

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Dying Of St Margaret's

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COVER ART

THE DYING OF ST MARGARET'S

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THE DYING OF ST MARGARET'S

INTRODUCTION

The Dying Of St Margaret's is a Purist adventure for Trail of Cthulhu. In this story, there is no escape, no comfort, no salvation when faced with the Mythos. You are powerless and insignificant: your only choices are death, insanity or a quiet life with a shattered mind.

The Hook

On the remote Scottish island of St Margaret's, the Investigators take jobs at a private school. Each is searching for an acquaintance who disappeared from the school.

The Horrible Truth

Under the school is a Colour, draining the life from the building, its residents and the surrounding island.

The Colour descended to Earth in a well-documented meteor shower in 1914. It ploughed into the sea, coming to rest in a system of caves under the coast, then seeped throughout the caves, drawing strength from the surrounding rock.

As the Colour grew older and stronger, it sucked life from a growing area: first, from the cliffs on top of the cave system; then, from the school built on the cliffs. It lay there, undetected, for twenty years.

In 1934, the London occult set became excited about St Margaret's. Their interest coincided with a fervour for the Mythos, fuelled by the anonymous

book *The Astronomical Medium* and its tales of ancient beings, unimaginably powerful, falling from the sky. This loose collection of dilettantes, amateur scientists and lonely gullibles, meeting in their gentleman's clubs and bookshop lectures, were excited. Had a new being come to Earth? Were these meteors more than they seemed?

Some enthusiasts travelled to St Margaret's Island to investigate. They took jobs at the school, working during the day, investigating into the night. Their base was a set workshop, underneath the disused theatre. Naming themselves the "Seekers of Truth", they read ancient manuscripts and legends. One built a strange machine, intended to contain whatever arose from the meteor.

As they researched, explored and pieced together evidence, they realised the meteor was likely embedded in the caves beneath the school. On 14th July of this year, they gathered guns and supplies and entered the caves.

None reemerged. Some remain there, as dusty corpses, their life drawn out by the Colour. Some retain a semblance of life: lying on the cave floor, staring, their life still draining. The remainder are dust, their corpses destroyed by a gust from the sea.

The Spine

The Investigators arrive at St Margaret's School as the academic year begins in September. Two things become clear: that something is sapping the life from St Margaret's; and that an unnatural shimmering haze is everywhere,

seeping into the buildings and hanging over the sea.

The Investigators find the base of the Seekers of Truth: a set workshop, dominated by an infernal machine. The Investigators follow the Seekers to the caves beneath the school, where they encounter the Colour.

The End

Like many Lovecraft stories, this story ends in an anti-climax. The Investigators will stand in a cave, surrounded by a Colour, and realise there is nothing they can do against the Mythos. Perhaps, like many of Lovecraft's protagonists, they return home and go quietly mad.

Note, also, that this is a scenario without combat.

Before playing, ensure your players are on board with this. There is no final fight; no climactic banishing ritual; no promise that "you're all going to die". The adventure ends with a whimper, not a bang.

Instead, the story is about the Investigators and their Drives. First, you will describe what drives each Investigator to investigate; later, you will raise their expectations; finally, you will dash them. As the story ends, the Investigators realise that whatever drove them to investigate is meaningless and doomed.

If this is not your idea of fun, tweak this adventure into the Pulp style, using the instructions at the end.

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to A letters to The Times

13th May, 1914

Sir - A short time after 11 o'clock last night, a meteor of extraordinary size and brilliancy was seen to shoot down in the south-eastern sky. It passed over the Great Bear, heading in a south-westerly direction, towards Saturn, as it were. Its light was white and of amazing brightness, while its long tail was a fiery red. In appearance it was larger than Mars, that had just risen like a great beacon over the hill top to the right.

Doubtless the wonderful phenomenon has to do with the most extraordinary change that has so suddenly taken place in the weather. While for weeks past it has been of the most boisterous and stormy description, a change occurred overnight, and this morning broke with hard frost, and the day has been of the loveliest sunshine, with a pretty keen high wind prevailing. It will have cheered the hearts of the farmers. - I am, &c.

ALEXANDER SCOTT

The Astronomical Medium

The Astronomical Medium was written in 1853 by an unknown author. It was reprinted in 1931 and gained popularity on the London occult circuit.

"The Author hopes that no reading will so far misunderstand his intention, in the present instance, as to suppose that a train of thought professedly theoretic, or hypothetical, and on a subject connected with which we have no direct information beyond what the Scriptures incidentally convey, is to be allowed to interfere with, or to supersede, any article of our religious belief. That which follows, then, is mere speculation, and if it seems fanciful to the reader, then the Author would be glad for his work to be interpreted merely as a retelling of folktales. This work is submitted, then, firstly for the reader's enjoyment, and only secondly for his enlightenment.

...Yet we must attempt to understand these proven phenomena, displayed both by theatrical spiritualists and in more scientific studies, and interpret them in the light of our Christian beliefs and of the scientific method. It seems clear that these events are not of this Earth, being unmentioned in the Bible and incomprehensible in terms of our advanced sciences. We are compelled, then, to entertain the conjecture that the spirits, beloved of mediums and spiritualists, are in fact entities from other worlds; and if it seems improbable, considering the astronomical distances, that humankind would be capable of contact with these beings; then we might reference the folktales of Finland, which tell of beings descending from sky to earth in ancient times and resting thereunder. Indeed, such tales are by no means uncommon, for Bavarian legends tell a similar tale."

The Colour At St Margaret's

Hardened Cthulhu Keepers will realise the problems of designing an adventure around a Colour. At the first mention of "strange colours", the players understand what they are dealing with, and the mystery disappears.

In this adventure, then, there is only one mention of colour: the sunset, as the Investigators arrive is a "shimmering haze of reds, blues and purples". Thereafter, the Colour is described as a shimmering haze or iridescence. The Investigators might notice, for example, an unnatural haze over the sea or an iridescence seeping into the school's stonework.

To further throw the players off the scent, the St Margaret's Colour is subtly different both from Lovecraft's Colour, described in his story *The Colour Out Of Space*, and the Colour described in *Trail of Cthulhu*. It appears gaseous, rather than liquid; it drains life slowly, rather than attacking victims suddenly; its effects are described as "aging", not dessicating or mutating.

All that said, of course, experienced players may well realise about the Colour the first time you mention a meteor. It happens.

But there is another reason for using a different form of Colour. Lovecraft's monsters were deliberately *unknowable*. Changing the Colour's description slightly, from the one with which the players are familiar, reclaims a little of that mystery.

Creating the Investigators

It is likely that the Investigators are members of the London occult set, which is less an organisation than a collection of loose groupings. The occultists meet in gentleman's clubs, upper rooms of pubs and small bookshops, attending lectures and demonstrations on the occult. The social classes are mixed on these occasions: a tramp might sit in the same room as a gentleman, although it is unlikely that they would talk.

Any Investigators who are members of this set will be aware of St Margaret's and the astronomical phenomenon in 1914. They likely attended a lecture, or read a pamphlet, on the subject. They will be also aware that a group of occultists took jobs at the school to investigate further, but have been out of contact for months.

Ask each player to decide:

- How their Investigator knows the other Investigators.
- The job their Investigator will take at St Margaret's School.
- The person that their Investigator is following to the school, who disappeared earlier this year.

Whoever the Investigators follow will feature heavily in the story, as the "Seekers Of Truth". Some example Seekers of Truth are at the back of this book or players may create their own.

As Keeper, remember these descriptions and reference them frequently. When this text refers to one of the Seekers of Truth, choose one of the people the Investigators described, and reference them specifically. For example, when this text describes a Seeker of Truth "breaking in a pair of boots", you might

describe this as "You find your brother's diary. He mentions he was breaking in a pair of boots."

During character creation, use the following rules:

- Cap Health and Stability at 12 and Sanity at 10.
- Cap Credit Rating at 6.
- Reduce General Build points to 50 and Investigative Build points to 16 (for two players), 12 (for three players) or 10 (for four or more players).
- Since it is unlikely this scenario will be used as part of a campaign, do not use Sources Of Stability.

Remind your players this is a combat-free adventure. There will be little need for Scuffling, Weapons or Firearms, unless these skills are used on other Investigators. This is not impossible - one Investigator might try to restrain another from suicide - but encourage your players to allocate few points to these skills.

The Investigator's Drives are central to this game. They will be referred to specifically three times:

- As the adventure opens, a predirected scene will illustrate each Investigator's Drive.
- Later, a discovery will encourage the Investigator's Drives, boosting the Investigator's hopes of fulfilling their ambitions.
- At the end, each Investigator's Drive is proved futile by the discovery of the Colour. Here, the rule of Anagnorisis (described on page 76 of Trail of Cthulhu) may be used.

Hence, be sure each player knows precisely what drives their Investigator to St Margaret's.

Discourage the Drives Bad Luck, In The Blood, Curiosity and Sudden

Shock: since there is little way to undermine these Drives, they do not suit Anagnorisis. Note that the Drives Adventure, Duty and Revenge, although more commonly used in the Pulp mode, work well for this scenario.

The following new Drive, Power, is particularly apt for this adventure.

New Drive: Power

The Mythos is the greatest source of power you know. Surely these rituals, these monsters, can be harnessed for your own ends? Where others have failed, you will succeed, and use this immense power to attain unimaginable authority.

Examples of Drives

Following is a guide on how each Drive might progress through the story. For each Drive, there is:

- A suggested Directed Scene (see sidebar) to illustrate it. This plays out at the beginning of the adventure, below.
- A description of how the Investigator's discoveries might boost the Drive. This will be referenced in the scene "The Workshop", below.
- A description of how the Drive might be finally undermined. This occurs at the end of the adventure, in the scene "The Cave".

