigned to him because he is missing one (Medicine or a little time and Oral History will reveal that Makúsuwa's missing finger is a congenital defect, not an amputation or burn). He is recovering from a wicked set of burns - Medicine shows them to be pinpoint third-degree burns. He says a sorcerer inflicted them upon him for refusing to surrender a pair of goats.

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Makúsuwa will speak matter-of-factly about the Sháa. Assess Honesty will, of course, indicate that he absolutely believes what he is saying. They are an ancient tribe of evil villains, and they harass and enslave the Tarahumara. They use magical fire as a weapon. They worship a living ball of fire. (See What The Tarahumara Know). If Investigator's are interested (a one point spend of Reassurance or Oral History), Makúsuwa will open up and urge them to see Alma Rodriguez up in Cañón el Nogal, a genuine Bruja and a powerful one at that. Not a person to be trifled with but a good person nonetheless.

If they really hit it off, it's possible that Makúsuwa can be persuaded to accompany them when they leave San Antonio.

The Attack

Pedro Gaheh has been instructed to kill the Investigators (after tipping off or excluding Dyo, if Dyo is an Investigator). The very best way for him to do this is to catch them all together in a confined space and then send in Yaa Kuu 1a to immolate them. The best place to do this is probably the Hotel Colibrí, but any dramatic location is fine. The library at the polytechnic might be good. See "About Sháa magic".

Summoning them involves ritually charring his own skin. Sense Trouble may reveal the cloying odor of burning meat moments before the attack.

If the Yaa Kuu 1a fail Gaheh's own life is immaterial; he will charge in and spray magical fire from his hands in desperation if necessary.

(For Yaa Kuu 1a and Kuu Zááyé stats, see the Magic and Monsters appendix.)

THE HIDEOUT

This section is intended to provide some violent action. A shootout at the rancho, mixed up with some menacing cult magic, is not perfect. It's entirely possible to skip this section and, in fact, if it becomes necessary due to time, player inclination, or both, it won't cause a problem. Just move the core clues to Guerrero, Schönwiese, or San Antonio.

Bustillos

[Core Clue] Marco Chimones is up in the Sierra Madre.

Everyone - the Villista lieutenants, the various cult thugs, and the Tarahumara - knows that Chimones is up in the mountains. None of them will be coy about sharing this information (see below).

[Core Clue] The Villistas are part of a cult

This clue can be learned through direct experience at the hands of the sorcerer Miguel Navarez, or indirectly through a captured or killed Villista, or from the Tarahumara slaves (see below).

The Town

Bustillos, the valley's namesake fifteen miles northeast of San Antonio, is a ghost town. History, Architecture or Oral History (the latter applied in San Antonio or Guerrero) will explain the vacant streets - Formerly the center of the Zuloagas clan cattle empire, it was deserted during the revolution.

Bustillos is along the main road (an unpaved, washout-ravaged ribbon of gravel and dirt) between Ciudad Chihuahua and San Antonio. If the Investigators wish to visit Bustillos first, let it be completely deserted the first time around. Chimones usually has a couple of men on horseback in

Bustillos, which is also the gateway to his rancho. Locals know not to linger here. Upon a return visit, perhaps after some investigating in San Antonio or Guerrero, there will be armed lookouts in Bustillos.

The lookouts are Cleto and Jomi, Mexican Sháa cultists. They are armed with rifles and will approach anyone who does anything other than drive through Bustillos without slowing down. They are suspicious thugs and cultists, and will do their best to intimidate and threaten the Investigators into moving along. If that fails, they'll do their best to race to the ranch and raise the alarm. Bustillos isn't the place for a fight if they can avoid it. It's horse country, and Cleto and Jomi can easily outrun a motor car.

If either or both are captured, they will make a great show of their rights being violated, and how they will protest to the Federales and to their Jefe, Major Chimones, who will not be pleased. Interrogation, which will be somewhat time-consuming, will cause them to explain the fundamental banditry of their organization - hitting Guerrero and now Schönwiese, whose wealthy weak-sister Mennonites are no threat to them. Intimidation, with the right incentives, can also be effective.

An additional one-point Interrogation spend, or possibly some Occult Studies name-dropping, will persuade the bandits to explain that a big ceremony is planned up in the mountains, that Chimones has been very busy preparing for it, and that anyone who stands in the way is doomed. Condenado a muerte. They aren't Christians, not any more, not after what they've seen. Fires in the sky, beautiful magic, devilry, the old ways. Medicine or Evidence Collection, if used when searching either man, will reveal the tell-tale keloid scars of the cult.

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The Shores of Lago Bustillo

A rutted access road skirts the large, shallow Lago Bustillo. Bean fields along the road and around the rancho are worked by Tarahumara who are little better than slaves. They are lazily guarded by pistol-toting Villista cultists, but the Tarahumara here are broken people - far from home with no prospect of escape.

If the lookouts have sounded the alarm, the overseers will block the road with a pair of pine logs before abandoning their charges and retreating to the rancho. Avoiding the impromptu roadblock in a motor vehicle is a Difficulty 5 Driving challenge; failure damages the car a mile from the rancho. A Difficulty 4 Mechanical Repair roll, some cursing, and a few hours can set it right.

Unless the Investigators drive off or kill every last Villista at the rancho, the Tarahumara won't leave. Even if they are freed, they will need transportation, medical care, food and water. The logistics will be daunting and they will require months to recover from the horror they have endured. Anyone caring for the Tarahumara (Medicine, obviously, but even Reassurance or simple acts of kindness) can gain a little information. Their tormentors are Na'árami, the Burned Ones, and they spit magic fire. The cannot be defeated. A one-point Reassurance spend can tease out some practical information - Villa's decapitated head was recently dug up by Chimones, along with "two large and very heavy crates, each of which was all a mule could carry." Chimones and his mysterious load are long gone.

The Rancho

Chimones' rancho is a low-slung brick-and-adobe structure with thick walls designed to deter furious Apache and Tarahumara, a threat that has long since faded into irrelevance. Regardless, the entire compound is heavily

fortified, and guttering torches burn incongruously. The area is surrounded by bean fields and weathered pine trees that provide almost no cover. A wooden barn is the only outbuilding. Behind the rancho, out of immediate view from the access road, is a small cemetery.

The Major is away - up in the mountains. His three Lieutenants are minding the rancho, and how they react to the Investigators is wildly variable. Their general instructions are to capture, interrogate and then kill any interlopers. If they can't arrange this, just plain killing is perfectly acceptable. They won't have any warning that a fellow cultist (Dyo, if he's being played as an Investigator) is arriving.

Difficulty 5 Stealth or perhaps Disguise tests would allow Investigators to approach the rancho unnoticed.

Miguel Navarez

Navarez is a Sháa sorcerer and Chimones' second in command. A young and strikingly handsome man, his right hand is a club-like mass of scar tissue from repeated spell casting. He is completely insane and is eager to display his power. Navarez will approach the Investigators, provided they don't come in guns blazing. He's charming and has a brilliant smile beneath a thick black mustache. Assess Honesty will reveal that he's buying time as Jiminez and Silvino get in position. Sense Trouble will certainly set off alarm bells - an ambush is in the offing.

If the Investigators don't force the issue, Navarez will be glad to have a discussion about the cult and its plans. In his mind the Investigators have only minutes to live, and he's proud that they will be performing the great Bik'ai Kqu íá ritual at el Castillo Rojo, actually welcoming the true god to Earth. Major Chimones is up their preparing, and he's got everything needed to complete the ritual beneath

their holy notched peak. Then the shooting will start and he'll do his level best to incinerate them.

(For stats on Navarez and his magic, see the People appendix.)

Mariano Jiminez and Silvino Vargas

Jiminez and Vargas are prototypical murderous thugs with a cunning streak. Between them they command half a dozen bandits, a few of whom will be on horseback. They are armed with pistols, and a few will have a rifle or shotgun. These will tend to be widely dispersed, so two groups of six might show up at different times, or three groups of four.

(For Jiminez and Vargas' stats, use those of the generic Sháa cultist at the end of this document)

The Cemetery

The rancho cemetery has an ornamental fence around it. There are a dozen very old graves and one, unmarked, that has been freshly dug up and refilled. Forensics indicates that the digging was very recent exhumation of a ten-year-old grave. Evidence Collection finds the remains of a wooden marker reading "José Doroteo Arango Arámbula", which is the true name of the late Pancho Villa, as History (academic or personal) will tell.

Anyone with the time and inclination can dig up the grave again, finding a desiccated corpse whose missing head has been hacked off. Forensics, again, will reveal that the coffin once sat on top of two large crates, heavy enough to compress the earth beneath them. Crates full of gold, perhaps.

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THE GATEWAY

[Core Clue] Drugs from the Tarahumara pharmacopoeia can counteract Sháa magic.

The Tarahumara shaman Mawiyá is the Investigator's entree into the world of entheogenic plants, and if necessary he will seek them out (see below). Alma Rodriguez,

La Junta

La Junta is a village that sprung up around the junction of the national highway and the Chihuahua and Pacific Railroad. It has nothing of note beyond a telegraph station, but it is the end of the line for rail passengers heading west in the Valle de Bustillos - Guerrero and Schönwiese are only accessible by road.

Guerrero

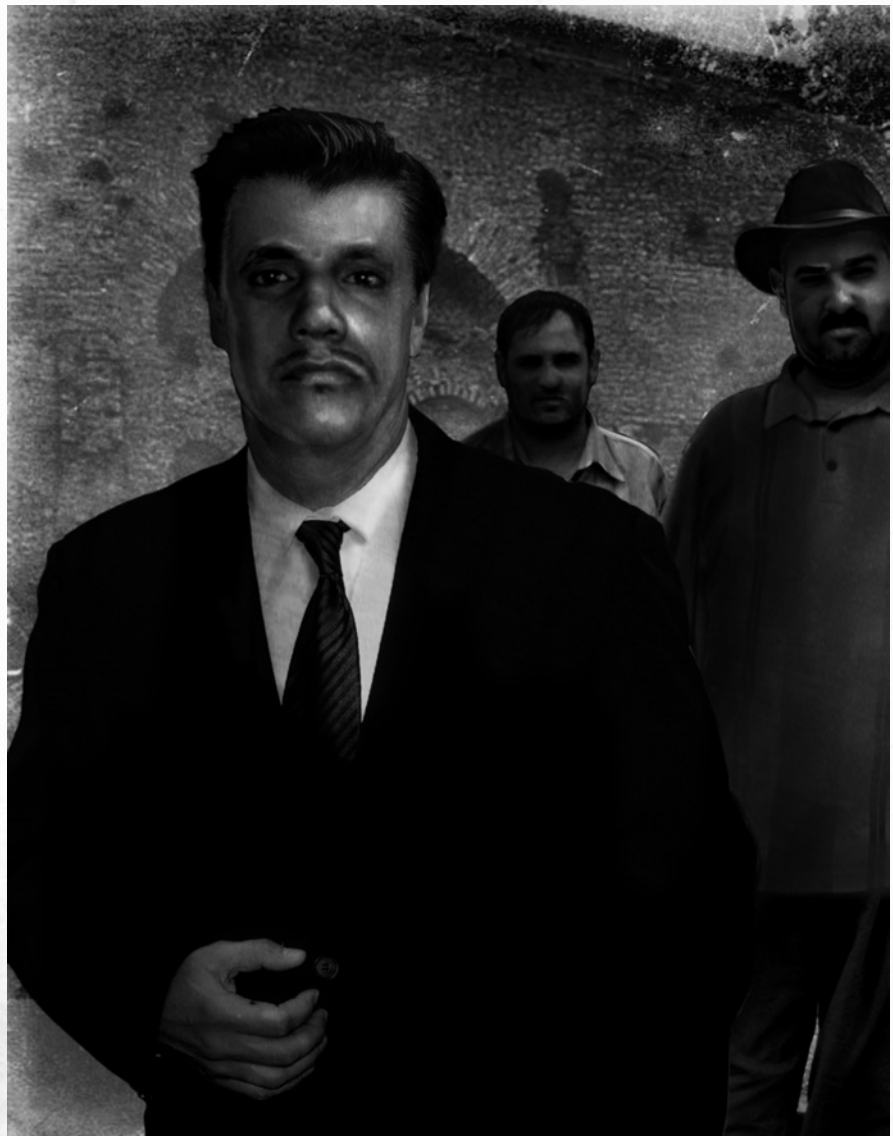
The town of Guerrero is high in the foothills of the Sierra Madre del Norte Occidental, a small and quintessentially Mexican mountain town accessible only by road. A tidy Mennonite village called Schönwiese is being built there - the road leading into Guerrero is dotted on both sides by row after row of apple tree seedlings. It was from Guerrero that Pershing began his fateful trip into the mountains, and if the Investigators want to follow in his footsteps, the journey begins in these twin settlements.

