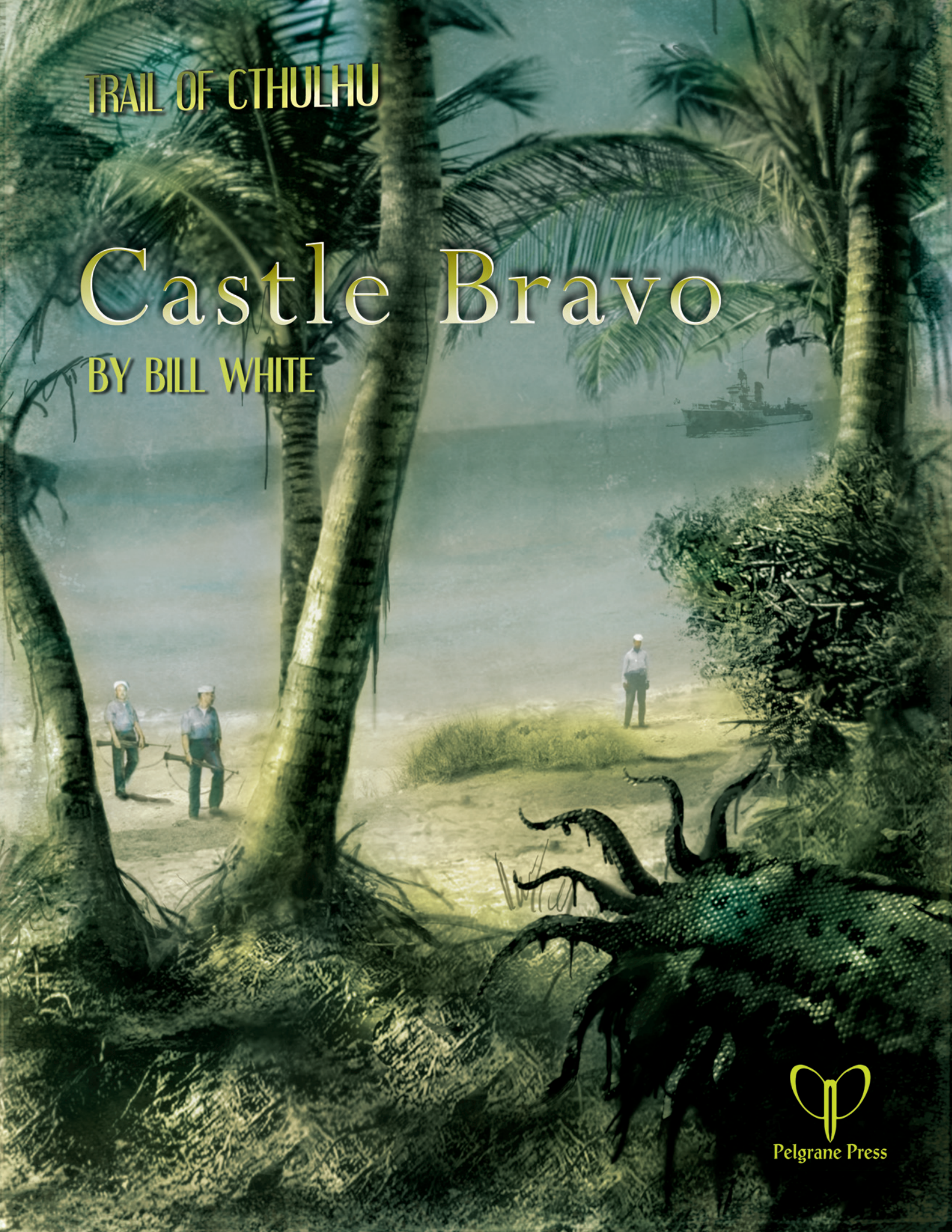


TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# Castle Bravo

BY BILL WHITE



Pelgrane Press





## CASTLE BRAVO

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# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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## CASTLE BRAVO

### INTRODUCTION

The year is 1954. The Korean War recently ended in a hard-fought stalemate. With the Cold War in full swing, the United States is busily conducting secret tests to determine the explosive yield of different models of nuclear weapons. Some of these tests are being conducted in the Marshall Islands at Bikini atoll, where nearly eight years before, in the aftermath of World War II, a similar but highly public test called Operation Crossroads caused international controversy as a display of American military might and intentions.

This adventure draws heavily upon Lovecraft's stories "The Shadow Out of Time" and "The Dunwich Horror," but it "re-reads" them so that the details are homage rather than slavish imitation. In tone, the game should play out much closer to Purist than to Pulp, although you can expect a fair dose of desperate military-flavored action to break out by the end of the adventure. One way to think of this scenario is as an attempt to do 1950s atomic horror without descending into camp or kitsch. If Lovecraft had lived, and seen the stark horrors of World War II give way to the subtler terrors of McCarthyism and Mutually Assured Destruction, what sorts of tales would he have told?

As Keeper, you should read through the entire adventure first and make note of the instructions provided for staging the adventure, changing those details to suit your play preferences and those of your players. As the group progresses through the adventure, it is likely to proceed in unanticipated directions,

but you need only extrapolate from the information presented here to judge the likely consequences of their actions.

Some basic familiarity with military protocol is presumed, but a brief summary of military etiquette is provided at the end of the adventure for those who desire it. Otherwise, you may fudge or finesse those details insofar as your own knowledge requires.

### The Hook

The investigators are sailors and scientists deployed aboard the Navy escort carrier USS *Bairoko* to the South Pacific as part of "Joint Task Force Seven" to participate in a series of secret thermonuclear test shots in the Bikini atoll called Operation Castle. After the first detonation, strange events begin to occur, and the investigators must figure out what is going on if they wish to save the ship and themselves.

### The Horrible Truth

Far in the future, an advanced race of spider-like creatures calling themselves Yithians tried to bind the cosmic entity Yog-Sothoth to their will. Their plan failed and their world—a far future Earth that they called "Yith"—was destroyed. They attempted to escape as disembodied consciousnesses into the far, far distant past, but were caught by Yog-Sothoth, who imprisoned them in the cone-shaped bodies of a species commensal with the polypous flying space-faring semi-material servitors Yog-Sothoth had extruded into our dimension long, long ago.

Trapped in the past but possessed of powerful mental gifts, the Yithians subdued the flying polyps and imprisoned them in their own basalt towers. Rebuilding their civilization and gaining control of the ability to travel through time by temporarily taking control of the bodies of cross-temporal "natives," the Yithians began gathering the knowledge they needed to complete their mastery of the space-time continuum and escape the cone-shaped bodies in which they'd been imprisoned.

However, their interference with the cone-beings' symbiosis with the flying polyps meant that their hosts were dying out, their reproductive cycle disrupted. The Yithians sought across the timestream and found a new set of potential hosts in humanity's immediate successor as dominant life form, blattid communal insects from 5 million years in the future whose sapience operates via distributed intelligence—in other words, a race of intelligent cockroach hive-minds. To power their cross-time migration from 65 million years in the past, the Yithians diverted an asteroid to impact with the Earth and captured the energy of the shockwave, escaping across time as they thought.

However, they did not reckon with Yog-Sothoth's implacable and omnipresent vigilance. In 1946 AD, the explosion of an atomic bomb at Bikini Atoll during a public test called Operation Crossroads created a small "tear" or gap in space-time through which the essence of Yog-Sothoth was able to seep through. The cavalier attitude of the military authorities toward radiological exposure at the time helped ensure that Yog-Sothoth could imprint itself upon



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## Castle Bravo

one hapless crewman's genes. The man returned home shortly thereafter and to him and his wife was born a Son of Yog-Sothoth, a hybrid being who, though seemingly and superficially human, partook not only of normal space-time materiality but also of the hyperdimensional non-Euclidean actuality of the Mythos. Grown to nearly adult size in a mere seven years, young Jed Whateley fashioned a false identity for himself as one Earl Sawyer (using the birth certificate of an infant who had died at birth), and ran away from his hateful and by-now insane mother to join the Navy, volunteering to serve on the very ship upon which his father died in 1951.

Yog-Sothoth foresees that the detonation of a second atomic bomb in the same location eight years later—Castle Bravo—will empower his “son” to create a temporal singularity that will trap the time-traveling Yithian minds in a nightmarish loop and enable him to recreate the strange symbiosis between flying polyp and cone-being, restoring them as servitors of Yog-Sothoth in the material world. The Son of Yog-Sothoth will use his newfound powers to transform radiation-stricken sailors into cone-beings capable of serving the flying polyps and restoring them to vitality once more.

### The Spine

For this summary of the structure of the investigation, text in **bold** indicates a section of the adventure with the same name.

The crew of **USS Bairoko** awaits the detonation of **Shot Bravo** in the Bikini atoll. The bomb blast exposes them to a massive fallout cloud, during which some strange events occur, including the awakening of **The Son of Yog-Sothoth**. In the blast's **Immediate Aftermath**, the investigators witness the crew's erratic behavior and strange

visions. When the fallout cloud settles, they are able to investigate **Anomalous Sightings** in the Castle area of operations, while yet plagued by **Shadows** out of time. Eventually, however, they are **Out of Time**, and the *Bairoko* must withstand an attack of flying polyps in the service of the Son of Yog-Sothoth as well as a mutiny by sailors transformed into monstrous cone-beings.

### Victory Conditions

The investigators may consider themselves “victorious” if, minimally, they survive the aftermath of Castle Bravo with soul and sanity intact. More to the point, however, they win if they prevent the restoration of a symbiotic commensality between the flying polyps and the cone-beings.



## THE INVESTIGATORS

### Pregenerated Characters

Six pre-generated characters are provided, though the “sweet spot” for this adventure is probably 4 players. The additional characters can be held in reserve as replacements for those lost in play.

#### Lieutenant Davis

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. (O-1) Enrique Chahan “Hank” Davis.** A young Marine helicopter pilot assigned to the transport squadron detailed to the carrier for this project. He's half-Chamorro, a native of Guam (his adoptive father was a Marine hidden by locals during the Japanese occupation of the island in World War II). After enlisting in the Marines during the Korean War, he was sent to Officer Candidate School and flight training for helicopters. This is his first tour of duty. **Occupation:** Military. **Drive:** Adventure. **Pillars of Sanity:** Faith, Filial Piety. **Special:** *Flight Status*. Davis can spend Bureaucracy in order to gain access to a helicopter or plane for “missions.” **Note:** Chamorro is a Malayo-Polynesian language like that of the Marshallese; the two tongues are similar but not identical (Chamorro has far more Spanish borrowings, for example), but they are similar enough that Lt. Davis can use his Language ability as if it were Oral History when dealing with the Marshallese.

#### Investigative Skills

*Academic:* Anthropology 1, History 1, Languages (Chamorro) 1, Law 1, Theology 1.

*Interpersonal:* Assess Honesty 1, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 3, Intimidation 2, Reassurance 4,



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## The Investigators

Streetwise 1.

*Technical:* Astronomy 2,  
Outdoorsman 2 .

### General Skills

Athletics 10, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 4, Explosives 2, Firearms 6, First Aid 4, Fleeing 8, Mechanical Repair 4, Piloting 10, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 4, Shadowing 4, Weapons 4.

Health 8, Stability 8, Sanity 6

### Seaman Hargreave

**Aerographer's Mate (E-3) Byron "Harvard" Hargreave.** An Ivy League-educated enlisted sailor who joined the Navy to escape the effete confines of bourgeois society and is now a meteorologist assigned to the Navigation department aboard the *Bairoko*. This is his first tour of duty. **Occupation:** Dilettante. **Drive:** Ennui (Father's banking business is so boring, but Navy red tape no better; craves *stimulation*). **Pillars of Sanity:** Self-Reliance, Detached Irony. **Special: Friends in High Places.** Spend Credit Rating to call on personal connections who can make a stink or pull strings for you in Washington as needed—e.g., your uncle the Congressman, your father's admiral friend in the Pentagon. You can use this to insulate yourself from the normal inconveniences of a low position in the naval hierarchy.

### Investigative Skills

*Academic:* Architecture 1, Art History 1, Cryptography 1, History 1, Languages (Japanese) 1, Library Use 1, Physics 2

*Interpersonal:* Assess Honesty 1, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 5, Flattery 2, Oral History 1, Reassurance 1.

*Technical:* Astronomy 2, Evidence Collection 1.

### General Skills

Athletics 8, Conceal 2, Disguise 2, Electrical Repair 2, Explosives 2, Filch 2, Firearms 4, First Aid 2, Fleeing 8, Mechanical Repair 2, Preparedness 4, Riding 2, Scuffling 6, Sense Trouble 6, Shadowing 4, Stealth 2, Weapons 2.

Health 6, Stability 5, Sanity 4

### Father Mullaney

**Father Francis X. Mullaney (O-3).** A young Navy chaplain from an Irish family in Boston. **Occupation:** Clergy. **Drive:** Compassion (wants to bring faith and healing to the benighted and desperate). **Pillars of Sanity:** Faith, Forgiveness. **Special: Shepherd of the Flock.** Once per session, Fr. Mullaney may refresh any Interpersonal ability after leading co-religionists in prayer or other spiritual undertaking.

### Investigative Skills

*Academic:* Anthropology 1, Archaeology 1, Architecture 1, Art History 1, History 2, Languages 2 (Latin, Hebrew), Law 1, Library Use 2, Theology 4.

*Interpersonal:* Assess Honesty 2, Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 3, Reassurance 4.

*Technical:* Art (painting) 1 .

### General Skills

Athletics 6, First Aid 6, Fleeing 12, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 8, Sense Trouble 12.

Health 9, Stability 12, Sanity 6

### Dr. Pettigrew

**Dr. Nathaniel Pettigrew, M.D., Ph.D.** A civilian A.E.C. scientist who studies the effects of radiological contamination on biological organisms. **Occupation:** Scientist. **Drive:** Scholarship (wants to contribute to the continuing expansion of human knowledge): "We owe it to science to investigate!" **Pillars of Sanity:** Scientific Progress, Reason. **Special: Scientific Speculation.** Dr. Pettigrew may make plausible guesses about the scientific causes of an otherwise mysterious phenomenon. In game terms, he may spend Biology, Geology, Medicine, or Physics in order to avoid up to 3 pts worth of Stability test occasioned by exposure to the Mythos, so long as he can explain it away in scientific terms (i.e., aliens, advanced technology, time travel, and so forth).

