

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# The Big Hoodoo

BY BILL WHITE



Pelgrane Press

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Big Hoodoo



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# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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## The Big Hoodoo

### INTRODUCTION

It is June 19, 1952. Brilliant but bizarre autodidact rocket scientist Jack Parsons died two days ago, killed in his own makeshift garage laboratory by the accidental explosion of a volatile chemical—or so the Pasadena police are going to conclude after what will seem to be an open-and-shut investigation. Of course, the newspapers are going to have a field day with the eccentric scientist's dabblings in the occult, his association with the diabolist Aleister Crowley, and his outlandish theosophical writings, but no one in their right mind should seriously believe that Parsons' death had any cause other than the man's careless handling of dangerous chemicals. But for a few of Jack's long-lost friends—the investigators—the truth will bring them face-to-face with a mendacious charlatan who seeks to aggrandize himself via the power of the Mythos.

This adventure should play out like Lovecraft-flavored film noir, with investigators drawn into the interplay among a set of seedy characters with complicated histories who are working at cross-purposes. Although "The Big Hoodoo" is inspired by real-world events, and the pregenerated characters it uses share the names of real people, it departs shamelessly from the historical record as necessary for dramatic and ludic purposes. This can lead to two different problems in play that the Keeper should be prepared to address. The first is the problem of too much history: players may feel awkward, uncertain, or intimidated when playing a character who is based on a historical person if they lack knowledge about that character. For those players, background information for the pre-

generated characters is provided. The second is the problem of not enough history: players may be unable to willingly suspend their disbelief if the game-fiction contradicts that which they know or suspect to be true in the real world. For those players, a scrupulous effort has been made to incorporate such details as will enhance the adventure's verisimilitude.

However, as Keeper, you should encourage your players to treat the game-world as an alternate reality that diverges from our own in several important regards, some of which they may discover or create in play. Historical accuracy should be treated lightly—it is an extraneous bagatelle; an ornamental rather than essential feature of the adventure. You can play with or against players' historical expectations about the period as you desire; for example, you may decide to present the cultists of Thelema encountered by the investigators as hedonistic libertines presaging the enormities of the Manson family, on the one hand, or as a genial patriarchy in the mold of Father Knows Best, on the other.

### Ripped from History

A cavalier regard for strict historicity is especially necessary in the case of this adventure's central antagonist. Daedalus Vance Wimpole is a heavily fictionalized version of the real world's Lafayette Ronald Hubbard, who was a pulp writer, self-help guru, and eventually the founder of a controversial quasi-religious organization called Scientology. In this game, Wimpole is the head of a self-help movement-cum-religion called "Psychohistory". The reason for this was

to justify the anachronistic inclusion of quasi-religious elements in the pulp guru's self-help movement (which in 1952 was still billed primarily as a new science of mental health rather than a religion) but some Keepers may wish to change Wimpole back to Hubbard and Psychohistory back to Dianetics or Scientology.

Players who are aware of Isaac Asimov's stories about the fall of a galactic empire where a predictive science called Psychohistory enables the galactic dark age to be reduced to a mere thousand years may be confused, and so should learn that in this alternate universe, Asimov's "Academy" (not "Foundation") novels feature a predictive science referred to as Scientology; any character with Art History will be aware of this. Similarly, in the game-world, should the name "L. Ron Hubbard" be mentioned, it will turn out to be that of a character based on D. Vance Wimpole who appeared in Tony Boucher's 1942 mystery novel *Rocket to the Morgue*, set in the pre-war science fiction scene in Los Angeles (in other words, the reverse of the situation in the real world).



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### THE INVESTIGATORS

#### Pre-Generated Characters

Four pre-generated characters are provided. The investigators are habitués of the science-fiction scene in California. They are based on real historical personages, some of whom may be familiar or even well-known to your players. Noted author Bob Heinlein and his wife Ginny have briefly returned to the West Coast from their new home in Colorado on the first leg of a tour around the world paid for with money earned from Bob's work on the movie *Destination Moon* nearly two years ago. Before they take passage on a ship bound for Hawaii, they are in San Francisco visiting Bob's friend Tony Boucher (rhymes with "voucher"), a writer and editor of fantasy, horror, and science fiction. Boucher is a sci-fi aficionado who has become one of the founding editors of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. Rising young talent Phil Dick, Boucher's protégé, is attracting attention for his intensely introspective and reality-bending science fictional imagination and is considering giving up his job as a record-store clerk to work on writing full-time.

Character sheets for all the PCs are given on page 44 to be used as handouts.

#### Additional and Alternate Investigators

Should you have more than four players, you can easily introduce additional investigators drawn from the science-fictional circles of which Boucher, Dick and the Heinleins were part in the 1950s. Collaborators Hank Kuttner (age 39) and his wife C. (for Catherine) L. Moore (age 43) now live and work in Los Angeles, where in the 1930s Kuttner was active in fandom

#### Gaming in the 1950s

Playing a game set in the 1952, like playing in the standard *Trail of Cthulhu* setting of the 1930s, is strictly speaking "historical" rather than "modern" gaming. Nonetheless, the slightly closer distance in time from now to then makes this era much more familiar-seeming as a setting than even the 1930s. The post-war political and social order coalescing in this period is going to shape attitudes and beliefs for the remainder of the century (well into the time of many players' living memory), and the on-going penetration of television into American households (and subsequent enshrining of 1950s suburban domesticity in popular culture) means that even the shape of everyday life in this period will seem more familiar than that of the 1930s. For U.S. players at least, the 1950s are likely to stand as a quasi-mythical "normal" against which the cultural shifts of the latter half of the 20th century stand either as deviations or advances.

In general, the cultural milieu is characterized by the pre-occupations of the period: (1) paranoid Red-baiting anti-Communist politics, (2) tensions between materialistic consumer desire (occasioned by postwar prosperity) and guilt or suspicion about giving in to social conformity (same), and eventually (3) the gradual emergence of civil rights as a persistent social concern. Technological optimism is the order of the day, consistent with increasing electrification and telephone penetration in rural areas—the U.S. has about 28 phones per 100 people at this time—and the establishment of the automobile as an icon of American social mobility and cultural possibility (about 60% of U.S. families now own a car). Science fiction, although still regarded neither as art nor literature, is beginning to provide important pop-cultural touchstones, with Howard Hawks' *The Thing from Another World* and Robert Wise's *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (both 1951, and both later re-made) serving as early examples.

Some additional cultural orientation to the period may be helpful to some players. In June 1952, when this adventure takes place, World War II has been over for only seven years. The Korean War (initiated in 1950) has entered a period of protracted stalemate while the larger Cold War against the Soviet Union simmers on in deadly earnest, exacerbated by Senator Joseph McCarthy's Red-baiting witch hunts, currently in full swing against the State Department, Hollywood, and the universities. Nuclear testing in the South Pacific and in the Nevada desert is on-going (with one desert explosion televised nationally in April). Julius and Ethel Rosenberg have been found guilty of delivering atomic secrets to the Soviet Union and await their execution in the electric chair. Harry Truman is President of the United States, having won against New York governor Thomas Dewey four years earlier. Truman's current unpopularity as a result of economic recession, the Korean war, and revelations of governmental corruption has led him to announce that he will not seek re-election, particularly after his loss in the New Hampshire primary to Senator Estes Kefauver in March.

On television (still only available in black-and-white, and only to 34% of American households), *I Love Lucy* and *Dragnet* just ended their first seasons, *The Ed Sullivan Show* is four years old, and Milton Berle is near the height of his popularity as "Uncle Miltie" on *Texaco Star Theatre*. Leroy Anderson's instrumental "Blue Tango" is a presence on the airwaves, and Gene Kelly's movie musical *Singin' in the Rain* was a hit with audiences earlier in the year. Novels of World War II top the fiction bestseller list, including James Jones' *From Here to Eternity* and Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny*, both of which deal with men confronting the constraints of regimented organizational life, a theme that will be picked up throughout the decade.

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and part of the Mañana Literary Society. Jack Williamson (age 46), currently working on his M.A. in English in New Mexico, had lived in Hollywood briefly before the war. He was friends with Heinlein and Boucher, and had met Parsons in the 1940s after publishing a novel about magic and werewolves in the modern world called *Darker Than You Think*, of which Parsons was a great fan. He could coincidentally be visiting his old friends in California when Parsons dies. Ray Bradbury (age 34) has been a Los Angeles resident since he was a teenager, and had met Heinlein, Kuttner, and Williamson through the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society in the 1930s; he was friends with Forrest Ackerman. Paul Anderson (age 28) and his graduate student wife Karen (age 22) have just moved from Minnesota to Berkeley, where they become friends with Phil Dick and his wife Kleo (age 22)—who would also make a fine investigator. Even

Isaac Asimov (age 34) might plausibly appear, having perhaps traveled across the country by train (still a common mode of travel, and he is afraid to fly) to give a speech or accept an award; he and Heinlein were friends, having worked together in Philadelphia during the war. The presence of British sf master Arthur C. Clarke (age 37) would be a stretch, but he might be passing through en route to a scuba diving trip off the California coast. Create these investigators using the Author or Scientist templates, modifying them in light of such biographical details as you are able to obtain.

If there are fewer than four players, you may use the unplayed investigators as NPCs under the loose control of one of the players, or simply remove them from the game. In the latter case, you should give the investigators additional build points to spend on Investigative abilities, per the guidelines in the rulebook.

### Pacing the Adventure

To fully explore all of the ramifications of this adventure could easily take six to eight hours of play, perhaps divided into two or three sessions. If you intend to run this in a single session—say, as a four-hour convention slot—some aggressive pacing will be necessary. Use investigators' Drives to motivate them to act, antagonist reactions (including visits from the FBI and the police) to shanghai them from one location to another, and NPCs like Jane Wolfe, Omar Garrison, Forrie Ackerman, and Wilfred Smith to unload exposition. Hand-wave fight scenes or resolve them with a single roll if necessary. Ideally, you'll want to budget about an hour and a half for Part One (*The Long Hook*: A wake for Jack Parsons, a drive in the desert with Marjorie Cameron, and a meeting at the Church of Thelema) and two hours for Part Two (*Down These Mean Streets*: The investigators make inquiries and follow up on the initial clues), leaving about a half-hour for Part Three (*The Despite of Azatao*: The investigators show up to suborn the ritual).



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### THE SHAPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

#### The Hook

The game begins at the wake for **Jack Parsons**, a colorful but distant acquaintance whom some of the investigators know from his involvement as a science fiction fan before World War II. A number of curious invitations are issued at the wake, and accepting these invitations embroils the investigators in the conflicts among those Parsons has left behind. However, the investigators have different reasons (Drives) for wanting to know more.

#### The Horrible Truth

Jack Parsons, a rocket scientist and practicing magician, was killed while conducting a dangerous bit of alchemy, the concoction of an entheogenic elixir called space mead. The explosion occurred because of a magical curse pronounced by Parsons' former magical partner **Daedalus Vance Wimpole**, who had learned from Parsons' wife **Marjorie Cameron** that he intended to conduct a ritual called the Despite of Azatao. Wimpole was keen to interfere, since he had been imbued with a powerful chaos-spirit as an unanticipated consequence of a magical ritual called the Babalon Working that the two men had conducted together in 1946. Wimpole thought the whole thing was a joke, and in fact arranged to have Cameron "coincidentally" arrive as the "elemental being" the ritual was intended to summon, but to his shock he found himself in touch with a "burning voice" inside his head—the spirit of Azatao (whom the Necronomicon calls Azathoth). Parsons' bizarre new ritual was intended to complete the work begun in 1946. He would use neo-Enochian

magic to alchemically transmute the requisite raw materials inside the fuel tank of a small sounding rocket into space mead, which would act as rocket fuel and upon ignition send the rocket in the direction of the Mt. Wilson Solar Observatory, which Jack believed was a temple to Azatao. The specially prepared rocket would then serve as the focus for a second spell that would symbolically defeat Azatao and render the deity temporarily powerless. This would have the effect of awakening the Moon Child—the "soul and messenger" of Azatao—who would then go on to usher in a new age of licentious freedom. With Parsons dead, Wimpole now intends to subvert the ritual to give himself greater sorcerous power. He thinks that if he sacrifices the Moon Child while at the same time conducting the Despite of Azatao himself, he will become dominant in his relationship with the Outer God. As a final fillip of horror, it may become clear by the end of the adventure that one of the investigators is the Moon Child (i.e., an avatar of Nyarlathotep)—Philip K. Dick is the obvious candidate from among the pre-generated investigators.

#### Victory Conditions

The investigators must prevent D. Vance Wimpole from enacting the Despite of Azatao, possibly by enacting it themselves, and prevent both the sacrifice and the manifestation of the Moon Child Nyarlathotep.

#### The Trail of Clues

The investigators, for a variety of reasons, arrive at the small memorial service for their friend Jack Parsons on the afternoon of June 19, 1952 (I Am The Way to a City of Woe). They meet a number of curious characters, most notably Marjorie Cameron, Parsons' widow, and learn that she's afraid that the FBI is after her. She attempts to

enlist one or more investigators to help her evade anyone who might be following her (Requiem for a Rocket Scientist). Meanwhile, Parsons' ex-wife **Helen Smith** attempts to enlist one or more investigators to help protect her sister **Betty** from her estranged husband Vance Wimpole, while others may encounter a nosy newspaper reporter (For Us, The Living). Those who go with Marjorie Cameron may experience an unsettling ghostly encounter in the middle of the Mojave Desert, during or after which Cameron disappears (Drive in the Desert), while those who accept Helen Smith's importuning may arrive at an occult ceremony in Jack's honor in time to have a run-in with Wimpole's goons, who try to kidnap Betty's daughter **Alexis**, Betty herself, or both (The Church of Thelema). Retracing Marjorie Cameron's steps takes the investigators down to the Santa Monica Pier, where a connection to Vance Wimpole can be uncovered (At The Pier). For his part, Vance Wimpole will be hard to find; investigators pursuing his trail may find themselves searching his business (The Foundation) or hunting for his boat (The *Excalibur*). In seeking to make sense of these events, the investigators may find themselves visiting Jack's old haunts (In A Strange Land), which ultimately leads them to the Mount Wilson Observatory, where they pick up Vance Wimpole's trail as well (Rocket to the Morgue). A painting with heavily mystical symbolism, obtained aboard the *Excalibur*, provides the details of the occult ritual invented by Parsons if it can be interpreted correctly (The Painting from Catemaco). Armed with this information or not, the investigators make their way or are led to Henninger Flats, in the mountains north of Pasadena, to confront Vance Wimpole as he attempts to enact The Despite of Azatao.

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### PART ONE: THE LONG HOOK

The first part of the adventure gets the investigators involved and provides the necessary exposition. As part of this process, some NPCs are introduced and then “pointed at” the investigators: in other words, they attempt to enlist the PCs in their business. This is particularly true of Marjorie Cameron and Helen Smith, and to a lesser extent of Ed Forman. Other NPCs are interested in what the PCs are up to, or what they know—this includes **Forrie Ackerman** and **Omar Garrison**.

Establish what’s going on as the scenario begins: in the case of the pregens, the investigators have driven down together from San Francisco that morning—a journey of several hours—to attend a wake for Jack Parsons near Los Angeles, and are just about to arrive at the funeral home where it takes place, having checked in at the nearby Aztec Hotel in Monrovia, where the sprawl of the Los Angeles area begins to peter out. Give them a copy of Handout #1 (page 48), a newspaper article detailing what they know of the circumstances surrounding Jack Parsons death.

### Rules for Movement

Give the players Handout #2 (page 49). The accompanying GM aid (page 50) schematizes the geographical relationships among the main locations that the investigators may move between. Imagine each “road link” as requiring about half an hour of travel by car, more or less: you may have investigators make Drive rolls versus Difficulty 4, with each point above the roll reducing the time by about 5 minutes (to a minimum of 15) and each point below increasing it by 5 minutes.

The exception is the “road” leading north out of Pasadena into the San Gabriel Mountains to Mt. Wilson via Henninger Flats, a total distance of

about eight miles as the crow flies. But the road is actually a hiking trail called the Mount Wilson Toll Road Trail; it was once used to haul construction materials up to Mount Wilson, but has since been turned over mainly to recreational use. Hiking the Mount Wilson Toll Road Trail is a journey of about two hours on foot to move from one trail link to another. An investigator with Outdoorsman may safely attempt to move faster—allow the player to set the Difficulty of an Athletics or Fleeing test (maximum 6) which if successful cuts off 10 minutes per point of Difficulty from the travel time; on a failure, the travel time is still reduced but the investigator loses 1 point of Health for each point by which the roll failed. PCs without Outdoorsman may still try to move quickly along the mountainous trail, but must Sense Trouble at Difficulty 4 to avoid taking 1d6-2 damage to Health due to pulled muscles, overexertion, and the like.

### I Am The Way to a City of Woe

*The scene begins with the investigators arriving at a funeral home for Jack Parsons’ wake. They meet Forrie Ackerman—a devotee of Psychohistory secretly spying for Vance Wimpole—before heading in to the wake proper. On their way in, they witness a curious exchange between two of Jack’s colleagues from the world of rocketry, Ed Forman and Professor Theodore von Kármán.*

### The Parking Lot (Forrie Ackerman)

#### Scene Type: Core

Thursday, June 19, 1952. It is the middle of the afternoon on the West Coast. In their car, the investigators pass through the gates of a park-like cemetery shaded by trees; the sign at the gate reads, ‘Liveoak Cemetery’. They follow an oak-lined driveway that curves past rows of white headstones stretching off in every direction.

The investigators pull into the parking lot, where a man in a cheap suit—lanky, bespectacled, a paperback with a lurid cover in his hand—stands awkwardly by his car, looking expectantly toward their approaching vehicle. “Oh, shit,” somebody mutters. “It’s Forrie Ackerman.”

### Forrest J. “Forrie” Ackerman

(b. 1916, age 36). Skills: **Drive** 4, **Health** 6. Special: Ackerman gets a +1 **Psychohistory** bonus. Drive: **Antiquarianism**

Play Ackerman as a proto-nerd, the original uber geek fanboy from whom all others descend, a sci-fi man-child on his own in Hollywood. Forrie is a collector of all things “sciffy”—as he puts it—including sci-fi, fantasy, and horror books, paintings, and memorabilia. The ashes of a certain occultist rocket scientist are in this category. He is awkwardly gregarious and will be generally oblivious to slights and put-downs in his fawning devotion to the luminaries of the sci-fi universe. If you can, fill his talk with puns and wordplay as well as references to monster movies, UFOs, and bug-eyed aliens. Occasionally push your glasses up on your nose with the base of your palm.

### Ackerman’s Connections to the Investigators.

Ackerman considers Bob Heinlein and Tony Boucher to be his good friends. He met Ginny briefly once two years ago but dislikes her out of a weird sense of loyalty to Bob’s first wife Leslyn, who was always kind to him. He knows Dick by reputation and is a fan of Dick’s work because of its psychological strangeness, although he would like there to be more conventional science fiction tropes in it like rocketships and rayguns.

**Art History.** “Forrie” Ackerman was one of the founding members of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society, and is an inveterate collector of sci-fi memorabilia from movies and magazines. He is science fiction’s

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### Psychohistory (resource tome)

This is a slim paperback emblazoned with the title *Psychohistory* in red in small caps against a starry black background representing a portion of the night sky, with the name “D.Vance Wimpole” in larger type below. **Astronomy** allows an investigator to recognize the Pleiades and the constellation Taurus, with its prominent red star Aldebaran. A starburst with the words “The National Best Seller!” is located in an upper corner.

The book can be skimmed in several hours and pored over in a day or two; **Library Use** can considerably reduce these times. In a prolix and pretentious style, with intimations of having overcome profound and implacable resistance from the medical and psychiatric establishment, it announces the discovery of a new mental science with profound implications for human health and sanity. It declares that the techniques it espouses allow the Psychohistorical initiate to rid his unconscious mind of the mental traumas that cause psychological and physical problems, which removal results in an increase in strength, intelligence, dexterity, wisdom, constitution, and charisma so long as one’s actions are consonant with one’s newly purified beliefs. After a review of the basic Psychohistorical procedures, which come across as a kind of guided autosuggestion, the book goes on to say that the best results are achieved by those who have been trained as psychohistorians in one of the Foundations established since Psychohistory was first introduced (a list is provided at the end of the book; it includes an address for the one in Los Angeles, 206 South Hoover Street in Hollywood—core clue). It hints that greater gains are available to those who receive Foundation training to progress beyond the level of “initiate” through “adept” to that of “master psychohistorian.” So much is revealed by skimming the book.

**Psychohistorical Assessment:** Poring over the book qualifies one to conduct Psychohistorical assessment on another person at a basic level. This requires a test of one’s **Psychohistory** skill, which begins at zero and increases by one after a number of sessions equal to one’s current skill plus one; so it takes one session to achieve a skill of 1, two more to raise it to 2, three after that to raise it to 3, and so forth, to a maximum equal to twice the psychohistorian’s **Credit Rating**. The **Difficulty** of the test is the Sanity of the Psychohistorical subject.

An assessment session involves the assessor asking the subject a series of questions intended to get him or her to “isolate the psychic engraining” that produces illness, weakness, and unhappiness. Most subjects resist, because the process is emotionally painful, but a good assessor is able to overcome that resistance, and the subject is suddenly overwhelmed with memories from youth, childhood, and even infancy that are embarrassing, traumatic, or bewildering. This is a strange epiphany almost like a physical shock for the subject, who must test **Stability at Difficulty 4** to avoid a 2 point loss as a result.

**Psychohistorical Empowerment:** If the subject successfully deals with the surge of memories (i.e., makes the **Stability** test), he or she is said to be “psychohistorically empowered,” and is able to draw upon a reservoir of personal afflatus or psychic energy to lend his or her efforts increased effectiveness or force. This empowering operates when the subject is pursuing a specific purpose (i.e., obeying a Drive). For initiates (that is, first-level Psychohistorians) this amounts to a +1 **Psychohistory** bonus. Adepts (second-level) receive a bonus of +2. Master psychohistorians receive a +4 bonus. In all cases, each point of **Psychohistory** bonus may be used once per turn (or extended contest) to increase a General ability roll, increase the **Difficulty** of another’s General ability roll against the psychohistorian, increase the psychohistorian’s damage roll, or reduce the damage rolled by another character against the psychohistorian. So, for example, a Psychohistorian adept could increase the **Difficulty** of the investigators’ **Sense Trouble** roll by +2 on one turn, make an attack at +1 to hit and +1 damage the next, and then make a normal attack but reduce the damage he suffers from the investigators’ counter-attack by 2 on the third. This ability may only be invoked if the psychohistorian is demonstrably pursuing his or her Drive! As Keeper, you should scrupulously police yourself in this regard; if you can’t by (role-played) word or deed demonstrate the Drive in action, you should forgo the bonus.