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Drive	Directed Scene	Drive Boosted	Drive Undermined
Adventure	Your colleagues wave you off from the steps of your Club. In your suitcase is a gun, a map and a pulp adventure novel. Your mind is filled with thoughts of battle and discovery	As you read the description of the ancient creature, you cannot imagine a finer adventure. A monster, from beyond the stars, with which to do battle!	You stand, surrounded by the Colour, realising the futility of your ambition. There is no excitement, nothing to fight: only the certain knowledge you will end your days in this cave, the life draining from your body.
Antiquarianism	You stand in your room of ancient treasures, breathing in the past. Your eye is drawn to an empty space on a shelf and your thoughts race at the treasure you might discover.	You pore over the documents, growing in excitement as you recognise forgotten languages and drawings of ancient creatures. What prehistoric delights await in the caves below the school?	You stare at the Colour and realise it is too old, too alien, for you to understand. There is nothing to put on that place on the shelf: indeed, you wonder whether you will see your room of treasures again.
Arrogance	You barely attend to the talk in your club, privately thinking the speakers are fools. But perhaps you should not be hard on them: they were not born with your brilliance. Only you will understand this mystery: only you are capable.	You see, in these drawings, something worthy of your talents. Finally you can prove yourself superior, a giant among men.	As the Colour surrounds you, you are suddenly aware how insignificant you are. What hope is there, in the face of such incomprehensible power? What are you, next to this?
Artistic Sensitivity	Reading the Times article, images swarm in your head. The natural beauty of the meteor shower alone would be a worthy subject. But the promise of something alien, something prehistoric? That would be a subject incomparable to anything in your career to date.	As you examine the drawings, you are intrigued and excited. If an amateur sketch can produce such intriguing, otherworldly drawings, imagine what you could do!	You stand in the cave, unable to see in the glowing mist. There is no beauty here, no subject for art: only a horror so incomprehensible you could not hope to capture it.
Duty	You cradle your old Army gun. It has been a long time since you felt the call, but now the old feelings are stirring. Another foe to vanquish, another evil to conquer. One more time, for King and Country.	These monsters are worse than you imagined: it is an invasion from beyond the stars. You feel younger, more capable, than you have for years. You know what you must do.	There is no hope. Whether this is a weapon or a sentient being, there is no defence. The Empire is doomed if these are its foes. You feel old. What is there, now, worth fighting for? You, and the Empire, can only wait for your doom.
Ennui	You sink another cocktail, hoping to make the evening pass quicker. What tedious people; how tedious this society. But then you overhear a conversation: an adventure, a journey, something fallen from the sky. Something different, at last. A break from the mundane.	As you watch the others preparing, you smile. An expedition, perhaps a fight. You are excited, you realise: a feeling you have not felt in years.	In the dank cave, you think back to London, and wonder whether you will see it again. Why did you come here? Can you leave? You fear you will spend the rest of your days here, your life ebbing away. For a moment you imagine the taste of a Manhattan, then the moment is gone, replaced with the monotonous reality of the cave.

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Drives

Follower	You pack the last of your belongings. In your life, there is one constant, one purpose, and that is the person you are following. You are off to a remote Scottish island, you understand. There is probably a good reason behind all this.	You prepare to follow into the caves. It's what you do, after all.	You have wasted your life, following someone else, and now your life is about to end. Whether you will die now, or whether your life will ebb away in this cave, you are unsure. But your life proper is over. Perhaps this is what you deserve: you have never sought a life of your own and, now, you have none.
Power	For the first few minutes, the lecture is interesting: something ancient, descended to Earth. Thereafter, you drift into your own thoughts. In something so old, that travels between stars, there must be power. What would it take to harness that power?	This is it. Everything is here: a prehistoric monster of unimaginable strength. Is it only you who thinks of harnessing this power? No matter. It is time to take what is yours.	There is no way to harness this. As you stare, you realise you are in its power, not it in yours. Your mind snaps. You are the thrall of a power you cannot understand.
Revenge	The photograph of your brother sits on your mantelpiece, making you angry every time you glance at it. As you pack the last of your things, you look at it one last time. If the stories are true, a monster has descended from the sky, like the monster that killed your brother. It is time to make things right.	The familiar anger grows: it is a comfort to you. Was this the thing that killed your brother? Or another monster from beyond the stars? No matter. It will be the one that pays for your brother's death.	The anger drains away, replaced by a hopeless bitterness. How can you fight against this? There is no possibility, here, of avenging your brother. You will spend the rest of your life here, you realise, a victim, as your brother was a victim before.
Scholarship	You pick up the morning post: another newsheet from the occult cranks. You subscribe in the hope of something new, but are always disappointed. Before you throw it away, you scan it: and a report on a meteor storm catches your eye. Something, says the newsletter, has fallen from the sky. This is new: a myth with which you are unfamiliar. Perhaps you should go.	Mentally, you are composing the paper that will make your name. A prehistoric creature from beyond the stars. This discovery will echo over centuries: every textbook will include your name.	There are no words to explain this, and if there were, no-one would believe you. In your head, you attempt to compose your paper again, but give up. They would think you mad.
Thirst For Knowledge	You have often stared into the night sky, willing the stars to divulge their secrets. Perhaps they heard! A meteorite, surrounded by rumours of something alien. You must go. You must learn what this is about.	These books excite you beyond belief. They are the gateway to knowledge you did not know existed: a truth from the beginning of time and beyond the stars. You must learn more. You must see this creature.	For the first time, you are faced with something you cannot comprehend. This is not knowledge, only confusion: how can you hope to understand something so ancient, so powerful? Here, facing you, is a truth that underlies everything, and a truth you cannot grasp.

GUMSHOE rule: Directed Scenes

When following the characters in personal moments, use **directed scenes** to compress time and share your dramatic intent with the players.

In a directed scene, you place one or more PCs in a scene just as it's getting interesting, avoiding the preliminaries and pedestrian connective detail a talented writer or film editor always cuts out of a story.

You stage a directed scene for Ralf's character, Michel. "You're in Thelma's hotel room, the slime from the green blurry things still marring your sport coat. She's throwing bottles at her locked bathroom door. Judging from the terrified, whiskey-rotted voice on the other side, she's got a man in there."

If the player appears puzzled, you may choose to give him an assignment of sorts, explaining what the scene is meant to establish

"Here you're to dramatize your relationship with Thelma."

Directed scenes may establish sources of stability, risk factors, or personal goals, moving them from the static potential of entries on the character sheet to dramatic enactment in actual events unfolding before the entire group.

Juice them up by enlisting the other players to take on supporting roles during these scenes. Give them a brief description of the supporting character, and tell the chosen player what that character wants to accomplish.

Lynne seems a little bored by the proceedings, so you assign her the role of Thelma. "You love Michel like the son you never had, but he's always trying to get between you and your pleasures. Your intention is to get rid of him as quickly as possible, with a minimum of fuss and hurt feelings."

Once a directed scene has dramatized the character aspect you want to establish, and seems to be running out of steam or headed off on a tangent, end it by cutting to a new scene. To maintain forward momentum and avoid confusion, it's best to make the next scene a standard one involving all of the group and concerning the main action, rather than another directed scene.

Don't read these examples verbatim to the players! Instead, use them as guides in setting Directed Scenes, and tailor each scene to the Investigator.

About Clues

Clues are presented as follows: first, the piece of information contained in the clue is outlined; second, some examples of how different abilities might reveal the clue are given. All clues, other than Core Clues, cost one point.

As Keeper, you are actively encouraged

to allow *any* ability, plausibly used, to reveal a clue. For example, here is a clue, together with ways it might be revealed by three abilities:

2. *The school and its surroundings are aging at an unnatural rate.*

- **Architecture:** The school has suffered more damage than you would expect for a Victorian building: it looks 500 hundred years old rather than 50. Nevertheless, it is clearly built in the Victorian style.

- **Occult:** Looking at the school, you imagine a dark aura, as if the building were dying, almost as if it was in pain. This building is growing old quickly, you realise, more quickly than is natural.

- **Art History:** Although the portraits on the staircase are clearly Victorian, the state of the canvas and the paint is unnaturally aged. You would expect to see this degree of decay on medieval paintings.

Any other appropriate ability might also be used. For example, if an Investigator wished to investigate using *Biology*, you should also give this clue, perhaps describing the plants aging at an unnatural rate.



Prologue

PROLOGUE

The ferry from the mainland to St Margaret's runs twice a week. It is the only likely route to St Margaret's, short of an Investigator hiring a boat: certainly, there is nowhere to land a plane.

As the Investigators near St Margaret's Bay, and despite the chill of the evening, the first view of the island is beautiful. It appears unspoilt and peaceful, as the sun sets over the water, in a shimmering haze of reds, purples and yellows.

Along from the bay is a stony beach, at the base of a cliff. Perched on the edge of that cliff, the Investigators see the school for the first time: a dark, tired-looking Gothic monolith.

During this introductory scene, describe a flashback for each Investigator, into a Directed Scene to illustrate their Drive.

The School

St Margaret's is a private boarding school, accommodating girls between 8 and 13 years of age. Most of these girls are from Southern England, of parents who enjoy the idea of an austere, isolated environment, with no distractions from study. When each term starts, the children are driven up to Scotland, shipped over on the ferry, and educated at the school until the term ends, when they are returned to their parents.

Most residents of the island cannot afford the fees, which generates resentment towards both pupils and staff. There are exceptions, however, and some locals have entered St Margaret's on scholarships.

St Margaret's heyday was in Victorian

times, when its mission, to educate young ladies without frivolity, sat well with the zeitgeist. Since the turn of the century, St Margaret's reputation and educational standards have decayed, and the school has become anachronistic.

For clarity, note that the island, the school and the village are all named St Margaret's. In conversation, these are usually referred to as "the island", "the school" and "the village" to avoid confusion: "The village is on the north side of the island. Don't tell them you're from the school."

Cast of Characters

Following are descriptions of the characters on St Margaret's island. After each description are three things that, as Keeper, you can do to physically portray the character at the table.

Bartholomew Althorp, Physics teacher

Bart Althorp is English, bearded and shabby, with leather patches on his unwashed jacket. Although he is thirty, he looks forty. There is a sigh in his voice, which grows stronger when he speaks of the world outside the school.

