

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# The Armitage Files



by Robin D Laws



Pelgrane Press

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## These Dread Pages

They arrive mysteriously, one by one. Each appears amid the effects of persons associated with Mistakonic University's Orne Library. The first shows up inside the valise of assistant library director Cyrus Llanfer. The second is found by chief librarian Henry Armitage, tucked neatly under his desk blotter. Others follow, each materializing in circumstances of troubling mundanity. They are handwritten notes, some in elegant, legible cursive, others in a wildly agitated version of the same hand. The pages are dirtied, bloodied, folded. Some have photographs or odd scraps of paper ephemera glued to them. In varying degrees of lucidity, they describe a series of investigations leading to a looming apocalypse.

Of the members of the Armitage Inquiry, the intrepid team of scholar-explorers who face down the horrors of the Mythos, none is more surprised by the arrival of the letters than the group's eponymous founder, Dr. Henry Armitage.

*The handwriting is his own!*

Dr. Armitage has no recollection of having written them, nor of the people or events laid out on their grime-stained pages. Speculation rages as to the provenance of the files. Is this an elaborate prank, or a hoax played by one of the Inquiry's growing list of occult enemies? Or do the weird warnings in these impossible documents portend real doom, if not investigated?

This book provides the raw materials for an open-ended epic campaign, in which the PCs investigate the cryptic references laid out in the files as they see fit. As the players choose which

leads to follow and which to leave on the backburner, the Keeper improvises a series of scenarios allowing them to avert the future cataclysms the files foretell.

Inside *The Armitage Files* you'll find the following sections:

**The Documents:** The ten documents found in the Miskatonic Library, in the order they're discovered. After the occasional customization by you, these are used as player handouts. Each contains more than one lead, allowing the players to decide what dark corners their investigators pry into, and in what order.

**People:** Forty-three characters, many of them referenced in the files. Divided by category and type, each is described in three alternate versions: one sinister, one innocuous, and one ready to aid the PCs in their battle against the rising forces of ancient madness. Alternate names and physical descriptions allow you to reuse them as new NPCs as needed.

**Organizations:** Eleven organizations, each referred to in one or more of the files. Each is presented as either a stalwart, innocuous or a sinister group, allowing you to tailor them to your current narrative needs.

**Places:** Snippets of "stock footage", short bursts of prepared text allowing you to evocatively describe common locations of the 1930s.

**Tomes and Magic:** Eight terrifying new Mythos volumes, each mentioned in one or more of the files. Alternate versions allow you to portray them

as hoaxes or genuine loci of Mythos activity, as your improvised storyline demands.

**Scenario Spines:** This chapter shows you how to wrap all of this material together into a satisfying campaign of epic scope. Included is a description of the Inquiry's reaction to the discovery of the documents, example scenario spines, and notes on time travel.

## How To Use This Book

Before reading further, flip to each of the chapters and read or skim an entry or two apiece. After familiarizing yourself with them, come back here to see how they all piece together to create your improvised campaign.

## BRINGING IN THE PCs

If you're already using the Armitage Inquiry campaign frame (*Trail Of Cthulhu*, p. 206), the investigators are on hand when the files first appear and are quickly deemed the obvious team to go out and verify its peculiar references.

Investigators affiliated with Project Covenant (ToC p. 207) may be temporarily detailed to the Inquiry as a joint operation between the two groups. Recent brushes with the Cthulhu cult have left Armitage's own field teams lamentably depleted. With his own people fiercely divided on the possible authenticity of the documents, the professor arranges with Cleveland Drew to send out the PCs, in hopes that they will look at them with fresh eyes.

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London book-hounds (Toc p. 209) are, due to references to the *Tears of Azazoth*, brought reluctantly on board as consultants. Set this up by first giving one or more PCs a lead to the present location of this tome (p. 78), then presenting them with a summons to Miskatonic. The collision between the earnest academics of the Inquiry and the greedily bibliomaniacal book-hounds provides opportunities for moments of comic relief. They may also pose a treacherous conflict of interest, as the avaricious collectors of the PC group attempt to capture the *Tears*, or any of the other tomes and artifacts of chapter five, for their own bookshelves.

PCs unaffiliated with any of these frames are also brought on board as fresh eyes. Past successes against the Mythos attract the attention of Armitage, Dr. Tyler Freeborn, or the Inquiry NPC who offers the most elegant connection to one or more player characters.

The self-motivated structure of the campaign's improvised scenarios assumes an already Mythos-aware party—or at least a group of people willing and able to seize a few confusing threads and actively weave them into an investigation. If you're starting a new game with *The Armitage Files*, ask that they create character concepts with this in mind. Although the Cthulhu Mythos skill isn't needed to complete any of the scenarios you'll improvise, let them buy it during character creation if they want.

Don't let the Mistakonic Library setting skew the party make-up completely toward academics and away from practical problem-solvers. With the horrors you're going to throw at them, they'll need their share of ex-cops, former soldiers and oddly competent hobos, too.

**As with any GUMSHOE campaign, harmonize character creation to ensure that, between them, the**



**characters have access to all of the game's investigative abilities.**

To tie a new group of players tightly into the mystery, you might suggest that some play members of the Inquiry, as listed in *ToC*, p. 206-207. (One playtest group made Armitage himself a PC, portraying him as resolutely skeptical of the documents' reality.)

Keepers wanting to weave a strong continuity between episodes may want to ask players to devise story hooks for their characters. For more on this idea, see p. 16.

### THE FILES ARRIVE

The first sheaf of handwritten pages (Document 1) is found by Dr. Cyrus Llanfer. He discovers it inside his own valise, after taking papers home to work at night in his personal study. They are in a badly scorched envelope, held shut by homemade glue. The envelope is made out to Henry Armitage, with no address provided. The glue crumbles, allowing Llanfer to gently pry open the flap and examine the document. Surprised by their bizarre content, he takes them to Armitage the next day. Recognizing the handwriting as a scrambled version of his own, yet with no recollection

of having created the document, Armitage requests confidentiality from his friend Llanfer. He delays informing his colleagues while he mulls the find's significance.

DocumentTwo appears a few days later, neatly but obtrusively tucked under Armitage's desk blotter. Increasingly disturbed by what he instinctively fears is an authentic document, he calls a meeting of his inner circle and shows them both documents. The scrawled pages elicit a paralyzing array of contrary responses.

### Reactions To the Files

Warren Rice and Albert Wilmarth, following the tenets of Occam's Razor, conclude that Armitage has created the files himself, most likely as a symptom of a comprehensive mental breakdown. Rice voices the theory more bluntly than Wilmarth, who has himself felt a sense of emotional vertigo ever since his encounter with the Mi-Go near Townshend, Vermont. (A 1-point **Assess Honesty** spend while conversing with Wilmarth about the issue suggests that he is projecting his own anxieties onto Armitage.)

William Dyer speculates that Armitage may produce the documents while

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possessed or otherwise under dire influence. He hints that Armitage should be monitored at all times, to check for evidence that an alien consciousness is imposing itself on him.

William Moore reminds the group of past cases where atavistic impulses have awakened in apparently normal men, exposing ancient and inhuman bloodlines. To certain prehistoric races, such as the Elder Things, time may have flowed in a nonlinear fashion. The files may be authentic, and the peculiar consciousness Armitage is in contact with may be his own future self.

Llanfer, motivated as ever by loyalty to Armitage, takes quiet offense at all of these suggestions but floats no theory of his own.

Nathaniel Peaslee, the group's resident psychologist, sees no sign of mental defect in Armitage's demeanor. He argues for independent verification of the documents' contents. With all that they've experienced, they must allow for the possibilities that defy rational thought. Whether produced by an unknowing Armitage or another entity in imitation of his handwriting, it is the contents of the document, not their means of production, that should preoccupy the inquiry.

Tyler Freeborn sees a human conspiracy. He wonders if some forger has set out to subvert the Inquiry. Even enemies motivated by supernatural agendas might attack by non-occult means.

The inner circle's junior members, Ferdinand Ashley and Francis Morgan, withhold judgment.

Fearful that she might cut off the group's funding, the professors decide not to mention the documents to Mrs. Pickman. Nor do they consider this a matter befitting the expertise of Dr. Sprague.

(If you've been running an Armitage game for a while, these reactions may not fit the NPCs as you've portrayed them. Adapt them as necessary to your established continuity.)

Armitage agrees to be watched at all times, to determine whether he is in fact writing the documents himself, as seems likely. He also proposes to find a group to independently research the various references made in them. This is when the PCs are brought in, using the hooks outlined above.

Where the PCs are not already inquiry members, choose one of the above NPCs to act as liaison. If they've met one of them before, pick that character—or the most vividly remembered Inquiry stalwart, in the case that they've previously interacted with several of them. Otherwise, choose a liaison based on professional allegiance: an alienist knows Peaslee, an archaeologist bonds with Morgan, or a professor enters into colloquy with the Inquiry member closest to his specialty. If you sometimes split the group up into smaller units and play cut scenes, assign multiple liaisons. Add conflict, as needed, by having them steer the different PC subgroups to opposite conclusions.

Once the PCs become involved, they can take the lead in performing tests on the documents. The information they gather is interesting but probably doesn't advance the story. They may choose to allow inquiry NPCs and other Miskatonic faculty members to head up this phase of the investigation, gathering the information passively as it comes in. In this case, information that can be gained from spends is provided during a later session than the basic clue, and only if the players remember to actively follow up.

**Biology** finds that the rusty splotches on the documents include human and rat blood, and an unidentifiable

substance which resembles blood but contains cellular material matching no known animal phylum. (*1-point spend:* The human blood found on the pages is of at least two separate blood types. *2-point:* One of the types matches Henry Armitage's. *3-point spend:* Some of the grime matted to the document includes a fine dust of pulverized bone. )

Among the inorganic materials found clinging to the document, **Chemistry** finds traces of soot, volcanic ash, soil, and pulverized concrete. (*1-point spend:* The documents give off a barely measurable radiation. *2-point spend:* In document 1, the ink is suffused with these inorganic materials. In document 2, the contaminants overlie the ink. This implies that the second document was written first, prior to the unknown event that filled the atmosphere with particulate matter.) **Chemistry** also identifies the makeup of the glue on the envelope containing the first document: it's water and flour.

### More Files

With two documents in hand, the PCs have enough information to find and pursue promising avenues of field investigation. Successive documents appear whenever a lull in the action arises, warranting the infusion of additional story hooks into the campaign.

As they investigate, senior members of the Inquiry monitor Armitage. **Document Three** materializes in Armitage's bedroom as he sleeps. Rice, who sits in a chair with pen and paper at hand to make observations, keeps watch over him. Suddenly Rice is overcome by a sense of vertigo and lapses into queasy unconsciousness. When he awakens about twenty minutes later, the document sits at his feet.

If the players seem more interested in investigating the means by which the

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### Providing the Files

The appearance of a lengthy handout in mid-game stops the action dead as players stop to read it. Provide the first file prior to the opening Armitage Files session. That way, players can read it at their leisure and come to the table with proposals for action. Continue this practice as new documents appear, providing them at session's end where at all possible. Remind players to develop possible courses of action as they read the files, to minimize flailing-about time at the top of the subsequent session.

documents appear than what they're talking about, allow them to take part in a version of this scene, rather than having it reported to them second-hand.

**Document Four** is found folded into the pages of the *Necronomicon*. Llanfer spots it while making one of his frequent routine checks on the inventory of the rare books collection.

**Documents Five and Six** appears in the personal effects of the PCs they mention (see the key for that document, below).

**Document Seven** appears in Dyer's locked wall safe. Armitage does not know its combination. This is the document where the author discusses his consumption of Dyer's brain.

**Document Eight** is found in the Miskatonic Library vestibule, resting on the floor, in the dead center of its inlaid marble elder sign.

**Document Nine** is found in a suitably creepy fashion by the PC it references.

**Document Ten** appears in the jacket pocket of Armitage's dressing gown. He discovers it in the morning after a prolonged and fitful sleep.

If it suits a specific purpose to do so, you can mix up the order of the documents. By mixing them up, you lose the sense that the letters present a narrative of growing horror. Without a

strong reason to alter the order, you're probably better off preserving it.

### Document Keys

This connects the documents to their corresponding entries in the people, places, organizations and tomes chapters. It shows you how to fill in the blanks to customize the documents to your campaign. Where necessary, it provides story context for the documents, placing them within Armitage's future actions in the timeline the PCs are working to prevent.

The documents depict, in fragmentary detail, a series of investigations Armitage undertakes. These begin a year and a half after your campaign's present day, and culminate in a Cthulhoid catastrophe about another year and a half later. To notate this, we use the formula PD + [x years, y months, z days], where PD is the day when the PCs read the first of the Armitage files.

### Document I

This is the last of the documents the future Armitage writes, on PD + 3 years, 6 months, and 3 days. He writes it half a year after the apocalypse, while on the run through upstate New York pursued by unspecified Mythos entities who have "stolen his face." Whether this reference is metaphorical or literal remains an unsolved mystery of a timeline which the investigators will

hopefully prevent.

**Austin Kittrell** is a cad, p. 34.

The organization **Kingsport Yacht Club** appears on p. 61. Oliver Gardiner is described in that entry.

**Horace "Diamond" Walsh** is a racketeer, p. 52.

### Document 2

Chronologically, this is the earliest document in the series, assembled from notes written by Armitage at Miskatonic University over a period of several weeks starting at PD + 1 year, 5 months, 21 days. At this stage, he is still heading the Inquiry, exactly as he is doing in the present day. Shown the documents, Armitage confirms that this is the format he uses for his rough notes, which are later collated and typed up by Llanfer for the organization's permanent files. Armitage recognizes none of the references and has no recollection of having written these notes.

**The Tears Of Azazoth** is a tome, p. 78.

The circus corresponds to the **carnival** entry in places (p. 68) and mentions two variants of the **strongman** character on p. 56.

**The New England League Of Amateur Astronomers** is an organization: p. 64.

Philip might be the traveling salesman, **Phil Hughes**, p. 39.

**Helping Hands** (p. 59) and the **Circle Rite Lodge** (p. 59) are organizations.

"Temporary agent Olson" could be shopkeeper **Olaf "Ollie" Olson** (p. 40.)

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### Document 3

The format of this document is the same as document 2, although the handwriting has grown slightly more ragged. This includes notes taken between PD + 1 year, 7 months and PD + 1 year, 9 months. None of the other Inquiry figures mentioned in it recall any such interactions, or know anything about the subjects referenced.

The **Tears Of Azazoth** (p. 78) is mentioned for a second time here.

The **American Preservation League** is an organization, p. 66.

Fill in the blank spaces about the investigator found dead on a factory floor with the name of a PC. Choose the investigator most likely to be sent to talk to working men. (Other investigator deaths will be marked in subsequent documents; be sure not to repeat them.) Names appear even when the PCs are not members of the Inquiry. This implies that they will join, officially or not, at some point in the future timeline.

### Document 4

This document is another set of notes written by Armitage in his standard format, between PD +1 year and 9 months and PD +1 year and 11 months. Once more, none of the known individuals mentioned in it can shed any light on the supposed events it describes.

The **Tears Of Azazoth** (p. 78) is mentioned again.

The **Basel Codex** is another tome, p. 73.

The **Society Of Syncretic Inquiry** (p. 60) and **Fuschack-Donland Gang** (p. 63) appear in the organizations chapter.

### Document 5

Unlike the previous three documents, number five is written on pages torn from a small notebook. Its handwriting is significantly distressed. They are furtively written while Armitage himself is on the road, personally conducting his investigations. He writes them between PD +1 year 11 months and PD +2 years.

The fortune teller reference is to **Claudia Brazda**, p. 53.

**Lars Fagerberg** is the linguist, p. 27.

The **Marcuzzo Crime Family** is an organization, p. 63.

Fill in the blank with the name of a PC with the highest Streetwise rating.

**Cecil Davis** is the biologist character on p. 26.

### Document 6

Document six is written with a fountain pen on torn-out pages from a blank journal.

This is the first document to bear a date, explicitly confirming the idea that the files are coming from the future. Fill in the top blank with the actual date corresponding to PD +2 years, 3 months, and 13 days.

The reference to **Ollie Olson** is the second mention of the shopkeeper on p. 40.

Fill in the second blank with the name of another PC investigator.

The organization **International Logospheric Union** appears on p. 62.

The **Nophru-Ka Panel** appears in the tomes and magic chapter, p. 76, as does **Meditations On an Attic Figure**, p. 75

**General Stothart** is the general character, p. 47.

### Document 7

This document resembles the previous one. Fill in the first blank with the date corresponding to PD + 2 years, 4 months, and 21 days.

The **Millbrook Business Improvement Association** appears on p. 64.

Several passages are written in a crude code.

The first moves major words out of context and into two streams. The unscrambled version of this file's third paragraph reads as follows:

Now increasingly certain that the Gainesville cylinder authentic and of inhuman origin, most likely Great Race, I travel to Georgia to speak to relatives of its discoverer, Earl Flowers. The story has it disappearing in Jersey City, where he was murdered but I think they have it. His aunt, Eugenia Bridgeman, says this city fellow Charles Fort has it. Of course Fort died in 1932, which is too early for me to have killed him. Or to be Earl Flowers' murderer, unless I succeed in finding the formula for the Invocation Of Non-Euclidean Time, traveling chronologically backwards to claim the item. I cannot afford to be complacent and assume that I will do so/have done so. Meanwhile I take the opportunity to butcher Mrs. Bridgeman and her family—husband William, son Ernest, granddaughters Ellie and Cora. Initial killings accomplished with the sacred shotgun of Russell Fushack. Except for Ernest who I slaughter with a tire iron. Amazing how connection to my primal self—the same blood running through the veins of those who rose up against their creators in the Basel Codex—has invigorated me. That I still appear old and weak is an advantage when suddenly I strike with

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the savage force of a jungle ape.

The **Gainesville Cylinder** is described on p. 74.

The next coded passage substitutes asterisks for the vowels a, i, o, and u:

Regarding Invocation, find chronological element volume known as Modena Grimoire. Llanfer, who saw it in Prague, said it was mostly cobbled-together nonsense from other mystical volumes. But what of the author? Guillaume Ballena appears from nowhere in 1763, in Modena, tells officials there he is time traveler. Say he is from 1930, but that alchemical (which is to say, scientific) inquiries led to his split into two selves, one light and one dark. On first hearing this, I ask myself, could I be Ballena? But my transformation occurs later than 1930. In 1930 I am still ignorantly virtuous, believing that the world's survival is still worth fighting for. But the point is—time travel. Then go back and what? Warn myself? Kill myself? Devour myself, triggering paradox that awakens Great Cthulhu from the depths and brings about the fatal cataclysm for which I yearn? Forget Emrys Wynn and the Tears Of Azazoth. It is the Modena Manuscript I must acquire.

The **Modena Grimoire** appears on p. 75.

If players in your group like word puzzles, provide these handouts without the solutions and let them bang away at them during the break between sessions. Each puzzle can be unscrambled with a 2-point **Cryptography** spend.

### Document 8

This document is written on butcher paper, in pencil. Fill in the first blank with the date for PD + 3 years, 1 month, 9 days.

The **Circle Rite Lodge**, referred to more briefly before, is an organization

on p. 59.

The **Nightingale** is a publication, described in the organization section, p. 65.

See the farmer entry, p. 41, for the **Sutton** family.

**George Belling** is a doctor, p. 31.

**Alfie Pivar** is a freak, p. 54.

**Cliff McGrail** is a detective, p. 53.

The **Versatile Glass** is an open reference. Make of it what you will.

### Document 9

This undated document matches the previous one. From context, it appears to follow immediately after document 8.

The anthropologist **Henry Russell** is on p. 24.

Fill in the blank with the name of a PC who has not been killed off in a previous document.

**Elisha Culberson**, a sheriff, is on p. 32.

The alienist **Erwin Dieke** is on p. 30.

The fortune teller reference is the second to **Claudia Brazda**, p. XX.

### Document 10

This document is written on the back of a crumpled and water-damaged sheet of gift wrap.

It refers again to **The Tears Of Azazoth**, p. 78.

The **Brotherhood of the Red Sash** is an organization on p. 61.

Wilton Bohleen is the author of the

tome **A Short History Of the Future**, p. 77.

The theologian **Graham Burgess** appears on p. 28; the mechanic **Jesse McDermott**, on p. 38, and the magnate **Vance Whitney** on p. 36.

The entities that can turn sideways and Ephraim Callan are open references.

## Using The Files

Each of these player handouts provides an evocative catalogue of scenario hooks. The players get to pick the plot threads they find interesting, and the order in which they want to tackle them. You then improvise responses to their actions, deciding which items represent real Mythos threats, which can be quickly established as red herrings, and which ones lead to aid or information. No two *Armitage Files* campaigns will run the same way or establish the same set of underlying facts. When you run it, the Gainesville Cylinder might be real; in my campaign, it might turn out to be a hoax.

The basic conceit of the *Armitage Files* story arc is that a number of apparently unrelated Mythos activities are feeding into one another, creating a storm of eldritch energy that eventually allows Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones to rise and scour the earth. This device allows you to build a series of self-contained scenarios into a greater narrative of cataclysmic import.

When one of these scenarios reaches a natural conclusion, allow the players to feel a sense of closure and momentary relief. If your game were a TV series, this would represent an episode break. Episodes don't have to conform to the structure suggested by any single document. The leads provided in one file might provide grist for multiple episodes. A single episode might draw on leads from two or more separate files.

### Reading-Averse Players

Although our hobby is heavily dependent on the written word, you may find yourself running for a player who incongruously hates to read in his leisure time. Suggest these players work this reluctance into their characters. They may play illiterates who can't read or neurotics who refuse to peruse the awful documents from the future. Of course, they'll have to depend on their fellow players to read and accurately convey the messages' contents.

### Revealing New Files

Fresh documents typically appear after episode breaks, usually prior to the beginning of a new session. Occasionally you might find the players stalling out in the middle of a scenario. They may conclude that there are few promising leads to follow, even though you can see them. Here you can either nudge them onto a path using their existing leads, or goose them forward by having Llanfer contact them with news of a new file arrival. (In the case of documents five, six, and nine, they appear among a PC's belongings; see above.)

Don't rush to reveal additional documents while the PCs are still eagerly pursuing leads currently before them. Your improvised scenarios may take them in directions unrelated to the contents of the files. The important thing is that your game remain eventful and creepy, not that the files be doled out at a particular pace.

When the players start wondering aloud when another file will appear, it's probably time to fulfill their expectations. If they get too humdrum about it, replace the document arrival details given above with a horrific and surprising delivery method. Maybe they find a document lodged in the



chest cavity of a slain victim, or in the jaws of an oncoming Tindalos hound. The Invocation of Non-Euclidean Time works in mysterious ways.

Be aware of the small chance that you'll have to rewrite later documents to conform to events in your series. If a PC snaps and kills Dr. William Moore, you'll need to alter the reference to him at the end of Document 9, as he has now prematurely met a different doom.

### Interweaving

In an extended campaign, you may want to intersperse Armitage Files scenarios with others. These may be other published mysteries or adventures of your own devising. You can build connections to the Armitage Files cases, or keep them entirely separate. The more entirely unrelated action you insert between Armitage cases, the harder it will be to sustain the urgency of impending apocalypse. The occasional digression may avoid

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monotony. Consider a change-of-pace episode, perhaps even one of comic horror, to cleanse the palate before the inexorable march toward the end times resumes.

### Time Disease

As the campaign progresses, choose one investigator—most likely the one with the lowest Sanity and/or highest Cthulhu Mythos—to serve as a conduit for the growing supernatural storm. Stray energies attaching to the documents from the future Armitage infect this individual with a sensitivity to time slippage. The infected PC experiences vivid dreams of the future suggested by the documents. Clocks and watches malfunction in his presence, speeding up, slowing down, or breaking completely. When alone, time dilates or contracts. The infected finds himself losing time, or able to accomplish hours worth of tasks in a few minutes. Each new instance of skewed time provokes a Stability test with a possible loss from 1-5, depending on its intensity. When the character passes a test, he becomes inured to weird time events of the same or lesser degree, remaining susceptible only to those that impose a greater potential Stability loss.

The time disease acts as a psychic meter, showing the players how well they're doing at averting the dreadful future described by the future Armitage. When they're succeeding, the dreams become less frequent, and recede in intensity. When the PCs are struggling, they become chronic. As the campaign progresses, they become brief, terrifying waking visions. At your discretion, these may entail possible Stability losses in the 4-7 range.

When time-diseased characters draw on Cthulhu Mythos, describe them as mentally plucking information from the awful future.

Naturally, when this character goes irredeemably mad or suffers a gruesome demise, the next most likely candidate is then gradually infected with the same malady.

### Scenario Shaping

Improvise your mysteries by riffing on the following base structure:

**Suspicions are aroused.** In *The Armitage Files*, this step of the storyline is provided for you, in the documents themselves. The players decide which odd reference is the most intriguingly menacing, and go off to investigate it.

#### **The ominous seems innocuous.**

The PCs interact with the apparently suspicious person, group or situation. Although something seems vaguely wrong, the investigation yields no damning evidence. The investigated individuals present a credible front of innocence. Various red herrings are pursued and ruled irrelevant.

#### **Something nasty happens.**

The PCs suffer a jolt of horror, most often a horribly mangled victim or attack by evil and/or eldritch forces.

**A layer is revealed.** Although their jolt of horror may have cost them, the PCs also gain information leading them closer to the heart of the mystery.

**A twist occurs.** This information in turn leads to an upending of the investigator's assumptions, and a loss of their mental equilibrium.

**[Relief comes.]** In this optional sequence, which can occur at any later stage of the mystery, the investigators gain unexpected aid, putting them back on the path to victory.

**A final truth is revealed.** The investigators learn what's really going on—and it's worse than they imagined.

**Horror is confronted.** They engage in a climactic clash with the forces of evil, temporarily restoring a semblance of order.

Adding structural flexibility to the spine are one or more **floating events**, which can be inserted as needed into the action. Antagonist reactions are always solidly reliable floating events.

This is a framework to fall back on when needed, not a blueprint you have to stick to. Relief may be needed earlier in the story; red herrings in the stretch may help you pace scenario events to match your time frame. Above all, you're responding to player initiative, nudging but not pushing plot developments into as much structure as seems mutually satisfying. It's helpful during step one to think ahead to what the twist (step 5) and final truth (step 7) might be. Many of these are strongly suggested by the descriptions in the people, organizations and tomes chapter. When you need a twist or final truth, look to the sinister entries (for people and organizations) or the authentic entry (for tomes.) For relief, look to the stalwart entries; for red herrings, look to the innocuous entries.

Only rarely will the resulting adventure precisely match this structure. However, using it to think ahead will help prepare you for the messier, but more vital and interactive, scenario that does result when PCs encounter a document's characters and situations

Don't let your use of a fallback structure serve as a tell alerting players to the solutions behind your mystery. If the first person from a document they investigate always turns out to be the bad guy, they'll twig to your tricks,

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deflating suspense and torpedoing suspension of disbelief. Of course, as soon as they start making decisions based on out-of-character clues, they're setting themselves up for a massively unpleasant switcheroo on your part.

### Laying Pipe

Create the feeling that the disparate investigations of the Armitage Files belong to a single cycle of connected events by hinting toward the dread events described by the future Armitage. References to *The Tears Of Azazoth* serve this purpose. Recurring appearances of other free-floating references might do the same. The strange yeti creature sighted by Armitage in document three might haunt their dreams, then stare at them dolefully through the woods, and finally stalk through a supposedly safe sanctum. You might explain him with a scenario which, at its conclusion, allows the PCs to banish him for good. Or you could leave him in place as a sort of walking omen pointing to the unity of your disparate scenarios. Appearances of the Möbius wasps or Red Box could be used in the same way.

### When It Ends

As you work your way to the end of the files, look for possible climactic events that allow the PCs to conclusively believe that they've averted the horrific future they outline. The character with time disease understands that disaster can't be averted simply by rendering a minor element of Armitage's narrative impossible. Killing Wilton Bohleen or Russ Fuschack before the time frame of the letters alters the future, but doesn't necessarily stop the apocalypse.

The time-diseased character becomes your meter of success. When the PCs overcome your final culminating obstacle, preventing the Mythos ripple effect from reaching critical mass, he undergoes an ecstatic breakdown. The weight of his time infection is suddenly

### Using Entries Without the Files

You can use entries in the People, Places, Organizations and Tomes chapters without ever referring to the Armitage Files themselves, or to the story arc they support. Bring them into improvised adventures as required, or build scenario premises around them. Non-*Armitage Files* adventures might revolve around a single entry, or tie multiple ideas together into one mystery.

lifted, as he becomes certain of their victory. Indulge a taste of irony by forcing a test against 8-point Stability loss arising from this final flood of arcane information into the brain. If the character goes insane, he becomes blissfully, grinningly catatonic for the duration of his illness.

### Temporal Issues

The basic premise of The Armitage Files campaign—that Henry Armitage's future self is using the Invocation Of Non-Euclidean Time spell to send messages back in time to his present self—raises certain temporal issues we'll leave you to resolve as you prefer.

Time travel stories work according to one of two sets of mutually contradictory rules. The past is either immutable or fungible.

If time is immutable, the Investigators have no hope of forestalling the apocalypse future Armitage is warning them about. Should they acquire the Invocation Of Non-Euclidean Time spell themselves, nothing they send back in time will ever substantially alter their present situation. Events will always conspire to maintain the

timeline as the Investigators remember it. This approach offers two advantages. One, its fatalism is entirely appropriate to a horror game, especially one evoking Lovecraftian cosmic dread. The failure of attempts to interfere with the timestream merely confirm the bug-like insignificance of all human endeavor. This choice is most appropriate to a purist game. Two, the elimination of time paradoxes is simpler to GM. Your storylines remain clear of confusing retroactive changes. You have to invent plot contrivances to explain why attempts to rewrite the past fail, but this is easy. Improbable coincidences are not only acceptable, but desirable, as examples of the universe fighting to maintain the established time stream.

If time is fungible, the Investigators can use Armitage's notes to prevent his disastrous future from coming into being. Armed with the Invocation Of Non-Euclidean Time, they can—at a hefty Stability cost—send messages to themselves allowing themselves second chances to avoid various horrible fates. This decision has the advantage of being more hopeful, allowing an added chance of victory many players will relish. Fungible time may be best suited to a free-wheeling pulp-flavored game. It also allows you access to a range of subtly creepy horror moments, as the PC's interference with the past causes their memories and the altered timeline to increasingly diverge.

For example, let's say that the PCs enter an excavated burial mound in Ohio, where they encounter Serpent People, leading to the death of one of their number. They use the Invocation to send a message warning themselves against a trip to the mound. The spell works, causing the message to dematerialize. Suddenly, the dead PC reappears—obviously they heeded the instructions and didn't go to the mound. But as they go about their business, trying to find a new way of solving the mystery at hand, they

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find their lives altered in other, subtle ways. A PC returns home to find that his wife has left him. Another finds mafioso waiting for him at his house, demanding to know why he hasn't paid them for a shipment of tommy guns he doesn't remember ordering. They must now work backwards, investigating themselves, to find out what other decisions they made when they got the message, connecting the dots to their current situation.

Needless to say, any confrontations with time alterations like these are mentally destabilizing, with potential Stability losses ranging from 1 to 6, depending on the magnitude of discontinuity between the lives the PCs remember and the lives they led after getting their messages from the future. As the mechanism of these time alterations is an incantation to Yog-Sothoth, it's also fair to rule that these are Mythos Shocks, at least for the first few times they happen.

### The Improvising Keeper

If you feel daunted by the extended improvisation called for here, the following pointers should guide your way. Many of these tips are applicable beyond this campaign, GUMSHOE, or the horror-mystery genre.

#### Don't Panic!

First of all, don't sweat any uncertainty you may be feeling. It's common, and will go away once you plunge in and start creating your campaign. Initially it may seem like this book contains a lot of elements to juggle. Techniques that seem tough in principle will turn out to be easier than they seemed when confronted with specific story situations in play. When in doubt, take a deep breath, break down your options, and ask yourself which one is the most interesting at the moment. Once you've made that choice and brought it out in play, you can then concern yourself with building on it to spur further interesting developments down the line.

Strong improvising is about reacting to input. Each choice you make will build on the previous ones. Soon your scenario will manifest a sense of momentum all its own. Once this creative alchemy occurs, you may find an improvised game easier to run than one from a published scenario. You don't have to worry about keeping your players on track, because they helped to build that track—and can use it to go where they and their characters want.