### Investigative Skills

*Academic:* Biology 2, Geology 1, Languages 2 (Latin, German), Library Use 2, Medicine 2, Physics 2.

*Interpersonal:* Bureaucracy 1, Credit Rating 4.

*Technical:* Chemistry 2, Evidence Collection 2, Forensics 1, Pharmacy 2, Photography 2.

### General Skills

Athletics 2, Conceal 6, Disguise 4, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 4, Firearms 2, First Aid 8, Fleeing 6, Mechanical Repair 2, Psychoanalysis 8, Scuffling 3, Sense Trouble 4, Shadowing 2, Weapons 2.

Health 6, Stability 6, Sanity 4

### Chief Walton

**Chief Master-at-Arms (E-7) Malcolm Walton.** Walton joined the



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## Castle Bravo

Navy in the early days of World War II and fought in the Pacific theater, surviving surface battles and kamikaze attacks. As a master-at-arms, he is responsible for maintaining order aboard ship, conducting weapons training for the crew, leading boarding parties and similar actions, and investigating crimes committed aboard the ship. **Occupation:** Police Detective. **Drive:** Duty (committed to defending U.S. from foreign threats). **Combat Veteran** (max Stability 10, +1 to hit in combat). **Pillars of Sanity:** Patriotism, Anti-Communism. **Special:** *Security Chief*. In the pursuit of your duties, you have automatic access to secure areas or equipment aboard the ship or base to which you are assigned; you may spend Cop Talk to gain access to top secret material.

### Investigative Skills

*Academic:* Accounting 1,  
Cryptography 1, Law 2.

*Interpersonal:* Assess Honesty 4,  
Bureaucracy 2, Cop Talk 4,  
Credit Rating 3, Interrogation 2,  
Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1.

*Technical:* Evidence Collection 2,  
Locksmith 1, Outdoorsman 1.

### General Skills

Athletics 6, Conceal 3, Driving 2,  
Explosives 1, Firearms 8, First Aid  
2, Fleeing 8, Mechanical Repair  
2, Piloting (small watercraft) 4,  
Preparedness 2, Scuffling 8, Sense  
Trouble 8, Shadowing 4, Stealth 3,  
Weapons 4.

Health 6, Stability 8, Sanity 4

### Corpsman Zengetti

**Hospital Corpsman Third Class (E-4) Giovanni "Johnny Z" Zengetti.** A medic recently assigned to the ship, a second-generation

Italian-American from New York. **Occupation:** Nurse. **Drive:** Sudden Shock (saw weird things in Korea during the war; awful memories drive him to self-medicate and engage in self-destructive behavior). **Combat Veteran** (max Stability 10, +1 to hit in combat). **Pillars of Sanity:** Loyalty, Sanctity of Human Life. **Special:** *Lead by Example*. You can spend 2 Reassurance points to steady a single panicking or erratic character as long as your own Stability is above 0; return the character's Stability to the lowest value of the next higher Stability category.

### Investigative Skills

*Academic:* Biology 2, Library Use 1,  
Medicine 2.

*Interpersonal:* Assess Honesty 1,  
Bureaucracy 2, Credit Rating 2,  
Oral History 2, Reassurance 4.

*Technical:* Chemistry 2, Evidence  
Collection 1, Lockpicking 1,  
Outdoorsman 1, Pharmacy 2.

### General Skills

Athletics 6, Firearms 4, First Aid 8,  
Fleeing 6, Mechanical Repair 4,  
Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis  
3, Sense Trouble 6, Stealth 3,  
Weapons 3.

Health 8, Stability 8, Sanity 6



## THE ADVENTURE

### THE USS BAIROKO

*The purpose of this scene is to establish the initial situation. It introduces the players to their characters, and the characters to each other. It also provides players with a chance to interact with some important non-player characters (NPCs).*

It is March 1, 1954, early in the morning in the South Pacific. The USS *Bairoko*, an escort carrier, is on station 38 miles east of the bomb site on the western edge of Bikini Atoll, awaiting the detonation of Operation Castle's first test, Shot Bravo. It is still dark; the bomb will go off at 0600—H-hour! The *Bairoko* has reconnaissance planes in the air to monitor the detonation and its aftermath. The other ships of Joint Task Force Seven are deployed further south, between Ailinginae and Wotho Atolls. Monitoring personnel at Rongerik and Eniwetok Atolls are standing by at their instruments. General Chambers, the leader of Joint Task Force Seven, has given the order to proceed from his command center on Kwajalein. The scientists in the control bunker on Bikini itself are counting down to zero, and the count is being relayed through a loudspeaker broadcasting to the crew assembled on the flight deck of the *Bairoko*, 557 feet long and 105 feet wide. It is H-hour minus 5 minutes, now.

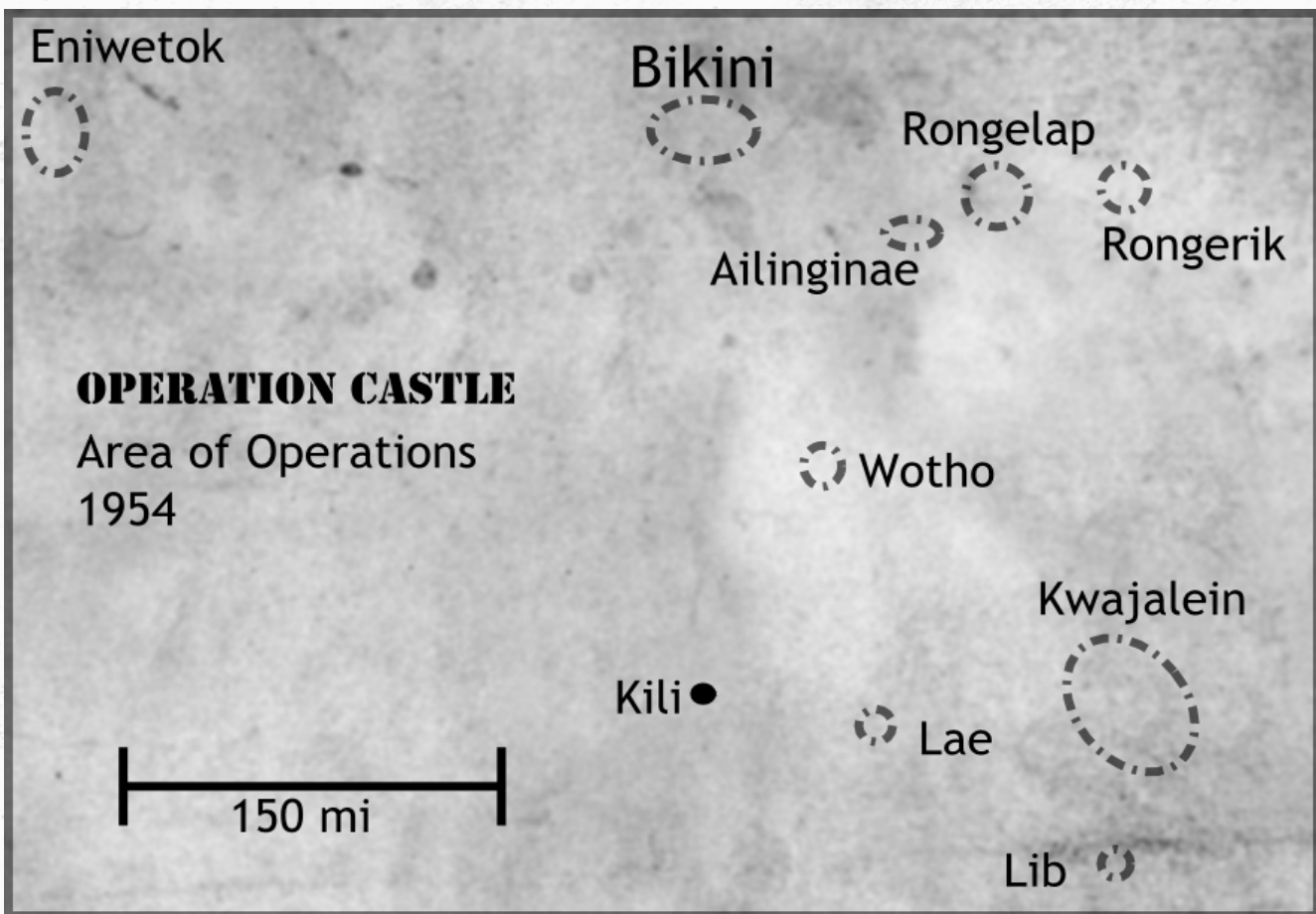
Keeper, lay out or sketch the Operation Castle area map and indicate the positions of the test shot on the western edge of Bikini Atoll, the *Bairoko* off the southeastern corner of Bikini, the meteorological and scientific monitoring stations on Eniwetok and Rongerik, and the U.S. base in the southeastern quadrant of Kwajalein.

The characters are standing on the deck of an aircraft carrier waiting for



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## The USS Bairoko



the detonation. Note the presence of Command Master Chief Don Bodine among them, a garrulous presence for whom witnessing atomic explosions is old hat, as well as that of Corpsman Earl Sawyer, known to them as rather a naif. Give the players the background knowledge their investigators possess. Allow the players to interact in character. The scene ends when all have said all they wish to say.

### Background Knowledge

You should prepare a small card or handout with the relevant knowledge for each investigator, or brief each player separately before you begin. If a particular character isn't being played, his background knowledge becomes available as a floating bonus clue.

**Lt. Davis.** Marine Helicopter Transportation Squadron 362 and its 12 unarmed Sikorsky H-19 Chickasaws (top speed 100 mph, 450 mile range, 12 passenger capacity) is a fine outfit, I guess, but wouldn't it be something to be able to get into one of those six F4U Corsairs (top speed 425 mph, 1000 mile range, room for pilot and observer) from Composite Squadron 3 and fly it around! They're only equipped with cameras for reconnaissance, but still! If the Air Boss wasn't such a control freak, maybe I'd have a chance to take one for a spin one of these days.

**Seaman Hargreave.** I'll be lucky to see anything when they set off the Bravo shot, since the test site is so far below the horizon. I suppose the observation gallery outside of Flight Ops at the top of the carrier island will give a better view, but the CO is up there with his binoculars. Maybe I'll get a better chance at Eniwetok. They're setting

up a test bomb code-named Ramrod for Shot Echo there now. The plan is to set it off at the end of the month; I suppose I could try to pull a few strings to be assigned as the CO's runner, who mostly gets to stand around and drink coffee unless the intercom goes out.

**Fr. Mullaney.** It is a great sorrow how we've displaced the Bikini islanders from their homes for these tests. They were first relocated to Rongerik, and then when that proved unsatisfactory, to the island of Kili, which in some ways proved worse. An article in LIFE magazine several years ago quoted "King" Juda, the *iroij* or chief of the Bikinians, in a memorably poignant complaint, saying, "Rongerik was not a good place. The fish there are poisonous, the coconuts are smaller, and the lagoon is haunted by a poison spirit who sleeps under the waters. We wanted to return to Bikini, but they told us we could not. Finally, we agreed to come to Kili. But



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it is not like Bikini. At Bikini, one could always go to another island. But Kili is not an atoll, so it is always the same. Sleep, wake up. Kili. Again, sleep, wake up. Kili. Kili is a prison." Those poor people.

**Dr. Pettigrew.** When Castle Bravo detonates, we'll see an area of illumination on the horizon, like distant lightning perhaps, and then three minutes later the sound of the blast will reach us. At this distance, it should be much attenuated. At the ship's top speed of 22 mph, it would take the *Bairoko* about an hour and three-quarters to cover the same distance. One of the two 36-passenger plywood "Higgins boats" aboard the *Bairoko* would take just over twice as long—three point five hours to cover the ground that *sound* does in just over three minutes and that *light* does nearly instantaneously! Fascinating! When I see him next, I'll share my observations with the Flight Operations Officer, Lt. Cdr. Jermyn, since he has demonstrated a keen interest in applying mathematical principles to logistical problems.

**Chief Walton.** The Reds would stop at nothing to get their hands on America's atomic secrets. Luckily, the devices code-named *Zombie* and *Morgenstern*, to be used in Castle Romeo and Castle Koon—two later shots in this operation—are stored in ammunition bunkers at the U.S. base on Kwajalein under heavy guard. They require orders signed by General Chambers to be released for any purpose. As far as the *Bairoko* itself goes, it's too bad there are no armed aircraft aboard, but at least it is armed with two 5"/38 caliber guns [+8 damage] controlled from the bridge as well as an array of 20-mm Oerlikon [+4 damage; add 2 to Mechanical Repair pool to operate each turn with 2-man crew] and 40-mm Bofors [+6 damage; add 4 to Mechanical Repair pool to operate with 3-man crew] autocannons in tandem [roll 2 dice plus bonus for damage] and triple [roll 3 dice plus bonus for damage] mounts

for air defense. Still, Communist brainwashing can't be discounted. Sabotage is always a possibility. And it's a shame that Lieutenant Delapore, the Deck Officer, is such a milquetoast—things could use a little tightening up around here.

**Corpsman Zengetti.** This guy Sawyer standing next to me is a strange bird. All of the guys in our section say so. "He's not all there in the head," one of my buddies told me the other day. "He doesn't remember where he was on V-J day, and I remember that like it was yesterday!" He has friends who'll stick up for him though, like the one who said "Earl's just been really sheltered. Everyone else has stories about where they grew up, goofing around in high school with their buddies, a girl they miss—but Earl, nothing. He doesn't talk much about his family, either. I think they kept him mostly inside. That's why he's always reading those fancy books. I'm glad he's finally getting a chance to see the world."

### The Old Salt

**Command Master Chief (E-9) Don Bodine.** Bodine is the senior enlisted man on the *Bairoko*, and at age 48 has served 30 years in the Navy and seen action in two wars. He is responsible for the morale and well-being of the enlisted personnel aboard the ship. He intends to retire at the end of his tour, and is wont to go on about his time in the Navy, the comrades he's sailed with, and the things he's seen. Bodine likes to think he's helping younger sailors by granting them the wisdom of his experience, and he is—albeit in a somewhat self-aggrandizing way, as he is the hero of all his stories. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Flattery** ("Golly, Master Chief, you've sure seen a lot of stuff") and **Oral History** ("Boy, Chief, this must be like dealing with those kamikazes during the Big One, huh?").