In play, when investigators face psychohistorically empowered opponents, you as Keeper should make clear that those opponents are drawing upon some deep reserve of strength, creativity, or power when they act, perhaps imposing a 2- or even 3-point Stability test for witnessing such empowered feats.

most ardent and well-connected fan. He writes letters to authors and other fans, attends conventions, and wears costumes. He holds an open house each week at his house in Beverly Hills, which he calls the “Ackermansion,” so fans and friends can see his collection. He’s also been a literary agent for some well-

known writers of science fiction such as Vance Wimpole and A.E. van Vogt.

Ackerman peers at their car until they get close enough for him to recognize the investigators. He raises a hand in greeting. “I wanted to pay my respects in there,” he says. “Jack was one of us. But I’m

nervous. I’m glad you fellas are here. Can I tag along with you?” He will make idle conversation as the investigators move toward the entrance. “How was the drive down? Are you staying long? Where’s your hotel? Hey, Bob, I have to say that I loved ‘Destination Moon’; those Bonestell backdrops were top-notch.” He will gush over



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Phil's work when they are introduced. "You wrote 'The Little Movement!'" he'll cry. "And 'Beyond Lies the Wub!' I love those stories! They're twisted! You'll have to come to the Ackermansion and sign my copies!"

**Assess Honesty** (leverage: **Art History**). Forrie is not living up to his reputation by being so reticent about schmoozing with people, even if it is at a funeral. **Follow-Up**: Forrie will dismiss any suggestion that something is wrong with him. "I'm just nervous is all." What's he nervous about? "Oh, um, well, you know that Jack was into some pretty weird stuff. It's just—I'm just—never mind. Let's go." A 1 pt. spend (also **Flattery**, 1 pt. spend) confirms that he's hiding something big. **The Truth**: Ackerman is nervous because Vance Wimpole is counting on him and he wants to do a good job. "Forward the Foundation!" He's got orders to keep an eye on Marjorie Cameron, and is supposed to call in a report on her: who she's with and where she's headed. It will take a 1 pt. player-suggested **Intimidation** spend to get him to reveal that Vance Wimpole put him up to it, but that's all he knows.

**Evidence Collection**. Forrie is reading D. Vance Wimpole's new self-help book, *Psychohistory*. With a 1 point spend, the investigator notices that it's autographed. In the back of the book is a phone number and the words "Friendship Org," written by the same hand seemingly. **Follow-Up**: The number reaches the Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation. If pressed, Forrie will awkwardly and unconvincingly claim that Wimpole had just invited him to receive a free session of Psychohistorical assessment. **The Truth**: This is the number Forrie is supposed to call to report back to Wimpole, asking the operator to connect him to "Friendship Org" and leaving any messages with the man who answers (who will then pass on any instructions he has received to relay to Forrie).

### The Funeral Home

#### Scene Type: Core (Introduction)

The building consists of two low, block-shaped structures of whitewashed adobe connected by an open breezeway. One, slightly larger, is windowless, with a narrow tapering cylindrical chimney rising from it (this is the crematorium). The other is cut with half a dozen abstract stained glass panels along the side, giving the impression of religiosity without any specific denominational commitment (this is the funeral home proper). Entering the funeral home, the investigators proceed into a vestibule with stained glass windows on either side. There are two men in the vestibule, talking quietly: an older man still wearing his hat and coat, facing away from the investigators, and a lanky and lugubrious fellow in his late 30s in short sleeves, somewhat unkempt, standing in the doorway leading from the vestibule deeper into the building. The older man is Dr. Theodore van Kármán of Caltech, one of Jack's mentors; the other man is Ed Forman, an engineer and friend from childhood who was Jack's business partner.

### The Keys to the Kingdom (Ed Forman)

#### Scene Type: Clue (Core)

**Evidence Collection** (core clue) lets the first investigator through the door notice Ed Forman at that instant give something to von Kármán—a small object, like a set of keys or a small piece of jewelry. If that observer also has **Assess Honesty**, he or she gets the impression that Forman is reluctant to give it up, and that he is pleading with or warning von Kármán about something. Von Kármán's reply seems to shock or upset Forman. After making the exchange, von Kármán makes an abrupt about face and departs, disturbed by Forman's outlandish behavior. He will brush past the investigators with a brusque nod. **The Truth**: Forman

has given von Kármán the keys to the Aerojet storage warehouse in Azusa where he worked with Parsons on the modified sounding rocket for the Despite of Azatao. He informed von Kármán that he was accosted last night on his way into his house by two men—a jowly old low-life and a broad-shouldered surfer type—who roughed him up until he told them where the rocket was. He thinks they were sent by Marjorie, who didn't know where the rocket was being put together. Von Kármán shocks him when he tells him that the warehouse was broken into last night as well, and the rocket is gone. Forman will stagger to the side of the vestibule, lurch into a chair, and bury his face in his hands.

### Ed Forman

(b. 1913, age 39) is loose-limbed and lanky, with a long, serious face and large hands. The death of his childhood friend has hit him hard; he is clearly in a great deal of pain. He looks like he has been through the wringer.

**Skills: Athletics 4, Fleeing 4, Health 6, Scuffling 4**. Play Forman as a man bereft; grimace and tighten your mouth as if trying to keep your act together. Make visible efforts to keep it together. Remember that he is hearing banshees in his head.

**Evidence Collection** (core clue). Forman's face is puffy and bruised-looking. Was he in a fight?

A **Reassurance** spend will let an investigator calm Forman down and get him talking. Otherwise, they may pass by, in which case they may get a chance to talk to Forman later.

**Oral History** (core clue). Me and Jack were friends since my family first came to Pasadena; he was a little rich kid with no friends, except me. We needed each other. He got bullied a lot, but I was a big kid, and I wouldn't let them get away with it. We started experimenting

## D. Vance Wimpole: What the Investigators Know

At least one of the investigators should have a prior connection to Wimpole highlighted in play. During the 1930s, D. Vance Wimpole was a writer of pulp fiction renowned for his prodigious output of adventure stories: Westerns, detectives, science fiction, you name it, as fast as he could type for as long as he got paid. During the war, he joined the Navy and acquitted himself with some distinction. When the war ended, he left the Navy and dropped out of sight after spending some time on the West Coast.

**Art History** (1 pt. spend). Vance Wimpole had a reputation among his fellow pulp writers as an incorrigible exaggerator and a teller of tall tales with an outsize ego and the ability to hold a grudge.

**Bonus Clue** (1 pt. spend, any appropriate skill—**Bureaucracy**, **CopTalk**, or **Library Use** most likely). Wimpole's wartime Navy records show that he was twice relieved of command for overconfidence, poor judgment, and grandiose overestimation of his own abilities and importance. Most notable is the time when, commanding anti-submarine patrol boat, he fired on an island owned by Mexico in the waters south of San Diego, causing a minor diplomatic incident between the U.S. and its neighbor. He ended the war as a minor functionary in the Intelligence section, performing duties as a military censor.

**Bonus Clue** (1 pt. spend, any appropriate skill—**Art History**, **Oral History**, or **Library Use** most likely). After the war, Wimpole had a hard time getting back into writing and seemed to be trying to get rich quick with a handful of grandiose schemes. After he and Jack Parsons had a falling out over money and a woman, Wimpole left the West Coast.

Then, two years ago, he re-appeared. In the pages of Don Stewart's *Flabbergasting Science Fiction* magazine, Wimpole announced to great acclaim that he had created a "new mental health science" he called *Psychohistory*. A subsequently released book of that title became a national best-seller, and now there is a burgeoning Psychohistory movement, with Wimpole himself running training sessions for "psychohistorian-adepts" at "Foundations" located across the country.

If you have time—in convention play you almost certainly will not—you can take a PC's inquiry "Do I know anything about Vance Wimpole?" as an opportunity to run very short directed scenes in which one or more of the investigators interacts with Wimpole in order to reveal something of his personality and character. You are allowed to require a spend (**Assess Honesty** or **Credit Rating**, e.g.) to initiate the flashback scene, but it's not strictly necessary. In these scenes, play Wimpole as a smarmy red-headed blowhard with a hot temper, a soft touch, and an eye on the main chance. End the scene when you feel both Wimpole and the PC have had a chance to establish their characters and relationship with each other. Note that any Investigative skills used in the scene count as having been used for real, although the point of these scenes is not primarily investigative. If you don't run these as scenes, you can still use the information provided here to frame up, "You remember . . ." -type answers to PC questions.

**Tony Boucher.** A scene in which an angry Wimpole, meeting Boucher seemingly by chance on the streets of San Francisco near the close of the war, angrily confronts him over the character L. Ron Hubbard in Tony's 1942 mystery novel *Rocket to the Morgue*. "I'm the murderer! He's obviously based on me! Any fool with eyes could see it! And you've made me look like a nincompoop!" He will go on about how "the Navy brass" will regard this as a stain upon his spotless record, and threaten to sue Boucher for libel and defamation of character. *The point of this scene is to play up Wimpole's grandiose and rather deluded sense of self.*

**Phil Dick.** A scene in which Phil attends a Psychohistorical Foundation lecture at Berkeley by Wimpole himself, on a West Coast tour last year. The audience seems to be made up mainly of awkward-looking college-age boys. Wimpole takes the stage and gives a long rambling speech about the power of the immaterial soul to conquer the material world, the mind to master the body, and the will to direct the flesh. Three men come on stage—a young man with broad shoulders, a thin neurasthenic-type in his thirties, and a stolid middle-aged fellow with a jowly scowl—and demonstrate "the powers of Psychohistory." The first man easily lifts a large steamer trunk that two audience members could barely budge and holds it over his head (albeit obviously with some strain); the second balances himself in a handstand atop a folding chair and then acrobatically dismounts; the third stands immobile while the first picks up a two-by-four and strikes him from behind across the shoulders with it; the two-by-four breaks and the third man isn't even fazed. Wimpole invites a volunteer to come forward to be psychohistorically assessed on stage. *The point of this scene is provide an opportunity to learn more about Psychohistory per se, and to lend a sense of menace to the three goons the PCs will encounter later in the adventure.*

**Bob Heinlein.** A scene from right after the war in which Bob's then-wife Leslyn is drunk and screaming mad at Wimpole, their house guest for a few days, for telling her young nephews (maybe 8 and 10) that he would take them to the Philippines to search for their father—who was caught and executed by the Japanese as a guerilla. Wimpole will be unable to understand why she'd would think he'd done anything wrong—"I was only trying to make them feel better"—but will know when he's not wanted. "Maybe I'll go stay with your friend Jack for a little while," he tells Bob. *The point of this scene is to highlight Wimpole's easy disregard for the truth, and his willingness to tell people what they want to hear.*

**Ginny Heinlein.** A scene in which Wimpole, then stationed near Princeton, comes to Philadelphia for a meeting convened by Bob intended to bring a bunch of science fiction writers together to develop ideas for fighting kamikazes to pass along to Bob's old CO Admiral King, now Chief of Naval Operations. When Ginny—then Lieutenant Gerstenberger—is detailed to give Wimpole a tour of the facility (where they develop and produce things like Plexiglas cockpit canopies, inflatable life rafts, and other plastics-based materials), Lt. Cdr. Wimpole makes a pass at Ginny. "Say, what are you doing later, Lieutenant?" he says. "How about I buy you dinner?" He will brag about his military exploits hunting subs in the Atlantic, and mention that he has applied for intelligence duty on the West Coast. *The point of this scene is to characterize Wimpole as an aggressive womanizer with the morals of a snake.*

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with rockets early on; he was the brains, I was the hands. We were partners in everything. We wanted to build a rocket to fly to the moon. We had one last project that we were working on, but that bitch—she sold him out. **Follow-up:** The grieving widow, that's who I mean. Follow-up: I can't say any more. It was pretty hush-hush government work.

**Assess Honesty** (core clue; leverage: Parsons was suspected of being a Red). Forman is not being forthright about the purpose of the “rocketry experiment” that he and Parsons were working on. If Parsons couldn't find work in the national security industries because the FBI was investigating his supposed Communist ties, how could he be doing hush-hush government work? **Follow-Up:** Confronted by this inconsistency, Forman will be obviously discomfited at first. Then he'll lie poorly, claiming that Jack's friend and mentor Professor von Kármán had “pulled some strings at JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory)” for them.

**Reassurance.** You don't understand. It's all real—the magic, the black magic—it's real. I know. I used to help him with that, too. Once, once, after a working, I went home. I woke up at midnight when I felt the whole house shake. I looked outside and I could see these lights floating in the sky, coming closer. They were shrieking, louder and louder. I ran inside but I could still hear them. I thought I was going to go crazy. The next thing I knew, it was morning, and there was Jack at the door. He had tears running down his face. Crowley had died during the night; the telegram was right there in Jack's hand. Those things I saw, they were banshees—spirits of death. We'd called them up somehow. **Follow-Up:** I heard them again the night Jack died. And I can still hear them now. They're quieter, but they're there. I don't think they're ever going to go away. **Follow-Up:** It was so strange. After Crowley died, all Jack said was, “We have to get some of his ashes.”

## REQUIEM FOR A ROCKET SCIENTIST

*The investigators witness an emotional scene, and encounter a newspaper reporter with lots of questions. They learn something of the history of Jack Parsons, and are invited to go in several different directions by the end of the ceremony.*

### The Mourning Chapel

Leaving the vestibule through the archway, the investigators follow a long hallway that runs the length of the building. About halfway down, an easel festooned with a wreath of flowers standing outside one open doorway down the hall bears a sign that reads “*In Memoriam John W. Parsons, 1914-1952.*”

Before the investigators enter, sketch out the mourning chapel: a single large stained glass window at the back, small altar with two brass canisters beneath, a few short wooden pews on either side of a central aisle.

Have Ackerman whisper the names of the people he knows to the investigators as you place them on the map: “*Look, there's the widow (Marjorie Cameron) by that pair of urns and that must be her brother next to her (Robert Cameron). The woman with the strong jaw and the white hair is Jane Wolfe; she was a big name in the movie biz once upon a time. Apparently she knew Aleister Crowley himself, and helped Jack learn magic. Then there's Jack's ex-wife Helen (Smith) in the front with her little boy Kwen, and, uh, speaking of ex-wives, Bob, isn't that Leslyn (Heinlein, Bob's ex-wife) over there?*”

The following sub-sections describe events at the wake. Sub-scenes identified as “Clue (Core)” will occur independent of investigator

action. Sub-scenes identified as “Clue (Bonus)” may occur depending on what the investigators do. Some of the information in those scenes is labeled as core clue as well; you should be prepared to deliver that information to the investigators in later scenes as they follow up their initial inquiries.

### Who Are You? (Robert Cameron)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

#### Robert Cameron

(b. 1924, age 28) is a slender young man who greatly resembles his sister, except that his hair is very dark. He seems a little overwhelmed by the circumstances. To play Robert Cameron, run your fingers through your hair or press your hand to the side of your neck or face as you speak. He will approach investigators that he does not know and suspiciously inquire about their identity—who are you? What do you want? How did you know Jack? When their bona fides have been established (perhaps via the intervention of Helen Smith, who may have met Boucher or Heinlein when she was still married to Jack, but the give the players a chance), Robert Cameron will apologize: he's anxious because Marjorie has been paranoid about strangers since Jack died.

**Oral History** (core clue). Marjorie's very upset. She and Jack were going through a tough time, but the project he was working on for the government was almost finished, and they were going to take a vacation and try to work things out. But apparently Jack was still having problems with the FBI about his security clearance, because agents had been visiting his friends and relatives asking what they knew about his work—trying to see if he'd

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been disloyal and talked about things he shouldn't. And now Marjorie is afraid that they're coming to take her in for questioning. **Follow-Up:** What was he working on? I don't know. I didn't ask, and he wouldn't tell me even if I did ask. He wasn't disloyal.

**Reassurance** (core clue). It's been a rough couple of days. Marjorie has been beside herself, and having to stay at her poor dead mother-in-law's apartment can't be easy. I said she could stay with me, but it's really too cramped, and my landlord is annoyed enough at me at it is for wanting to store their little vacation trailer in his garage.

### Concerning Leslyn (Leslyn Heinlein)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

#### Leslyn Heinlein

(nee MacDonald, b. 1906, age 46) is Bob's ex-wife. She is a tiny woman with short dark hair; her patrician looks have been ruined by drink so that she comes across as bitter, shriveled and minatory—that is, crow-like. She will be quietly drunk and in a vicious mood. To play Leslyn, wrinkle your nose and try to smile. The attitude you are going for is a kind of sneering condescension. Tinge your speech with bitterness and anger. Leslyn is here because she was fond of Jack Parsons from the days before the war; she regarded him as a kindred free spirit, like her resistant to but shackled by the conventional pieties of the era. She will be unpleasantly surprised by Bob's presence at the wake. "Jack wasn't stuck in the past like some people I know," she could say. "He was trying to actually bring about a real future, a better future, not just write about a 'tomorrow' that's really just a dressed-up adolescent power fantasy." She is perfectly willing to make a scene, and will try to goad Ginny Heinlein,

calling her a "red-headed Navy slut, just like that other one" (by which she means Marjorie Cameron, a former WAVE as well). She will also blame Bob for Parsons' death. "It's your fault he's dead," she will say. "He came to you for help, and you pushed him away." The vehemence of her attack may warrant a small **Stability** test—no more than a point or two.

**Flattery** (1 pt. spend). Yes, I was Jack's friend. We both knew what it was like to be betrayed by someone you loved. I tried to help him. It wasn't much; I gave him some money. He said he needed it as a deposit on some surveying equipment he needed to rent to lay out the range for a rocket he was going to test. **Follow-Up:** Where? I don't know where. I think he had gotten some sort of contract from the Hale Observatory folks. Funny that he wouldn't tell you about that, Bob, don't you think?

### Poetry Reading

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

#### Marjorie Cameron

(b. 1922, age 30) is a striking redhead with skin like clotted cream. But her pale blue eyes have a haunted look to them, and her scarlet lips are twisted down in a pained frown. She wears black for mourning. To play Marjorie Cameron, relax your shoulders and gaze off into the middle distance; speak in a breathless whisper. The effect you are striving for is that of being quietly and dreamily stoned.

After the investigators are oriented to the setting, and have perhaps had a chance to talk to some of the other mourners, Marjorie Cameron, holding a thin typescript, calls for everyone's attention, saying, "I'd like—I'd like to read one of Jack's poems. This is one he dedicated to me." She reads in a faltering voice:

*I remember  
When I was a star  
In the night  
A moving, burning ember  
Amid the bright  
Clouds of star fire  
Going deathward  
To the womb.*

There is more, but she cannot continue. Her arms fall to her sides, fists balled, and she bows her head, face collapsing into artless grief. Her brother Robert puts his arms around her shoulders. When Helen Smith goes to comfort her, Cameron angrily and tearfully rebuffs her. "Get away from me! You wouldn't help him! You didn't believe in his work! You didn't believe in him!" **Assess Honesty** allows an investigator to note a highly charged depth of emotion in her words: the hurt is raw and fresh. In tears, Cameron will excuse herself, heading for the restroom to compose herself.

Jane Wolfe then recites the rest of Jack's poem from memory, hamming it up shamelessly.

*And I dreamed  
and the great powers  
moved over me  
And a voice cried  
Go free, star, go free  
Seek the dark home  
On the wild sky  
Good bye, star, good bye!*

"Good bye, Jack," Wolfe will say, theatrically wistful. "You were in such a great rush to leave us." **Assess Honesty** will suggest that Wolfe is grandstanding; her theatricality marks her as glib and insincere, and hungry for even a little bit of attention.

Even if no one follows Cameron to the powder room (see **The Grieving Widow**, opposite), investigators with **Evidence Collection** will notice

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a pronounced change in Cameron's behavior when she returns: she seems calmer emotionally but physically restless, gazing around the room and changing position. Her eyes are vacant and glassy (i.e., pupil dilation) and she appears to be highly distracted. **Pharmacy** will enable an investigator to infer that she is under the influence of a hallucinogenic drug like mescaline, psilocybin, or LSD.

Cameron will not open up to an investigator until she is alone with him or her; see **Drive in the Desert**, on page 18.

### The Grieving Widow

(Marjorie Cameron)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

An investigator who follows Marjorie from the mourning chapel will see her taking a covert sip from a small metal hip flask she has concealed in her black garter belt; the 8 oz. flask is now still about three-quarters full; it contains enough *space mead* (see sidebar) to constitute two full doses or up to six small sips.

She will make a face as she swallows and give a little gasping exhalation. Spotting the investigator, she will try to make light of being caught with the flask. "*Regular rocket fuel*," she says, giving a little laugh. **Assess Honesty** gets that she is indulging a private joke. Then Marjorie starts to sob. "*He's gone*," she moans. "*And I don't know what to do!*"

If Marjorie Cameron makes a connection with an investigator here (a **Reassurance** spend or good role-playing), the she will ask him or her to drive her home (or out into the desert to spread Jack's ashes—whichever seems more natural in the moment), and hand over her car keys to the investigator.

### Space Mead

For more complete information on space mead, see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 110. In short, a small sip allows the imbiber to use **Sense Trouble** as an investigative skill (see the examples below), possibly avoiding that trouble by means of a spend, at the cost of restricting the use of Interpersonal abilities as the imbiber is dreamily stoned. Another liability of using space mead is to render the imbiber more vulnerable to **Stability** tests caused by exposure to otherworldly sensations and perceptions.

**Sense Trouble** (example). Anyone sensitized to higher-dimensional resonances by the space mead will be able to perceive those who have **Psychohistory** bonus points as "holding a knot of power inside" themselves.

**Sense Trouble** (example). Anyone sensitized to higher-dimensional resonances by the space mead will perceive that Ed Forman is "enmeshed in negative energies" or "haunted by dark angels" in a profoundly disturbing way—as if his very soul is about to be crushed or snuffed out. Test **Stability** at **Difficulty** 4 to avoid a 3 pt. loss.

The formula concocted by Parsons is poisonous. Ingesting any amount requires a **Health** test, versus **Difficulty** 4 for a small sip or **Difficulty** 6 for a full dose. Failing the test does damage equal to the difference between the roll and the **Difficulty** number; the imbiber may also become messily nauseated.

Space mead is created using neo-Enochian magic (see **Neo-Enochian Magick**, on page 42).

## FOR US, THE LIVING

*These scenes include exposition and the opportunity to make useful contacts as well as developing the broader plot.*

### Crying Wolfe (Jane Wolfe)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

#### Jane Wolfe

(b. 1875, age 77) is frail-seeming but fierce, a hawk-like old woman, still striking in appearance and demeanor. Play her extravagantly, a real-life Norma Desmond with a hint of New Age wackiness thrown in. Overemote as you speak, and make sweeping gestures and pronouncements.