Guerrero, in contrast to the fresh paint and clean yellow pine of Schönwiese, has been torn up a little recently. It's a frequent target of Chimones' thugs, since the stubborn mountain people refuse to pay for "protection". It has the air of a village under siege, and everyone is scared.

Eduardo Domínguez

Eduardo Domínguez runs the Pino de Montaña cattle ranch and is a big wheel in Guerrero, the man who is indisputably in charge. He rides with a pair of gunmen and has the air of a person who should not be trifled with. His imposing demeanor aside, he's expansive and hospitable, particularly if he learns that the Investigators are after Chimones, who he hates. Credit Rating 5+ is enough to make Domínguez a friend for life, and Flattery will work just as well in securing an invitation to his stately (and secure) home.

Domínguez knows and likes Pershing and acted as a provisioner to the Americans in 1916. A one point Credit Rating or Reassurance spend will get him talking about the old days. He knows, for example, that when the American Army passed through Guerrero, Pershing made a side trip up to Cañón el Nogal to see the ruins and spent "a lot of time" up there. If an Investigator discusses the stranger aspects of their mission - cults, magic, or similar topics - Domínguez will get uncomfortable. An additional one point Reassurance spend will find him quietly talking about the plague of "devil worshipers" that has infected the



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region - Indians deep in the mountains who have resisted contact for centuries have made secret alliances with the Villista bandits and all hell is breaking loose. They worship Satan with fire and burn themselves. Their lair is called “El Castillo Rojo”. Some of them follow a witch that lives up in Cañón el Nogal (This is obviously false, but Domínguez believes it).

Iglesia de San Francisco

Guerrero’s principal church boasts a large encampment of Tarahumara (See The Tarahumara, below). They have nowhere to go, having been driven out of their mountain homes by the cult. Iglesia de San Francisco has a disorganized and deteriorating archive that can be accessed through Credit Rating or Theology. The Cabeza de Vaca narrative (see appendix) is in the archive and can be dug up with a one point Library Use spend.

The church archive is also an alternate place for the Pershing and Lumholtz handouts to incongruously turn up.

Schönwiese

Schönwiese stands out in contrast to the vernacular adobe of its larger neighbor. The Mennonite village could have been plucked from some cheerful river bend in Schlesweig-Holstein. A single, rail-straight street bisects a community of neat little houses, barns, and an austere church. Architecture or Forensics will reveal nothing but fresh paint and green timber - unlike Guerrero, Schönwiese has not been touched by the bandits.

Talking to the Mennonites will be a challenge - many speak only German and all of them will refer Investigators to the leader of the Schönwiese community, Klaas Heide. They are understandably skittish about outsiders. Schönwiese also has a small group of Tarahumara, who do odd jobs or just camp stoically along the main road, living off the charity of the Mennonites (See The Tarahumara, below).

Klaas Heide

Klaas Heide is the leader of the Schönwiese community, a surveyor by trade and an outdoorsman by inclination. He knows the local mountains very well. Heide is a handsome, cheerful man who walks with a slight limp. He was inducted into the cult on his very first visit to Chihuahua. His legs have been viciously scarred in terrible rituals. He has a good idea why the Investigators are in town.

Heide is reluctant to discuss his limp. Reassurance will tease out a convincing cover story concerning a construction accident that occurred back in Canada. Fact-checking Heide’s story, either with a one point Oral History spend locally or a one point Bureaucracy spend back in La Junta with a telegraph, will fail - he was never in an accident in Canada and returned from the initial survey of Schönwiese with it. Obviously Assess Honesty will point to his discomfort with the topic and general lack of truthfulness. This sort of digging will not endear them to Heide in the slightest. If pressed, he will storm off - and the Investigators can expect a visit from Yaa Kuu t̥a that evening.

In contrast, they can earn Heide’s temporary friendship in a number of ways: Pitching in around Schönwiese using a practical skill (Mechanical Repair, Electrical Repair, Medicine), helping him survey (Outdoorsman), or contributing to the building fund (Credit Rating) will all change his attitude. If he’s in an expansive mood, he’ll talk about the local troubles. Chimnones’ thugs and bandits have been terrorizing Guerrero, stealing goods and shooting up the town. They’ve been kidnaping innocent Tarahumara and enslaving them at the rancho north of Lago Bustillos. Unlike some other Mennonite settlements in the valley they’ve left Schönwiese alone, and so far Heide’s been happy about that.

Of course he’s the reason Schönwiese hasn’t been touched, and Heide is a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Hiring a Guide

It’s foolish and potentially deadly to head up into the mountains without a local guide. Heide and Mawiyá (See below) are both available and willing to go - Heide for the right price, Mawiyá for aid to the local Tarahumara. The most direct path into the Sierra Madre del Norte begins ten miles to the northwest, in Cañón el Nogal. Provisions for a trip into the mountains will include jerked beef and pinole (finely ground corn meal), carried in simple sacks.

If they don’t hire Heide, he’ll give them a short head start and follow them anyway.

The Tarahumara

The Tarahumara have lived in the mountains above the Valle de Bustillos forever, and their remote villages, coupled with a prudent desire not to have much contact with the outside world, have kept them largely untouched by Mexico’s calamities. Now they are being driven out of the mountains by the resurgent cult, forced into Guerrero as refugees or marched to Bustillos as field slaves - or worse. A small community of Tarahumara live uneasily in the two towns, not really resident in either but welcomed with compassion in both.

Anyone who needs information of guides in the local mountains would be well served to call upon the Tarahumara. The best local guide, Mawiyá, will be glad to escort outsiders into his ancestral home in exchange for whatever relief the Investigator’s can provide their bedraggled, dispirited and physically ill refugee community.

Mawiyá

Mawiyá is a Tarahumara shaman, also known as “Roberto” among the Mexicans and “Der Puma” among the Mennonites (because his name means

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“cougar”). If his confidence can be gained through Reassurance or even the deft application of Anthropology, Mawiyá is a fantastic guide to the mountains and a useful source of intelligence and local resources, particularly a potent and useful local herb called bakana. (See What The Tarahumara Know). Mawiyá says things like “The moon sometimes has to fight with the sun. If the weather was only dependent on the moon it would rain constantly, which would be of great benefit to us. The sun is not a friend to the Tarahumara.”

Mawiyá knows Makúsuwa, who the Investigators may have met in San Antonio, and will be glad to know that he is all right.

If the Investigators take Mawiyá seriously and explain their purpose, he will offer to help them defeat the Sháa. He'll tell them about Bakana and encourage them to seek out a proper Bruja for more powerful plants.

(For Bakana stats, see the Drugs appendix)

THE CANYON

[Core Clue] The Red Castle is beneath El Pico Dentado, the Jagged Peak, a 8360 foot massif to the north of Cerro Grande.

The core clue can be learned from the Bruja Alma Rodriguez or by analyzing the paintings in Casa de Largo (see below).

Cañón el Nogal

It will take a local guide to find the Canyon - Klaas Heide or Mawiyá, or both. It lies a dozen miles west of Guerrero in the foothills, along a path that has been overgrown and abandoned (Outdoorsman will reveal that it isn't entirely abandoned). At the mouth of the canyon is a ruined mission, now the home of an infamous

local Bruja. Deeper in the steep canyon are the ancient ruins known as La Casa de Largo.

Mission San Rafael

At the mouth of the canyon is the shell of a hacienda, known locally as Mission San Rafael. Archaeology or History will identify it as one of the missions destroyed by the Tarahumara in their 1690 rebellion. The overgrown stone walls are now home to Alma Rodriguez.

The Bruja

Alma Rodriguez lives in what remains of the hacienda, an unofficial guardian of the canyon's ruins. She is a Chiricahua, a “wild Indian” unrelated to the Tarahumara whose people live deeper in the Sierra Madre. Somehow she was set adrift far from home, but that story is buried in her blurry past. Her Chiricahua name is Izdzáníí Lichíí, which means “Red Woman” - perhaps because she paints her face in lurid vermilion mineral paste, which Anthropology will indicate is the sign of a Chiricahua priestess. Those not in the know will be shocked by her unearthly, blood-red face - something an enterprising GM should keep in mind. The Tarahumara treat her with a mix of respect and unease; Heide will dismiss her as senile.

Alma Rodriguez is very old, very frail, and a little unstable. She will rave in a friendly mish-mash of Chiricahua, Tarahumara and Spanish about the sun and moon, Michá and Rayénari, and offer her visitors tizwm, a potent drink made from fermented green corn. Anthropology will allow an Investigator to recall a quote from the ethnologist Carl Lumholtz: “An intoxicating drink is also made from the shoots of green corn called tshawi which though common on the higher slopes has only recently become known to science. According to tradition it is the first plant God created, and the

liquor made from it is considered by the pagan Tarahumares and Tepehuanes as indispensable to certain ceremonies.” Over her small, smoky campfire she is roasting some round cacti on spits. These are wichuri (see below).

Talking to Alma isn't easy. There's a language barrier, and her innate Stability is seriously eroded. Reassurance or Flattery will at least put her at ease. A one point Reassurance spend will cause her to confess that she's had a dream that she would be visited by men seeking the skull of a great warrior and his treasure of gold, and that Michá would appear on Earth to burn his subjects and all creation soon. She knows where this will take place - in Chiricahua territory, on the dry northern slope of El Pico Dentado, the Jagged Peak, at the Red Castle. Any Outdoorsman can quickly find this on a map - only ten miles away as the crow flies, over very rough terrain.

Alma Rodriguez could use some equipment and supplies, and a one point Bargain spend will see her cherry-picking the group's gear for practical items (choose something they'll be reluctant to part with, like a gun) in exchange for detailed information. She knows a very good route to El Castillo Rojo and can sketch it out, allowing the Investigators to avoid some of the Sierra Madre's hazards.