**Skills.** Athletics 4, Electrical Repair 3, Firearms 3, Piloting (watercraft only) 3, Health 6, Sanity 3, Scuffling 4, Stability 6.

**Oral History (core clue).** The USS *Bairoko* wasn't commissioned until the end of World War II, so we were too late to see action against the Japs. In 1946, we were at the Bikini atoll for Operation Crossroads, when the Air Force—it was still part of the Army back then—tried to show it could destroy a fleet with an atom bomb. They tried to put her out to pasture after that, but they had to bring her back for the Korean War. On a shakedown cruise in '51, after they brought her out of mothballs, there was an explosion on the hangar deck. It caught fire, which spread to the deck below. Five men died before it could be put out, and the ship was laid up for months. I knew them all, too—good men, they were. But now here we are again, testing the 'nukes' again. Good old *Bairoko*!

### The Innocent

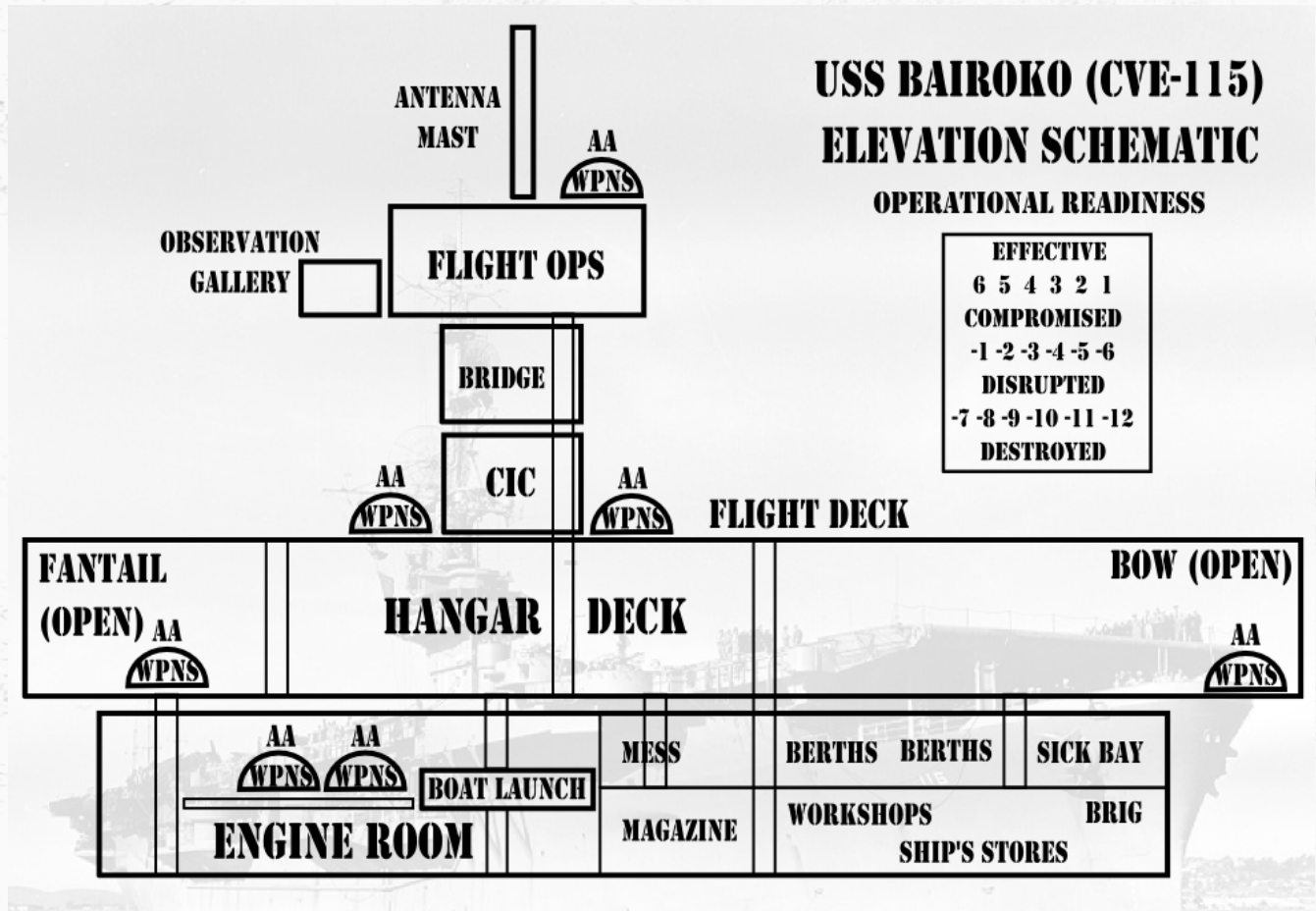
**Medical Corpsman (E-3) Earl Sawyer.** Sawyer is quiet and looks uncomfortable in his own skin, a gangly youth still in the throes of late adolescence, with that ill-at-ease, half-formed quality that some particularly awkward teenagers have. **Abilities.** Athletics 8, Firearms 7, Health 13, Scuffling 17. **Hit Threshold:** 4. **Alertness Modifier:** +2. **Stealth Modifier:** +1. **Weapon:** -1 (inhumanly strong fist), by weapon type.

**Assess Honesty.** It's funny how nervous Sawyer is around Bodine; he gets even more tongue-tied than normal, and won't even open his mouth to say anything beyond "Yes, chief," or "No, chief." (**leverage: grief-stricken mother**). Sawyer's telling the truth as far it goes, but there's more to it than that. He's got a lot of anger towards his mother (also **Psychoanalysis**). (**leverage: skin condition**). Maybe



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## Shot Bravo



he should have it looked at again, if it's bothering him so much.

**Evidence Collection.** There is faintly acrid scent around Sawyer, like he's been working with chemicals, perhaps.

**Oral History.** Sawyer is from Arkham, Massachusetts. He has no family; his father died when he was young and his mother went crazy with grief. They had to put her in a home.

**Reassurance (leverage: acrid scent).** I have a skin condition, Sawyer says, embarrassed. It's nothing. The doctor prescribed some medicine. **(leverage: Bodine).** I just get nervous because he might have known my dad. He—he died in a fire on this ship during the war.

## SHOT BRAVO

*The purpose of this scene is to drive the plot forward. The detonation of the atomic bomb serves as its inciting incident, and the reactions of the investigators to (a) the unexpected power of the bomb, and (b) the subsequent fallout that strikes the ship provide a space for character development and action. More importantly, however, the scene provides some initial clues by foreshadowing greater weirdness to come.*

Begin this scene by laying out or sketching the *Bairoko* elevation schematic. Specify the positions of the investigators as well as of the CO (in the observation gallery), the XO (in the CIC), the Air Boss (in Flight Ops), and the Deck Officer (on the Flight Deck). Inform the players that the "Operational Readiness" status of the *Bairoko* is "effective," but that things

might happen in play that render it less so. Then proceed from the detonation of Castle Bravo through the rain of fallout and its aftermath. The scene ends when the *Bairoko* has cleared the area affected by fallout.

## An Escort Carrier At Sea

Imagine a floating city of over a thousand men, including barbers, carpenters, cooks, electricians, and even shopkeepers as well as the pilots, mechanics, and other operatives and technicians needed for industrialized warfare. In the center of the long flat flight deck is a multi-story "island" where command and control functions are carried out. The flight deck is located above the hangar deck where aircraft are stored and maintained. Below this is a complex labyrinth of passageways, bulkheads, and



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## Castle Bravo

### Movement Rules

When it is critical to know how long someone takes to move from one place to another aboard the ship, use this rule. Each named area aboard the ship (Flight Deck, Hangar Deck, Berths, etc.) is a "zone." The thin vertical rectangles are "ladders" enabling passage between decks. Moving from one zone to another in a single action is automatic (i.e., Difficulty 1). Each additional zone of distance to be moved increases the Difficulty of the Athletics or Fleeing test by +2 (so two zones is Difficulty 3, three zones is difficulty 5, and so forth). Each level of ladder to be traversed increases the Difficulty by 1. If you fail, you wind up halfway between where you started from and where you wanted to go, and suffer 1d6-3 damage to Health (minimum 0, obviously).

### Communication Rules

An intercom system allows the CIC two-way communication with most of the rest of the ship on a selective basis (i.e., it may address all or some of the rest of the ship; other areas may only talk to the CIC). The only places not accessible via intercom are the Flight Deck and the exposed portions of the Hangar Deck, though the various anti-aircraft gun emplacements are wired in. A loudspeaker allows broadcasting from the Bridge to sailors on deck. Additionally, a telephone network connects working areas belowdecks and on the island (i.e., all but the Berths, Flight Deck, AA Guns, and Hangar Deck) with each other on a point-to-point basis. A limited number of walkie-talkies (portable two-way radios) can be issued for specific assignments with a spend.

compartments organized with an eye towards maximizing storage rather than ease of passage. Life aboard ship is cramped; the corridors are narrow and the "ladders" or staircases are steep. Berthing compartments sleep 30 sailors in bunks or "racks" in ten stacks of three, surrounded by tight vertical lockers in which to stow their gear. Officers are allotted slightly more space, but their quarters are tight as well.

### The Captain and His Staff

The CO is in the observation gallery (aka "buzzards' row"), waiting for the bomb to go off. The XO is in the Combat Information Center, monitoring radio traffic as well as radar and sonar data. The Flight Operations Officer, or "Air Boss," is in the Flight Operations Center ("Flight Ops") keeping track of the recon flights that are in the air. The Deck Officer is on the Flight Deck,

waiting to resume normal operations after the detonation.

**Commanding Officer, USS *Bairoko* (CO).** Captain (O-6) Richard D. Hogle. Captain Hogle commands the *Bairoko*; he is cautious and by-the-book. The CO is responsible for ensuring that the ship's mission is fulfilled. Hogle has been in command less than a year. He hopes for an uneventful tour so that he can "punch his command ticket"; that is, get the experience on his resume he needs to be selected for prestigious Pentagon jobs. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Bureaucracy** ("Don't worry, sir, the general will never find out") and **Law** ("Sir, the regulations are very clear on this").

**Executive Officer (XO).** Commander (O-5) Martin C. Reeves. Reeves is the *Bairoko's* second-in-

command; he is responsible for ensuring that the day-to-day operations of the ship proceed smoothly and efficiently. Reeves is a hustler and a wheeler-dealer who is at least a little crooked but also sharp, and extremely knowledgeable about the ship's technical capabilities and resources. He wants opportunities to get a little something for himself without crossing a line into outright criminality. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Bargaining** ("Hey, sir, if you let me talk to the prisoners for five minutes, I'll tell my buddy in the Supply Department on Kwajalein to give us a higher priority for ship's exchange resupply") or **Streetwise** ("Sir, do you want to get in on a poker game in the Operations wardroom tonight? The stakes are pretty high, though").

**Flight Operations Officer (FOO).** Lieutenant Commander (O-4) Felix A. Jermyn. Lt. Cdr. Jermyn is the "Air Boss," responsible for keeping track of all the birds that *Bairoko* has in the air at any given moment, and can approve or scrub missions requiring the use of aircraft. He is a control freak who considers himself a hard-headed realist. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of empirical argument, such as **Physics** ("There's no way a fully loaded helicopter can get there fast enough") or **Accounting** ("That's a hundred thousand dollar aircraft out there, sir.")

**Deck Officer.** Lieutenant (O-3) Wilbur Delapore. Lt. Delapore is responsible for making sure that operations on the flight and hangar decks are proceeding efficiently and for keeping things generally shipshape. He has access to much shipboard equipment. While generally diligent, he is nervous and indecisive, and has a tough time thinking while under pressure. He is particularly susceptible to influence by means of **Intimidation** ("Sir, if you don't do something about this, I will!") or **Reassurance** ("Sir, this is absolutely



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## The Captain and his Staff

### Operational Readiness

The ship's operational readiness (OR) rating begins at 6; this is essentially a free-floating pool of bonus points that the investigators may use to do things aboard the ship.

**Effective.** The ship and crew are ready for action. Investigators may spend points of OR to add to task rolls as desired; these spends represent using the ship's resources to complete tasks more efficiently or with less effort on the part of the investigator.

**Compromised.** The ship has suffered minor damage or personnel loss in such a way as to somewhat degrade its capabilities. Investigators may no longer spend points of OR, and attempts to influence the chain of command are at +1 difficulty, as ship's officers will be interested in addressing more immediate problems.

**Disrupted.** The ship has suffered severe damage or personnel loss, and its capabilities as a result are severely degraded. Parts of the ship are out of contact with other parts, and attempts to influence the chain of command to do anything other than take immediate steps to save the ship are not permitted. Investigative activities are not possible, and the investigators may be required to step up and take charge of frightened, confused, or demoralized sailors. The chaos of the situation may require a Stability test of somewhere between 2 and 4 points.

**Destroyed.** The ship is completely stricken. All hands abandon ship! The catastrophe may require a Stability test of somewhere between 4 and 6 points.

### Going Up the Chain

Of course, at a level above even the commander of the ship is the man in charge of Operation Castle, General Clarkson.

**Commander, Operation Castle (JTFCOM).** Major General (O-8) Percy W. Clarkson. Clarkson, the commander of Joint Task Force 7, runs the show from the U.S. base on Kwajalein Island. He is not particularly susceptible to any given means, and usually will only be a disembodied voice on the radio—if that—during the adventure. However, the atomic buck stops with him.

During play, investigators may want the chain of command to do something for them that they can't do on their own: call the entire crew to battle stations, change the destination of the ship, and other ship-wide or mission-consequential actions. Some of the time, this will be mere window-dressing, and you should hand-wave it so when the point is merely to set the scene for the next cool thing the investigators want to do. At other times, however, convincing the chain of command that a certain course of action is *immediately* and *absolutely* necessary can be a moment of high drama in the adventure, and so should be represented by a contest. See p. 59 of the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules for its discussion of Investigative contests.