Bart is to be found in his lab, particularly in the dusty cupboard at the back, where he smokes his pipe and reads pornography.

To portray Bart:

- Slump.
- Sigh as you talk.
- Shrug.

Anthea Davies, Headmistress

Miss Davies is a rotten oak: upstanding, appearing healthy, but rotted from the inside. Her brittle sixty-year-old's body would smash with a careless fall. Her

voice is imperious, almost declaiming, and she speaks rather than listens.

The headmistress' study is immaculate, chintzy and soulless. She will entertain visitors, subjecting them to the ritual of tea, but her attention wanders quickly.

To portray Miss Davies:

- Talk loudly and imperiously.
- Sit straight.
- Make small, contained gestures.

George Marr, Caretaker

A large man, with a drinker's face, George Marr does not entertain friends. He will converse, particularly with other servants, but rarely refers to his past: he is a reformed petty thief, who has spent time in prison on the mainland.

He is most often found in the kitchen, where he smokes, reads out-of-date newspapers from the mainland and drinks the cooking brandy when the cook leaves the room.

To portray George Marr:

- Speak from the back of your throat.
- Slur your words slightly.
- Keep a deadpan face.

Mary Clegg, Cook

Mrs Clegg is overtly friendly, loud and welcoming. Talk for her for more than a minute, though, and you realise the facade: she is beaten, her spirit crushed, using an over-the-top jollity as a cover.

The cook likes to play cards. She prefers to do this in the kitchen, but the stink of George's pipe often drives her to her room.

To portray Mrs Clegg:

- Smile at the end of every sentence.

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- Make expansive gestures.
- Affect a “sing-song” voice.

Rebecca Mackey, Nurse

Rebecca is fragile and pretty. She talks with enthusiasm of travelling, but has not left the island since she arrived, five years ago. Her company is pleasant, at first, but later stifling, as you sense her desperation to leave.

In the evenings, before the light has fully faded, she walks in the gardens and looks over the sea. She likes to watch the last ferry crossing of the day. Sometimes she walks along the clifftop, to the edge of the school grounds, but never goes further.

To portray Nurse Mackey:

- Talk quietly and gently.
- Stare into the air as you talk.
- Forget what you were saying halfway through a sentence.

Andrew McCree, Landlord of the Grey Sailor

Andrew has decayed, handsome looks and thinning hair. A faint air of body odour surrounds him, especially when he moves: this is because he does not bathe after lugging barrels around in the morning. He is suspicious of outsiders and keen to put the upper classes in their place.

To portray Andrew McCree:

- Talk deeply and directly.
- Look directly into the eyes of the person you are speaking to.
- Point, occasionally, at the person you are speaking to.

Sarah McCree, Postmistress

Sarah is pretty and portly. An air of dreaminess surrounds her, as if she is unused to speaking to people.

To portray Sarah:

- As you talk, look at the table from time to time, speaking at it.
- Speak slowly and breathily.
- Smile to yourself.



Scenes

Arrival at the School

The Investigators are met at the dock by Bartholomew Althorp, the Physics teacher, bearded and shabbily dressed. He waits by a car, which belongs to the school.

He shakes the hands of any Investigators of Credit Rating 3 or higher and introduces himself. Any Investigators of lower social standing are asked to load the luggage into the car.

The car can hold three passengers comfortably, or four uncomfortably: those of lower Credit Rating will be expected to walk if there is not sufficient room. Bart drives to the school, up a winding road to the clifftop. He asks, with moderate interest, how the Investigators found their journey and what posts they will fill at the school. He gets out of the car to open the school gates, before parking on the gravel in front of the school.

It is now 5.30pm. Where the Investigators go now depends on their Credit Rating and, perhaps, on the post they are filling.

Credit Rating 6: Bart deferentially delivers an invitation, from the Headmistress, to pre-dinner drinks.

He shows the Investigator to the Headmistress' study.

The Headmistress is working at her desk, but expecting any Investigators whose social standing is this high. She offers them tea, of which she has a pot ready, or sherry. She asks the same questions as did Bart, about the journey and the post the Investigator will fill, and will make small talk about the school: the children are unexpectedly pleasant and the weather is expectedly unpleasant. At 6.30pm, she conducts the Investigator to High Tea.

Credit Rating 4 or higher: Bart asks the Investigators to find their rooms, which are in the Staff Wing, clearly signposted and labelled by name. He promises their luggage will be brought to them and tells them that High Tea is in the Dining Hall at 6.30pm. Investigators of this Credit Rating are likely taking teaching posts: if their posts are more menial, Bart will look surprised but give them the same directions.

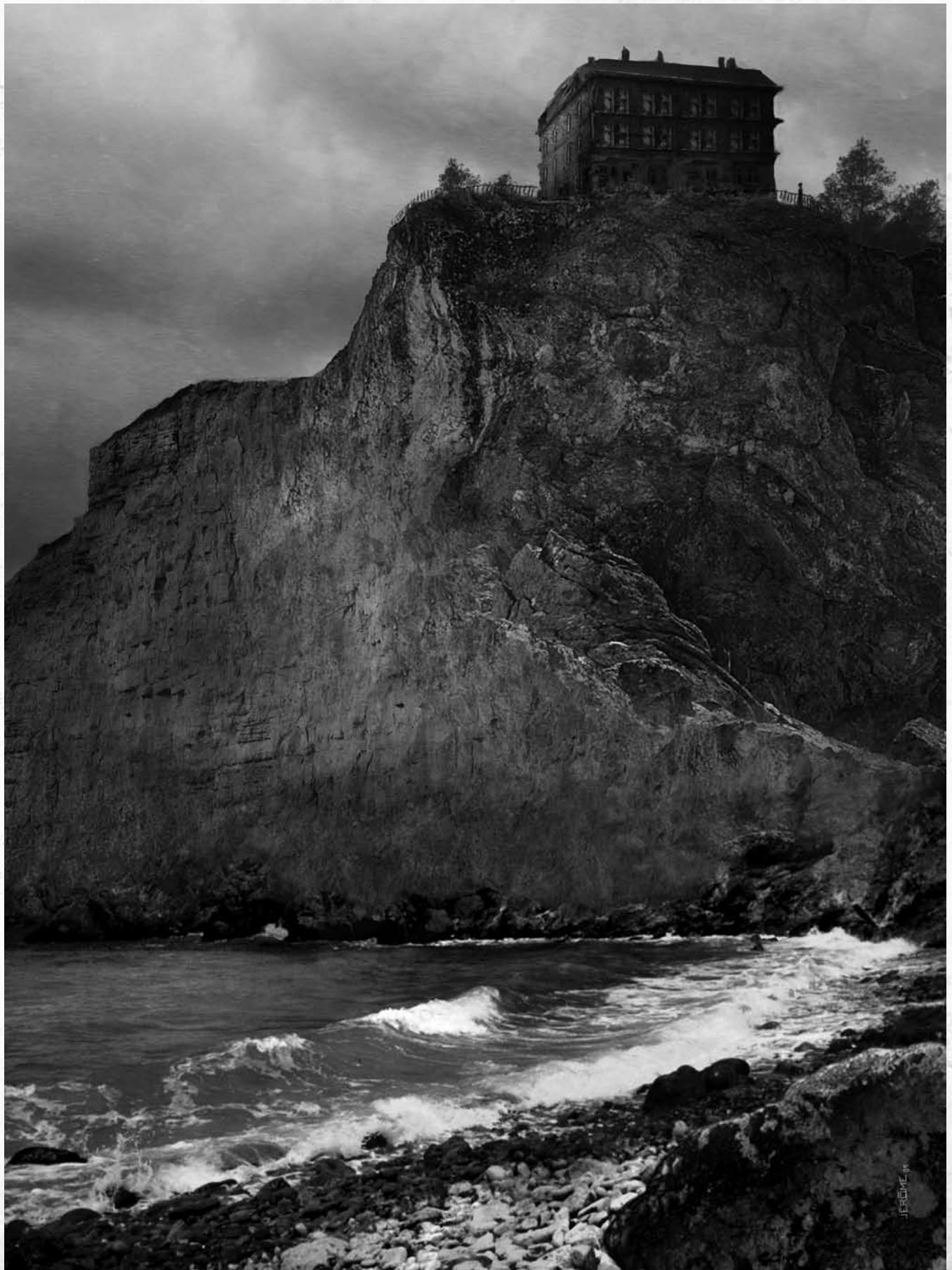
When the Investigators find their rooms, they prove small but adequate, each with an Investigator's name on the door and the key in the lock. The furniture and floorboards are wooden and creaky and there is a view of the darkening, misty sea. If the Investigators wish to wash before dinner, a shared bathroom is at the end of the corridor.

Credit Rating 3: If the Investigator is filling a teacher's post, Bart will give them the directions for those of Credit Rating 4 or higher, above, reminding them to dress appropriately for High Tea. Otherwise, he will give them the directions for Credit Rating 2 or lower, below.

Credit Rating 2 or lower: Bart will ask the Investigator to carry luggage to the Staff Wing, then report downstairs to the caretaker. These Investigators will eat downstairs and, although they

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Arrival at the school



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may serve at High Tea, will not dine.

If any Investigator of this social class is expecting to take a teaching post, Bart will look surprised and give them the same directions: later, the Investigator will receive a message that there has been a mistake, and asked to assist the caretaker rather than teaching.

Below stairs, the Investigator find the servants eating fish soup. The cook, Mrs Clegg, offers some to the Investigator. George Marr, the caretaker, introduces himself gruffly. If the Investigators are taking up serving posts, they will be asked to help serve at High Tea; if janitorial posts, they will also be asked to help serve, while Mr Marr remarks that "we all muck in here"; if they are gardening, they will be given a key to the gardener's cottage.

High Tea and afterwards

High Tea is the main evening meal. The teachers sit at High Table, oriented horizontally at the head of the room and raised on a platform. The lower tables are reserved for pupils: they run for the length of the room, perpendicular to High Table, with benches as seating.