Most importantly, she'll offer the Investigator's wichuri, as much as they want, already prepared, if they will promise in turn to stop Michá from burning the world to ashes. “Michá knows you are coming,” she says, “Kuu tá' knows you are coming.”

(For Wichuri stats, see the Drugs appendix)

Meeting Alma Elsewhere

The Bruja can be met anywhere - her knowledge is important to share, so

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if the Investigators decline a visit to Cañón el Nogal, have her show up elsewhere - in either of the towns or even chained in the barn at the rancho north of Bustillos.

La Casa de Largo

La Casa de Largo is a small pre-Columbian ruin. The Long House is a stone structure worked into the cliff wall, deep in the canyon along the Investigator's path into the mountains. It consists of a series of cramped rooms, all roofless and empty.

Architecture makes it obvious from examining the post-holes just below what was once the roof line that at some point in its history La Casa de Largo was burned down. Archaeology reveals the structure to definitely represent the Mogollón culture, circa 1100 AD, a far-southern outpost of the highly developed civilization that flourished in the 12th century and then mysteriously disappeared.

[Core Clue] There is a cave hidden behind some scrub behind the Long House.

The Cave

The cave predates the Long House and the Mogollón era. Inside it are a series of crude pictographs painted with mineral vermilion. Archaeology or Forensics will demonstrate that the cave paintings are no more than one hundred years old, if that - the pigment is practically still wet by archeological terms. They illustrate a series of vignettes.

Panel One: There is a star in the heavens - Astronomy can place it as Fomalhaut. A one point Astronomy spend will put Fomalhaut in contemporary context - this is the month in which it is highest in the Mexican sky, identical to the representation in the panel. Men and women worship the star from a fortified structure - a castle - beneath

a peculiar notched peak. Geology or Outdoorsman (with the aid of a map) can identify this as El Pico Dentado, the Jagged Peak. Lines seem to tie the people to the mountainside.

Panel Two: The star bifurcates and a terrible burning wheel appears - Occult Studies or perhaps Cthulhu Mythos can easily place this as the dreaded **Kuu lá'**, Many Fires. It is connected to Fomalhaut by a long, twisting line of vermilion (the tether, visible when using wichuri).

Panel Three: The people are consumed in flame by smaller versions of **Kuu lá'** - the Yaa **Kuu lá'**, which the Investigators have likely already seen. Their expressions are ecstatic.

Panel Four: A hero carrying a large knife stands with a pair of native priests. One feeds him what Pharmacy or Biology indicates is bakana; the other holds wichuri and pours the pulp mixture into his ear.

Panel Five: The hero approaches the Red Castle and severs the tethers of **Kuu lá'** and his minions, causing the terror to retreat and become one with Fomalhaut again.

Viewing the panel causes a loss of two Stability to anyone who has been attacked by the Yaa **Kuu lá'**. The Mountains Begin

Past the Long House, the true Sierra Madre begin. Before entering the mountains, the investigators should know the location of the Red Castle, know that Marcano Chimones is there, and know (or at least suspect) that the cult is conducting a ritual to summon **Kuu lá'**.

THE SIERRA MADRE

Dangers abound in the untamed mountains. The route from Cañón el Nogal to the Red Castle is only ten miles in a straight line, but much farther in the difficult, undulating terrain of the Sierra Madre Occidental. The route requires huge, exhausting changes in elevation and treacherous switchbacks over bush-covered slopes.

A guide can significantly ease passage - both Heide and Mawiyá know the area well. Intelligence gained from Alma Rodriguez is also beneficial.

Below are five possible events that can occur during the trip to the Red Castle. The GM can choose as few or as many as circumstances indicate. Pacing may require more or fewer, and if the Investigators are following the advice of Mawiyá or the Bruja a few of the nastier ones should be avoided. If Heide is along he will try to trap and kill the Investigators, and failing that he'll try to warn the cult of their impending arrival. Most of these can be combined in challenging ways as well.

The Cave

At a campsite next to a clear stream edged with chili bushes and wild gourds, the Outdoorsman or Geology finds a cave with evidence of a wall built into the entrance to fortify it.

Inside are disarticulated skeletons and row after row of stacked, desiccated mummies - Archaeology indicates that this is a mortuary cave of some unknown pre-Mogollón people. The cave has ancient petroglyphs that are clearly the original source of the Long House pictographs, but one thousand years older. This revelation may call for a small Stability loss.

Heide (or the Pinaleños, see below) may choose to make his move at the mortuary cave if he can trap the

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Investigators inside. If so, he'll drag up some chili bushes and set them on fire, filling the cave with deadly capiscum smoke. History will recall this technique used with great success by the Aztec against the Spaniards at the siege of Tenochtitlan. Use the rules for suffocation and acid on page 68 for anyone trapped in the cave, giving the burning chilis a -3 modifier for inhalation damage.

The Forest Fire

Forest fires are a natural occurrence, but they can also be set. Leave the origin unknown but the fire a menace to survival. There are two courses of action - a straight-up Fleeing test at Difficulty five or building a firebreak (a Difficulty five Athletics test, or Difficulty four after a successful Sense Trouble test at Difficulty four). Failure in either course of action results in burning damage with a +1 damage modifier as well as smoke inhalation (see page 68).

The Pool

To establish the proper air of menace, this simple cut-scene works nicely. A crystal clear drinking pool is discovered after hours of parched climbing and bushwhacking. Moments before an Investigator takes a deep drink, Mawiyá (if he's along) shouts "Chawé!" and waves the Investigators off - the water 's been poisoned by the Sháa. Without Mawiyá, a Sense Trouble test at Difficulty five or an Outdoorsman or Biology test at Difficulty four will give an Investigator pause. Anyone who drinks the neurotoxin-laced water immediately goes into convulsions and will die without the rapid delivery of First Aid (a Difficulty four test). Survivors suffer 3 health damage and are significantly weakened.

The Betrayal

Heide will certainly try to kill the Investigators before they reach the ceremonial site. Whether he's acting as guide or merely trailing them. He has many options - certainly any of the other hazards listed here can be his doing, and he can complicate them with sniper fire from the thick brush, coordinated attacks by the Pinaleños in his employ, or a raging assault by Yaa Kuyú tá'. The specific approach is up to the GM, but killing Mawiyá should be high on his agenda.

The Pinaleños

The Pinaleños, or Piney Apache, are Chiricahua roughnecks who live in the mountains. Known to the Tarahumara as "Ndé'ndai" ("People who make trouble"), they are independent but firmly allied with the Sháa. They may poison pools, start fires, trap people in caves, or otherwise live up to their Tarahumara nickname. They can be tracked (Using Outdoorsman) and dealt with in a civilized way - Bargain and Intimidation are the most useful ways to get their attention and respect, and for the right price they'll be glad to "escort" a group through the mountains all the way to El Pico Dentado, el Castillo Rojo, and certain death.

After various trials, the Investigators should find themselves at the base of 8360 foot el Pico Dentado, to the north of Cerro Grande. At night, from the northern slope, the star Fomalhaut is squarely bracketed by a prominent notch in its summit.

THE RED CASTLE

A confrontation at the Red Castle is the adventure's culmination, and there are too many variables to outline a particular course of action. The Investigators will have their own agenda at this point, and the cult has other events in motion. Hopefully these will collide in a satisfying and exciting finale.

Before it comes into view, the Red Castle can be smelled - things are burning. It can also be felt - there is an oppressive feeling in the atmosphere, a change in air pressure, an increase in temperature, a dry stillness and complete silence that is deeply unnerving. Occult Studies may intimate - and Cthulhu Mythos may bring back terrible memories - of the sensation of an impending meeting of worlds.

El Castillo Rojo is a sprawling ruin. The remains of an ancient ritual complex, stolid, monolithic stepped pyramids bracket a ceremonial platform aligned with the notched peak that looms above. The pyramids are easily mistaken for scrub-covered hills, eroded by time, wind and rain. Archaeology reveals that this once grand complex must have been demolished in the 12th century. A one-point Cthulhu Mythos spend will hint at a deeper purpose to the terrible geometry of the complex - suggesting that the ancient builders could actually control Kuyú tá'.

Everywhere, there are fires - a truly enormous bonfire is centered on the platform, torches ring the edge, and other fires burn in the encampment adjacent to the platform. The ground has been scorched for an eighth of a mile in every direction - blackened vegetation lends a nightmarish pall to the setting. The Sháa will be alert to the potential arrival of the Investigators and may have guards hidden in the surrounding scorched area.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Many Fires

The Platform

The platform is one hundred feet in circumference and has been laboriously scraped down to the bare stone. Burnt corpses have been ominously shoved of the edges - a dozen or more. At the edge of the platform facing the peak is an impressively incongruous pile of gold bars upon which rests a skull - Pancho Villa's skull. Sháa are clustered around the platform at small fires, lost in ecstatic trances. Occasionally one removes a white-hot metal rod from the fire and scores flesh - his own or that of a fellow worshiper. Carefully watching the platform causes a loss of two Stability.

The Encampment

Clustered around the edge of the platform are canvas tents, native lean-to shelters and an enclosure containing a dozen burros. Lethargic cultists rest here - no one is cooking or repairing equipment, they are merely gathering strength for what comes next. They are a curious mix of Villista bandits and Amerindians - new recruits and lifetime cultists. No one says a word. Marcano Chimones is clearly visible among them, wearing his ragged officer's uniform, unshaven and weak-eyed.

The Ritual

As the Investigators get a good look at the proceedings, the ritual is finishing. By some unknown cue, all the cultists will congregate around the bonfire on the platform. One will hurl himself onto the fire, screaming in transported agony as he burns to death (witnessing this causes a two point Stability loss). The self-sacrifice closes the unholy circuit the Sháa have built, and three Yaa Kqu íá appear in a dazzling flash of light. They hang in midair for a moment before darting down into the crowd, each immolating another cultist in a vicious orgy of violence. The Sháa prostrate themselves before these creatures, who bob in the air, alive with keen, cruel intelligence, visible only as atmosphere-warping heat sources.

The Arrival

The terrible Yaa Kqu íá are followed only moments later by Kqu íá himself. Unlike his servants, Kqu íá is clearly visible, an enormous ball of coruscating energy like a miniature sun. He materializes with an almost anticlimactic suddenness, a dozen feet above the platform, his heat roasting his worshipers alive beneath him. Some break and run or crawl, and the Yaa Kqu íá hunt these down and destroy them.

The monstrous being dips down amid screams and Villa's gold melts, dripping off the edge of the platform, his skull blackening, then cracking, then exploding atop it. Chimones will be near it, talking to Kqu íá as his face blisters and his hair smolders. He's trying to make a deal - a futile effort lost on the otherworldly intelligence.

Kqu íá's attention will then be focused on anyone who walks the spirit world in a wichuri-facilitated state. He'll dispatch his minions and, if necessary, pursue them himself. Kqu íá's motivation is impossible to ordain, but he is a destroyer.



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Many Fires

Fighting the Horror

Investigators using wichuri have the ability to sever the tethers that connect Kqu lă' and his minions to their distant home. Doing so will take heroic action and intense cooperation, and it is likely to fail. But it is possible. Remember that these tethers are only visible to spirit walking wichuri-takers.