**Influencing Higher Ranking Officers.** Use the rank of the officer capable of making the decision that the investigators want made as the Difficulty of a skill roll to persuade them to issue the order or give their permission. Officers use their full rank, Enlisted use half rounded down. Modify this Difficulty upward by a point or three if what the investigators want is particularly strange, counter-intuitive, or impractical. So, for example, an effort to convince the ship's executive officer (an O-5) that everyone with radiation burns should be locked in the brig is both strange and impractical, and thus gets a +2 Difficulty, for a total of Difficulty 7. The investigators may then spend Investigative abilities for a bonus to the roll, justifying those spends by role-playing their interactions with other officers and non-coms whose expertise or responsibilities gives their professional opinion weight as well as with the decision-maker himself. *If they spend enough, the roll is a mere formality.*

**Example.** *The investigators may decide first to spend a point of **Medicine** to review medical histories with the Ship's Doctor and get him to agree that the radiation victims have been acting strangely and, with a point of **Bureaucracy**, to write a recommendation that they be separated from the rest of the crew. Similarly, they remind Master Chief Bodine of his responsibility for the morale of the crew (**Flattery**) and spend a point of **Architecture** to make a plan for securing the affected personnel. Bodine agrees to let the XO know that their request is do-able. Thus armed, they approach the XO and, in role-playing the interaction, say that Communist brainwashing is a possibility. The Keeper gives a +1 to the roll for a two-point **History** spend for this. They also spend **Reassurance** to convince the XO that if he gives the go-ahead, they'll get him the proof he wants that the radiation victims are a danger to the ship. The total bonus is now +6, which means that even if the investigator rolls a 1, the effort succeeds. The XO tells the investigators to get 'em locked up, pronto.*



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## Castle Bravo

what needs to be done. No question”).

### “Now Hear This...”

The radio voice from the control bunker on Bikini Atoll announces the approach of the detonation, patched through the ship’s intercom. It counts down from 10. Sense Trouble at Difficulty 4. Those who fail are at worst indifferent to the coming explosion, but those who make the roll think, *This could be really bad. Do we really know what we’re doing here? How do we know the whole atmosphere won’t ignite?*

When the count reaches zero, there is a momentary pause, then the sky lights up as if it were day for a long moment and then goes black. Remaining in the northwest is a patch of pink radiance that covers a quarter of the sky and slowly fades over the course of several minutes, becoming dark again just as a loud sustained rumbling reaches the ship, growing in intensity before slackening and fading away.

Everyone who witnesses the explosion and feels the rumbling should test Stability. Those who were able to Sense Trouble make the Stability roll at Difficulty 4 to avoid a 3-point loss. Those who *did not* Sense Trouble make the roll at Difficulty 3 to avoid a 2-point loss (because at times ignorance is bliss).

Much of the crew witnessing the shot is disconcerted; they begin to mutter and complain among themselves. *Dock the ship a point of Operational Readiness unless an investigator makes a spend to do something to stiffen their morale* (e.g., Reassurance, Intimidation).

**Floating Core Clue.** In the immediate aftermath, Earl Sawyer will approach one of the investigators—good candidates are Walton, Zengetti, or Davis—look at him intently, and say with some degree of heat, “Hey! This time, *don’t shoot me*

*in the head* and I won’t let them tear you apart!” Then he’ll look confused and walk away, seemingly embarrassed. He will not know why he said what he said, although he does remember saying it.

### A Grey and Dirty Snow

Much of the crew has already dispersed belowdecks to begin their duties for the day. The CO will head for the CIC to consult with the XO about post-shot operations. Master Chief Bodine goes below.

In a few moments, the sky fills with grey clouds moving in rapidly from the northwest and obscuring the approaching dawn. Anyone witnessing their approach may Sense Trouble at Difficulty 3. *Those clouds aren’t normal*, the investigator realizes. Allow anyone who makes this roll to do one thing: shout a warning, move toward cover, make a Preparedness roll (to don protective gear, e.g.), and so forth.

A fine gray “snow” of sticky, gritty powder begins to fall. Anyone outside in it (i.e., on the Flight Deck, the exposed portions of the Hangar Deck, or Buzzards’ Row) should test Stability (Difficulty 3) to avoid a 2 point loss. *What is this uncanny stuff?* Investigators may use their abilities to make sense of the phenomenon.

**Biology.** It must be seawater mixed with coral from the atoll, blown to smithereens by the blast and hurled into the sky.

**Evidence Collection.** It looks like snow, at first, but it’s warm. It’s like sticky sand, or pieces of burnt paper. It’s sticking to my clothes, and the deck. It’s probably dangerous.

**Medicine.** Don’t touch it or breathe it in! It’s probably poisonous!

**Outdoorsman.** When stuff comes out of the sky, the first thing you do is

seek shelter.

**Physics.** That’s not snow—it’s radioactive fallout! Don’t let it get on you!

### A Dose of Their Own Medicine

There are about two dozen sailors scattered over the Flight Deck prepping it for returning aircraft and other functions. They will continue to perform their duties even as the fallout descends. Lt. Delapore will dither indecisively. It is up to the investigators to take action.

Assign each investigator an initial Dose—representing exposure to the fallout. Anyone who left the Flight Deck prior to the radioactive precipitation striking the deck is Dose 0. Anyone who left the Flight Deck after it began is Dose 1 (for those who fled quickly) or Dose 2 (for those who retreated more slowly). Anyone who is still on the Flight Deck or the exposed portion of the Hangar Deck is Dose 3.

Play out the action in rounds. Ask each player what his or her investigator does. Make skill rolls as needed to resolve movement or other actions. Each round the investigator remains in an exposed position (i.e., on the Flight Deck or the exposed portions of the Hangar Deck), increase his Dose by 1.

At the end of the third round and each round thereafter, have the highest ranked investigator test the ship’s Operational Readiness. The Difficulty of the test is 8. The roll is at +1 for each successfully completed investigator action intended to speed the ship out of harm’s way or clear the decks until the fallout rain stops. For example, running to the CIC to let the XO know about the fallout would count, as would taking charge of crewmen on deck and leading them below. If the roll is made, then it is “All



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Dauntless the Slug-Horn to My Lips I Set

Clear”: the ship has been secured and sailed out of the fallout cloud, and now it is just a matter of cleaning up. The difficulty of the roll decreases by one for each round after the third. End the scene when the roll is made, or when the action is complete.

### Dauntless the Slug-Horn to My Lips I Set

However, other things are happening at this time. During the first round of *A Dose of Their Own Medicine*, above, the investigator closest to Sawyer experiences a weird vision. He’s not on the *Bairoko* anymore; instead, he’s standing in front of a looming tower of black rock that rises from a lush plain of ferns and palm trees, among which dart brightly colored lizards—some with feathers! There are openings high up on the flanks of the tower, with a spiraling ramp of some sort of fibrous matting leading to the ground.

**Architecture.** Openings on the lower level have been sealed off; it is as if the tower were less a fortress to keep things *out* than a prison to keep something *in*.

**Biology.** The trees are cycads and ginkgos, which became the dominant flora during the Mesozoic era, which ended when the dinosaurs disappeared.

**Evidence Collection.** Several wide trails lead from the foot of the spiraling ramp at the base of the tower off into the forest. There seems to be some sort of gummy residue on the trails.

**Geology.** The black stone seems to be basalt, a type of igneous rock. And while the tower seems obviously to have been constructed, the rock of which it is comprised doesn’t appear to have been quarried *per se*. The regularity of the columnar fracturing implies that it was constructed by incredibly precise control of massive lava fountains that were then rapidly cooled in place—as if



someone had built an igloo by spraying water up from a firehose!

**Outdoorsman.** There’s no place on earth today with animals like that!

The investigator may wish to try to “snap out of it.” Instead of investigating, test Stability at Difficulty 4. On a success, the vision ends. Otherwise, it continues. If the investigator tries to do anything other than just look around, he feels that *his body is the wrong shape*, makes a 3 point Stability test (Difficulty 4), and the vision ends.

While the investigator is having this vision, other investigators may notice him standing with a wild-eyed expression on his face, staring as if he doesn’t know where he is. If addressed, he will not speak except to make strange gurgling noises, like he’s forgotten how to talk. A 1 pt **Reassurance** spend might bring him back to himself.

### Man Overboard!

At the end of the first round, some sailors on the deck will begin to complain of superficial burns received from the fallout—“Hey! This stuff is



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## Castle Bravo

burning me! Ouch!” Captain Hogle will summon Dr. Pettigrew or another investigator who has some expertise to the CIC to advise him on the proper course of action.

**Floating Core Clue.** Meanwhile, other crewmen will seem to experience some sort of fugue-like dislocation as well. One drops to his belly and begins to crawl in an aimless fashion. Another starts to babble in some sort of gibberish (although **Anthropology** will allow an investigator to suppose the sounds to be speech related to the Khoisan family, the click-languages of southern Africa used by Bushmen and others). Test Stability (Difficulty 4) against a 2 pt loss

**Floating Core Clue.** On the second round, Sawyer accompanies an investigator who goes to help those men; failing that, he runs toward them on his own. In either case, he stops short at some point and looks around as if he had heard something and was looking for its source. He studies the top of the island for a long moment before getting back to his duties. “I thought I saw something up there,” he will say if asked. What? “I—I couldn’t tell.” **Assess Honesty** provides the intuition that not only does Sawyer think the investigator wouldn’t believe the truth, Sawyer isn’t sure if *he himself* believes it.

A third stricken crewman dashes off toward the edge of the Flight Deck. Anyone who wishes to stop him has to catch up to him. Make three Athletics tests, with success or failure on earlier tests influencing the Difficulty of subsequent ones. So the first roll is at Difficulty 4. On a failure, the second test is at Difficulty 5; on a success, the second test is at Difficulty 3. If the second test is failed, the Difficulty increases by one; if it is successful, the Difficulty decreases by one. Success or failure on the third test determines if the fleeing crewman is caught in time.

If he is not stopped, he leaps off the edge of the deck and into the ocean, 50 feet below. Test Stability (Difficulty 4) against a 3 pt loss for witnessing this apparently suicidal act. But the crewman will be in the water, calling weakly for help; he was badly injured by the impact with the water and is barely conscious. It will take the heroic effort of the investigators to rescue him before he drowns. Allow an **Outdoorsman** spend to be used to let a player freely narrate his character’s heroism; otherwise, some combination of Athletics, Piloting, Mechanical Repair, and First Aid tests can be employed to determine if the investigators succeed in their rescue.

## THE SON OF YOG-SOTHOTH

*Use this information to respond to investigator efforts to make sense of Sawyer’s place in all this, as well as to generate “antagonist reaction” in the form of bizarre and unsettling events in which he is involved. You should include Sawyer in some or all of the activities embarked upon by the investigators at this point; as a medical corpsman, he is plausibly available for a variety of missions or assignments.*

Sawyer now hears the voice of Yog-Sothoth in his head. The Outer God permeates time and space but can only take action through his instruments, such as the flying polyps (long dormant since the suborning of their servile commensals, the cone-beings by the Yithians in the distant past) and hybrid beings like Sawyer himself, if conditions are right. The detonation of Castle Bravo created such conditions, at least briefly. Now the contact is imperfect, and filtered through Sawyer’s understandings and expectations. He thinks his father’s ghost is talking to him. He knows that the “spider-ghosts” (Yithians) are bad, and that they’re *all*

around, hiding among the crew of the *Bairoko*. He has a vague idea that he has to grant “a powerful blessing” to the radiation victims, and that this will help his father. He does not realize that the effect will be to initiate a gruesome transformation that will turn them into cone-beings.

## Meet “Earl Sawyer”

**Bureaucracy.** Sawyer’s personnel records show that he requested duty aboard the *Bairoko* right after basic training, but was assigned to the USS *Estes*, an amphibious command ship. He spent some time on Bikini Atoll during the construction phase of Operation Castle, and then he was temporarily assigned to the *Bairoko* once non-essential personnel were evacuated from the island. Sawyer’s medical records may also be obtained (also **Cop Talk**).

**Chemistry (leverage: Sawyer smells funny, or the jar from his foot locker).** That odor is probably coal or pine tar. It is a highly flammable substance used to treat dandruff and other skin conditions as well as head and body lice (also **Medicine** or **Pharmacy**).

**Evidence Collection (leverage: access to Sawyer’s personal effects).** In Sawyer’s locker, investigators find an unlabeled jar of a viscous brown stuff with a pungent chemical smell as well as an envelope addressed to Earl Sawyer at his shipboard address; the return address is from a “M. Whateley” at a street address in Arkham, Massachusetts. Inside the envelope is a birth certificate from the records clerk in Arkham for Jedediah Whateley, born December 1947 to parents Josiah and Mary, with a big black X scrawled across it, as well as a handful of photos, similarly defaced. One is an official-style portrait of a smiling young sailor who resembles Sawyer; Master Chief Bodine can confirm that



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Son of Yog-Sothoth

this is Joe Whateley. The others show pictures of a boy and his mother over the years. The boy ages from infancy to a hulking teenager; anyone who knows Sawyer by sight will recognize him. The mother doesn't seem to change much in the photos, except for looking more and more harried and increasingly unhappier. There is also a copy of a slim hardbound volume of morbid avant-garde poetry by one E.E. Derby, entitled *Azathoth and Other Horrors*, and a copy of a dense science magazine (also **Lockpicking, 1 pt spend**).

**Photography** allows an investigator to notice that the woman's garb and hairstyle in the photographs don't change as much as they should over what should be about fifteen years (also **Art History**).

**Interrogation, 1 pt spend (leverage: Sawyer's true age).** "I don't know why I'm this way. My dad said I just grewed, like Topsy. Heh. Mom hated that. I don't know. Why are you the way you are?"

**Intimidation.** "You're one of *them*, aren't you? My father told me that they were all around. He said that the spider-ghosts would try to stop me. I won't let you."

**Medicine.** According to his induction examination, Earl Sawyer presented with what appeared to be a moderate case of *psoriasis vulgaris*, a non-contagious autoimmune condition that produces scaly silver or reddened skin plaques. In this case, the disease was noted to affect his upper arms, chest, and back. "Born that way," the report reads. A Navy physician prescribed coal tar for the condition, which was not regarded as a bar to enlistment. A medical examination of Sawyer's current skin condition reveals that it is spreading, thickening, and becoming more rugose (wrinkled) and squamous (scaly). There also seems to be some

sort of bluish-purple pus seeping from between the folds of Earl Sawyer's scaly skin, which he will do his best to keep concealed. The condition is bizarre and unsettling and anyone witnessing the affliction should test Stability at Difficulty 4 for a 2 point loss, doubled for anyone without **Medicine** or First Aid.