#### Activating Players

A common complaint about investigative scenarios is that they "railroad" players into tightly following a slavishly predetermined story path. Pelgrane's *Trail Of Cthulhu* scenarios vary in their adherence to a strict story structure, from highly timed cases like "The Non-Euclidean Man" (*Shadows*

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*Over Filmland* ) to the building block approach used in this book.

Although you rarely see the opposite complaint voiced, a larger pool of players become confused when not steered in an obvious direction. A similar response may occur in the case of *The Armitage Files*, where they're asked to choose between a large number of competing story hooks.

Prepare your players to take a more active role in advancing the story. Let them know that you'll be hitting them with more choices than they can be expected to follow up on. Assure them that the only bad response is to do nothing. If convenient, show them the brief section of player tips that starts on p. 21 .

Let players weigh options for as long as the discussion seems lively and fun. If you see the group get frustrated and unable to make a collective choice, gently insert yourself into the discussion. Summarize the various suggestions made and direct the discussion toward a conclusion. Guide the players in eliminating choices without nudging them to a preferred answer. (This detachment is easier to attain when you don't settle on one.)

Remind the players that the only way forward in a mystery scenario is to gather more information. When things get static, refer to the characters' drives. Ask them which choices before them most suit their specific drives.

Expect players to be initially overwhelmed by the multitude of choices in any given *Armitage Files* document. Tell them that (at least some of) their characters are accustomed to solving complex problems just like this. Whether they're anthropologists or private eyes, they're used to forming hypotheses, testing them by gathering information, and revising their theories, and moving forward. They respond to dilemmas by breaking them

down into steps. With a little coaching, they'll quickly internalize this sense of problem solving. Your players will learn to take the initiative, abandoning the "wait for clues" passivity trained into them as they were run through more predetermined scenarios.

### Avoid Negation

**"It's A CULTIST LIBRARY IN A CULTIST BUILDING. HOW CAN THERE NOT BE A SECRET PASSAGEWAY?"**

- as said during actual play, Sly Gryphon as Joe the PI

When running a mystery scenario, it helps to think two or three scenes ahead of the players. It's often useful to have a possible climactic sequence in mind, too. That allows you to foreshadow enough to make the ending appear to be a logical outgrowth of the scenes that preceded it. (For more on this, see the next section.)

However, don't let the possible plot forks you have in mind become too fixed in your imagination. Instead, keep them provisional, so that you can turn away from them and substitute new choices more in keeping with player input.

This is a long-winded way of restating the basic principle of improvisation used by stage actors: *never negate*. If, as a sketch unfolds, one performer identifies the other as his mother, the second performer must embrace and build on that choice. To simply swat down the choice and say, "I'm not your mother," is extremely poor form. It stops the story dead and punishes the other participant for attempting to advance it.

In a like vein, train yourself to respond to unexpected possibilities by embracing them and building them into the ongoing storyline. You may have decided that Elsa Hower is an innocent

victim of sinister forces. However, if one of the players seems dead set on treating her as a reincarnation of a 16<sup>th</sup> century witch, well, maybe she is the main villain of your piece, and not Josephine Wingate, as you had planned.

You don't have to accept every piece of player direction at face value. Keep the story surprising by building twists onto the elements you do incorporate. When in doubt, make the player half-right. Perhaps Elsa is wreaking all kinds of havoc, but only when Josephine pulls the strings. This revelation presents the group with a challenging moral dilemma—how do they deal with the witch without destroying the still-innocent girl whose body she occupies?

It's not necessary to turn the narrative on a dime with every piece of player input. The key is to avoid a scene in which nothing happens, or in which your scene is less interesting than the one suggested by the player. When a player says that the cultist library in the cultist building must have a secret passageway, it's disappointing to rule it out, or prevent the players from finding it because they haven't the right skill to spend from. Finding a passageway is more fun, and more plot-advancing, than not. This doesn't mean, however, that there shouldn't be a nasty surprise waiting for them at its other end.

### Preparing a Fallback

As mentioned above, you may find it easier to choose one or more of the following elements in advance of play: a possible evil scheme, preliminary suspense sequences, a trail of clues and/or a scene of climactic horror. You probably won't stick with it, but you've got it in your back pocket if everyone's inspiration suddenly flags.

The trick, though, is never to fall in love with your fallback. Mentally separate what has actually been revealed in play

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from the background facts you believe, at the moment, to be true. If player interest suggests it, always be ready to abandon facts not yet introduced, however vivid they may seem to you.

### Dramatic Rhythm

When no obvious response to a situation presents itself, stop for a moment to consider the scene's role in creating a dramatic rhythm. Most gripping stories vary their rhythm, mixing positive and negative moments. Horror stories are more punishing than others, taking their characters into a spiral into madness and destruction. Supernatural mysteries, which add adventure elements to the eldritch terror, allow for more up moments on the emotional rollercoaster. In *Trail*, the first structure is that of the purist mode, where the second is more pulpy. Even straight horror stories, however, allow their characters moments of respite. By letting the audience relax, you sharpen the intensity of the next explosion of horror.

If the characters are having a hard time of it and the players seem ready to crack from the strain, answer your next open plot question in a way that leads them to an up moment. If they've gone for awhile without meeting up with any nastiness, look for a way to connect that question with something awful.

### Leading and Following

Improvising is a technique, not an ultimate goal. Occasionally you'll find that it's more entertaining for all involved if you seize the narrative reins and steer them in a particular direction. This will tend to happen more near the end of a scenario, when you're trying to wrap all of the threads together into a coherent and satisfying conclusion.

Again this is a matter of responding to the mood and attitude of the players. When they're actively engaged in the

story and throwing out fun suggestions, follow their lead. When their creativity hits the wall, pick up the slack. Improvisation is an organic process of give and take.

### Chaos and Order

Any mystery story—or any real-life investigation, for that matter—appears chaotic at first, and gradually resolves its way to order. As the investigators accumulate facts, the number of possible truths multiplies. Mystery stories proceed by elimination, methodically reducing the number of possibilities until only one remains. In Lovecraft, however, the search for answers is also an unwitting spiral into doom: the truth is the last thing you really want to find! The structurally orderly resolution of a *Trail Of Cthulhu* scenario may well feature collapsing temples, nauseating eviscerations, and the mass appearance of hopping, tootling servitors of Azazoth.

Expect each story to sputter at first as the players sort through the various leads offered by an Armitage document. They'll toss out multiple theories without sufficient evidence. Debates over which clues to follow may bring out personality clashes between characters.

This first stage of a story may feel like pushing a rock up a hill. But when you get it over the crest of that hill, and various plot possibilities are eliminated and the main thread settled upon, the rock picks up speed, rolling faster and faster until you reach the one conclusion that seems suddenly to fit. At which point you collapse the temple, cue the eviscerations, and bring on the minions of Azazoth.

### Teach the Tropes

When you use a pre-written scenario, you can rely on it to evoke the themes, images and structure of a Lovecraftian

horror-mystery. By granting them greater leeway to direct the plot, improvised scenarios shift some of that burden to the players. Experienced Cthulhu hands know the drill. Based on their past successes and failures, they know roughly what their characters ought to be doing as they choose which threads from the Armitage document to follow up on. Knowing Lovecraft's fiction helps, too.

Where one or more of your players are new to Lovecraftian roleplaying, take the time to teach them the ropes. Or the tropes, as it were. During your introduction to the campaign, quickly summarize the themes and standard images of the setting. Provide a basic grounding to the player, *even if the character is unaware of the Mythos*. (As mentioned earlier, an Armitage Files campaign probably works best if the characters are already seasoned and self-motivated investigators. A player new to Cthulhu should still play a character who knows more about the Mythos than he does, or, failing that, one with a very active drive that will propel him into making active choices.)

In your own words, quickly mention:

- Lovecraft's themes of cosmic indifference, and the fragility of the human mind when forced to confront it
- the existence of the Great Old Ones
- their typical servitors on Earth, including human cultists and creatures like the Deep Ones

Mention other horror-mystery works, like *Supernatural*, *Fringe*, or *The X-Files*, as models for the sorts of things the characters will be expected to do in the course of the campaign.

During the early sessions of play, see to it that the player knows what to do

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in standard situations. Break in with authorial narration, keyed to the PC's investigative skill set:

"As you were taught by your mentor, Dr. Mistral, this is the sort of situation that demands a trip to the library."

"From years on the beat, you can tell that this is the king of mug who folds in the face of a little physical intimidation."

"A scientist with your field experience would search for samples to test."

Leading the players in this blatant way is a no-no—when they already have a set of expectations to draw from. Those who don't will rapidly get the idea with a little prompting of this sort. As soon as the light bulb goes on, you can treat them as you would any other player.

### Improvising a Narrative Arc

The improvised scenarios of an *Armitage Files* campaign can be entirely self-contained. If you prefer, however, they might contribute to a larger narrative arc. Often a continuity arises on its own, without your doing very much about it.

To build a narrative arc, keep an eye out for two elements: running villains, and character arcs.

### Running Villains

Sometimes the PCs fail to vanquish notable antagonists. When an especially tough or otherwise memorable enemy escapes their clutches, look for opportunities to bring him back for more. In these return encounters, stoke your players' desire to defeat this elusive evildoer. Create circumstances in which he can safely taunt the investigators. He might be spotted from a distance in one scenario and then just as quickly

drop from sight. Clues indicating his involvement behind the scenes may surface from time to time.

Increase his chances of surviving subsequent encounters. If your bad guy originally beat the protagonists with dice luck, or because their pools were depleted, increase his game statistics to reflect his perceived formidability. Groom other running villains to replace him as your main threat when they finally take him down.

By appearing in multiple scenarios, running villains create links between them. Tie them together by creating a grand scheme the villain and his allies are working toward. Perhaps, for example, they have pages of the Armitage Files in their possession, and want its awful future to come to pass. They insert themselves into the group's cases, to stop them from averting the events the documents describe.

The best running villains are people, or at least display recognizably human qualities. Alien, mindless or impersonal menaces are hard to develop a sustained enmity for. The wealthy mastermind who cruelly toys with them in the Yacht Club basement carries greater emotional resonance than the Mi-Go with the dented claw.

### Character Arcs

The standard character arc of a Lovecraftian tale is a descent into madness. The backgrounds and actions of the PCs may suggest other possible conclusive outcomes. If you know from the beginning that you want to weave a broader narrative arc, and the players are starting with new characters, ask them to supply story hooks for their investigators that might be advanced over multiple episodes. A strong hook implies a goal that will profoundly change the character if fulfilled. The change might have external components but must be internal or emotional, too.

The easiest and neatest way to devise a story hook is to draw inspiration from the character's drives. Conversely, a player might start with a hook and then pick a drive to match. Share the following examples with your players, to either draw inspiration from, or plunder wholesale:

**Adventure:** You heedlessly seek danger in a transparent attempt to forget a dead lover.

**Antiquarianism:** You seek the approval of your estranged father by doing what he never could—find the Red Box or the *Tears Of Azazoth* (both mentioned in the first document.)

**Arrogance:** Armitage or another member of the Inquiry attacked one of your scientific theories. Now is the chance to prove your superiority, by saving them from their own benighted foolishness.

**Artistic Sensitivity:** You met Armitage at a social event and sensed a terrible fate hanging over him. Ever since that night, you've suffered from a crippling creative block. Only by solving his mystery can you write or paint again.

**Bad Luck:** A fortune teller predicted that your string of catastrophic bad luck would end only when you fulfilled certain conditions. Her prophecy led you to the Inquiry.

**Curiosity:** Ever since you stumbled across the Files mystery, you've been unable to sleep properly. Only by solving it can you mend your increasingly threatened sanity.

**Duty:** Armitage saved your life once. Ever since then your life has been oppressed by the weight of this obligation. By solving the Files mystery, you can at long last live

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your life again, free and clear.

**Ennui:** When you heard of Armitage's situation, you had purchased the length of rope you intended to use to hang yourself, so that you might be relieved of your crushing spiritual boredom. For reasons you wish to more fully understand, you were intrigued by the tale—perhaps by solving this mystery, you will find a reason to go on breathing this world's tedious air.

**In the Blood:** Your disturbing dreams of monstrous transformation feature Henry Armitage. By atavistic instinct, you believe that the solution to the Files mystery is also the answer to that of your murky parentage.

**Revenge:** Diamond Walsh killed your family, perhaps under the orders of shadowy others. Seeing his name in the first document, you sense the chance to finally avenge them.

**Scholarship:** Your unified theory of everything, which will catapult you to fame and win you the Nobel Prize, can only be proved with access to the Red Box or *Tears Of Azazoth*.

**Sudden Shock:** Mere days ago, you woke up by the side of the road outside Arkham, remembering nothing of your past, your pockets filled with enigmatic objects. Written on the back of a matchbook cover was the name *Henry Armitage* and the words, "*Regain your past. Stop the future.*"

**Thirst For Knowledge:** You have always idolized Henry Armitage from afar and seek to emulate him. Secretly, you believe him to be your true father.

### Combining Villains and Character Arcs

In building an improvised narrative arc, you can rely on one element or the other. Or you can combine the two. As candidates for recurring villain status emerge, look for ways to tie them into one or more of the characters' arcs. The link might be literal—the villain could be, or could threaten, a supporting character mentioned in the story hook.

Alternately, it might be metaphorical. The villain could act as a foil to the PC in question by mirroring or contrasting his or her drive.

A mirror antagonist shares the same fatal flaw as the hero, personifying its moral or spiritual risks. If a PC is driven by ennui, he is too—but his bottomless boredom prompts him to torture, murder, and usher in Armitage's terrible future.

A contrasting antagonist highlights the character's defining traits by taking a role as his polar opposite. The arch-villain for a character afflicted by suicidal ennui might be so furiously determined to live that he's ushering in the rise of the Old Ones in a bid to achieve eldritch immortality.

Plot hooks are useful only insofar as they help you construct your narrative. If you're not sure how to integrate a hook into the Armitage plot line, ask players to make the necessary links. Some connections between the hook and your main plot line are more fun if introduced by surprise as the campaign proceeds. For example, the thrill-seeking adventurer who's trying to forget his dead love might not expect her to show up as an undead antagonist several episodes in.

When you use character arcs, look for ways to slightly advance one or more story hooks during each separate case. Shape your climactic installment by looking for a horrific conflagration that will tie together and resolve all of the active story hooks.

Incorporating story arcs for each investigator may prove unwieldy. It's okay to skip them for players who prefer to avoid the spotlight, or whose attendance is spotty, so long as they understand why you're doing it and don't feel left out. By focusing on arcs for only a few characters, you privilege them as your campaign's primary protagonists.

Given the typical *Trail Of Cthulhu* mortality rate, you can't rely too heavily on character arcs to tie your narrative together. Be prepared to switch gears when a focus PC dies a horrible death or goes incurably insane, taking her oh-so-useful plot hook with her. Players who still want to pursue orphaned character arcs may want to create new characters who are also motivated to carry them on.



# IMPROVISING WITH GUMSHOE

by Steve Dempsey

*This article is taken from our online webzine See Page XX.  
It includes optional rules for improvisation, and some good improv advice.*

Most games of GUMSHOE are played using a scenario that the GM has written. Not only does he introduce each scene and play the non player characters but he also decides in advance what the clues are. Although the GM does not dictate the path the players will take through the adventure, he has a strong hand on the tiller as the clues he chooses will determine to a rather large extent what the players do.

There are some good reasons not to always play this way. Stephen King says in *On Writing*, “I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our lives are largely plotless, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren’t compatible.” When you tie this in with the GM’s creed, “No scenario ever survives contact with the players,” you will see that the improvised game has some advantages over one written by the GM.

What you might lose on intricate plotting you are likely to gain on player involvement in the creative process and character play. Players will be much freer to take the scenario in directions that seem more natural to them and their input will have a greater impact on the story.

Improvisation is nothing terribly difficult to do, the main impact of playing this variant is that the game is not planned up front by a GM but is developed in play by players and GM alike. This means no prep for GMs, other than learning the rules. I’ll be discussing the details of how to do this in three easy stages. Finally I’ll give an example that shows how this works in play.

## The set-up

As with any improvisation, you have to have a theme. It’s an improvisation on something. If you don’t have a theme, then the players won’t know what kind of characters to make.

So start with a theme. It doesn’t really matter how you come by this as long as there is some consensus within the group. You could let the GM choose (“You’re all students at a Japanese high school, getting ready for a school trip”) or you could have a group discussion about what sounds cool (“I want things lurking in doorways”, “I want magical rituals that take years to cast”, “I want a scene in an 80s disco”). You could also choose something that relates to a moral question (“How far are you prepared to go to

stop the monsters?”) or a dilemma (“Family or Job?”).

But remember that this is GUMSHOE: Fear Itself, Esoterrorists, Trail of Cthulhu, Mutant City Blues, Death in the Dark Ages. It’s all about investigation. Some terrible crime has been committed, the bastions of reality are under threat, and the characters are the ones to deal with it.

For your theme you should also discuss the nature of this threat or crime, even if you don’t want to know the details at this stage. For example, the Japanese schoolgirls are a shoe-in for some kind of mad slasher and the 80’s disco idea smacks of Son of Sam or Zodiac.

You could discuss who the villain of the piece is going to be. This could be oblique (some Mythos deity) or explicit (one of the schoolgirls). It helps the game if you have some idea of what you are aiming for. It should also help with pacing. You don’t want the bad guy to be revealed to the characters in the first five minutes.

It’s a good idea, although not necessary, to write down the outcome of your discussions regarding the theme. It’s a handy resource for players and GM alike who can refer to it when making decisions about characters or plot.

Once you know what the theme is, make up some characters. In many games, this is done in utmost secrecy lest anyone steal your cool idea. In improv, we have a different way of doing things. You all do your characters together. Talk about your characters to each other and say when you like something. Give positive feedback.

Improv thrives on feedback. You are the audience as well as the actors so big yourselves up. It’s not just about getting a good vibe, this is also about riffing off each other’s characters. If you’ve gone the schoolgirl route, you’ll need to know who is the class swot, who is the cheerleader and who has psychic powers. Your characters don’t necessarily need to know, but your players do. You need to know where conflicts will arise because that’s what makes the game interesting.

You can do this by each introducing your character once generation has been done, but that’s a short cut that misses out the links that you can forge between your characters if you do the job collaboratively.

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In improv GUMSHOE, investigative skills work differently. They still allow characters to automatically find core clues or to be spent on supplementary clues. That much does not change. However, because there is no prewritten scenario, the choice of skills determines what the characters are going to encounter. If no one has Art History as a skill, the characters aren't going to be looking at many paintings. If they all have high trivia scores, then what happened in last week's episode of Full Metal Alchemist is going to be much more important.

Decide how long you want the game to last. This can be done by deciding on the number of core clues. One is generally not enough but you can play a decent one session game with only three or four core clues. Don't forget that some scenes will not be about clues but for transition or colour. Whilst you might like to go for a mammoth ten core clue game, this is probably a bit much and I imagine is best broken down into smaller three or four clue episodes, each with their own internal logic but all building blocks in the greater plot arc.

### What do we do now?

Now you play. Without any kind of pre-existing scenario this sounds a bit scary but you do have something to go on, namely all the work that you've put in so far to create the theme and the characters. You should all have a pretty good idea of how the general direction of the game so now what you do is ask for scenes.

Anyone can ask for a scene, player or GM, but the GM gets to decide the order in which they are played. The first scene is usually called for by the GM who will use it to introduce the game, the characters and perhaps something about the mystery that's about to be investigated.

A scene is where a least one character will attempt some kind of action. An action is where a character finds a clue, has a social interaction with a PC or NPC or uses their general skills to some end. It's a fairly loose definition but you'll know one when you see one. For a scene to work it has to have some kind of danger, excitement, threat or drive the plot of the game.

It's the GM's job to set-up scenes and to play NPCs. They can take account of player wishes but ultimately it is their responsibility to decide who and what is in the scene.

It's also the GM's job to make sure that transitions between scenes are handled. This is essentially narration. It's the bits in 24 that happen during the ad breaks when Jack Bauer drives to the next action packed scene, or at the start when the voice says "Previously on Heroes." Transitions are important because they tie everything together. They can also have bits of exposition such as when a PC talks to his critically ill wife in hospital, flashbacks to a scene in

the life of the villain or even foreshadowing of future events. The extent to which you expose plot to the players in these scenes is very much up to the will of the group. Some don't want out of character knowledge but some relish the TV show style construction that has interposed shots of the bad guy committing his latest dastardly crime: think Skylar in Heroes.

### How to improvise

Here are some techniques that you can use to help with your improvisation. If you want more information on improvisation for roleplaying I recommend *Play Unsafe* by Graham Walmsley.

These techniques are not difficult to use and they have been shown in theatre sports (see Impro by Keith Johnstone) to improve stories generated through improvisation.

### DON'T TRY TO BE TOO CLEVER

If your character goes into a bar for the first time, they should probably order a drink, they probably wouldn't do a back flip over the bar and shoot the pianist. If you do this kind of thing, you spoil the narrative by doing things for which the other players can't see the justification. Characters should act in character and do what's natural for them to do. You'll find that acting naturally helps the game along much better because the other players will come to know what to expect from your character.

### DON'T BLOCK

This follows on from the first technique. You won't be able to understand what the other characters are like if you try to block everything they do. So if a character proposes going into a bar, you probably shouldn't say "It's closed" or "I don't go in bars." It's fine to say, "Well, I wouldn't usually, but just this once." In fact this is very good because this reveals something about your character as well as encouraging the other player's development of the game.

### REINCORPORATE

Build on what's already happened. If an NPC gets mentioned by name in an early scene, bring them back later on. If a detail is mentioned, make it appear in a later scene under a different light, make it more or less important than it was. The reason behind reincorporation is it reinforces the narrative by drawing attention to the salient points.

Reincorporation is also known as Chekov's Gun because he once wrote in a letter to a friend, "If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there."

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### An example of play.

So here's an example. Graham is running a game for Simon and Alex. They decide that they want to play Fear Itself set in the London in the 70s. The player characters will all be involved in the punk scene, the tone will be gritty and the game should involve some kind of parasitical infection.

Simon's character is called Steve, a fanzine writer from Bromley. His writing has some influence in the small milieu but he's not necessarily well liked, mainly because of the sarcastic tone of his writing. He's unemployed.

Alex's character, Adrian, has come down to London from Birmingham, to escape from Heavy Metal. He's a competent drummer and has got a gig with a band called Dole Kids. Adrian and Steve share a grotty room in Berwick St.

Graham thinks that the plot probably involves something to do with some chord progression carrying the infection but that's not something he can decide. But it is his job to frame the first scene. Given the theme, there's nowhere better to start the game than at a club. (This is **Not Being Too Clever**.)

It's a Friday night and the Dive, a club in Camden pub basement, is heaving. The floor is sticky with beer and various bodily fluids, the walls and ceiling dripping with sweat. Dole Kids are just coming off having done a decent set. Steve is in the off-stage area having a discussion with Molly, lead singer of Kick in the Head who are due on next. Molly has taken umbrage at something Steve wrote in his last fanzine. Her band is on stage and waiting for her.

The scene is played out to introduce the characters and any NPCs. From what happens it's clear that Molly will feature later in the game. On this occasion Molly storms off up the steps to the stage barging into Adrian. This only escalates the arguments. She spits at the boys and she runs up to sing. They follow her and end up being beaten up by Kick in the Head and their loyal following. Molly takes pity on the boys and gets them back to her dressing room where they share a joint.

Next, Alex calls for a Core Clue scene. As there hasn't been anything horrible happen yet, this scene should introduce the first elements of horror. It's probably time for someone to die.

Alex asks for the scene to take place at the after show party. Graham sets the scene but allows the players to place their own characters. It's after the gig at a party in a squat next to a kebab shop. There is no electricity in the building and it's entirely lit by candles. Someone has a grotty tape player which is blasting out the rather indistinct sounds of Iggy Pop and the Stooges.

Alex says that Adrian is snogging some groupie in a wrecked bathroom, candles reflecting off broken bits of mirror. Simon decides that Steve is holding forth in a damp and grimy kitchen to a small coterie of fanzine fans.

Graham narrates what happens next. Suddenly a scream comes from upstairs. A girl staggers into a stairwell, her face is contorted in horror. She collapses and falls. People run up to see what's going on. As Alex called the scene, it's up to him what the clue is. He can take suggestions from the other players. Adrian comes out to see what's going on and uses Intimidation to get everyone else to back off so he can get to clue. Alex says that the girl has passed out, she's got a joint tightly clenched in her hand. Adrian checks the girl out and takes the joint. (This is **Reincorporation** of the joint.) He goes to take a puff but just before he does notices something strange in the joint. Graham suggests that this might be some kind of small wriggly worm, and Simon adds that perhaps as Adrian is leaning over the girl he notices something pass across her eyeball, although it's not clear what.

Alex decides to go with the wriggling worm in the joint. Simon also decides on a supplementary clue, spending a point of Streetwise, he decides that Steve knows the dead girl. She's a goth called Perdita, also from Bromley. She's a pagan who Steve knows is into some "heavy magic shit."

Graham narrates what happens next. Perdita wakes up with a start and looks around. She smiles strangely and attempts to kiss Adrian. She is superhumanly strong but together they manage to force her outside. She chases after someone else. Everyone else has run away at this point, except for Molly, who announces "Oh my god, I've got the same dealer as Perdita!" She gets out her weed and it too is infected with worms.

We have a plot! Everyone has smoked the infected weed, who knows what might happen to them now? The game will continue long into the night.

You now have some tools that you can use to improvise games. If you give this a go, remember that a light touch is often needed with this kind of game, don't go trampling all over other people's ideas, give them space and time to come to fruition. It's a question of mutual respect.

Finally, the improvisation may well not work at all. You might find that you've painted yourselves into some kind of dead-end story. But don't worry about it. Improv, like any other game technique, doesn't always work. The thing is not to worry too much about this and to just try again from a bit before when things started to go off the rails.

With a bit of patience, you'll soon be off again.

### The Improvising Player

Before commencing your campaign, decide how open to be about its improvised nature. Some players don't like the thought that a mystery is being made up as they go along. An investigation only feels real to them if they think that there's a single predetermined answer to work toward. If the majority of the players in your group feel this way, *The Armitage Files* may not be for them. On the other hand, via the honorable and time-honored game mastering technique of shameless deception, you can still use it to show them a grand old time. Make them think you've adapted the material in this book and worked the answers all out in advance.

These days you're more likely to find players who seek narrative input. If you're openly improvising, prepare them for the experience with the following pieces of advice:

- **Seize the Helm.** *The Armitage Files* is your chance to drive the plot of a Cthulhu campaign. Instead of waiting for things to happen, your characters get to take control and make them happen. Rather than follow a single narrative thread, each document gives you the chance to choose the mysteries that most interest you.
- **Mysteries Are Confusing At First.** At first, the storyline may seem messy or diffuse. This is to be expected. It is, after all, what real-world investigations look like during their early stages. If you're at a loss, gather more information. As you do so, the case will take on a momentum of its own and choices will become more obvious.
- **There Is No Wrong Choice.** Choose the details from the documents you want to pursue boldly and quickly. All of them will lead to something interesting. None of the choices are clearly tactically superior to the others. So take the avenues that you think are the most fun. This is your chance to make choices in character and not be punished for it. When in doubt, look at your drives and ask yourself which clue would most fascinate your character.
- **They're All Wrong Choices.** This is a Cthulhu game. Your stalwart characters are struggling against a universe of dread indifference, toward victories which will be fleeting at best. No matter where you turn, horrible doom awaits. Relax and enjoy your inevitable doom!



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### Scenario Spine Worksheet

Suspicious Aroused

Ominous Seems Innocuous

Something nasty

Layer Revealed

Twist

Final Truth

Horror Confronted

[Floating: Relief Comes]

[Floating]

[Floating]

## TRAIL OF CTHULHU



## People

This chapter contains 42 configurable, reusable profiles for supporting characters the PCs meet as they probe The Armitage Files—or conduct any other Trail Of Cthulhu investigation. Characters are presented within the following broad categories: Academics (p. 26), Professionals (p. 29), Police (p. 32), Swells (p. 34), Townsfolk (p. 37), Salesmen and Shopkeepers (p. 38), Rural Folk (p. 41), Working Men (p. 43), Sailors (p. 45), Soldiers (p. 47), The Hardboiled (p. 49), and Carnies (p. 53.)

Each character write-up includes modular elements which you can mix and match as required. When a supporting character enters the storyline, either as you prepare your scenario or in an improvised scene in progress, decide whether he or she is *sinister*, *innocuous*, or *stalwart*. A sinister character places obstacles in the investigators' path, attempting to harm them, or those they hope to protect. He may be a knowing agent of the Old Ones, an occult evildoer unaware of the true existential madness of the Mythos, or a mundane villain. An innocuous character is an ordinary person merely hoping to get on with his day—which often puts him at odds with the investigators and their outlandish needs. If the character is stalwart, he is a heroic individual equipped with a drive similar to those driving the investigators. Whether or not they're aware of the Mythos, they'll go to great lengths to aid the group in overcoming their present plot obstacles. The horrific universe of H. P. Lovecraft being what it is, stalwarts often reappear in the storyline after aiding the heroes—as appallingly mangled corpses, destroyed by the eldritch forces they so rashly

disturbed. Stalwart characters may be adopted as PCs to replace suddenly slain characters, as might many innocuous types, after a suitable heroic epiphany.

Needless to say, the facts given about the characters in any of their three modes are a starting point, not a straitjacket. When an idea doesn't serve your story needs, change it to something that does.

Finding yourself in need of a narrative twist, you may occasionally find reason to switch your conception of a character in midstream. A character you have portrayed as sinister might surprise by turning out to be innocuous. An innocuous type might find himself inspired to stalwart behavior, or a stalwart corrupted by madness to walk a sinister path.

Some entries include an entry entitled "Role," indicating why the PCs might seek them out, independent of references to them in the Armitage Files.

Also included are additional names and physical descriptions, so you can reuse the basic template the next time you need a character of that type. As you use these names and descriptions up, you may wish to replace them, so that you always have a fresh version of the character type to hand when the story goes in an unexpected direction and improvisation is a must.

Three or more defining quirks are provided for each character. One suggests a physical action you can perform at the gaming table, often with the use of props. Use only one quirk per iteration of a character. Multiple

quirks are hard to play and can prove distracting from the main point of the scene.

Each character also includes game statistics. Although supporting characters do not use investigative abilities, these are in a few instances provided, to give you a sense of the expertise the character might be able to lend to the investigators. General abilities that allow the supporting character to perceive or hide from PCs are omitted in favor of Alertness and Stealth modifiers.

If a character is referenced in one of the Armitage Files, the entry *Document Reference* notes its number. Where the NPC appears in more than one document, the main reference is in ordinary text and secondary references are italicized.