**Art History**, 1 pt. spend. Jane Wolfe was a silent film-era character actress who appeared in many films during the 1910s, including a major supporting role under Mary Pickford in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. Then she left Hollywood and became a disciple of the notorious Aleister Crowley at an old monastery in Italy until Mussolini kicked them out.

**Flattery**. Oh, yes, she came to Hollywood when it was young, and she could have been a star—but she gave it all up for Aleister, don't you know, unholy Aleister Crowley, the magician. Three years she was in Sicily, at the Abbey of Thelema with Crowley. She was his Scarlet Woman, his Red Flame, his elemental, his muse. Every magician must have a familiar, darling. That's one of the rules, you know—the rules of magic. I'm sure you've read your *Golden Bough*—the magician is always the king. But he gets his power from his queen. The priest needs the priestess, and the magician must have his familiar.

**Flattery**, 1 pt. spend. Jane Wolfe insists that the investigator is a kindred spirit and simply must come to the Church of Thelema tonight for the service in Jack's honor. She promises to introduce

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the investigator to Wilfred Smith, the priest. She summons Helen Smith over to meet the investigator this instant, darling! and insists that she prevail upon the investigator to make sure that he or she agrees to come.

**Oral History** (core clue). She saw a great deal of potential in Jack when he and his wife Helen started coming to the meetings of the Agape Lodge in the late 30s. A great deal of potential, indeed. But so young, and so dream-ridden! Even after he had been named leader, he had no patience for it. Certainly he was no match for Wilfred Smith, who even suborned Helen to his side. It took Crowley himself, managing things at long distance from London, to drive Smith away. But then Vance Wimpole showed up, and that was the beginning of the end for poor Jack. **Follow-Up:** *How so?* Vance encouraged Jack's more metaphysical speculations, and Jack thought he had found in Vance a kindred spirit—as perhaps he had, though not quite as he might have thought. It turned out that Vance had started sleeping with Jack's girl Betty—she was Jack's ex-wife's sister, you know, how delightfully incestuous—at the same that he and Jack were engaged in the Babalon Working. Jack was torn. He felt jealous and betrayed (just like when Helen left him for Wilfred), but he needed Vance as his magical Scribe, he thought—and the Agape Lodge was supposed to be a haven for free love, so he had no right to be jealous, especially after he'd made peace with Wilfred over Helen. **Follow-Up:** *The Babalon Working?* Yes, darling, that was Jack's name for the ritual he and Vance performed out in the desert. He thought he could conjure a goddess to “mother the Moon-Child,” as he said. When Marjorie showed up soon afterward, Jack convinced her to join in some rather flamboyant sex magic at the Parsonage, thinking that she was the goddess he'd brought forth. Of course, nothing came of it.

**Follow-Up:** What's a Moon-Child? A messenger from the Outer Gods, darling; a being of perfect love. Aleister wrote about it in the Book of the Law. **Follow-Up:** *So what happened to Vance Wimpole?* Well, things got very bad! Jack fronted Vance some ungodly amount of money so Vance could go to Florida with Betty to buy boats to bring back to California and sell. But of course he had no intention of ever coming back. Jack had to go down to Miami and summon an air elemental to stop them from sailing off into the Caribbean. It was the last straw; he resigned as leader of the Agape Lodge shortly thereafter. **Follow-Up:** *And then what happened?* Aleister was heart-broken; he'd had such hopes for the boy. He thought Jack's silly plan to create a Moon-Child was sheer foolishness, and so it proved; there was never any sign whatsoever that a wonderful child had come among us to lead us to a new age of freedom. Poor Aleister! It broke his heart, and he died of it! Funny that Jack was so eager to have some of Aleister's ashes after he died, and now he's naught but ashes himself. Life is like that, darling: the gods relish irony.

### The Reporter (Omar Garrison)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Allow investigators to **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 4 to notice a wiry fellow in his early 30s wearing a cheap suit and taking notes in the back of the mourning chapel in a small notebook. The investigator who rolls lowest is buttonholed by Los Angeles Times reporter **Omar Garrison** (b. 1919, age 33), who will ask what an investigator knows about Jack's unusual religious or political activities. *As Garrison, adopt a skeptical expression and pretend to have a reporter's notebook and pad at the ready. Fire off questions with an ear cocked to listen to the answer. Say things like, “Is this on*

*record, pal?” and “My editor will never buy it,” and “What a scoop!”*

1. Did Parsons have any enemies that you knew of?
2. Did you know that in the 1930s and 40s Parsons belonged to a group called the Agape Lodge, associated with the diabolist Aleister Crowley?
3. Did you ever see Parsons perform any sort of devil-worshipping ceremony or ritual?
4. Were you aware that Parsons identified himself with the Anti-Christ?
5. Did you know that Parsons was under investigation by the FBI as a security risk, and that he was fired from his job at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory when his clearance was revoked?
6. Did you ever hear Parsons mention something called “*The Babalon Working*”?

If all the investigators successfully **Sense Trouble**, have the one who rolled highest overhear Garrison trying to interview Ed Forman or Marjorie Cameron—the answers will be protestations and demurrals. If Forman is either the interviewee or within earshot of another interviewee, he will at some point physically attack Garrison in a fit of rage; if not, you may at your option have Cameron shrilly beat at Garrison with her fists, similarly. **Assess Honesty** or a successful **Psychoanalysis** roll at **Difficulty** 4 allows an investigator to notice that it was the mention of the Babalon Working that set Forman or Cameron off. If Forman and Cameron are forced to interact, observers with **Assess Honesty** notice a strained and formal tension between them—hostile on Forman's part, hurt on Cameron's.

## The Big Hoodoo

A **Bargaining, Flattery** or **Cop Talk** spend (this representing the use of a crime reporter's professional jargon) can get Garrison to reveal the "two big leads I'm running down right now."

**Bonus Clue.** Parsons was supposed to be a real careful worker, according to his friends at the powder factory where he worked. Did something happen that made him careless the day he died? [This clue points to the Burmite Powder Company, also mentioned in the news article.]

**Bonus Clue.** Where was his wife at the time of the explosion? She said she was running last-minute errands before they left for Mexico, but what "errand" did she have at the Santa Monica pier that day? Riding the merry-go-round? [Note that this clue is also available to investigators who inspect Cameron's car.]

Additionally, Garrison can reveal that he has an "inside source" with "the real scoop on this mug Parsons." This source, whom right now Garrison knows only as "the Commodore," is in fact a mendacious Vance Wimpole, who will paint Parsons as a sinister sex-crazed black magician who has set up his own cult in Pasadena devoted to free love and devil worship.

**Oh That I Were Where Helen Lies (Helen Smith)**  
Scene Type: Clue (Core)

### Helen Smith

(b. 1911, age 41) is a short, slender woman who looks like she's in her mid-30s. Her dark eyes are alert and perceptive, and she projects an air of quiet concentration when she purses her lips and furrows her brow, which she does quite often. *To play Helen, imitate her pouting moue. Speak politely and circumspectly, with carefully*

*precise diction.* She is sad about Jack's death, but she isn't surprised; he was pursuing things that were far beyond him. "*Jack was just a boy, playing at being a magician. He was interested in freedom, but not in responsibility. In a magician the two must be in perfect balance. Wilfred—my husband—tried to teach him, but beyond a certain point he just couldn't learn.*"

Helen will approach one of the science fiction writers among the investigators; she may be able to draw upon a previous acquaintance. "So, how is the science fiction business?" she will say. Eventually, she will probe: "*Do you ever hear from your old friend Vance Wimpole?*" or something similar (This may be another opportunity for a Wimpole-related flashback, if you have the time). She will pump one or more investigators with respect to their attitude toward Vance Wimpole, and then if they are no warmer than non-committal implore them calmly to come to her home at 2140 Beachwood Avenue in North Hollywood that evening to talk about a matter of extreme importance in which only they can help—if appropriate, push this as a soft Driver for Dick or Boucher. Otherwise, ask them to show up later in the evening—"It will be no trouble," Helen says. "*We keep odd hours*"—or even the next day. **Assess Honesty** can hint at her motivation: she needs help with a sensitive or potentially embarrassing matter, and she's being cagey about sharing it with outsiders.

**Oral History.** Betty has always been trouble! First she stole Jack from me—but that was all right, since my marriage was ending anyway—and then she snuck off on Jack with Vance. In between she warmed every bed in the Parsonage, Jack's bohemian boarding house on Orange Grove Avenue. But none of it ever made her happy, and now she's bitten off more than she can chew. She's married, and

she has a child, and she's no longer young enough to go hopping from bed to bed. And Vance, her husband, is quite, quite insane. So she's really in quite a fix. I'd laugh, but she's my sister, and I love her, and I want to help her.

**Reassurance.** Helen wants to help extricate her sister Betty from her troubled marriage, but the involvement of the police may prove embarrassing to her husband's church at the very least. The investigator knows Betty's intractable husband, and so may have useful advice for dealing with him.

Her son **Kwen Smith** (b. 1943, age 9) is with her, a solemn boy with short dark hair and his mother's finely sculpted features. He will not volunteer any information; he looks shy and a little scared. A 1-point **Reassurance** spend might get him to reveal that his cousin Alexis is staying with them at their house—"Well, we live at the church"—and Mommy is mad at Aunt Betty.

### Forrie Sneaks Out (Forrie Ackerman)

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

The investigator with the least amount of business occupying his or her attention notices Forrie Ackerman slip out the door. **Follow-Up:** Forrie leaves the funeral home proper and follows the breezeway into the larger building, a mortuary and crematorium in which he locates a pay phone and leaves a message for Wimpole. He returns about ten minutes later; if asked about his momentary disappearance, he will say he had to make a phone call. Pressed further, perhaps via **Intimidation** or **Bargaining**, he will claim that he was upset by the wake and had called to schedule a Psychohistorical assessment. **The Truth:** Forrie was relaying information about what

## The Big Hoodoo

happened at the funeral home, including Marjorie Cameron's behavior at the wake, the presence of the investigators there and what he knows about them, and anything else that seems relevant. He now has orders to bring Jack's ashes to the "Friendship Org" at the Psychohistorical Foundation in Los Angeles.

Returning along the breezeway, Ackerman stops and looks out into the parking lot, as if he's noticed something, and then ducks comically behind one of the narrow pillars that holds it up and peers out again, as if scouting out the scene. Following his gaze, the investigator spots what has gotten his attention: a dark nondescript sedan in which sit two men in suits and dark glasses. One is reading a newspaper. The other is drinking coffee from a paper cup.

When Forrie returns, he will be very excited tell one of the investigators that he thinks the Feds are watching the funeral. If confronted, the FBI agents—for such they are: Special Agents Brown and Porter—will be polite but brusque, utterly unforthcoming. *"I'm sorry, sir. This is a national security matter. I'm not permitted to say any more."* They are both young and fit, clean-cut and serious.

**Skills:** Athletics 8, Drive 6, Firearms 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6. They will try to follow Marjorie Cameron and keep tabs on her until she gets home; they want to know who she's meeting with.

If necessary to get the action moving, Marjorie Cameron will overhear Ackerman and she or her brother will ask the investigators to help get her away from the funeral home without the FBI agents following her. Robert Cameron will follow the investigators' lead and agree to do his bit in any sensible plan. Note that Forrie Ackerman is motivated to help out as well—albeit for ulterior motives.

## DRIVE IN THE DESERT

It is still light when one or more investigators leave the wake with Marjorie Cameron. The sun doesn't set until 8:08 pm tonight (and for the next few days) as the summer solstice approaches (**Astronomy** lets an investigator know precisely when sunset will occur). Marjorie Cameron's car is a light blue 1948 Chevy convertible with a trailer hitch. The keys are on a rabbit's-foot keychain that also has keys to (1) the carriage house apartment and (2) the laundry room/laboratory at 1071 S Orange Grove Avenue as well as (3) her mother-in-law's apartment at 21 West Glenarm Street. During the ride, she will seem nervous and edgy, on the verge of utter exhaustion. **Streetwise** or **Assess Honesty** allows an investigator to notice her nervously adjusting her stocking (really, reaching for the flask of space mead to take the edge off).

**Evidence Collection** (core clue). There is a scrap of paper on the dashboard; it looks like a parking pass or something (give this clue to the driver automatically, even if he or she does not have **Evidence Collection**). In the back seat is a picnic basket. There is a camera in the glove-box. **Follow-Up:** The scrap of paper is an undated parking pass for a lot on the Santa Monica Amusement Pier. The picnic basket holds three wine-glasses, a bottle of wine, a bottle opener a cheese knife, some sour-looking grapes, stale crackers, and a block of hardened cheese as well as a half-empty pack of cigarettes and a book of matches. *"We were going to have a picnic once we got on the road,"* Marjorie will explain.

**Photography.** The camera shows that it has 21 shots remaining. If developed, there are three photos on the roll. (1) The first shows a dusty meadow with grass and scattered scrub

pine; in the background is a snow-covered mountain peak. Parsons is in the picture, peering into a surveyor's theodolite. (2) The second picture is a close-up of a flower, framed against a wooden sign that says, "Henninger Flats Woodland Nursery—Los Angeles County Fire Department." (3) The third picture is a mountain landscape that includes shows a tall structure that looks something like a water tower at first glance; closer inspection shows that the "water tank" is actually an observatory dome.

**Reassurance.** You know what his last words were? 'But I'm not done yet.' Not done yet! Oh, Jack! We were going to go to Mexico after—we were going to go to Mexico. I'd found the perfect place, a little city on the Gulf of Mexico named Catemaco. It's wonderful. There's an artists' colony on the edge of town, and every year the town holds a *fiesta de brujos* with folk healers and fortune tellers and all sorts of wonderful things. I've even sold some of my paintings there. Now I don't know what to do.

**Assess Honesty.** She said, *"We were going to go to Mexico after—"* but then she corrected herself. After what? What is she hiding?

**Oral History** (core clue). "Jack was the white magician and Vance was black. Two forms of witchcraft in contention, one dedicated to the bright goddess Siobnoghurach and the other to the dark god of chaos, Azatao. Babalon against Horus. Lovecraft versus hatecraft, versus fearcraft. And Chaos was winning. The Moon Child wouldn't come, even though we tried and tried. But then Jack figured out why. It was the space mead that helped him! The magicians of Catemaco taught us the secret! And Jack saw! He saw how the Temple of Azatao could be brought low, and Azatao himself chained, so that the star of the Moon Child might shine forth."

## The Big Hoodoo

**Occult.** The names come from British occultist Aleister Crowley's work. He wrote a book that was supposedly dictated by a spirit-possessor speaking through him while he was visiting Egypt in the 1920s.

**Theology.** Cameron seems to be describing a sort of Manichean cosmology of two equal but opposing deities, one male and one female, with the Moon Child as the messianic mediator between them.

### I Know What To Do!

At some point during the conversation, Marjorie will suddenly become excited. She says, "*I know what to do! We'll ask Jack!*" She will attempt to persuade an investigator to serve as the magician for the ritual; if more than one investigator is present, she will inveigle another to help the magician by serving as his or her familiar. "*Trust me! I need your help! I'll teach you everything you need to know.*"

If the investigator is not persuaded, Marjorie tells the investigator to just drop her off at home (her mother-in-law's apartment on West Glenarm Street in Pasadena). She says the investigator can just bring the car by in the morning (Note that Forrie will abduct her and steal the ashes in the meantime). She asks the investigator to help her bring the ashes inside the house. Otherwise, she tells the investigator to drive east along Route 66, and then turn south to follow a little traveled back road.

As the car heads out into the Mojave, have the driver roll **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 4 to notice that they are being followed. Winning a **Drive** contest (versus Forrie Ackerman's **Drive** skill) allows the investigator to identify the trailing car as Ackerman's and either lose the tail or confront him. If confronted, Forrie Ackerman will claim to have followed Cameron's car because he was worried for some

reason—that the driver would get lost, that the car was being driven erratically and Forrie wanted to make sure they were all okay, or some such excuse; **Assess Honesty** will in all cases reveal the rationale to be a pathetic deception. Forrie will be curious about what Cameron and the investigator(s) are up to, and want to tag along. If rebuffed, he will withdraw.

Cameron will direct the investigator to a place in the desert to park at the base of some rocks. From the trunk of the car, she will remove a fencing foil and a flashlight. She also pulls the picnic basket out of the back seat and puts Jack's urn in it. A short walk up into the rocks brings them into a kind of box canyon ringed with tall stone spires shaped vaguely like totem poles. **Geology** will remind an investigator that these are wind-formed structures, called "hoodoos," created when erosion sculpts the softer stone sandwiched between layers of harder rock.

### I Am The Flame

Marjorie Cameron will explain the basics of neo-Enochian magic (see the sidebar on page 15). She then tells the magician (and familiar, if there is an investigator suitable to the purpose; otherwise, Marjorie will be the familiar) that to be invested as a magician requires a short ceremony where they take on the roles of Priest and Priestess. Marjorie will give the Priest and Priestess sips of space mead.

First, the Priest brandishes sword (i.e., the fencing foil) and flame (a lit cigarette). He speaks the Words of the Priest; if necessary, Marjorie Cameron will coach ("Repeat after me . . .").

**The Words of the Priest.** *I am the flame that burns in every heart of man. I am the flame that burns in the core of every*

*star. I am Life, and the giver of Life. And so am I the knowledge of death. I am alone; there is no God where I am.*

Next the Priestess divests herself of her clothing, and speaks the Words of the Priestess. Again, if necessary Marjorie Cameron will coach.

**The Words of the Priestess.** *To love me is better than all things! If under the night-stars in the desert thou burnest thy incense, then I shall be with thee. Come before me with a pure heart, and the serpent flame burning within! Put on the wings, and arouse the coiled splendor within you! Come unto me! Sing the rapturous love-song unto me! Burn to me perfumes! Wear to me jewels! Drink to me, for I love you!*

The Priest replies, "*Love is the law, love under will,*" and the Priestess says, "*Do what thou wilt, shall be the whole of the law.*" Then both say, "*Aumyn.*" The Priest puts aside his implements. The Priest and the Priestess embrace. They will feel a striking energy pass between them; both should make a **Stability** test at **Difficulty** 5. Anyone who fails the roll loses 3 points of **Stability**. But if both succeed, they may roll 1d6 and add that amount to the **Stability** pool (not the rating—this is a temporary feeling of elation and empowerment) of each character.

### Mors Obit

"Now," Marjorie says, "*to call Jack.*" She opens the urn with his ashes and takes out a handful, casting them upon the head of the magician.

The key that Marjorie Cameron will teach the magician is called "*Mors Obit*," which means "*Death is dead*" in Latin. These are the first two lines of the key. The remainder of the key doesn't quite make sense; it might mean something like "the porch is built," or "I straighten the walkway." Its signature is non-Euclidean architectural weirdness; a typical side effect is a waking nightmare of being

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lost in a shadowy space of bizarre angles hunted by half-glimpsed figures.

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She prepares the Brimful Chalice, or shows the familiar how, and directs the magician to begin. If the magician succeeds, he is possessed by the spirit of Jack Parsons, who will speak through the investigator's mouth in an eerie manner. If he fails, you may opt to have the possession still take place—perhaps it is the familiar who is possessed, or perhaps the **Stability** tests it engenders are more difficult or more severe—or you can simply decide that the clue is not revealed; it is not essential to the adventure, after all.

**The Ghost of Jack Parsons** (bonus clue). *“It is cold, cold, beyond the stars. They seeped down long ago, long ago they came from the stars. The Scribe knows them! He speaks for them now, since he was corrupted in the Babalon Working! O Babalon! Remember what he said to me! Here in this place it was! This very place! ‘Babalon*

*feeds on the death of men—she shall absorb thee, and thou shalt become living flame before she incarnates.’ Now his soul burns with the fire of their Daemon Sultan, and the beating of his heart sounds their cry, ‘Tekeli-li! Tekeli-li!’ Oh, he is a foulness! He has found the painting that you set down and gave to the witch in Mexico. He is learning things from it. He has brought his sword into the harbor, and there he plots. He thinks to spite Azatao in my stead, that the man may rule the god, that the man may bank the fire in his heart at whim! But he knows not that Moon Child has come! She is yet hidden from him, as from me! But she is close! Ah, yes, so close! Woe, woe, woe, if he should find her! It is dark here; I am in darkness. The fire burned me; the Scribe sent the fire; truly he has grown strong! Truly he has grown strong.”*

Do not forget to impose **Stability** tests at **Difficulty** 5 for creepy possession effects as Parsons in the body of the magician lurches and staggers around. Marjorie Cameron will lose her composure and weep helplessly, clinging to a hoodoo stone. She will take a stiff belt of space mead—a full dose!—and continue to cry for Jack.

You may justify imposing side effects on the ritual automatically because the investigators drank the space mead. The investigators experience these

side-effects as a living nightmare of being pursued through dark labyrinths by unseen and silent but inexorably approaching monsters. This should take the game-mechanical form of a series of tests at **Difficulty** 5 in which the investigator may spend **Athletics** or **Fleeing**; after each failure, the investigator loses 1 **Stability**. Roll a d6 after each failure; the nightmare ends if the roll is equal to or less than the number of previous failures.

Forrie Ackerman may witness the magical ceremony. He may try to steal the urn with the ashes of Jack Parson now, or wait and try to do it later. In either case, he will slip away unnoticed if the investigators fail a **Sense Trouble** roll—**Difficulty** 6 if he's just observing from the rocks above, **Difficulty** 4 if he has to actually sneak in among the investigators to try to grab the urn.

After you've gotten enough mileage out of this scene, you want to (a) get Marjorie away from the investigators so that she can disappear—either kidnapped by Ackerman, murdered by Forman, or abducted by unleashed extra-dimensional forces—and (b) get the investigators here back together with any of their colleagues who went to the Church of Thelema.



## The Big Hoodoo

### THE CHURCH OF THELEMA

One or more investigators are invited to attend the Thelemite memorial service at 6 o'clock in the evening of June 19.

It is usually at least a 50 minute car ride from the funeral home in Monrovia to the Church of Thelema in Hollywood; investigators traveling on the freeway during rush hour will almost certainly take longer. The Spanish hacienda-style house at 2140 North Beachwood Avenue is surrounded by a high hedge that obscures the grounds within.

Kwen Smith opens the door for visitors and offers to take their hats. Tagging along after him is a little girl, a toddler of two or three years of age. *"That's my cousin Alexis,"* Kwen will say. *"I'm watching her during the service for Uncle Jack."*

**Flattery** (core clue). Alexis's mother is Kwen's Aunt Betty; he does not know who her father is, only that he's a bad man. **The Truth:** The little girl is Alexis Wimpole; her father is Vance Wimpole. Her mother Betty Wimpole is seeking refuge from Vance Wimpole with Betty's sister Helen Smith.