(also **Biology** and **Library Use**).

**Reassurance.** "I think the ghost of my dad is talking to me now. He died in fire, on this ship, and the atomic fire woke him up. I can hear his voice, whispering to me. He says I'm his son, and he's proud of me. And he wants me to save his people from the spider-ghosts."

### Sawyer's Books

Among Sawyer's possessions are an abstruse physics journal and a book of poetry.

**Physics.** Sawyer owns a copy of the journal *Physical Review*, vol. 47, no. 10, from 1935. It has been stamped "Miskatonic University Library." Inside is a well-known three-page article by "A. Einstein, B. Podolsky, and N. Rosen," which argues that quantum mechanics is an incomplete description of reality because of the contradiction engendered by the fact that in quantum mechanics, knowledge of one physical quantity precludes knowledge of a second, which means that "(1) either the description of reality given by the wave function in quantum mechanics is not complete or (2) these two quantities cannot have simultaneous reality." However, it is clear that it is possible to make predictions about one physical quantity based on its interaction with another, therefore the latter possibility is false. Ergo, one must conclude "that the description of reality as given by a quantum wave function is not complete." In the margins, Sawyer has written "The observing consciousness is the center of all calculation."

**Library Use, 1 pt spend (leverage: Sawyer's copy of *Azathoth and Other Horrors*).** Derby's book is discussed on p. 105 of the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules. This thin book is a clue tome for this adventure. The entire book may be pored over in an hour; the spend obtains the clue after a few moments of flipping through its contents. It was published in 1919 by Golden Goblin Press; the book plate reads, "EX LIBRIS" with "Josiah Whateley" filled in with pen in elegant letters. A dog-eared page contains an underlined stanza in a poem called "The Opener of the Way" that seems to be about a dream-journey through a starry void. The poem's narrator, in a state of anxious dread, ascends the spiraling stairs of a stone tower where a shrouded figure waits behind a shimmering veil. He knows that when he reaches the top he will be tested, and if he succeeds he will gain the Key to the Gate but if he fails he will be doomed. Finally he comes to a despairing epiphany: he has already failed the test, and the endless climb is his doom. In the margins, someone has written "my dream!!!" and "Yog-Sothoth?" The handwriting is not Sawyer's, as **Cryptography** confirms.

**Cthulhu Mythos.** The poem is clearly an allegorical reference to the spell for summoning Yog-Sothoth, the Outer God co-terminous with all time and space, who is sometimes called "The Opener of the Way" by sorcerors who wish to look upon or even journey to distant places and times. The summoning requires the ascent of a high tower or hill as part of the ritual.

### The Absent Father

There are ways of finding out more about Sawyer's father.

**Library Use (leverage: Sawyer's father, 1951 *Bairoko* fire).** The ship's logbooks show that five men died in that fire three years ago, but none of



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them had Earl Sawyer's last name. But one of the men who died was from Sawyer's hometown in Massachusetts. His name was Josiah Whateley, and he was 27 when he died. So this Whateley couldn't have been Sawyer's father—he would have only been 9 years old when Sawyer was born.

### Oral History (leverage: asking Bodine about Josiah Whateley).

Joe Whateley served on the *Bairoko* from 1946 until he died in 1951. He was on the hangar deck when the fire started. I wrote a letter to his wife, but I never heard back from her. They had a little boy, too—he must be eight or nine by now. During Operation Crossroads, we spent a lot of time together out on the surviving ships in the lagoon, working on decontamination details in our shirtsleeves.

### The Powers of Paradox

As a temporal singularity that serves as the strange attractor defining a closed time-like curve, Earl Sawyer will increasingly manifest some strange and paradoxical abilities. Witnessing these paradoxical events subjects the witness to a Mythos shock. In all cases, Sawyer will be aware of the paradox albeit—and this is important—not wholly in control of the paradox-causing phenomenon. He can try to explain what is happening, but the concepts are difficult to articulate.

**Two Places At Once.** It is possible for Sawyer to appear seemingly simultaneously in two places at once, so that an investigator who leaves him pleading on the deck for a slot upon the helicopter will be surprised to notice Sawyer sitting next to him when the bird is in the air. Alternately, he can appear in two different scenes taking place more or less simultaneously. Noticing the anomaly engenders a 4 pt Stability test (Difficulty 5). If the two versions are brought close together, suddenly there will be only one again,

or both will disappear (and Sawyer will show up somewhere else).

**Sample Explanation.** *"How funny! You're the one who said no, and we're sitting here together! You should be the one who said yes! Our wave-forms are tangled up! Just sit tight; they'll diverge again. I'm sure they will."*

**Particle or Wave?** Conversely, Sawyer will be absent at times even if there's no way he could have departed—for example, he was locked in the brig. Noticing this engenders a 3 pt Stability test (Difficulty 5).

**Sample Explanation.** *"I didn't get out of the brig. I'm—I'm—I'm close enough to where I was. Do you understand? The world is spinning; the sun is moving with us around it. We're always moving through space, all of us But I'm the only one who is aware of all my vectors. So my position is fundamentally indeterminate. It can't be known. That's a law of nature."*

**Schroedinger's Cat.** Sawyer can both be killed and not be killed. For example, if he is shot dead, his lifeless body will fall to the ground while another version of himself appears after a brief delay, continuing the course of action in which he was previously engaged, or carrying out another task as if he'd already completed the one which was interrupted. Witnessing this engenders a 5 pt Stability test at Difficulty 5 (this includes the Stability cost for witnessing but not committing the murder).

**Sample Explanation.** *"He shot me, yes. He shot me—in that world-line. But we're not just in that world-line; we're in this one too. Here he missed. Over there he never pulled the trigger. There's even a tiny, tiny space-time volume where the gun blew up in his hand, and he's the one who died. All those possibilities*

*are not just possibilities; they're enacted somewhere and somehow. The waveforms won't collapse."*

**Déjà Vu All Over Again.** Sawyer can anticipate actions those around him take—except those involving radioactive materials or atomic weapons, regarding which he has a blind spot. This anticipation takes the form of Sawyer "remembering" future events as if they'd already happened, but with the knowledge that they are about to happen again in the not-too-distant future. He will seldom interfere with those anticipated events, but he will predict them as a way of proving that he knows what he's talking about.

**Sample Explanation.** *"How did I know what would happen? It's no parlor trick. We're in a temporal recursion, and I remember this part."*

In practice, use this ability to create mild paranoia among the investigators (a 1 or 2 pt Stability test) for uncannily predicting events. To the extent that Sawyer's predictions involve the investigators, they are *hard drivers* (see *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 73).

### Into Something Rich and Strange

More fearsome still, Sawyer can initiate a horrific transformation on anyone who has been exposed to significant amounts of radiation. By grasping or touching someone for a few moments and concentrating—the victim will feel a strange tingling or burning, requiring a 3 pt Stability test (Difficulty 5)—he can force them to make a Health test against a Difficulty equal to their current Dose (see above). In combat, make this *player-facing* (see *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 125): allow an Athletics test vs. Difficulty 4 (+1 if Athletics is 8 or greater) to evade Sawyer's grasp. Fleeing points may be spent if the investigator is in fact running away.



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## The Son of Yog-Sothoth

NPCs succeed or fail at the Health test as necessary for dramatic purposes. Those who succeed pull away; those who fail feel *something in their very cells* responding to Sawyer's touch.

### Sample Explanation.

*"Quantum theory is incomplete; Einstein said so himself. The missing piece is the mind itself; it is mind that informs matter and energy and gives them shape. There is energy pulsing inside you, that you absorbed from the bomb blast. All I'm doing is using my mind to shape that energy into a new pattern, a pattern that my father showed me."*

The transformation will have the following physical effects:

**Stage 1.** Over the course of the next twelve hours, the victim's hair falls out. His teeth and nails loosen. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 3 pt loss (minimum 1).

**Stage 2.** Between twelve and twenty-four hours, the victim's teeth and nails fall out. His skin becomes wrinkled and saggy, and he grows physically weak (treat as hurt) as his bones—including his skull—soften. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 5 pt loss (minimum 2).

**Stage 3.** Between twenty-four and forty-eight hours, the victim is in enormous pain (treat as severely wounded) as his body twists itself into impossible shapes and loses its human form. The legs and genitalia retract into the body, which swells enormously and becomes a wide rugose cone, with a heavily muscled ventral foot as its base. Parts of the skin thicken to form a sturdy carapace. The arms become ropy tentacles, and the fingers on each hand fuse to become a heavy pincer. The head loses its shape (with the brain receding into the body cavity)



and extends to become four tentacle-like stalks, one with a pair of eyes, two with a single fan-shaped ear each, and one with a toothless maw. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 7 pt loss (minimum 3).

NPCs who undergo the change will become despondent, angry, and morose by turns. Some will be able to point to Sawyer as the author of their situation, and may become violent. The CO's inclination will be to keep them sedated, although as the Captain's personality is overridden by Theotides, he may order them to be drilled on deck as a special

"boarding party."

As the change takes place, an investigator may opt to sacrifice Sanity in order to restore Stability, with each 1 point of Sanity lost providing 2 points of Stability. Witnessing the teratomorphous transformation needs a Stability test at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 4 point loss (minimum 1). An investigator who survives the transformation with Sanity above zero and Stability above -12 is playable, albeit monstrous.

Note to the Keeper: There are a variety of ways of keeping a PC investigator



### A Typical Cone-Being

The transformed cone-being gains +15 Health and +7 Scuffling, in addition to gaining 5 pts of Armor from its thick carapace and a pincer attack that does +5 damage but can only be used at point-blank range. NPC cone-beings will thus typically have on the order of 20 Health and 12 Scuffling. Luckily, its gastropodous movement mode makes it less maneuverable than a human being; the creature has a tough time with stairs and ladders—though it can move quickly when it wishes.

involved in the game even though he is undergoing the transformation. The first is to enable him to be treated with First Aid or **Medicine** to ignore the pain, with the change happening in discrete punctuated bursts at appropriate—and Stability-testing!—moments. Another is to make that character the primary recipient of dreams, visions, and messages from the Yithians. Alternately, give PCs more chances to *resist* the change, making a new Health roll at each threshold to delay the onset of the next stage, perhaps aided, enabled, or guaranteed by **Medicine** or **Pharmacy** spends.

### Friend of the Flying Polyps

Sawyer knows how to *Contact Flying Polyps*, and they will recognize him as one of their ilk: an instrumentality of Yog-Sothoth itself. If he befriends an investigator—as he is especially likely to try to do to one in whom he has initiated the transformation—he can teach him the warbling call that will summon them from their vault beneath the lagoon of Rongerik, at a cost of 3 Stability and a Stability Test of Difficulty 4.



## THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

*This scene permits the investigators to begin to make inquiries about the strange events that happened during Shot Bravo and its immediate aftermath. Up until now, they have been reacting to what you have thrown at them; now they gain some measure of control over the direction events take. Nonetheless, you must take care to keep up the pressure and sense of urgency; the tools at your disposal include the insidious effects of radiation, unsettling reports from monitoring stations—or the lack thereof—and visions or fugues among the crew.*

Begin the scene by determining the effects of radiation exposure on the crew in general and the investigators in particular, and then allow them to pursue what they see as their duties in the current situation; use NPC officers and NCOs to give them orders that serve to position them where they are able to gather information. Make sure that at least one of the radiation victims has begun to undergo the transformation into a cone-being by the end of the scene. End the scene to signify that decontamination operations are complete and the fallout cloud has settled, making it possible to conduct operations off the ship. This is probably anywhere between 24 and 36 hours after the bomb blast.

### The Dangers of Radiation Exposure

Have each investigator test Health versus a Difficulty equal to their final Dose. On a success, the character suffers no lasting ill effects other than perhaps some superficial burns. On a failure, the investigator suffers from radiation sickness (treat as *hurt*) and experiences bouts of nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, fatigue, and diarrhea for about 1 hour per point of Dose, and then seems to recover. First Aid at a Difficulty equal to the Dose or a 1 pt

**Medicine** or **Pharmacy** spend can halve this recovery time.

Make a roll to determine the exposure level for non-player sailors with whom the investigators dealt during the scene: Sawyer, the crawling man, the gibberish-spouter, and the jumper (if he survives). In addition to these men, about 12 other sailors need to be treated for radiation injuries of varying degrees of severity; give them -1 to this roll. Note that the jumper should probably be automatically assigned third degree exposure.

- **1 or 2. First Degree Exposure.**

Relatively minor superficial burns. Difficulty 3 to treat with First Aid; failure has no effect.

- **3 or 4. Second Degree**

**Exposure.** Moderate radiation sickness; the victim is *hurt*. Difficulty 4 to treat with First Aid; failure means that the condition worsens.

- **5 or 6. Third Degree**

**Exposure.** Extensive radiation sickness; the victim is *severely injured*. Difficulty 5 to treat with First Aid; failure means that the victim dies.

**The Radiation Victims.** Any successful use of First Aid on one or more of the radiation victims provides a dedicated pool point of **Streetwise** that can be used to learn about any gossip or rumors spreading among the crew. Some of the radiation victims may report strange sensations or uncanny visions; **Medicine** or **Library Use** can tell an investigator that such hallucinations are not typically associated with radiation exposure.

- **Uncanny Vision 1 (Floating**

**Core Clue).** First of all, the sun filled up half the sky and it was red like blood. There was a horde of things like giant tarantulas in a big



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Immediate Aftermath

bowl-shaped amphitheatre, and they all were singing in a weird spider-language. And in the area in the middle of the amphitheatre there was a big empty glass cylinder with some metallic machinery attached and thick cables leading away from it. One of the spiders went up and turned on the machine, and the spider singing got louder, and the glass cylinder seemed to fill up with a silvery emptiness. Then something happened, and the spiders started to run away, and that's when I came to.