Staff and pupils are expected to be in their places by 6.20pm: anything else is "late" and will be remarked upon. The headmistress enters at 6.30pm, accompanied by any Investigators with Credit Rating 6. All pupils and staff stand at her entrance. After she says Grace, they sit.

The food tonight is cod, blandly cooked in milk. It is edible without being pleasant. It is accompanied on High Table by wine, which is excellent.

This, for the Investigators, is the first real opportunity for conversation with the staff.

After dinner, the teaching staff repair to the common room for coffee. Thereafter,

Talking Posh and Talking Rough

In a setting obsessed with class, it is only a matter of time before someone will *pretend* to be a different Credit Rating. Perhaps a labourer puts on a suit and tries to talk posh; perhaps an upper-class clergyman dresses down and talks rough.

The skill to use here is Disguise. Ask for a roll against a Difficulty Number of 4 plus the difference in Credit Rating. For example, for a labourer (Credit Rating 2) to pretend to be a middle-class teacher (Credit Rating 4), the Difficulty Number would be 6. Equally, a well-bred vicar (Credit Rating 5) attempting to slum it as a gardener (Credit Rating 2) would face a Difficulty Number of 7.

The roll should be repeated for each new social situation (for example, at High Tea and while teaching), but after three successful rolls, you should assume the impersonation is completely successful (requiring no further rolls).

some play bridge, while some retire to their rooms. Below stairs, the servants wash the dishes, then drink whisky and play various raucous gambling games.

Staying at the school

The Investigators will likely stay a while at the school, while they uncover the mystery.

Pupils and staff rise at 7am. After washing and dressing, they take breakfast: pupils in the Dining Hall, staff in the Common Room. As is the British tradition, they serve themselves congealing food and lukewarm tea from a sideboard.

The Investigators' Daily Routine

Teaching begins at 9am. Investigators who are teachers will be expected to start teaching the morning after their arrival: there being no formal curriculum, they are simply expected to impart "the basics" to their pupils. Teaching gives excellent opportunities to search cupboards (which might reveal clues 3 and 4, below) and, between lessons, to talk in the staff room (which might reveal clue 1).

If the Investigators are assisting the

caretaker, they will spend their days with him, lugging boxes and fixing locks. If they have posts within the kitchen, they will peel potatoes and gut fish. If they are assisting in the garden, they will dig over flower beds. Again, opportunities for searching and conversing abound.

At midday, Staff and pupils take lunch in the Dining Hall. The meal is lighter and less formal than High Tea. The headmistress takes lunch in her study.

Teaching continues from 1pm until 5pm. This is continuous for pupils, although staff will find themselves with the occasional "free period": an hour when no lessons are scheduled, during which they may amuse themselves. Most staff go to the staff room and drink tea for an hour.

High Tea is at 5.30pm, after which everyone amuses themselves, as best they can, for the evening. The pupils go to bed at 9pm, a time known as "Lights out", while staff generally retire around 11pm.



Arrival at the school

Clues

The following free-floating clues are available at any time during the Investigator's time in the school. Examples are given of how certain skills might reveal clues: again, as Keeper, you should allow *any* plausibly used skill to reveal a clue.

Note that the skill of Streetwise is used to relate to the servants: anyone at home in an underground drinking den will fit in below stairs.

1. *The residents are lacking in motivation: they all express a wish to leave, but have been there for years.*

- **Bureaucracy:** The staff records show that teachers remain at the school much longer than is average for the profession. Nevertheless, the memoranda from staff often express a wish to leave.
- **Streetwise:** The gardener takes your cigarette. He says that St Margaret's makes him feel old beyond his years, and although he often makes plans to leave, he never follows them through.
- **Flattery:** Bart thanks you for your compliment. He says he used to have great ambitions, but that these drained away at St Margaret's. He wonders about leaving, but never does.
- **Psychoanalysis** (used as an Investigation Skill): Something is wrong with these people. They are undermotivated and socially unresponsive.

2. *The school and its surroundings are aging at an unnatural rate.*

- **Architecture:** The school has suffered more damage than you would expect for a Victorian building: it looks 500 hundred years old rather than 50. Nevertheless, it is clearly built in the Victorian Gothic style.
- **Occult:** Looking at the school,

you imagine a dark aura, as if the building were dying, almost as if it was in pain. This building is growing old quickly, you realise, more quickly than is natural.

- **Art History:** Although the portraits on the staircase are clearly Victorian, the state of the canvas and the paint is unnaturally aged. You would expect to see this degree of decay on medieval paintings.

3. *The people the Investigators were following spent much time together. They called themselves The Seekers of Truth.*

- **Credit Rating:** The headmistress remembers the group. They always hung about together and had a ridiculous name for themselves: the "Seekers of Truth".
- **Oral History:** Oh, yes, Mrs Clegg remembers them well. One night, she overheard two of them talking in the quadrangle. They said they were going to meet the other "Seekers". She wondered what they meant, but later found they called themselves the "Seekers of Truth"! Imagine that!
- **Reassurance:** The headmistress looks worried. The group always worried her: they hung about together and called themselves the "Seekers of Truth".

4. *The Seekers of Truth had strange interests, in obscure science and mythology.*

- **Physics:** You come across an examination paper, set by one of the Seekers of Truth. Oddly, there is a question about Special Relativity. Relativity is a controversial subject, only slightly more than a fringe belief. No Physics teacher would have taught it as fact.
- **History:** You come across an examination paper, set by one of the Seekers of Truth. You are

surprised by its contents: two questions do not concern history, but obscure, and bizarre, myths about world creation.

- **Reassurance:** Once Mrs Clegg calms down, she tells you: she saw one of the teachers with a strange book. When she asked what it was, he showed her. It was strange and decidedly un-Christian, with drawings of monsters and strange writing. She avoided him after that.

5. *The Seekers of Truth disappeared, all at once, on the evening of 14th July.*

- **Bureaucracy:** Looking back at the archive files, there are letters regarding a group, who called themselves the "Seekers of Truth", who disappeared on 14th July.
- **Credit Rating:** The headmistress looks angry. Yes, she remembers that day very well. They all disappeared one evening, without any explanation, and she was asked to cover teaching duties. It was the 14th July, she thinks. They were Physics lessons, too! How can she be expected to know about Physics?

6. *(Core Clue): There are many sickly children, who are taken to the Sanatorium.*

- **Medicine:** For some reason, the Dining Hall reminds you of your waiting room, from your days in General Practice. You soon realise why: many of these children appear pale and ill. You would normally blame the diet, but the food seems perfectly adequate. On asking, you find that sick children are taken to the Sanatorium.
- **Bureaucracy:** There is an unexpectedly high level of sickness absence, both in staff and pupils. Looking at school procedures, you assume that sick children are taken to the Sanatorium.
- **Assess Honesty:** When Bart

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Althorp talks about the academic results, you sense he is telling the truth. However, when he talks about sports, he seems to be lying; and his sudden statement that “the pupils are healthy and happy” is a barefaced lie. You think he mentioned, once, that the Sanatorium is full at the moment.

7. (Core Clue) *The personal effects of the Seekers of Truth are in the attic.*

- **Reassurance:** Rebecca smiles at you. “I found them creepy,” she says, “When they disappeared, they collected their stuff into boxes and put it in the attic. I was glad.”
- **Credit Rating:** “Damn it, man,” you bark at the caretaker, “If I ask you a question, I expect you to answer. Where are their effects?”. He stares at you. “In the attic, sir,” he says politely and coldly.
- **Architecture:** Where would their personal belongings be? There must be a storage space, somewhere in the building, but you have not seen it. The answer comes to you as you walk in the drawings: there are great amounts of space under the eaves. Perhaps there is an attic, where the Seeker's belongings were kept.

Antagonist Reaction: The Colour

Each night an Investigator stays in the school, they lose one point of Stability. It takes a 2-point stability roll to leave St Margaret's Island, but the difficulty of this increases by one point for each night spent in the school.

The Investigators will notice, as they look out over the sea, the same shimmering haze that they saw from the boat, hanging over the water.

The following events are not Clues, but flesh out the pervasiveness of the

Colour. At appropriate moments, ask an Investigator to make a Sense Trouble roll, Difficulty 4. If they succeed, tell them one of the following. All these events require Stability tests, although none are Mythos Shocks.

- Looking at the building, you notice an iridescence. It reminds you of the shimmering haze you saw, at sunset, from the boat. Your eye follows the haze from the sea to the building: it seems, to you, that the haze has seeped into the building and the surrounding rock. [Stability loss 2]
- You watch the sunset, noting the same shimmering, sunlit haze you saw from the boat. Hours later, you notice the haze still shimmering. There is no moon, no source of light, no reason for the haze to shimmer. It now seems unnatural, hanging over the sea. [Stability loss 3]
- You wake. There is something in the room. Gradually, you perceive the same shimmering haze you saw from the boat. It is here. It is everywhere: in the land, in your room, in the bricks of the school. You breathe deeply, then realise it is in your lungs. It is inescapable. [Stability loss 4]



Scene: The San

The Sanatorium is a small, single-storey outbuilding, overlooking the playing field. By contrast with the imposing nature of the school, it seems pleasant and tranquil, and even has a small garden, although the plants are hardy bushes rather than flowers. Birdsong hangs in the air.

There is always one staff member on duty. During the day, it is Nurse Mackey, a young and bookish girl from St Margaret's village. At night, one of the teaching staff is assigned to San duty, which is dull but undemanding. Most bring a book, a crossword or a half-bottle of whisky.

The main room of the San has eight single beds, all of which are presently occupied. Nurse Mackey's office is small and contains unsophisticated medical equipment, suited to little more than first aid, as well as the pupils' medical records. There are two large jugs: one of white fluid that tastes of chalk; the other of brown fluid, tasting strongly and unpleasantly of vegetables. Pupils are given a glass of each a day, until they recover: this acts a deterrent for malingerers rather than medicine.