After a moment, an older woman, maybe in her sixties, clearly the nanny—Kwen calls her "Aunt Mary"—comes to take the children and give them their dinner.

### Entering the Temple

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

The foyer opens into an airy, naturally lit hall with white walls and a dark tiled floor. At its far end is an elegantly paneled set of double doors. On the right is an open closet in which hang what appear to be hooded white choir robes. On the left, a round white shield

### Out of the Mouths of Babes

If time permits, it can be amusing in play to confront an investigator with a child or teen, especially if you are prepared to role-play a toddler's naked ego and limited vocabulary, for example, or a teen-ager's truculent self-absorption. You can require a **Reassurance** spend to placate a child who is frightened, upset, or angry, or a **Flattery** spend to get one who is shy or recalcitrant to open up. **Credit Rating**, interpreted as pop-cultural cool, may be the only thing that is capable of impressing a teen. The information provided by a child can include family secrets and half-understood gossip, delivered with an ingenuous artlessness that masks its import.

hangs in the middle of the wall. Below the shield is a pair of decorative crossed swords (note that these may be pulled off the wall and used to fight).

**The Sator Square** (core clue). The shield bears a starburst-like symbol traced in black (**Occult** recalls that this is the unicursal hexagram of the Church of Thelema, a symbol of his creed devised by Crowley), with the words "SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS" inscribed in a circle on its rim (see sidebar on page 23). Investigators may wish to take a few moments to puzzle over the words on the shield **Cryptography** sees that the phrase is a palindrome; **Archaeology** remembers that the sentence was found preserved as graffiti on the walls of Pompeii in the form of a square, and that some degree of uncertainty accompanies attempts to interpret its meaning. Latin translates the phrase somewhat awkwardly as "Farmer Arepo works a wheeled plow." **Occult** associates the Sator square with the

worship of Mithras in ancient Rome, and a 1 point spend will allow the occultist to correct the translation as, "Horus the Sower bears toil and torment."

Present are Jane Wolfe, clad in a robe of black, and about a dozen other people of various ages in white robes. Wolfe will invite the investigators to don their own white robes, explaining that she will take on the role of Deacon during the service. The Thelemites are in the main middle age or older, although there are a handful of children present as well (see **Meet the Thelemites**). *"We are just waiting for the Priest and Priestess to ready themselves,"* someone will explain to an investigator.

One woman stands slightly apart from the others, who seem to be studiously ignoring her. This is **Betty Wimpole** (b. 1923, age 29), Helen Smith's younger sister, a tall, outdoorsy blonde in her late 20s. She looks harried and distraught, as if she's just barely keeping it together. She will react suspiciously to any attempt at interaction.

### Meet the Thelemites

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

In addition to Jane Wolfe and Betty Wimpole, the "cultists" assembled here include **Ray Burlingame** (age 59), corpulent mystic; his wife **Mildred** (age 38), formidable matriarch; their





## The Big Hoodoo

daughter **Laylah** (age 9), impish waif; **Phyllis Seckler** (age 35), serene earth mother-type; her children **Stella** (age 15), dark-eyed ingénue; **Lisa** (age 13), awkward poetess; **Paul** (age 9), little hellion; **Georgia Schneider** (age 45), sickly neurasthenic; **Louis Culling** (age 58), leering mountebank; **Meeka Aldrich** (age 49), stage-gypsy astrologer; and **Maria Prescott** (age 61), embarrassingly ancient doxie. Men are addressed as “frater” (brother) and women as “soror” (sister). They should come across as eccentric and ill-adapted. Note that in convention play or other single-session game you will have little time to play them out. In that case, give each investigator the opportunity to declare the use of a single Investigative ability and merely report the results.

**Anthropology.** This group espouses a philosophy of free love and open marriage but much of their conversation revolves around the hurt feelings and bad blood occasioned by the criss-crossing dalliances of its married and unmarried members. Parsons is a case in point: his marriage to Helen fell apart as Jack began to sleep with Helen’s sister Betty, among his numerous other affairs; Betty then ran off with Vance, and Helen divorced Jack and married Wilfred Smith after having his baby. Parsons seems to be regarded as something of an apostate, having espoused heretical views about a Thelemite Messiah, in which these people do not believe.

**Occult.** The Church of Thelema is a form of non-Christian Gnosticism, emphasizing the individual’s personal spiritual journey in an imperfect world through the metaphor of “magick,” in which the magician (i.e., the person) is the locus at which the material force of Chaos (e.g., ego-death, physical dissolution, entropy) contends with the ineffable influence of Abomination (that is to say, consciousness itself, directed willfully and perversely). The

product of that contest is the mastered self, capable of potent acts of will. (2 pt. spend) The investigator gains a point of **Cthulhu Mythos** for talking to the Thelemites at great length and with extreme intensity. Note that this cost may be borne in combination with **Theology**, such that Mythos skill can be gained by spending two points of **Occult**, two points of **Theology**, or one point of each.

**Oral History.** This group, to which Parsons once belonged, has had a history of poisonous in-fighting beginning from its origins in the late 1920s, when Wilfred Smith came from Canada with two other adherents of Aleister Crowley per his instructions to establish the Agape Lodge in California. Parsons left the group after a number of personal, professional, and magical setbacks, including the failure of the Babalon Working that was supposed to help him create a messianic Moon-Child but which only got him Marjorie.

**Theology.** Their cosmology resembles that of the witch-cult in pre-Christian Europe, with a powerful but reactive male god called Azatao, whom they associate with the Egyptian deity Horus in all his multiplicity of contradictory forms (king of the sky, spirit of war, innocent child-god), and a slightly subordinate but active female goddess called Siabnoghurach, who is mainly identified with the “great harlot” of the *Book of Revelation*—that is, “Babalon”—but who seems to hearken back to the monstrous Babylonian fertility deity Tiamat as well as to the Egyptian goddess Isis. In a perverse echo of Christian doctrine, these two entities are themselves merely aspects of a greater unity called Iao-Soto, which encompasses, delimits and ultimately is the expression of their struggle. (2 pt. spend) The investigator gains a point of **Cthulhu Mythos** for talking to the Thelemites. Note that this cost may be borne in combination with **Occult** (see above).

The Sator Square

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The “Sator Square” is a magical key of great power. Its signature is fire. With the Adornless Blade, it can be used to summon hurricane force winds in the area around the caster. With the Carven Stone, it can unleash earthquakes and other seismic activity in accordance with the local geology. With the Fiery Brand, it can cause mass rioting in urban areas. With the Brimful Chalice, it can give the caster such detailed knowledge of the future as to render him or her nearly insane. If all four instruments are used at once, as Jack Parsons intended for the Despite of Azatao, it will attract the notice of Azatao. Such an eventuality is likely to be disastrous, as the Daemon Sultan reaches out reflexively with a tendril of his power to swat the annoying stimulus.



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### An Unwelcome Interruption

#### Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

When it is time for the service to begin, Wolfe leads those assembled through the double doors. The group passes across a portico encircling an open-air central courtyard that has been converted into a religious sanctuary; steps lead down into the courtyard itself. At its center, a black stone block about four feet high holds a small circular ceramic font. At the far end stand two obelisks, each about seven feet tall, the right one black and the left one white. Three steps tiled in black and white beyond the obelisks lead back to the portico, where an altar stands. It is a narrow table seven feet long covered with a crimson altar-cloth embroidered with a golden sunblaze emblem in the center of the drape. Upon it lies a slim leather-bound volume (see the Thelemite Tomes sidebar on page 26) atop a small ornate wooden box; a ceremonial dagger with an ankh-shaped hilt rests upon the book.

Beyond the altar is the super-altar, an open framework of three shelves. It is shrouded with a long and diaphanous veil, through which can be seen various items of occult significance: a stone tablet at the top (closer examination will show that it is engraved with a Sator square), a crown in the middle, a chalice with roses at the bottom. Each is flanked by many candles. Standing near the altar is a woman clad in a green robe; this is Helen Smith garbed as the Priestess.

At the sonorous tones of a bell thrice ring by one of the Thelemite children, the service begins. Jane Wolfe, as deacon, leads the congregation in a recitation of the cult's credo: "*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the Law,*

*love under will.*" Helen as the priestess blesses the congregation and calls, "*Come forth, O Man!*" At the rear of the temple, the coffin-door opens and a man in a black robe emerges. He is in his sixties but still hale, with craggy good looks and a healthy tan. This is Wilfred Smith (see sidebar on page 25) in the role of priest. A child presents him with a ceremonial spear, and he makes his way through the congregation to stand before the priestess at the altar. He speaks the Words of the Priest (see **I Am The Flame**, page 19). Helen disrobes and stands naked before him and the congregation as she speaks the Words of the Priestess. They embrace, and part, and the priestess regains her robe.

At this point, have the investigators test **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty 4**. On a failure, the investigator is rapt with attention to the service. Smith takes up a knife from the super-altar and goes to the priestess. He makes a small cut in her hand with the knife. The deacon then collects a few drops of the dripping blood in a chalice, into which she mixes some wine. On a success, though, the investigator is distracted by the muffled sound of voices coming from the other side of the door in the gathering hall outside the sanctuary. An investigator who slips out to see what's going on sees three strangers in the foyer along with Kwen Smith, Alexis Wimpole, and the nanny they met earlier.

The three men are Psychohistorians under orders from Vance Wimpole to get his wife back. They are **Frank Dessler** (b.1912, age 40), a hard-eyed and jowly looking thug; **Richard DeMille** (b. 1922, age 30), a slender intellectual with a high forehead and sensitive mien; and **Miles Hollister** (b. 1926, age 26), a good-looking young man with broad shoulders.

### Frank Dessler

Psychohistorical Adept. Skills: Athletics 4, Scuffling 4, Firearms 6, Health 6, Psychohistory 6, Shadowing 6.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +2. Drive: Bad Luck (Frank makes poor decisions, like bringing along a pistol when he's on parole). Pistol (-1), Fist (-1). To play Dessler, tuck your chin into your chest and scowl. Glare menacingly as you speak.

### Richard DeMille

Psychohistorical Adept. Skills: Athletics 4, Filch 4, Fleeing 8, Scuffling 4, Health 6, Piloting 6, Preparedness 4, Psychohistory 8, Weapons 4.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +2. Drive: Artistic Sensitivity (like his father Cecil B., Richard feels that he is an auteur in his own particular medium, which is social interaction). Fist (-1), Knife (-1). To play DeMille, raise your eyebrows and purse your lips. Make casual gestures in the air with one hand as you speak.

### Miles Hollister

Psychohistorical Adept. Skills: Athletics 8, Drive 6, Mechanical Repair 6, Scuffling 8, Health 8, Psychohistory 4.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +2. Drive: Adventure (Miles just wants to be a part of something exciting). Fist (-1). To play Hollister, square your shoulders and put your hands on your hips. When you speak, grin and squeeze your fist with the other hand, punch the palm of one hand with the other, or crack your knuckles.

They have orders to get both Alexis and Betty; they think that if they grab the kid they can get Betty to come with them of her own free will. They will advise those who interfere to

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back off. “See, we’re friends of the little girl’s father; he wants her back.”

Meanwhile, the service inside continues. The priest drinks from the chalice, as does the priestess. The deacon then goes around to the members of the congregation with the chalice, offering it to each in turn to drink from as the priest chants a litany of blessings. At some point, the service is interrupted by Kwen Smith running in to shout tearfully that “*The bad men are taking Alexis!*”

The Thelemite men will be for the most part pusillanimous and ineffectual except for Smith, who will try to intercede on behalf of his sister-in-law in the absence of investigator action and get punched in the face by a Psychohistorian for his troubles, rendering him *hors de combat* for the rest of the fight. Betty will scream and try to grab her child back from the Psychohistorians, but she will fail in the absence of investigator aid. “*Miles, how could you?*” she will sob. Hollister will look pained—he is smitten with Betty—but he will probably just tell Betty, “*Don’t worry; I’ll make sure it works out okay*” and follow his orders—although a sufficiently persuasive investigator may sense an opening and with a spend guarantee his defection. “*Now, now, you’d better come along with us, Betty, like a good girl,*” DeMille will say. “*After all, your loving husband is worried about you.*”

They have a black sedan with California plates parked outside. If they get away, they most likely head for the Psychohistorical Foundation first, but eventually they will separate the girl from her mother and hide her—on the yacht, at Ackerman’s, or in a sleazy motel in Azusa, say—to use her as leverage so that Betty will agree to serve as Wimpole’s familiar during the Despite of Azatao.

### The Priest of Thelema

**Wilfred Smith** (b. 1885, age 67) looks tanned, lean, and fit for a man of his age. Bald, he has high cheekbones and deep piercing eyes. There is an unsettling intensity to his gaze, and he speaks in a clipped and precise fashion that makes him sound cool and dispassionate. An investigator who interacts with him undergoes a 1 pt. **Stability** test at **Difficulty** 3 for each separate interaction; the investigator can lose a maximum of 3 points from these encounters. He doesn’t believe that Jack was a powerful or skilled enough magician for the Babalon Working to succeed; he thinks that Marjorie is foolish and deluded. “*The perils of magick are many,*” he will tell the investigators. “*It is surrounded by a charlatan’s web of chicanery and illusion to entrap the weak-willed and foolish-minded and prevent them from coming to know the true secrets.*” Jack thought that the Babalon Working had brought Marjorie to him as his “Scarlet Lady.” More likely, Vance Wimpole, as Jack’s “Scribe” (i.e. familiar) employed her as his confederate in a scheme to dupe Jack. He doesn’t know what Jack was working on before his death—he thinks that whatever it was, it probably resulted in an eruption of his sublimated death-wish.

Use Smith as a source of magical information should the investigators pursue that line of investigation. Otherwise, he will simply be another voice pointing the investigators at Vance Wimpole and counseling against involving the police.

### The Aftermath (Betty Wimpole)

#### Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

The Thelemites are in an uproar following an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt, doubly so if the attempt is successful. If police are called, accusations and counter-accusations will fly, and everyone who threw a punch will spend the night in jail in the absence of a good **Cop Talk** spend. A **Law** or **Credit Rating** spend can get an investigator released on bail after several hours, however. Vance Wimpole’s lawyers are good, and will exert pressure to make the police treat the whole thing as a misunderstanding, with Wimpole as the concerned husband and Betty the willful and flighty wife. Allow an investigator with an idea for a creative **Law** or other spend to hamper Wimpole in some way—keep one or more the adepts in jail for a longer period, for example.

Ideally for your purposes, both Betty and Alexis will have been abducted. In that case, Helen Smith will implore the investigators for their help. If only Alexis has been taken, Betty will do the imploring. If neither has been taken, they will nonetheless fear another attempt and ask the investigators to “talk to Vance and make him see reason.” In either of the latter circumstances, the investigators will probably want to hear Betty’s story. To play Betty, vamp it up a little bit. Pout coyly, simper, and suck the tip of your thumb.

**Betty’s Story** (core clue). We needed money after Vance’s boat-buying scheme went bust. But then he got the bright idea to start his own religion, or something like one. Where he came up with some of that stuff, I’ll never know. I helped him write it all down; it was a gas. Of course, once I got pregnant, Vance went a little crazy, and it stopped being all that much fun. We had some great big fights. But the money was



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pouring in, and after Alexis was born it got better for a little while. Then a few months ago, Vance bought a yacht and told me we were going for a cruise. It was a nightmare. He would keep me and the baby locked up for hours at a time, and then he'd have me out for long, long assessment sessions where he wouldn't let me sleep. Then he'd lock me back up with a bottle of sleeping pills—he wanted me to O.D. on the pills! I was begging him to just let me go. Then about two weeks ago, we docked at a small city along the Gulf of Mexico near Veracruz called Catemaco, which is apparently some big watering hole for Mexican magicians; there's an American artists' colony there, too. I tried to get away, but no one would help me and the sailors found me and brought me back. Vance went ashore and went into one of the little "sorcerer's shops" they have there called a *tienda del brujo*. We set sail that afternoon, steamed down to the Panama Canal, and raced back up to California. When Vance left the ship, I figured out where we were. I snuck off and headed for my sister's house. **Follow-Up:** The name of his yacht is the *Excalibur*; it's anchored in the Santa Monica Harbor, near the pier. But I don't think he's there now.

**Oral History** (1 pt. spend). An investigator who follows up on Betty's claim to have helped write down the material that became Psychohistory can pump her for details, and she will provide a précis of the book (equivalent to skimming; see the **Psychohistory** sidebar, on page 9). Additionally, she can reveal some of the "deeper truths" of Psychohistory.

### Thelemite Tomes

There are two resource tomes available in this adventure. They may be obtained at the Church of Thelema; alternately, investigators may find them (a) aboard Wimpole's yacht, the *Excalibur*; (b) in Forrie Ackerman's house, the "Ackermansion"; (c) in an occult bookstore, with a **Bargaining** or **Credit Rating** spend, or (d) in a special collection (perhaps the academic library at Caltech, for example) with a **Library Use** or **Bureaucracy** spend.

### The Book of the Law, by Aleister Crowley

The *Liber al vel Legis* is kept on the super-altar in the sanctuary of the Church of Thelema, protected from the elements by an ornate wooden box. Other copies can be found via **Bargaining** or **Library Use** spends in an occult specialty bookshop or library collection; the 1925 Tunis edition is extraordinarily rare, with only 11 copies printed, but the 1938 edition privately published by the Ordo Templi Orientis in London and New York is somewhat more common. This dense and allegorical work provides the cosmological background of Thelema, the mystical Gnostic religion to which Crowley (and Parsons) subscribed. It can be skimmed in about a day (or 1 pt. **Library Use** spend) or pored over in about a week (or a 2 pt. **Library Use** spend). Skimming provides a basic understanding of its contents. "*Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law*," is its thesis. "*Love is the law, love under will*." It announces the Aeon of Horus, which it envisions as a great oppressive spirit of Chaos that seethes at the center of the universe—"the blind mad dreaming god," as Crowley says. It imagines a countervailing spirit, inchoate but nonetheless real, called by various names, including Babalon, Isis, Ra-Hoor-Nuit, Siabnoghurach, and many others. The union of Horus and Babalon brings to life the Moon-Child who is the soul and messenger of the Outer Gods, and who completes the "opening of the way" for the universal being Iao-Soto. Poring over this book provides 1 pt. of **Cthulhu Mythos** and 1 pt. of **Occult**.

### The Book of Magick, by Aleister Crowley

This privately published monograph may be found in Smith's robing room at the Church of Thelema as well as in some occult bookstores. It details the principles of neo-Enochian "magick," a quasi-Qabbalistic mystic system for invoking the "elementals" and "principals" of the æther. It can be skimmed in about a day (or 1 pt. **Library Use** spend) or pored over in about a week (or a 2 pt. **Library Use** spend). Skimming provides a basic understanding of the neo-Enochian magical system works. See the section on **Neo-Enochian Magic**, page 42. Poring over it provides a dedicated pool point of **Occult** useful for preparing or enacting neo-Enochian workings as well as a detailed understanding of its procedures.



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### PART TWO: DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS

*In this part of the adventure, the investigators must make sense of the various threads of conspiracy hinted at the night before. Use NPCs like Robert Cameron, Omar Garrison, Forrie Ackerman, and Theodore von Kármán to provide leads if the investigators are stuck, confused, or going in circles.*

### IN A STRANGE LAND

These scenes are generally connected to locations mentioned in the newspaper article about Parsons' death (Handout #1, *Death of a Rocket Scientist*)

#### The Aztec Hotel (Monrovia) Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

The hotel is a fanciful concoction of vaguely Central American arabesques in relief on its white concrete walls. It is located on the main street in Monrovia. Its restaurant, The Elephant Bar, is a good place to meet for drinks or take a phone call. If Wimpole feels pressured by the investigators, he will send one or two men from Friendship Org to toss their rooms, intimidate them, kidnap one or more of them, or otherwise put pressure back on them. If captured and pressed to talk, they can reveal where they were supposed to report back to Wimpole—at the local Foundation chapter house, aboard the *Excalibur*, or at Henninger Flats, as needed for the timing of the adventure to work out.

#### 21 West Glenarm Street— Ruth Parsons' Apartment (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/  
Alternate)

Before Jack's death, he and Marjorie Cameron were living at Ruth Parsons'

garden apartment at 21 West Glenarm Street in Pasadena, a low U-shaped building around a grassy courtyard open to the street (each of the apartments has a different street number). If the investigators enter the house, they will notice (**Evidence Collection**) a vase full of dried Mexican morning glory flowers—the same sort of flowers as in **The Catemaco Painting** on page 37.

But Cameron will have gone missing the night of Jack Parson's wake. The evidence here will be consistent with what you judge to be the most appropriate mode of her disappearance. (a) If Forrie Ackerman kidnapped her, her car will have been broken into, Parsons' ashes will be missing, and there will be signs of a struggle in the house, including a smashed pair of eyeglasses. Neighbors can report hearing something shortly after the time the investigators dropped her off and seeing a car matching the description of Ackerman's speeding off. (b) If she ran off to Mexico on her own (possibly after being confronted by Ackerman, who may or may not have been able to obtain Jack's ashes), then neighbors can report a cab arriving (she will have gone to the bus station). (c) If Ed Forman murdered her, there will be signs of a struggle but no evidence of forced entry. (d) If she disappeared as a side effect of the *Mors Obit* working, then there will be no obvious signs that anything is wrong, nor will there be any indication of what might have happened or where she might have gone.

#### 125 North Rampart Boulevard—Robert Cameron's House (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

Parked in the back of Robert Cameron's small bungalow-style house is a car trailer. It contains camping equipment, maps of Los Angeles County, Thelemite

robes, archery gear, and surveyor's instruments as well as a five-gallon jar labeled 'Catemaco' in grease pencil; the jar is half-filled with honey. There is also a cardboard box filled with a dozen unopened wine bottles, along with a loving cup-style fencing trophy with Jack's name on it from University High School, Pasadena. There are also vials of a grey salt-like powder stored in a padded box; **Chemistry** will reveal that this is mercury fulminate, a highly explosive substance. If an investigator without **Chemistry** searches the trailer, roll **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty** 5 to avoid an explosion; if it occurs, give everyone in range 1d3+3 wounds (roll **Athletics** at **Difficulty** 6 to halve the damage). The trailer is of course lost in those circumstances. One map is marked, with the location of Henninger Flats in the mountains between Pasadena and Mount Wilson circled in pencil. An old construction road runs into it from the south and then heads for the Mount Wilson observatory complex about three miles away.