Cutting the cord of a terrestrial organism is harmful but not immediately deadly. The victim will weaken, and must make a five point regular Stability test. Failure means the victim becomes temporarily shaken (see p. 74) for the remainder of the scene. Even on a success, the unfortunate victim will be generally weakened and prone to undefined illness for the following year.

Cutting the cord of Yaa Kqu lă' is no easy task - it is, in fact, impossible if an Investigator has the minion's undivided attention. Therefore they must be distracted; an exercise left to player creativity with a great potential for self-sacrifice. Once distracted, consider it a Difficulty 5 Athletics test to get into striking position, then a normal Scuffling attack is possible. Any attack success severs the cord and the Yaa Kqu lă' immediately retreats to whence it came. The same trick attempted on Kqu lă' himself is more problematic. His spiritual tether is twenty feet off the ground (requiring something more inspired than a simple Athletics test) and much thicker than those of his minions or mere humans. Cutting it is more difficult - the tether itself has 10 Health

and, being semi-insubstantial, has -1 armor as well. He's also considerably harder to distract...anyone under the influence of wichuri will stand out like a glowing sign to Kqu lă', who will seek to destroy them.

The End

Kqu lă' might be driven back to Fomalhaut. If not, he'll kill everyone he can and then fly away from the inferno, his Yaa Kqu lă' orbiting him like whirling moons, at an impossible speed. He'll head north.



GM Resources

PEOPLE

Sháa Cultists

They fall into a predictable mold.

Athletics 8, Outdoorsman 10, Filch 2, Firearms 8, First Aid 2, Fleeing 8, Health 10, Sanity 5, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 2, Stability 0, Weapons 8

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapons: As appropriate; ranch hands might have a rifle or shotgun, anyone might have a pistol, all will have knives. Torches are a popular hand weapon, of course.

Raise or lower these stats a few points as appropriate - Pedro Gaheh should be weaker and Klaas Heide stronger.

Sháa Sorcerer

Like Miguel Navarez, will be both dangerous and insane. Several of these will haunt the Red Castle.

Athletics 6, Outdoorsman 6, Filch 4, Firearms 4, Fleeing 10, Health 8, Sanity 0, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 5, Stability 0, Weapons 8

Alertness Modifier: +0

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapons: Weapons: -1 (straight razor), magic (Kuu Zááyé, see below)

HANDY LIST OF MEXICAN NAMES

These can work for anybody; Tarahumara or Chiricahua will have a "Spanish" name and a real name.

MAGIC AND MONSTERS

Kuu Zááyé, "to make the small fire", is a deadly bit of magic taught to important Sháa. The caster mouths certain inhuman syllables and channels the radiant energy of his master, the dreaded Kuu Iá. Greasy drops of living fire form on the sorcerer's scarred fingertips, which he can spray by moving his hands. This can only be done once per day, but it tends to be very surprising. Witnessing this calls for an appropriate loss of **Stability**.

The target must be at point blank range. Roll a **Scuffling** attack with +2 damage, or blind the target for the duration of the scene without doing any damage, or it can be used to set flammable material on fire.

For Investigators who know or learn this spell, the **Stability** test difficulty is 4 (3 for those inducted into the cult), Costs 3 **Stability** and 1 **Health**. Casting time is more or less instantaneous. Kuu zááyé is the only Sháa spell within reach of Investigators for the purposes of this adventure. Yaa Kuu Iá, "Many Fires' Lice"

These otherworldly monsters are like invisible pinpoints, viewable only by the air they distort and displace with their heat and the singular, unearthly scent and taste they bring to the atmosphere. They can start fires as easily as a child painting on a wall. They consume oxygen and can suck the air out of a closed room, asphyxiating the occupants. When summoned they only remain for a few rounds - one per point of **Health** damage the caster suffers, up to six. Assign the roll a +6 in the presence of a major conflagration. In the presence of Kuu Iá they will stay indefinitely.

Abilities: Athletics 5, Health 10, Scuffling 15

HitThreshold: 6 (effectively invisible)

Weapon: Burn, +1, one in six chance of setting the target on fire (see p.68)

Stealth modifier: +0

Armor: partially insubstantial, projectile weapons are useless, hand weapons do half damage. More creative attacks using water, sand and the like should be treated like heavy firearms when used against Yaa Kuu Iá.

Stability loss: +1

Male Names

Vincente Enrique
Juan Campos
José Torres
Antonio
Suero
Fernando

Female Names

Graciela
María del Rosario
Velentina
Marora
Lucy
Chela Antónia

Surnames

López
Míguez de Pestano
Núñez
Pérez
Gamiño Díaz
Antúnez

Many Fires

Kqu lă , Dread God of Fomalhaut

Seeing Kqu lă is a four point **Stability** loss. Being attacked by a malign, intelligent ball of fire from the vicinity of Fomalhaut is a seven point **Stability** loss.

Additional **Stability** Pool Point Loss: +3
Additional **Sanity** Pool Point Loss: +1

Scorch: Being at close range to Kqu lă hurts; consider it an automatic attack at +0. Being at point blank is +2.

Heat blast: Kqu lă can craft a wall of boiling wind, knocking people of their feet and into nearby objects. Damage modifiers depend on distance from Kqu lă at the time of the attack: point blank or close is +4, near is +2 and long is +0. He can target one person per round.

Immolate: An invisible ray of heat bridges the distance from Kqu lă to its victim and sets them on fire. Roll normal damage with a +0 damage modifier each round automatically until the fire is put out, probably by a Difficulty 4 **Athletics** roll. Kqu lă can immolate one person every other round.

DRUGS

Wichuri is the name for this plant stems from the Tarahumara word *wichuwa-ka*, which means “insane”. Wichuri is a nondescript round cactus with thick spines and a pulpy, latex-rich interior with radiating vascular tissue. It is a potent hallucinogen, prepared by roasting, removing the spines, and splitting it in half. The white pulp is then squeezed into the user’s ear. When absorbed, it allows a properly prepared shaman to fall into a deep sleep. He then has the clear vision to locate witches and sorcerers and destroy them. Improper preparation invariably leads to madness.

Pharmacy or **Biology** will identify the unappealing little round cacti with thick spines that the Bruja is roasting are *Mammillaria craigii*. **Chemistry**, given time, could isolate its powerful soporific compounds, volatile and unique to the fertile eastern slope of the Sierra Madre.

With an additional one point **Pharmacy** spend, the investigator has read a colleague’s preliminary notes for an article in *Cactus and Succulent Journal* that describe it. Were it flowering, the purple petals would clinch the identification. It is, apparently, an extremely potent soporific that delivers wonderful opium-like dreams, completely safe and non-toxic.

Anthropology or **Oral History** with any Tarahumara will provide ample evidence that they are terrified of wichuri. They firmly believe that “mistreating” the plant by collecting specimens or improperly preparing it will cause great misfortune. They gladly trade with the Chiricahua, who have no such reservations.

Stability test difficulty: 2 to prepare, 4 to use. Failing a **Stability** test while using wichuri gains the hapless Investigator a point of **Cthulhu Mythos** knowledge as the implacable cosmos yawns wide.

Cost: 2 Stability

Time: An hour to prepare, 1 round to apply, 1 round to enter the dream state. 10 round duration of drug effect.

An Investigator under the influence of wichuri collapses and leaves his sleeping body in spirit form. The investigator can see “lines of force” connecting living things to the Earth and one another; these energy projections appear as ephemeral strands of solid light. Yaa Kqu lă and Kqu lă possess these lines of force, but theirs do not terminate terrestrially - they writhe among themselves and disappear into nth-dimensional space, presumably tethering them to some

alien homeworld (viewing this costs three **Stability**). These lines of force can be severed, and doing violence to the tethers offers the only chance of confronting Kqu lă.

Bakana is another curious plant in the Tarahumara pharmacopoeia. Once a specimen is found living in the Sierra Madre, **Pharmacy** or **Biology** will identify the grass-like herb as *Cyperaceae scirpus* and **Chemistry** can isolate its powerful alkaloid hallucinogen.

The Tarahumara refuse to cultivate or gather the plant for fear of going insane, claiming that while it is growing, the plant’s “song” will drive them mad. Those who cut or harm the plant become sick or cursed, but it is a powerful medicine and they are glad to barter for it. They use it medically, both to allow a shaman to diagnose and treat illnesses in the spirit world and directly, to cure insanity.

Eating bakana tubers induces a sleepwalking state. While unconscious but active, users can make lengthy spirit journeys, speak with the dead, and perceive the invisible world, along with the typical effects of hallucinogens. A minder is essential, because bakana users are drawn to fire and will throw themselves into it at any opportunity.

Stability test difficulty: 3 to use

Cost: 2 Stability

Time: 1 round to ingest, several rounds for the drug to reach the central nervous system. Effects last for at least an hour, possibly much longer.

An Investigator under the influence of bakana has **Stability** loss from exposure to Yaa Kqu lă entirely negated and Kqu lă himself halved. These beings can seem with almost clinical clarity, but the drug buffer’s the user’s mind somehow. The down-side to bakana use is that it makes fire dangerously attractive and causes actual hallucinations.

Many Fires

Using General skills while in the bakana dream state is considerably more difficult - add one to all Difficulty. Using Investigative skills is impossible. The bakana plant must be used fresh and is much too fragile to be useful outside the Sierra Madre.

Bakana "Fire Obsession"

Under the influence of bakana, open flames become almost irresistible. In the presence of fire, the Investigator must make a Difficulty 4 Stability test to avoid moving toward - or into - it. A dedicated minder, who can't really do anything but watch and restrain the bakana imbiber, makes the Stability test unnecessary. Should they be distracted, impaired, or choose to take some other action, the Stability tests begin again.

Bakana Hallucinations

Hallucinations are at the GM's discretion - if only one Investigator uses bakana, the following rule is fun. If the entire group does, it becomes unworkable, and you're better off using narrative flourishes and applying additional difficulty to represent the sensory effects of the drug.

When an Investigator consumes bakana, send him out of the room for a moment. Quietly agree on some aspect of the upcoming scene that will be a product of the hallucinations. Distinctive fire-related phenomena would be good - walls of fire, flowing pools of molten metal, spitting cauldrons, fireballs, whatever seems appropriate and interesting. Once everybody knows what form the hallucination takes, invite the player back into the room and proceed. The GM should narrate the hallucination as fact, and the other players should respond to it, even rolling dice and "taking damage" as appropriate.

The hallucinating Investigator can attempt to disbelieve, of course. This requires a **Stability** test at Difficulty 5. Success effectively suppresses the hallucination, hopefully at the cost of additional **Stability** spent.