## Academics

### Anthropologist

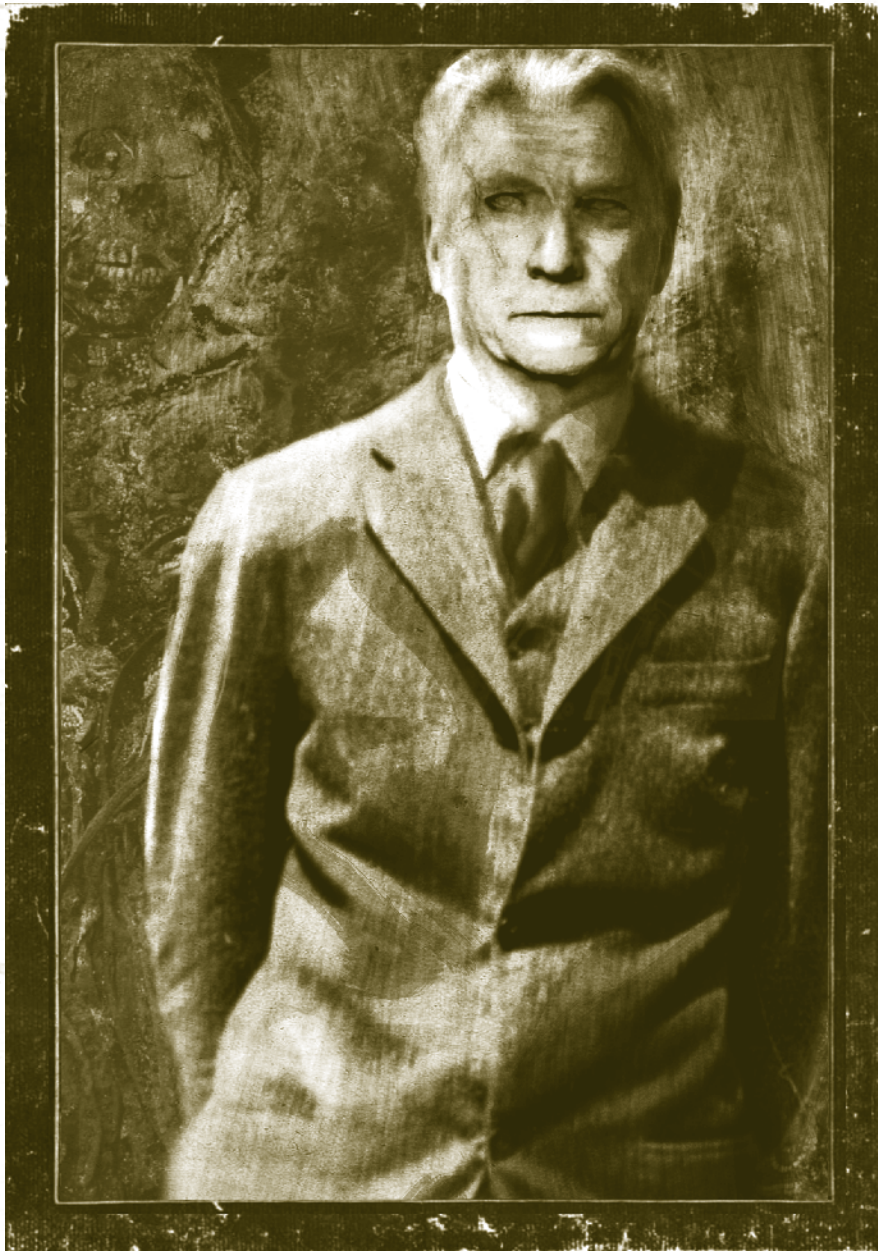
**Name:** Henry Russell

**Physical Description:** Late 50s, blind, scarred, prematurely white hair, high-pitched voice

**Sinister:** During his sojourn among the tribal people he has studied all his life, Russell fell under the spell of a degenerate shaman. This charismatic primitive subjected a half-willing Russell to the unspeakable rites of his ancient, inhuman god. After breaking from the shaman and returning home, Russell went slowly blind. Soon after

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losing his sight completely, Russell made an appalling yet obscenely delightful discovery. Although his ability to perceive this world had ebbed away from him, he could now perfectly perceive the true non-Euclidean angles underpinning our false and limited conception of three-dimensional space! When the PCs come to him seeking information on his tribe, he can see the unearthly forces arrayed around them, hungering for their demise—and does his best to push them to see

what he sees, hastening their fall into madness. Well adapted to his own small environment, his disability has left him terrified of imprisonment. **Interrogation** by anyone who might send him to jail, even briefly, prompts him to reveal his secrets.

**Innocuous:** Russell lost his sight while performing field work. Bashed from behind by a porter he had mistreated, he lost his sight and was then mauled or injured by an exotic creature. This might

be anything from a piranha to a cobra, depending on where you need to situate the tribe he was studying. Blaming himself for his fate, Russell has become an advocate for the rights of primitive peoples to be left unmolested. In this progressive opinion he is a generation or more ahead of his time. He insists that PCs agree to somehow help him in this agenda before he does them a favor in turn (**Bargain.**)

**Stalwart:** Russell was blinded in a tribal raid. He tried to protect the group he studied from degenerate rivals who propitiate a cruel octopoid spirit. With the aid of colleagues, he has since found parallel cannibal religions located throughout the globe. Russell blames the noxious influence of these cults for the shameful primitivism that keeps the good folk of his chosen tribe trapped in a pitiful struggle for subsistence. He eagerly cooperates in any effort that might shine a bright, exposing light on these barbaric cultures.

**Alternate Names:** Raymond Rickard, Harold Hurd, Gerrit Frost

**Alternate Descriptions** [Once the group has encountered one blind anthropologist, alter the details given above so that this memorable detail does not endlessly repeat itself—unless you're using the recurrence in furtherance of an eerie storyline.] (1): mid 50s, jet black hair, widow's peak, narrow features

(2): late 30s, wavy brown hair, blue eyes, large ears

(3): early 40s, ruddy skin, flat features, monotonous voice

**Defining Quirks:** [if he's blind, there's no need for another memorable trait; manipulate objects at the table by feel alone] (1) sweats profusely, as if still gripped by a jungle fever; (2) unconsciously caresses his scar tissue when lost in thought; (3) gesticulates

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with a pipe but never lights it

### Academic and Technical Abilities:

Anthropology, Archaeology, History, Languages, Medicine, Outdoorsman, Pharmacy

**General Abilities:** [second set of ratings is for sighted version of character] Athletics 1/6, Driving 0/2, Firearms 0/6, First Aid 0/6, Fleeing 0/4, Health 2/6, Mechanical Repair 2, Piloting 0/4, Riding 0/4, Scuffling 1/6, Weapons 1/6.

**Alertness Modifier:** -1 (visual), +1 (aural) [if blind], 0 [if sighted]

**Stealth Modifier:** -2/+1

**Document Reference:** 9

### Astronomer

**Name:** Rupert Vegard

**Physical Description:** Late 30s, lean, prematurely wrinkled, back-swept mane of unruly hair

**Sinister:** After long, late-night sessions staring at the stars, Vegard lost his sanity—when one of the stars *looked back at him!* He is not in touch with the primary antagonists of the scenario. Rather, he gets his instructions directly from the star entities, who whisper their commands by causing the stars he sees through his telescope to wriggle in his visual field. Vegard is a sleeper agent, waiting for the time when enemies of the Mythos approach him looking for help. Then the star beasts will compel him to lead them to their doom. He hides his true insane self beneath an energetic, excitable intellectual persona, like the stalwart version of the character given below. Depending on how good a liar you need Vegard to be, **Assess Honesty** may show that a second self lurks beneath his engaging facade. Once unmasked as a servant of malign entities, **Flattery** of his skill

at deception prompts a proud, crazed recitation of his baleful secrets.

**Innocuous:** Vegard is a distracted man engaged in the study of galaxies. He spends nearly all of his waking hours making observations and calculations in this fairly new realm of astronomical inquiry. Whatever help the investigators seek from him represents a frivolous commitment of time and energy he's simply not willing to make, not when there are new galaxies to document! **Bureaucracy** reveals that the terms of his research grant, made by eccentric philanthropist J. Schuyler Vandervoort, require him to spend a certain number of hours educating the public and entertaining inquiries from interested laymen. If the PCs make a fuss over his refusal to assist them, he could lose his funding, or at the very least be forced to waste countless hours answering questions from children and crackpots.

**Stalwart:** A whirlwind of intellectual energy excited by new advances in all the sciences, Vegard allows his mind to roam where more hidebound scientists will not. Among his offbeat researches, he has made a study of medieval and renaissance astrology texts, looking for observations of obscure heavenly bodies modern methods may be able to amplify. In the course of his readings, he discovered that many spells in ancient tomes of black magic in fact contain more accurate celestial observations than could have been possible through the telescopes of the time. He knows names such as Cthulhu and Nyarlathotep from these books, and is willing to grant them some measure of reality. Vegard aids investigators not only out of altruism, but also to further plumb this peculiar well of lost astronomical knowledge.

**Alternate Names:** Sven Granhagen, Oliver Vallentin, Geoffery Read, August Campbell

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): mid

40s, balding, portly, peers through tiny, smudged spectacles

(2): early 60s, snowy hair, pointed goatee, wears worn tweed jacket

(3): late 50s, broad-shouldered, beakish nose

**Defining Quirks:** (1) opens and eats tin of sardines while he talks to investigators (mime this action or use a prop can); (2) desk and other surfaces of his observatory adorned with multiple, half-finished solitaire games, seemingly abandoned midway through; (3) leaves food outside his observatory for a mangy stray cat

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Astronomy, Chemistry, Occult

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Electrical Repair 4, Fleeing 6, Health 2, Mechanical Repair 4, Scuffling 2

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Biologist

**Name:** Cecil Davis

**Role:** may be called on to analyze or comment on mysterious samples, such as hallucinogenic drugs, traces of ichor, or severed body parts of impossible creatures

**Description:** 50s, bearded, hearty, resembles a statue of Zeus or Poseidon

**Sinister:** Thwarted in his quest for Nobel glory, Davis seizes on whatever the PCs provide him as the basis for a new research project which will prove his fame to the world. He pretends to find nothing, then goes to work—possibly unleashing terrible powers beyond his ken. A staunch rationalist, Davis knows nothing of the Mythos until the investigators expose him to

it. It is the catalyst that transforms him into a monster of reason-gone-mad. **Biology** or **Chemistry**, used as an interpersonal ability in an attempt to recall the pure principles of science, may talk him down from his madness, prompting him to reveal what he's done—after it's tragically too late.

**Innocuous:** A charismatic blowhard who delights in the adoration of his students, Davis agrees to help the group, then goes off to pursue some other task promising greater ego reward. **Flattery**, or the approval of someone of a high **Credit Rating**, is required to get him back to the microscope.

**Stalwart:** Inspired by the weirdness of the sample the PCs discover, the previously hale Professor Davis drives himself mercilessly to unlock its secrets, to the point of physical breakdown. Having broken his health in pursuit of the cause, he urges the PCs to ensure that his sacrifice was not in vain.

**Alternate Names:** Marvin Samuel, Charles Dauvillier, James Dempster

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 30s, smiling, unassuming, bespectacled

(2): early 30s, tall, dark-haired, dresses with unusual casualness

(3): late 40s, doughy complexion and physique, squints to look at nearby objects

**Defining Quirks:** (1) periodically breaks eye contact to peer out of window; (2) extremely well traveled; (3) automotive enthusiast (4) dedicated bird watcher

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Biology, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Physics

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 2, First Aid 4, Fleeing 4, Health 4, Mechanical Repair 2, Piloting 2, Riding 2, Scuffling 2.

### Adjusting Game Statistics

Sinister characters may be required to stand toe-to-toe with investigators in physical struggles, especially in pulp games. A sinister supporting character who is the case's primary antagonist should have a Health rating from 8-12; secondary antagonists should have Health of at least 4-8. Give sinister characters of whatever stripe at least one fighting ability (Firearms, Scuffling or Weapons) in the 6-8 range, and ratings in the other abilities of at least 2-4. Increase their Alertness and Stealth modifiers by 1-2. Main antagonists may also require back-up in the form of slope-browed henchmen or minor Mythos entities. Indirectly threatening sinister types may keep their low combat ratings but should have Fleeing values of 8-12 if you want them to have a chance of escaping when the PCs come busting through their doors.

You'll rarely need to boost stalwarts; they're present to lend minor aid and perhaps serve as sympathetic victims to the horrors the PCs confront. When you need them to act as the cavalry to rescue the PCs from certain doom, you can do so by narrative description alone, without having to roll contests between sets of NPCs.

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 5

### Linguist

**Name:** Lars Fagerberg

**Role:** can translate an obscure language known to none of the PCs

**Description:** late 70s, tall, imposing, penetrating eyes, deep voice

**Sinister:** Indoctrinated into the occult from a young age, Fagerberg learned a variety of obscure tongues to further his magical inquiries. A document or tome pivotal to the current plot happens to be the very thing he's been fruitlessly searching for throughout his long career. He will attempt to steal, or at least copy, it. He mistranslates the text given to him, either to keep the PCs from uncovering the same dread truth he seeks, or because he considers them a threat. In the latter case, his false translation leads them into deadly danger. Fagerberg's physical frailty renders him susceptible, once his

perfidy is exposed, to **Intimidation**.

**Innocuous:** Fagerberg's obsession with a language no one cares about has left him isolated and a trifle dotty. He wants nothing more than to sit and chat about his chosen language's syntactical minutiae. Excited beyond measure that someone has found a practical need for his work, his desire to know all about the case may seem prying, or even sinister.

**Stalwart:** Entombed in the structure of dead languages is a corpus of ancient knowledge best left in the grave. As a younger man, Fagerberg personally confronted cultists seeking other occult texts written in his chosen language. This led him into a series of perilous exploits in deepest Africa, including the time he fought the secret occult masters behind the siege of Khartoum. Along with the contents of their text, Fagerberg may impart useful practical advice for battlers of Mythos menace.

**Alternate Names:** Arthur Burnett, John Lodge, William Crawshaw

**Alternate Descriptions** [if a stalwart, amend timeframe of past

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adventures to match alternate age] (1): mid 40s, stooped posture, jowly, deeply inset eyes

(2): late 30s, Nordic features, brown hair, cleft chin

(3): late 60s, sad eyes, snowy beard, deeply lined face, mournful vocal cadence

**Defining Quirks:** (1) collects Persian rugs; (2) wears a scarf at all times no matter what the temperature (use one as prop); (3) whenever the PCs visit him, a thunderstorm always starts up

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Archaeology, Anthropology, Art History, Languages, Occult

**General Abilities:** First Aid 4, Fleeing 2, Health 2, Riding 2.

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 5

### Theologian

**Name:** Graham Burgess

**Physical Description:** 40s, unkempt hair, deeply creased features, wheelchair bound

**Sinister:** Once a dedicated foe of the Cthulhu cult, and one well vouched for by the Armitage Inquiry, the zeal of theology professor to remain active in the face of devastating injury has turned him into what he once despised. Five years ago his active investigation career ended when a tcho-tcho dart entered his spine. Using a serum confiscated from a defrocked Catholic priest, Burgess is able to temporarily invigorate himself. When he injects the serum, his severed spinal column temporarily fuses back together. He also gains impossible strength. Although able to project



the image of a stable if embittered man, Burgess vengefully hungers to personally take on the forces of the occult. When the PCs come to him for information, he sends them on a wild goose chase, takes the serum, and goes on the hunt himself. In his berserk zeal he may endanger the innocent or unleash horrors beyond his control. The sinister Burgess may be best used as the main complicating factor in an otherwise straightforward case, offering dramatic contrast between his ruthless methods

and the personal morality of the PCs. He may yield to in the face of powerful religious argument (**Theology** used as interpersonal ability).

**Innocuous:** Burgess hasn't touched a drop of drink after paralyzing himself in a drunken fall downstairs. He has since pursued redemption through prayer, meditation, and retreat from worldly things. A PC must demonstrate religious sincerity (**Theology** used as interpersonal ability) before Burgess

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will risk prolonged exposure to him. Unacquainted with the Mythos before he meets the PCs, Burgess can conceive of it only in terms of Satanic temptation within the bounds of a moral universe.

**Stalwart:** Like the sinister version, except that Burgess has remained steadfastly sane and stable in the face of his infirmity. When his priestly arch-rival offered him a chance to walk again, he destroyed the serum without touching it. Now able to continue the fight only vicariously, Burgess yearns for a mentoring relationship with an investigator who shares his fiery faith. (If the group includes a religious character, Burgess shares his denominational background.)

**Alternate Names:** Lawrence Dempster, Frank Holtgreven, Joseph Teller

**Alternate Descriptions** [remove the wheelchair angle for recurrences of this character after the first] (1): late 60s, white mutton-chops, balding, affects Victorian style

(2): late 40s, wild-haired, barrel-chested, aggressively masculine body language

(3): mid 30s, thick head of chestnut hair, comb-shaped mustache, reading glasses worn on loop around neck

**Defining Quirks:** [don't bother with quirk for paraplegic version] (1) amateur painter favoring religious subjects; (2) church organist (as if unconsciously rehearsing on invisible keys, arrange hands in chords; add foot pedal motions for emphasis)

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Anthropology, Art History, Occult, Theology

**General Abilities:** [second set of ratings is for able-bodied version of character] Athletics 0/2, Driving 0/2,

Fleeing 0/4, Health 2/4, Psychoanalysis 4, Scuffling 0/1

**Alertness Modifier:** [sinister] +2 [otherwise] 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 10

## Professionals

### Accountant

**Name:** Roy Wellman

**Physical Description:** late 50s, bulbous nose, leathery skin

**Sinister:** Always on the lookout for the main chance, Wellman inserts himself into the case at hand when he smells a blackmail opportunity. If his search for dirt turns up nothing, he ingratiates himself to them, hoping that the relationship will pay off later. When he does find evidence of financial wrongdoing, he withholds the information from investigators. Instead, he hunts down the wrongdoer or fraud artist and demands payment for his silence. **Assess Honesty** may suggest that he's harboring selfish motives. Given the sorts of people investigators are checking up on, Wellman may find himself in over his head, as he attempts to extort a crazed cult leader or Nyarlathotep himself. As such he may appear later on in the narrative as a corpse whose horrible wounds provide valuable clues.

**Innocuous:** His bank account battered by the depression, Wellman seeks to maximize his every transaction. He'll help the group, but only after receiving an exorbitant fee—or succumbing to **Bargain** and agreeing to a more reasonable rate.

**Stalwart:** Having whiled away his years

in a world of numbers, Wellman yearns to be more than a misplaced decimal place in the great ledger book of life. When he gets wind of the dangers posed to mankind by the Cthulhu cult (or whatever else the threat of the moment might be), he's willing to throw himself heedlessly into the fray, in a desperate attempt to lend meaning to his ink-stained existence. Wellman's near-suicidal heroism may stem from his recent cancer diagnosis. Though he seems hale and hearty now, the doc says he has only about a year left to live. Though he will divulge this secret only at a dramatically appropriate moment (such as a triumphant dying monologue), **Assess Honesty** indicates that a heavy burden oppresses his mind.

**Alternate Names:** Raymond Perkins, Louis Garrett, Edgar Lyon

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): 60s, burly, balding with sandy hair, strong New York accent

(2): late 30s, aquiline features, slicked-back hair

(3): late 40s, squarish features, wide nose, muscular physique

**Defining Quirks:** (1) touches up his pale features with barely noticeable traces of makeup (while playing him, dab distractedly at face, as if searching for untouched spots); (2) interrupts meeting to examine spoor of the elusive mouse that's taken up headquarters in his office; (3) a fervent believer in an international gold standard

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Accounting

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Driving 2, Fleeing 6, Health 2, Scuffling 2.

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Armitage Files

### Alienist

**Name:** Dr. Erwin Dieke

**Physical Description:** mid 50s, moon-faced, German-accented

**Sinister:** Dr. Dieke has not been the same since he attempted to apply the talking cure to a patient at a nearby asylum. This poor deluded individual believed that the world was menaced by encroaching knowledge of ancient gods whose supreme malice was indistinguishable from cosmic indifference. As the patient—lucid and apparently rational, but prone to homicidal rages—talked, Dieke found himself increasingly convinced of the veracity of his claims. Dieke is now as mad as his charge, who has since escaped confinement. He can't quite picture himself as a murderer—not yet, at least. But when the PCs appear in his life, lending apparent confirmation to his patient's babblings, Dieke goes over the edge, resolving to seek out worshipers of the insane gods. Only by joining them can his own creeping madness be proven as the gift of insight that it is.

**Innocuous:** The egotistical Dieke is locked in a one-sided rivalry with Swiss alienist C. G. Jung, whose writings he has repeatedly challenged in print. He provides better treatment to those patients willing to dismiss Jung than to those who voice approval of his theories.

**Stalwart:** Like the sinister Dr. Dieke, his stalwart counterpart has treated a patient whose sanity was utterly blasted by contact with the Mythos. When a second sanity-challenged character appears before him in the course of the PC's current case, Dr. Dieke comes to an awful realization. Some underlying reality *must* unite the disparate experiences of his two supposedly delusional patients! At first offering only his therapeutic services to the cause, he may eventually decide



that he is duty-bound to more directly confront the forces responsible for a growing epidemic of insanity.

**Alternate Names:** Dr. Alfred Rees Wright, Dr. Heinrich Boenheim, Dr. Walter Gotho

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 60s, oblong face, furrowed brow

(2): mid 30s, receding chin, protruding forehead

(3): late 40s, red-lipped, curved nose

**Defining Quirks:** (1) working on a novel about a heroic alienist; (2) amateur botanist; (3) fidgets with his ring

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Anthropology, Medicine, Theology, Pharmacy

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, First Aid 3, Fleeing 2, Health 2, Hypnosis 6,

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Psychoanalysis 12

**Alertness Modifier:** 1

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 9

### Doctor

**Name:** Dr. George Belling

**Physical Description:** in his early 40s, but still blessed with boyish good looks; short

**Sinister:** Dr. Belling is a longstanding member of whatever cult or conspiracy the PCs are working to unravel. If an injured investigator is left in his care, he chloroforms him or her and delivers the patient for interrogation or sacrifice, as seems appropriate. If the threat at hand is not one he could credibly ally with, Belling is instead a fiendish experimenter. He seeks human subjects whose disappearance will not be noticed by the community, or whose deaths might be laid at the feet of some other murderer at large. His insane science draws on insights gleaned from occult tomes the PCs are familiar with, perhaps including Gottfried Mülder's *Secret Mysteries of Asia*. An **Occult** spend spots distinctive phrases from these works peppering his conversation.

**Innocuous:** Belling pursues his medical practice with bored efficiency. His real passion is local history, which he documents in a series of maddeningly dull self-published books. No matter how much time the PCs spend with them, they are completely silent on any issues of relevance to their investigation. A demonstrated acquaintanceship with **Oral History** turns Belling into a fast friend. He's always willing to dispense a little free first aid in exchange for talk on his favorite subject.

**Stalwart:** Belling's embrace of science and rationalism is a reaction to the

chaos and carefree irresponsibility of his upbringing. He never knew his father. His mother, a hedonistic heiress, dragged him across Europe as she pursued dalliances with a series of spectacularly alcoholic artists and dilettantes. As the PCs might later help him discover, she spent the year prior to her birth in a commune dedicated to the practice of ritual magic. Periodically Belling feels a strange stirring in himself, as if a dread, irrational being resides deep in his tissues, and yearns to break free. Hating this side of himself, Belling vehemently assists any project to destroy forces associated with the orgiastic, the esoteric, or the supernatural.

**Alternate Names:** Dr. Everett Lynch, Dr. Oscar Fairfield, Dr. Gene Osborn

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 30s, high cheekbones; scar on right cheek

(2): early 60s, small round face, dark complexion

(3): early 50s, well-trimmed gray beard, long, straight nose

**Defining Quirks:** (1) a dedicated, proselytizing pescatarian; (2) extremely territorial; never invites others to his house (physically distance yourself from players as you talk to them); (3) aquaphobic

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Biology, Medicine, Pharmacy

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Electrical Repair 2, First Aid 12, Fleeing 4, Health 3, Hypnosis 4, Mechanical Repair 2, Psychoanalysis 2, Riding 2.

**Alertness Modifier:** 1

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 8

### Lawyer

**Name:** Samuel Hepburn

**Physical Description:** early 50s, heavy brows, triangular features

**Sinister:** Hepburn's work assisting in crooked foreclosures led him into contact with a family who wouldn't leave their confiscated land. After an armed standoff with sheriff's deputies went nowhere, Hepburn decided to personally intercede with the "backwoods inbreds." The family, third-generation worshipers of the dark gods, captured, tortured and imprisoned Hepburn. In a strange case of mental turnabout beyond the ken of 1930s alienists, the pin-striped lawyer came to identify with his degenerate captors. They released him after he promised to assist them in buying up a large patch of land, which they would use to construct an underground temple to dread Azazoth. If the PCs come to him for help, he tries to gain information on their case, hoping to secure Mythos tomes or artifacts to present to his rustic high priest. PCs could use **Accounting** to discover his shady dealings with local banks, and then **Intimidation** to threaten him to comply with them, lest they reveal all to the authorities.

**Innocuous:** Hepburn is a cold-hearted man who wreathes his mercenary objectives in a tone of lugubrious propriety. He cooperates with the PCs only to the extent that it immediately lines his pockets—unless they impress him, with superior **Credit Ratings**, with social-climbing opportunities.

**Stalwart:** Although his moneyed family pressured him to become a lawyer, Sam Hepburn's true calling has always been scholarship. Specifically, he spends his off hours engaged in a field of research relevant to the PCs' current case. His discoveries to date would be widely heralded if only he possessed a professorship. As it is, his work is

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dismissed as that of a mere enthusiast. When the investigators' case offers him the chance to prove his theories once and for all, he plunges into the world of the Mythos. Warned of the risks to his career, reputation or life, Hepburn responds with a cavalier shrug. Now he can be the man he always wanted to be.

**Alternate Names:** Paul Fredericks, Peter Merriam, Henry Nugent

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 30s, rotund, square-faced, Southern-accented

(2): early 30s, fresh-faced, narrow-chinned

(3): early 30s, red-headed, toothy, slightly bug-eyed

**Defining Quirks:** (1) office decorated with souvenirs from Spain; (2) shows off a recently inherited bronze by Rodin; (3) meets trusted clients in the steam bath of his gentleman's club

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Accounting, Law

**General Abilities:** Firearms 2, Fleeing 12, Health 2, Riding 2.

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

## Police

### Detective

**Name:** Cliff McGrail

**Physical Description:** late 30s, square-jawed, dapper, soothing voice

**Sinister:** Graft is a fact of life for cops

in the big cities of the 1930s. Both the legal and illegal sides of life have to be run by somebody. As gatekeepers between the two worlds policemen accept pay from both official and off-the-books sources. When he started as a beat cop, Cliff McGrail had his qualms about this, but his grizzled sergeant set him right. If he didn't take the cash, none of his fellow officers would trust him. Every year after that, Cliff became progressively more bent. Now he's a hard-drinking habitué of the big boss' speakeasy. When a debtor needs his legs broken, or a competitor must be run out of town, Cliff earns his secret pay envelopes. Strange murders and occult crazies have no place in McGrail's universe. When amateur sleuths show up to examine a weirdly mangled victim, McGrail's response depends on their place in the system of power. If they have the **Streetwise** credentials demonstrating juice with his unofficial boss, or the **Credit Rating** to pass muster with the daytime authorities, he lets them do what they want. But if they threaten to disturb the placid facade covering the city's seething corruption, he rounds up a few of the boys to teach them a lesson. His course schedules always start with a beating and end up with a trip to the outskirts of town. And if either of McGrail's masters are in the service of Nyarlathotep or other Mythos forces, he'll bump the PCs off and cut them up. It's that kind of town.

**Innocuous:** Like the sinister McGrail, the innocuous version takes a little graft on the side and is on friendly terms with the mob bosses. His association with them stops short of thuggery and murder, though. In fact, stopping short is Cliff's watchword in all things. He does as little as possible to get by, solving the easy cases and letting the weird stuff skate. If nobody wants to hear about it, he's sure not going to make a stink. **Cop Talk** can impel him to short bursts of cooperation.

**Stalwart:** Even the stalwart McGrail is

a hard drinker, acceptor of bribes, and a shrugging servant to both sets of powers that be. But when confronted with a malign supernatural threat that would devour the pure and the corrupt alike, without pausing to distinguish between them, something long suppressed stirs within him. McGrail discovers a higher calling, and a shot at redemption—one which may leave the investigators hovering over his lifeless form, swearing vengeance on his behalf.

**Alternate Names:** Hank Lewis, Jack Farley, Andy Lane

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 50s, broken-nosed, bearish

(2): late 30s, pug-nosed, small but tough

(3): mid 50s, tall, worn eyes, jutting chin

**Defining Quirks:** (1) compulsively scratches his ear; (2) keeps supply of fancy scarfs to give out to cheap dames; (3) Catch phrase: "What's the fresh goods, mac?"; (4) always wants you to buy him a steak dinner;

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Law, Cop Talk, Interrogation, Intimidation, Forensics

**General Abilities:** Athletics 6, Driving 6, Explosives 2, Firearms 6, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Weapons 6.

**Alertness Modifier:** 2

**Stealth Modifier:** 1

**Document Reference:** 8

### Rural Sheriff

**Name:** Elisha Culberson

**Physical Description:** mid 50s, jowly, hacking smoker's cough

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**Sinister:** A small town sheriff knows all of a town's secrets—particularly when those secrets are of a sinister nature. Whatever cult or dark force has this rural region in its grip, Elisha Culberson is its dedicated servant. When dealing with outsiders, he sticks to the stereotype of unimaginative hick sheriff. He does his best to shoo nosy cityfolk away. If they persist in snooping, he and his deputies arrest them on trumped-up charges. This may end in expulsion from Culberson's jurisdiction, or, should the stars be correctly aligned, an escort to the sacrificing grounds. Only when he's sure they're about to be slaughtered or devoured does he drop his hayseed pose and show the coldly ruthless psychopath beneath. **Cop Talk** may suggest that he's something worse than the run-of-the-mill bullying sheriff.

**Innocuous:** Elisha Culberson got the job of sheriff because nobody else wanted to do it. In these bad times, he's mostly called on to assist the city slickers from the bank in taking folks' farms away from them. It's poor Elisha who has to face down his neighbors when they come out of their houses with shotguns, trying to protect what's rightfully theirs. Somedays Elisha feels like standing beside them and driving off the bank men. But he never does, on account of he's always been afraid of authority himself. Elisha may not be the most competent or eager law enforcement official the PCs will ever run into, but they'll certainly never find a sheriff more amenable to **Intimidation**.

**Stalwart:** Elisha has been a part of his community since he was born, and he's been protecting decent folk as an officer of the peace since the age of seventeen. If there's something terrible out there preying on people, he's going to be the first through the door with his shotgun. The thought that he himself is vulnerable to the forces of evil never occurs to him—perhaps until it's too late.



**Alternate Names:** Coke Ward, Allan Prouty, Price Colquitt

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 60s, lean, hangdog, cowboyish mustache

(2): late 40s, handsome, grinning, crewcut rises to slight peak

(3): late 20s, dull-eyed, rounded chin

**Defining Quirks:** (1) on perpetual

alert for signs of communism; (2) challenges PC to a game of checkers (have stack of checkers on hand to fidget with); (3) also serves as editorialist for local newspaper

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Law, Cop Talk, Interrogation, Intimidation

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Driving 6, Explosives 2, Firearms 6, Health 4, Riding 6, Scuffling 2

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**Alertness Modifier:** 2

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 9

### Urban Beat Cop

**Name:** Joe Trotter

**Physical Description:** late 20s, rectangular face, lanky frame, alert posture

**Sinister:** Joe Trotter has always prided himself on knowing everything that goes on in his little chunk of the city. But he never expected what he found when he burst into the dank basement of the condemned old church. When he saw lights inside, and hooting and hollering, he figured it was vagrants drunk on cleansers and shoe polish. Instead, he shined his flashlight down there and... well, he's not sure what he saw, and doesn't want to think about it. But since that night, he's had these terrible headaches. Every so often, he finds himself somewhere and doesn't remember how or why. Once or twice, after one of these blackouts, his hands are speckled with blood. His landlady tells him he's been on the phone, talking in a funny voice, and he has no idea who he called or what he said.

Joe Trotter is under the mental domination of the cult or entity the investigators are hunting. If they come to him for help, he seems perfectly normal and helpful. As soon as they're gone, his enthralled personality takes control, and betrays them. **Assess Honesty** provides no hint of supernatural possession. On a subsequent encounter, **Evidence Collection** might spot physical evidence on his person suggesting that he followed them during a recent sequence.

**Innocuous:** Joe Trotter considers himself lucky to have a job during the Depression. He never wanted to be a

cop, like his dad and uncles, but it puts food on the table. His father got himself beat up by intervening in a robbery. Now the old man sits in the attic all day and drools. You look into his eyes, and he's hardly there. Well, that's not about to happen to Joe Trotter, Jr. Not for what cops get paid. **Reassurance** may persuade him to perform the occasional dangerous duty, but at the end of the day, there's one citizen Joe's looking to serve and protect, and that's Joe.

**Stalwart:** Joe Trotter has dreamed of glory ever since he earned his badge. His ambitions may be selfish—he wants commendations, promotion, the swooning admiration of the girls down at the malt counter—but his courage is real. If suitably persuaded that there might be advancement in it for him (**Cop Talk**), he'll charge headlong into any outré danger, with only his billy club and revolver to back him up.