#### 1071 South Orange Grove Ave.—The House That Jack Blew Up (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

The tenants who lived in the carriage house at 1071 South Orange Grove Ave. are still there. They include Salvatore "Greg" Ganci, a painter, and Martin Foshaug, a student, both in their early 20s. Greg and Martin have been cleaning up—the landlord is paying them. They can report what they've told the police and the press. Jack and Marjorie had been getting ready for a long trip to Mexico; they said if they liked it they might not come back. They had a small trailer in the driveway outside the carriage house, and it was loaded up. It held camping equipment, art supplies, and some of Jack's special effects gear. At one point, Marjorie had gone out and Greg Ganci met

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Jack heading into the garage where he stored his chemicals with a 5 gallon jug of some amber fluid. He said he needed to prepare a “rush order” for a client. “*Don’t blow us up, Jack,*” Ganci had joked. Half an hour later—this would be just after 5 o’clock, maybe 10 after—Ganci was in his apartment, which was over the laundry room, when he heard a loud blast and a hole appeared in his floor. He met Foshaug running downstairs, and the two of them found Jack with his arm blown off and half his face destroyed. He was still conscious, though barely, and trying to speak. Ganci leaned in close as the dying man clutched at him. “*He wanted to tell me something,*” Ganci says. “*But all I could make out was something like, ‘the scribe . . . the scribe.’ I don’t know what it meant.*”

A search of the debris (**Evidence Collection**) will produce a **Scrap of Paper** (see handout on page 51) that appears to have been written by Parsons.

### Bermite Powder Company (Tujunga)

Scene Type: Clue (Alternate)

Tujunga is about 45 minutes northwest of Pasadena, along the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains. The investigators might come here following up a lead obtained from Garrison or the story he wrote (in which he misspelled the company’s name). The Bermite Powder Company is located in an isolated box canyon outside of town.

Parsons was well-liked and well-regarded there, but had no close friends. He had a reputation as a wild man, and some of his co-workers thought that he had a tough time getting along in the stricter, more business-like climate that came with the end of the war. “*He’d probably have been happier back out in the Arroyo Seco with the rest of those ‘Suicide Squad’ boys, firing rockets just for the hell of it,*” one will say. “*But those days are gone.*”

The do recall that he talked about “going to Mexico” a lot in the past few months; apparently his wife had spent some time at an artist’s colony in a town down there on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico that she really liked. They have no knowledge of any special or secret project that he might have been working on. “*But you know who you should talk to? Von Kármán at Caltech!*” And someone will add, “*He did just buy a whole bunch of fulminate of mercury. He said it was for a special effects explosion for some sci-fi movie filming up in the mountains.*” Another will add, “*Right. I think they were going to shoot some scenes near the observatory; I saw Jack looking at some pictures of it once.*” **Follow-Up:** The Hale Observatory is about an hour away by car, up in the middle of the San Gabriel Mountains.

### The Arroyo Seco (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

The investigators may come to this dry riverbed on the western edge of Pasadena where Jack Parsons and the rest of the Suicide Squad used to test their rockets, now part of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, for a number of reasons. They may be searching for the rocket that Jack was building, or for Marjorie Cameron’s body. Wimpole’s men may try to lure them out here to deal with them. Betty Wimpole or Wilfred Smith may bring them out here to enact a neo-Enochian ritual.

While here, one of the investigators runs into a rattlesnake. **Sense Trouble** at **Difficulty 6** (**Difficulty 4** if the investigator has **Outdoorsman**). On a failure, the investigator is bitten. Once bitten, the victim is hurt and must make a **Health** roll every three hours versus a **Difficulty** of 4 to avoid becoming seriously wounded, and then every six hours thereafter to avoid dying once seriously wounded. **First Aid** can be used to treat the bite; allow pool points of **First Aid** to be spent on the victim’s

**Health** roll. The nearest hospital is in Pasadena. A seriously wounded investigator may begin to hallucinate; the hallucinations could include a visit from the ghost of Jack Parsons.

### The Los Angeles Times Building (Central L.A.)

Scene Type: Clue (Alternate)

The headline in Friday’s paper reads, “**SLAIN SCIENTIST PRIEST IN BLACK MAGIC CULT.**” The article is salacious and lurid, implying that Parsons was a devotee of notorious English diabolist Aleister Crowley and ran a Satanic sex cult in Pasadena in the Thirties and Forties. It contains some factual errors, including the assertion that Parsons’ mystic mentor Wilfred Smith died in 1948. It is illustrated with photos of Parsons in dark robes embroidered with occult symbolism (an investigator with **Occult** will recognize the imagery as indicating the wearer as a neo-Enochian priest and alchemist). This may prompt investigators to seek out its author, Omar Garrison—the reporter they met at Parsons’ wake. **Cop Talk**, **Flattery**, or a bribe (i.e., **Credit Rating** or **Bargaining**) can get him to reveal that, although his source is anonymous, he’s supposed to meet him again tonight to get more pictures for a follow-up story. Such a meeting may lead the investigators to the source Garrison knows as “the Commodore” (Vance Wimpole) or one of his flunkies.

### Going to the Police (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/Alternate)

In general, the police will not be helpful. Parsons had a long record with the Pasadena police: rockets and other explosives going off in the Arroyo Seco, wild parties on Orange Grove Ave., accusations of witchcraft and salacious

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activities, like a naked pregnant women jumping through a ring of fire in some sort of weird ritual sometime in the 1940s.

The death of Parsons seems like an accident. Ace criminologist Don Harding will brusquely dismiss any attempt to assert otherwise. He is precise, professional, and scientific. His report shows that the explosion occurred at 5:08 p.m. on June 17, followed shortly by a secondary explosion. No indications of rigged explosives were found: no wiring, timing devices, or fuse residue. Witnesses report Parsons' intention to "mix up a batch of chemicals" prior to departing on a vacation. Metal fragments consist with a coffee can containing traces of fulminate of mercury were found on the scene. Parsons most severe injuries were to his face and right arm.

### Caltech (Pasadena) Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

**Theodore von Kármán** (b. 1875, age 77) can be found in his office at Caltech in Pasadena. He is a wizened little gnome of a man with a beak of a nose and wavy white hair brushed back from his temples. Play von Kármán with your version of a broad central European accent: shortened vowels, "d," "t," or "z" for "th," "w" for "v," and so forth. "Ah, yiss, Chack's dett iss wery zad . . . Parzuns vuz a breelyunt man, but he had no deesaplinn!"

Von Kármán will be reluctant to speak to investigators about his involvement in Jack Parsons' recent activities, but confronted with evidence or even the accusation that he condoned irrational explorations of the occult will feel compelled to justify himself (**Assess Honesty** will allow an investigator to note his prideful identification as a rational man of science).

**Oral History.** *Yiss, I em a zientist, chust like Chack wuss a zientist. And zientists must explain tings! Chune 24, 1947. Pilot in Washinkton State zees nine zaucer-shaped obchecks in de air. July 7, 1947. Farmer in New Mexico finds debris in hiss field; the Army says first, yiss, iss zaucer, then no, iss wedder balloon. May 11, 1950. Man in Oregon takes photographs of zaucer hanging ower hiss house. Zumting is goink on—and Chack is maybe de only one who can figure it out! Like Eddington zays, de uniwerse iss stranger zan we can imachine! Zere are tings out dere, and Chack zays he will try to contact zem wit special rocket. Zo I help him.*

**Architecture** or **Evidence Collection** (bonus clue; leverage: unicursal hexagram). Leaving campus, an investigator notices a statue of George Ellery Hale (1868-1938) peering through a telescope at the center of a sun-dial. It is also decorated with zodiacal symbols, but what catches the investigator's eye is a version of the unicursal hexagram. **Astronomy** or **History** can reveal that Hale was one of Caltech's founders as well as the man responsible for the construction of several observatories in the area, including a solar observatory on Mount Wilson. **Bureaucracy** and **Credit Rating** (1 pt. spend each) allow an investigator to determine that the anonymous donor of the sun-dial was Jane Wolfe; she can reveal that he was a secret magician of great power whose efforts during the Great War almost single-handedly staved off a victory for the Germans, at least according to Aleister Crowley.

**Library Use** allows a biographical sketch of George Ellery Hale to be assembled. Born and raised in Chicago, attended MIT 1886-1892, achieved prominence as an astronomer. In receipt of a \$10 million grant from Andrew Carnegie to build a new observatory, went to California and began to organize the Mount Wilson observatories near Pasadena in 1903.

Worked tirelessly and energetically for many years to develop new techniques and make new discoveries in astronomy. By 1910, began to suffer from recurring attacks of "brain congestion," accompanied by physical pain, depression, and sometimes "confusion of thought." Eventually, ill health prevented him from enduring the harsh conditions of "the Monastery" (as the living quarters on Mount Wilson were called) and he built a small "solar laboratory" near Caltech to continue his researches.

If Von Kármán is present, he can tell investigators that he knew Hale personally, and can report that Hale was obsessed with Egypt to the point of mania. "Ah, he wass ztrange man," von Kármán will say. "He once zays he build on Mount Wilson where he deed because elf told him to put it zere. Yiss, yiss, wery ztrange and wery zad."

The Solar Laboratory, built in 1924, is now a part of the Mount Wilson Observatories. It is a small T-shaped white building of rough plaster and vaguely Spanish Colonial style. The thick wooden door is 15 feet high and arched like a gate. Above it is a cast stone bas relief depicting a sun whose rays end in hands that each grasp a small hooded cross or ankh—as **Art History** reports, an Egyptian symbol of life; **Occult** associates the solar imagery with the god Horus. Working there now are the father-and-son team of Harold and Horace Babcock, who are working on a device to measure the magnetic field of the sun. They are currently testing the device, and are perturbed by a recent image it has produced in which the sun's magnetic field vaguely resembles a man's laughing face. The time stamp on the on the image is June 17, 5:16 p.m. **Astronomy** or one of the Babcocks (as part of his explanation of their research) reminds investigators that light from the sun takes 8 minutes to reach the earth.

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### THE FOUNDATION

#### The Ackermansion (Beverly Hills)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/  
Alternate)

Investigators who want to get their hands on Forrie Ackerman will probably be able to find him at the “Ackermansion,” his Beverly Hills dwelling. It is a squarish, high-walled hacienda-type house of a decent size. Inside there are many interconnected rooms with communicating passages and stairwells; it is not easy to navigate, especially as the rooms and halls are cluttered with sci-fi memorabilia from movies, magazines, comics, and books. There are shelves of paperbacks, racks of periodicals, framed prints and pictures on the walls, movie props and costumes in cases lining the hallways, rocketship models dangling on fishing line from ceiling hooks—it is a garish and overwhelming panoply of fandom. There is even a life-sized Dracula’s coffin being used as a coffee table in the overcrowded living room.

The Ackermansion makes a good place to run a cat-and-mouse chase between Ackerman and the investigators. For the investigators to corner Ackerman, they must successfully **Sense Trouble** three times at a **Difficulty** of 4. However, each failure gives Ackerman a chance to pop up and launch a surprise attack—a whack with a pair of nunchuks, a handful of throwing stars, or even just a pushed-over bookshelf—before retreating again. The attack will strike home and do damage by weapon type unless the targeted investigator succeeds at “dodging” by rolling **Athletics** or **Fleeing** at **Difficulty** 5. After the third roll, they have him cornered (fail or succeed), they have him cornered. One player rolls **Scuffling** versus a random **Difficulty** equal to 1 die plus 3 (to represent Ackerman’s **Scuffling**), while each

investigator helping against Ackerman may contribute **Scuffling** to the player roll. If Ackerman wins, the difference between his roll and the player’s is the number of points of **Health** damage that you can distribute among the participating investigators.

Once cornered and subdued, Ackerman can reveal the truth of his involvement with Wimpole and his conversion to Psychohistory. He can tell how Richard DeMille showed up at his house on Wednesday with an autographed copy of *Psychohistory* and instructions to go to Parsons’ wake and get his ashes for Vance Wimpole. Ackerman will point the investigators to the Psychohistorical Foundation as the most likely place for Wimpole to be. He can also provide other clues as needed to get investigators back on the trail—possibly including even leading them to Henninger Flats himself. More likely, he will bring or direct them to the Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation.

#### The Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation (Hollywood)

The Los Angeles Psychohistorical Foundation is located at 206 South Hoover in Hollywood, a few blocks south of the Hollywood Freeway (US 101). It is a sprawling apartment building of whitewashed concrete poured into irregular angles and high walls, with numerous staircases and porches along its exterior, making the whole place look like a labyrinthine fortress looming brightly above the street.

Getting inside undetected requires **Locksmith** or an ability roll versus a **Difficulty** of 5 or 6 depending on the audacity of the investigator’s plan, with the ability being used depending on the general nature of that plan: e.g., **Athletics** (to shimmy up the angle

where two exterior walls meet and enter via an open window or porch), **Shadowing** (to sneak in behind someone entering the building), or **Disguise** (to pretend to be a deliveryman or building inspector or some other authorized person). In general, failure should result in the investigators gaining access but then being unmasked or discovered relatively quickly by psychohistorian flunkies who will try to apprehend them and bring them to the man in charge, **Al van Vogt** (see **The Man in Charge**, page 31). At night, the place will be quiet but not wholly deserted—some Psychohistorians live in the building during training courses, and some of these will be detailed as guards.

#### Psychohistorian Flunkies.

Skills: **Scuffling** 3, **Athletics** 3, **Drive** 2, **Health** 4.

Special: **Psychohistory** bonus +1. **Drive**: Follower (These people are devoted to Psychohistory, and to Vance Wimpole. They come across as saccharine, mildly brainwashed, and phony. “*Psychohistory changed my life—for the better!*”; “*I’d give up anything to help Psychohistory!*”; “*My psychic engravings no longer trouble me, thanks to Vance Wimpole!*” “*Mr. Van Vogt is an excellent assessor!*”) . **Fist** (-1).

During normal business hours, a **Bureaucracy** or even a **Flattery** spend may allow someone to brazen his or her way past the receptionist at the front desk, who will otherwise keep them cooling their heels while she makes a number of phone calls (all the while looking askance at them). Eventually, van Vogt will send for them.

The upper floors are mainly living quarters for Psychohistorian trainees undergoing intensive training. On the lower floors, there are small ad hoc classrooms and “interview rooms” complete with large reel-to-reel tape recorders where Psychohistorical

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assessments may be conducted. There are rooms filled with filing cabinets containing paper transcripts and summaries of the analyses, alphabetically by the subject's name, as well as tapes awaiting transcription.

There is a tape dated 6/17/52 (i.e., the day Parsons died) with the name "Wimpole" on it. On the tape, the voices of two men can be heard: van Vogt's relaxed baritone occasionally asking questions interspersed with a rapid, breathless voice, obviously Vance Wimpole.

### Psychohistorical Assessment

**Session:** 6:00 p.m., June 17, 1952, D.V. Wimpole, subject; A.E. van Vogt, assessor (**bonus clue**). [van Vogt opens the session with this identifying information and then starts to ask questions about Wimpole's Drive per the **Psychohistory** sidebar, but Wimpole interrupts] WIMPOLE: *Forget about that shit . . . I'm deep into it already. I met someone tonight, an artist I used to know during the war. I bought one of her pieces recently and tracked her down. It was deep, deep stuff. Don't tell me to calm down. I am calm. It showed me the way, the way to make the burning voice my slave. My old "partner," heh-heh. He did it to me, and now he's helping me undo it. That's right. That's right.*

Listening to the entire hour-long session provides the listener with 1 point of **Cthulhu Mythos**, at the cost of a 3-point **Stability** test at **Difficulty** 5. Wimpole explains his new Psychohistorical "theory": our souls are the cast-off detritus from the star-borne journeys of those called the Old Ones. We are reborn time and time again in corporeal shells, in kind of an inverse karmic cycle: copies of copies, we become pallid and feckless imitations, merely relict of our original Old One nature. Assessment can bring us back to the Old One we once were.

The main plot function of their visit to

the Foundation, however, is to point the investigators at Wimpole's yacht, the *Excalibur*, now moored in the Santa Monica Yacht Harbor, off the Santa Monica Amusement pier. A variety of clues may point to this fact.

**Accounting.** The investigators find a bill from the Santa Monica Harbor Office dated June 18, 1952, for an anchorage permit for the SS *Excalibur* addressed to the "Friendship Foundation" at 206 South Hoover.

**Bureaucracy** (1 pt. spend). An investigator claims the authority of the "Friendship Org" to get the switchboard operator to talk: "*Mister De Mille called to say he was going down to the harbor to check in with the Commodore aboard the Excalibur, sir.*"

**Evidence Collection.** A scribbled phone message in a receptionist's wastebasket contains the cryptic note, "*4 men Santa MonY Harb carg unload f/ Excalibur. Need truck.*"

### The Man in Charge

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

If the investigators attempt to raid or infiltrate the place, they may eventually come face-to-face (either by capture or other means) with Al van Vogt, who runs the place under normal circumstances; Wimpole is an occasional and celebrated guest when he visits.

**Al van Vogt** (b. 1912, age 40), Master Psychohistorian is a hearty looking, well-dressed man with thick dark eyebrows that give him an intimidating appearance that is belied by a genial smile. He is an expert Psychohistorian, and he is the nominal leader of the Los Angeles branch of Psychohistory.

**Skills:** Athletics 2, First Aid 4, Health 4, Psychoanalysis 6, Psychohistory 10, Weapons 4.

**Special:** Psychohistory bonus +4. **Fist** (-1), **Epee** (-1). **Drive:** Scholarship (He wants Psychohistory to be recognized as an authentic science). To play van Vogt, smile indulgently as you speak, and strive for a broad, relaxed tone of voice. Change demeanor abruptly if van Vogt gets mad, though.

Van Vogt's main motivation is to preserve the reputation and the finances of the Psychohistorical Foundation—and Wimpole, he believes, is a drain on both. **Assess Honesty** can reveal his opinion, and allow investigators to surmise that he can be persuaded to help them.

**Bargaining** (1 pt. spend). Van Vogt agrees to help them find Wimpole if an investigator does something to advance Psychohistory, like write a blurb for the back cover of the next printing of the book, or give a testimonial to its effectiveness that can be used in print advertising for the Foundation.

In some circumstances, van Vogt will bring out fencing foils and masks and agree to tell them what he knows if one of them can defeat him in a duel. Roll a **Weapons** contest between the duelists. Allow other investigators to help; they may allow a duelist to re-roll a failure by succeeding at a roll versus a **Difficulty** of 4 using an ability they "narrate in": **Sense Trouble** to shout a warning, **Preparedness** to have given the duelist some caffeine pills or other stimulus as the match began, and so forth. Even if the investigator loses, van Vogt may see an opportunity to point him and his friends at Wimpole in a way that would remove him from the organization's leadership without harming Psychohistory.

**Oral History.** Van Vogt can tell the investigators that Wimpole arrived at the Foundation on Tuesday night, around 6:00 p.m. or so, and asked for an assessment session, during which Wimpole claimed to have

Señor Director de la Oficina de Identificación  
Don Juan V. ...

Val

A fin de completar la ...

Orden del Día 355, ... de la ...  
el 2º párrafo de ...  
propuestos, ...  
de rayas los que ...  
y remitirá, siempre que ...

Victor

Victor



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uncovered the key to unlocking past life experience—a claim that van Vogt regarded as crazy. After the session, he sent Richard DeMille to acquire some supplies and equipment for him while he took Dessler and Hollister on a “secret mission.” At that point, Van Vogt went home. Wednesday morning, when van Vogt returned at around 10 a.m., Wimpole and the Friendship Org were already present; there was an Army surplus jeep parked in back, loaded with supplies and camping equipment as well as an Army surplus radio set, pulling an empty flatbed trailer. Then around noon word came from Wimpole’s boat the *Excalibur* that his wife Betty had left, taking their daughter Alexis with her. Wimpole flew into a rage and ordered that the crew be subject to “radical demotion”—“make ‘em walk the plank!” Wimpole shrieked. Dessler headed off to the pier while DeMille was ordered to Forrie Ackerman’s house with instructions for him. Meanwhile, Wimpole took Hollister with him on another “secret mission.” Wimpole has not yet returned, but some of the Friendship Org men have been back and forth.

If the investigators haven’t been to the yacht yet, van Vogt tells them where to find it. If they have, he can reveal overhearing one of the Friendship Org men say something about “Henninger Flats” on a recent visit. Alternately, he can capture them and then either bring them to Vance Wimpole under guard or put them on ice until they escape with a Locksmith spend or similar action.



### ROCKET TO THE MORGUE

These scenes allow the investigators to find out about the rocket that Parsons and his co-conspirators were trying to build.

**Evidence Collection.** At some point on Friday, probably as the investigators are driving around the Los Angeles area, radio news will report that county police still have no leads in the case of a break-in at a local rocket motor manufacturer Aerojet, Inc. in Azusa sometime Wednesday night.

### Ed Forman’s House (Pasadena)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/Alternate)

Forman lives with his wife Jeanne in a small house in a modest section of Pasadena; he is currently using vacation days from his job at Aerojet. If the investigators visit him, he or his wife can tell them about being accosted the night that Jack died by two goons that he thought were sent by Marjorie.

Forman may have gone to Marjorie Cameron’s house—her mother-in-law’s apartment—with the intent of getting the truth out of her after the wake. One of several possibilities exists; choose the one that suits the developing narrative best.

1. Cameron never returned home that night. Forman waited but eventually gave up and left.
2. Cameron was home when Forman arrived, and he confronted her. She tearfully confessed to meeting with Vance Wimpole the day that Jack died, but denied that she meant Jack any harm. He wanted to know where to find “the rocket from the

painting” but she didn’t know; she told him to ask Jack. “It’s too late for that,” she will say Wimpole told her. “I’ll have to go ask his better half”—meaning Forman.

(a) Enraged, Forman struck Marjorie. She fell, hit her head, and was killed. He panicked and dumped her body in the Arroyo Seco.

(b) Disgusted, Forman called Marjorie a stinking whore and left.

3. Forman arrived in time to see Ackerman abduct Cameron and stuff her into his car. Forman followed them to the Ackermansion. When he foolishly attempted to sneak into the house to free her, Ackerman stealthily beamed him with a frying pan. Forman’s wife can relate that he never returned home the night of the wake. His corpse is now hidden inside a replica of Dracula’s coffin on the main floor of the Ackermansion.

**Evidence Collection.** Should the investigators be allowed to go into Forman’s workshop in the garage and poke around, they will find a clip-on employee identification badge issued by the Aerojet Corporation with a picture of Parsons on it but a different name—“John Smith, Jr.”

### The Aerojet Corporation (Azusa)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

The Aerojet Corporation is listed in the phone book, and an address in the town of Azusa is provided. **Library Use** allows investigators to learn something of Aerojet’s history. It was established by a team of Caltech rocket scientists that called itself the “Suicide Squad” during World War II. This team

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included Parsons and von Kármán. They had a contract to build detachable rocket boosters for heavily laden airplanes that had to take off from short runways. After the war, most of the original founders were bought out by a larger defense contractor, seemingly because of government worries about their political reliability. Bureaucratics enables an investigator to discover that Ed Forman worked there on a special project authorized by von Kármán, but that Jack Parsons was no longer welcome there.