- **Uncanny Vision 2 (Floating Core Clue).** I was in a big black castle, but it wasn't really a castle. And there were these knights in the castle, but they really didn't look like knights; I can't really remember what they looked like, exactly. And the knights had been grooming these things that were like huge black dragons, and you could tell that the dragons really loved the knights. But it was like someone flicked a switch and the knights *changed*; they started to run away from the dragons, who started to chase them. And that's all I remember.
- **Uncanny Vision 3 (Floating Core Clue).** There were dinosaurs, big ones, and these things like giant walking slugs with lobster claws were riding them across a swamp toward a big black tower. They were following a road next to these power lines that led back to the tower. And even though it was daytime, there was a bright star over the tower, like a comet.

**Sawyer.** Sawyer imagined he heard his father calling him, and thought he saw someone—maybe an investigator—on top of the island, near the antenna mast. Note that a severely injured Sawyer can be laying here while another Sawyer is

somewhere else aboard the ship.

**The Crawling Man.** This is Seaman Schultz; an intense, bookish young man from the state of Oregon. "It was like Kafka, man! I was a *cockroach*—no, I was a *hive* of them; I was *all of them*, the way you're your head and your hands and your heart. And I was with a *bunch of other hives*, or whatever you call them, and we were all trying to build something like a sculpture, and all the while making this drawn-out droning noise like, 'saaa-maaa . . . saaa-maaa . . . saaa-maaa.' That's all I know."

**The Gibberish-Spouter.** This is Seaman Clark, a big but laid-back country boy from a small town in Georgia. "Well," he says, "I was in a fancy palace in some foreign country. Everyone there was as black as the ace of spades, and there was a huge fat man who looked like a judge sitting on a throne watching me, and his guards had mean scars on their faces and giant cleavers on their belts. I guess I was on trial or something because they had these wooden handcuffs on me, and I looked at the back of my hands and *I was coal black too*. And then one of 'em came up and started shouting at me and waving something in my face, but I couldn't understand what all he was saying."

**The Jumper.** This is Seaman McWhirter from Long Beach, California. If his body is even recovered, he will probably be too weak to speak, possibly comatose, for hours after the initial event. Then he will begin to babble without regaining consciousness, and eventually lapse into a coma.

- **Floating Core Clue.** "I'm telling you . . . I'm not one of them. I'm a man! I'm human! I wasn't one of them! I didn't try to bind you! You're a god, I know you're a god! I wouldn't do that! Men don't do that! Please! Don't! Please! Lower your veil! Do not show

me the Voorish Sign! Ah! Your silver spheres! Your silver spheres! They're so *beautiful*!"

Someone who attends closely to his babbling for several hours gains +1 **Cthulhu Mythos** as they hear him plead with cosmic beings whose god-like indifference to humanity is the only thing that saves us from their ineffable malignity and who seem to be built into the very fabric of the universe. Such a one may also piece together the **Voorish Sign** (see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 120), which renders the invisible visible to the caster. It requires a Stability test of Difficulty 5 as well as the expenditure of 1 point of Stability and 1 pt of Sense Trouble or **Evidence Collection**.

### Soon...

After three hours, the *Bairoko* is about 60 miles due south of its previous position. Note the change on the Area of Operations map. The effect of the contamination from the fallout is to reduce the Operational Readiness of the ship by 3; also note this change.

Then allow the investigators to take action as they desire or feel necessary; push the Drives of those who are uncertain as to what they should do, or have an NPC officer assign them to some duty.

### Decontamination Operations

The *Bairoko* is equipped for decontamination operations, with personnel showers and detergent-spraying hoses occupying a portion of the hangar deck. Some investigators may volunteer or be assigned to decon duty. For every six hours of such duty they perform, each can make a skill roll at Difficulty 4 which, if successful, contributes +1 to an Operational Readiness roll by the highest ranking investigator at Difficulty 5 to restore one point of Operational Readiness.



Appropriate skills include Athletics (energetically scrubbing decks and other exposed surfaces), Electrical Repair (firing up and maintaining generators and similar equipment), First Aid (treating radiation casualties), Mechanical Repair (setting up and operating decon equipment like hoses, showers, and sprayers), Sense Trouble (using detection equipment to go over places others may have missed). Allow appropriate spends to reduce the Difficulty of one type of skill roll by one (e.g., a 1 pt **Medicine** spend may reduce all First Aid rolls to Difficulty 3).

**Bureaucracy.** Readiness has been affected by the recent incident. Many crewman are complaining of headaches, dizziness, and blurred vision. There are also numerous incidents of people failing to report for duty or showing up late and not remembering where they had been or why they were late.

**Streetwise.** Don't let anybody know you heard this from me, but one of the cooks in the mess section is from Kentucky. He rigged up a still and is selling moonshine after hours. He's making money hand over fist, now—so many guys went crazy during Shot Bizarro, they need a stiff belt to get them through (also **Cop Talk**). **Streetwise, 1 pt spend.** The investigator obtains a bottle of high-proof potato hooch. He can choose to go easy on it, gaining +1 on Stability tests but -1 on all other General ability tests, or go on a bender, automatically succeeding on Stability tests but taking -2 on all other General ability tests and losing the ability to make investigative spends until he sleeps it off. The former effect lasts 24 hours. The former only lasts 12, but then the character must sleep for at least 6 hours and then make a Health roll at Difficulty 4 or be hung over, suffering all the effects of being on a bender and automatically *failing* Stability tests for 12 hours. Having made the connection via **Streetwise**, later purchases can use

### Bargaining or Credit Rating.

### Scuttlebutt Aboard the *Bairoko*

You can use these rumors as incidents involving the investigators or as things they find out about later.

- **Rumor 1.** Right after the detonation, an engineer's mate went crazy and started busting stuff up, shouting something about being "the king of frozen Lomar." He's in the brig now. **Follow-Up:** Seaman Lorenzo is still in the brig, and he still thinks he's Kirriyari, High King of frozen Lomar, where once he did battle 'gainst monstrous white-furred half-men and the degenerate serpent-creatures whose mighty ancestors had long ago ruled vanished Valusia. He can tell how he was imprisoned in a demon's body in a dark tower with other men from distant ages and times—one of whom, a magician from the land of Stralia at the time of the fall of the West and rise of the Cruel Empire of Tsan Chan, taught him English. In the tower he was made to record as much as he could tell about Lomar and its people, and he is thankful for his freedom from that durance vile. "Now release me from this cage and I will lead you into glorious battle 'gainst your foemen!" he promises. "We will crush their skulls and mock the lamentations of their women!"
- **Rumor 2.** A rash of pilferage from machine shops and maintenance areas struck right after the bomb blast. **Follow-Up:** The missing items vanished from widely separated areas of the ship over the course of several hours. The items missing include copper wiring, batteries, replacement parts for radar equipment, and electrician's tools. A canvassing of

the crew (spend **Interrogation**) might produce a witness who will remember having seen Machinists' Mate Lemoine acting funny—"like he was sleepwalking, I dunno"—near a machine parts storage locker in the Engine Room from which some of the missing items disappeared. Searching Lemoine's locker uncovers a pair of needlenose pliers with identification marks from the missing tool kit. His sectionmates in the "A-gang" (auxiliary equipment mechanics) aver that he was gone for several hours right after the blast, when they were up helping with decon ops. Lemoine insists that he was framed, although he doesn't remember what he was doing during that time. Hidden among some junk parts in the A-gang machine shop is the thing Lemoine put together, which looks like a cargo-cult raygun. Here's the thing: it will actually work. Treat as a cut-rate lightning gun with 16 charges (see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules p. 135) that must be allowed to geometrically "build up" its charge round by round (so it can be fired each round for +1 damage 16 times, every other round for +2 eight times, every third round for +4 four times, every fourth round for +8 twice, and after five rounds of build-up for +16 damage once). Anyone with Electrical Repair can figure out how to fire it using Firearms, but it is bulky and awkward to carry. If there is not enough charge left, the whole thing shorts out noisily and must be repaired and recharged.

- **Rumor 3.** The CO is rattled. He's losing his grip and talking crazy in the command center. **Follow-Up:** Captain Hogle has started to give orders in *koine* Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Hellenistic world, and then correct himself. As the adventure goes on, he will



## Anomalous Sightings

increasingly take on the personality of Theotides, an ambitious general of the Greco-Bactrian domain founded by Alexander the Great (in what is now Afghanistan) while retaining less and less of Hogle's basic knowledge. Theotides is cruel, manipulative, and cunning, liable to order extravagant punishments like flogging; the effect of this personality change will be to render Hogle relatively immune to persuasion via

**Bureaucracy** and **Law** and more susceptible to **Credit Rating** ("This is how it's done here, sir") and **Assess Honesty** ("I know you're not who you say you are!").

### Monitoring the Signals

The command and communication facilities of the CIC, Flight Ops, and Bridge are taking in information; the *Bairoko* has been ordered to gather information to enable the Atomic Energy Commission scientists to figure out what happened; all planned nuclear bomb testing has been suspended until further notice. Some of the information needed can be obtained by investigators going out and getting it.

To the extent possible, give the investigators input into the process of deciding what the ship and its crew will do next. Have their officers solicit their input or ask their advice in directed scenes intended to underscore the bafflement of the leadership in the face of all this cosmic weirdness.

**Floating Core Clue.** Sonar readings show that the blast produced unanticipated seismic activity in this area.

- **Geology.** A tsunami warning should be issued for the Castle AO based on the strength of the seismic activity.

**Floating Core Clue.** Weather balloon

readings show that the winds in the area have picked up strength unexpectedly and changed direction, blowing strongly to the east.

- **Physics.** Analyzing the meteorological data reveals that the fallout cloud has swept over Ailinginae, Rongelap, and Rongerik in addition to Bikini Atoll.
- **Biology (leverage: meteorological analysis).** Until the fallout settles, it is highly dangerous to move around in the affected areas. It will be okay to conduct limited operations beginning with Bikini at H+12, Ailinginae and Rongelap at H+30, and Rongerik at H+36. Personnel on those islands should be evacuated as soon as operating conditions permit; in the meantime, they should stay indoors and try to avoid contact with contaminated material (also **Medicine**).

**Floating Core Clue.** There is a lot of noise in the radar return. Zig-zagging ghost contacts pop up and disappear with disturbing regularity.

- **Electrical Repair.** There is no detectable problem with the radar system. Taking it apart and reassembling it, swapping out potentially defective parts—nothing works. The ghost contacts continue.
- **Evidence Collection.** The ghost contacts seem to be centered on Rongerik.

**Floating Core Clue.** The monitoring station on Rongerik is requesting evacuation at the earliest possible time. They are holding out in their shielded room, but space is tight and supplies are running low.

**Floating Core Clue.** The control bunker on Bikini has been incommunicado since the blast.

- **Bureaucracy.** Standard operating procedure calls for personnel in the bunker to remain in a specially shielded chamber until the all clear is given.

**Floating Core Clue.** The Atomic Energy Commission scientists now on Kwajalein are anxious to get out to Bikini and start taking measurements, but General Clarkson has concerns about the dangers that may be present.

## ANOMALOUS SIGHTINGS

*In this scene, the investigators have more-or-less free rein to investigate what's been taking place in the Castle Area of Operations while they have been waiting it out aboard the Bairoko. Hitherto, the menace has been creepy rather than deadly; here that changes.*

Begin the scene at any point in time after the completion of decontamination operations. If the investigators have not initiated planning for a recon or biological sampling mission themselves, have such orders come down the chain of command. Allow investigators to decide if they will stay on the *Bairoko* or go on such a mission, depending on their inclinations and sense of narrative plausibility. Investigators who desire to go but cannot devise a plausible excuse may spend Investigative abilities (e.g., **Bureaucracy**) to warrant their inclusion.

This write-up assumes that investigators will wait until it is more or less "safe" to visit the affected area before leaving the ship; if they insist on getting off the ship before it is safe, increase their individual Dose by 1 point per hour for



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## Castle Bravo



the first 12 hours following the blast, 1 point per 6 hours for the second 12 hours after, and 1 point per 12 hours for the third 12 hours after. Have them make a new Health roll as described above at the end of each twelve-hour period. After 36 hours, only long-term exposure and ingestion risks remain; i.e., don't live there and don't eat anything grown there.

In a 4-hour convention slot, you will not have time to touch upon all of these incidents. End the scene when the investigators who have left return to

the ship from the mission to Rongerik.

### In the Sky

In transit to one or another destination, have the pilot make a Sense Trouble roll at Difficulty 5. If he succeeds, he may make a Piloting roll at Difficulty 5 to avoid colliding with a half-seen shape that seems to roil the air, a vague shimmering greyness within which dark blotches evanesce. If he fails either roll, the craft strikes the flying polyp with a loud crash; make a Piloting roll at Difficulty 4 to ditch safely in

the water with only minor bruises. Failing this second Piloting roll means that everyone aboard the craft takes 1d6-3 Health damage on impact (roll individually).

If the aircraft stays in the air, the pilot may spot the creature streaking northeastward (or, generally in the direction of Rongerik). If the pilot gives chase, do this: Each round, the pilot must first Sense Trouble (Difficulty 4). If he fails, he must deal with the buffeting cross-winds summoned by the fleeing polyp by rolling his Piloting versus a Difficulty of 5 to avoid taking 1d6-1 structural damage from the shaking and twisting; the aircraft can take 10 such damage points. After these preliminaries, the pilot must then make his Piloting check versus a Difficulty of 4 to stay on the polyp's tail; on a failure, the polyp gets away—however, it will be making a beeline for Rongerik, so that's something. Allow other investigators to help, e.g., by making a Sense Trouble roll at Difficulty 4 to give the Pilot +1 on a single roll, by using Mechanical Repair or Electrical Repair similarly to field-repair some of the damage (restoring 1-3 points, say), and so forth. Call for Stability tests when the flying polyp is spotted (2 pts, Difficulty 5), when the aircraft first takes damage (3 pts, Difficulty 4), and when it hits the water (3 pts, Difficulty 4).

If the pilot makes three successful checks to stay on the polyp's tail, the pilot reaches Rongerik atoll in time to see it descend over the lagoon.

If the aircraft ends up in the water, the crew is probably "rescued" by the *Lucky Dragon*, a Japanese fishing boat that has inadvertently strayed into the area.

### The Bunker at Bikini

The devastation on the atoll is considerable. The whole thing is covered with gray ash, and much of the vegetation has been burned away.