**Alternate Names:** Frank Donnelly, Dennis Hegarty, Phil Mullen

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 20s, baby faced, dark eyed, looks like he only has to shave every few days

(2): late 20s, high forehead, toothy, round-eared

(3): late 20s, bulbous nose, fat cheeks, dimpled chin

**Defining Quirks:** (1) taking night school courses in Philosophy; (2) can't help playing devil's advocate in any debate or discussion; (3) dreams of being a property owner (use old photo of house as prop; he's thinking of buying it)

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Cop Talk, Reassurance, Streetwise

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Driving 4, Electrical Repair 2, Firearms 4, First Aid 4, Health 6, Mechanical Repair 2, Scuffling 4, Weapons 2.

**Alertness Modifier:** +2

**Stealth Modifier:** +1

### Swells

#### Cad

**Name:** Austin Kittrell

**Physical Description:** late 30s, pencil-thin mustache, pencil-thin frame, wavy hair

**Sinister:** Beneath the louche reputation of moneyed roué Austin Kittrell lurks an even darker truth. A minor heir to the great Kittrell chemical fortune, Austin makes his way through polite society as its token symbol of Dionysian excess. Often seen wildly drunk and in the company of loose woman, Kittrell's dissolute adventures place him at the center of smart set gossip. In truth, Kittrell long ago tired of the pleasures offered up by ordinary flesh. Through contacts made in decadent Europe (possibly in the Backlot Gothic setting; see *Shadows Over Filmland*) he sought induction into an ancient witch cult. By stripping away the details of its orgiastic folk rituals to stark existential truth beneath, Kittrell quickly eclipsed his original tutors. His personal power derives from spells that corrupt the young and pure. Nowhere is there a greater supply of his favored victims than in the sheltered homes of naïve, wealthy Americans. Now a master sorcerer, Kittrell allows himself to seem the buffoon in order to navigate high society's prey-filled waters unimpeded. If Kittrell is not the primary antagonist in the mystery at hand, he stands at a safe remove and waits to take opportunistic action. He may aid the investigators, without letting slip his Mythos awareness, ingratiating himself to them now in order to betray them later.

**Innocuous:** This Kittrell is exactly

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what the sinister version appears to be: a charming rascal permitted to engage in epic acts of drunkenness, and the occasional mild sexual indiscretion. His high-gloss pedigree permits him to blithely sidestep any serious consequences that might otherwise arise from his behavior. Any recent encounters with the uncanny simply have accelerated his rate of alcohol consumption. (Prior to 1933 his private stock of booze is illicit and of uneven quality, but no less plentiful.) Kittrell provides information or low-risk favors when plied with **Flattery**, or to anyone who bests him in a drinking contest.

**Stalwart:** Beneath a history of caddish behavior and spectacular insobriety lies the wounded heart of a man yearning for redemption. Should Kittrell encounter a life-or-death situation demanding potentially suicidal bravery, he undergoes an epiphany and seizes it with gusto. As he plunges into danger, he is not so completely reformed that he denies himself a final fortifying nip.

**Alternate Names:** Kinsley Berryman, Guy Royster, Rex Terry

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 20s, tall, wolfish grin, flashing teeth

(2): early 30s, fine-boned, plummy voice, wears an ascot

(3): late 30s, Roman profile, prematurely gray temples, uses tiny cigarette holder

**Defining Quirks:** (1) use props: cigarette holder, cigarette case (2) speaks to persons of lower status with withering condescension, especially to strivers of Credit Rating 5-6; (3) gives sporty nicknames to PCs he likes

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Credit Rating 7

**General Abilities:** Athletics 6, Driving 4, Firearms 6, Fleeing 4, Health



4\*, Riding 6, Scuffling 4, Weapons.

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

\*If entering into a drinking contest with PCs, gains 8 temporary Health, which can only be used for that purpose.

**Document Reference:** 1

### Socialite

**Name:** Elsa Hower

**Physical Description:** early 20s, blond, glamorous, horsey laugh

**Sinister:** Eight months before her birth, Elsa Hower's grandfather, Perry McGill Hower, undertook a reckless bid to save his crumbling financial empire. Striking a pact with a strange witch-woman he encountered near the family estate, he agreed to allow

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her to enter his daughter's home in the guise of a nurse. The sorceress, who called herself Diligence Cooper, dosed Cornelia Hower's food with an otherworldly contaminant. The baby was born healthy and whole. Perry McGill Hower, on the other hand, died shortly thereafter, of a rapidly accelerating leprosy. Elsa underwent a normal upbringing for a beautiful child of wealth, culminating in a stunning coming-out party just a few years ago. Then the witch-woman struck, committing suicide and transmigrating her soul to Hower's young, rich and lovely body. Diligence Cooper was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1676, and sailed as a child for the Puritan colonies of the New World. Falsely accused as a witch during the Salem trials, she escaped pursuit and wandered into the woods, where she encountered a tall man with charred black skin. She begged this occult tutor to fashion her into the thing her community feared, enabling her to take revenge against it. Over the centuries she has kept herself alive by jumping from body to body. Eventually the supple form of Elsa Hower will decay into that of a twisted crone. Until then, Cooper accesses the trapped personality and memories of the real Hower, enabling her to credibly impersonate the young socialite. Her primary goal is to squirrel away as much of the Hower fortune as possible for her own later use—and to torment and slay anyone who reminds her of the envious, hectoring Salem townsfolk who sent her fleeing into the Charred Man's embrace.

**Innocuous:** Elsa is a high-spirited girl who aims to have as much fun as she can before settling down to the role of staid society wife. Nothing could be further from her pretty, sheltered world than the idea of occult menace. She'll go to quiet pieces when confronted by horrors from beyond, requiring **Reassurance** to provide solid information to investigators.

**Stalwart:** With Elsa's pretty face come nerves of steel and an intelligence to match. Once she catches wind of a potential life of adventure and noble purpose, she pursues it with headstrong determination. When others quail and fear, she orders them "not to get squishy," hefts her father's prize hunting rifle, and soldiers on.

**Alternate Names:** Lucy Wyant, Barbara Chilcote, Carol Lyndon

**Alternate Descriptions (1):** early 20s, brunette, glamorous, dimpled

(2): early 20s, redhead, glamorous, lightly freckled shoulders

(3): early 20s, platinum blond, glamorous, bee-stung lips

**Defining Quirks:** (1) near-sighted but won't wear glasses (squint at players as you talk to them); (2) puckishly refers to her social set as "the inbreds"; (3) helps her younger brother do fun and dangerous things with his chemistry kit

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Assess Honesty Flattery

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Driving 2, Firearms 4, Fleeing 4, Health 4, Preparedness 6, Psychoanalysis 2, Riding 6.

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Magnate

**Name:** Vance Whitney

**Physical Description:** late 50s, portly, double-chinned, basso voice

**Sinister:** Vance Whitney's legitimate businesses have suffered severely since the crash of '29. No one but his crooked accountant sees this. Instead, the moneyed class watches in fear and

envy as he increases his portfolio of mansions and summer houses. Whitney owes his growing wealth and hold on society to his underworld connections. He heads the secret underworld syndicate known only as "the Group." All of the city's career criminals kick up to him through a network of rough-hewn intermediaries. Whitney uses a trusted associate, reformed gambler Stanley Graham, to stand in for him as the face of "the Group." He manages his criminal empire with the same ruthless mania for cost-cutting and profit maximization that once powered his legitimate enterprises. Though he is uninvolved in any hocus pocus, occult investigators may arouse his murderous knack for self-preservation if their case brings them uncomfortably close to his secret. Whitney's keen eye for the balance sheet may permit him to accept a good **Bargain** proposed by PCs.

**Innocuous:** Vance Whitney's business empire, though diminished by the Depression, is still a vast and going concern. His main worry is the spread of international communism, which he fears will provoke a second world war between economic classes. **Reassurance** that their efforts somehow fight the Red Menace may earn his cooperation with investigators.

**Stalwart:** In his travels to inspect distant outposts of his far-flung holdings, industrialist Vance Whitney has heard his share of weird tales. There was the time dead-eyed, chanting figures invaded his Cuban cane fields, scaring off the workers until tribute was paid. He recalls also the odd fish-faced pirates of the Sulu Sea, who harried shipments from his Philippine copper mines. Investigators able to speak in the parlance of unfettered capital (**Accounting** used as an interpersonal ability) may convince him to bankroll an expedition against similar targets. The threat posed to international commerce by degenerate cultists is unquestionable!

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**Alternate Names:** Wallace Hutchinson, D'Arcy Alexander, Harry Shaw

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 70s, extravagantly whiskered, wears pince-nez

(2): late 40s, barrel-chested, handsome features thickened by middle age

(3): early 80s, grizzled old coot in expensive suit, speaks with Western twang

**Defining Quirks:** (1) carries a heavy cane with silver-tipped handle (use prop if available); (2) mistakenly remembers highest Credit Rating investigator from Republican party fundraiser; (3) frequently refers to himself as a “down-the-line Ten Commandments man,” but shows no other signs of piety

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Architecture, Accounting, Chemistry, Geology

**General Abilities:** Firearms 4, Fleeing 2, Health 2, Riding 6

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 10

## Townsfolk

### Local Historian

**Name:** Josephine Wingate

**Physical Description:** late 60s, delicate frame, wears glasses on fake-pearl string

**Sinister:** Wingate, immersed in cult activity from an early age, protects the town's secret worship habits from

prying outsiders by constructing a false version of its history. Her self-published local history books promote an image of strawberry socials, fall fairs and barn raisings. It omits the many inexplicable disappearances and acts of violence that would stain an accurate chronicle. When they insert Mythos terms into the conversation, **Assess Honesty** alerts investigators to an almost imperceptible facial twitch. If Josephine feels she's failed to misdirect them, she'll contact her co-conspirators to take direct action against nosy investigators. Depending on how smoothly the players conceal their suspicions, a 1-3 point **Reassurance** spend prevents her from realizing they're onto her.

**Innocuous:** Josephine Wingate is the sweet old lady she appears to be. She knows the dark spots in her town's history but prefers not to dwell on them. Someone versed in **Oral History** can persuade her to reveal them, as one expert talking to another. However, her sunny disposition and sensible, bedrock Christian faith prevent her from giving credence to any wild rumors of hauntings or evil stirrings in the woods.

**Stalwart:** Amateur historian Josephine Wingate started out as a disbeliever in the occult. When certain local figures began to resist her innocent inquiries, her curiosity was piqued. Now she's willing to entertain the thought that something fishy may be afoot. If given pieces of the puzzle she hasn't seen before, she engages in research parallel to the group's—possibly stumbling into more truth than she's bargained for.

**Alternate Names:** Nellie Whayne, Jim Harold, Mattie Pease

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 60s, stout, matronly

(2): male, early 50s, tall, walrus mustache, half-glass spectacles

(3): early 70s, energetic, wears hair in a bun, quavery voice

**Defining Quirks:** (1) clacks dentures when she thinks; (2) offers PCs “a tiny drop of sherry” whenever she sees them; (3) home covered in newspaper clippings

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Geology, History, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Fleeing 2, Health 1, Riding 4

**Alertness Modifier:** 1

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Mayor

**Name:** Herman May

**Physical Description:** late 50s, short, pear-shaped, weathered features

**Sinister:** Herman May plays no role in the grim mystery that's sent the investigators poking around his town. He is, however, pathologically protective of its bucolic image. Any strangers who come around making insinuations about his fine citizens find a series of escalating obstructions placed in their path. At first, he sends around the local patrol officer to send them on their way. If that doesn't work, he assembles a citizen's posse of upstanding citizens to roust them. His efforts may or may not lead him to tip off the true villains of the piece. Herman might back off in the face of apparent legitimate authority, even if not from his jurisdiction, in the form of a hefty **Cop Talk** spend.

**Innocuous:** Herman is a naïve, somewhat befuddled small town official who would never dream that anything nefarious might be going on in his quiet little municipality. He assures investigators that any untoward events or eerie manifestations are

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perfectly innocent situations, bizarrely misinterpreted. **Oral History** may prompt him to reveal a telling fact, the true significance of which he refuses to ponder.

**Stalwart:** Herman's attachment to the good people of his town, and to his civic duty, impels him to act when shown concrete evidence of their endangerment. He might send in the cavalry, in the form of state troopers or other rescuers, to pull the PCs out of a climactic conflagration. Alternately, his intervention might serve simply to doom him, leading to his replacement by a member of the local conspiracy.

**Alternate Names:** Joe Harrold, Elmer Bradbury, Henry Graham

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): mid 50s, gawky, blond, bird-like mannerisms

(2): late 50s, blunt features, square face, sandy hair

(3): mid 70s, small, skinny, darting eyes

**Defining Quirks:** (1) is also the town druggist; (2) amateur photographer (use old camera as prop); (3) muffles his consonants

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Law, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Fleeing 2, Health 2, Riding 2

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Mechanic

**Name:** Jesse McDermott

**Physical Description:** late 30s, lean, unshaven, stoop-shouldered

**Sinister:** The only available mechanic

for miles around, Jesse McDermott can't help but flash a predatory grin when he looks at an out-of-town's ailing automobile. If your primary antagonists are human, McDermott is in cahoots with them. He steers stranded motorists into their clutches before anyone not involved in the conspiracy lays eyes on them. Already disliked by the town's good folk, McDermott is a cautious bad guy, backing off in the face of **Intimidation**. Otherwise, he's an unrelated secondary antagonist, planning to delay the group with a series of ever more expensive unnecessary repairs. He scares if threatened with legal trouble (**Law**, used as an interpersonal ability).

**Innocuous:** Jesse is a well-meaning fellow but doesn't see anything wrong with charging big city folk more than he would the locals. He'll also attend to farm machinery and other important equipment before he takes care of the investigators' automotive woes. Threats of paperwork (**Bureaucracy**) speed him up. Too unimaginative to believe in things that go bump in the night, Jesse may provide clues without guessing at their true import.

**Stalwart:** Jesse is glad to think that he'll never again have to use the killing skills he was taught as a young infantryman in the Great War. (Adjust his apparent age as necessary.) As a reminder to properly appreciate each day, he keeps a map of the French battlefield pinned to the wall of his garage. (**History** identifies it as such.) If the PCs need him to pick up a gun again, he's scared but ready—provided they convince him that he's the best man around to help them protect the good people of this fine town.

**Alternate Names:** Ed Parker, George Luck, Horace Green

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 60s, rangy, muscular, long-faced

(2): late 30s, bald, round-headed, pointy chin

(3): early 60s, blue-eyed, squinty, heavy-browed

**Defining Quirks:** (1) gestures with a wrench (use prop); (2) eyes seem to change color depending on the light; (3) reacts with reverse snobbishness to characters of Credit Rating 5+

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Craft (Metalwork), Locksmith,

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Driving 6, Electrical Repair 4, Fleeing 2, Health 4, Mechanical Repair 6, Scuffling 2

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 10

## Salesmen and Shopkeepers

### Peddler

**Name:** Joachim Forbstein, known as "Old Joe"

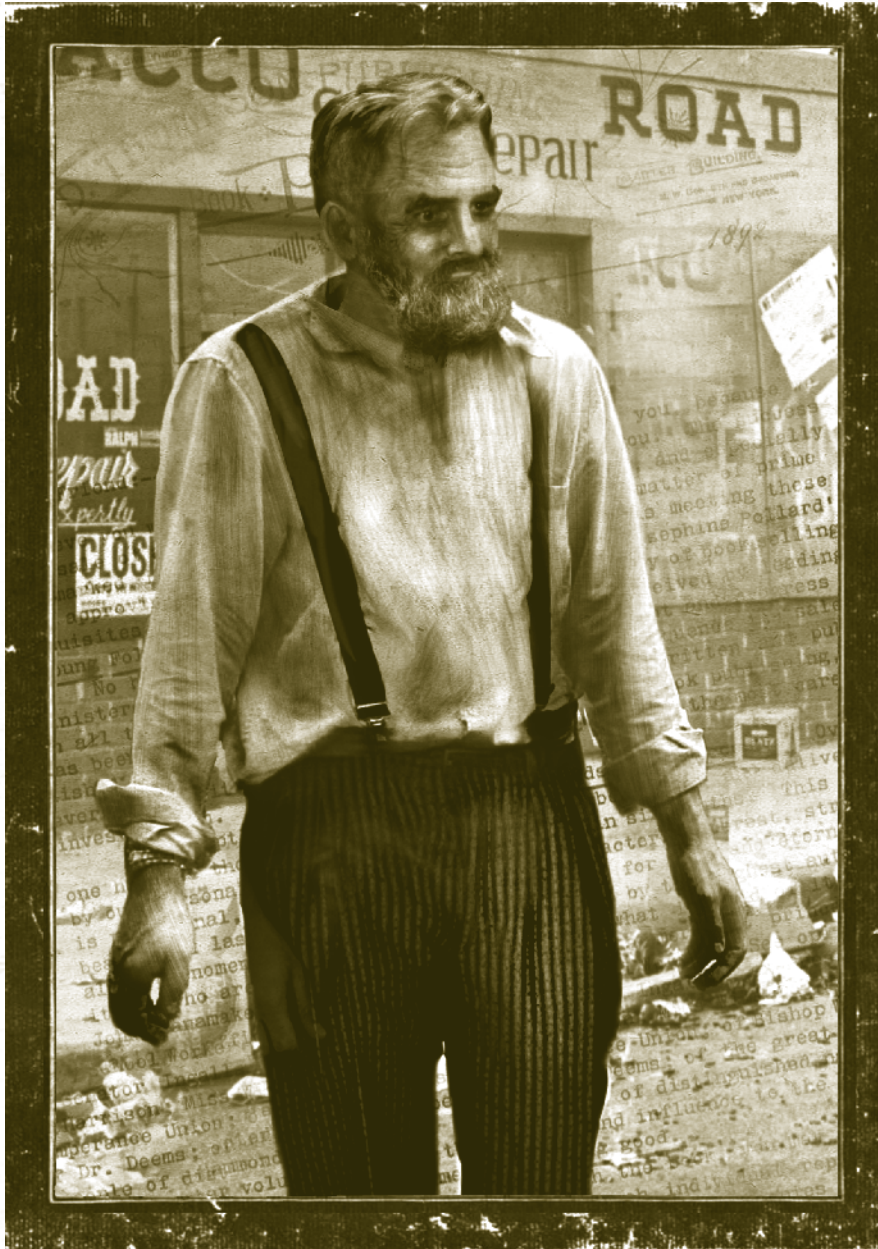
**Physical Description:** late 40s (but looks like late 60s), bearded, hunched, moon-faced

**Role:** "Old Joe" wanders through poor urban or rural neighborhoods selling any of the hundreds of small household items stuffed into his voluminous pack. Its weight seems perpetually ready to topple him. The PCs spot him as he ambles through an area central to their investigation.

**Sinister:** Among the items of simple utility stored in his pack, Old Joe possesses a few cursed pieces he has gathered in the course of his travels

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down America's back streets. He may be stuck in his role of peddler because he took the items in the first place, and is anxious to pass them along to someone he hates enough to deserve his fate. Alternately, he might be a willing servant of the Old Ones, leaving objects redolent of their worship in the hands of those open to occult awakening.

**Innocuous:** As a grizzled outsider of unfamiliar ethnicity, Old Joe becomes a perfect scapegoat when murders or

hauntings sweep through a community. His alert eyes may have seen the real culprits at work—which he reveals given **Reassurance** that the PCs aren't also out to railroad him.

**Stalwart:** Old Joe took to his hobo-like existence after his previous life as an educated man took him too close to sights no sane man was meant to ponder.

**Psychoanalysis** (used as investigative ability) prompts him to return to his old self long enough to provide a crucial

insight. A Difficulty 6 **Psychoanalysis** test might permanently restore his sanity, allowing him to perform active tasks on the group's behalf.

**Alternate Names:** Hasse Norberg, "the Hessian"; Cesar Gomez, "Old Cece"; Fiorenzo Girelli, "Mr. Frank"

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 60s, gray-blond hair, broken nose, mostly toothless

(2): early 40s, narrow eyes, twitching forehead vein, goiter

(3): late 60s, rat-like teeth and ears, palsied hands steady when handling cash or merchandise

**Defining Quirks:** Fill an old sack or duffel bag to use as a prop. (1) the one thing he won't sell is the set of little girls' skates hanging prominently from his pack; (2) claims to be a "lost prince of the principality of Andorra"; (3) eats what **Biology** reveals to be a highly poisonous toadstool, to no apparent ill effect

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Geology, Occult, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Electrical Repair 3, First Aid 3, Fleeing 12, Health 18, Hypnosis 3, Mechanical Repair 3, Preparedness 8

**Alertness Modifier:** +2

**Stealth Modifier:** +2

### Traveling Salesman

**Name:** Phil Hughes

**Role:** In these tough times, it's hard to go door to door without being taken for a beggar or hobo. Though pickings are slim, a few traveling salesmen, retailing everything from Bibles to insurance, still scrape together a living. A neatly pressed suit, well-kept fedora

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and gleamingly shined shoes preserve the salesman's dignity, proclaiming him a trustworthy beacon of middle class values.

**Physical Description:** late 20s, boyish, freckled, "gee whiz" manner

**Sinister:** Phil pockets the money from his sales without sending it on to head office. They know someone is swindling clients in their name, but have yet to catch up with him. If this is all Phil is up to, he can be forced to reveal a vital clue gained while inside the house of a suspect or victim with **Interrogation** or a little **CopTalk**. A darker version of this character places him as a wandering killer, perhaps driven by supernatural forces, who takes advantage of his entrée into folks' homes to brutally victimize them.

**Innocuous:** Phil is precisely as described in the "role" entry: a hardworking man whose wallet and self-respect have been tightly squeezed by the Depression. Hughes only wants to be left alone to plod on to the next town. He gives in to **Intimidation** with a weary sigh.

**Stalwart:** Tired to the bone and disenchanted with the decaying American dream, Phil has begun to contemplate ending it all. His wife is stepping out on him. His children are loutish and ungrateful. But when he stumbles into a weird mystery the PCs are investigating, he senses a life of greater meaning that has always eluded him. If civilization itself is threatened by vastly powerful supernatural enemies, perhaps that's why Phil Hughes was put on this earth—to help fight them off! If, on the other hand, he's clearly in over his head, it takes **Flattery** to convince him to go off and perform less risky tasks for the cause.

**Alternate Names:** Ted Hendricks, Leo Robinson, Floyd Martin

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 40s, close-cropped gray hair, waggly ears

(2): early 60s, thick-framed spectacles, wavy hair, pronounced bags under eyes

(3): late 50s, deep-set eyes, widow's peak, flat features

**Defining Quirks:** (1) terrified of beetles; (2) devoted reader of the funny pages (have newspaper page on hand as prop, drop names of 1930s comic strips); (3) Catch phrase: "I am a person, gol darn it!"

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Accounting

**General Abilities:** Driving 6, Fleeing 2, Health 2

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 2

### Shopkeeper

**Name:** Olaf "Ollie" Olson

**Physical Description:** late 20s, short forehead, long face, high cheekbones

**Sinister:** Ollie Olson has something in his storeroom. Something alive, but not like any plant or animal he'd ever heard of before. He found it while out wandering on a lonely night—or was perhaps gifted with it by the mystery's primary antagonist. At first, it seemed repulsive in its helplessness. Since then he has nursed it to robust health. Over the intervening months, he has become strongly attached to it. A spark glimmers in its multiple eyes; a spark of feeling, or sympathy. It trusts him. Needs him. More than any person has ever done, that's for sure. Initially it was content to eat live rodents Ollie trapped for it. Now it insists on...larger

prey. Ollie will do anything to keep it alive and happy. If the investigators start nosing around, well, there are plenty of things in his shop you wouldn't think of as deadly weapons... but with a little ingenuity, Ollie means to protect his charge.

**Innocuous:** Friendly, lazy, and a wee bit bored, Ollie is happy to while away his days behind a counter. He's comfortable around longtime customers and nervous around strangers. If he knows something fearful, he doesn't want to think about it. Investigators can use his fear of outsiders against him, by applying a little **Intimidation** to coerce him into talking.

**Stalwart:** Ollie Olson has something in his storeroom. It is an antique sword, emblazoned with the red sword and cross of the Livonian Knights. **History** shows that this medieval order of knights took a leading role in the Baltic crusades of the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, Christianizing the heathen tribes of present-day Latvia, Estonia and Finland. **Occult** reveals that they spearheaded efforts to suppress certain degenerate sea cults. According to family legend, early Olsons took part in these battles. The sword is handed down from father to son, in case it is again needed to smite occult evil. Although others in his family treat these tales lightly, Ollie has always believed that there would come a day when he would unsheathe the sword, again putting it to the use for which it was forged.

**Alternate Names:** Mike Sorensen, Tom Nordby, Peter Lindquist

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): mid 40s, pear-shaped head, lazy eye

(2): early 30s, prominent nose, blocky chin, pronounced bottom lip

(3): late 40s, high cheekbones, pinprick eyes, square jaw

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**Defining Quirks:** (1) keeps mentioning how bored he is; (2) happy to give unwanted advice; (3) crosses himself when anxious

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Accounting

**General Abilities:** Fleeing 4, Health 2, Weapons 6 [stalwart]

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 2, 6

### Rural Folk

#### Farmer

**Name:** Asa Sutton

**Physical Description:** early 80s, goateed, curly hair, broad nose

**Sinister:** Ever since they first washed up on the shores of the new world, the Suttons have been loyal servitors of the Old Ones. They work the land just enough to make it seem as if they could plausibly make a subsistence living for themselves. In fact Asa and his brood survive by waylaying traveling strangers and reselling their goods to crooked peddlers. The strangers themselves are butchered and fed to the Suttons' enormous hogs. The Suttons have named the largest of their pigs Azazoth and Cthulhu. This is no irreverent joke: they consider the hogs to be vessels of sacrifice to the Old Ones. Indeed, the family's inhuman strength and resistance to injury is tied to the health of the pigs. If they are slain, the Suttons' Athletics and Health (pools and ratings) drop to the low single digits. If already injured, the loss of points may result in immediate death or incapacitation. **Assess Honesty** may note that the

Suttons become agitated whenever investigators look at or discuss the hogs.

**Innocuous:** Asa Sutton is an ordinary hard-working man trying to eke life out of increasingly dusty soil. Imminent foreclosure worries him sick. Suspicious of outsiders with their fancy city ways, he becomes cooperative if helped to keep his farm. **Accounting** might show him how to stave off bankruptcy; **Law** could provide a legal way for him to stay on the farm even if he defaults on his loan.

**Stalwart:** A man's land is his livelihood, or so Asa's father always used to tell him. If horrors from beyond threaten his land or community, Asa sees no choice but to pick up torch and pitchfork in preemptive self-defense. Any decent God-fearing Christian would do the same. Should the investigators prefer that he barricade himself inside the farmhouse until the trouble passes, a man from a background of honest labor (**Credit Rating** 2) can do the necessary convincing.

**Alternate Names:** Eli Corson, Enoch Moorhouse, Wilfred Burtis

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 40s, bald, mutton chops, hands scarred by repeated welding accidents

(2): early 30s, triangular face, unshaven, wears worn porkpie hat

(3): late 60s, black, broad-shouldered, thin mustache

**Defining Quirks:** (1) overall pockets sag with the weight of assorted spare parts (have props on hand); (2) keeps his home and equipment in immaculate condition; (3) avid listener to radio swing music programs

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Craft (Metalwork), Craft (Woodwork)

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Firearms 4, Fleeing 2, Health 2, Mechanical Repair 2, Weapons 2.

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 8

#### Hired Hand

**Name:** Herb Hanlin

**Physical Description:** late 60s, pigeon-toed, weak-chinned, cracked, mumbling voice

**Sinister:** Herb Hanlin killed a woman, a long time ago, on the other side of the country. He made his way here before the coppers could arrest him, signing on as a hired hand to farmer Orval Gear. Every morning Herb wakes up thinking that today will be the day when they catch up with him and drag him off in shackles. Remorse doesn't enter the picture: his victim deserved it, for turning down Herb's offer of marriage. She should have known better than to humiliate a man like that. When they come for him, he's ready to fight back, with a pistol hidden in his boot. He won't make it easy on them, no sir.

In fact, no one is looking for Hanlin. The authorities have long forgotten the case, and his impoverished, powerless victim. **Assess Honesty** immediately senses that Hanlin has something to hide, and that his bubbling anxieties make him a risk for impulsive, hair-trigger reactions.

**Innocuous:** Herb Hanlin is a little touched in the head, but harmless. He's happy to work for his boss, keep his head down, and have a roof over his head at night. He'd hate to have to become a hobo. That's why he keeps quiet about anything strange he may have seen. Herb understands that people think he's slow. If they thought

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he *saw things*, they might reckon him as dangerous. Then he'd lose his position at the farm. Nossir, he's just going to keep his big trap shut. **Reassurance** convinces Herb that the investigators will protect his place here, no matter what impossible truth he tells them.

**Stalwart:** Herb Hanlin hasn't been the same since he fell from that hayloft a few years back. People look at him sadly, or don't look at him at all, as if he used to be somebody. Now he does what he's told and eats what he's fed, and he's content with that. Even if there are things about himself that he can no longer remember. Obliging and trusting, Herb will do any favor for investigators who give him a little **Reassurance**. Steep Stability losses are in store if they use this trusting soul as a cat's paw and get him hurt or killed.

**Alternate Names:** Mack Rogers, Omer Rice, Harry Bailey

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 30s, balding, gravel-voiced, splotchy birthmark on neck

(2): late 40s, hefty, wears Abe Lincoln-style beard

(3): early 40s, caterpillar eyebrows, dirty gold-rimmed spectacles,

**Defining Quirks:** (1) issues constant warnings about rabies; (2) followed everywhere by a mangy dog called Ishmael; (3) chews on piece of straw or grass

**General Abilities:** Explosives 2, Firearms 2, First Aid 2, Health 1, Mechanical Repair 4

**Alertness Modifier:** 1

**Stealth Modifier:** -1

### Hobo

**Name:** Isaiah Havens

**Physical Description:** late 50s, veiny nose, wide-set eyes, gray eyebrows

**Sinister:** Isaiah Havens has been living rough ever since he went insane, as long as a generation ago. Before then, he was a toy manufacturer, famed for inventing the popular *Twirl-A-Whirl* boardgame. Then he stumbled into an incident of Mythos menace similar in many details to the one the characters are presently investigating. Drawn by atavistic instinct to the energies that destroyed his mind the last time, Havens acts on a compulsion to kill anyone who interferes with the new manifestation. If apprehended, the disheveled Havens is incapable of accounting for his murderous behavior. Instead he speaks in a series of strangled gurgles. To the Mythos-aware, these unintelligible sounds appear to be an attempt to speak in a language which cannot be accurately rendered with human speaking apparatus.

**Innocuous:** Isaiah Havens was a footloose bum, and proud of it, long before the Depression swelled the hobo ranks. A wily judge of character, he quickly figures out what makes each of the PCs tick. He has probably seen something of relevance to the case, which he will gladly share for some grub and a cash donation to his personal charity (**Bargain**).

**Stalwart:** Isaiah Havens used to be just like the investigators—an intrepid sleuth solving bizarre slayings, cracking open secret cults, and delving into the secrets of the Mythos. Then came an incident of Mythos menace similar in many details to the one the characters are presently investigating. It destroyed his mind and memory. Yet signs of the menace's resurgence have unconsciously drawn him here. If subject to a second sudden shock, Havens recovers his memories long

enough to provide crucial information to the PCs. Havens then charges into the maw of danger, hoping to die before his sanity again slips away from him, leaving him as a wretched shell of his old self. When first met, **Assess Honesty** suggests the presence of a suppressed personality. After his old memories surface, a Difficulty 5 **Psychoanalysis** test allows a character to identify and ward off his self-destructive urges.

**Alternate Names:** Maynard Steinore, Vern Jahraus, Ambrose Gillespie

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 50s, long beard, stooped shoulders, limp

(2): early 70s, watery eyes, wattled neck, patchy hair

(3): early 30s, rounded chin, greasy hair, long striped scarf

**Defining Quirks:** (1) afraid of losing his lucky ball cap (use prop); (2) plays a battered mandolin; (3) drinks formaldehyde, to no apparent effect

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Fleeing 12, Health 1, Scuffling 1

**Alertness Modifier:** +2

**Stealth Modifier:** +2

### Widow Woman

**Name:** Emma McDaniel

**Physical Description:** early 80s, tiny, haggard, palsied hands

**Role:** Emma has lived on the fringes of a rural community for decades. She never remarried after the untimely death of her young husband. Mizz McDaniel, as she is called, raises chickens on a small plot of land, trading the eggs and hens

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for whatever else she might need.