Beneath her quiet manner, Nurse Mackey is distraught. She expected this job to be pleasant and unchallenging. Instead, she is appalled at the number of broken bones she sees. Since she cannot set a bone, pupils are taken to the mainland on the ferry for treatment, before returning to the Sanatorium to recover. Secretly, she is worried that someone will think she harms the pupils, which she does not; or incompetent, which she is.

Once a week, Dr Bryson visits from St Margaret's village. Although he realizes something is wrong, he prefers to keep his mouth shut and do the minimum necessary to help pupils recover.

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The San



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Dying of St Margaret's

Clues

1. *Many children in the sanatorium suffer from arthritis and osteoporosis, which is extremely unusual.*

- **Medicine:** Many children complain of pains in their hands and ankles. Although the medical records describe these merely as “pains”, you suspect arthritis, which is astonishingly unusual for children this age. There is a high incidence of broken bones, from incidents as simple as tripping and falling. This leads you to wonder about osteoporosis.

2. *Heart rates and blood pressure seem universally lower than usual.*

- **Medicine:** You examine the children and are surprised by lower heart rates and blood pressure than is usual. Checking the records, you find these lower rates repeated across almost all pupils. The only exceptions are those new to the school: indeed, looking at the records for newly arrived pupils, their heart rates and blood pressure seem to be normal on arrival and decrease as they spent time in the school.
- **Flattery:** You talk at length to Nurse Mackey. It is odd, she says, but the heart rates of the children seem lower than is normal, as does their blood pressure. For the blood pressure, she wondered about faulty equipment, but there is no explanation for the heart rate.

Scene: The Attic

Finding the attic is easy. It is located at the top of the main staircase: although the staircase is heavily used, the final flight to the attic is not. It is locked and the caretaker holds the key, although it would not be difficult to break the lock.

However, entering the attic is odd behavior, especially for teachers, likely to draw attention and suspicion of thievery. Searching the effects of former teachers, without a good explanation, looks even worse.

Hence, for Investigators with Credit Ratings of 3 or higher, going to the attic unobserved is difficult. Investigators wishing to gain the benefit of searching the attic alone may spend a point of an appropriate skill (perhaps Flattery, Intimidation or Reassurance). Without this benefit, someone will follow them up, offer to help or call a servant, and report the matter to the headmistress later.

Investigators with Credit Ratings lower than 3 need only make a plausible excuse to the caretaker. If observed, people will assume they are fetching a box.

The attic is vast. Near the entrance, stacked in neat rows, are trunks of pupils currently resident at the school. Against the north wall, in boxes and filing cabinets, are archived school records. In the north-eastern corner is a disorganized heap. Here, buried beneath broken furniture and other junk, the Investigators find the effects of the Seekers of Truth, in crates labeled with the Seekers' names.

It takes hours of solid work to sort through the crates fully. They contain clothing and trinkets, with some personal diaries and letters.

Clues

1. *The documents are incomplete. Some documents, particularly those relating to July of this year, have been removed.*

- **Library Use:** There are references to other documents, which, after much searching, you determine are not present. There are also gaps in the dates of the letters:

for example, many letters were sent on a weekly basis, but they stop around mid-May without any explanation.

- **Evidence Collection:** You notice that a set of diaries suddenly stop at the beginning of May. You have a hunch that there is a batch of documents that are missing from this collection.

2. *There is a sense of preparation and excitement before 14th July, as if the Seekers were going on a journey. There are no records after that date.*

- **Accounting:** Reading through an accounts book, you notice a great deal of expenditure on equipment such as cooking stoves and ropes, in May and June of this year.
- **Outdoorsman:** One of the Seekers of Truth, in a diary, mentions that he was “breaking in” a pair of boots. Along with other references, you wonder whether he was intending to take a journey: perhaps on 14th July, when all the records stop.
- **Library Use:** One constant you notice, as you correlate the various correspondence, is a sense of excitement and adventure, which peaked just before they disappeared in July.

3. *Anything you might take on a journey, particularly a dangerous journey, is missing.*

- **Evidence Collection:** You notice that, in all the personal effects, there is no overcoat, nor a sturdy pair of shoes. You sense that everything you would need on a journey has been removed.
- **Outdoorsman:** These personal effects remind you of the things you leave at home when you go somewhere. There's no overcoat, for example, and few winter clothes. These people went on a journey: this is the stuff they left behind.

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The Grey Sailor



Credit Rating: Your suspicions are aroused by the lack of a gun. If a gentleman disappeared, why would his gun not be in his room? The answer is clear to you: he took the gun and he was going somewhere.

4. (*Core Clue*): Sarah McCree, who left her post as school secretary at the end of July, and who now lives in St Margaret's Village, knew the Seekers well.

- **Evidence Collection:** A paragraph in one of the letters catches your attention, in which one of the Seekers mentions leaving "everything with Sarah". The only Sarah you have heard mentioned is the school secretary, who left the school two months ago.
- **Library Use:** Although locals are mentioned from time to time, you are struck by the number of

times the name "Sarah McCree" is mentioned. Sarah, you remember, is the former secretary of the school, who left earlier this year to work in St Margaret's Village.

Scene: The Grey Sailor

Sarah McCree, formerly the school secretary, is now the postmistress on St Margaret's Island. Her Post Office is part of the pub, the Grey Sailor, in St Margaret's Village.

The pub itself is a working-class haunt, shabby and pleasant. The landlord is Andrew McCree, a large, smelly and pleasant fifty-year-old, who is Sarah's husband. He inherited the pub from his father, William, who died fifteen years ago. Andrew is friendly to his friends, but guarded with outsiders.

The Grey Sailor opens at 3pm and fills quickly as sailors return from fishing, then empties at 5pm, as they return to their houses to eat. Afterwards, it is largely empty, save for servants from the school, who are welcome; and teachers, who are tolerated.

As outsiders and strangers, the Investigators will be treated with suspicion. If they are of Credit Rating 4 or higher, their welcome will be particularly frosty, although McCree will serve them.

Sarah herself is normally in the bar area from 3pm to 6pm. After that, she will be upstairs: Andrew McCree will call her down, if asked, which will make her suspicious and irritated. Andrew, or the locals, can also answer the Investigators' questions.

Sarah was given various sentimental

Think of the children

Altruistic Investigators may want to save the people in the school: perhaps by evacuating the children.

This is not impossible. They will likely need to persuade the Headmistress, who will require tangible evidence of danger (perhaps medical evidence, gathered the San), together with a two-point spend of an appropriate skill, such as Credit Rating or Intimidation.

Any other altruistic gestures, such as sneaking the children out without informing the staff, are left to your discretion as Keeper.

items by the Seekers of Truth: wedding rings, photographs, hip-flasks. None of these items contain useful information, but they may be of interest to Investigators searching for loved ones. Any appropriate skill (Reassurance, Intimidation) will allow the Investigators to view the items. To take items away takes another point of an appropriate skill, per item.

Male investigators must buy a pint of beer before Andrew or Sarah will talk to them (except, perhaps, if Intimidation is used). Female investigators, in this male-dominated environment, will be a surprise to all the pub regulars, but will not be required to buy a drink.

Clues

1. *Sarah worked at the school, suffering various illnesses and injuries, which stopped when she left.*
- **Reassurance:** Sarah smiles. "Well, everyone in the village knows. That place made me ill. I kept breaking bones and catching diseases. Then Andrew took me out of the school and I was fine."
- **Credit Rating:** You order one of the locals to tell you what's going on. Hearing your voice, he sits upright. "All right, Mister. Sarah was always ill, at school. That's why Andrew took her out of the school. She got back to the village and suddenly she was healthy. Still is. Go and ask her."

2. *Sarah knew one of the Seekers of Truth. He talked of strange mythologies and crackpoint science. He said he was planning "a great adventure" or "a great discovery" on 14th July. He left that day. She didn't see him again.*

- **Oral History:** You buy one of the locals a drink. "That gentleman Sarah used to hang about with, one of the teachers. Always talking about crazy things, black holes and monsters. He said he was going an adventure, sounded excited. That was back in July. We never saw him again. Good riddance, I say."

3. *(Core Clue): The Seekers Of Truth met somewhere underneath the old school theatre.*

- **Intimidation:** Andrew takes a step back. "All right. Go and look under the old theatre, in the school. That's where they met, that crowd. Now get out and don't bother Sarah again."
- **Flattery:** Sarah looks suspicious, then relaxes. "One of the teachers used to say things like that," Sarah says. "I used to see him hanging about near the old school theatre. I think they used to meet somewhere under it."

Scene: The Workshop

The old theatre, now disused, is built into the side of a hill, at the back of the playing fields. Since it was built in mid-Victorian times, the trees have crept forward, so that, although they do not engulf the theatre, they effectively camouflage it.

There are three doors: the main door, leading to the auditorium past a tiny box-office window; the stage door, along one side of the building, leading to the dressing rooms; and the set workshop door, hidden among the trees.

Take a moment, at this point, to consider what the Investigators should be doing, rather than breaking into a theatre. Teachers should be teaching during the day; janitorial staff and servants have duties to perform. How have they explained their absences?

Neither the stage door nor main doors are difficult to force. Alternatively, the caretaker has a key. Again, a point spend of an appropriate skill (Locksmith to open a lock cleanly, Reassurance to ask for the key discreetly) ensures the Investigators enter undetected: without this spend, they will face hard questions from the headmistress later. By this stage, of course, they may not care.

The auditorium itself, although small, was clearly once luxurious. One hundred red seats, now reeking of damp, face a stage set for a final performance of Cinderella. The dressing rooms are unremarkable.

The set workshop is below the main stage. It may be reached in three ways: through a small door in the changing rooms; through the overgrown door at the back of the theatre; and, most interestingly, through a trapdoor in the stage, via a ladder. The investigators will need to light the workshop: there

The Workshop

is no electric light here.

Once lit, the workshop appears cavernous and cluttered. Against the walls are desks, piled with papers, tools and old books. Impromptu bookshelves, made with bricks and planks of wood, are loaded with more books.