**Biology** observations will confirm the general picture of great ecological destruction. The control site has been devastated. Not much remains standing.

The control bunker is in an underground chamber built with reinforced concrete and shielded with lead, its entrance located on the far side of the main island away from the site of the detonation (at the end of long jetty, now in ruins). Propped up against the door of the bunker is a man dying of radiation poisoning, incontinent, too weak to move, and bleeding from his nose, ears, and eyes. It is *Sawyer*! At least, a version of Sawyer from an alternate world-line where his transfer to the *Bairoko* wasn't approved and he remained on Bikini. Test Stability at Difficulty 5 for 4 points for the paradoxical and grisly nature of this find.

"They turned into monsters," he gasps. "Fallout got into the ventilation system, and they got sick. I tried to help them, but they went mad. Don't go in there." He dies messily and painfully without saying much more, although a **Reassurance** spend may coax him to provide the access code for the bunker door.

The bunker is sealed. It requires **Lockpicking** or Explosives (Difficulty 4) to get open it up, absent the access code. Inside the bunker, a narrow corridor with smashed decon gear leads to a control room with now inoperative monitoring equipment. **Evidence Collection** allows an investigator to notice trails of dried residue crisscrossing the room and leading to the living areas beyond; **Biology** will suggest the mucus-producing glands of gastropods, which lay trails to ease their passage across rough surfaces. In the center of the room is the dismembered corpse of *another* Sawyer, ripped messily apart as if literally torn limb from limb. Test Stability (Difficulty 5) for 4 points.

Further in, inside the wreckage of the mess hall/kitchen area, the investigators are attacked by about four cone-beings who have been hiding behind overturned tables, stovetops, and so forth; some are still wearing tattered and now blood-stained rags that were once labcoats. Sense Trouble at Difficulty 4 to avoid the ambush. Everyone should test Stability at Difficulty 5 to avoid a 3 point loss (minimum 1). Anyone who fails the roll may be attacked; roll Athletics at Difficulty 4 to dodge the pincers that seek to grab them as the creatures surge forward; failure means they've been grabbed and are about to be pulled apart by the inhuman strength of the creatures. Some characters may be attacked by more than one cone-being; if Sawyer is with the investigators—and maybe he ought to be—the cone-beings will concentrate on him. Characters may now act; those who Sensed Trouble are at close range while those who did not are at point-blank. Those who avoided the pincers may act freely; those who have been grabbed may only try to escape (test Athletics at Difficulty 5). After the first round, those who have been grabbed are rended by the pincers holding them; make a Health roll at Difficulty 3, +2 Difficulty for each additional cone-being who assists in the rending; someone who is already caught may be automatically grabbed by another cone-being.

The cone-beings will not pursue past the control room—at least, for now. Note that these are the scientists who once manned the bunker, transformed by Sawyer's manipulation of the radioactive contamination of their bodies into monstrous form and now crazed with despair and horror. If a corpse is obtained, an autopsy will reveal the distortions of human anatomy within the alien carapace.

### Evacuating Rongerik

Rongerik is an uninhabited atoll is twenty-five miles east of Rongelap. It is the site of a small, temporary U.S. station. It is currently occupied by about two dozen scientists from the Atomic Energy Commission (A.E.C.), holed up in a sealed room in their monitoring station since the fallout warning.

**Biology.** The fish in the lagoon seem to have withstood the increased radiation levels very well; we're not seeing the same sort of die-off here that we've seen at Bikini and Eniwetok in previous tests.

- **Biology, 1 pt spend.** Even without the radiation, these fish aren't edible; their flesh is slightly toxic.

**Geology.** Naval charts show that the floor of the lagoon is concave and steeply sloped rather than convex and shallow (also **Library Use**).

**History.** The islanders who left Bikini Atoll before Operation Crossroads in 1946 first came here to Rongerik before settling elsewhere.

**Oral History.** The scientists have heard strange whistling noises coming from outside; they are eager to get off the island.

In the center of the lagoon, a black cone of what seems to be cooling lava has emerged from the water. There seems to be an opening in its center.

An investigator who wants to explore the islet in the middle of the lagoon certainly may; abandoned outrigger canoes may be employed to get to the warm outcropping. The hole seems to go very far underground. Have the character make a Stability test at Difficulty 4 versus a 2 pt loss as he descends into the inky blackness. To represent the technical challenge of the exploration, require a series of rolls



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## Castle Bravo

involving Preparedness, Mechanical Repair, and Athletics where the first roll at Difficulty 4 increases or decreases by one the Difficulty of the next roll, which in turn affects the final roll, whose result indicates whether or not the investigator takes 1d6 damage from still-cooling lava and smoky fumes. An **Outdoorsman** spend may negate a single failure. Eventually, the investigator arrives in what seems to be a wide cavern pocked with regular holes. Make a 2 pt Stability test at Difficulty 4 as a weird whistling sound begins. A 1 pt **Evidence Collection** spend allows the character to notice a piece of fibrous matting on the ground. The investigator will begin to be harassed by winds, and should be induced to flee.

In daylight, the fibrous matting proves to have faded text on it—in an investigator's own handwriting! It says,

*Kingston-Brown calls the [illegible] the Son of Yog-Sothoth, and hopes that the last Yithian can collapse the waveform by a sufficiently powerful invocation of the Saaamaaa ritual. Otherwise, we [illegible] doomed.*

Encourage players to roll Stability tests if they are at all freaked out.

### Lucky Dragon Number Five

This is a Japanese fishing boat with a load of tuna and a crew of 12, many of whom show signs of radiation poisoning. They are anxious to get back to Japan, because one of them is very sick, but they will seek medical help for themselves if they make contact with the *Bairoko* or its crew. In real life, the *Lucky Dragon* made it back to Japan before anyone in the Operation Castle AO even knew they'd been there. Because of their irradiation, they make ideal subjects for transformation into cone-beings.

### Rongelap and Ailinginae

These two island atolls have also been affected by fallout. They are inhabited by about 150 Marshallese men, women, and children, and at some point the United States military is going to remember that they need to be moved somewhere safe. This evacuation can take place off-camera (i.e., without investigator participation), and serve mainly as a source of people to be transformed into cone-beings by the Son of Yog-Sothoth.

### The Problem With Castle Bravo

Investigators who care about why the bomb was so powerful should be able to gather readings from instrumentation on Bikini and Rongerik as well as transmissions from Eniwetok and Kwajalein and figure it out. The explanation should be able to be parlayed into credibility with the higher-ups of Operation Castle, including General Clarkson.

**Floating Bonus Clue.** Instruments reveal that the yield of Shot Bravo was 15 megatons, about three times the expected yield. The fireball was about 4 miles in diameter, and the initial mushroom cloud rose 10 miles into the air. The *Bairoko* was actually under the edge of the dissipating mushroom cloud when the fallout hit.

- **Physics.** The yield calculations for the “Shrimp” device used in Castle Bravo assume that the lithium-7 isotope in the lithium deuteride used as fusion fuel was inert; however, if it too were fusible, then the yield numbers would look about like the numbers we actually saw. The scientists who built the thing probably should have known better.

## SHADOWS...

*Use this information to give investigators the resources they need to “solve” the mystery; more precisely, to give them the opportunity to gain resources that will enable them to take effective action against the Son of Yog-Sothoth.*

### We, In Some Strange Powers Employ . . .

At a point after the investigators have realized that there is something very, very strange about Sawyer, have an investigator black out for a moment—maybe make him lose a round of action—and then return to his senses. The point of this blackout is to narratively justify the Yithians knowing what the characters do.

Later, another fugue will occur. This takes the form of a series of *hard drivers* for an investigator (not necessarily the same one who blacked out). If the lightning gun once hidden in the “A Gang” workshop in the Engine Room spaces has not been discovered (see **Scuttlebutt Aboard the Bairoko**, above), the urge is to go down there and search. If it has been moved, the urge is to obtain it from its new location. If the lightning gun is not accessible, the urge is to obtain a weapon of some kind.

In any case, once the investigator has a weapon, a new urge strikes, acting as a separate hard driver. It is to find Sawyer and attack him with the weapon as hard as possible while chanting the words, “saaa-maaa lo no taaa nay” over and over again.

This chant is a version of the seventh line of the Saaamaaa ritual (see the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, p. 124), but use these rules for casting it. First, the investigator loses 1 Sanity as he becomes tentatively cognizant of a greater non-Euclidean totality outside the visible world around him. Next, use the difference between the energy of the attack—i.e.,



## ...Move In A Rigorous Line

the damage roll—and Sawyer’s Inertia of 24 to determine the target numbers for a contest to “collapse the temporal singularity” represented by Sawyer. The investigator makes his ritual roll first, each of which costs 1 Stability. Keep rolling until someone fails. Note that it is possible for an attack to “kill” Sawyer (at least temporarily) but fail to collapse the singularity.

Damage Minus Inertia	Ritual Roll	Inertia Roll
+7 or more	auto succeed	auto fail
+4 to +6	2+	6+
+2 or +3	3+	5+
-1 to +1	4+	4+
-3 or -2	5+	3+
-6 to -4	6+	2+
-7 or less	auto fail	auto succeed

Note that if the ritual succeeds, even if Sawyer is not killed he is rendered powerless—that is, only human. But the numbers are deliberately crooked so that this attempt to collapse the singularity will probably fail. To drive home the point, the next time Sawyer sees the investigator, he is scornful. “Tell your spider-ghost masters it wasn’t enough,” he will say. “Not enough power.”

Most players will get the point: they have the Saaamaaa ritual—perhaps you will require a spend to allow the investigator to recall it to mind correctly—so now all they need is a sufficiently powerful energy source to successfully collapse the singularity. The words “atom bomb” need not ever escape your lips.

If the singularity collapses, Sawyer is vulnerable. If he is killed, the only things that the investigators then have to deal with are the transformed cone-beings and the flying polyps.

## ...Move In A Rigorous Line

*The following may be a memory recovered via Reassurance or Psychoanalysis following an investigator’s blackout, or simply be inserted at the appropriate time.*

One of the investigators who has been affected by the strange fugue finds himself in a cylindrical pit of black stone, beneath a vaulted ceiling of the same material. Some sort of machinery has been suspended over the pit, all fluted glass and silver metal, with dark cables snaking up from it. On the floor of the pit is a scroll of tough fibrous material.

The investigator realizes that he is in a non-human body shaped like a rugose cone; he has two pincer arms and his eyes are mounted on a tentacle emerging from the cone’s apex along with three other tentacles bearing ears and a mouth. Test Stability (Difficulty 5) to avoid a 3 pt loss. He cannot speak; his elongated throat enables him to produce only a sort of gurgling noise.

An oculiferous tentacle peeks over the edge of the pit, and it says something; a modulated trilling that the investigator can’t understand. If the investigator hasn’t read the scroll yet, the creature will gesticulate urgently toward it.

The scroll is written in English.

*My name is Nevil Kingston-Brown. I was born in Sydney, Australia, in the year 2517 AD, ten years before the Tsan Chan completed their assimilation of Europe. By the time*

*I graduated from college, North America had been fully integrated into the Tsan Chan system. By then we knew enough to call it “the Cruel Empire.” Only Australia remained, the last bastion of Western civilization, a fiercely burning ember of a 3000-year-old heritage. I was in grad school, studying physics. My work on higher-order N-dimensional folding secured me a post-doc position at the University of Melbourne. I was on my way to campus when the bombs started to fall; apparently the Tsan Chan were unwilling to continue to deal with Australian intransigence. Fortunately for me, it was at that moment when a Yithian exchanged its consciousness for mine, drawing me 65 million years into my own past into an alien body. The Yithian was not so lucky, however. I can only imagine the creature’s chagrin as the Cruel Empire’s anti-matter bomb vaporized my body in the 26<sup>th</sup> century—its all-too-brief cross-temporal host.*

*With return to my own time impossible, I was granted great privileges among the Yithians, who had been exiled from their home in the far future by a being they call Yog-Sothoth. I learned much of their history and their science.*

*Their host-forms in this era were a pitiful species that had been enslaved by creatures whom the Yithians describe as “flying polyps.” The Yithians were able to subdue the flying polyps, and set about trying to escape from their nightmare exile. They mastered the art of projecting their minds across time and space, and ranged the entire history of the Solar System. Their scouts thought they had found an ideal new home in the sentient cockroach hive-minds who came to dominate the earth 5 million years after my era.*

*But transferring the minds of every*



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*Yithian across 70 million years of time required a great deal of energy. The Yithians had to wait until a giant asteroid—probably the one associated with the K-T boundary event—struck the earth. Channeling the force of the impact with the Saaamaaa ritual, they were able to leap across the ages, finally free of their centuries-long exile—or so they thought.*

*I was left behind, free to read the accumulated wisdom brought back by the Yithian time-scouts, my only companion a Ganymedan polymath named Morquon from 2.5 billion years ago who had been trapped in similar circumstances as mine. One day, however, Morquon's mind was gone; a true Yithian had returned!*

*The inexplicable had happened: the migration was scattered across time and space. We rigged up temporal scouting gear and sent the last Yithian across time and space to understand what had gone wrong. Soon, our research identified mid-20<sup>th</sup> century atomic bomb testing as the site of a temporal singularity that is interfering with the Yithian's cross-temporal migration.*

*My Yithian companion believes that Yog-Sothoth has managed to localize within a persistent temporal loop. He hopes to identify the localization and neutralize it by means of a variation on the Saaamaaa ritual and a crude power source he has covertly constructed. If he fails, then not only is the Yithian migration doomed, but the very fabric of the universe will begin to unravel, permitting those who dwell Outside to make ours their home.*

The creature will gesture at the scroll and then at itself, trying to make clear that it is Nevil Kingston-Brown. If the investigator indicates his peaceful intentions, Kingston-Brown will

operate machinery that unfolds a spiral ramp into the pit. Emerging, the investigator sees a long gallery whose walls are covered with thousands of tiny pigeon-holes, each containing a scroll much like the first.

It is a portion of the Supreme Work of the Great Race of Yith. The investigator can spend **Library Use** to gain dedicated pool points of any Academic skill, including **Cthulhu Mythos**, on a one-for-one basis, reading accounts in any language known to him by people brought to the Yithian library over the ages.