**Sinister:** Emma McDaniel died over a decade ago. An expedition of Mi-Go, conducting mining operations in a nearby quarry, returned her to a semblance of life with otherworldly science. If the Mi-Go are behind your mystery, she still serves her original purpose, as their eyes and ears near the quarry entrance. A monitoring device in their spacecraft transmits whatever she sees or hears. Emma responds to investigator behavior via remote control.

Otherwise, the Mi-Go have long gone. Stray eldritch energies arising from your central mystery have revived her to mobility and a reflexive semi-intelligence. With effort, she can respond with seeming spontaneity to basic queries and requests. Although sustained by weird forces, she hungers for more vibrant life. Instinctively, she realizes that she might attain this by eating the organs of human victims.

Either way, **Psychoanalysis** (used as investigative ability) suggests that she suffers from dementia or similar syndrome. A **Medicine** spend shows that there is something very wrong with her, physically speaking.

**Innocuous:** Emma prefers solitude but must barter her chickens to survive. When investigators offer to trade something valuable for mere information, **Bargain** convinces her that they are trustworthy (if a little touched in the head).

**Stalwart:** Emma practices the old healing ways, paying no mind to clucking tongues who say her potions and poultices are contrary to God's ways. Attuned powerfully to the natural world, Emma is well aware of the supernatural disturbance in the area. After the investigators prove their bona fides with a display of **Occult** knowledge, she tells them what she

knows. If the local horror has been active for many years, she has taken quiet steps to protect the community. She may have laid traps for creatures or cultists, which might at a crucial moment save the PCs from otherwise certain doom. Less dramatically, she may provide emergency medical assistance.

**Alternate Names:** Bertha Rose, Ida Webb, Minnie Fleck

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 40s, wild white hair, blackened fingernails, wears three sweaters

(2): early 50s, stout; hair dyed shoe-polish black and parted down the middle

(3): early 40s, eyebrows plucked bare, broken blood vessels in face, watery blue eyes

**Defining Quirks:** (1) wears her dead husband's old army medals; (2) bruised from a recent fall; (3) uses a baseball bat as a cane (use prop)

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Biology, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** First Aid 12, Fleeing 6, Health 6

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** +2

## Working Men

### Delivery Man

**Name:** Mike Bellamy

**Role:** May deliver milk, mail, or groceries on a regular route. Alternately, he may work for a store or delivery service, with few or no regulars. Either

way, his job puts him in a position to know surprisingly intimate details of his customers' lives.

**Physical Description:** late 20s, sharp features, beady eyes

**Sinister:** Bellamy takes advantage of his job to case customers' homes and sneak into them when he knows they won't be there. In a series respecting the genteel limits of Lovecraft's fiction, he merely burglarizes them. If you allow franker depictions of deviant sexuality, Bellamy may be a voyeur or rapist. When approached by investigators, his guilty panic, picked up by **Assess Honesty**, turns him into a red herring suspect. A **Streetwise** character might also read him as a sexual degenerate. To integrate him into the central mystery, establish that he was caught in the act by the primary antagonist, who has been blackmailing him to use his break-and-enter skills on the conspiracy's behalf.

**Innocuous:** A happy-go-lucky fellow untroubled by burning intellect, Bellamy refuses to stop to talk to the PCs for fear of getting behind on his rounds. **Bargain** gives him a cash reason to risk a scolding from his boss.

**Stalwart:** Behind the humble exterior of an ordinary delivery man beats the heart of a would-be hero. Bellamy whiles away his humdrum work days dreaming of glory and fame. When he meets the investigators, he figures out, to some degree, who they really are. Ignoring any warnings regarding the real nature of the threat, he resolves to handle it himself, single-handedly. He plunges into danger, visions of headlines and ticker tape parades dancing in his head. **Psychoanalysis** (used as an investigative ability) provides advance warning of the dangers posed by his immature narcissism.

**Alternate Names:** Jessie Ainslee, Alec Sandrich, Charlie Carson

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**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 40s, chunky, broad-lipped, periodically clutches aching back

(2): early 30s, acne-scarred, vaguely Asiatic features

(3): early 40s, trim, hawkish nose, thick eyebrows

**Defining Quirks:** (1) yawns constantly; (2) seems wary of any female PCs; (3) absently drums his fingers on any available surface

**General Abilities:** Driving 2, Fleeing 4, Health 2

**Alertness Modifier:** +2

**Stealth Modifier:** +1

### Factory Worker

**Name:** Will Moran

**Physical Description:** mid 40s, coal-colored hair, crooked teeth, wide face

**Sinister:** Will rules the shop floor with all the natural leadership abilities of an alpha gorilla. Though he's no man's idea of a supervisor or foreman, the guys all look to him for cues whenever a new situation arises. The only thing they fear more than his fast-flying fists is his talent for vicious mockery. A hard-drinking, bellowing bully, Moran zealously guards his emotional territory. He views any investigators coming around asking questions as an affront to his personal authority. **Credit Rating 2** gives an investigator a sense of how to properly appease this working class tyrant. Without appropriate blandishment, he and his boys appear later on in the story line to bust investigator heads, all to assuage Moran's swollen ego.

**Innocuous:** Will only wants to do the minimum amount his job requires, avoid workplace injury, and get home safely to his family every night. He has

no time for weird mysteries or other hoohah. **Bureaucracy** convinces him that he'll get in trouble, or at minimum suffer time-wasting annoyances, if he doesn't cooperate with investigators.

**Stalwart:** Will sees the guys on the factory floor, especially the younger ones, as his extended family. If there's something nasty threatening them, he has to do his bit to keep them safe. Lord knows the bosses would never trouble themselves. He's no hero, just a regular Joe, and won't charge into danger if the PCs warn him off. But if every regular Joe did what was right when the chips were down, Will figures, maybe this world wouldn't be in the kind of trouble it is.

**Alternate Names:** Homer Coleman, Fred Hamilton, Les Gargan

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): mid 40s, blunt features, flat head, rigid jaw

(2): early 60s, paunchy, long nose, worn expression

(3): late 30s, bantam frame, pugilist's stance, hooded eyes

**Defining Quirks:** (1) looks upward, as if to God, when exasperated or thoughtful; (2) messy eater; (3) quickly completes crossword puzzles

**General Abilities:** Athletics 6, Electrical Repair 4, Explosives 2, Health 10, Mechanical Repair 4, Scuffling 8, Weapons 6

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** -1

### Labor Organizer

**Name:** Wally Endore

**Role:** This dusty wanderer travels across the country, spreading the gospel of radical worker's rights. Layers of hard-

earned scar tissue and the occasional old bullet wound attest to his front line position in the often violent labor disputes of the 1930s.

**Physical Description:** early 60s, leathery hide, angular features, receding chestnut hair

**Sinister:** Endore's union activities are only a front for a darker cause. He ambles from job site to job site looking for likely minds to implant with the seeds of Cthulhu worship. Among any crew of low-paid workers there are bound to be some who bear traces of the Innsmouth look. Often these wretches have lost touch with their watery heritage. Endore takes them aside to show them who they really are. He may then leave them in place, to destabilize crucial industrial sites when the time of the great god's rising comes. Or he may send them off to start new grottoes of worship, where they conduct the rituals necessary to call R'lyeh from its mid-Pacific tomb. When either the bosses or his socialist "friends" stumble across his true agenda, Endore calls on his newfound cultists to baptize their sacrificial blades in the flesh of the enemy.

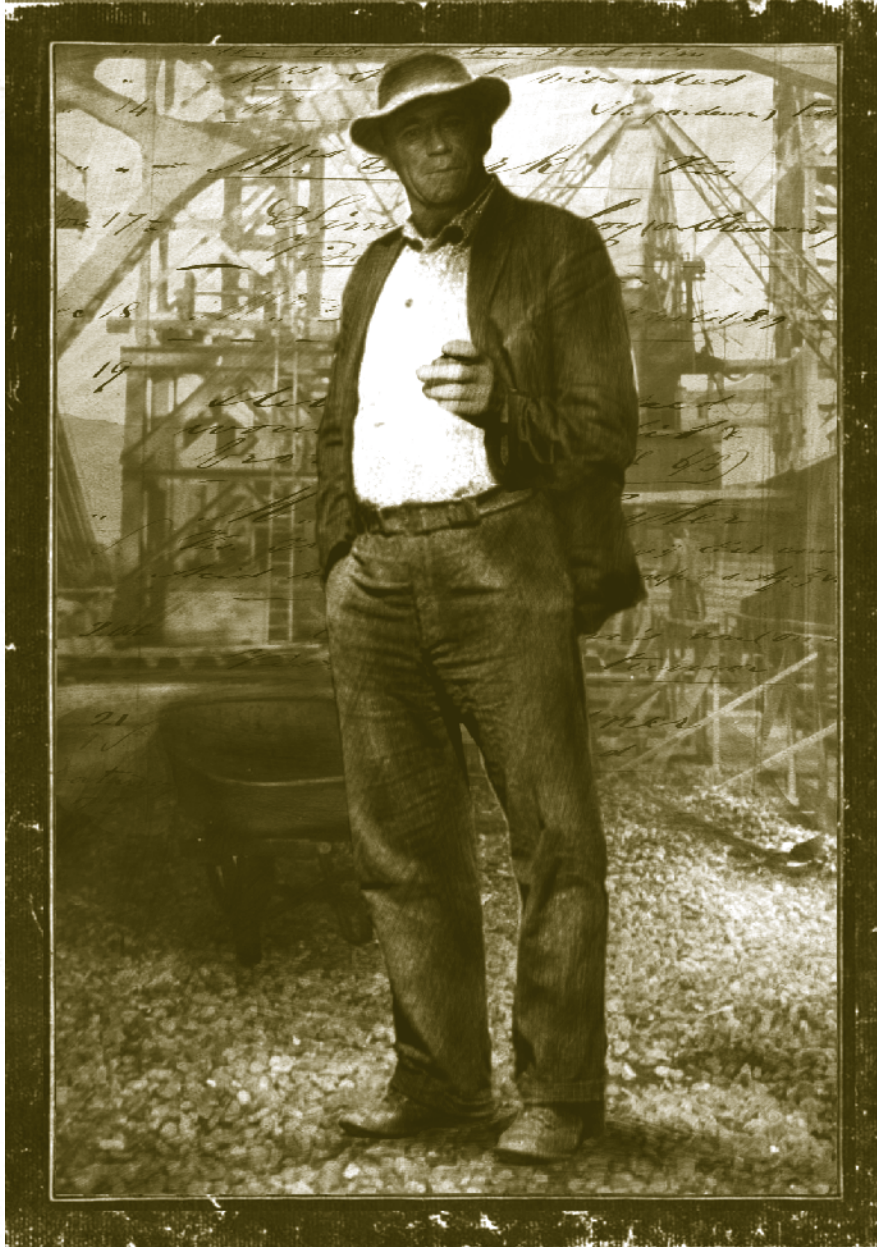
**Innocuous:** Wally Endore is every inch the brave socialist soldier he claims to be. A dyed-in-the-wool rationalist, he rejects any notion of supernatural activity. He distrusts the investigators as dupes or agents of the capitalist system.

**History** enables a PC to construct an argument proving that Endore will, by providing the information they need, advance the inevitable triumph of the proletariat.

**Stalwart:** On a recent visit to the mining country of Pennsylvania, Endore heard some peculiar rumors regarding families of degenerate hill people and their ancient pagan rites. At first, Endore dismissed these as bunkum tales told by the workers to distract themselves from the urgency of their plight. But when a

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crew of his fellow agitators were found slain in their truck, Wally found himself contemplating an enemy even worse than the bosses. The wounds left on the bodies were too savage, too disturbing, to suggest a completely human origin. So when the PCs cross his path, telling similar tales, he's prepared to do what he always does in the face of exploitation and injustice: grab a pick-axe handle and give 'em what for.

**Alternate Names:** Vic Kolb, Andy

Windheim, Jim Lane

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 60s, lean, owlsh spectacles, shy smile

(2): late 30s, protruding ears, narrow face, strong chin

(3): late 50s, thick head of dark hair, brooding expression, whiskered chin

**Defining Quirks:** (1) absently draws figures in the dirt with a stick or the toe

of his boot; (2) Catch phrase: "I forgive anything except stupidity;" (3) tries to sign PCs up as dues-paying non-voting auxiliary members of his International Labor Confederation

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** History, Locksmith, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Electrical Repair 4, Explosives 4, Firearms 4, First Aid 4, Fleeing, Health 4, Mechanical Repair 4, Scuffling 6, Weapons 6.

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

## Sailors

### Captain

**Name:** Solomon Kingsford

**Physical Description:** early 60s, protruding jaw, close-set eyes, impeccably shaven

**Sinister:** Decades ago, when Kingsford was a green first mate aboard a merchant steamer, his ship ran aground on an uncharted Pacific atoll. All other hands were either drowned in the wreck or, to hear Kingsford tell it, died of starvation on the island. Kingsford survived, eventually paddling a raft into the sea lanes, where he was rescued by a Danish freighter. What enabled him to survive were the half human, half cetacean creatures who circled the island, performing obscene rites to their hungry marine deity. For reasons he has yet to fully fathom, the creatures saw him as a kindred figure. In exchange for his help trapping and killing his erstwhile mates, they aided his survival. Among the gifts they bestowed on him was the ability to survive for weeks on end without food or water.

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After his rescue, he returned to a life on the sea. Kingsford crews his ships with the most dissolute and bestial crews imaginable. With brutal discipline he molds them into obedient, if not particularly efficient, seamen. Characters with **Anthropology** who have encountered the tcho-tcho race spot several of them among his crew.

Every so often Kingsford shanghais a few soft-fleshed city dwellers to take to the Pacific, where he feeds them to his old saviors. His ship, the *Costaguana*, forms a vital transport link in a worldwide network of cultists. At any given time, his cargo hold may contain idols, salvaged gold or half-human hybrids ready to smuggle onto civilized shores.

**Innocuous:** Captain of a sturdy but humble merchant vessel, Kingsford has little time for any dealings unrelated to the business of running a ship. **Bureaucracy** convinces him that the investigators have the power to tie him up in port if he doesn't provide the information they seek.

**Stalwart:** Any man who's sailed the sea as long as Kingsford has has heard whisperings of forbidden sea-cults. Land lubbers may scoff at such things, but on stormy seas, lit by lightning, Kingsford has seen things he'd sooner not reflect on. If marine commerce is to flourish and grow, the dread secrets of the seas must be plumbed, no matter what the cost. Though not prepared to risk his ship or his men, Captain Kingsford will aid intrepid investigators willing to fight these dark forces.

**Alternate Names:** Nathaniel Hamilton, Millard Hayle, Ellis Baravalle

**Alternate Ship Names:** *Sulaco*, *Scylding*, *Chance*

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 60s, broad-nosed, bearded, large gap between eyebrows

(2): late 40s, sleepy-eyed, cleft-chinned, speaks with slurred, confident drawl

(3): late 50s, slim, gray at temples, neatly trimmed mustache

**Defining Quirks:** (1) builds models of medieval castles (prepare cardboard pieces for use as prop) (2) Catch phrase: "Organization, man! *Organization!*"; (3) keeps his distance, both physically and emotionally

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Accounting, Geology, Astronomy, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Firearms 2, Health 2, Mechanical Repair 4, Piloting 6, Scuffling 4, Weapons 3.

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Old Salt

**Name:** Lem Finlayson

**Role:** Having spent his entire life working on the sea, his body broken and bent, old Lem Finlayson faces an unwelcome retirement on dry land.

**Physical Description:** early 60s, withered limb, limping gait, ruddy skin

**Sinister:** Having always lived a life under the strict command of a demanding captain, Lem is lost now that has to fend for himself. The seaman's retirement home is too soft an environment for his tastes. Finlayson has decided that only one place offers him the strict parameters he needs—prison. Thus, he has resolved to take a boat hook to the next young fool who annoys him. A murder sentence would be the perfect solution to his problems. Meanwhile, he plays the fool, like an old sailor character from the moving picture show. Needless to say, investigators coming around asking him questions about what is

doubtless none of their business would rank high on Lem's list of annoying people. **Psychoanalysis** (used as an investigative ability) detects the signs of severe disturbance behind his cheery bluster.

**Innocuous:** Lem may be lonely and a little drunk since he was forced to leave his crew behind, but he figures there's a fine career ahead of him as a lighthouse keeper. He refuses to cooperate with the investigators because they frighten him, as do all landlubbers, what with their unfamiliar ways. **History** allows a character to summon sufficient nautical lore to establish himself as a trustworthy son of the waves.

**Stalwart:** Lem never believed the crazy stories fellow salts told about the demons lurking in the deepest fissures of the ocean floor. But if the investigators jog his memory with **Oral History**, he can tell a tale or two. As they talk, he conceives of a plan—if he follows them, and pokes his nose into whatever danger they're in, maybe he can go out in a blaze of glory, instead of slowly wasting away in a drafty retirement home.

**Alternate Names:** Cyrus Haworth, Elihu Nelson, Sherman Berns

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 60s, right hand replaced by hook, ill-fitting dentures

(2): mid 70s, mop of snowy hair, perpetually frozen brow, phlegm-coated voice

(3): early 60s, shrunken face, woebegone expression, withered mustache

**Defining Quirks:** (1) frequently refers to a "Mr. Kenney"; it is unclear whether this is a deceased fellow sailor or an imaginary friend; (2) complains of having water on the knee, frequently wincing in pain and grabbing it; (3) plays a euphonium

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**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Geology, Astronomy

**General Abilities:** Health 1, Weapons 12 [sinister only]

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Young Jack

**Name:** Miles Kerr

**Physical Description:** early 20s, blond hair, boyish, blue eyes

**Role:** Miles Kerr is a junior sailor, either an ordinary ship's mate, or an ensign groomed for eventual command.

**Sinister:** Miles Kerr is really Jonathan Guilfoyle, a fugitive from justice. Raised amid the wealthy by his chauffeur father and ladies maid mother, Guilfoyle formed a childhood bond with his rich employer's son, Paul de Grasse. When de Grasse grew up and exiled him from his circle of upper-crust friends, Guilfoyle flew into a rage and crushed his skull with a paving stone. He fled to the docks, where he knew few questions would be asked, adopting the identity of Miles Kerr. A **Cop Talk** spend matches his face to a remembered wanted poster. Kerr jumps to the conclusion that the PCs' queries relate to the de Grasse murder. If waylaying one of them would seem to solve his problem, he does that. Otherwise, he tries to steer them into danger of some other kind. Ever on the alert for trouble, he may know quite a bit about the mystery at hand, although he has no desire to enmesh himself in occult weirdness.

**Innocuous:** Miles is an optimistic young fellow whose father died at sea when he was a little boy. Ever since, he's felt a pull toward that life himself, even though it upsets his darling mother. Taught to mind his own business and not be a tattletale, Miles crumples in

the face of **Intimidation**. Pushing this sweet young guy around should provoke a degree of guilt on the players' part.

**Stalwart:** Taunted by schoolmates for his once-puny physique, Miles is determined to prove his childhood enemies wrong. He's grown up, added bulk to his frame, and now seeks to establish his manhood by seeking the most masculine career possible. From his vise-like handshake to his booming voice, his every gesture is designed to project strength and mastery. **Flattery** of these traits may inspire him to acts of perilous bravado against forces beyond his ken.

**Alternate Names:** Tony Webb, Walter Reese, Alec Clark

**Alternate Descriptions (1):** late 20s, thick brown hair, winning smile, dashing mustache

(2): mid 20s, dark hair, brown eyes, sturdy jaw

(3): early 20s, shaggy locks, thin lips, dimpled chin

**Defining Quirks:** (1) left hand is bandaged from recent loading accident (use prop bandages); (2) always displays at least one notable shaving cut; (3) attracts resentful gaze of grizzled older sailors

**General Abilities:** Athletics 6, Health 8, Piloting 4, Scuffling 6, Weapons 2

**Alertness Modifier:** -1

**Stealth Modifier:** -1

### Soldiers

#### General

**Name:** Vernon Stothart

**Physical Description:** late 50s,

balding, double-chinned, porcine features

**Sinister:** For over a decade, General Vernon Stothart has been at loggerheads with a rival for promotion, General Hubert Bruggeman. In his quest to find bureaucratic weapons against Bruggeman's rise, Stothart discovered his rival's logistical support to something called Project Covenant and/or the Armitage Inquiry. (If you have already established a high contact in the Department Of War in your campaign, use that NPC in Bruggeman's place.) Not for a moment does Stothart allow himself to believe in esoteric hugger-mugger. Clearly, Bruggeman has gone batty. Stothart intends to monitor his activities and wait for the opening he needs to have the man cashiered. When the PCs come to him as part of an investigation, Stothart obstructs them, at the very least. He may also send undercover military police to trail them, hoping to gather more damning information on Bruggeman. During a meeting with Stothart, **Bureaucracy** catches hints of this white-hot rivalry. If they are unaware of Bruggeman and his role as the War Department's leading behind-the-scenes Mythos fighter, they may not understand its significance until they've been used as pawns on Stothart's behalf.

**Innocuous:** The stolid Stothart would be a firm disbeliever in the occult if he'd ever given it the least amount of thought. If investigators suggest any such nonsense during an interview, he'll find an excuse to suddenly depart and have an aide show them the door. **Reassurance** that they share his rational viewpoint and will protect him and the War Department from any embarrassment prompts him to offer information or other limited assistance.

**Stalwart:** While still a Colonel, Stothart served as commander of the secret American military installation at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where the

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prisoners from the Innsmouth operation were interned. Though not part of the original raid, this assignment led to his unofficial induction into the “Friends Of Ezra.” the group of Mythos-fighters within the US armed forces. When approached for aid, he provides whatever covert assistance he can safely muster. After 1933, he must act carefully, as the Friends Of Ezra have lost high level patronage. **Reassurance** may be required to prove that the PCs can be trusted with his confidence.

**Alternate Names:** Gilbert Biggs, Nathan Hull, Willard August

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 60s, wiry hair, small frame, high forehead

(2): mid 50s, rectangular features, matinee idol jawline

(3): late 60s, sandy hair, doughy features, thin eyebrows

**Defining Quirks:** (1) editorializes

on the inevitable demise of America’s isolationist posture; (2) winces from lower back pain whenever he moves; (3) points out defects in the PCs’ hygiene and posture, as if they are boot camp soldiers

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Geology, History, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Driving 2, Explosives 2, Firearms 4, Health 2, Riding 4, Scuffling 2, Weapons 2

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** -1

**Document Reference:** 6

### Lieutenant

**Name:** Howard Bennett

**Physical Description:** late 20s, black hair, hatchet face, Brooklyn accent

**Sinister:** Howard Bennett is a native-born sympathizer of a foreign power, most likely Germany. (Adjust details if your game is set prior to 1933.) After joining the officer corps, he was recruited by a secret agent as a contact. Bennett considers himself a loyal American and believes that history will unite the US with his foreign power of choice. His handler never asks him to turn over military secrets. Instead, he cultivates him as an asset for later use. Occasionally Bennett is instructed to convey a positive impression of the German regime to his superiors. Depending on how early in the decade it is, he may find this relatively easy. Recently, his handler passed on a new instruction: to keep his eye out for events of an occult nature. Though no believer in the supernatural, Bennett is anxious to please and thus may report the investigators’ activities to a German spy ring. The spies then shadow the PCs, on the hunt for grimoires or artifacts to take back home to the Ahnenerbe (see **Trail Of Cthulhu**, p. 160).

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**Streetwise** suggests that, although he doesn't give off a whiff of criminality, there's something not quite on the level about Lt. Bennett.

**Innocuous:** As a third-generation army officer, Howard Bennett feels enormous pressure to live up to the storied careers of his father, currently a general, and his grandfather, a decorated commander of the campaign to liberate the Philippines. Their legacy of bold action has left him cautious and terrified of making a mistake. He's afraid that aid to the investigators might embarrass him and stall his career. **History** recognizes the family resemblance to his grandfather. A stirring invocation of family chance-taking may inspire Bennett to take a mild risk on the PCs' behalf.

**Stalwart:** Howard Bennett worked his way from humble beginnings into college, and from there into an officer training program. As such he feels a class barrier between himself and the upper-class fellows populating the officers' mess. Howard tries to keep his chin up but feels lonely in his new position of authority. If one or more of the PCs is of **Credit Rating 2-3**, Howard feels an immediate connection to them. When he realizes that they're in danger, he does whatever he can, within the bounds of his obligations, to help.

**Alternate Names:** Ray Walker, Leroy Greer, Carl Stevenson

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 30s, red hair, wide mouth, narrow chin

(2): late 20s, short, thinning hair, wears glasses to read

(3): early 30s, long face, long neck, pronounced Adam's Apple

**Defining Quirks:** (1) asks to borrow minor items, giving him pretence to return later; (2) constantly checks his watch (use prop); (3) wants to be seen as a logical thinker

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Geology, History, Outdoorsman

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Explosives 2, Firearms 5, First Aid 2, Health 6, Piloting 2, Scuffling 6, Weapons 4.

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Infantryman

**Name:** Calvin Alper

**Physical Description:** late 20s, overbite, blinks frequently

**Sinister:** Calvin Alper was raised by a family of rural Mythos-worshipping inbreds destroyed by Mythos-fighters when he was in his late teens. Only a few of his kinfolk escaped the conflagration alive. Calvin missed out on being killed because he was out hunting at the time. The Alper matriarch, Eula, resolved that the new generation, when it rebuilt itself, would not be caught this way again. She encouraged Calvin to enlist in the military. There he would learn tactics and, more importantly, gain access to weapons and ammunition, which he could pilfer and send back to the family stockpile. Calvin has always been treated as stupid, and when he runs across investigators like the ones who killed his folks, he resolves to prove he's smart by taking independent action against them. **Streetwise** may indicate that Calvin is involved in shady dealings at the base.

**Innocuous:** Calvin is an unimaginative farm boy who's grateful for the chance to serve in the military while others from his home town suffer the Depression's ravages. He prefers to do what he's told and correctly senses that his superiors don't like it when mere dogfaces flap their lips to outsiders. **Bureaucracy** convinces him that he won't get into trouble by talking to the investigators.

**Stalwart:** Though of humble origin, Calvin hoped for an academic career. Instead, he had to enlist to keep a roof over his head and chow in his belly. In his spare time, he risks the ribbing of his fellow soldiers by reading up on his desired field of study. That just happens to dovetail with the case that brings the investigators across his path. The prospect of a tantalizing discovery short-circuits Calvin's judgment, sending him AWOL, and deeper into the mystery.

**Alternate Names:** Elbert Steers, Lonnie Pennick, Wilbur Stoney

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 20s, flat profile, lush eyelashes

(2): early 20s, narrow eyes, sharp chin

(3): early 20s, skinny frame, big head, olive skin

**Defining Quirks:** (1) dishes out easy compliments; (2) takes rivalry with navy very seriously; (3) keeps a nervous eye out for his sergeant

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Driving 2, Explosives 2, Firearms 4, Health 4, Scuffling 6, Weapons 4

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

## The Hardboiled

### Bar Girl

**Name:** Ruby Reed

**Role:** Ruby makes her living in a clip joint, a crooked bar that tricks and pressures customers into spending all of their money. She flirts with customers, urging them to buy her expensive drinks. The bartenders serve her watered down cocktails. **Streetwise** PCs who want the bar girls to get as drunk as they are always order champagne—by the bottle.

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**Physical Description:** mid 20s, brunette, cheaply glamorous, bee-stung lips

**Sinister:** Ruby understands that there's little future in being a bar girl. If she could stand the sight of the men who come into the bar and paw and drool over her, she might try to hook one into marriage. Instead she builds a little nest egg for herself with a booming blackmail business. She takes married men back to her apartment and records her trysts with an automatically triggered camera hidden in the wall. When she has enough cash stashed away, she plans to run away to Florida to start a bar of her own. Then she won't let anybody touch her, ever again. Ruby may target a PC of **Credit Rating** 4+ for her one-girl sting operation. Her blackmail activities may have taught her an important secret about a central figure in the mystery the PCs are investigating.

**Innocuous:** Ruby is a hard-headed, self-protective young woman doing what she has to to feed herself and her orphaned niece. Safety means keeping her trap shut. She'll talk only to cops, or people with cop connections (**Cop Talk**).

**Stalwart:** Though Ruby lives in a world where the only thing that matters about a girl are her looks, she yearns for excitement and independent action. When the PCs breeze through her weary, booze-soaked life, she gets it into her head to trail after them, in search of unpredictable adventure. It's a crazy world, she figures, and you only live once.

**Alternate Names:** Evelyn Salinger, Louise Raab, Catherine Silvera

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 20s, strawberry blond, cheaply glamorous, trim figure

(2): mid 20s, redhead, cheaply glamorous, curvaceous



(3): early 20s, cheaply glamorous, willowy

**Defining Quirks:** (1) wears a brooch depicting a Celtic deity, given to her by a customer (use prop, made of paper if necessary); (2) rails against prudery; (3) other girls working at the joint dislike her

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Locksmith, Photography [sinister only]

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Fleeing 6, Health 4, Scuffling 4

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** -1

**Bartender**

**Name:** Howard Sketchley

**Physical Description:** late 30s, dark hair, blandly handsome

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**Sinister:** Howard Sketchley supplements his income by robbing the occasional unwary customer. He picks his victims carefully, taking care never to target a regular. Best of all are swells who pop into his place for a whiff of rough glamor. Those types never holler to the cops. Surprisingly often, his marks do his work for him by getting so stinking drunk they don't notice him lifting their wallets as he helps them out the door. Slightly more sober victims earn themselves a Mickey Finn: they wake up in a nearby alley. Howard's a smart character, and does a slick job of covering his tracks. But one day he got himself caught at it, by the main antagonist or another figure central to the mystery at hand. If they blew the whistle, his sweet racket would be over. So when they ask him to do them a favor and slip the mickey to PC or two, who is he to argue?

**Innocuous:** With his good looks and charm—well, maybe not the charm so much—Howard should have gone somewhere in life. Instead, he's stuck slinging cheap whiskey in this rotten bar. It's the lousy Depression's fault, that's what it is. Only the prospect of easy cash temporarily eases Sketchley's bitterness—meaning that the investigators have to fork over some dough (**Bargain**) to get any information out of him.

**Stalwart:** Some folks might think that tending bar is a chore, but Howard finds it fascinating. He loves to listen to customer's stories, even the sad ones. He's heard some crazy yarns—especially when old sailors blow in from the docks. An avid reader of pulp magazines and the newspaper crime stories, Howard can't believe his luck when a group of enigmatic investigators come into his place, asking questions. His curiosity may then lead him to actively insert himself into their case. Should Howard prove himself more nuisance than asset, **Flattery** convinces him to go off and perform an indispensable yet safe task for them.

**Alternate Names:** Ray Ford, Charlie Bond, Clarence Thompson

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 50s, balding, big-nosed, dark-eyed

(2): early 40s, large head, small face, perpetual stare

(3): late 30s, dark hair, meaty features, heavily defined facial muscles

**Defining Quirks:** (1) dismisses the supernatural as "a bunch of fiddle faddle"; (2) complains of being an unlucky gambler; (3) absently gathers peanut shells on bars into mounds (use prop)

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Accounting, Pharmacy [sinister only]

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Firearms 3, Health 6, Psychoanalysis 6 [stalwart only], Scuffling 6, Weapons 4

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

### Gunsel

**Name:** Dock Vogan

**Physical Description:** late 30s, blond hair, boyish looks gone to seed, limpid blue eyes

**Sinister:** Ever since he was a kid growing up in the city's worst neighborhood, Dock Vogan solved problems with force. He started with fists and, as a young man, graduated to guns. He's never been an inside member of any gang. Vogan's more the guy you hire for short-term muscle, or to rub a guy out without leaving any of your own fingerprints. He's worked for more crooks than he can count, and isn't fussy about who hires him. He meets his clients through the grapevine. Vogan has probably accepted a one-time payment from the case's main antagonist to lean on, shadow, or kill the PCs. In games adding a worldly Hammett touch

to the rarefied Lovecraftian milieu, Dock is a not-so-latent homosexual. He compensates for his "pansy" status with flashes of sudden violence.