This workshop contains all documents that were missing from the crates in the attic. It will take days to search and collate all the information.

The Machine

In the centre of the room is a strange machine. Its most noticeable feature is a fifteen-foot long iron arm, attached to a central pivot. Attached to the central pivot is a flywheel; and attached to the flywheel are long, thick cables, connected to a petrol-powered generator in one corner of the workshop.

The arm looks intended to revolve horizontally and, indeed, a circular space, thirty feet across, has been cleared around the machine. Across this space, spirit levels are placed, screwed firmly to the floor. The machine is, of course, immobile in any practical sense: the flywheel is extraordinarily heavy, the generator is large and the arm is fifteen feet long.

The Investigators may start the machine. To do so, they must start the generator: this involves scraping rust and forcing a lever down.

As the machine starts, the arm begins to revolve, first slowly, then gathering speed. Over several minutes, the arm begins to revolve faster. The bubbles in the spirit levels tremble, as if the floor is moving; however, the floor remains still.

Gradually, the arm becomes a blur, scything lethally around the circle at unnatural speeds. The displaced air

sends loose papers flying, where they hang, twisting in eddies in the rushing air. The bubbles in the spirit levels creep towards the outer edges, indicating that the floor is tipping, as if pulled downwards in the centre. To the eyes, the floor remains flat.

It is clear, especially to scientists, that the generator is no longer powering the machine: no earthly power could produce this speed.

Suddenly, one spirit level breaks, its liquid instantly sucked towards the centre. The others, although clearly horizontal, indicate they are vertical. The centre of the machine is no longer visible, but sucks loose papers from the air towards it.

Any Investigators witnessing this must make a 2-point Stability test. Any scientist will understand, especially from the spirit levels, that this is impossible and unnatural, and must make a 3-point Stability test. These scientists will be unable to suppress the thought that they are witnessing a portal between worlds.

The Investigators may try to stop the machine. Disconnecting the generator will do this. So will pushing furniture into the path of the arm: the first piece of furniture will splinter and be sucked into the centre, but will slow the machine; further furniture will eventually stop the rotation entirely. The machine will take minutes to stop, but, as the speed reduces, the spirit levels return to normal and the centre of the machine becomes visible.

Engaging the machine physically is foolish and to be encouraged. Treat this as combat, using the following statistics: Health 20, Scuffling 20, Hit Threshold 3, immune to bullets

Entering the portal is equally foolish. The portal is at the same location as the hub of the machine, which means

that anyone entering must avoid the rotating arm. If an Investigator gives a plausible explanation of how they can do this, allow them to enter the portal, within which they will disappear (and leave the adventure).

When the machine stops, anything that was sucked into the centre is gone.

The Desks

Each Seeker of Truth has a specified work area within the workshop.

Here are example descriptions of the work areas. As Keeper, tailor these descriptions to the players' initial descriptions of the Seekers they are following. For example, you might say "This must be your brother's table: his handwriting is in the margins of the books. The books are myths of world creation, translated from Finnish and German. One of them is a picture book, of folk monsters. It shows a diabolical creature, like a sea-monster, but against a background of stars."

An engineer's desk: This untidy desk is covered with sketches of machines. There is a slide rule, a set square and protractor, with three thick books on Mechanical Engineering. A small model of the machine in the centre of the room is buried under a pile of paper.

A physicist's desk: This desk is merely a resting place for books. Many are on conventional physics, but it looks as though the author had a special interest in relativity: there are letters to a physicist in Austria; and scribbled relativistic calculations, related to rotating frames of reference.

"Calculating in a rotating frame of reference, we see the standard results, and note singularity at centre (division by zero!). Contrast with graph for a black hole. But now treat singularity as source of *mass*, linearly increasing and note that speed of rotation increases

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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without limit. Suggestion of miniature 'black hole' albeit contained in field of rotating body. Now consider conjecture of black hole = wormhole (anecdotally supported, although not experimentally, of course) and we may be looking at way to manufacture a portal. Pure conjecture, of course. Nevertheless interesting"

An astronomer's desk: Neatly stacked maps and star charts line this desk. In the centre is a precise drawing, showing something falling from the sky. Oddly, amongst the maps, is a book of prehistoric legends of world-creation.

A historian's desk: Here, the books are not those you would expect of an academic historian. They often concern prehistoric myths of world creation. There is a sketch of a creature: at first you think it is a jellyfish, but then you realise it is something alien and monstrous.

An occultist's desk: You have heard of these texts, but not seen them: myths of world creation, translated from Finnish and German. One book is a picture book, of folk monsters. It shows a diabolical creature, like a sea-monster, but against a background of stars.

A linguist's desk: The owner of this desk was translating a text. It is a book of Finnish folk-myths, mainly world creation myths, although strange glyphs are printed in the margins. In the centre of the book are colour illustrations of creatures: sea monsters, perhaps, or aliens?



Tomes

The Seekers of Truth ordered occult tomes and books of prehistoric myths through the school library. Judging from the books here, there was little scrutiny of what was ordered, although there is bias towards children's literature, books in foreign languages and histories, suggesting that the Seekers were ready, if necessary, to defend the books as "educational".

This workshop, then, is crammed with books and notes. Treat everything written within the Workshop as a Tome (as detailed in Trail of Cthulhu). Gaining a clue by poring over *anything* written adds one point of Cthulhu Mythos.

The following two books, in particular, are found in the workshop. If the Investigators are fluent, or choose to be fluent, in Finnish or German, the books will be found in their original languages. Otherwise, they are found in translation.

Die Jungewelt (translated as "When The World Was Young"), by Gustav Brandauer

Published in the original German in 1836, this educational textbook details world creation myths. The familiar Christian and Nordic creation myths appear here, followed by a descriptive account of a Bavarian story of ancient creatures, falling to Earth, and remaining buried to this day. The margin scribblings, in two unknown hands, expand on this last myth. The original German version adds 2 to Cthulhu Mythos; the translation adds a single point.

Untitled (translated as Creatures From Space"), author unknown

The original Finnish book accompanies illustrations of monsters with intricate and beautiful poetry. It has no cover, so that the original title, author and date of

publication are unknown. Reading the haunting poetry, and its descriptions of Star Vampires, Old Ones and a Colour, adds 2 to Cthulhu Mythos.

The translation, "Creatures From Space", is an ill-advised late Victorian attempt to popularise the original for children. The original illustrations remain and, in this version, are the main source of information. The poetry is translated as doggerel, retaining a little of its original meaning. Read by itself, it adds nothing to Cthulhu Mythos: viewing the illustrations while reading other similar books, however, adds a single point of Cthulhu Mythos.

Clues

1. *The Seekers were investigating occult myths, about gods that 'fell from the sky when the Earth was young'. Many of these writings seem insane.*

• **Library Use:** "Looking at your brother's books, you see he had moved beyond history, into world creation myths. Many of them seem insane. In the margins, he has scrawled the phrase 'They fell from the sky when the Earth was young', over and over again."

• **Linguistics:** "This is a more ancient form of the language than you are used to. There are chants about beings falling from the sky, although you cannot tell whether the beings are monsters or gods. The incantation 'They fell from the sky when the Earth was young' is repeated."

2. *The Seekers believed that one of these gods fell to Earth in the meteor storm.*

• **Astronomy:** "On the professor's desk are detailed plots of trajectories, showing a meteor falling from the sky. You are surprised by some of the notes in the log book: it looks as though the professor assumed the meteor was

The Bay

an alien, perhaps a god.”

- **History:** “There are eyewitness reports of meteor storms, dating back as far as the 15th Century, cross-referenced with world creation myths. You realise that the Seekers thought the meteor storm was a god coming to earth.”

3. *In later writings, the Seekers sometimes refer to themselves as the Order of Truth, sometimes in Latin: Ordo Veritatis.*

4. *The machine is intended to contain a creature or, perhaps, banish it to another plane. There are specific references to other planes: “Dream”, the “Dark Outside”.*

- **Physics:** “The scribbled relativistic equations remind you of similar equations you’ve seen for black holes. Many of the proofs are strange – there is a division by zero – but you gradually realise that the machine is intended as a portal, perhaps to contain a large creature, perhaps to banish it to another plane.”

- **Occult:** “There are symbols inscribed on the machine, which you have seen before in a summoning ritual. Clearly, the intention to to open a portal, but you are confused by a glyph that could represent “Contain” or “Banish”: was this machine intended to imprison a creature?”

5. *There are sketches and descriptions of things from beyond the stars: a vampire, that leaves its victims dessicated; a vapour, that lies under the Earth, drawing power until it is mature; an idiot god at the centre of the universe [Stability test 2].*

- **Evidence Collection:** “Once you clear the desk, you notice strange drawings, carved into the wood. They are detailed: one shows a vampire-like creature amongst the stars; another a vapour, under

the soil, drawing something into it; a third shows the universe, with something alien at the centre.”

- **Occult:** “You recognise some of the myths, although they are described in horrific and detailed terms. A vampire floats between the stars, sucking the life out of its victims. An alien gas lies under the soil, gaining its power from the life above. An idiot god writhes at the centre of the universe.”

6. *(Core Clue): On 14th July, the seekers went to the bay where a meteor landed.*

- **Library Use:** “The final entry in one of the diaries is excited: ‘Now we will see what the meteor really is! Will we meet a god? Will we die? We will make the bay uncover its mysteries!’ ”
- **Astronomy:** “One of the trajectories shows the meteor falling into the bay. Next to the location is written ‘Tuesday’. You conjecture that, on 14th July, the Seekers went to the bay, to investigate the meteor.”

Scene: Interlude - Drives

At this point, remind the Investigators of their Drives. This workshop holds the promise of finding a buried god.

Take a moment to focus on each Investigator before proceeding, perhaps as a Directed Scene. Encourage each player to describe their excitement. Within hours, this discovery will give the Investigator everything they ever wanted. What do they imagine? How do they feel? What do they do?