The Aerojet Corp. compound in Azusa is a cluster of Army surplus-looking buildings at the edge of the desert surrounded by a barbed wire fence—the whole place looks temporary, prefabricated and cheap.

Forman's project area is actually a large Quonset hut the size of a two-car garage built on a concrete pad on the edge of the desert. This was where Forman was assembling the 12-foot long sounding rocket, but Wimpole will have already managed to break in and steal it.

Police and private detectives are on the scene. The fence is being repaired, and other security improvements are being made. Investigators will probably only be able to get inside with special permission from von Kármán or the police. Inspection of the crime scene (**Evidence Collection**) discovers blueprints in the trash.

**Physics.** The blueprints show a 12-foot long, liquid-fueled sounding rocket (i.e., a sub-orbital non-military rocket, typically used to carry meteorological or other scientific instrumentation) with a negligible payload capacity. The blueprints show that the "payload" actually consists of an airburst-type time-delay fuse and a small explosive core seemingly intended to vaporize the rocket's remaining fuel over the target area. The range of the rocket seems to be a maximum of about 5 miles,

depending on the fuel used. Circuitry for remote controlled radio ignition is indicated as well. (1 pt. spend). The investigator's thorough understanding of the blueprints gives him or her a 2 pt. pool of **Electrical Repair** that can be used to operate or interfere with the operation of the rocket.

### The Observatory (Mt. Wilson)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/Alternate)

The Mt. Wilson Observatory is actually several observatories, built at intervals beginning in the early years of the 20th century. The compound is spread out across a wooded slope, interspersed with spartan living quarters and observatories of various sizes, some obsolete or little visited. There are scientists here making observations, astronomers who seem completely normal. They are upset because the phone lines are out, and aren't likely to be repaired until next week.

The younger astronomers—graduate students from Caltech and elsewhere—are likely to recognize Bob Heinlein at the very least. They will be excited. "*Two in one day!*" one will say. "*How strange!*" They can describe Vance Wimpole making an appearance there some hours before, wandering around and asking some questions. "*I think he went for a hike. Come to think of it, he didn't have a car.*" Someone might ask what the investigators think of Wimpole's *Psychohistory*.

The Solar Observatory is a dome-covered coelostat (the name for the system of movable mirrors that direct incoming light into a focal lens) sitting atop a 150-foot tall obelisk of cross-hatched girders. A central cylinder leading from the bottom of the dome to a small building beneath it at ground level is not a support; it is rather an optical tube. The solar telescope was

completed in 1912, according to a plaque on one of the girders. The door to the central pillar is a strong steel plate decorated with a peculiar motif—a central disk with the sun's rays stretching out like hands. **Art History** recognizes the design as inspired by ancient Egyptian art; **Theology** notes that the many-handed sun was a motif associated with the god Horus. **History** reminds an investigator that George Ellery Hale, the founder of the observatory, was apparently obsessed with ancient Egypt. **Astronomy** allows an investigator to recall to mind Hale's contention that the Sun was insufficiently understood, given its vital importance to all life on Earth.

The Mount Wilson Toll Road trailhead is here, 6 miles through the mountains from Henninger Flats—about four hours away by foot; use the same rules for this hike as above. **Outdoorsman** or **Geology** may allow an investigator to notice an area of darker greenery through a notch in the slope of Mount Harvard to the southwest, suggesting the presence of a "hanging basin" where run-off water can collect and provide naturally irrigation. A map reveals that area to be Henninger Flats—there is one in a visitor's center mounted to a wall behind glass.

### Questioned by the FBI (Central L.A.)

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus/Alternate)

Should one of the investigators fall afoul of the FBI, they will take him downtown. You should treat this as a golden opportunity to pass information to the players in the guise of "questioning" the miscreant. Give him a hard time and make him sweat, of course, but generally you should be able to let him out even in the most egregious circumstances within 24 hours at most, sooner with a Law or similar spend. Or the FBI may let him

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go in the hopes that he will “lead us to the others.”

**Assess Honesty.** The FBI agents don’t know what Jack Parsons was up to, and they want to find out. They are willing to cut a deal with someone who can get them the information they need.

**Oral History.** Based on the questions that the FBI asks, it seems that they suspect that Jack Parsons was selling rocketry secrets to a foreign power. They are asking about some sort of link to the Israelis—but aren’t we on their side?—because of Jack’s obsession with the biblical Book of Revelation. And they’re interested in any connection between Vance Wimpole and Marjorie Cameron.

Should the investigators contact the FBI looking for help, it will generally be stymied or delayed by J. Edgar Hoover’s personal supervision of the case; any decision will have to be submitted via cable back to Washington, D.C., for action.

### AT THE PIER

The Santa Monica Pier (Santa Monica)

The entrance to the Santa Monica pier lies beneath an Art Deco sign that reads “*Santa Monica / Yacht Harbor — Sport Fishing / Cafes.*” Drivers pass beneath the sign and park along the edge of the pier or in parking lots just past the entrance sign. A big Ferris wheel and a roller coaster anchor the amusement park atop the pier. Boats of all sorts, big and small, lay at anchor off the pier.

Past the roller coaster and the rides is the La Monica Ballroom, which rises like a castle with towers and pennants from the water. Inside, patrons pay 25 cents for a ticket to dance, which lets them out on the huge hardwood dance floor that surrounds the bandstand. The musicians show up at 7 o’clock and play

until midnight; tinny canned music is piped in before then starting at around 3 p.m.

### The Parking Attendant’s Story

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

A parking attendant named Gabe at the lot named on the parking stub from her car’s dashboard thinks maybe he remembers Marjorie Cameron if the investigators describe her; he is certain he does if shown a picture. “*Yeah, sure. You don’t get too many knockout redheads in California; the sun is just too much for ‘em. Sure, she headed straight for the La Monica Ballroom like she had a hot date. She didn’t look too happy about it, though. And then she came back crying, and drove out of here like a bat out of hell.*” What time was that? “*Maybe around quarter after five, about then anyway.*”

### The Hatcheck Girl’s Story

Scene Type: Clue (Core)

Asking around, the investigators locate a hatcheck girl named Cynthia who remembers seeing Cameron late Tuesday afternoon. “*The poor thing! She looked so unhappy! And then when I saw who she was waiting for, I figured out why, let me tell you!*” Cynthia describes a fleshy, slab-faced man in his late forties dressed like a cut-rate commodore—“*I can’t be sure, but I think his coat had epaulets! I know it had brass buttons!*”—and smoking a detestably smelly cigar. “*He gave me his hat, and it was so garish; the brim had gold braid on it like a Navy officer’s dress cap*” (Note that any further inquiry on this point will enable her to remember the words “SS EXCALIBUR” around the bottom of Wimpole’s hat).

They went out on the dance floor, the hatcheck girl tells the investigators. “*I noticed they both had red hair.*” Cynthia noticed that Marjorie snuck a sip from her hip flask; that seemed to calm her

down. The couple seemed to be having an argument as they danced. “*Anyway, the commodore was holding her real close, and I could tell she wasn’t enjoying it. He was gripping her tight with one hand and waving his stogie around with the other.*” The hatcheck girl could tell that Marjorie was scared and angry, and it made her mad. She almost screamed, but then the song was over. Marjorie ran from dance floor, and the man she was with—Wimpole—sauntered off himself. “*He didn’t care where she went.*”

### The Value of a Dollar

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

Cynthia gives the story an epilogue. “*And then he decided he was a big spender, and he gave me a whole dollar as a tip when he came to get his hat. But it was a dirty old bill, with writing on it.*” She still has it. Cynthia will not be averse to showing it to them, or even trading it for a clean bill. The dollar bill is marked with a letter-filled grid:

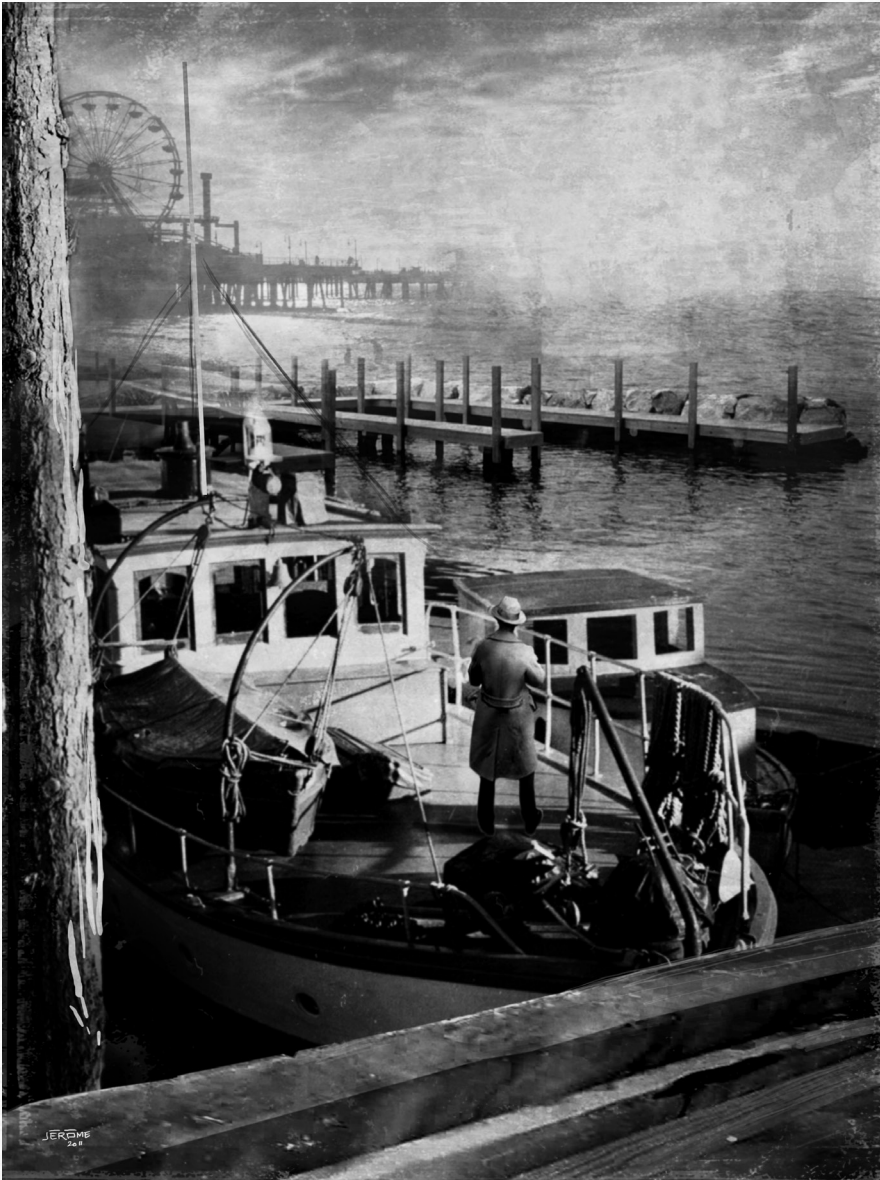
|    |    |    |
|----|----|----|
| BE | LI | AL |
| LI | LI | TH |
| AL | TH | EA |

**Art History.** Lilith is a character from Jewish folklore, Adam’s first wife, who left him because he refused to accept her equality. Althea is a character from Greek myth who, in the story, hears a prophecy that her son Meleager will live only until a certain brand is consumed in the family hearth. She hides the brand for many years until she becomes angry at her son for quarreling with and killing her brothers, his uncles. She retrieves the brand and throws it into the fire. Later, she kills herself out of remorse.

**Languages.** In Hebrew, *Belial* could mean “worthless” or, alternately, “without master.” In Greek, *althea* means “healer.”

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Big Hoodoo



**Occult.** Belial is one of the four demon princes subordinate only to Satan listed in medieval grimoire *Ars Goetia*, translated into English and published in 1904 by Aleister Crowley. Lilith is the name of a Mesopotamian storm demon and bearer of disease, death, and disfigurement.

**Theology.** Belial is a name from the Jewish and Christian apocrypha, originally used to refer to those who lawlessly rejected God's commands, particularly idolators and inciters to wickedness. Eventually, it began to be used as a synonym for Satan.

### The Excalibur

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

**Finding the Yacht: The Timing.** It's possible that the investigators will come here right after the Church of Thelema, on Betty's testimony. Since that will send them haring up to Henninger Flats if they find the painting and interpret it correctly (as they should), you may wish to forestall that. An easy way to do that is simply move the painting to somewhere they haven't been yet, like the Foundation. Another option is to have the *Excalibur* sail away, making

a trip down the coast (perhaps to secure some Mexican morning glory seeds somewhere before returning). Inquiring with the harbormaster can reveal the boat's filed excursion papers and expected time of return in about a day, thus freeing up the investigators to do other things while they wait for it to come back. Otherwise, you should allow any reasonable plan to enable them to locate the yacht in the harbor without too much difficulty.

The *Excalibur* is a somewhat beat-up motor yacht about 50 feet in length, now anchored in the Santa Monica Yacht Harbor. It must be reached by launch: a small motor boat or even a row boat will do, and boats of that sort can be hired at the pier. Depending on the timing of their visit and what kind of challenge you wish to provide, there will be four crewmen plus possibly one of the Friendship Org goons aboard. If there are prisoners aboard, the sailors will be alert (**Stealth Difficulty 5**), otherwise they will not be terribly attentive (**Stealth Difficulty 3**).

If investigators try to board the ship openly, a quartet of suspicious psychohistorian sailors will try to restrain them until Wimpole or one of his Friendship Org lieutenants comes to decide what to do with them. If they try to sneak aboard, allow the use of **Piloting** as well as **Stealth** to quietly approach and board the yacht; set the **Difficulties** relatively low depending on the audacity of the investigator's plan.

The Friendship Org man aboard might make a break for it, first grabbing the painting from Catemaco. He'll jump in to a motor launch moored to the aft part of the yacht along with one of the sailors and head for the beach at the base of the pier. He'll run to his car and peel out for Foundation headquarters. Use **Piloting**, **Athletics**, and **Driving** for the chase—do it as a series of paired rolls (two **Piloting**, one **Athletics**,

## The Big Hoodoo

and three **Driving**), with the higher of each opposing roll given a +1 cumulative bonus on the next roll. The one who succeeds at the last roll decides how the chase ends—with an escape or with a showdown. If Hollister is aboard guarding Betty or Alexis, he will grab the prisoner he's guarding as well as the painting.

If the investigators gain access to the bridge, **Piloting** enables the investigator to reconstruct the *Excalibur's* journey by examining its charts and logs. Two weeks ago it was in the Gulf of Mexico at a place called Catemaco south of Veracruz, but then it steamed down to the Panama Canal, passed through, and then cruised back up the Pacific Coast at its top speed.

Any stealthy exploration of the ship will reveal the painting from Catemaco, laid out and weighted down on an antique wooden sea-captain's desk in the commodore's stateroom. **Accounting** or **Language** (Spanish) will allow an investigator to find a receipt amid the clutter in Wimpole's desk from a *tienda del brujo* in Catemaco for *miel de hechiceros* ("sorcerer's honey") and *semillas tlitiltzin* (seeds of the Mexican morning glory plant).

There is a radio on the bridge; it is set to a frequency matching the radio set in Wimpole's jeep. Wimpole may be monitoring the radio; clever investigators may trick him into revealing his whereabouts or other useful information. Similarly, he may use it to taunt the investigators.



### The Painting from Catemaco

The background of the painting is a surreal landscape, a mountain meadow in high summer, with the sun high in the sky—but at the edges of the scene the bright blue of day fades to the deep blue-black of night with stars shining; in one corner hangs a pale crescent moon; in the other, a blue-and-green earth. In the center of the meadow a cruel-faced farmer with wild hair struggles with a wheeled plow as he stares into the sky.

Above him a bearded man in magician's robes floats in the air entwined in flowers, his arms upraised and bearing a flaming rocket that points downward at the plowman. The rocket is marked with four equilateral triangles in a row: one pointing up, one pointing down, one up with a line cutting across its upper tip, one down with a line cutting across its lower tip. Below that are the words SATOR ROTAS.

Hovering close by the rocket is a grail-like chalice covered with array of letters arranged in a square on its sides. Floating around the magician's cup are a swarm of symbols and images of obscure meaning.

#### The Magician's Cup

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| H  | N  | H  | Ca | H  | K  | H  |
| N  | P  | Al | P  | Al | F  | Be |
| H  | Al | Mn | Ar | Sc | Li | H  |
| Ca | P  | Ar | Sc | Mg | F  | K  |
| H  | Al | Sc | Mg | B  | Ca | Ca |
| K  | F  | Li | F  | Ca | Sc | Ar |
| H  | Be | H  | K  | Ca | AR | H  |

These symbols include (1) a circle with little horns on top and a cross below entangled in two wavy lines and surrounded by a vine; (2) a cup or chalice into which blood drips from the tip of a spear or lance; (3) a cluster of little seeds; (4) a little pile of ashes marked with the unicursal hexagram; and (5) an eagle perched atop a beehive devouring a snake. The form of the land is curved to suggest the body of a woman, with the meadow her belly and the mountains at the left her shoulders, and naked men and women of monstrous aspect, the lower halves of their bodies rooted in the ground, reach beseechingly toward the magician—or perhaps toward the moon. It is signed "M. Cameron."

### Examining the Painting Scene Type: Clue (Core)

**Art History.** The work is clearly allegorical. It is not clear, however, for what the rocket could possibly be an allegory. It looks like the magician is literally wielding the rocket like a magic wand or staff. **The Truth:** The rocket is the instrument for the Despite of Azatao; because of its nature, it serves as every instrument at once—it is sword, chalice, stone, and brand.

**Astronomy.** The very slender crescent moon is clearly waxing. And those prominent stars in the opposite corner are the constellation Cancer. But why is there a globe, with lines of latitude and longitude, floating in the middle of it? I point spend. Maybe it's a reference to the Tropic of Cancer, the line of latitude that marks the apparent position of the sun when the summer solstice occurs.

**Biology.** The flowers in which the magician is wrapped are a kind of morning glory. They're also called

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Big Hoodoo

“moonflowers.” **Anthropology**, 1 pt. spend. The seeds of that plant were used by Indians in Mexico for medicinal and shamanistic purposes. I wonder if that’s connected to this little cluster of seeds here near the scroll.

**Cthulhu Mythos**. The plowman represents Azatao, the Horus spirit of Chaos. It is a reference to the Sator square. The ground he plows represents Siabnoghurach, Great Babalon, the Mother of Abominations. **Cthulhu Mythos**, 1 pt. spend. The painting is a set of instructions for a ritual that will enable a magician to command Azatao.

**History**. The snake devoured by an eagle could be a reference to Mexico; that symbolizes the founding of the city of Tenochtitlan. But on the Mexican coat of arms, the eagle is standing on a cactus, not a beehive. **The Truth**: This is a reference to a special kind of honey made by the sorcerers of Catemaco, in Mexico.

**Occult**. (1) This looks like the alchemical symbol for mercury floating in the air behind the magician, but it’s been strangely combined with the zodiac symbol for Aquarius and wreathed with a grapevine. (2) Also, those are the alchemical symbols for the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire on the shaft of the rocket.

**Chemistry**. The mercury symbol could be referring to fulminate of mercury, a dangerous explosive, which is prepared by dissolving mercury in nitric acid (which the alchemists knew as aqua fortis or “strong water”) and adding ethanol.

**Outdoorsman**. The scene looks like it’s set somewhere in the San Gabriel Mountains. 1 point spend. As a matter of fact, I think it’s the high meadow called Henninger Flats near the Mount Wilson Observatory,

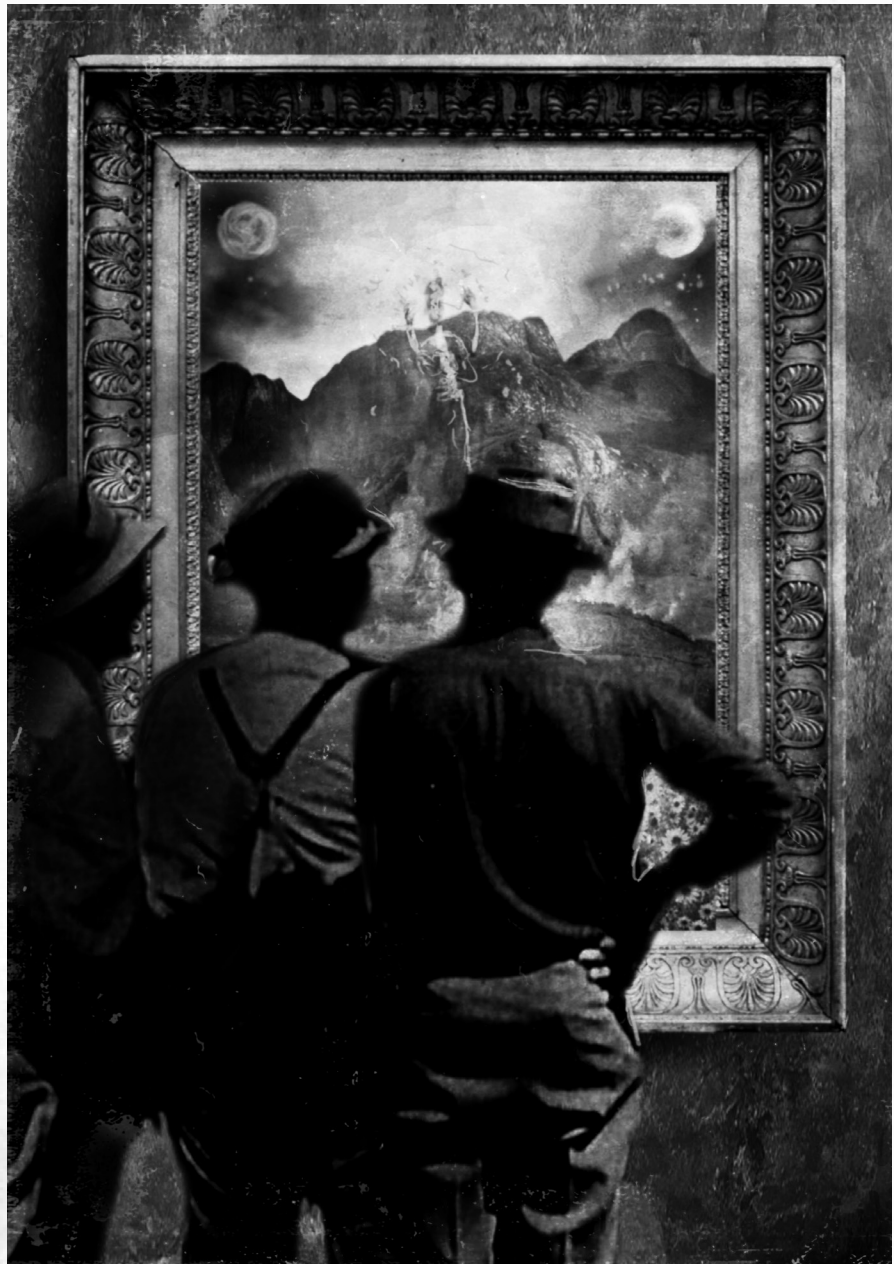
north of Pasadena.