**Innocuous:** Dock is as above, but is a peripheral figure in the case. He has no desire to harm the investigators, because he doesn't see the percentage in it. A PC with **Streetwise** can approach Dock safely, paying the appropriate respect and indicating that they're not going to jam him up. He provides his information in quick, clipped sentences and goes on his way.

**Stalwart:** Until recently, Dock's life was as given in the "sinister" entry. Then, on the way to shoot a young female witness to a mob case, the shadow of a church steeple fell across his path. It was the oddest thing, but the shadow stopped him from going any further. Dock stumbled into the church and begged for God's mercy, tears streaming down his face. Now he's vowed to make restitution to the Lord for all the people he's hurt and killed. When his contact with the investigators leads him to forces of implacable malignity—an evil far worse than the one that drove him to his thoughtless misdeeds—he resolves to dedicate the rest of his life to fighting it. A PC might bring him to this conclusion by using **Theology** as an interpersonal ability.

**Alternate Names:** Mose Langton, Ike Grandis, Boyd Pan

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 20s, lush head of dark hair, full lips, melancholy expression

(2): mid 60s, puffy cheeks, small teeth (always bared)

(3): late 50s, flaring nostrils, ropy neck, intense stare

**Defining Quirks:** (1) his hobby: trying to solve a classic math problem called the Goldbach Conjecture; (2) has many

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pinko political beliefs, but distrusts communists; (3) carries a small pocket telescope, for peeping purposes (use prop)

**General Abilities:** Athletics 6, Driving 6, Explosives 2, Firearms 8, Health 8, Scuffling 8, Weapons 4

**Alertness Modifier:** +2

**Stealth Modifier:** +1

### Racketeer

**Name:** Horace "Diamond" Walsh

**Role:** This high-ranking mob boss is either the head of a gang or a member of its inner circle. The gang controls turf in an urban area, where it runs extortion and vice rackets.

**Physical Description:** mid 60s, veiny nose, watery eyes, gray hair

**Sinister:** Walsh was a feared but run-of-the-mill gangland figure until he entered into smuggling activities with a family of homely fisherman from a small coastal village. During a meeting with their patriarch, Elihu Smallidge, Walsh became enamored of his beautiful granddaughter Zora. Walsh took Zora back to the city with him and set her up in an apartment. Conveniently, his wife at the time soon sickened and died, paving the way for a speedily arranged and lavish wedding. Zora now directs her husband to perform certain favors for her family. These further the regrowth of the Esoteric Order Of Dagon, smashed in the 1928 Innsmouth raids. Excited by the impending birth of their first child, Walsh has begun to divert increasing resources to the Smallidges. **Streetwise** picks up the rumor that Walsh has been neglecting mob business. The PCs might be able to cut off the resurgent Order's new funding source by nudging Walsh's subordinates into a takeover attempt.

**Innocuous:** Walsh sees himself as an



ordinary businessman providing essential services which, due to official myopia, happen to be illegal. If approached respectfully (**Streetwise** provides the necessary etiquette), and offered something in return (**Bargain**), he may deign to aid PCs with information or other minor favors. Naturally, he does nothing to risk his lucrative rackets.

**Stalwart:** Like many mobsters, Walsh perceives himself as a devout man, a patriotic American, and a defender of the

neighborhood he preys on. He despises sickos who kill for the thrill of it, instead of for profit, which is how it should be. When fear of a lurking menace keeps people off the streets and depresses takings from gambling and prostitution, Walsh extends concrete assistance to the investigators, in the form of goons, guns, or a network of tunnels and hideouts.

**Alternate Names:** Herbert "The Clutching Hand" Curtis, Rudolph "the German" Heydt, Gaspare Morello

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**Alternate Descriptions** (1): late 50s, wattled neck, hangdog expression

(2): mid 50s, fat, short-fingered, graying mustache

(3): early 60s, jug-eared, big-nosed, open face

**Defining Quirks:** (1) compulsively files his nails (use prop); (2) boasts of assisting J. Edgar Hoover's patriotic union-busting activities; (3) regular opera attendee

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Accounting, Law, Intimidation, Streetwise, Locksmith

**General Abilities:** Athletics 2, Firearms 4, Health 7, Scuffling 2, Weapons 2

**Alertness Modifier:** 1

**Stealth Modifier:** -1

**Document Reference:** 1

### Private Detective

**Name:** Patrick Ford

**Physical Description:** early 40s, dark hair, muscular frame, enigmatic expression

**Sinister:** Hired by a client whose true agenda he remains unaware of, the quietly determined private dick Patrick Ford expertly shadows the PCs. He reports their activities to the main antagonist, or a respectable-seeming accomplice thereof. Even if confronted and shown who he's working for, Ford does not assist the investigators. At best, his code of the mean streets allows him to withdraw from the case, returning his fees to the primary villain. He then steps aside, washing his hands of the entire incident.

**Innocuous:** Ford's current case has led

him to uncover information peripheral to his own inquiries, but of great importance to the PCs. If they dig up something useful to his work, he'll trade facts with them (**Bargain.**)

**Stalwart:** As much as Ford tries to cling to an ethos of detached professionalism, he can't help taking a personal stake in cases. This is especially true when the helpless have to swallow a raw deal dished out by forces too big for them to understand. Though previously unschooled in the Mythos, he trusts his own senses and instincts. Should the PCs need him in a pinch, he curses his foolish altruistic streak and goes through that door, gun in hand.

**Alternate Names:** Leo Holt, Frank Steele, Jack Bridge

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): early 40s, blunt features, unshaven, perpetual squint

(2): early 40s, red-blond hair, arching eyebrows, verging on jowly

(3): early 40s, bushy eyebrows, wide eyes, long ears

**Defining Quirks:** (1) compulsive about hygiene; (2) office decorated with photographs of Shanghai; (3) fidgets with a cigar cutter (use prop)

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Law, Cop Talk, Intimidation, Streetwise, Evidence Collection, Forensics, Photography

**General Abilities:** Athletics 4, Driving 4, Firearms 8, Health 8, Scuffling 6, Weapons 2

**Alertness Modifier:** +2

**Stealth Modifier:** +2

## Carnies

### Fortune Teller

**Name:** Claudia Brazda

**Physical Description:** early 30s, curly raven tresses, smoky eyes, aquiline nose

**Sinister:** Claudia Brazda doesn't mean to drive clients of her sideshow fortune telling booth to madness and murder. And for the most part, she doesn't. Only now and then will she encounter a rude, boorish, or presumptuous customer who ignites her unplumbed rage. Then Claudia forgets herself, and draws on the dark powers she was born with, back in the old country. Her fingers fly, unbidden, across the Tarot cards. On the surface, her predictions of the future resemble the usual vague nonsense she dishes out to the rubes. Something hidden beneath the pattern of her words suggests the most terrible of truths—that we are alone in the universe, that nothing means anything, and that the only gods are mad, malign, and indifferent. The customers react at first as if shell-shocked, then go about their humdrum lives. Days or weeks afterwards, the esoteric core of Claudia's words explodes like an intellectual depth charge. Sometimes the customers go violently insane. In other instances, their crazed new perceptions unlock a gate to the distant realm of Azazoth—one admitting its impossible, predatory entities to this realm. Claudia and her carnival are long gone by the time this happens. She is dimly aware that something bad occurs in the wake of her prophetic tempers, but doesn't know the half of it. If confronted, she is honest with the investigators: since she doesn't do it on purpose, she can't promise that it will never happen again.

**Innocuous:** Claudia uses her foreign accent and exotic appearance to put across her act. It's all harmless hokum and flattery. She assumes that anyone else claiming the existence of supernatural

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powers is a fake, too. Like most carny folk, she's leery of authorities, and takes **Reassurance** before sharing information with investigators.

**Stalwart:** What Claudia does in the fortune teller's booth is fakery, but that doesn't mean she isn't capable of true second sight. Over her crystal ball, she tells people what they want to hear for a nickel a throw. They're better off that way. But if convinced that the PCs are mentally fortified against the terrible

revelations on the other side of the veil, she'll point them toward the nearest Mythos manifestation. To find it, all she has to do is concentrate. The hard part is shutting out the visions afterwards.

Claudia does not become a reliable psychic beacon for the team. Opening mental contact with the Mythos is dangerous and taxing. When they come back to find her again, the carnival has moved on.

**Alternate Names:** Teresa de Matos, Nadia Luna, Ludmilla Zharov

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): mid 50s, bird-like features, hides blondish hair under a turban

(2): mid 30s, zaftig figure, lush eyelashes, wavy hair

(3): early 60s, tiny, broad nose, creased brow

**Defining Quirks:** (1) flatters her interlocutors by seeming to agree with whatever they say; (2) rolls her eyes at male foolishness; (3) passes the time by reading Shakespeare (translated into her native tongue)

**Academic and Technical Abilities:** Occult, Assess Honesty

**General Abilities:** Health 2, Hypnosis 12

**Alertness Modifier:** +2

**Stealth Modifier:** 0

**Document Reference:** 5, 9

### Freak

**Name:** Alfie Pivar

**Physical Description:** age indeterminate; flipped hands, oversized eyes, fishy smell

**Sinister:** When sideshow talker Earl Murdock advertises Alfie Pivar as the "Half-Human Boy," he's telling a greater truth than he knows. Alfie's fellow carnival workers think that he's just another guy turning a physical deformity into a means of making a living as a sideshow specialty act. In fact, Alfie is the hybrid issue of a ceremonial mating between a human woman and Yog-Sothoth. His mother, a captive taken by cultists as a ritual vessel, died during Alfie's explosive birth. Raised by

cultists in a squalid basement cell, Alfie hungered for freedom and the warmth of sunlight on his skin. As his thirteenth birthday approached, he learned that he too was destined for sacrifice, so that an even more powerful entity might be summoned to walk the earth. Taking advantage of a lapse of attention at feeding time, Alfie escaped. He rampaged through the backwoods cult compound. During this frenzied murder spree, he discovered his awful killing potential—the retractable claws beneath his fingertips, the raking over-teeth that descended at will. Alfie lumbered to the highway, hoping to hitchhike his way through a newly discovered world. He quickly learned what it meant to be hideous. Driver after driver recoiled as his visage drew nearer in their headlights. The only people to embrace him for the peaceful soul he believes himself to be were the folk of a small-time carnival. Alfie loves them with a fierce protectiveness that can unfortunately get out of hand. Whenever he sees any of them—especially his fellow sideshow freaks, or the beautiful trapeze girl Letty O’Fearn—mistreated by outsiders, he sees red. His monstrous side takes over, sending him creeping out to slaughter the offenders. Afterwards, Alfie does not clearly remember what he has done. If the investigators are following his trail of carnage from state to state, they’re not alone—the surviving members of the cult that spawned him are close on his heels, too.

Any character with **Medicine** getting a good look at Alfie realizes that his outwardly explicable deformities conceal a radically altered internal anatomy.

**Innocuous:** **Medicine** reveals that Alfie’s apparent deformities are all created with inventive make-up effects. A 1-point spend spots something else beneath the makeup—a raging case of advanced alcoholism. Alfie Pivar was a Hollywood makeup artist back in the heady days of silent cinema. Eventually he found himself out of work—a



fact he blames on actor Lon Chaney (1883-1930.) Alfie blames the star of *Hunchback Of Notre Dame* and *Phantom Of the Opera* for stealing his secrets and having him blackmailed. (A 2-point **Assess Honesty** spend posits that this accusation is a projection on Pivar’s part. Pivar destroyed his own career without outside assistance.) Ever desperate for more booze money, Alfie has added a geek element to his act. He kills a live chicken with his teeth twice a day, to the nauseated amusement of sideshow

patrons. Any useful information Alfie knows can be had for the price of a little **Flattery** directed toward his makeup skills.

(If the PCs ran through “The Final Reel” scenario from *Shadows Over Filmland*, tie Pivar’s past to the equally troubled makeup artist Kenneth Beaumont.)

**Stalwart:** Alfie is an inwardly ordinary young man who loves baseball, radio comedy, and western paperbacks.

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Given his deformities, he figures he's lucky to have a job—and a large adopted family—at the carnival. It could be worse: he could be stuck in an institution somewhere, treated like a mental defective by doctors and nurses. That was how it was for him before he ran away to join the circus. If some kind of horror threatens his people, Alfie does what he can to stop it. Investigators wanting to discourage him from taking action of his own must make a 1-3 point **Reassurance** spend, depending on the urgency of the situation, to convince him they can handle it on their own.

**Alternate Names:** Kenny York, Oliver Vogel, Earl Cutter

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): age indeterminate; hunchbacked, misshapen skull

(2): mid 20s; fur-covered, elongated canine teeth

(3): mid 40s, dwarf, sandy hair, tattoo of dog-faced mermaid on back of left hand

**Defining Quirks:** (1) laughs unnervingly at private jokes; (2) smells of the glue he uses to assemble his scrapbook; (3) takes a liking to one of the PCs, who he refers to as “pally”

**General Abilities:** Athletics 8, Health 15, Hypnosis 2, Mechanical Repair 2, Scuffling 12, Weapons 4

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** +2

**Document Reference:** 8

### Roustabout

**Name:** Garland “Mitch” Mitchell

**Role:** Mitchell is a laborer, handyman, bouncer, mechanic and animal feeder at a small circus or carnival.

**Physical Description:** mid 30s, tall, broad shoulders, perpetual five o’ clock shadow

**Sinister:** Mitch Mitchell is on the run after taking part in several armed bank robberies with the quasi-notorious Red Clay Gang. With the FBI on their tail, Mitch had a falling out with gang leader Red Barclay. A week after he lit out for parts unknown, Barclay and his erstwhile pals were gunned down by federal government machine guns. Mitchell took a job with a traveling carnival to lay low. Now sure that the G-Men are about to capture him, too, Mitchell regrets his stupid failure to adopt a fake name when he signed on as a roustabout. Taking anyone poking around the circus for an FBI agent, he attempts to engineer a fatal accident. **Cop Talk** recalls Mitchell’s name in connection with the Red Clay mob.

**Innocuous:** When he was a kid, Mitch wanted to go to the police academy. A run of bad luck starting in his late adolescence landed him here, putting up tents and feeding mangy trained bears. Circus work is hard, but it’s better than no work at all. Strangers have always meant bad luck for him, but an investigator able to speak fluent **Cop Talk** can get him to open up.

**Stalwart:** Mitch Mitchell enjoys the simplicity of circus life and wouldn’t dream of doing anything else. Before he came here, he was a navy man. During his stint in the marines, he took part in a series of unusual reconnaissance missions to isolated tropical coves and atolls. He never understood what the brass was looking for, but he did glimpse a few very hair-raising things. On exit from the service, he was sworn to strict secrecy. Mitch might be convinced to share what little he knows by a master of **Bureaucracy** who can convincingly describe a loophole permitting him to speak. If the same dark forces now threaten innocent American lives, Mitch requires little convincing to gather up his

guns and make like a marine again.

(Mitchell’s missions all took place in the immediate wake of the 1928 Innsmouth raids. An investigator aware of the raids deduces that Mitch’s activities were part of a subsequent intelligence effort to find out if there were more Innsmouth-like enclaves elsewhere in the world.)

**Alternate Names:** Cornelius “Corny” Brown, Reuben “Rube” Zeisl, Leland “Carl” Carlisle

**Alternate Descriptions** (1): mid 30s, ruddy-faced, red hair, snoutish nose

(2): early 30s, wiry, fleet-footed, darting eyes

(3): mid 30s, curly hair, thick neck, neck scarred by old knife wound

**Defining Quirks:** (1) Catch phrase: “Well, if that ain’t a turn.”; (2) plays tour guide to the local sights; (3) belches contentedly after a good meal

**General Abilities:** Athletics 6, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 2, Explosives 4\*, Firearms 6\*, Health 8, Mechanical Repair 4, Scuffling 8, Weapons 6

\* Stalwart only

**Alertness Modifier:** +1

**Stealth Modifier:** +1

### Strongman

**Name:** Vladimir Krotka

**Physical Description:** late 50s, enormously muscled, bald, hirsute

**Sinister:** Vladimir Krotka is the circus’ resident bully. He takes special pleasure in intimidating the carnival’s weakest. The first time the investigators see him, he is probably chortling as a freak show dwarf or alcoholic clown scatters from his approach. **Psychoanalysis** (used as an

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investigative ability) shows that Krotka is unlikely to react like a typical bully, who is cowed by resistance. It predicts that Krotka will seek violent delayed revenge against anyone who publicly humiliates him. Instead, he basks in the well-faked admiration of other apparently strong men (**Flattery**). Krotka may complicate an investigation by swearing deadly vengeance against a crucial witness or stalwart. Krotka is utterly indifferent to the occult when first encountered. He might, in the course of a storyline, become enthralled by Mythos forces.

**Innocuous:** As per the sinister version, except that this Krotka is a garden variety bully. A little **Intimidation** turns him into a wheedling, subservient pussycat. Once successfully intimidated, he becomes the investigator's self-proclaimed best friend and admirer. Krotka may become comically annoying in his quest to win the PC's approval, but never represents a physical threat. In a pinch, his allegiance proves valueless, as he flees at top speed from the merest hint of real danger.

**Stalwart:** Vladimir Krotka has come down in the world since competing as an Olympic weight-lifter for his home country. At night he sits in his trailer, listening to the nostalgic folk songs of his homeland, dreaming of another chance at glory. **Oral History** gets him talking about his past, revealing his desire for a second shot at heroism. Krotka can then be convinced to lend his powerful muscles to the investigators' cause.

**Alternate Names:** Sergei Garkalin, Heinrich Helm, Marius Corban

**Alternate Descriptions (1):** mid 40s, enormously muscled, flat-top hair cut

(2): late 20s, enormously muscled, wears hair in a long jungle-man mane

(3): mid 30s, enormously muscled, dons fake mustache for performances



**Defining Quirks:** (1) before entering into a fight, warns that his fists are registered as a lethal weapon back in his homeland (**Assess Honesty** reveals this as an absurd boast); (2) when not performing, constantly massages aching muscles; (3) complains about an imitator at another circus, Gorogrov the Great, who has "stolen his act"

**General Abilities:** Athletics 16, Fleeing 4, Health 15, Scuffling 12, Weapons 2

**Alertness Modifier:** 0

**Stealth Modifier:** -1

**Damage Modifier:** (scuffling only) +2

**Document Reference:** 2

## Organisations

The following chapter contains information on various associations, clubs, lodges and other groups which may factor into your game's mysteries, including the troubling puzzle of The Armitage Files.

Each description breaks down into the following entries:

**Apparent Nature:** This describes the organization as it shows its face to the world. If the group is an innocuous one, it proves, on further investigation, to match its initial impression.

**Sinister:** This entry describes what the organization might be up to if you decide that its apparent nature is a front covering up its real, malign purpose. As always, you can use the idea as it appears, modify it to suit your needs, or treat it strictly as a jumping-off point for a completely different concept of your own.

**Stalwart:** Here appears an opposite suggestion, explaining what the organization is really all about if it is secretly dedicated to combating occult and/or Mythos forces.

To maintain an atmosphere of tension and horror, see to it that organizations able to provide shelter, resources and information to the PCs are few and far between. This approach particularly suits a purist game, where the investigators (and perhaps patrons, such as the Armitage Inquiry or Project Covenant) might be the only significant forces working to stave off the Old Ones' imminent invasion. If you include many such organizations in your game, its tone will veer toward the pulp end of the spectrum.



If you decide that an organization has neither a sinister nor a stalwart truth, its apparent nature is also its true nature.

**Connections:** This entry suggests characters from the previous chapter

who may be connected to the organization. Treat these as suggestions to choose from; a character who is named in connection with several organizations is probably involved in only one of them. Connection does not

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imply membership; a character could be opposed to the group, or simply know something about it.

**Document Reference:** tells you which of the Armitage Files mentions the organization.

### Masonic Lodge

#### CIRCLE RITE LODGE

**Apparent Nature:** The Circle Rite Lodge is a small sub-group of Freemasons with chapters throughout the New England area, founded in 1890. Referred to by those in the know by its acronym only, the CRL is a so-called appendant body to the broader Masonic movement. This means that one must already be a Master Mason to join it. Members progress through a series of ceremonial observances, continuing to gain ever more impressive ranks and titles, the nature and purpose of which is kept secret from outsiders.

In practice, the Lodge provides an ostentatious series of bonding rituals for influential men. Their time together engaged in the various circle rites encourages them to develop business, social and political connections, which they apply to mutual benefit.

The oldest chapter of the Circle Rite Lodge headquarters itself in Arkham. Sugar magnate Jonas Stockton serves as its current Exalted Commander.

**History** reveals that the Circle Rite Lodge uses as the theme for its most secret ceremonies the Eleusinian Mysteries. This means that the lodge members make classical references during the initiation ceremonies, in contrast to, say, the York Rite Masons, who allude to the Knights Templar.

**Occult** shows that the pseudo-magical rituals of masonic organizations are not thought even by those performing them to exert genuine supernatural power.

Mastery of the rites is at most a test of dedication and mental discipline.

**Sinister:** Under a veneer of classical gallimaufry lies a deeper layer of genuine ceremonial magic. For forty years successive generations of CRL members have been perfecting a ritual to open pathways into another reality. Now the gates have begun to open—allowing Mi-Go to slip through, overriding the brain functions of participants. The considerable material resources of Jonas Stockton and various other New England worthies are now wielded by the fungi from Yuggoth.

**Stalwart:** Beyond the fake classical rituals is an initiation ceremony into a league of Mythos-hunters. Clues in the Armitage Files leading to the CRL are veiled references to Armitage's own induction into the lodge. Fearful of infiltration, Stockton and his inner circle treat the investigators as likely cultists, until conclusively proven otherwise, with **Reassurance** spends and the overcoming of plot obstacles.

**Connections:** Cad (p. 34), Mayor (p.37), Magnate (p. 36)

**Document Reference:** 2, 8

### Service Club

#### THE HELPING HANDS

**Apparent Nature:** An international organization of community service clubs, founded in Akron, Ohio in 1863. Clubs are located throughout the industrialized world. Local chapters accept the charter of the international umbrella organization but are largely autonomous. Chapters typically include a locality's prominent businessmen and professionals. Members raise money for charity and perform volunteer work. As an unadvertised bonus, membership confers prestige and respectability. The Helping Hands supports worthy but uncontroversial causes, mostly related

to the treatment of childhood diseases. New members find it an invaluable source of business connections. Helping Hands chapters exist in large cities but are not as vital to their communities as those in smaller centers. The movement boasts hundreds of thousands of members worldwide. Although the depression has blunted its fundraising capacities, its members cling to it as a pillar of normalcy in troubled times. (PCs of **Credit Rating** 4 or 5 may specify during character creation that they are members of the Helping Hands, and treat its philanthropic creed as a Source Of Stability.)

The Helping Hands are banned in the Soviet Union, as its charter usurps the prerogatives of the Communist Party.

Admission can be gained via **Flattery** and **Credit Rating** 4+. The Helping Hands is primarily a middle class phenomenon; persons of Credit Rating 6+ rarely seek membership.

**Sinister:** The Helping Hands network is, in its entirety, too large to serve as a concealed cult front. Individual chapters, on the other hand, might be corrupt. A sinister Helping Hands chapter best fits a mystery in which the leaders of an entire town turn out to be cultists. Such chapters allow members to pursue their goals cloaked in a sterling collective reputation. Its members are no slaving backwoods maniacs, but rather highly organized, well-behaved psychopaths. They worship the Old Ones in pursuit of power, respect, and luxury; their greatest affinity is to Nyarlathotep.

In a small town devoted to Mythos activity, the entire Helping Hands chapter is comprised of cultists. Where servants of Nyarlathotep must act under a veil of secrecy, the cult members in a corrupt Helping Hands chapter comprise an inner circle within a seeming innocuous chapter.

Prospective members in a corrupt chapter or covert inner circle are carefully vetted before admission. Members observe the candidate, searching for the desired combination of remorseless ambition and subservience to higher authority. Persons exhibiting nativist, racist or fascist tendencies are highly prized. While Nyarlathotep's malice cannot be encompassed by human political categories, this frame of mind is well-suited to both cruelty and obedience. A PC might come to the attention of the membership committee through one or more incidents where he is seen to **Intimidate** the weak (spend required), or to credibly spout hateful authoritarian views (**History** or **Theology** spend).

A new member is typically assigned minor tasks until he establishes himself as trustworthy. When the cell is placed under pressure, recruits may be catapulted into positions of knowledge and authority. A team of investigators can aid their infiltrating comrade by forcing the Helping Hands cultists to take simultaneous action on several fronts.

**Stalwart:** The board members of a small town Helping Hands chapter have formed themselves into an ad hoc investigation group and stand on the threshold of mind-shattering Mythos discoveries. It began when they noticed a sudden spike in illnesses at the children's hospital they sponsor. Led by their resident physician, Dr. Kenneth Dawn, they discovered that blood samples were being stolen and somehow tampered with—in a way that, inexplicably, *sickened the patients from whom the blood had been drawn!* Their inquiries led them first to Lutie Simmons, the town madwoman, whose hut turned out to contain a trove of occult paraphernalia. Simmons escaped with what they suspect to be the connivance of the local sheriff. With every new piece of information they gather, the size of the conspiracy

seems to grow ever larger. Last week, one of them succumbed to the mystery sickness. The night before the PCs contact with them, another falls prey to it.

Desperate for aid, the Helping Hands group takes into its confidence anyone who knows more than they about the occult forces they've stumbled into (**Cthulhu Mythos** used as an interpersonal ability; does not require a spend or cost Sanity/Stability) and who seems honest and trustworthy (**Reassurance** spend).

**Connections:** Accountant (p. 29), Doctor (p. 31), Lawyer (p. 31)

**Document Reference:** 2

## Academic Society

### SOCIETY OF SYNCRETIC INQUIRY

**Apparent Nature:** The Society Of Syncretic Inquiry, founded in 1912 in London, established its New York and Vienna chapters in 1913. After an interregnum imposed by the Great War it expanded to other university centers, including Arkham in 1924. This scientific body, composed mostly of tenured academics, promotes research across disciplinary lines. Its freewheeling meetings are intended as a safe forum for unstructured thought, in which members can engage in fruitful speculation. They then return to their laboratories to do the solid research required to advance or reject the perhaps fanciful claims made in its smoke-wreathed club room. Although its membership rolls include many prominent names, a faint whiff of the disreputable attaches to the organization. Critics accuse it of a pre-modern, even superstitious, outlook, and of a contempt for the vital boundaries between specialties.

Membership is available to PCs of any of the following professions; the

Credit Rating spend to join varies by profession and appears afterwards in parentheses: Archaeologist (2), Dilettante (3), Parapsychologist (3), Professor (2), Scientist (1). PCs of other professions may join on a 4-point Credit Rating spend and a 2-point spend of Anthropology, Archaeology, Biology, Medicine, Physics, or Chemistry.

**Sinister:** S.O.S.I. is a recruiting front for the Western Tsang Temple, a coven of cultists attempting to revive Chaugnar Faugn so that it may devour the earth. Its leaders understand that powers understood to be occult spells are merely expressions of a science beyond the ken of our rational minds. They created S.O.S.I. to attract other thinkers obsessed with finding the intersection points between science and magic. S.O.S.I.'s founder, Sir Wilfrid Wakeling, still lives but is confined to a wheelchair on his estate in Shropshire, England. After a brief but intense power struggle a new leader, perhaps a character from the *People* chapter, has consolidated operational control of the group.

To gain admission into the inner circle, one must either present a paper containing concealed glimmers of Mythos awareness, or bring these concepts into discussion at a meeting. A 2-3 point **Reassurance** spend allows the PC to pass muster as a trustworthy recruit. To fully advance, the recruit must undertake a risky and unethical task on behalf of the local chapter's leadership.

Over the years S.O.S.I. has proven useful as a trap for too-clever investigators seeking to infiltrate the organization. They are interrogated and sacrificed to Chaugnar Faugn.

It may be that only certain chapters of S.O.S.I. are fronts for Chaugnar Faugn worship. If so, founder Wilfrid Wakeling may selectively choose branches to activate, or may himself be entirely innocuous.

**Stalwart:** Wakeling, a lifetime combatant against Mythos forces, created S.O.S.I. to recruit other would-be investigators, and to identify and isolate potential cultists before they find other like-minded maniacs. He achieved the latter by creating a false cult dedicated to the nonexistent Mythos entity Ombhoggu. Aspiring cultists are shunted into an Ombhuggu coven, which spends its time searching for fake artifacts, memorizing sham grimoires, and scurrying from its enemies—actually the real inner membership of S.O.S.I. What the increasingly frail Wakeling did not account for was the possibility that the fervency of his dupes' beliefs would summon an entity that answers to the name Ombhoggu. As the investigators stumble across S.O.S.I., this being launches its campaign to fully manifest and make itself permanently real—which requires it to destroy anyone in on the original sham.

To be accepted by Wakeling or one of his lieutenants, PCs must make a total 3 point **Reassurance** spend and share a dangerous secret from one of their own past investigations.

**Connections:** any academic (p. 26)

**Document Reference:** 4

### Gentleman's Club

#### THE KINGSPORT YACHT CLUB

**Apparent Nature:** The Kingsport Yacht Club is a private men's club located near the piers of that haunted city of the Miskatonic region. Wealthy patrician males gather here for private conversation, quality liquor, and to retrieve and smoke prized cigars stored in the club's superb walk-in humidor. Priding itself on exclusivity, the club does not admit women, Jews, ethnics, or non-whites. It espouses no overt ideology, other than the rights of the privileged to sedately enjoy the

perquisites of their stations in life.

The Yacht Club was founded in 1870 by the shipping magnate Oren Gardiner, patriarch of its leading family. The Gardiners acquired their wealth first as fishermen, then expanded their holdings into a small maritime empire. Oren belonged to the fourth generation of wealthy Gardiners. His grandson Oliver is president emeritus of the club today.

Yacht ownership is a plus but not a prerequisite. To be admitted, one must be of Credit Rating 5+, have no untoward incidents in one's biography, and gain the sponsorship of a current member, usually through a 2-3 point **Flattery** spend. Great embarrassment attends the sponsor of a candidate who is found unsuitable. By tradition, he resigns for failing to withdraw the nomination in time. When evaluating past indiscretions which might otherwise disqualify a candidate, extremely high Credit Ratings and advantageous social connections are taken into account. As is only right and proper!

**Sinister:** The Gardiners have been cultists of Dagon since they first went to sea. Rites to this god and other Old Ones are covertly held by Kingsport residents of all social strata throughout the year. It is the Gardiner patriarch's duty to keep these activities safe from prying outside eyes. Oliver Gardiner uses his private offices at the Yacht Club as his base of operations for cult activities. His hidden safe bulges with ledgers detailing unholy births, human sacrifices, and awful summonings, dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Of Yacht Club members, only those related to him by blood are aware of his dark side. Without Gardiner blood, induction into this inner circle is simply impossible.

**Stalwart:** The Gardiners have long been aware of Kingsport's status as a center of ineradicable cult activity. They work to suppress it to the maximum

degree possible without tempting the federal government to raze it, as it did Innsmouth. That would be bad for business, not to mention catastrophic for the vast majority of Kingsport residents who are ordinary, sane individuals completely ignorant of the town's strange history. Oliver's office at the Yacht Club is the repository of the family archive, and the spot from which he manages the city's delicate balance.

To win his confidence, PCs must demonstrate that they are neither cultists, nor blundering crusaders who might bring down the government's heavy-handed wrath. This requires a spend of a total of 6 points from the following abilities, possibly by multiple characters: **Law, Occult, Credit Rating 6+, Reassurance**. At least 2 of the points must come from the latter source. Any show of **Cop Talk** or **Bureaucracy** cancels 2 points of expenditure.

**Connections:** Accountant (p. 29), Doctor (p. 31), Lawyer (p. 31), Magnate (p. 36)

**Document Reference:** 1

### Ethnic Association

#### BROTHERHOOD OF THE RED SASH

**Apparent Nature:** Atop a third floor walk-up in a large metropolitan center the visitor finds the musty office suite and meeting room of the Brotherhood of the Red Sash. Only this title, painted on the office window, is in the English alphabet. All other signage appears in Cyrillic. **Languages (Russian), (Hungarian), (Serbian)**, or another Balkan tongue recognize it as an obscure tongue with tangled Balkan roots.