NPCs

Pedro Gaheh

Pedro Gaheh is a cult operative and minor sorcerer in San Antonio. To portray Pedro Gaheh or other Native cultists:

- Lean forward
- Make unreasonable eye contact
- Behave like a spittle-spewing, raving lunatic

Mexican Sháa Cultists

Mexican Sháa cultists, like the Bustillos lookouts Cleto and Jomi, can be portrayed in the following ways:

- Rub your arms
- Maintain a flat affect
- Speak slowly and matter-of-factly

Jesús Herrera

Jesús Herrera is the Mayor of San Antonio and proprietor of the Colibrí Hotel. To portray Jesús Herrera:

- Be cheerful and friendly
- Wave your arms a lot
- Employ gallows humor

Isaac Dyck

Isaac Dyck is an elder at the Manitoba Mennonite colony outside San Antonio and designated spokesperson. To portray Isaac Dyck:

- Be still
- Lay your hands flat on the table
- Speak thoughtfully, carefully, and with a German accent

Altkolonier Mennonites

Altkolonier Mennonites may be encountered in San Antonio, along the highway, or in Schönwiese. Many speak only German. To portray Altkolonier Mennonites:

- Avoid eye contact
- Nervously adjust your collar
- Glance around as if looking for someone to rescue you from the conversation

Heriberto Uriarte

Heriberto Uriarte is the Headmaster of El Politécnico San Antonio. To portray Heriberto Uriarte:

- Wipe the sweat from your brow and sigh a lot
- Scratch your head absent-mindedly
- Occasionally burst out in a shout of enthusiasm

Gabriela Pinzón

Gabriela Pinzón is the Chief of burn clinic at the Hospital de San Juan Bautista in San Antonio.

- Be calm, collected, and officious
- Purse your lips
- Glance to the side as if considering other duties

Makúsuwa

Also known as "Carlos", Makúsuwa is a displaced Tarahumara living in San Antonio.

- Nod compulsively
- Occasionally wince in pain and physically reference your burns
- Speak in a low, soft voice

Tarahumara slaves

The Sháa have forced displaced Tarahumara to work fields at the Bustillos rancho. To portray these unfortunates:

- Don't speak unless spoken to, and then only in a mumbled whisper
- Stare at the ground
- If something is important, hold your hands out in supplication and make direct eye contact. Do this rarely.

Miguel Navarez

Miguel Navarez is Chimones' second in command and a sorcerer. To portray Miguel Navarez:

- Radiate confidence and power
- Smile expansively
- Play with your scarred fingers - sleight of hand, little touch exercises, drumming on the tabletop

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Many Fires

Mariano Jiminez and Silvino Vargas

Mariano Jiminez are bosses and slave overseers at the Bustillos rancho. To portray Mariano Jiminez:

- Observe laconically, knowing what is coming
- Absently massage your hands, as if preparing them for some hard work
- Speak in a loud, level tone that radiates authority

Eduardo Domínguez

Eduardo Domínguez is the merchant prince of Guerrero. To portray Eduardo Domínguez:

- Smooth your impressive mustache
- Stand, or sit upright with shoulders back
- Pound the table when making a point

Klaas Heide

Klaas Heide is a surveyor, guide and cultist who leads the Schönwiese colony adjacent to Guerrero. To portray Klaas Heide:

- Assume a slightly tired, slump-shouldered posture until you assume a ramrod straight, madness-fueled posture
- Be kind and accommodating until you are cruel and imperious
- Speak with a slight German accent

Mawiyá

Mawiyá is a Tarahumara shaman, also known as “Roberto” among the Mexicans and “Der Puma” among the Altkolonier of Schönwiese, is a displaced Tarahumara living in Guerrero/Schönwiese. To portray Mawiyá:

- Be open and gentle in your words and actions
- Point at and, if appropriate, touch others
- Speak in low tones

Alma Rodriguez

Alma Rodriguez, or Izdzáníí Lichíí, is a Chircahua priestess. To portray Alma Rodriguez:

- Shake slightly
- Speak in a loud, uneven voice
- Put both palms on your face and rock back and forth

The Pinaleños

The Pinaleños are Chircahua roughnecks and thugs. To portray the Pinaleños:

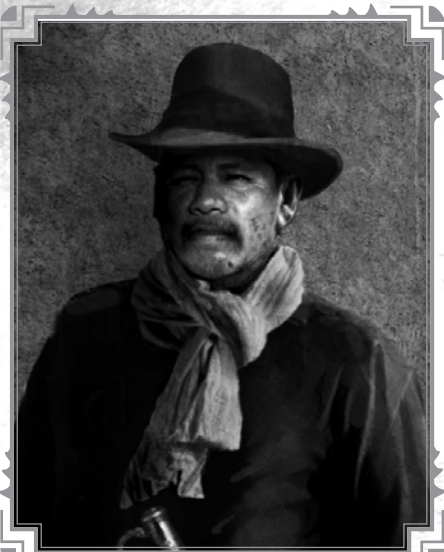
- Cultivate utter disdain for outsiders
- Snap your fingers and laugh roughly
- Let your eyes dart around as if looking for an opportunity



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



Sanity¹

0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Hit Threshold³

Stability

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name: Anacelto Bracada

Drive: Duty

Occupation:²

Special:

Pillars of Sanity: 1) I trust in my family to see me through my trials. 2) Jesus will protect me from evil

Academic Abilities

Geology - 1
History - 1
Languages - 2
- English
- Spanish
- Apache
Theology - 1

Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty - 1
Bureaucracy - 1
Cop Talk - 1
Credit Rating - 1
Flattery - 2
Intimidation - 3

General Abilities

Athletics - 10
Driving - 4
Explosives - 2
Firearms - 6
First Aid - 6
Health - 8
Mechanical Repair - 4
Preparedness - 4
Sanity - 7
Stability - 8
Scuffling - 4
Sense Trouble - 4
Shadowing - 2
Stealth - 2
Weapons - 6

Technical Abilities

Astronomy - 1
Evidence Collection - 2
Outdoorsman - 4

¹ In a Pulp game where Sanity can be recovered, mark Sanity pool loss with a line, Sanity rating loss with a cross.

² Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

³ Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

⁴ These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

⁵ Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

⁶ In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

⁷ Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

⁸ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁹ Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

¹⁰ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

You were a Lieutenant in the Mexican army in 1916, a Carranza loyalist fighting the outlaw Pancho Villa in the Sierra Madre and working as a scout, guide, and interpreter for the American army. You served as aide-de-camp to Pershing and Patton and learned to admire both men. You've seen things no man should see.

SECRET: In the last days of the war against Villa Pershing became a Brujo. He had gained power somehow and it made him terrible and strange. There are stories, told from Sinaloa to Sonora, about bad Indians in the mountains, ancestors of the Chiricahuas, sorcerers. Pershing found these people and parlayed with them. God only knows the price that he paid.

- Speaks English, Spanish, and Apache
- Knows northern Mexico
- Goal: Kill or capture Major Marcano Chimones. Uncover Pershing's curious and terrible secret. Get rich off Villista gold.
- Carries the sword Patton took from Julio Cardenas, Villa's personal bodyguard
- Has burn scars from an automobile accident

Sources of Stability:

- Herve Bracada, your young and beautiful son
- Sally Bracada, your young and beautiful wife

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



Sanity¹

0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
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Hit Threshold³

Stability

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
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Health

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name: John Johnson

Drive: Curiosity

Occupation:²

Special:

Pillars of Sanity: 1) True loyalty will always be repaid in kind. 2) The Voice of God does not speak falsely to the faithful

Academic Abilities

Languages - 2
- English
- Spanish
Library Use - 2

Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty - 2
Bureaucracy - 1
Bargain - 2
Credit Rating - 2
Flattery - 2
Interrogation - 1
Reassurance - 4

Technical Abilities

Craft (Carpentry) - 3
Evidence Collection - 2
Outdoorsman - 1
Forensics - 1

General Abilities

Athletics - 8
Driving - 2
Conceal - 4
Electrical Repair - 2
Firearms - 3
First Aid - 3
Fleeing - 4
Health - 8
Mechanical Repair - 1
Preparedness - 2
Sanity - 7
Stability - 8
Scuffling - 6
Sense Trouble - 8
Weapons - 6

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⁶ Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁸ Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

You were the African-American manservant of Mrs. Frances Warren Pershing for many years. It was you who saved the life of little Warren Pershing when the family home in San Francisco's Presidio burned down in 1915. It was you who failed to rescue Mrs. Pershing and her three daughters. Now, you have a chance to clear your name - and keep Warren Pershing safe. Whatever he knows, wherever he goes - you owe it to those poor, dead women to see it through.

SECRET: The deaths of the Pershing women broke you, ruined you. You were cast out, forgotten, another useless colored man on the streets of San Francisco. But what you saw that night - fire but not fire, living, intelligent, malevolent fire serving an impossible, invincible master - showed you a way forward. Your soul had been taken apart so that it could be re-assembled, with a new purpose and a new master. Nothing happened without a plan. You opened yourself to the fire, and the fire told you to go back to Pershing, to bide your time. And this you did, always waiting, hoping that one day you'd be taken to the fire and its people yourself. That day has come, and you love the boy you saved like your own. But now the boy aches for vengeance, and that is the one thing you cannot allow. Your twin impulses - to join the cult and to keep Warren safe - are deeply at odds.

- Speaks English and weak Spanish
- Goal: Keep Warren safe (this trumps everything). Get rich off Villista gold. Secretly, to join the fire cult.

Sources of Stability:

- Manuel Reyes, old friend from your Presidio days
- Dr. Archibald Hurst, pastor, Breslow Street African Methodist Episcopal Church

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



Sanity¹

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8	9	10	11
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12	13	14	15

Health

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name: Warren Pershing

Drive: In The Blood

Occupation:²

Special:

Pillars of Sanity: 1) My father is a great man with unimpeachable motives 2) I can rely on my education, upbringing, and strength of character to see me through any challenge

Academic Abilities

Anthropology - 1
Archaeology - 1
Biology - 1
History - 1
Languages - 1
- English
- Spanish
- French
Library Use - 3
Occult Studies - 1

Interpersonal Abilities

Credit Rating - 4
Flattery - 2
Oral History - 2
Reassurance - 2
Streetwise - 2

Technical Abilities
Chemistry - 1

General Abilities

Athletics - 10
Conceal - 2
Disguise - 4
Filch - 2
Firearms - 4
First Aid - 4
Fleeing - 4
Health - 10
Mechanical Repair - 3
Sanity - 8
Stability - 9
Scuffling - 7
Sense Trouble - 4

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³ Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

⁴ These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

⁵ Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

⁶ In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

⁷ Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

⁸ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁹ Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

¹⁰ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

You are the only son of John J. Pershing You'll attend Yale in the fall, but for now you must avenge the deaths of your mother and sisters, and prove yourself worthy of the Pershing name.

SECRET: You know your father's secret and are determined to use it. From some old Apache in the Sierra Madre del Norte he learned a marvelous secret, some kernel of ancient knowledge lost to mankind. He wrote down the technique and you found it easy to duplicate. It is a sort of magic involving fire, calling fire to you and from you, and it is incredibly powerful. Its secret name is Kuu zââyé, "to make the small fire", in a language you don't know. In your heart you know this magic killed your mother and sisters. You've promised to use it only for good, and to seek out and punish those who did otherwise so cruelly. You'll break them. You'll burn them.

- Speaks English and weak French and Spanish
- Knows Kuu zââyé magic
- Goal: On the surface, to follow through on your father's request. In reality, to get revenge on cult that killed your family.