Use these clues to help investigators decode the puzzle encoded upon the chalice in the painting.

**Chemistry**. These are standard abbreviations used to represent elements in chemical formulae. 1 pt. spend. None of the elements in the table have an atomic number higher than 25 (Additionally, provide

investigators with a copy of the periodic table of the elements; see handout on page 53).

**Cryptography**. The table is a magic word square, since it is vertically and horizontally symmetrical. 1 pt. spend. The table could be encoded using a simple substitution cipher. The trick is to figure out what the symbols in each cell stand for.



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Big Hoodoo

### The Spirit Moth Key

Scene Type: Clue (Bonus)

**The Truth.** Decode the puzzle by replacing each element in the table with its atomic number and then substituting the corresponding letter of the alphabet for each atomic number. This produces the following key:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | G | A | T | A | S | A |
| G | O | M | O | M | I | D |
| A | M | Y | R | U | C | A |
| T | O | R | U | L | I | S |
| A | M | U | L | E | T | T |
| S | I | C | I | T | U | R |
| A | D | A | S | T | R | A |

This key can be used to make space mead and other elixirs, depending on the contents of the Brimful Chalice. With the Adornless Blade, it can be used to summon and bind a byakhee.

With the Fiery Brand, it produces a surge of power and confidence in the magician, who may trade points of **Sanity** (permanently) for six-sided dice to roll and add the total to his or her **Stability** pool (temporarily). And with a Carven Stone, it allows contact with a lloigor. Its signature is the swarming of insects.

**Anthropology** indicates that “amyruca,” the word from the third line of the key, is the name of a South American shrub related to the coffee plant called *Psychotria carthagenensis* used in the brewing of *Ayahuasca* (pronounced “EYE uh WAS kuh”), a hallucinogenic tea whose use by Amazon natives in Colombia was recently reported by Harvard botanist Richard Schultes.

**Biology** allows an investigator to recall that *Agatasa gomomidae* is the species name of a butterfly native to the Indian subcontinent, discovered in the early years of the twentieth

century by entomologist William Appleby-Jenkins of Pemberton University. The first two lines of the key could thus be a reference to this creature, which is known in local folklore as a “spirit moth” sacred to the goddess Kali.

**Languages (Latin)** reveals that the phrase *sic itur ad astra*, which makes up the last two lines of the key, means, “*Thus do we reach the stars.*”

**Medicine** suggests that the fourth line of the key, “torulis,” could be a reference to a medical term for any small raised elevation of the skin, like goose bumps.

**Occult** notes that the fifth line of the key, “amulett,” is a Germanic or Middle English spelling of the word *amulet*, and refers to a charm or talisman against evil.

|          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1<br>H   |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          | 2<br>He  |
| 3<br>Li  | 4<br>Be  |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          | 5<br>B   | 6<br>C   | 7<br>N   | 8<br>O   | 9<br>F   | 10<br>Ne |
| 11<br>Na | 12<br>Mg |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          | 13<br>Al | 14<br>Si | 15<br>P  | 16<br>S  | 17<br>Cl | 18<br>Ar |
| 19<br>K  | 20<br>Ca | 21<br>Sc | 22<br>Ti | 23<br>V  | 24<br>Cr | 25<br>Mn | 26<br>Fe | 27<br>Co | 28<br>Ni | 29<br>Cu | 30<br>Zn | 31<br>Ga | 32<br>Ge | 33<br>As | 34<br>Se | 35<br>Br | 36<br>Kr |
| 37<br>Rb | 38<br>Sr | 39<br>Y  | 40<br>Zr | 41<br>Nb | 42<br>Mo | 43<br>Tc | 44<br>Ru | 45<br>Rh | 46<br>Pd | 47<br>Ag | 48<br>Cd | 49<br>In | 50<br>Sn | 51<br>Sb | 52<br>Te | 53<br>I  | 54<br>Xe |
| 55<br>Cs | 56<br>Ba | *        | 72<br>Hf | 73<br>Ta | 74<br>W  | 75<br>Re | 76<br>Os | 77<br>Ir | 78<br>Pt | 79<br>Au | 80<br>Hg | 81<br>Tl | 82<br>Pb | 83<br>Bi | 84<br>Po | 85<br>At | 86<br>Rn |
| 87<br>Fr | 88<br>Ra | **       |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |

\* Lanthanide series

\*\* Actinide series

## The Big Hoodoo

### PART THREE: THE DESPITE OF AZATAO

This is the climax of the adventure. The investigators must get to Henninger Flats, the place where Vance Wimpole intends to conduct the Despite of Azatao, at noon on the day of the summer solstice—Saturday, June 21, 1952—and stop him somehow. It is up to you as Keeper to manage this final sequence with as much drama and tension as possible. You are hampered to some degree by the fact that investigators will have been trying all along to derail Wimpole's efforts, to forestall or obviate the need for a climactic final encounter in some fashion. Keep things moving forward anyway: Wimpole will try to conduct the ritual even if it is doomed to failure.

#### Henninger Flats

The Mount Wilson Toll Road trailhead leads from the edge of the city of Pasadena to a well-watered notch high in the mountains that is distinctly greener and shadier than the surrounding slopes. In the morning, at this time of year, low-lying marine fog will blanket the sides of the mountains, reducing visibility until it burns off in the mid-morning. This high basin is called Henninger Flats on the map, and is about three miles from the lower trail head.

#### Vance Wimpole Arrives!

Wimpole will come barreling into Henninger Flats in the war-surplus jeep he sent DeMille out to purchase. He will come from the opposite direction used by the investigators, with the 12-foot long sounding rocket strapped in the vehicle's center and the jeep loaded down with passengers and supplies.

#### Vance Wimpole

(b. 1911, age 41). Skills: Athletics 6, Drive 6, Firearms 6, Health 10, Piloting 4, Psychohistory 10, Weapons 6.

Special: Psychohistory bonus +4. Drive: Arrogance (Vance Wimpole wants more!).

To play Vance, smile smugly when things are going your way and glower irritably when they are not, particularly when you face opposition, resistance, defiance, or even merely skepticism. Tell arrantly self-aggrandizing stories of your personal exploits, beginning these tales with phrases like, *"When I was in the Navy..."*, *"During my Arctic explorer days..."*, and *"As a young man in the Far East..."*

He will drive to the center of the high meadow and park in the shade of a tree. He will leap out and direct his flunkies to their tasks—setting up a steel-pipe launch rail, arranging the rocket upon it, filling the rocket's fuel tanks with honey and fulminate of mercury and other ingredients. He will direct the binding and guarding of the putative or suspected Moon Child as well as any other prisoners. Give the investigators a chance to hear Wimpole's villainous monologue, if possible—you may wish to punctuate his actions during any fighting with pieces of this monologue in order to obtain his **Psychohistory** bonus.

#### Wimpole's Villainous Monologue.

*"At last, I'll have the last laugh! Parsons, you thought you were so clever! You never realized up to the moment you died how I outfoxed you in every way—I beat you at my game, and today I'll beat you at your own game! I thought it was all mumbo-jumbo when we first met, and I just wanted to bang your pretty little mistress. Faugh! You see how well that turned out! But it was too easy to fool you. Marjorie was a push-over. 'Sure, Vance, I'll show up on his doorstep. Is he cute?' Ha! And then he actually went and married her! She was no Babalon! I invented*

*her! But you—you did something out there in the desert. You connected with something real, something that got inside my skin and can't come out. Well, today—today it comes out! Today I'm the one doing the big hoodoo, and re-making the world in my image. The power will be mine and I'll make this world dance like a monkey on a leash."*

Ideally for his purposes, Wimpole will (a) force Betty to be his familiar to invest him as priest, (b) have all of the needed ingredients for the space mead, (c) have the sounding rocket at hand, (d) know the Spirit Moth Key and the Sator Square, and (e) have the Moon Child near at hand to sacrifice at the proper moment.

The identity of the Moon Child is something that you as Keeper should adjust depending on what you and your players will find most satisfying. This write-up expects the answer to be Phil Dick, and his stats are built so that such a revelation will make sense after the fact. If you think your players will find such a move to be dirty pool, you have a number of choices:

You could make it be (1) Alexis Wimpole, the two-year-old daughter of Betty and Vance; (2) Kwen Smith, the nine-year-old son of Helen and Wilfred; or (3) Marjorie Cameron, supposedly the "Scarlet Lady" avatar of the Babalon, Mother of Abominations, but possibly merely someone recruited by Wimpole to bed Parsons while he slept with his friend's mistress. Or you could say it's just unknown. Certainly, Vance Wimpole may be mistaken about the Moon Child, and may be about sacrifice his daughter to no purpose. In general, it's probably fairest for Wimpole not to know who the Moon Child is unless he's met Phil. However, if all else fails, you may have Wimpole kidnap Phil and bring him to Henninger Flats, with the rest of the PCs in hot pursuit, explaining that he identified Phil as the Moon Child from the numerological significance of one of his stories.

## The Big Hoodoo

Falling short of ideal conditions, Wimpole will improvise. In the absence of Betty, Forrie Ackerman or one of the Friendship Org goons will serve as Priestess, or he will have had Marjorie under wraps all along. Without Jack Parsons' ashes, he'll have his goons break into Wilfred Smith's sanctum and steal the pouch of Aleister Crowley's ashes that Smith keeps there—or he'll slice off his own pinky and burn it.

Shortly before noon, Wimpole begins the ritual in earnest. He will enact a ceremony of magical investment with Betty or whoever he has roped into the job of Priestess. He will use the Spirit Moth key to transform the ingredients in the rocket's fuel tank into space mead. He will use a brick-sized remote control to trigger the rocket fuel's ignition, and the rocket will soar away toward the dome of the Mount Wilson Solar Observatory, during which time Wimpole will chant the Sator square in order to bring Azatao forth. Once Azatao manifests itself, he will use a knife to sacrifice the (suspected) Moon Child, and in so doing expect to become supremely powerful.

While this is going on, give the investigators a chance to take action. But until Wimpole is forced to stop doing what he's doing, let him continue. Do not forget to enact side effects as a result of Wimpole's "failed rolls" during the neo-Enochian rituals—there should be **Stability**-testing insect swarms during the use of the Spirit Moth key and spontaneous combustion during the use of the Sator square.

### The Moment of Truth

There are lots of ways that investigators can disrupt the ceremony. Your goal is not to stop the disruption, but to try to make their interference push events toward the catastrophic. Gunfire is especially useful in this regard, especially when there is a 12-foot-long cylinder nearby filled with an extraordinarily volatile substance. Allow a chance for any missed gunshot to ricochet into or otherwise strike the rocket and cause a powerful explosion (doing +6 damage at point-blank, +3 at close, +0 at near, and -2 damage at long range). If the exploding fuel has been transformed into space mead, then test **Stability** at **Difficulty** 5 for a 4-point loss (Mythos shock) as the entheogenic substance sinks into their very pores and those exposed begin to see that this "reality" is merely a thin skin over an indifferently malign nothingness.

Exposing the Moon Child to space mead causes him or her to transform horribly into a monstrous manifestation of **Nyarlathept**—"Call me Set"—that takes the form a gigantic bestial, long-necked, animal-snouted creature with round horns and red eyes and a body like a cross between a jackal and an alligator. Its scaly mottled red hide glistens in sunlight. The monster will stalk Henninger Flats after those that have offended it: Wimpole comes first. It adds +5 to **Stability** losses it causes (minimum loss of 4) and an additional **Sanity** loss of +4 (minimum loss 3). Eventually, the transformation will wear off and the Moon Child will return to his or her "normal" form.

If the rocket is launched and the Sator square pronounced, then Azatao (Azathoth!) will arrive. It will appear

literally as a ball of fire hanging in the air above Mount Wilson. The observatory will be ground zero for the Daemon Sultan's manifestation, and much damage will be caused—equivalent to an artillery barrage (+17 at point-blank, +8 at close, +1 at near, and -2 at long range). Allow investigators to use **Athletics** or **Fleeing** to find cover that protects them, rolling versus **Difficulty** 10 at point-blank range, -2 **Difficulty** per range category further away. Henninger Flats should be at least at the edge of the affected area. Witnessing the manifestation and the results of that manifestation is at least a 10-point **Stability** test at a **Difficulty** of 5 with a minimum loss of 5 even on a successful roll. The **Sanity** loss for witnessing Azatao is +5, with a minimum loss of 3.

If Wimpole survives the arrival of Azatao, he will try to sacrifice the Moon Child. Azatao may forestall his effort by unleashing the Moon Child, or the Outer God may simply depart. This is most likely in the event that the actual Moon Child is not threatened. In the event that Wimpole succeeds in his sacrifice, his plan works—he may employ the power of Azatao to make people spontaneously explode, or control their wills with a word and a gesture. He will use these powers to torment those who opposed him.

Once these events are resolved, the adventure is over. Invite players to offer a brief epilogue for their investigators, and offer a brief coda: soon the 60s would arrive. Who is to say that events like those of *The Big Hoodoo* didn't usher in a new era of license and freedom? And let the curtain fall.



## The Big Hoodoo

### NEO-ENOCHIAN MAGIC

Players may obtain this background information from conversations with knowledgeable occultists like Marjorie Cameron, Jane Wolfe and Wilfred Smith, by reading obscure tomes, or by spending **Occult** or **Library Use**. For the purposes of this adventure, “magick” works, albeit uncertainly and with high potential for undesired side effects, and is intimately connected with the operation of the Mythos.

#### A Basic Understanding

In neo-Enochian magick, the magician conducts a working by calling to mind a key and employing an instrument of magick to trace and retrace it with sufficient intensity so as to bend an elemental or cosmic force to the magician’s will.

**Occult.** Neo-Enochian “magick” is Aleister Crowley’s gloss on the work of 17th century Enochian magicians Dr. John Dee and Edward Kelley, who took their inspiration from the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*, which recounts how fallen angels came to earth and sired monstrous giants. It replaces complex tables with simpler formulae derived from ancient mystery religions.

#### The Operation of Magick

The magician (or priest) must be properly ordained, acclaimed, or otherwise initiated into his office. If there is a familiar (or priestess), he or she must have bonded with the magician in a physical way. Though some may assume that the magician is always male and the familiar is always female, no such requirement exists. While concentrating on his intention, the magician uses an instrument to trace and retrace a key.

**Cryptography.** A key is a magic word square; that is, a crossword-like

grid in which the same set of words is intertwined horizontally and vertically.

**Oral History.** During the Babalon Working, Parsons was the magician and Wimpole the familiar.

#### Instruments of Magick

There are four instruments of magick: the Adornless Blade (a plain knife or rapier-like sword), the Carven Stone (a stone tablet indited with an appropriate cipher), the Fiery Brand (a candle, torch, or burning branch), and the Brimful Chalice (a goblet or bowl, usually filled with wine). Each corresponds to a different type of “elemental” effect, respectively air, earth, fire, or water, construed fairly broadly (see table on page 43). The precise effect produced by the key depends on the instrument used in the ceremony as well as other magical foci that may be present to shape the magical effect. The key itself connects to a particular cosmic entity, force, or soul; its nature will tend to color the effects as well. This “coloration” is referred to as the signature of the key.

In game terms, any reasonable instance of an instrument allows the magic to proceed. You may decide that some objects bear so tenuous a resemblance to their ideal as to increase the Difficulty of the magician’s die roll. The creation or selection of a “proper” instrument can either be played out or abstracted via a Craft or Bargaining spend, for example. Sometimes, a particularly suitable instrument will reduce the Difficulty of the magician’s roll, or increase the Difficulty of the GM’s rolls to oppose the magician.

#### Magickal Keys

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| L | A | W |
| A | W | A |
| W | A | R |

Though larger keys are more difficult to employ, they are also more potent in their effects—and side effects. As a very rough and general rule of thumb, use the size of the key as the average size of the **Stability** test its (intended) effects will prompt. Creating a key generally requires a 1 or 2 point **Cryptography** spend, unless the magician learns one from another source.

A simple example is the Lawful Key set down in Crowley’s Book of Magick (see **Thelemite Tomes** on page 26). Crowley also refers to it as “*the Call to Those Who Serve the Daemon Sultan*.” Its signature is a weird, unearthly fluting or piping that seems to emanate from an unknown source. The key consists of three intertwined three-letter words: LAW AWA WAR. Anthropology reminds an investigator that “awa” is the name of an intoxicating Polynesian beverage with hallucinogenic and even entheogenic effects. **Occult**, **Cryptography**, or perhaps even **Theology** will enable the investigator to posit that the key implies something about transforming love into hate (because “*Love is the law, love under will*,” according to Crowley) or order into chaos, and that it will thus produce effects consonant with that motif. Alternately, Wilmer Smith can explain

It is up to you as Keeper to determine the specific effects of a given magical working. You should take into account the nature of the instrument, the signature (and deeper meanings of which you are aware) of the key, and the intent of the magician.

#### Neo-Enochian Space Mead

To create space mead, the Brimful Chalice is filled with the blooded wine from the Thelemite ritual and special honey from Catemaco mixed with crushed Mexican morning glory seeds, the ashes of a magician, and (very dangerous) fulminate of mercury. The magician uses a special magic word

## The Big Hoodoo

| Instrument      | Element | Magical Effects                                   | Side Effects                                         |
|-----------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Adornless Blade | air     | windstorms; enhanced perceptual abilities         | hallucinations; whirring silver flying saucers       |
| Carven Stone    | earth   | tremors; great luck, fortune, or material success | physical weakness; bug-eyed monsters (BEMs)          |
| Fiery Brand     | fire    | heat, flames; raw emotions                        | madness; glowing spherical or cigar-shaped UFOs.     |
| Brimful Chalice | water   | rain, snow; prophetic visions; dreams             | nightmares; alien abductions; little green men (LGM) |

square called the Spirit Moth Key (see **The Painting from Catemaco** on page 37) as the ritual key, and the mixture is transformed to space mead if the ritual succeeds. On a failure, the whole thing explodes, doing +12 damage at point-blank range. This is what happened to Parsons, thanks to Wimpole's curse.

### Neo-Enochian Game

#### Mechanics

In game terms, an act of neo-Enochian magick requires a special contest between the magician's **Stability** at a **Difficulty** equal to the number of lines in the key, on the one hand, and the "Inertia" of the cipher or key, also determined by how many lines it has: A three-line key rolls versus **Difficulty** 6; a four-line key versus **Difficulty** 5; five-

line key, **Difficulty** 4; six-line key, **Difficulty** 3; and a seven-line key versus **Difficulty** 2. The magician may spend his own **Stability** to affect the roll; additionally, the magician's familiar may spend **Stability** to affect the roll as well.

In this special contest, the magician and the GM both roll three times, trying to succeed each time—any one failure makes the whole sequence a failure. Each spend, however, only counts toward a single roll. The magician's rolls represent his attempt to keep the spirit contained, having once called it forth. If the magician fails any one of his rolls, he loses control of the working, and may see unexpected side effects. The **Inertia** rolls represent the spirit's attempt to resist the magician's will. If the GM fails any one of her rolls, the spirit bends to the will of the magician, and

magical effects consonant with the intent of the magician will occur.

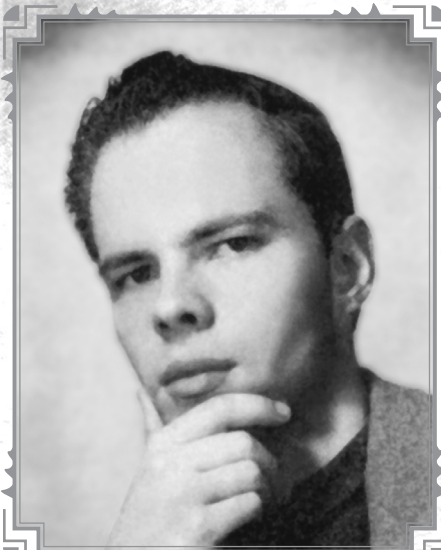
If both fail, something unexpected happens—that is, some combination of magical and side effects (i.e., the magician has forced the spirit to bend to his will, but that will has been corrupted, undermined or altered by the efforts of the spirit). If neither fails, nothing happens (i.e., the spirit is resisting, but the magician has it contained). In that case, the magician may opt to either (1) cease the effort without consequence, banishing the spirit and breaking the magickal link or (2) continue it, thus initiating another set of rolls. Once the magician fails three sets of rolls, though, he is exhausted and can no longer continue without rest. The supportive presence of the magician's familiar allows another three sets of failed rolls before exhaustion sets in.



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



### Sanity<sup>1</sup>

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

Hit Threshold<sup>3</sup>

### 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: Phil Dick

Drive: Duty

Occupation:<sup>2</sup> Record Store Clerk

Special: Gnostic Visions - see below

Pillars of Sanity: 1) My twin sister Jane who died as an infant is a lost part of me. 2) Causality is an illusion.

3) *I am not crazy!*

### Academic Abilities

Accounting - 2

Anthropology - 1

Cthulhu Mythos<sup>4</sup>

Geology - 1

Library Use - 2

Occult - 2

Theology - 2

### Special

With the right psychoactive stimulation, Phil can trade points of Sanity for intuitive insights that feel like communications from a benevolent higher being. In game terms, obscure but relevant clues delivered in the form of dream-like, symbol laden visions; the GM may accompany these 'bonus clues' with Stability tests based on what Phil sees.

### Interpersonal Abilities

Bargain - 2

Credit Rating - 3

Oral History - 1

Streetwise - 2

### Technical Abilities

Art (sci-fi writing) - 2

Chemistry - 1

Evidence Collection - 1

Pharmacy - 2

### General Abilities

Athletics - 6

Conceal - 2

Driving - 4

Electrical Repair<sup>5</sup> - 2

First Aid - 2

Fleeing<sup>7</sup> - 12

Health<sup>9</sup> - 11

Sanity<sup>9</sup> - 8

Stability<sup>9</sup> - 8

Scuffling - 6

Sense Trouble - 6

Stealth - 4

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

<sup>2</sup> Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a \* before assigning points.