The Brotherhood of the Red Sash is an association where members of the city's Tuzlo-Ugric community gather. Even in its Balkan homeland this tiny ethnic group shelters behind a cloak of

obscurity. Without a spend, **History** yields only a vague recollection of a possibly apocryphal group of this name. On a 1-point spend, the PC knows them as a formerly nomadic people converted to Christianity in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by the warrior-priest St. Zoran. On a 2-point spend the character is familiar with Dragoslav Kralj's *Chronicles of the Red Sash*, the only detailed text devoted to the Tuzlo-Ugrics. He remembers that the Red Sash was a symbol of a Templar-like order of knightly monks founded by St. Zoran to fight heathens and backsliders.

Today's Brotherhood functions as a simple support network for compatriots. Members of the community meet, drink strong tea, argue old-country politics, and raise funds for weddings, funerals, and other events. Its auxiliary, the Sisterhood of the Sash, cooks and bakes for all such affairs, secure in the belief that no outsider can prepare an acceptable cabbage roll.

The Brotherhood's presidency rotates through a coterie of community elders. A querulous and abundantly liver-spotted old man named Zdravko Ilic currently holds the title.

**Sinister:** A generation after its formation, St. Zoran's order was corrupted from within when it turned to the worship of Idh-Yaa, monstrosity from Xoth and mate to Cthulhu. By day, members of the Tuzlo-Ugric community act as normal, hard-working immigrants. By night, they celebrate Idh-Yaa's orgiastic rituals of perverse fertility. They believe these to be central to their personal prosperity. They have survived centuries of bloody Balkan history by keeping their activities secret from prying eyes. Now, however, with signs of Cthulhu's rising everywhere, Ilic prepares his people to step out from the shadows and seize the fruits of conquest their purulent goddess has long promised them.

**Stalwart:** The backsliders and heathens St. Zoran organized his templars to fight were the worshipers of the Old Ones, including foul Idh-Yaa. In the new country, the brotherhood has lost much of its fervor, becoming the community support group described under "apparent nature." But Ilic and a few of the old men still remember the ancient chants and charms, and may be able to lend mystical support to the investigators' efforts to destroy the supernatural menaces hinted at in the Armitage Files.

**Connections:** Delivery Man (p. 43), Shopkeeper (p. 40), Factory Worker (p. 44); change to Balkan names and Tuzlo-Ugric ethnic background.

**Document Reference:** 10

## Esoteric Society

### INTERNATIONAL LOGOSPHERIC UNION

**Apparent Nature:** The International Logospheric Union is a worldwide educational organization dedicated to the study and promotion of the works of the late Finnish mystic Jukka Lavi. Best known for the 1875 book *Logos Throughout the Ages*, Lavi argued that all religious and mystical beliefs were poorly understood articulations of a single fundamental truth. The effort to find the secret underlying resonance uniting all human faiths was, in Lavi's formulation, both a philosophy and a science. He dubbed this field Logospherics. Immensely popular at the turn of the century, Lavian philosophy is now remembered more as an influence on other movements than as a vibrant, growing discipline. Still, small chapters of fervent believers, many of them elderly, are dotted throughout the industrialized world.

One such local chapter is headed by snowy-haired autodidact Bernard Petrovich. Having studied at the feet of the master himself, Bernard ferociously

ensures his students' logospheric orthodoxy. Most of them are elderly ladies who spend as much time talking about their medical ailments, and those of their cats, as they do the works of Jukka Lavi. Petrovich's drafty old house provides a social circle for them, one allowing them to look back fondly on the years when they were young and vital and forever on the brink of universal truth.

**Sinister:** Logospheric disciplines did uncover the ultimate truth of the universe—that it is a meaningless farrago of physical interactions, overseen by a blind idiot god. Without resort to traditional spells, masters of Logospherics were able to stare into the writhing faces of the Old Ones. They learned, as a matter more of intuition than active intent, an array of minor summoning and binding spells.

(This may be true only of Petrovich's chapter, or of the entire movement, as your storyline requires.)

As they lapse into senility, Petrovich and his circle now summon minor Mythos entities while they slumber. After meeting them, investigators may find themselves the targets of byakhee or star vampires.

**Stalwart:** Logospheric inquiry revealed to Union members the terrifying existence of Azazoth and the other Old Ones. Some leading members went insane, but others, including Lavi, resolved to spend the rest of their lives closing the gate they had so foolishly opened. They rewrote the Lavian texts, filling them with high-flown mystical nonsense and suppressing the originals. Most chapters now follow the debased, self-flattering philosophy Lavi left to cover up his real discoveries. Petrovich and his old ladies are among the few still alive who know the real history. They swore an oath to disrupt and misguide any subsequent philosophical movements who might stumble onto

the terrible truth. Now in their dotage, they seek a new generation of stalwarts to guard access to the Logosphere.

**Connections:** Anthropologist (p. 24), Alienist (p. 30), Socialite (p. 35)

**Document Reference:** 6, 7

### Gangs

#### THE FUSCHACK-DONLAND GANG

**Apparent Nature:** Tommy gun-wielding bank robbers Russell Fuschack and Jim Donland have been tearing through the dustbowl for over eighteen months, G-Men nipping at their heels. Accompanied by a rotating cast of brothers, cousins and the occasional hellion girlfriend, their daring (if not wildly lucrative) bank raids have made them folk heroes to tabloid readers across the land.

Russ Fuschack wraps a love of riotous mayhem within the aw shucks demeanor of a dispossessed country boy. His older partner Jim Donland, hardened by a long stay in the Mississippi State Penitentiary (a.k.a. Parchman Farm) fortifies himself on a seething hatred of authority.

**Sinister:** The uneducated, superstitious Fuschack, unbeknown to his accomplices, takes secret advice from a carnival fortune teller. He never picks a target without first getting her approval, often supplied via telephone. The fortune teller uses the gang to work a Mythos ritual. She plots the banks' location on a map, choosing those that draw a mystic pattern across the great Midwest. Each time the gang violently spills blood during a robbery, another point on the diagram is filled in. When complete, the area within the pattern will become a locus of heightened Mythos activity.

**Stalwart:** Fuschack, steeped in the



steely rationalism of the radical labor movement, doesn't believe in the supernatural—until an ill-advised choice of hideout brings his gang into contact with migrant fruit-picking cultists and their resident Son of Yog-Sothoth. After the creature kills his brother, Lewis, Fuschack may, on a suitable Streetwise spend, lend the services of his gang to the investigators' cult-busting plans.

**Connections:** Bar Girl (p. 49),

Bartender (p. 50), Fortune Teller (p. 53)

**Document Reference:** 4

#### THE MARCUZZO CRIME FAMILY

**Apparent Nature:** Although gang patriarch Elio Marcuzzo claims that he and his confederates are honest businessmen who maintain a benevolent association for their fellow Italian immigrants, this is more a transparent dodge than a true false front.

**Sinister:** Elio Marcuzzo founded and runs a criminal organization dominant in the Little Italy neighborhood of a large American city. Before Prohibition, his men specialized in extortion activities, also known as “the Black Hand.” When alcohol was outlawed, he became a beer baron. After repeal in 1933, his operations sustained a major blow. It owes its subsequent partial recovery to new ventures into gambling and prostitution.

The beefy, stolid Marcuzzo barks orders to his lieutenants: younger brothers Domenico and Libero, and brothers-in-law Vittorio Marchese and Massimo Bragana. As first generation gangsters, the Marcuzzos are close-knit and highly disciplined. Battles within the family are unheard of, though they occasionally skirmish with rival Irish, Jewish and Chinese gangsters. With the collapse of the bootlegging racket, most gangs have retreated to their own neighborhoods.

Law enforcement of the 1930s deems infiltration of ethnic gangs next to impossible. To join the Marcuzzo family, one must be of Sicilian extraction. Marcuzzo checks with relatives in the old country to verify the claimed family ties. To even get to that stage, one must be vouched for by a current mob insider: this probably requires expenditures of both **Flattery** and **Streetwise**. Then the PC must prove himself by committing (or convincingly staging) a violent felony, as ordered by Marcuzzo.

Marcuzzo believes in the evil eye and other potent superstitions of the Sicilian hills. Although he has nothing to do with the occult, a case’s primary antagonist may lay a trail of red herrings leading investigators into confrontation with him.

**Stalwart:** As above, except that Marcuzzo has noticed the activities of cultists or other Mythos enemies

operating on his turf. He senses in his bones that they’re dangerous and bad for business—and the sort of trouble best left to experts. He cooperates with **Streetwise** investigators, perhaps even drawing them into this phase of the ongoing Armitage mystery.

**Connections:** any Hardboiled character

**Document Reference:** 5

### Business Association

#### MILLBROOK BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

**Apparent Nature:** The urban neighborhood of Millbrook, located in any large or medium-sized city, has been hit hard by the Depression. Squatters occupy its boarded-up buildings. Swarthy criminals roam its night time streets. The area’s last few beleaguered shopkeepers and professionals have gathered together to form a neighborhood watch, organize volunteer improvement projects, and to encourage community support of local businesses. Heading the M.B.I.A. is the earnest, almost preacherly dentist Brendan Brophy, who speaks in Dale Carnegie-style inspirational maxims.

**Sinister:** Brophy’s neighborhood watch began as an admirable self-protection effort but has descended into vigilantism. They used to simply run off local undesirables. When this failed to stem the tide, they took to capturing them and turning them over to an acquaintance of Brophy’s. This peculiar fellow, Leon Godtland, ensures that they are never seen again. The stern-faced Godtland is a sorcerer and worshiper of Ghatanathoa, born in medieval Sweden. He kills Brophy’s kidnap victims and distills their blood into an alchemical powder which he uses for various purposes. Chief among these is the maintenance of his preternatural longevity.

**Stalwart:** Among the squatters of Millbrook lurk a strange group of waxy-featured men who prey on derelicts and honest passersby alike, dragging them off so that they are never seen again. Originally ordinary men of a rational age, the M.B.I.A. membership have become self-taught foes of the paranormal. They’ve caught and dissected several of these wax men, finding only rudimentary organs and circulatory systems beneath their unliving skins. These are homonculi animated by the sorcerer Leon Godtland (as described above), who do his dirty work, capturing victims to distill into alchemical blood powder.

**Connections:** Doctor (p. 31), Lawyer (p. 31), Shopkeeper (p. 40)

**Document Reference:** 7

### Hobbyist Organization

#### NEW ENGLAND LEAGUE OF AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

**Apparent Nature:** The New England League Of Amateur Astronomers (N.E.L.A.A.) is a club uniting stargazing hobbyists from the greater Miskatonic river basin. They meet on a monthly basis, organize occasional field trips, issue a newsletter, and raise funds with a Christmas social. Hard times have cut the organization’s membership in half; it now numbers less than twenty-five.

Full membership, including newsletter and voting privileges, costs two dollars per year. Auxiliary membership, allowing non-voting participation in meetings and social attendance, costs fifty cents. Applicants are not tested on their Astronomy ability on entry, but investigators posing as enthusiasts will give themselves away without a 1-point **Astronomy** spend at the first discussion. A 2-point spend earns the awe of amateur members due to a mastery of the field.

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The group leader is a folksy, balding man named Thomas Ongine, who entertains at N.E.L.A.A. socials by strumming traditional Appalachian songs on a battered guitar.

**Sinister:** Ongine is a cultist using the league's unwitting amateurs to help him track the progress of a constellation of distant, unmapped stars. He uses their data to plot ideal times for rituals. With this unwitting assistance, Thomas prepares himself and his flock of inbred

relatives for the time when the stars are right.

**Stalwart:** Ongine is a dedicated anti-cultist using the league's oblivious amateurs to aid him in tracking the progress of a constellation of distant, unmapped stars. He uses their data to predict likely times for occult rituals, which he and his family, following a multi-century tradition, disrupt with torch and pitchfork. Ongine fearfully plots the coming conjunction of

stars, knowing it heralds a worldwide eruption of enemy activity. Unwilling to trust any but his kinfolk, Ongine must be the subject of a **Reassurance** spend before he treats the investigators as anything other than misguided interlopers.

**Connections:** Astronomer (p. 26), Local Historian (p. 37), Rural Sheriff (p. 32)

**Document Reference:** 2

## Amateur Press Association

### THE NIGHTINGALE

**Apparent Nature:** This home-printed amateur magazine is published irregularly by editor Horace St. Johns. Available by subscription only, its current circulation approaches 90. Almost all of its subscribers are past or current contributors. Each issue offers an unpredictable melange of subject matters, including science, literature, history and politics of a modestly conservative bent. By far the most common topic is the amateur journalism movement itself. St. Johns and his fellow contributors write for a wide variety of other home-produced journals. All are members of the Society Of Amateur Journalists, participating in debates on the pages of its self-named house journal. They also correspond voluminously with one another, forming the nucleus of a community sustained by postal contact. Together, at the dawn of the mass communications era, their venture prefigures the dynamic of the Internet.

From his writings, Horace St. Johns appears to be an intellectually precocious self-taught scholar prone to a slightly hectoring tone. His letters to friends reveal his friendly, informal side. *The Nightingale* bears an Arkham postmark.

To join St. Johns' circle, one need only contact him, pay his 5 cent per issue subscription price, and submit reasonably well-crafted articles to his magazine. The latter requires a 1-point spend of any Academic ability (other than Accounting or Cthulhu Mythos).

**Sinister:** St. Johns is never seen, only corresponded with, because he is a ghoul. He prints his magazine with a stolen press hidden in a disused crypt. At night he creeps into Arkham, breaking into houses to pilfer stamps, paper, and writing implements. He yearns to be fully human. His greatest dream is to be able to meet Dorothy Warren, a sympathetic female correspondent, face to face, and not have her withdraw from him in terrified disgust. Knowing that this will never happen, he toils away, maintaining his long-distance contacts and honing his prose style. Horace doesn't mean to be a threat to others. But sometimes people insist on stumbling across his lair. Then he has no choice but to kill and devour them. Worst of all, a couple of his postal friends tracked him down last month. Hot tears streamed from his pinprick eyes as he ground down their bloodied bones.

**Stalwart:** St. Johns is a sheltered young man kept at a remove from the world by his doting yet neurotic mother. Clara St. Johns fearfully interrupts any attempt he may make at direct interaction with outsiders, but grudgingly allows him his postal activities. Despite the close watch she keeps on him, he has stumbled into a Mythos mystery. Not knowing where to turn for help, he has seeded recent issues of *The Nightingale* with hints regarding the nature of his discovery. The investigators have found them—but so has a sinister figure who intends to find St. Johns and make dark use of him.

**Connections:** Local Historian (p. 37), Rural Sheriff (p. 32), Widow Woman (p. 42)

**Document Reference:** 8

## Political Party

### AMERICAN PRESERVATION LEAGUE

**Apparent Nature:** This small political party boasts a local membership of about twenty. Hundreds of associate members scattered throughout the country subscribe to its bulletins. They finance its operations with small donations.

The APL devotes itself to promoting its own quirky brand of isolationism. The desire to remain unentangled in world affairs, especially those of sybaritic, bloodstained Europe, is currently widespread. Its program of limiting immigration to the white race is likewise well within the mainstream. Other planks in its platform seem eccentric, such as its demand to devalue the currency, and to grant additional electoral college votes to states with racially homogeneous populations.

Associate membership is available for a \$1 donation. To join APL founder Fred Jahraus in his protests, leaflet drops and envelope stuffing marathons requires only the ability to spout his opinions back at him, (1-point **History** spend) coupled with a touch of **Flattery** (1-point spend.)

Jahraus is a dumpy, absent-minded man, apparently in his early thirties. He lives with his elderly mother and a large number of her former foster children, now grown up. They are all APL supporters.

**Sinister:** The bodies of Jahraus, his mother, and his unrelated siblings are all possessed by Lomarites. In the undocumented prehistoric era called the Hyerborean, the northern land of Lomar was inhabited by a race of prehuman beings. In place of technology, they developed sophisticated mental powers. When their long reign on earth came to an end, they ensured their survival by projecting their consciousnesses forward into their future—what for the

PCs is the present day. This imprecise process left Lomarites scattered through the world. Jahraus, as occupied by the Lomarite priest-count Y'dhoul, uses APL bulletins to collect others of his kind. The party's publications include what to the untrained eye are meaningless mandala-like graphic elements. To a Lomarite, they are symbols of home. Once one of Y'dhoul's people sees the symbol, he contacts Jahraus and joins his growing so-called "family." When Y'dhoul has gathered enough of his people to him, they will use their shattering mental powers to conquer a medium-sized city. To this end he has allied himself with various cultists. He regards them as easily manipulated allies, who can be disposed of when the time comes. Their possession of APL literature may make Jahraus a target of PC investigation.

**Stalwart:** Jahraus' xenophobia is rooted in his brush with half-human cultists during his tour of duty as a merchant marine. The encounter left him delusional: he believes that all immigrants are Mythos entities. In his fevered imaginings, they're executing a quiet invasion of America, the world's last bastion of natural humanity. Jahraus has infected the rest of his movement with apocalyptic paranoia. Though completely unstable, he has uncovered some useful information, which **Psychoanalysis** (used as an investigative ability) may reveal. Repeated sessions of successful Psychoanalysis (as a general ability) may restore Jahraus' Stability and convert him and his group to useful opponents of the Mythos threat.

**Connections:** Mechanic (p. 38), Old Salt (p. 46), Shopkeeper (p. 40)

**Document Reference:** 3



## Places

Each place is presented in two modes: neutral and sinister. Use neutral description for an ordinary place—or one whose horrors have yet to reveal themselves. Sinister descriptions are used whenever you want to crank up the unease. In some cases, you'll use them to generate false suspense, making a safe place seem momentarily dangerous by allowing it to reflect the players' fears for their characters. In some cases players may react with dismay to a neutral description, anticipating that you're planning to turn it on its head with a sudden eruption of horror. Certain common locations are given multiple sinister descriptions.

Descriptions assume a North American setting. With a few adjustments in terminology, they can also describe other places in the industrialized world.

### Army Base

**Neutral:** Sun streams over an expanse of gently rolling hills. Crisply painted wooden structures hunker amid their green slopes. On a parade ground in front of a well-groomed garrison structure, soldiers drill, moving sharply in response to a drill sergeant's rhythmic bellows.

**Sinister:** Clouds of brown dust billow across a windswept flatland, thrown up by the wheels of military vehicles. They obscure a collection of low-slung wooden buildings behind a wire fence. Shrieking metal sounds screech out as cyclopean armored vehicles lumber their way over a denuded hillside.

### Stock Footage

This chapter uses a conceit first used in *Shadows Over Filmland*, and adapted for use with Armitage Files.

Many groups find large sections of text read verbatim to be distancing, and tune out after a few lines. That said, this setting, with its roots in classic literature, is particularly well suited to brief, well-placed moments of prose description. To that end, we've divided up what in another game book might be sections of descriptive text meant for the GM alone into blocks of text we're calling "stock footage." Like the filmic equivalent, these are pieces of description ready to drop into a narrative context of your choosing. These can be used at appropriate moments in any of the scenarios provided in this book, or in cases of your own devising.

Accordingly, we've written much of the description in this chapter in the second person, so that it not only tells you, the Keeper, what sort of visual images to associate with it, but is packaged to allow you to convey these to the players. They are preceded by a brief descriptive tag, in boldface, so you can find them by quickly scanning this chapter when needed. Stock footage passages are broken up into short passages; unless your group is unusually hungry for canned text, avoid reading more than one of them at once. The more sparingly you use them, the more powerful they'll seem. Edit or paraphrase the stock footage passages as needed to fit the situation at hand.

Stock footage can also create the illusion that the group is on the right track in a closely prepared adventure. This can be useful for groups who crave a sense of strong direction. For groups who fear railroading, show your hand, telling them that the narrated passages float free from any pre-scripted storyline.

You may find it useful to prepare for scenarios of your own creation by writing sections of stock footage tailored to them. The group may or may not venture into the old mill; if they don't, you can always clip and save your old mill description for a later case.

Movie fans learn to recognize certain bits of overused stock footage. Unless you're intentionally trying to underline the unreality of your game setting, you'll want to avoid this effect, by ticking off the descriptions after using them for the first time. Otherwise you might earn an unintended laugh by reusing a memorable bit of prose.

Stock footage is another example of a GUMSHOE player-facing technique: it takes something normally reserved for the GM (in this case, background description) and turns it around to face the players.

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### Carnival

**Neutral:** Children cry out their delight as they charge down the main muddy drag of a traveling carnival. Astride the horses and mythical creatures of a churning merry-go-round, they giggle gleefully. They clutch candy apples, wave ice cream cones, and gesticulate with pink clumps of cotton candy. Broad-shouldered young men hurl baseballs at piles of cans, or pierce paper targets with BB gun pellets, proving themselves to their shyly blissful dates. Before a banner painted with the images of fierce jungle beasts, a snappily chanting barker invites the crowd, for the mere price of a nickel, to examine the carnival's collection of exotic animals.

**Sinister:** Suspicious, standoffish locals move hesitatingly between the stalls and rides of a flea-bitten carnival. Anxious mothers pull their children tight. Fathers fish in their pockets for the keys to their automobiles. An unblinking painted eye adorns the red tent of a fortune teller. The low weeping of a disappointed client can be heard from inside the closed but candlelit tent. Scantly-clad women parade about on the forestage of a hoochy-coochy show, their fleshy charms celebrated by a boater-wearing fast-talker. In the distant gloom, apart from the rest of the show, stands the freak show tent. A parade of painted deformities disports on its cloth banners, attracting onlookers afflicted with a taste for the grotesque.

### Cemetery

**Neutral:** Neat rows of well-cleaned tombstones line rolling, grassy hills. A whistling caretaker clips happily at a hedge, gently trimming its few encroaching branches.

**Sinister:** Blackened, lichen-encrusted burial stones lean at odd angles from the sun-hardened ground. Mottled blotches of bare ground infect the graveyard's



sea of dead brown grass. The cemetery occupies a bowl-shaped depression beneath a lonely ridge. Moonlight whitens the tombstones; they jut up like a jaw full of broken teeth.

### Crematorium

**Neutral:** Clay shingles adorn the roofs of a pleasingly rectangular building. Well-scrubbed walls of sandy-colored brick soothe the eye. Only a single smokestack, discreetly recessed at one

end of the structure, alerts the observer to the structure's true purpose.

**Sinister:** A crooked brick smokestack casts a jagged shadow across an unpaved parking lot. Birch trees, besmirched by a black dusting of soot shrink back from its cloudy plumes. Grimy columns support a roof shadowing an inner courtyard. Stained glass windows depict the ancient suffering of warrior saints, consigned to cleansing fire by brutish pagan kings.

### Curio Shop

**Neutral:** Gingerbread treatments drip from the eaves of a tiny shop. Antiques and curiosities, from the desirable to the absurd, crowd its storefront window. Among its treasures are jewels, souvenirs, statuettes, old tools, Indian artifacts, pieces of a weather vane, and a plaster cast of a Roman bust. The shopkeeper beckons you inside, to a tiny room jammed with similar items. The room smells like a combination of mothballs and mint.

**Sinister:** Grinning clown faces leer out at you from the window of a curio shop. The display includes figurines, toys, statues, and paintings, all seen through a slightly distorted sheet of glass. Its buckled metal frames suggest that it was heated but not destroyed in some past fire. The door frame, likewise bent, resists your attempts to enter. When you finally open it, you dislodge long strings of dusty cobweb.

### Doctor's Office

**Neutral:** A soothing phalanx of degrees and diplomas musters itself on wallpapered office walls. A fine leather examining couch stretches out invitingly, not far from the doctor's oak desk, reassuring in its solidity. The chrome finish on a set of scales gleams with modern optimism.

**Sinister:** A faint note of formaldehyde mingles with the overpowering odor of antiseptic. Cold seeps up into your feet from white tile floors. The drawers of an ebony-colored instrument chair sit slightly ajar, allowing a glimpse of dull metallic instruments within. Staring down at you from the walls are the dour portraits of past medical worthies. Their eyes bore into you, as if detecting the shameful corruptions of your flesh.

### Factory

**Neutral:** The percussion of automated

machinery bangs and clanks from the interior of a three-story brick structure. Large sets of multi-paned windows run across each face of the building, allowing in generous helpings of light and air. At sidewalk level, a row of half-windows peeks into a basement level, used for storage. A water tower rises on wooden stilts from the factory roof, the name of the establishment painted in neat, high yellow letters across it. Behind the structure, the first floor extends onto a platform to create a loading dock for waiting trucks.

**Sinister:** Triple smokestacks chug from the side of a soot-caked brick building. The groans and hisses of thundering machinery fill the unclean air. As you approach it, vibrations from the factory rise up through the soles of your shoes to rattle your bones. Hunched workers, their faces spattered with machine oil, mill disconsolately about the employee's entrance, smoking cigarettes to the butts. They gaze at you, eyes narrowed in distrust. Maybe they've pegged you as bosses, skulking out from head office to announce the long-foretold demise of their hard-kept jobs.

### Farm

**Neutral:** A stout brick farmhouse sits aside a meandering gravel lane way. Behind it stands a barn, its wooden walls painted red. A feed silo rises from its freshly shingled roof. In the field beyond grazes a modest herd of cows. A healthy-sized dog, mostly retriever with perhaps a hint of German shepherd, comes bounding out of the barn. It stops, fixes you in its gaze, and deems you fit to enter the property. It eases toward you, tongue lolling out its mouth, barking happily.

**Sinister:** Weathered gray wood covers a barn, farmhouse, and shed. Stunted stalks of corn lean drunkenly from dead, dry ground. Wind whistles through holes in the wall of a dilapidated barn. A monstrous pig snuffles through a trough

of rotting, unidentifiable food. For a moment you catch yourself thinking that you've spotted a human fingernail amid its dinner, though it's probably just a chunk of strangely shaped potato peel. Yeah, that's probably it. Potato peel.

### Hospital

**Neutral:** A white-columned portico welcomes patients and visitors into a classically proportioned structure. Nurses bustle efficiently up and down its marble steps. Inside, their white heels confidently clack across the hospital's polished tile flooring. They sweep swaddled babes through its maternity ward, or wheel snoozing, elderly patients to a cozy solarium.

**Sinister:** Stone saints gaze dolorously down from their precarious perches on the hospital's gothic facade. A recent downpour has left weeping raindrops drying on their faces. Inside, a rattle of trays and instruments echoes through cathedral-like hallways. Muffled cries emanate from the emergency ward. A tall, hawk-faced nurse scolds a patient for daring to leave the confines of his room.

### Lecture Hall

**Neutral:** Curved tiers of wooden seats ring halfway around a marble dais, which supports an oaken lectern. The university's crest forms a protective shield around the lectern's base. Behind it hangs a series of blackboards, covered with the powdered chalk of a hundred past lectures.

**Sinister:** A stage rises like a wooden behemoth from the end of a cavernous hall. Battered chairs, bolted to the floor, sit beneath it, row upon regimented row. Heavy woven curtains, their hue a sickly puce, drape across the stage, absorbing any untoward sound. Thick-bladed ceiling fans dangle from the rafters, wobbling reluctantly.

### Library

**Neutral:** New metal shelves, painted a staunchly neutral shade of blue-gray, house row upon neat row of leather-bound books. Clear labels, painted in a smooth and steady hand, direct you easily to your desired section. Behind a marble arch, decorated with sculpted Art Nouveau figures of the seven muses, waits the rare books section. There the shelves are of exquisitely lacquered wood, protected from light and dust by panes of lucent glass.

**Sinister:** The acid stench of dying paper rushes through your nostrils and settles high in the back of your throat. Bookshelves teeter like old gravestones, struggling to remain upright on the library's worn and bumpy carpeting. Moldering volumes creep suicidally to the edges of their shelves. A low chewing sound rustles from the stacks, as some hungry worm or rat enthusiastically makes its way through a book's binding.

### Mansion

**Neutral:** A thirty-room manor ostentatiously occupies a multi-acre estate. Baroque-style gardens stretch out in front of it; behind lies a dense forest. Your group's resident architectural expert notes that the manor is built around a sixteen-room three-story structure constructed sometime in the 1840s. Two additional wings have recently extended this core structure on both sides. Outbuildings have been attached to each, adding guest lodges and a sheltered garden area.

**Sinister:** A slate-faced edifice in the High Victorian style emerges from a darkened wood. Triple spires, each bearing a gabled window, pull the eye upwards. Through topiary trimming, the estate's trees have transformed into frozen, rampant creatures. As you approach, lights in the windows flicker on and off, as if a legion of mischievous

children have conspired to play a peculiar, coordinated game.

### Nightclub, Swank

**Neutral:** A supper club dance orchestra led by a baton-swinging bandleader plays light, lilting music. Elegantly dressed couples sway coolly together on the dance floor. Multi-tiered chandeliers hang from the white ceiling, each crystal pendant refracting glittering light across the club's egg-shell walls. A stray strand from a marabou feather floats from the ruff of a chic woman's gown, finally landing at the base of a champagne flute.

**Sinister:** Gray-haired revelers shuffle in mummified rhythms to the outdated syncopations of a tuxedoed dance orchestra. Colored lights queasily illuminate the powdered faces of society matrons. An overstuffed business magnate erupts into a coughing fit and is led back to his table on the arm of a stony faced waiter. Heavy rains lash the nightclub's skylight, pounding a hostile counter-rhythm to the band's waltzes and fox trots.

### Nightclub, Sleazy

**Neutral:** A tuxedo-clad jazz man wails on his saxophone as the pulsing swells of hot swing music reach a thrilling crescendo. The ecstatic crowd, clad in risqué finery, clears a circular space in the middle of the floor, allowing a sweat-soaked couple to complete an ever more athletic series of jitterbug moves. Waves of heat radiate from the assembled bodies. The smell of spilled wine and beer rises into the air to form an exhilarating vapor.

**Sinister:** Dispirited jazz men shuffle wearily offstage, to be replaced by a ventriloquist act. The puppeteer is drunk and flush-faced. His goggle-eyed wooden sidekick spits out a series of insults, drenched in the arsenic of his master's self-loathing. Along the bar

cold-eyed men in cheap suits linger, the outlines of their pistols and shoulder holsters all too clear through the thin fabric of their jackets. They scan the room with the boredom of predators, as if waiting for an excuse to unleash their killing instincts.

### Observatory

**Neutral:** A tower-like structure, topped by a golden dome, sits atop a tree-lined hill. A window in its side opens to reveal a gigantic telescope. Accompanied by a low whirl of electrical motors, it glides smoothly into place, its single orb-like eye ready to catalogue the heavens. As dusk turns to night behind it, the stars reveal themselves, eager to be counted in the log book of human knowledge.

**Sinister:** Atop a naked crag sits a stone tower terminating in a cyclopean dome. Like a nictitating eyelid, a slash opens in the dome. From this thrusts a steel cylinder housing a mammoth lens. Its unthinking eye stands ready to part the veils of heaven. In its metallic impassivity, its ignorance of consequence, it awakens in you a peculiar anxiety—as if there are stars better left unseen, whether by the human eye, or by its unliving surrogates.

### Parlor

**Neutral:** Overstuffed sofas and chairs huddle cozily together in a brightly appointed parlor. Ceramic cherubs gather gaily on its mantle, as if engaged in a session of heavenly gossip. A grandfather clock anchors the room, each easy swing of its brass pendulum exuding continuity.

**Sinister:** Spindly pieces of antique furniture maintain a standoffish distance from one another in a sparsely drafty parlor. The mantle is riddled with the squiggled grooves left behind by boring insects. Above it hangs an engraved print depicting a ghostly figure rising from a grave, his naked torso shining with the

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light of the underworld. (**Art History** identifies this as being by Gustav Doré. A 1-point spend names it as one of his illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.)

### Private Club

**Neutral:** Rich dark woods dominate the clubhouse interior. Deep leather-clad couches line the walls. Lush but well-worn throw rugs show the tread of a thousand slippers. Decades of pipe smoke have infused carpeting and furniture with the sharp, fruity aroma of expensive tobacco. An antique globe sits in a corner, the American continent turned assuredly outward.

**Sinister:** Though richly appointed, the club interior is surprisingly cramped, resembling the hold of an 18<sup>th</sup> century ship. A servant stands at attention by the sole, narrow window, as if to guard against attempts to open it. Paintings jostle to cover the wood paneling; those that are not portraits of forbidding club founders are still lives of fresh-killed game. These images of long-perished pheasants, rabbits, deer and songbirds, shown piled into bleeding heaps, are dulled by a yellowy layer of congealed cigar smoke.