Sources of Stability:

- John J. Pershing, General of the Armies and your father
- Dr. Alphonse Baldwin, headmaster of your prep school
- Lily Baldwin, your sweetheart

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



Sanity¹

0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Hit Threshold³

Stability

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name: Julius Penn

Drive: Arrogance

Occupation:²

Special:

Pillars of Sanity: 1) First do no harm 2) Good always prevails - this is an immutable truth 3) Nature rights mankind's wrongs.

Academic Abilities

Biology - 6

Languages - 4

- English

- Spanish

- Apache

Medicine - 10

Theology - 1

Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty - 4

Credit Rating - 4

Reassurance - 3

Technical Abilities

Pharmacy - 4

General Abilities

Athletics - 4

Driving - 2

Filch - 2

Firearms - 4

First Aid - 10

Fleeing - 6

Health - 6

Psychoanalysis - 4

Riding - 4

Sanity - 10

Stability - 10

Scuffling - 2

Sense Trouble - 8

Shadowing - 2

Stealth 2

Weapons - 1

¹ In a Pulp game where Sanity can be recovered, mark Sanity pool loss with a line, Sanity rating loss with a cross.

² Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

³ Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

⁴ These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

⁴ Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

⁵ In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

⁶ Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁸ Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

You rode with Pershing in Troop L, Sixth US Cavalry, out of Fort Bayard, New Mexico Territory, in the bad old eighties. Together as Lieutenants, you chased Apaches to hell and beyond. You saw some strange things in the Sierra Madre del Norte and did Pershing's dirty killing work and kept your mouth shut all these years - in fact, the shame of it drove you into medicine, that you might do some good to mankind. Now you are an old doctor with a few things to make right before you die.

SECRET: There is a cult. A world-spanning cult, with one diseased pocket high in the Sierra Madre del Norte. You were with Pershing when he stumbled onto their red brick fortress somewhere west of Guerro. You saw him changed when he emerged from that terrible place, eyes alive with possibility and excitement. "They worship fire," he told you, and you knew by the sound of his voice that he now did, too. He sent you back to kill them all and Lord knows you tried. You have never spoken of this to anyone, but you've researched this cult ever since. Your obsession ended your Army career and turned Pershing against you.

- Goal: On the surface, to keep Warren Pershing safe and get rich off Villista gold. But in reality, to root out the cultist in your midst, then locate and destroy the fire cult the traitor serves.
- Speaks English, Spanish, and weak Apache
- Knows history and has researched the region and cult

Sources of Stability:

- Julius Penn Jr, your successful son
- Karl Lumholtz, anthropologist and friend
- Sarah Alvarez, your mistress

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



Sanity¹

0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Hit Threshold³

Stability

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
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Health

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-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name: Tsutomu Dyo

Drive: Duty

Occupation:²

Special:

Pillars of Sanity: 1) True obedience to a higher power will deliver you 2) There is nobility in sacrifice, privation, and want

Academic Abilities

Languages - 1
- English
- Spanish
- Japanese
Occult Studies - 1

Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty - 1
Bargain - 4
Flattery - 1
Reassurance - 1
Streetwise - 6

General Abilities

Athletics - 10
Conceal - 5
Disguise - 2
Firearms - 2
Fleeing - 6
Health - 10
Sanity - 6

Technical Abilities

Craft (jewelry) - 2
Outdoorsman - 4

Stability - 8
Scuffling - 8
Sense Trouble - 8
Shadowing - 6
Stealth - 8
Weapons - 8

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² Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

³ Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

⁴ These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

⁵ Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10- Cthulhu Mythos.

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⁸ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁹ Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

¹⁰ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

You were an itinerant peddler in Mexico, part of the tiny Japanese minority, in 1916. With an entree into both Carranza and Villa's camps, you risked your life as an intelligence agent of the American military during the Mexican Punitive Expedition. As a reward for your work, and that of others, you and 526 fellow Japanese were allowed to emigrate to the United States. John Pershing treated you fairly and you love him for it.

SECRET: You were brought into the mystery by your wife, one of the Sháa herself. She taught you the rituals and hinted at the power of an ancient connection to something larger and older than mankind. After you unintentionally helped Pershing damage the cult and moved to Texas, she died. In a fire. You didn't remarry, and you never strayed again. Now circumstances have aligned, and you can help prevent any further trouble for your bright master and the ones who feverishly serve Him. You have the scars of ritual obedience - knotted keloid burns scars across both thighs - that you must keep hidden. You know the cult's terrible calling card, a spell whose secret name is *Kuu zááyé*, "to make the small fire", the very magic that destroyed Pershing's wife and daughters in 1916. You are deeply conflicted - you owe Pershing your life, but the cult will destroy you if you cross it.

- Speaks English, Spanish and Japanese
- Knows northern Mexico
- Goal: On the surface, to kill or capture Major Marciano Chimones. In reality, to discretely prevent damage to the cult - but not at the cost of your loyalty to Pershing.

Sources of Stability:

- John J. Pershing, General of the Armies
- Takayuki Hamaya, fellow "Pershing Japanese" and friend

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



Sanity¹

0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
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Hit Threshold³

Stability

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Health

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0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Investigator Name: Benjamin Delahauf Foulois

Drive: Thirst for Knowledge

Occupation:²

Special:

Pillars of Sanity: 1) The practical always trumps the mystical

2) Deep down, people have goodness in them.

Academic Abilities

Anthropology - 2

Architecture - 2

History - 2

Languages - 1

- English

- Spanish

- French

Medicine - 2

Occult Studies - 1

Interpersonal Abilities

Credit Rating - 3

Oral History - 1

Reassurance - 1

Technical Abilities

Astronomy - 4

Outdoorsman - 4

General Abilities

Athletics - 6

Driving - 4

Electrical Repair - 10

Firearms - 4

First Aid - 2

Fleeing - 8

Health - 8

Mechanical Repair - 6

Piloting - 10

Preparedness - 2

Sanity - 8

Stability - 8

Scuffling - 8

Sense Trouble - 6

Weapons - 4

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² Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

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⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁸ Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

It's Foo-Loy, you don't care how the damned French pronounce it. Current assistant chief of the US Army air corps, you flew for Pershing during the Mexican Punitive Expedition as leader of the First Aero Squadron (Provisional). Now you are on leave to honor a promise you made 13 years ago high in the Sierras - a promise to end the Villista reign of terror, and perhaps another even darker.

SECRET: The devil is real. You saw him first hand, from above. Through the clouds, below you, a pulsing ball of fire the size of a church, alive with sinister intelligence. John Pershing later told you he saw you transit the thing, like Venus in front of the sun. He said it was a god, and you were afraid for him. That was January, 1917, over the Sierra Madre del Norte, and that night has haunted you ever since.

- Speaks English, French, and weak Spanish
- Knows northern Mexico
- Has access to an 8-seat Fokker F-VII aircraft
- Goal: Kill or capture Major Marcano Chimones. Understand Pershing's past, and his true goals for the expedition.

Sources of Stability:

- Lieutenant Colonel Frank P. Lahm, pilot and friend
- Elizabeth Shepherd Grant-Foulois, your patient and long-suffering wife

Documents and Handouts

Included in this section are all documents, maps, and handouts for you and your players to use during this scenario.

The order is as follows:

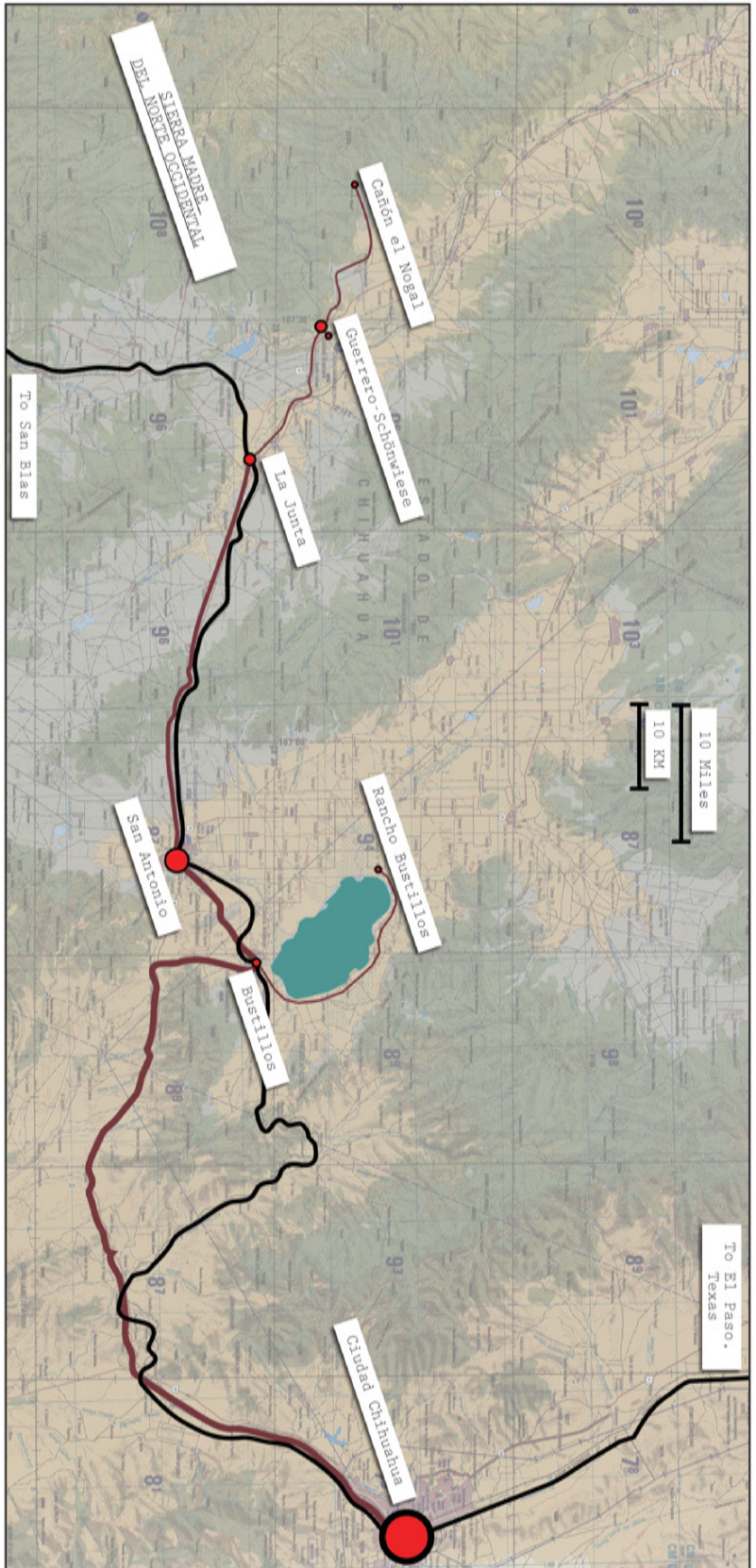
1. Map of Northern Mexico, the Valle de Bustillos, page XX.
2. A larger Map of Mexico, page XX.
3. Pedro de Castañeda, Narrative of the Expedition of Francisco Coronado, Seville, 1596, page xx.
4. Cabeza de Vaca, The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca, 1542, page xx.
5. Bartolomé de las Casas, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, 1542, page xx.
6. Pershing's Journal, 1 January 1917, page xx.
7. Snippets from Unknown Mexico, A Record of Five Years Exploration Among the Tribes of the Western Sierra Madre , Carl Lumholtz 1902, page xx.
8. Newspaper clipping detailing the fire in the Pershing household and a sketch map of the route of the 10th Cavalry Troops Punitive Expedition, page xx-xx
- 9 & 10. Letters from John J. Pershing, page xx and page xx respectively.