<sup>3</sup> Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

<sup>4</sup> These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

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

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

<sup>7</sup> Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

<sup>8</sup> Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

<sup>9</sup> Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

<sup>10</sup> You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

**Phil Dick's Connection to Tony Boucher:** You attended Tony's weekly writing class at his home in Berkeley (or would send Kleo in your stead); Tony was indifferent to your "literary" stories, but liked your short fantasy. Last year, in October, you made your first professional sale to Tony when he bought "Roog" for The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction. That was your big break. Now you're starting to sell potboiler short stories to other SF magazines as well and hoping to be able to make a living at it soon, and you've just landed an agent.

**Phil Dick's Connection to Bob Heinlein:** You just met Heinlein for the first time yesterday, at Tony Boucher's. You have not made up your mind up about him yet; he seems like a square.

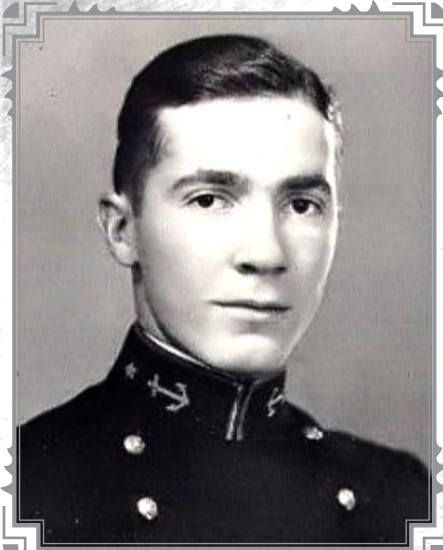
**Phil Dick's Connection to Ginny Heinlein:** You believe that women are stronger than men, and the talented Mrs. Heinlein is no exception. You might even have a little crush on her.

**Phil Dick's Connection to Jack Parsons:** You've never met the man, but the FBI is interested in what he'd been up to before he died. They know that Tony Boucher and his friends the Heinleins plan to attend Parsons' funeral service. They want you to go with them down to Los Angeles, pump all of Parsons' old friends about his activities, and report back to them. If you do, they've promised—although not in so many words—not to proceed with their investigation of your wife Kleo for her "un-American activities" like pamphleteering and going to meetings at Berkeley. They've given you the name and phone number of an agent in Los Angeles; you're supposed to contact him with the information.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



### Sanity<sup>1</sup>

|                            |    |    |    |
|----------------------------|----|----|----|
| 0                          | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4                          | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8                          | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12                         | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| Hit Threshold <sup>3</sup> |    |    |    |

### 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: Robert A. Heinlein

Drive: Artistic Sensitivity

Occupation:<sup>2</sup> Author

Special: Science Fiction Writer - see below

Pillars of Sanity: 1) The exceptional place of the USA in world history. 2) the manifest destiny of the human race to conquer the solar system and then the stars.

### Academic Abilities

Art History - 2

Cthulhu Mythos<sup>4</sup>

Cryptography - 1

Geology - 1

History - 1

Library Use - 2

Physics - 1

### Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty - 1

Bureaucracy - 1

Credit Rating - 5

### Technical Abilities

Art (Sci-fi writer) - 2

Astronomy - 1

Evidence Collection - 1

Outdoorsman - 1

Photography - 1

### General Abilities

Athletics - 6

Driving - 2

Electrical Repair<sup>(1)</sup> - 2

Explosives - 4

Firearms - 8

Fleeing<sup>7</sup> - 6

Health<sup>9</sup> - 8

Mechanical Repair - 2

Piloting - 6

Sanity<sup>9</sup> - 6

Stability<sup>9</sup> - 8

Scuffling - 6

Sense Trouble - 4

Stealth - 2

Shadowing - 4

Weapons (fencing) - 6

### Special

May engage in science-fictional speculation, allowing him to make plausible guesses about the sociological and technological causes of a mysterious phenomenon. He may spend 2 pts of Art once per session when such explanations are warranted; this gives him and investigators with him a boost in confidence (replenish 1d6 Stability each). The player must of course offer at least a brief summary of Bob's what-if supposition to justify the spend.

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

<sup>2</sup> Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a \* before assigning points.

<sup>3</sup> Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

<sup>(1)</sup> These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

<sup>4</sup> Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10 Cthulhu Mythos.

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

<sup>6</sup> Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

<sup>7</sup> Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

<sup>8</sup> Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

<sup>9</sup> You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

**Bob Heinlein's Connection to Tony Boucher:** You met Tony in the late 1930s when he would come to the little

gatherings you'd host at your old house in Laurel Canyon for your fellow toilers in the vale of science fiction. Leslyn named it the Mañana Literary Society, since that's when you were all going to write the great stories you'd talk about—tomorrow! The joke was funny, then; this was before Leslyn's drinking got out of hand and she turned mean. You enjoyed reading the portrait of those days that Boucher built into that detective piece he wrote during the war; the character based on you was the smartest guy in the book. You were glad when your plans for your round-the-world trip with Ginny included a visit with Tony in San Francisco; you didn't get to see him much the last time you were in California, when you were working on the script for George Pal's movie Destination Moon almost two years ago.

**Bob Heinlein's Connection to Phil Dick:** This Phil Dick kid reminds you of yourself when you were just starting out. He's hungry, he's dedicated to his craft, and he's not afraid to call it like he sees it.

**Bob Heinlein's Connection to Ginny Heinlein:** You took to Ginny when you were in Philadelphia working for the Navy as a civilian scientist during World War II and she was an officer in the WAVES, the sort of girl who would take off her Navy blues and put on dungarees to get some real work done. After the war, when Ginny came to California to go to grad school at UCLA, she was a regular visitor at your house. Her vivacious good cheer and clear-eyed approach to life was a breath of fresh air compared to Leslyn's moody volatility, her neurasthenic ennui, and her incessant drinking—the war sucked Leslyn dry, and you needed to get free from her or you'd have been sucked dry too. Ginny helped you deal with your emotional bleakness following the divorce. You have never loved anyone the way you love Ginny; she is your complement in every respect, shoring up your weaknesses and underscoring your strengths.

**Bob Heinlein's Connection to Jack Parsons:** As you recall, Forrie Ackerman suggested that you and your fellow writers at the Mañana Literary Society might want to hear Jack talk. Parsons was still just a kid, really, but his talk was a tour de force. The last time you were in California, though, things had changed. It was two years ago. You were working on Destination Moon, and he came to see you; he needed work and he was hoping that you could get him a job as a technical consultant on the production. Certainly he would have been a good choice for the job, should something have happened to you. But the producer told you there was no way; Parsons was on a list somewhere as a potential subversive, and the studio wouldn't okay hiring a Red. You told him you were sorry over the phone, but he just laughed in a scary way and told you that he was working on a "special project" that would change everything for him. You never heard from him after that.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



### Sanity<sup>1</sup>

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

Hit Threshold<sup>3</sup>

### 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: Virginia 'Ginny' Heinlein

Drive: Adventure

Occupation:<sup>2</sup> Engineer

Special: Engineering Acumen

Pillars of Sanity: 1) most problems can be solved with a little bit of judiciously applied engineering know-how. 2) men are men and women are women.

### Academic Abilities

Biology - 1  
Cthulhu Mythos<sup>4</sup>  
Languages<sup>6</sup> - 4  
- French

- Latin  
Library Use - 2  
Physics - 2

### Special

The Difficulty of Mechanical Repair or Electrical Repair tasks that Ginny undertakes is reduced by one.

### Interpersonal Abilities

Bargain - 1  
Credit Rating - 4  
Flattery - 2  
Reassurance - 2

### Technical Abilities

Chemistry - 2  
Evidence Collection - 2  
Locksmith - 1  
Outdoorsman - 1  
Photography - 2

### General Abilities

Athletics - 8  
Driving - 4  
Electrical Repair<sup>(1)</sup> - 4  
Explosives - 2  
Firearms<sup>5</sup> - 4  
Fleeing<sup>7</sup> - 8  
Health<sup>9</sup> - 8  
Mechanical Repair - 2  
Preparedness - 4  
Sanity<sup>9</sup> - 5  
Stability<sup>9</sup> - 10  
Scuffling - 4  
Sense Trouble - 4  
Stealth - 4

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

<sup>2</sup> Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a \* before assigning points.

<sup>3</sup> Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

<sup>(1)</sup> These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

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

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

<sup>6</sup> Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

<sup>7</sup> Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

<sup>8</sup> Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

<sup>9</sup> You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

**Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Tony Boucher:** You met Tony socially once or twice when you and Bob were living in California after the war. You suspect that, because you are Bob's second wife, Tony (who despite his cultivated air of dissipated urbanity is really quite the devout Catholic) regards you as somehow less "legitimate" than that old shrew Leslyn, even though she made Bob miserable and you make him happy. But Bob loves Tony; he was particularly tickled by the way that he portrayed a disguised version of him in a mystery novel some years ago.

**Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Phil Dick:** Phil seems like just a boy to you; all of the young men of his generation do, even though you suppose you're not really that much older than they are. Still, you served during the war and they were just too young.

**Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Bob Heinlein:** You met Bob at the Philadelphia Naval Yard during World War II, when you both worked as scientists for the government. You admired his intellect and his integrity, and you appreciated his sparkling wit and gallant manner. Bob took you seriously as an engineer and a scientist, unlike many of the men at the Yard, even when you technically outranked them as a WAVE lieutenant. Bob encouraged you to apply to grad school, and helped you find your feet in Los Angeles right after the war. But all the time you knew your friendship was destined to be more than platonic, and when Bob's divorce from Leslyn came through, you had no compunction about dropping grad school and becoming Mrs. Robert A. Heinlein. Now you are Bob's partner in everything he does. So far it's worked out pretty well; you've been able to build your dream-house in Colorado Springs and now you're about to embark on the first leg of a round-the-world tour. Pretty good for little Ginny Gerstenfeld from Brooklyn!

**Ginny Heinlein's Connection to Jack Parsons:** Although you never actually met him, you have read some of Parsons' technical work. He wrote a brilliant little summary of the chemical properties of various explosives during the war. You were surprised to learn from Bob that he'd come to looking for work on the movie set where Bob was the writer just after you'd gotten married. You thought Parsons and his partners had managed to parlay his wartime Army contract building rocket-powered takeoff-assist boosters for heavy planes on short runways into funding for a rocket motor company called Aerojet or something like that, but apparently Parsons had gotten out of the rocket-motor business and was piecing together jobs here and there as an explosives expert doing special effects for the movies.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:



### Sanity<sup>1</sup>

|                            |    |    |    |
|----------------------------|----|----|----|
| 0                          | 1  | 2  | 3  |
| 4                          | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 8                          | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 12                         | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| Hit Threshold <sup>3</sup> |    |    |    |

### 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: Tony Boucher

Drive: Thirst for Knowledge

Occupation:<sup>2</sup> Editor/Reviewer

Special: Mystery Buff – see below

Pillars of Sanity: 1) Roman Catholic Faith, 2) The power of the intellect to find solutions and solve problems

### Academic Abilities

Architecture - 1

Art History - 4

Cthulhu Mythos<sup>4</sup>

History - 2

Languages<sup>6</sup> - 4

Law - 2

Library Use - 2

Occult - 1

Theology - 1

### Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty -2

Bargain - 2

Credit Rating - 4

Oral History -1

### Technical Abilities

Art (mystery writing) - 1

Craft (cooking) - 1

### Special

Can spend Art History as Forensics (to examine clues that resemble mysteries he's read or written) or Cop Talk (to interact with police and legal professionals).

### General Abilities

Conceal - 4

Disguise <sup>0</sup> - 4

Filch - 4

Firearms<sup>5</sup> - 4

First Aid - 4

Fleeing<sup>7</sup> - 8

Health<sup>9</sup> - 6

Preparedness - 8

Psychoanalysis - 4

Sanity<sup>9</sup> - 6

Stability<sup>9</sup> - 12

Sense Trouble - 6

Shadowing - 4

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

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<sup>3</sup> Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

<sup>0</sup> These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

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

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

<sup>6</sup> Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

<sup>7</sup> Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

<sup>8</sup> Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

<sup>9</sup> You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Page references refer to the Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook

**Tony Boucher's Connection to Bob Heinlein:** You became friends with Bob after visiting the weekly writer's salon he hosted at his house in the Hollywood Hills before the war; he called it the Mañana Literary Society after some obscure joke his then-wife Leslyn made. You portrayed the pre-war California sci-fi scene in a locked-room mystery you wrote ten years ago, Rocket to the Morgue. Over the years you have stayed friends, but you haven't really had a chance to see much of Bob, between his work in Philly during the war and his move to Colorado afterward. It's ironic that the death of your mutual friend Jack Parsons should mark the occasion of the Heinleins' visit to California.

**Tony Boucher's Connection to Ginny Heinlein:** You met Ginny briefly when Bob returned to California for a writing job a few years ago. Compared to Leslyn, Ginny is a straight arrow. She's a good-natured tomboy where Leslyn was an acerbic artiste. Honestly, you think Ginny's better for Bob than Leslyn was, even though your faith frowns on divorce.

**Tony Boucher's Connection to Phil Dick:** You met Phil at a writing workshop you taught at Berkeley a few years ago. You encouraged him to send a story to The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, since you were looking to cultivate new talent in the pages of your magazine. You think Phil is going to make a name for himself in this field; he's a real talent. When he asked to come with you to the ceremony for Parsons, you agreed readily—you'll be interested in his take on the characters you'll meet.

**Tony Boucher's Connection to Jack Parsons:** Jack showed up a few times at Bob Heinlein's old house to drink his liquor and ogle his wife during the late-night bull sessions Bob loved to hold there. You once went to a party at Jack's house, and you were startled to discover that rocket scientist Jack Parsons seemed to have this alternate life where he took the far-out things that he told the sci-fi writers seriously: studying magic and doing drugs and looking for ways to peer into alternate realities. You hadn't heard much about him lately until you saw the paper announcing his death. Now your mind is working hard; you can see how a murder mystery might be written based loosely on the details of Jack's accident. A little more research is definitely in order.

Wednesday, June 18, 1952

# The Los Angeles Times

## Rocket Scientist Killed in Pasadena Explosion

A brilliant Pasadena rocket propulsion expert met death in an explosion that tipped apart his garage laboratory yesterday and as a tragic aftermath his mother committed suicide by taking sleeping pills. John W. Parsons, 31, former Caltech scientist and instructor and one of the founders of the school's famed Arroyo Seco Jet Propulsion Laboratory, was killed when two explosions, which occurred almost simultaneously, demolished the laboratory on the grounds of the former Busch estate at 1071 S. Orange Grove

Ave., Pasadena. Parsons' mother, Mrs. Ruth Virginia Parsons, 58, of 21 W. Glenann St., Pasadena, took 45 pills after she was notified of her son's death at the Huntington Memorial Hospital about an hour after the explosion. Parsons was recognized as one of the foremost authorities on rocket propulsion since leaving Caltech in 1946. He had been employed as a consultant by many firms, his brother-in-law Robert Cameron, 28, of 125 N. Rampart Blvd., told newsmen. Parsons and Dr. Theodore Von Karman

had founded the Caltech jet laboratory in the Arroyo Seco. The explosives expert was preparing for a trip to Mexico on a job assignment, the nature of which was very secretive, Cameron said. Parsons was last employed by the Burnite Powder Co. in Tujunga. Parsons was apparently packing bottled explosives in a box to take with him on the trip today when the explosion occurred. It was followed immediately by a second and larger explosion, setting off other explosives stored in the room,

according to Pasadena Police Lt. John C. Elliot. Four tenants residing in the building above the garage laboratory were uninjured but were routed from their apartments. Salvatori Ganci, an artist who occupies the unit directly above the laboratory, said the blast tipped a large hole in the floor and broke a leg of his grand piano. The bodies of Parsons and his mother were taken to the Turner-Stevens Mortuary in Monrovia where a wake will be held tomorrow at 3 pm.

Ren folle imp The that rela the beh of a exp in h its beh con or v It m tota thin dec-

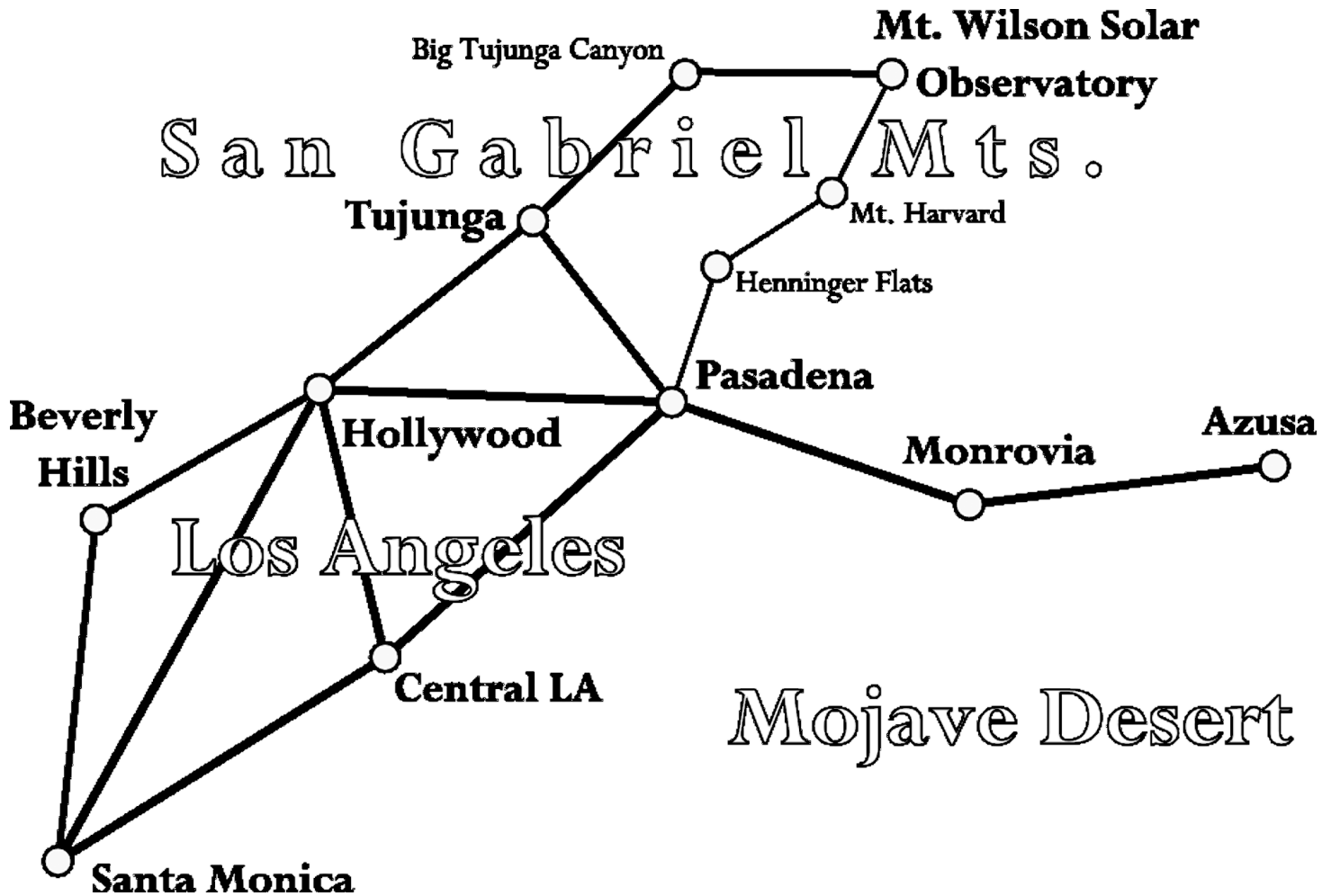
## The Big Hoodoo



Handout #2  
Part of the Greater Los Angeles  
area - circa mid 1950s

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Big Hoodoo



GM Aid #1  
Rules for Movement Map

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Big Hoodoo

Hail to thee, Moon Child! It is now six years since I entered into the infernal chapel to partake of the sacrament of thy incarnation. And there in the desert did I arouse the coiled splendor of the seething Horus-spirit AZATAD, thinking thereby to bring unto myself a Scarlet Woman. What a fool I was! Little then did I realise how much had already been accomplished, and how little yet remained to me. Know that I drank of the sacred mead that opens the third eye, and that I saw thereby the power of AZATAD, which dwelleth in the mountain temple built by His High Priest two years before I was born. Know that I became as are the bornless, and saw time and space laid out before me as from a high mountaintop. Now I know that thou art indeed incarnate, and that I need only to bind that which was loosed to set thee free.

In the Despite of AZATAD shall be named thy Name, NYARLATHOTEP.

Handout #3  
A Scrap of Paper

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Big Hoodoo

### The Painting from Catemaco

The background of the painting is a surreal landscape, a mountain meadow in high summer, with the sun high in the sky—but at the edges of the scene the bright blue of day fades to the deep blue-black of night with stars shining; in one corner hangs a pale crescent moon; in the other, a blue-and-green earth. In the center of the meadow a cruel-faced farmer with wild hair struggles with a wheeled plow as he stares into the sky.

Above him a bearded man in magician's robes floats in the air entwined in flowers, his arms upraised and bearing a flaming rocket that points downward at the plowman. The rocket is marked with four equilateral triangles in a row: one pointing up, one pointing down, one up with a line cutting across its upper tip, one down with a line cutting across its lower tip. Below that are the words SATOR ROTAS.

Hovering close by the rocket is a grail-like chalice covered with array of letters arranged in a square on its sides. Floating around the magician's cup are a swarm of symbols and images of obscure meaning.

#### The Magician's Cup

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| H  | N  | H  | Ca | H  | K  | H  |
| N  | P  | Al | P  | Al | F  | Be |
| H  | Al | Mn | Ar | Sc | Li | H  |
| Ca | P  | Ar | Sc | Mg | F  | K  |
| H  | Al | Sc | Mg | B  | Ca | Ca |
| K  | F  | Li | F  | Ca | Sc | Ar |
| H  | Be | H  | K  | Ca | AR | H  |

These symbols include (1) a circle with little horns on top and a cross below entangled in two wavy lines and surrounded by a vine; (2) a cup or chalice into which blood drips from the tip of a spear or lance; (3) a cluster of little seeds; (4) a little pile of ashes marked with the unicursal hexagram; and (5) an eagle perched atop a beehive devouring a snake. The form of the land is curved to suggest the body of a woman, with the meadow her belly and the mountains at the left her shoulders, and naked men and women of monstrous aspect, the lower halves of their bodies rooted in the ground, reach beseechingly toward the magician—or perhaps toward the moon. It is signed "M. Cameron."

## Handout #4

### Description of the Catamaco Painting

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# The Big Hoodoo

[illegible]

**\* Lanthanide series**

## \*\* Actinide series

# Handout #5

## Periodic Table of the Elements