- **Cthulhu Mythos, 1 pt spend (leverage: Yog-Sothoth).** The investigator learns a ritual to call Yog-Sothoth, which requires the caster to stand in a high tower or other elevated place and achieve three “ritual successes” by any of the following means (a) making a Stability test at Difficulty 7, (b) spending 2 points of Occult or Theology, or (c) spending 1 point of Cthulhu Mythos. So, e.g., spending 3 points of Cthulhu Mythos is sufficient to call Yog-Sothoth. Note that spending Cthulhu Mythos reduces the caster's Sanity. Once the Outer God arrives, the caster must designate a human sacrifice. This designation need not be more than a gesture of invitation, and the god must accept the sacrifice so designated. Yog-Sothoth appears as a beautiful congeries of translucent silver spheres within which images of different times and places shimmer.



## ...OUT OF TIME

*In this scene, the time has come for desperate action against the instrumentalities of Yog-Sothoth—his Son, the flying polyps, and the cone-beings. The investigators may or may not know what to do, but it is no matter. They are out of time. This is the climax of the adventure, and you must spring it on them whether they are ready or not.*

Give the investigators a chance to discuss their understanding and intentions. Do they think they know what's going on? Do they have a plan to deal with it? If so, establish the tasks that are required for the plan to succeed, using the *Bairoko* schematic to specify where each investigator needs to be, when he needs to be there, and what he needs to do. If not, let them position themselves on the ship where they want to be for their next set of actions, and then kick things into action.

**Example.** *The investigators' plan is to scuttle the ship so that Sawyer and the cone-beings drown. Chief Walton must go down to the Magazine and rig charges there to blow. He tells everyone else to get off the ship. There is a helicopter on the Flight Deck. Walton needs to spend three rounds prepping the charges, and then make an Explosives roll at Difficulty 4 to determine if the time delay works right. When the charges blow, a second Explosives roll indicates the amount by which the Operational Readiness of the ship is reduced as well as the damage suffered by anyone still on the ship. The other investigators must make Mechanical Repair rolls to do pre-flight checks on the helicopter, the Difficulty depending on how many rounds they take to do them: one round, one roll at Difficulty 6; two rounds, two rolls at Difficulty 4; three rounds, three rolls at Difficulty 2. You put everyone on*



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## ... Out of Time

*the Hangar Deck and begin the scene.*

It is your job now to provide them with some heavy-duty adversity, with a dramatic and action-packed finish as a reward for the players' willingness to wade in the Mythos weirdness. In general, you'll describe the menacing activities of the Mythos creatures and the reactions of the *Bairoko* crew, using this description to justify subtracting some amount from the *Bairoko's* Operational Readiness each "round" (which may well represent several minutes or even hours of activity) to represent this antagonism. The investigators can stave off or reduce this loss with Investigative ability spends, General ability rolls, or other actions.

**Example.** *You envision the cone-beings breaking out of their confinement in sick bay, overpowering the guards, and making their way to the magazine to arm themselves. You subtract one from the ship's Operational Readiness, and tell Chief Walton that he hears men screaming, shots being fired, and inhuman ululations coming from outside the magazine. Over the ship's loudspeaker, the XO sounds General Quarters and orders all hands to repel boarders.*

### Attack of the Flying Polyps

Radar contacts provide the first warning of their approach; they have either been called by the Son of Yog-Sothoth or somehow detected the presence of the cone-beings aboard the *Bairoko*. As they come near, a whistling wail grows in intensity, and the wind picks up strongly. Seeing the air roil and swirl as the flying polyps orbit the ship, flickering in and out of visibility, is worth a 2 pt Stability test at Difficulty 5.

#### The Son of Yog-Sothoth



**Speaks.** *"I understand now. My real father was a sailor, too. He sails the spheres between what is real and what could be real and what has never been. He's calling to me, somehow. Those things in the sky—they're as unreal as I am. They're my father's servants. No, not servants, that's wrong; they're his garment, his flesh. Just as I am."*

The flying polyps will try to protect Sawyer. As long as he is alive, they will be content to hover menacingly in the

sky and occasionally stoop downward to carry off a sailor who has been shooting at them. They will blast the Flight Deck with winds—note that the cone-beings, being bottom-heavy, will be relatively immune to these effects—that may sweep unprepared sailors overboard.

### March of the Cone-Creatures

Unless the cone-beings are killed outright by the investigators—for no NPC officer will order such a thing unless they are clearly an



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outright danger to the ship—they will eventually decide to *do something*: probably flee the ship and find an island where they won’t be disturbed, or take over the ship and claim it for their own, or scuttle the ship with all hands in gesture of nihilistic defiance.

An investigator who has succumbed to the transformation but thus far held it together has one further hurdle to overcome the first time a flying polyp draws near. It is a hard driver for all transformed cone-beings to use their pincers to “groom” the flying polyps, picking at their semi-material substance and eliminating the grey haze that discolours it. Watching this weird behavior requires a 3 pt. Stability test

at Difficulty 4.

Sawyer will try to convince them to join him on Rongerik where they may build a city of their own, using the power of the flying polyps to conquer time and space.

**The Son of Yog-Sothoth Speaks.** *“Don’t you see? You are all my brothers! Yog-Sothoth is our father now! Come with me to the place he has prepared for us, where all of time and space will be ours!”*

Just Then,

### An Atomic Bomb Went Off

The investigators may be able to gain access to an atomic bomb; use the rules for *Going Up The Chain*, above, noting that General Clarkson (O-8) is the approving authority for releasing the weapons. Securing the nuke “unofficially” should require slightly fewer Investigative spends as using the chain of command—say 4 to 6, depending on the justification—but will get the characters involved in big, big trouble if they survive.

To determine how much damage the bomb blast does, use the following table. Roll the indicated number of



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## The End



Distance from Blast	Dice Damage	Stability Test
At ground zero	16	8 pts, Difficulty 5
within 5 miles	8	6 pts, Difficulty 4
within 10 miles	4	4 pts, Difficulty 4
within 20 miles	2	3 pts, Difficulty 3
within 40 miles	1	2 pts, Difficulty 3

dice to determine the blast damage (which affects the Operational Readiness of the ship as well as the Health of individual characters, although Preparedness rolls as well as **Outdoorsman** and other spends can reduce this amount). The *number* of dice indicates the additional radiation Dose suffered by those in the affected area.

Witnessing an atomic bomb blast requires a Stability test as indicated. You may wish the Saaamaaa ritual to protect those nearby from the worst effects of detonation.

### The End

If the players succeed in their plan, allow them players to describe the fates of their characters, should they live, and to imagine the impact of the events they witnessed on subsequent history. To the extent the players desire, offer explanations for the strange events they witnessed whose causes they were unable to infer. If they fail, you may end the adventure with the characters standing on the deck of the *Bairoko* with the Shot Bravo detonation unfolding before them once more, and Sawyer going up to a character, saying, “*This time*, don’t [do whatever the character did of which Sawyer disapproves] and I won’t [cause or allow to come to pass the character’s death, injury, or



discomfiture].”

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Military Characters

All military characters have rank (note: technically, in the Navy, enlisted personnel are said to have a “rate” and “rating” rather than a rank). A character’s rank is signified by either the letter O (for “officer”) or E (for “enlisted”) and a number indicating relative seniority. e.g., an O-3 in the Navy is a Lieutenant, while an E-6 is a Petty Officer First Class.

### Military Rank

Officers technically outrank enlisted men, but senior enlisted men (non-commissioned officers, called “NCOs” or “non-coms”) are responsible for supervising the training and day-to-day activities of their unit while officers focus on planning and executing the missions those units have been assigned.

In the Navy, the commissioned officer ranks below Admiral are Ensign (O-1), Lieutenant Junior Grade (O-2), Lieutenant (O-3), Lieutenant Commander (O-4), Commander (O-5), and Captain (O-6). In the Marines, the officer ranks below General are Second Lieutenant (O-1), First Lieutenant (O-2), Captain (O-3), Major (O-4), Lieutenant Colonel (O-5), and Colonel (O-6). Commissioned officers are called “sir” by those they outrank.

In the Navy, junior enlisted ranks (E-1 through E-3) are seamen, becoming petty officers third through first class (E-4 to E-6) and then chief petty officers (E-7), senior chief petty officers (E-8), and master chief petty officers (E-9).

In the Marines, enlisted recruits are

privates (E-1), becoming privates first class (E-2) with a little bit of experience. An E-3 is a lance corporal; the next step is corporal (E-4) and then sergeant (E-5). Higher ranks are staff sergeant (E-6), gunnery sergeant (E-7), master sergeant (E-8) and master gunnery sergeant (E-9).

### Naval Organization

The crew of the *Bairoko* is organized into six departments of different sizes, each headed by an O-3 (Lieutenant) or O-4 (Lieutenant Commander) assisted by an E-8 (Senior Chief). The departments are Operations and Navigation (ON: piloting the ship; radar, sonar, and weather prediction; communications; air operations control; anything mission-related), Administration and Supply (AS: all logistical functions; includes Medical, Dental, and Legal divisions), Deck (D: anything related to keeping things shipshape), Air (A: keeping aircraft flight-ready), and Engineering (E: keeping the engines running and screws turning). By and large, however, they will serve as simple functionaries, and need only be described by a rank, position, and last name, if that. Use the following templates as a guide to the talents and capabilities of NPCs.

**A Typical Naval Officer.** Astronomy 1, Athletics 4-6, Bureaucracy (equal to rank minus 1), Credit Rating (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 2), Firearms 4, Health 4-6, Intimidation (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 0), Outdoorsman 1, Reassurance (equal to rank, maximum 6), Sanity 3, Scuffling 4-6, Stability 4-6.

**A Typical Pilot.** Athletics 4-6, Bureaucracy (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 0), Conceal 2, Credit Rating (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 2), Firearms 4, Intimidation (equal to rank minus 2, minimum 0), Outdoorsman 1, Piloting (equal to rank plus 1, maximum 6), Reassurance (equal to rank), Sanity 3, Scuffling 4-6, Stability 4-6.

**A Typical Marine.** Athletics 6-8, Conceal 2, Driving 2, Firearms 6, Health 6, Intimidation 2, Outdoorsman 2, Sanity 3, Scuffling 6-8, Stability 4-6, Stealth 2, Weapons 4. Officers add Bureaucracy and Credit Rating as per Naval Officer, above.

**A Typical Sailor.** Athletics 4-6, some combination equal to rank of Electrical Repair, Explosives, Firearms, Mechanical Repair, and Piloting (i.e., watercraft), Health 4-6, Sanity 3, Scuffling 4-6, Stability 4-6.

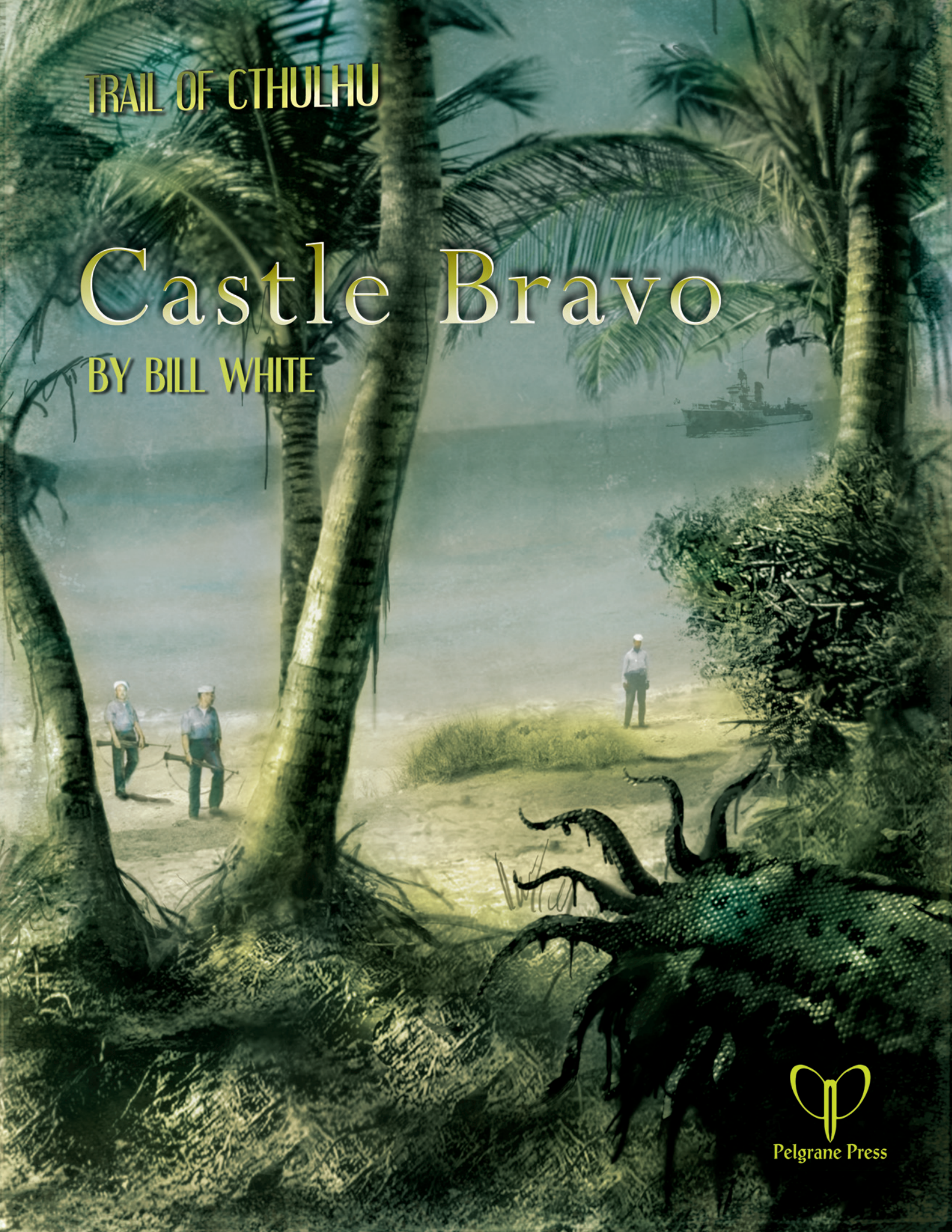




TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# Castle Bravo

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Pelgrane Press