Scene: The Bay

A stone staircase leads from the school to a rocky beach. This beach, half a mile long, runs the length of the bay, at the base of cliffs. It is not a pleasant place: the stones feel oily and the water is cold.

This is a short scene. It serves two purposes: firstly, it is the calm before the storm: a moment for the Investigators to prepare, gather their thoughts and have any final conversations. Secondly, it lets the players see the Colour again. After machines, trajectories and prehistoric myths, it is time to remind the Investigators of the shimmering haze.

Clues

1. *The shimmering haze is everywhere, sucking the life from everything it touches. [2 point Stability test]*

- **Geology:** “The rocks are iridescent and oddly crumbling. It is a strange iridescence, stronger than you have ever encountered. Then, as you look around, you seem the same iridescence everywhere: in the cliffs, the stones, the haze hanging over the sea. It is everywhere. You feel, against reason, that it is sucking the life from the land.”
- **Occult:** “You look at the shimmering haze over the sea and recall a Native American legend. It concerned a spirit, that floats over the water and seeps into the rocks, taking the life from everything. Now you look at the cliffs, and the stones, you see the shimmer everywhere.”
- **Biology:** “You are struck by the lack of life here. Eventually, you find a small fish, washed up on the stones. For a moment, you think you see the sheen of its skin. Then you realise you are looking at a shimmer, the same shimmer as

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the haze over the water. The fish crumbles in your hands. Perhaps this haze is sucking the life from the island.”

2. (Core Clue): *The meteor landed in the caves.*

- **Astronomy:** “Comparing what you see against the trajectory drawings, you realise the meteor must have hit the sea at a shallow angle, burying itself in the rock, beneath the cliffs. You notice a cave mouth leading into the rocks.”
- **Geology:** “The rock here is soft. A meteor would not hit the sea bed and stop: it would plough further down. You notice a cave: perhaps the meteor is within the cave system.”

Scene: The Caves

The entrance leads to a cave system. As the Investigators descend into it, the floor turns from sand to rock. The haze becomes denser and the rocks shine with the now-familiar shimmer. Deep down in the caves, it becomes almost possible to navigate without light.

The cave system is complex to navigate. It would take a layman days to map the system, exploring cave by cave, to find everything within. To navigate the system in a few hours, the Investigators may use an appropriate skill: perhaps Biology, to navigate towards the Colour by noting the dying moss; Geology, to navigate by the crumbling rock; or Outdoorsman, to descend a rock chimney using a rope.

If the Investigators stay together in

their exploration, they will encounter the following in sequence. If anyone wanders off alone, they will encounter an event alone. As before, whenever these encounters mention a Seeker of Truth, rephrase to refer to the person that a particular Investigator is seeking: for example, “You find your brother’s dusty corpse.”

- There are remnants of a base camp. It looks as though the Seekers remained here for few days, perhaps venturing into the caves, then returning to the camp each night. The Investigators find personal effects of the person they are seeking: a belt buckle, a gun, a diary.
- In a quiet, still cave is the dusty corpse of one of the Seekers of Truth. The eyes are open, staring at the wall. As the Investigators approach, part of the Seeker’s face

Epilogue

crumbles to dust. (4 point Stability test if the corpse is a stranger, 6 point Stability test if the person was known to the Investigator)

- Whenever the Investigators disturb the air, or touch the corpse, another part of the corpse will crumble.
- While exploring the caves, the Investigators find personal effects of other Seekers, together with parts of bodies – hands, hair, pieces of face – that crumble if touched. There is no need for Stability checks for these events: they are considered subsumed in the events before and after.
- In another still cave is another body. As the Investigators approach, it blinks, then its head begins to turn, until it looks at the Investigators. It exhales, noisily, as if it is trying to speak. (5 point Stability test)

Again, touching the body or disturbing the air will kill the Seeker. (If the person is unknown to the Investigator, this causes a 5-point Stability test for witnessing the death, a 6-point test for causing it. If the person was known, there is an 8-point Stability test for witnessing the death, a 9-point test for causing it.)

All these Stability Checks are Mythos shocks.

As the Investigators progress deeper, the haze becomes stronger, a luminous fog that makes sight almost impossible.

Finally, they come to a deep and vast cavern. It is filled with the fog, shifting, living and alien. The Investigators feel it surrounding them, inside them, drawing the life from them.

EPILOGUE

The adventure ends here, with the Investigators in the cave, surrounded by the Colour. To end each Investigator's story, focus again on their Drives.

First, emphasise to each Investigator the futility of their drive. Against this incomprehensible being, what hope is there? Ask each player, in turn, whether their Investigator would give up hope. For any that would, use the rule of Anagnorisis: an immediate loss of 8 Stability points and their Drive.

Finally, ask each player to narrate an epilogue for their character. Do they remain in the cave forever, the life

slowly draining from them? Or return to the real world and give up hope? Are they found screaming on the beach? The end for their character is in their hands.

What Comes After

Although this story isn't suited to campaign play, there are enough loose ends to lead to other scenarios, with different teams of Investigators.

The most obvious loose end is the Machine. What was it for? If the Investigators started it, what sort of portal has it opened? Future scenarios might involve Investigators trying to fix whatever problems were created.

Also, note that this scenario makes playful references to other Gumshoe systems. The Seekers of Truth eventually called themselves the Ordo Veritatis: the same name as the central organisation in The Esoterrorists. The Machine was suggested to open a portal to the "Dark Outside": which, perhaps, is another name for the "Outer Black". Perhaps an Esoterrorists or Fear Itself scenario might follow, taking place years after this story.



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SAMPLE INVESTIGATORS

[* Occupational ability]

Alfred Botham

Concept: Bored, middle-aged hack

Drive: Adventure

Occupation: Journalist

Sex: Male

Pillars of sanity: The truth will out, Live life to the full, We can understand anything if we apply ourselves

Investigative skills: Library Use 2, Occult Studies 1, Assess Honesty* 2, Flattery* 2, Intimidation 1, Oral History* 2, Reassurance* 2, Streetwise 1, Accounting 1, Credit Rating 2

General skills: Driving 6, Fleeing 10, Health 10, Preparedness 5, Stability 10, Mechanical Repair 5, Sanity 10

Taking the post of: English master

Following: Pip Masterson

You remember when you were young and idealistic. You got your first job, as a cub reporter on the Maidenhead Recorder, by pestering the editor with letters. There was nothing in Maidenhead to report on, of course, but that didn't stop you. You trudged the streets, unearthing stories, however minor they seemed. Looking back, you think you were happy, then.

Years later, you are middle-aged, married and the deputy editor of the Hammond High. Although you love your family, they hold you back. It was for them you turned down a post at the Times, five years ago, and you find that difficult to forgive.

Two years ago, you employed a kid called Pip Masterson. He reminded you of your young self, walking the streets, looking for stories. One night, he took you to an occultist lecture in a bookshop basement. The lectures proved to be fertile ground for stories: your readers never tired of stories about religious weirdos. You both continued to attend. Then, at the beginning of this year, Pip asked for leave of absence. He told you he was following a lead to the Scottish island of St Margaret's. He was excited: a contact at the Telegraph had shown interest in the story.

Pip never returned. Through contacts in the occult circuit, you know he took a job at St Margaret's school. Taking leave of absence yourself, and telling your family you are going on a fishing expedition, you are setting off to discover the truth.



Reginald Fairweather, MP

Concept: Manipulative politician

Drive: Power

Occupation: Dilettante

Sex: Male

Pillars of sanity: Some people were born to rule, Knowledge is power

Investigative skills: Art History* 2, Law* 2, Occult Studies* 2, Theology* 2, Bargain 1, Credit Rating* 5, Flattery* 2, Intimidation 2, Reassurance* 2

General skills: Athletics 10, Driving 5, Filch 5, Health 8, Scuffling 5, Stability 8, Riding 6, Sanity 9

Taking the post of: Divinity master

Following: Dafydd Edwards, MP

You are an ambitious young Tory in the House of Commons. You have few friends, which causes you little regret, but one person who came close was Dafydd Edwards, a socialist, and the Member for somewhere unpronounceable in Wales.

Dafydd was a left-wing old bugger, of course, and his arguments were scarcely worth listening to, but they caused you some diversion. If nothing else, he was less tedious than the other sycophants. He had an interest in history, you remember, and read the most peculiar books. Earlier this year, he disappeared.

Naturally, you searched his desk. After disposing of some oddities - a pack of Tarot cards, for goodness sake! - you found a letter from a school on a Scottish island. It was an appointment letter, offering him the temporary post of Bursar, for a period of six months. Intrigued, you visited one of Dafydd's occult lectures. The more you listened, the more you wondered whether these madmen were on to something. What if there were, indeed, a source of power beneath all the mythological nonsense?

It is now the summer recess and, pleading the need for a holiday, you are travelling to St Margaret's. You have even secured a temporary post at the school, to enable you to dig round a bit more freely.



Georgia Mackey

Concept: Ambitious young scientist

Drive: Scholarship

Occupation: Scientist

Sex: Female

Sample Investigators

Pillars of sanity: Equations underpin the universe, Nothing is true unless it is backed by evidence, Hard work is its own reward,

Investigative skills: Geology 2, Library Use* 4, Physics* 4, Astronomy* 2, Cryptography 2, Photography 1, Credit Rating 3

General skills: Fleeing 10, Health 8, Preparedness 5, Stability 8, Electrical Repair* 10, First Aid 5, Mechanical Repair 10, Sanity 10

Taking the post of: Physics teacher

Following: Dr Alfred Grant

It is extraordinarily difficult for a young woman to be taken seriously as a physicist. Perhaps it was this difficulty that encouraged you to take relativity as your field: you would rather be controversial than ignored.

Having graduated at Imperial College, London, you began studying for your doctorate, under Dr Grant. He was one of the few researchers working in the field of relativity, although it became clear that his aim was to debunk Einstein's work. He was also, clearly, an alcoholic. Nevertheless, you are studying a field you love, and grateful.