These handouts will also be available to download as PDFs from the Pelgrane Press website.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Map of The Valle de Bustillos

VALLE DE BUSTILLOS, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO



Ciudad Chihuahua is the state capitol and regional center of commerce, government, and transportation.

San Antonio is the hub of the valle de Bustillos, a large and prosperous market town. It is surrounded by German-speaking Mennonite settlements.

Bustillos is ghost town, abandoned during the revolution.

Rancho Bustillos was Pancho Villa's retirement home, accessible only by road.

La Junta is a junction town on the Chihuahua-Pacific railroad. It is the end of the line for passengers heading into the Sierra Madre.

Guerrero and Schönwiese are sister communities in the foothills of the Sierra Madre, one Mexican and the other Mennonite. They are accessible only by trail.

Cañon el Nogal is an abandoned rancho with noteworthy archaeological ruins, accessible from Guerrero by rough trail.

Map of Mexico



Narrative of the Expedition of Francisco Coronado

It was thus that the General met the Indians of the interior, who were greatly feared and unknown in New Spain. He dispatched his slave, Esteban, to meet with them and parley with them while he proceeded to Chichilticalli with the army. This Esteban did, taking a large retinue with him. But as the people in this country were more intelligent than those who followed Esteban, they lodged him in a little hut they had outside their village, and the older men and the governors heard his story and took steps to find out the reason he had come to that country. For three days they made inquiries about him and held a council. The account which the negro gave them of two white men who were following him, sent by a great lord, who knew about the things in the sky, and how these were coming to instruct them in divine matters, made them think that he must be a spy or a guide from some nations who wished to come and conquer them, because it seemed to them unreasonable to say that the people were white in the country from which he came and that he was sent by them, he being black. Besides these other reasons, they thought it was hard of him to ask them for turquoise and women, and so they decided to burn him alive. They did this, but they did not kill any of those who went with him, although they kept some young fellows and let the others, about 60 persons, return freely to their own country. As these, who were badly scared, were returning in flight, they came to Chichilticalli, and told the friars the sad news, which frightened them so much that they would not even trust these folks who had been with the negro, but opened the packs they were carrying and gave away everything they had except the holy vestments for saying mass. They returned from there by double marches, prepared for anything, without seeing any more of the country except what the Indians told them. When the General arrived in Chichilticalli he was greatly vexed by this news. After the General had crossed the inhabited region and came to where the wilderness begins, and saw nothing favorable, he could not help feeling somewhat downhearted, for, although the reports were very fine about what there was ahead, there was nobody who had seen it except the Indians who went with the negro, and these had already been caught in some lies. Besides all this, he was much affected by seeing that the fame of the place was summed up in one tumble-down house without any roof, although it appeared to have been a strong place at some former time when it was inhabited, and it was very plain that it had been built by a civilized and warlike race of strangers who had come from a distance. This building was made of red earth and is called the Castillo Rojo, and it stands beneath a peak the General named miesca, because it was notched at its summit. From here they went on through the wilderness. The first Indians from that country were seen here – two of them, who ran away to give the news. During the night following the next day, about two leagues from the Castillo Rojo, some of his natives were caught in a fire set by the Indians and burnt up. The fire was so great that, although the men were ready for anything, some were so excited that they put their saddles on hind-side before; but these were the new fellows. When the veterans had mounted and ridden round the camp, the Indians fled. None of them could be caught because they knew the country. The army descended for six leagues until it was out of the mountains.

✱ *Pedro de Castaneda, Narrative of the Expedition of Francisco Coronado, Seville, 1596*

The Indians saw that we were determined to go through the mountains to the west of where they wished to lead us, and they at first told us that where we wished to go there were no people, nor prickly pears, nor any other thing to eat. They again beseeched us not to go through the mountains. We refused their counsel, and they then told us the mountains were inhabited by fierce warriors and magicians unlike any we had unto then seen. These they called the people of the sun or of fire, and they were greatly distressed for they believed that we also were children of the sun, and that we had the power to cure the sick and to kill them and other lies even greater than that. Since they saw our determination, they bade us farewell, although with great sorrow, and they returned downriver to their homes. We traveled into the mountains for three days and saw no one, it was a barren land as the Indians had first foretold.

On the fourth day we came upon a red stone ruin. This was perhaps ten leagues inland through very rugged sierras. The Indians of this region were very primitive and were friendly and performed many dances and celebrations as they are accustomed to doing. The women brought us prickly pears and spiders and worms and whatever they could find, because, although the land was barren and many were dying of hunger, they would eat nothing without our giving it to them. Many of the Indians were disfigured, and very wicked, and the coastal people's tales of their cruelty and magic were true. To our shame we did not speak to them of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for we were only four, and the Indians who had accompanied us thusfar refused to treat with these in any way, and hid in the sierra or were lost to us. We were very much afraid and left the ruin with the aim of crossing the mountains to reach Chichilticalli and New Spain.

Cabeza de Vaca, The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca, 1542

A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies

I once saw Four or Five of the most *Powerful Lords* of the North laid on these Gridirons, and thereon roasted, and not far off, Two or Three more over-spread with the same Commodity, Man's Flesh; but the shril Clamours which were heard there being offensive to the Captain, by hindring his Repose, he commanded them to be strangled with a Halter. The Executioner (whose Name and Parents at Sevil are not unknown to me) prohibited the doing of it; but stopt Gags into their Mouths to prevent the hearing of the noise (he himself making the Fire) till that they dyed, when they had been roasted as long as he thought convenient. I was an Eye-Witness of these and innumerable Number of other Cruelties: And because all Men, who could lay hold of the opportunity, sought out lurking holes in the Mountains, to avoid as dangerous Rocks so Brutish and Barbarous a People, Strangers to all Goodness, and the Extirpaters and Adversaries of Men, they bred up such fierce hunting Dogs as would devour an Indian like a Hog, at first sight in less than a moment: Now such kind of Slaughters and Cruelties as these were committed by the Curs, and if at any time it hapned, (which was rarely) that the Indians irritated upon a just account destroy'd or took away the Life of any Spaniard, they promulgated and proclaim'd this Law among them, that One Hundred Indians should dye for every individual Spaniard that should be slain.

Yet the *King* of the whole Countrey escaped, and betook himself with a Train of thirty or forty of his Sorcerers, to a Temple (called in their Tongue *Quu*) which he made use of as a Castle or Place of Defence, and there defended himself, but the Spaniards who suffer none to escape out of their clutches, especially Souldiers, setting fire to the Temple, burnt all those that were there inclosed, who brake out into these dying words and exclamations. O profligate Men, what injury have we done you to occasion our death! Come, come into *Quu*, where the Lord of our Temple, *Quu Lab* will revenge our cause upon your persons. And such it was that the fire spread and blockd the Spaniard's escape; and they too perished.

Bartolomé de las Casas, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, 1542

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Pershing's Journal

1 January 1917, Jo. J. Pershing, Private

A New Year. We came upon a ceremony in the mountains among the Chiricahua. It was all very familiar but I had the distinct impression that I was not in a position of strength this time. The last time I'd heard the drums, the funereal chanting, I may well have killed some of these men's fathers.

The Chiricahua orchestra thumped and drummed furiously and the leader began to intone in a gradually increasing loudness of voice and with much vehemence a medicine song of which I could distinguish enough to satisfy me that part of it was words which at times seemed to rudely rhyme and the rest of it the gibberish of medicine incantation which I had heard so often while on the Sierra Madre del Norte campaign in 1883.

The chorus seconded this song with all their powers and whenever the refrain was chanted sang their parts with violent gesticulations. Three dancers in full disguise jumped into the centre of the great circle running around the fire shrieking and muttering encouraged by the shouts and singing of the onlookers and by the drumming and incantation of the chorus which now swelled forth at full lung power. Each of these dancers was beautifully decorated they were naked to the waist wore kilts of fringed buckskin bound on with sashes and moccasins reaching to the knees. Their identity was concealed by head dresses part of which was a mask of buckskin which enveloped the head as well as the face and was secured around the neck by a draw string to prevent its slipping out of place. Above this extended to a height of two feet a framework of slats of the amole stalk each differing slightly from that of the others but giving to the wearer an imposing although somewhat grotesque appearance. Each medicine man's back arms and shoulders were painted with emblems of fire, snake or other powers appealed to by the Apaches. I succeeded in obtaining drawings of all these and also secured one of these head dresses of the Cha-ja-la as they are called but a more detailed description does not seem to be called for just now.

CONT

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Pershing's Journal, cont.

Each of the dancers was provided with two long wands or sticks one in each hand with which they would point in every direction principally towards the cardinal points. When they danced they jumped pranced pirouetted and at last circled rapidly revolving much as the dervishes are described as doing. This must have been hard work because their bodies were soon moist with perspiration which made them look as if they had been coated with oil.

Klashidn, the young man who had led me down, said that the orchestra was now singing to the fires of heaven and I then saw that a fourth medicine man who acted with the air of one in authority had taken his station within. When the dancers had become thoroughly exhausted they would dart out of the ring and disappear in the gloom to consult with the spirits three several times they appeared and disappeared at each return dancing running and whirling about with increased energy.

Having attained the degree of mental or spiritual exaltation necessary for satisfactory communion with the denizens of the other world they remained absent for at least half an hour the orchestra rendering a monotonous refrain mournful as a funeral dirge. At last a thrill of expectancy ran through the throng and I saw that they were looking anxiously for the incoming of the medicine men. When they arrived all the orchestra stood up their leader slightly in advance holding a bunch of burning cedar in his left hand. The medicine men advanced in single file the leader bending low his head and placing both his arms about the neck of the chief in such a manner that his wands crossed he murmured some words in his ear which seemed to be of pleasing import. Each of the others did the same thing to the chief who took his stand first on the east then on the south then on the west and lastly on the north of the little grove through which the three pranced muttering a jumble of sounds which I cannot reproduce but which sounded for all the world like the chant of the Zunis at their Feast of Fire. This terminated the great medicine ceremony of the night and the glad shouts of the Apaches testified that the incantations of their spiritual advisers or their necromancy whichever it was promised a successful campaign.

Snippets from Unknown Mexico

From *Unknown Mexico, A Record of Five Years Exploration Among the Tribes of the Western Sierra Madre*, Carl Lumholtz, 1902

On top of a knoll in the mountains, at an elevation of 4,800 feet, well preserved remains of this kind of dwelling were seen. The house, consisting of but one room about ten feet square, was built of large blocks of lava. The largest of these were eighteen inches long, and about half as thick and as wide. The walls measured about three feet in height and one foot and a half in thickness, and there was a sufficient amount of fallen stone debris near-by to admit of the walls having been once four or five feet high. There were the traces of a doorway in the northwest corner of the building. Numerous fragments of coarse pottery were scattered around, some gray and some red, but without any decoration except a fine slip coating on the red fragments.