At the beginning of this year, Dr Grant announced his intention to take a sabbatical. You invited him for a drink - he never refused a drink - and he explained his intention to travel to a Scottish island. At first, he was secretive. Later, he talked about a breakthrough, and a practical experiment on rotating frames of reference. You were surprised and confused: normally, he would be excited about disproving a relativistic theory; here, he seemed enthused by evidence to support it. You bought him another drink and, shortly afterwards, left him to find his own way home.

He has not returned. You have decided

to look for him: the university seem uninterested in your work and will not notice your absence. Rationally, you tell yourself that you are simply looking for your supervisor; but, secretly, you want to find the breakthrough Grant talked about. Is there, indeed, a possibility of testing the relativistic predictions for rotating frames of reference with an experiment?



Vicky "Magpie" Smith

Concept: Tramp who spends her days in the public library

Drive: Duty

Occupation: Hobo

Sex: Female

Pillars of sanity: There's no good in the upper classes, Knowledge is there for anyone, Death isn't something to be feared

Investigative skills: Architecture 1, Art History 1, Geology 1, History 1, Library Use 1, Physics 1, Theology 1, Streetwise* 2, Astronomy 1, Chemistry 1, Credit Rating 0

General skills: Athletics *10, Filch* 10, Health 10, Preparedness 5, Scuffling 6, Stability 10, Conceal 5, Sanity 10

Following: Red

You started going into public libraries because they were warm. As long as you kept your distance from the public, nobody bothered you. Later, you got to like reading. A few years later, you know a little about a lot.

Now, there was this other tramp, Red, an Irish bloke. You saw him in the libraries too, doing the Times

crossword. He was good, too, almost always finished it. After a while, you made an arrangement, going with him to a different library every day. See, the librarians didn't mind you, but Red couldn't go to the same library too much, on account of them getting complaints from the public about how the crossword was always done.

In the evenings, when the libraries closed, Red had started going to these occult talks. At first you said no when he asked you to come, but he explained that it wasn't a cult, it was occult, and it wouldn't do anyone no harm. So you went with him.

At the start of this year, Red told you he was going to Scotland. How long for, you said. Not long, he said, just going to see about some occult stuff. He told you the name of the island: St Margaret's. But he didn't come back, so now you're going after him. You've got a sense of duty about it. After all, he's one of yours. The working classes have got to stick together. (That sounds familiar. Did you read it somewhere?)



Bob Greene

Concept: Single-minded curate

Drive: Arrogance

Occupation: Clergy

Sex: Male

Pillars of sanity: God is all-powerful, God loves us, A healthy body is a healthy mind

Investigative skills: History* 2, Languages* 2, Library Use* 2, Theology* 2, Assess Honesty* 2, Credit Rating 2, Flattery* 4, Oral History 2, Reassurance* 2

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General skills: Driving 10, Fleeing 10, Health 10, Stability 10, Firearms 6, Psychoanalysis* 10, Sanity 10

Following: Red

Taking the post of: Under-gardener

You certainly had your doubts when you were sent to St Anne's Church. It was hardly a prestigious post, but the Bishop asked for you, and you could hardly refuse. In an effort to raise your profile, you started a soup kitchen, and talked with the low-lives.

One of them, you must admit, was rather fascinating, a chap who called himself "Red". He was more receptive than most to the Gospel, particularly the Old Testament, which made him very excited. You grew to like the chap. It became clear he was involved in some rather less savoury religious pursuits: he attended some of the spiritualist talks. Naturally, you warned him about dark forces and so forth, but you couldn't dissuade him.

Towards the start of this year, he disappeared from the kitchen. This was not unusual, of course, and although you rather missed him (mainly because you were forced to talk to some of the duller vagrants), you were not surprised. A week later, a letter arrived, addressed to "Red Smith", care of the church's address. Curiosity got the better of you and you opened it. Red had been appointed as Assistant Gardener, on a school on a remote Scottish island, and had clearly given the church's address as his home. Good for him, you thought.

Red stuck in your mind. A few months later, you wrote to the school, asking after him. The school explained, tersely, that Red had moved on, and expressed some irritation at the post being vacant. You then did something that was either brilliant or foolish. Fresh from a row with the bishop that morning (he had encouraged you to "see a bit of the

world"), you wrote back to apply for the post, temporarily, until Christmas. The more you think about it, the more you like it. A few months away from the Church of England; an opportunity to travel; a chance to get your hands dirty. Rather undignified, but again, you like that too: you are growing to like the company of those lower down the social scale.

Perhaps, too, you can find whatever dragged Red to Scotland. You suspect it was related to his occult interests. Still, that doesn't worry you. A few religious nuts? What are they going to do to you?



The Seekers Of Truth

These are example Seekers of Truth. Encourage your players to create their own seekers, in addition to these.

Pip Masterson is an ambitious young journalist. A cub reporter on the Hammond High, he travelled to St Margaret's on the trail of a story. He hoped to this story would buy his way into a post with a national newspaper. While at the school, he took the English master's job.

Dafydd Edwards, MP. An occult enthusiast, although, naturally, he kept that quiet from Parliament. After reading *The Astronomical Medium*, he became fascinated with the incidents at St Margarets. When he heard the post of Bursar was available, he offered to fill in briefly.

Red: A tramp, with a passion for old

books and the occult. When the London occultists were talking about the astronomical events at St Margaret's, his main contribution was scouring back issues of *The Times*. He eventually found two letters, which described the meteor shower well. It was also while reading *The Times* that he found the post of a Gardener's Assistant advertised at the school. After persuading one of the more literate occultists to write a letter of application, he secured the post.

Dr Alfred Grant: A classical physicist at Imperial College, London. While investigating relativity, with an aim to debunking it, he stumbled across the London occult set. Fascinated by history, he immersed himself in the occult, and began to wonder whether there was more to relativity than he had thought. After the set became fascinated with astronomical events around St Margaret's, he decided to investigate himself, taking the post of Physics master.



Pulping St Margaret's

Oh, all right. You can play this as a Pulp adventure. Here's how.

Firstly, make your descriptions vivid. Rather than a seedy backwater, describe the school as a forbidding clifftop house. The inhabitants, instead of doomed innocents, should be creepy, guarded and robotic.

Secondly, ramp up the horror quicker. In Purist mode, the Investigators should slowly come to fear the shimmering haze; in Pulp, the plants should be

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purple, and wave eerily in the night air.

Make the Machine that appears in the Workshop demonic. When it starts, it rips a hole through worlds, accompanied by blazes of colour. If you want combat, it will summon a black, half-formed mass, that writhes and thrashes at anything near:

Half-formed mass

Abilities: Athletics 8, Health 12, Scuffling 10

Hit Threshold: 4

Weapon: +0 (black tendril)

For more combat, add shotgun-toting locals. They attack the Investigators to make them leave, because “some things were not meant for man to know”. If captured, they may, at your discretion, reveal clues from the scene The Grey Sailor, above.

Shotgun-toting Local

Abilities: Athletics 7, Firearms 4, Health 8, Scuffling 6

Hit Threshold: 3

Alertness: +1

Weapon: +0 (shotgun)

Finally, the Workshop will contain a ritual to bring the Colour into tangible form. Hence, the final foray into the caves will be a pistol-packing mission to eliminate the Colour. In tangible form, the Colour fights using the statistics given in the Trail of Cthulhu rulebook.

Convention play

The Dying Of St Margaret’s works well for convention play. In a four-hour session, it is even possible to let the players create Investigators, using the

instructions above.

If the players take their time exploring St Margaret’s school, you may need to cut later scenes. If necessary, cut the scene in the Grey Sailor, by allowing the Core Clue in the Attic scene to point directly to the workshop. If you do this, avoid mentioning Sarah McCree.

In any case, the Investigators should find the workshop at least 90 minutes before the session ends, then enter the caves at least 45 minutes before the session ends.

Notes

The letters are based on letters from Alex Welsh, in the Scotsman, 1909

The Times

13th May, 1914

Letters

A Shooting Star

Sir - A short time after 11 o'clock last night, a meteor of extraordinary size and brilliancy was seen to shoot down in the south-eastern sky. It passed over the Great Bear, heading in a south-westerly direction, towards Saturn, as it were. Its light was white and of amazing brightness, while its long tail was a fiery red. In appearance it was larger than Mars, that had just risen like a great beacon over the hill top to the right.

Doubtless the wonderful phenomenon has to do with the most extraordinary change that has so suddenly taken place in the weather. While for weeks past it has been of the most boisterous and stormy description, a change occurred overnight, and this morning broke with hard frost, and the day has been of the loveliest sunshine, with a pretty keen high wind prevailing. It will have cheered the hearts of the farmers. - I am, &c.

ALEXANDER SCOTT

THE ASTRONOMICAL MEDIUM

The Author hopes that no reading will so far misunderstand his intention, in the present instance, as to suppose that a train of thought professedly theoretic, or hypothetical, and on a subject connected with which we have no direct information beyond what the Scriptures incidentally convey, is to be allowed to interfere with, or to supersede, any article of our religious belief. That which follows, then, is mere speculation, and if it seems fanciful to the reader, then the Author would be glad for his work to be interpreted merely as a retelling of folktales. This work is submitted, then, firstly for the reader's enjoyment, and only secondly for his enlightenment.

...Yet we must attempt to understand these proven phenomena, displayed both by theatrical spiritualists and in more scientific studies, and interpret them in the light of our Christian beliefs and of the scientific method. It seems clear that these events are not of this Earth, being unmentioned in the Bible and incomprehensible in terms of our advanced sciences. We are compelled, then, to entertain the conjecture that the spirits, beloved of mediums and spiritualists, are in fact entities from other worlds; and if it seems improbable, considering the astronomical distances, that humankind would be capable of contact with these beings; then we might reference the folktales of Finland, which tell of beings descending from sky to earth in ancient times and resting thereunder. Indeed, such tales are by no means uncommon, for Bavarian legends tell a similar tale.

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