...About five miles south of our camping place the river turns eastward, and again two miles below this point it receives a tributary from the west. One day I followed the broken cordon on its eastern bank, then turned north and ascended an isolated mountain which rises about fifteen hundred feet high above the river. There is a small level space on top, and on this there has been built at some time a fortress with walls of undressed stones from two to six feet high and three feet thick. It was about fifty paces long in one direction and about half that length in the other. Remains of houses could be traced and inside of the walls themselves a sort of platform could be made out.

...Though this is the only ancient cave dwelling I visited in Ohuivo, I was assured that there were several others in the neighbourhood. The broken country around Zapuri is interesting on account of the various traditions which, still living on the lips of the natives, refer to a mysterious people called the Sha'a, regarded by some Tarahumares as their ancient enemies, by others as their ancestors. They were the first people in the world, were short of stature and did not eat corn. They subsisted mainly on herbs, especially sprouted corn called tshawi. They were also cannibals, devouring each other as well as the Tarahumares. The Sha'a lived in caves on the high cliffs of the sierra, and in the afternoon came down like deer to drink in the rivers. As they had no axes of iron, they could not cut any large trees and were unable to clear much land for the planting of corn. They could only burn the grass in the arroyos in order to get the fields ready. Long ago when the Sha'a were very bad the sun came down to the earth and burned nearly all of them - only a few escaped into the big caves. Here in Zapuri the Sha'a had four large caves, inside of which they had built square houses of very hard adobe. In one of the caves they had a spring. The Tarahumares often fought with them, and once when the Sha'a were together in the largest cave which had no spring, the Tarahumares besieged them for eight days until all of the Sha'a had perished from hunger. From such an event the name of Zapuri may have been derived. Intelligent Mexicans whom I consulted agree that it means *fight* or *contest*. From the same mountainous region I have the following legend about the Sha'a and the serpents:

...Two large serpents used to ascend from the river and go up on the highlands to a little plain between two peaks, and they killed and ate the Sha'a, returning each time to the river. Whenever they were hungry they used to come up again. At last an old man brought together all the people at the place where the serpents used to ascend. Here they dug a big hole and filled it with wood and with large stones and made a fire and heated the stones until they became red hot. When the serpents were seen to make their ascent on the mountain side, the men took hold of the stones with sticks and threw them into the big wide open mouths of the serpents until the monsters were so full with stones that they burst and fell dead into the river. Even to this day may be seen the marks on the rocks where the serpents used to ascend the mountainside.

FIRE KILLS FAMILY OF GEN. PERSHING

His Wife and Three Little
Daughters Perish in
Presidio Fire.

ONLY 5-YEAR-OLD IS SAVED

Aged Negro Servant Rescues Him,
Aided by Soldiers of San Fran-
cisco Army Post.

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 27.—Mrs. Frances Warren Pershing, wife of Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing, U. S. A., and three of her four children—Mary, 6, Anne, 7, and Helen, 8 years old—were suffocated in a fire in their quarters at the Presidio of San Francisco early this morning. Warren, 5 years old, was the only survivor.

General Pershing, commanding troops on the Mexican border, left El Paso when informed of the fire. He will arrive here Sunday.

United States Senator Francis E. Warren, father of Mrs. Pershing, will come from Cheyenne, Wyo.

Warren was being cared for tonight by nurses at the Lettermann General Hospital at the Presidio. He was taken there today when he was picked up unconscious on the floor of his bedroom by rescuers who crawled through the burning house searching for Mrs. Pershing and her four children. Warren revived quickly. The others were dead from suffocation when the rescuers reached them, and their heads, hands, and feet were burned.

Mrs. Walter O. Boswell, a relative, wife of Lieutenant Boswell of the Twenty-first Infantry, and her maid, leaped from the porch roof to the ground, after throwing Mrs. Boswell's two children down to officers and men who had been aroused by her cries and the noise of the crackling wood.

the noise of the crackling wood.

Mrs. Boswell was the first of those in the house to discover the fire. She was aroused by the smoke. She awakened her children and called to Mrs. Pershing. Then she opened the door to the hall. A gust of smoke drove her back, and she saw flames in the hallway. She took her children to the stairway, but found it cut off by fire, and retreated through her room to the roof of the front porch.

The noise of the flames by this time had aroused Lieutenant Eugene Sant-schei, of the Twenty-first Infantry, Private C. J. Hazlitt, and another soldier, who broke in the doors in the house, but were forced back by the flames. Then Mrs. Boswell, from the porch roof, threw her two children, Philip and James, 3 and 6 years old, to the men below, still calling to Mrs. Pershing, and jumped herself. Her maid previously had jumped and been caught. Mrs. Boswell fell in a flower bed, wrenching her back. She was taken to the Presidio Hospital.

Warren Pershing was found unconscious on the floor of his room by Johnson, the Pershings's aged negro servant, who led a rescue party into the house.

In the corner of the house most damaged by the fire the rescuers found Mrs. Pershing dead on the floor, with her arms across one of the children, who was on the bed. On another bed was another child; the third lay on the floor. The bodies of all were considerably burned.

The origin of the fire had not been determined definitely late today. Apparently it started in the dining room on the first floor. It destroyed one corner of the house, burned to the roof, and caused it to collapse.

Major Henry H. Whitney, commanding the Presidio, immediately appointed a board of inquiry to report on the fire.

The business men's camp recently opened at the Presidio was close to the Pershing quarters. Members of the camp rallied to the call for aid in fighting the fire.

The Board of Inquiry found that two grate fires had been burning in the house last night.

Lieutenant Boswell, whose wife escaped, is in Georgia on sick leave.

Mrs. Pershing and her children were to have left here within a week to join General Pershing at El Paso, where a home to receive them had been prepared.

Until General Pershing arrives, or sends instructions, no arrangements will be made for the funeral.

The lives of Mrs. Pershing and her children might have been saved if more fire apparatus at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, the grounds of which adjoin the Presidio, had been summoned immediately, according to Chief Thomas Murphy, of the San Francisco Fire Department, who has issued a statement criticising the Presidio's fire equipment and system as inadequate and antiquated.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Newspaper Clipping on Pershing Fire & Sketch Map

quoted.

He said that at a conference which he expected to have tomorrow with Major Gen. Arthur Murray he would insist that the Presidio authorities revoke a standing order to men of the post not to pull a city fire alarm until an effort had been made to subdue the blaze.

In the last three years there have been nine deaths by fire at the Presidio.

Wife Was Senator Warren's Daughter.

Mrs. Pershing was Miss Frances Warren, a daughter of Senator Francis E. Warren of Wyoming, and she was married to General Pershing in Washington, on Jan. 26, 1905, when he was a Captain in the Fifteenth Cavalry, attached to the General Staff. The romance of their marriage was related by her father one year after, when defending the General from charges of having had a liaison with a native woman in Mindanao. These charges, which circulated at the Capital as gossip, were the result of President Roosevelt promoting Pershing from Captain to Brigadier General for meritorious service, over 257 Captains, 564 Majors, 131 Lieutenant Colonels, and 110 Colonels, a total of 862 officers who ranked him in the service. No other General was promoted over such a number of ranking officers, and the appointment aroused much criticism.

Senator Warren, in speaking of his daughter's marriage, said that she first met General Pershing at a dinner given by Senator and Miss Millard of Nebraska. "We went and there met Captain Pershing for the first time. My daughter was just out of school. She and Pershing were very friendly. The next evening Miss Warren attended a dance at the post at Fort Myer, and there she and Pershing danced together.

That was the beginning of the affair."

When General Pershing's character was attacked at the time he was commanding the Department of Mindanao and was Governor of the Moro Province, his wife stood by him and wrote to her father saying: "If any stories about Jack come to you to his discredit, don't believe them. No matter how circumstantial they may be, nor how well they may seem to be substantiated, they are not true, and you may be sure of it."

General and Mrs. Pershing returned to this country in January, 1914, and when the army was mobilized along the border he was appointed to the command of the Eighth Brigade, with headquarters at El Paso, Tex. More recently he has been on a mission in northern Mexico.

There is a great similarity in the disaster that has befallen him and that which clouded the life of the late General Benjamin F. Tracy, Secretary of the Navy under President Harrison, who lost his wife and daughter, Mary, in 1890, when their home in Washington was burned.

General Pershing's record in the army is that of a fighting officer. He took part in the Geronimo campaigns, and also fought against the Zuni and Cree Indians. He took an active part in preparing the way for civilization in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Western Texas, and was promoted to a Captaincy for gallantry in the action at El Caney in the Spanish-American war. He destroyed the power of the Moros in the Philippines and razed forty forts and killed more than 100 of their warriors with the loss of only two American soldiers. His capture of the Moros under the Sultan of Jolo ended the insurrection.



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Letters from John J. Pershing

Dear Sir,

I began my military career as an Indian fighter. In '86, I commanded Troop L of the Sixth Cavalry, tasked with suppressing the Apache uprising in New Mexico territory, a task for which I was well suited. We chased various Apache bands, including Geronimo's, all across the southwest and well into northern Mexico. I returned to Chihuahua in 1916, in March, to hunt down Pancho Villa and his gang of murdering outlaws. That expedition was not a success as you know and some loose ends yet remain.

The years have taken their toll, Villa was gunned down in '23, and now only one of the great Villista thugs remains - Villa's right hand, "Major" Marciano Chimones. I swore I would kill them all and now old age thwarts this last ambition. This somewhat awkward circumstance has forced my hand, and I must rely on your discretion and patriotism.

Go to Mexico and kill this man.

Chimones is a bandit king. Even under Villa his troops were little more than barbaric packs who answered only to themselves. Chimones still manages a shadowy feifdom in the Valle de Bustillos west of Chihuahua city. Break his power and his bandits will scatter. No one will miss him.

Northern Mexico is in my blood like a fever. I love that rough country and, were I able, I'd ride with you. That is an impossibility in my current condition. I rely on you to end the last of the Villistas and allow an old man to keep his promise.

A retired soldier, even a General, can't hope to pay a man like you what he is worth, but if you need incentive I can offer a slender reed. Villa died a wealthy man, his fortune bound up in cases filled with gold, and Chimones has them. An enterprising man might well return rich from a junket such as this. And it is fascinating country.

Please reply immediately, as the matter is pressing and certain arrangements have already been made. The expedition will depart from El Paso, Texas in 30 days.

I remain,

Very truly yours,



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Letters from John J. Pershing

FROM THE DESK OF JOHN J. PERSHING

Dear Friend,

And that I may call you friend is, do not doubt it, one of my greatest pleasures! So few remain.

I'm writing to offer you an opportunity and to urge you to take it. I have some friends, associates of a sort with which you are well acquainted, who are heading down Mexico way on an errand of mine. They are good men and poor company, and they are there to set right some loose ends from '16. They'll be tramping all over Chihuahua state, down in the Valle de Bustillos, looking for a friend of the late Pancho Villa who, in border parlance, needs killing.

Now I don't expect you to jump at the chance to strap on your barking irons like an old cowboy, but southern Chihuahua is interesting country, your sort of country frankly, and your particular expertise would give the whole expedition an air of respectability and purpose. I want you to go - I need you to - and given our history I feel I must insist. Make your excuses, use the enclosed train ticket, and meet my other friends in El Paso, Texas.

I remain,

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Pershing". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name "Pershing".