### Sacrificial Ground

**Neutral:** A handwritten plaque installed by the local historical society identifies the ring of stones as a paleolithic worship site. The richness of the grass and absence of weeds points shows the attentions of a discreet landscaper. The rocks themselves are whitish sandstone, arranged in a pleasingly rough circle. A flock of sparrows lands to hop around them, pecking at their bases. Down the road, cars pull up to a roadside produce stand.

**Sinister:** In a marshy expanse of sodden ground, dark stones form a disrupted circle. Thick swamp brush, punctuated by toppled, rotten trees, surrounds this damp clearing. The surfaces of the



stones are jagged, crystalline, volcanic. Red wildflowers sprout inside the circle, their petals like spreading spots of blood. None, oddly, grow outside of it.

### Sanatorium

**Neutral:** A line of cottage-like structures stretches across a landscape of gardens and gazebos. Painters are at work, refreshing the white washes on their rustic plank wall finishes.

Only the presence of patients in wheel chairs, resting under canvas umbrellas, identifies the facility as anything other than a holiday resort. Inside the larger main structure, rooms and corridors alike are bright and airy. Bulletin boards line public spaces, decorated with colorful children's drawings.

**Sinister:** A seven-story edifice rises from a flat plain, its stuccoed surface the color of burnt milk. Thin gabled windows look out over the gated

grounds. Its slate roof darkens in the rain. Billows of dark smoke escape from massive twin chimneys. Inside, the building echoes with whispers. Row after row of metal-framed bed has been jammed into drafty, open rooms. An unending chorus of whispers and wheezes leaks from the room and into the corridors.

### Tenement

**Neutral:** A ramshackle apartment structure, wedged tightly in among others of its kind, overlooks the city's waterfront. Children play handball against its concrete stoop. Laundry hangs on lines strung from its windows, across its fire escapes and treacherous balconies. Once inside, a waft of hot, steamy air assails you, smelling of boiled vegetables and baked bread.

**Sinister:** A decaying apartment building molders between a vacant lot, piled high with demolition rubble, and a barren, treeless park. Sullen youths hold sway on its front stoop. With growled threats, they shoo away smaller children. An ill-fed rat emerges from an exhaust pipe, then scuttles fearfully down the basement steps. Peeling wallpaper curls from the walls of the building's narrow interior corridors. The muffled shouts of a domestic row

reverberate down creaky wooden stairs.

### Town, Rural

**Neutral:** A general store, a gas station, a bank and a church greet each other at the town's main intersection. A collection of modest houses line the main drag and a few intersecting streets. Picket fences, some more recently white-washed than others, separate dry but well-weeded lawns. As you arrive, a pickup truck filled with produce arrives at the general store. Two overall-clad men, who resemble one another enough to be brothers, jump down from the truck's cab. In unison, they tip their straw hats to you, then get about the work of hauling bushels into the store.

**Sinister:** Rings of dark wooden houses, carelessly erected on the slopes of a crater-like depression, make up this ramshackle town. Its inhabitants display all the signs of communal degradation. No fencing separates one property from the next. The inhabitants of the rickety homes seem to share a single, trash-strewn property. Paths have been beaten down through high weeds, leading between crumbling porches. Dull-eyed toddlers sit, listless and unattended, on patches of dirt in front

of the houses. They stare at you, a feral light in their eyes.

### Town, Seaside

**Neutral:** Freshly whitewashed shacks and bungalows cluster close together. Rows of red wooden docks attach like barnacles to a rocky shelf of a shoreline. Along the piers, fishing vessels rock gently in their moorings. Higher up on the stony cove perch the multi-story, brick-walled homes of the better-heeled. Brisk air blows through the town, bearing a salty tang. Overhead, gulls circle observantly, waiting to feast on the scraps of fish that will come when the men from the boats unload their catches.

**Sinister:** A disorganized scattering of shacks, warehouses, and low-slung homes sprawls across a stony sea wall. Slippery, moss-covered steps lead down to a pebbled beach, where the boats of an ill-kept fishing fleet shelter against ocean storms. A pair of steepled churches sits aloof from the rest of the town, the drooping tilts of their spires attesting to apparent disuse. As your presence becomes known, shutters bang shut and curtains are swiftly drawn. A few rheumy eyes blink out from behind mold-colored drapery.



## Tomes and Magic

This chapter contains descriptions of a number of tomes, spells, and artifacts mentioned in the Armitage files. The items referred to in the strange texts may be genuine Mythos articles, outright fakes, or something in between. Like the other story elements presented in this book, you decide which version of any item to use depending on your narrative needs of the moment.

Each item is presented using the following format:

### Name Of Item

**Type:** Usually a tome, sometimes an artifact.

**Physical Properties:** This entry describes the item in its default condition.

**Supposed History:** An account of the item's origin and provenance, along with its appearances in historical references, if any. These facts and rumors can be uncovered with **History**, **Occult**, and/or **Library Use**. If you decide that this is a wholly fabricated item, a 1- or 2-point spend of History or Occult finds crucial inaccuracies calling the veracity of these facts into severe question.

**Major Item:** Describes the item if it is a genuine article which provides great insight into the Mythos, or grants true eldritch powers. It could serve as a core clue, moving Investigators who possess it through one layer of mysteries into an even deeper threat.

**Minor Item:** The item is a genuine article either of Mythos or general occult significance, but does not fully

### Multiple Versions, Multiple Truths

In some cases you might want to include multiple versions of the same item in a storyline. The Investigators might stumble across a minor version of a tome, most likely the full version with crucial pages missing. Seeking a complete edition, they contact a shady bibliophile, who attempts to swindle them by selling a fabricated copy. While making this connection, they're followed by other cultists, seeking to find and suppress what they also falsely believe to be a genuine edition. After clashing with these new enemies, the Investigators track them to their lair, where they find an authentic and pristine copy. Interrogating captured cultists, they discover that they wanted to keep its contents to themselves—hence their risk-taking when they thought a second full copy had surfaced.

live up to the suggestive implications of the Armitage documents. The Investigators may wish to collect it for their organization's library. It might provide a flavor clue leading to a core clue. It does not grant Cthulhu Mythos knowledge or independently verifiable efficacious magic. Certain impressionable souls might believe that it grants them luck or vague insight, but they are most likely projecting their own hopes and fears onto it, or using it as a locus for their own innate psychic abilities.

**Fraudulent:** The item is either a fake or, in rare cases, an innocent, non-esoteric object mistakenly believed to contain occult information or properties.

**Document Reference:** Tells you which of the Armitage Files mentions the tome.

### The Basel Codex

**Type:** Tome

**Physical Properties:** 112 pages of

folded paper, hand-scribed on *huun* (Mesoamerican paper made from the inner bark of the wild fig tree); comprises series of illustrations intermixed with Mayan script.

**Supposed History:** During the conquest hundreds of Mayan texts were consigned to the flame by Catholic priests. Only a few survived, none more controversial than the Basel Codex, named after the European city where it briefly resurfaced in 1889. Six facsimile pages were printed in the German academic journal *Neue Archäologie* two years later. These were condemned as fabrications, on the ground that they bore only superficial resemblance to the contents of authentic codices held at Dresden, Madrid, and elsewhere.

The codex presents, in a series of linked narrative panels not unlike comic strips, an unusual creation myth. It chronicles the arrival on Earth of a pre-human civilization. The cylindrical, tentacled creatures' methods of worship are shown, as are their efforts to breed apes into a slave race. The apes transform into humans,

kill off their cylindrical masters, and resume a corrupt form of the original worship. The concluding panels contain a peculiar hint of prophecy, indicating that, as history runs according to vast, repetitive cycles, these past events will recur in the future. One dating system indicates that the pre-humans will come back to earth sometime between 1949 and 1961.

The codex was allegedly discovered by archaeologist Rainer Saxer, who bought it from an unnamed book dealer in the late 1870s. After his 1893 arrest for sexually assaulting his elderly landlady, Saxer was committed to an asylum. His library and papers, including the codex, appear to have been swindled out from under him during his commitment, perhaps by his uncle and ward, classics professor Werner Saxer. Rainer was murdered in 1895 by a fellow patient.

**Major Item:** Poring over the codex requires Languages (Mayan) and confers +1 Cthulhu Mythos and 3 dedicated pool points to spend on Anthropology, Archaeology, Occult, or Theology. It contains one to four spells.

**Minor Item:** Although it does seem to contain genuine Mythos content, the pictographic representations do not translate into useful knowledge. Poring over the codex with Languages (Mayan) imposes a potential 4-point Stability loss and confers 3 dedicated pool points for investigative spends related to the ancient Mayans.

**Fraudulent:** The codex was fabricated in 1887 by forger Clemens Driest at the behest of Werner Saxer. Saxer arranged for its discovery by his unstable nephew, the Mayan scholar Rainer Saxer. As planned, the younger Saxer went out on an academic limb, proclaiming its authenticity to skeptical colleagues. The severe mental stress he suffered as a result of their scornful reception drove him over the edge, allowing Werner to embezzle his nephew's inheritance and

sell off his belongings.

**Document Reference:** 4

### The Gainesville Cylinder

**Type:** Artifact

**Physical Properties:** A cylinder, seventeen and a half inches long, two and a half inches in diameter, made of an unknown metal alloy. Its surface reflects light with the sheen and brightness of silver; the metal is harder than titanium. Incised along its outer surface are nearly microscopic hieroglyphs of an unknown nature. (If this is not a fraudulent item, a 2-point **Languages (Sumerian)** spend finds similarities between this writing and cuneiform, as if both share an ancient, common root.) The cylinder is cool to the touch, becoming uncomfortably cold in hot weather.

**Supposed History:** The cylinder was excavated during stump-clearing work on a farm in Gainesville, Georgia in the early spring of 1919 by farmer and property owner Earl Flowers. In May of 1922, after reading *The Book Of the Damned*, a book by iconoclastic paranormal theorist Charles Fort (1874-1932), he corresponded with the author, describing the cylinder and enclosing a sketch. In 1927, shortly after Fort returned from a stint in London, Flowers made arrangements to come north to the writer's Bronx home to show him the cylinder. Fort never published an account of the item. It is mentioned in his notes, donated to the New York Public Library. He describes a meeting with Flowers but is uncharacteristically evasive in mentioning whether or not he personally examined the object. Two days later, Flowers was found stabbed to death in a wooded area near Union City, New Jersey. The cylinder, if it existed at all, was never recovered.

**Major Item:** This is a vessel created

by the Great Race to hold the minds of individuals temporarily unable or unwilling to occupy physical bodies. Each time a Yithian in its pure energy form occupied the cylinder, it left behind a resonance of its memories and knowledge.

Handling the object barehanded for a continuous hour adds 1 to your Cthulhu Mythos rating. For the next week, you experience a sense of grave unease while within a quarter mile of any member of an alien race.

Handling the object barehanded for a total of six or more hours over a one-month period adds 3 to your Cthulhu Mythos rating. The hairs on the back of your neck stand up when you are within half a mile of a member of an alien race. You gain a +1 bonus to all Firearms, Scuffling, or Weapons rolls against alien races.

Characters carrying the cylinder attract the attention of psychopathic and predatory individuals. At your discretion, thuggish secondary NPCs unrelated to the main mystery at hand stalk and attempt to rob or hurt the Investigator possessing it. (Earl Flowers was murdered in an otherwise unprovoked hobo attack brought about by this effect.)

**Minor Item:** This curious object was manufactured by the Great Race as a remote control for various pieces of technology. Anyone handling it suffers unusually vivid dreams for weeks afterward. These are ordinary dreams made many times more vivid and terrifying than usual. They include no Mythos content—unless the PC has for unrelated reasons already begun to dream his way through mind-blasting vistas.

As per the final paragraph of the major version, possession of the cylinder attracts the attention of predatory minds.

**Fraudulent:** Flowers' claims about the cylinder were false. On examination of the object with **Chemistry** it is shown to be ordinary iron covered with silver through an electroplating process. Flowers and a silversmith friend, Eurith Cousins, created it on their own in hopes that Charles Fort would publicize it, allowing them to then sell it to a museum.

**Document Reference:** 7

### Meditations On An Attic Figure By Emrys Dorian Wynn

**Type:** Tome

**Physical Properties:** Chapbook, published 1817, Glasgow, Scotland. 5 ½ x 3 ½ inches, 24 pages, cover bears woodcut of a Greek figurine. 60 copies printed, 11 copies extant.

**Supposed History:** Minor Welsh poet Emrys Dorian Wynn, a contemporary and sometime rival of John Keats, embarked on this exercise into lyric prose after purchasing a figurine of an Adonis-like deity in a London curio shop. In a mad, tumbling rush of words, Wynn describes a series of dreams or hallucinations he experienced after acquiring the statuette. His reveries end abruptly when a visiting Keats, distressed by the figurine, engages in an uncharacteristic act of vandalism and smashes it in Wynn's fireplace. The book concludes with a warning against "ancient intoxications." After publishing it, Wynn renounced poetry to become an Anglican vicar.

**Major Item:** The statuette was a lure left in the material plane by the lesser other god Gloom. These slowly drive their owners mad with dreams and hallucinations. Had Wynn's friend not smashed it, he would have eventually been drowned in his own bed. His

soul would have migrated to a temple beneath the Atlantic Ocean and been tormented by Gloom until its eventual obliteration. Having survived this attack, Wynn was able to record his crazed perceptions of Gloom's tomb and other Mythos events.

Poring over the chapbook grants +1 Cthulhu Mythos, +3 Hypnosis and 3 dedicated pool points to spend on Archaeology, Art History, Geology or Art (Poetry).

**Minor Item:** Although referred to in other minor works of Mythos scholarship as if it contains the material described in the previous entry, the published version of Wynn's chapbook refers only to his supposed dream interactions with classical deities. A dedicated peruser can read between the allusions to equate certain figures with their Mythos counterparts. Poseidon may be Gloom, for example. However, as a work of useful Mythos knowledge, Wynn's account is tantalizingly useless.

**Fraudulent:** Wynn's book may exist, but the copy found here is a Victorian forgery. Its text is made up of unpublished letters by and about the author. Included are excerpts from an enjoyable but esoterically uninformative anecdote about Keats' smashing of Wynn's statue.

**Document Reference:** 6

### The Modena Grimoire

**Type:** Tome

**Physical Properties:** Volume, written in Latin, first printed in 1768; reprinted in 1789. Three copies are known of the first edition; one, of the second. The first edition is 220 pages long, and bound in black leather, with fold-out maps and diagrams (missing in all but one of the known copies.) The second is 248 pages long, without the fold-outs, bound in red leather. Its text

omits portions of the previous editions and includes a chapter of new material.

**Supposed History:** In 1763, an individual calling himself Guillaume Ballena presented himself to officials of the University Of Modena, Italy as a mystical traveler from the far future. He claimed that his alchemical researches, conducted in 1930, had split him into two selves, one light and one dark. Both selves were cast temporarily into a nightmarish future, then washed backwards in time. The dark self chose to return to 1930 to commit an act of dire evil. It banished the light self to its distant past, causing Ballena to wash up on the banks of the River Po. Rejected as a madman by Modena's scholars, Ballena went on to make a living for himself as a soothsayer, healer and spy. In 1768, he composed and published his grimoire. Though largely a regurgitation of earlier mystical books, its account of Ballena's mystical twinning and experiences after the end of the world distinguish it from the rest of its genre.

**Major Item:** Poring over the first edition grants you +2 Cthulhu Mythos and +1 Occult. The second edition provides +1 Cthulhu Mythos and +1 Occult. When the character dies, you (the player) may specify that he is instead split into two selves—a more virtuous version of the original self, and a corrupt supernatural doppelganger. The new virtuous self appears to have miraculously regained a semblance of life, returning you to -11 Health and a state of consciousness. Your new self gains +4 Stability; you may alter your drive and pillars of sanity to fit this slightly altered persona. The doppelganger does not manifest immediately, but shows up within an adventure or two, perhaps as the primary antagonist of a scenario.

**Minor Item:** Poring over the first edition grants you +1 Occult and 3 dedicated pool points to use on Occult, History, or Theology.

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**Fraudulent:** Ballena and his books are the fictional creations of obscure 19<sup>th</sup> century gothic novelist Thomas Bellwood, believed by many naïve occultists to have actually existed. Several phony versions of his nonexistent grimoire have been fabricated by both Victorian and contemporary forgers and sold to gullible collectors.

**Document Reference:** 7

### The Noprhu-Ka Panel

**Type:** Artifact

**Physical Properties:** A five by sixteen foot limestone panel, dating from 14<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Egypt, featuring a relief carving of a priest sacrificing four captive slaves. In a peculiar oval image over the priest's head, a landscape of curious stylized forms is seen. The panel, including the plaster backing element keeping its broken segments in place, weighs nearly a ton.

**Supposed History: Archaeology** reveals the following: Excavated during a 1927 expedition to the jungles of West Africa, great scholarly controversy attends to this out-of-place artifact of Ancient Egypt. Believers in its authenticity identify the priest in this portrait as Noprhu-Ka, who led a rebellion against his pharaoh in the name of an alien deity. His followers fled to the possibly mythical city of G'harne, said to be located near the site of the 1927 expedition. They argue that this explains the presence of an Egyptian artifact far from its likely point of origin. The panel belongs to New York's Metropolitan Museum, which has elected not to display it, given the many credible attacks on its authenticity. On a 2-point **Archaeology** spend, a PC knows that the panel has been unaccountably missing from the Met's holdings at least since 1930, when curators last performed an inventory.

**Major Item:** Characters keeping a

### Time Gate

One of the articles listed in this section provides the future Henry Armitage with the ability to send his files backward in time, to be received by his old self. To do this, it must be an authentic major item. Since he receives it in the future, it might fall into his hands through the Investigators themselves, when they acquire it during their present-day adventures.

Choose an item that becomes important during your Armitage Files campaign. In addition to its specified qualities, it imparts the following spell:

#### Invocation Of Non-Euclidean Time

This spell, first perfected by the Great Race, unravels an object's mystic connection to linear time, binding it to a new, past era specified by the caster. Known in several forms, the version of the spell found here invokes Yog-Sothoth, master of gates. The chosen object seems to be consumed by ebony flame, but is in fact transliterated through time. It materializes in the past, in a specified place known to the caster. The spell offers no protection to the object when it appears in the past. A book that appears in a fireplace is destroyed, as is a piece of china that materializes on a mantle that doesn't exist during the chosen era. Plants and living creatures are destroyed by the spell, arriving in the past in perfect, lifeless condition. Animals complex enough to be successfully autopsied appear to have died of massive heart failure.

**Stability Test Difficulty:** 1, plus 1 for every decade into the past the object travels, plus 1 for every pound of the object's weight, plus 1 for every cubic foot occupied by the object. All conditions round up to the nearest increment, for a minimum Difficulty of 4.

**Cost:** 3 Stability

**Time:** The ritual takes eighteen hours to perform. It leaves the magician physically and mentally exhausted, and likely to fall into a deep twenty-four hour slumber. To remain conscious after performing the ritual takes a Difficulty 8 Health test, undertaken once per hour.

Giving the PCs the ability to send messages back through time raises temporal issues for your series, which are discussed on p. 12 of "Scenario Spines."

sustained watch on the panel under the influence of hashish find that, after an hour, the images in the oval start to move. (**Occult** reveals the need for the hashish.) Those who voluntarily remain transfixed on the images for several hours gain +1 to Cthulhu Mythos and gain 3 dedicated pool points for any Investigative or General ability used to understand or deal with ghouls, the Dreamlands, ancient Egypt, or Nyarlathotep.

**Minor Item:** The item is a genuine

historical anomaly, in that it depicts a worshiper of Nyarlathotep, and was carved in the west African city of G'harne by his disciples, in the Egyptian style. Anyone studying it for several days gains 3 dedicated pool points which can be spent on Archaeology, History, or Languages (Ancient Egyptian).

**Fraudulent:** As any 1-point Archaeology spend can attest, the panel is a clever but transparent forgery by a modern hand. On a 2-point spend, it appears to be the handiwork of

### Close Reading

If you find your group getting bogged down in the many options given them by the Armitage File documents, allow them to come across the following spell. It might be in one of the tomes described in this chapter, or elsewhere:

#### Philtre Of the Devouring Worm

This spell transforms any handwritten document on paper into an ingredient in an ingested potion. This process completely destroys the original document. The resulting concoction is a bitter, acrid liquid the color and consistency of black strap molasses.

The philtre can be consumed by anyone, including the caster. After half an hour of incapacitating nausea (reduced to fifteen minutes on a Difficulty 4 Health test), the user experiences a vivid hallucination from the point of view of the being who composed the document. The hallucination usually includes a core clue allowing the Investigators to move onto a new scene. Where the group has already gathered but not acted on or correctly interpreted one or more core clues, the hallucination may reiterate or reinforce the content of that clue or clues. The hallucination occurs quickly but from the user's subjective viewpoint may seem to encompass hours or even days of experience. On its conclusion the user vomits copiously and is incapacitated for an hour. For the next twelve hours, the Difficulty of all general ability tests increases by 1. (Halve both periods on a Difficulty 6 Health test.) Consuming a dose of the philtre costs 3 Stability. Repeated uses of a philtre brewed using the same document yields additional clues only if the Keeper deems it useful for pacing purposes to provide the group with new information.

**Stability Test Difficulty:** 4.

**Cost:** 3 Stability

**Time:** Four hours.

discredited Egyptian scholar Oswald Bevington, a rival to expedition leader Ernest Smalley. Presumably Bevington had the artifact planted to embarrass his despised colleague.

**Document Reference:** 6

### A Short History Of the Future by Wilton Bohleen

**Type:** Tome

**Physical Properties:** A typescript comprising 240 double-spaced pages of 8½ x 11" off-white paper, unbound, in a manila envelope. May also exist in a handwritten draft, most likely in

a series of four lined notebooks with cardstock covers.

**Supposed History:** Science fiction writer Wilton Bohleen, after a series of rejected submissions to Lewis Kearns, editor of the pulp publication *Stunning Science Tales*, swore to write a magnum opus. He envisioned the new work as so devastating that even the "cretinous, barely sapient" Kearns would be forced to acknowledge its genius. After a year of silence, an envelope arrived at the *Stunning Science Tales* office. It contained the novella *A Short History Of the Future*, under Bohleen's byline. Although the horrific narrative showed resemblances to Bohleen's previous style, this tale of survival, spanning the years from 1932

to 1951, rose to a level of terror he had never previously attempted. Written with an almost journalistic sense of detachment, it depicted an America devastated by attack from monstrous alien gods.

When Kearns rejected this submission—this time on the grounds that it was too terrifyingly drawn for his readership—Bohleen broke into his office and strangled him with a chain. During interviews with police, Bohleen claimed to have lived all the events described in his novella. When he was found hanged in his cell, police filed away his manuscript in their closed case file. It was reclaimed by Bohleen's widow and has since been read by several editors of pulp journals, all of whom describe themselves as shaken by the experience. Last year Mrs. Bohleen sold it to a private collector whose identity she refuses to reveal.

**Major Item:** This first person account of survival after the rise of R'lyeh grants +1 Cthulhu Mythos and 3 Preparedness to anyone poring over it. Detailed descriptions of rituals by the trates, dehumanized lackeys of the Old Ones, may allow the dedicated reader to reconstruct up to three spells.

**Minor Item:** The sole version of the manuscript has been apparently retyped—and, in the process, extensively bowdlerized. References to Mythos figures have been replaced by mentions of Sumerian deities and demons. Still, the reader is left with the impression that Bohleen somehow infused his wild tale of world destruction with a sense of documentary realism.

**Fraudulent:** Bohleen did kill Kearns, but the supposedly overwhelming contents of his final work are nothing but a warmed-over rewrite of H. G. Wells' *War Of the Worlds*, transposed to an American setting, and with supernatural enemies in place of Martians.

**Document Reference:** 10

### The Tears Of Azazoth,

#### Author Unknown

**Type:** Tome / Artifact

**Physical Properties:** Its covers are composed of an opaque black substance possessing the flexibility of onion skin paper. Marked in the center of the cover with a luminescent paint or ink is a mesmerizing, asymmetrical geometric pattern which is on some subliminal level disturbing to the eye. The pages themselves are pristine and white; the hand-inscribed writing appears fresh, almost as if its ink is still wet. The book has been described as being written in Latin, German, or English.

**Supposed History:** *The Tears Of Azazoth* is referenced in no known text. People who become aware of the Mythos simply *know* about it, without quite remembering the source of their information. Some believe it is a spontaneously generated physical realization of Azazoth's insane consciousness. It materializes to tempt

knowledge-seekers into irrevocable madness.

At any given time, either one or zero copies of this legendary book exist. The book's interior contents are malleable, containing whatever knowledge is most damaging to its discoverers in particular, and humankind in general, at the time of its manifestation. It erupts into this plane as an harbinger of foreboding, as the stars near the alignment required for R'lyeh's rise. The *Tears* may also appear when supernatural activity decreases time's linearity—for example, when The Invocation Of Non-Euclidean Time spell is extensively used. The *Tear* was last seen in the Miskatonic University Library in 1908. It has since been removed from the card catalogue. Head librarian/librarian emeritus Henry Armitage has concluded that it never existed. His colleagues are not so sure. (If it appears, it may contain copies of pages from the Armitage Files among its compendium of mind-shattering miscellanea.)

**Major Item:** Anyone who so much as briefly handles *The Tears Of Azazoth* faces a potential 3-point Stability loss.

Skimming it risks a 6-point loss. Poring over it risks a 9-point loss. It confers +3 Cthulhu Mythos and allows the reader to at any time gain a 6-point Health refresh, at a cost of 3 Stability and 1 Sanity.

The book is written in the native tongue of the first Investigator who attempts to read it.

**Minor Item:** The book contains gibberish which cannot be decoded by any means, along with a series of disturbing illustrations. No decipherable spells are included. Handling it risks a 2-point Stability loss; skimming it risks 4, poring over it risks 6. It confers +1 Cthulhu Mythos.

**Fraudulent:** The book does not exist; it is a shared delusion to which the Mythos-aware are collectively susceptible. Cunning cultists sometimes use its supposed existence as a trap to ensnare their enemies. They create trails of false clues to a supposed copy of the book, then shadow or ambush anyone who shows up hoping to find it.

**Document Reference:** 2, 3, 4, 5,



## Scenario Spines

This section presents a number of sample spines arising from the various documents, written to show the thought process involved in assembling them. To illustrate how you might improvise in response to PC actions, multiple spines are presented for the early documents. Spines from most documents are left as an exercise for the Keeper.

In practice, the spines you improvise won't be intelligible chunks of text, as they're given below. Because only you need to understand them, they'll consist of quickly jotted notes, if you write them down at all. Keepers who do use notes may find the Scenario Spine worksheet (see p. 22) a useful tool. For Armitage scenarios, you can leave the first entry blank, as the documents supply the basic scenario hook.

### Document 1 Sample

#### Spine A: The Corrupter

Document 1 references the cad Austin Kittrell, the racketeer Horace "Diamond" Walsh, and the organization the Kingsport Yachting Club. After preliminary research into all three, which in this document are obscurely described, the PCs choose to focus on Kittrell. You decide that this makes him your primary antagonist, albeit one capable of presenting an innocuous front at first. The sinister entry in the cad description portrays him as a sorcerer preying on the young and pure. The players also seem very fixated on the red box mentioned in the document, which does not correspond to an entry elsewhere in the book. You decide that he possesses

the Red Box of Leng, the use of which releases energies which will contribute to (in the Armitage future) the rise of the Old Ones. Kittrell is using it to store life energy stolen from the various rich young things in his social circle. This inspires an image of a horrific and climactic scene: the stolen souls of destroyed victims come out of the box to wreak indiscriminate havoc on everyone around—including the PCs. Backing up, you decide on a twist—Kittrell is involved with the mob, through Horace "Diamond" Walsh. In exchange for the money he needs to operate in his rarefied social circles, Kittrell acts as a mob hit man, using magic to execute Walsh's rivals. Although Walsh's role in the mystery may be far from innocent, for the purposes of this adventure you decide that he conforms to the innocuous entry in the racketeer description: he's an ordinary mobster with no occult connections beyond his association with Kittrell. You leave the role of the Kingsport Yachting Club open, if the PCs attempt to connect it to this mystery. If the PCs need relief or information, you'll use the stalwart version. If not, it conforms to its apparent nature. From these ideas you construct a provisional spine for the scenario:

- **What a Swell Party** (ominous seems innocuous): The PCs interact with Kittrell at a society soirée. They note his magnetic influence over several young swells, including peppy socialite Elsa Hower (p. 35; in her innocuous mode). Interpersonal abilities note something off about Kittrell, but nothing they can act on.

- **Husked** (something nasty): The PCs find the corpse of another young person they met at the party, Oliver Hayworth. He's a shriveled husk, drained entirely of life force by Kittrell.
- **To the Newspaper Morgue** (layer revealed): Further investigation shows a trail of bodies, all murdered in this fashion. Some can be connected to Kittrell, but...
- **The Big Dry Out** (twist): Other husk victims are denizens of gangland. **Streetwise** shows that all had run afoul of Diamond Walsh. When they nose around, Walsh strikes back, with a kidnap attempt.
- **Inside the Box** (final truth revealed) Through information picked up from Walsh, the PCs discover Kittrell's sorcerous backstory and his use of the Red Box.
- **Vengeful Souls** (horror confronted): When investigators come after Kittrell, and seem to be wining, the Red Box spontaneously opens, loosing the angry souls of his victims. They shred their tormentor in a Stability-blastingly grotesque fashion, but don't stop there, attacking the PCs, too.
- As a series of **floating events**, the PCs also have the opportunity to stop the hapless Elsa Hower from becoming Kittrell's next husk.

### Additional Elements

Entries in the People chapter without document references can be used whenever you need them. To drop in characters with document references before they appear in the files, use alternate names. To use alternate versions of organizations or tomes without regard to their appearance in later files, change their names and identifying details.

Some items mentioned in the documents do not correspond to entries in the book. These open references give you room to throw in some added creative thinking of your own, as you define them to suit your needs.

Needless to say, you can also borrow characters and situations from other *Trail* or *Call Of Cthulhu* materials you happen to have on hand. Alter details if there's a chance your players are already familiar with them.

### Document 1 Sample Spine B: The Dweller Within

After preliminary research into Kittrell, Walsh, and the Kingsport Yacht Club, which in this document are obscurely described, the PCs choose to focus on Walsh. At least for this first document, you've decided that the primary antagonist arises from the first item they focus on, so that means that Walsh's sinister version comes into play. It describes him as married to Zora Smallidge, the beauteous daughter of an Esoteric Order Of Dagon family, who he met through his smuggling connections. Immediately this brings a horrific image to mind for the climax: a monstrous fetus must surely burst from her belly and chew its way through the investigators. To connect this to the Kingsport Yacht Club, you decide that she's trying to gain a foothold for the cult among the well-to-do, and has pressured Walsh to win membership there. Kittrell can be one of its habitués, in either innocuous or stalwart form, as needed.

- **Hitting the Streets** (ominous seems innocuous): Checking on a mob boss is always dangerous, but initial underworld contacts seem to suggest that Walsh is an ordinary

gangster. He's not even the man he used to be. These days he's a little too besotted with his new wife to pay attention to incursions on his territory.

- **Pushback** (floating): Walsh's gunsels have heard that the PCs are nosing around in his business and come around to lean on them.
- **Food For the Fish** (something nasty): One of the group's underworld connections (the bartender Howard Sketchley, p. 50, innocuous version) turns up missing shortly after they talk to him, and the police want to know where they were at the time of his murder. Investigation leads them to his last known location, where **Evidence Collection** suggests he was dismembered and butchered.
- **Clubbing It** (layer revealed): At the Kingsport Yacht Club, the PCs find Howard and Zora attempting to curry favor with the town's old moneyed types. A clue gathered there leads the PCs on an historical inquiry into the strange origins of the Smallidge clan. This might be provided by Austin Kittrell, in either innocuous or stalwart mode. If so, he later winds up missing, with evidence that he, too, was

dismembered.

- **Meet the New Boss, Older Than the Old Boss** (twist): The PCs learn that the Smallidges are taking advantage of Walsh and plan to enslave him with Dagonic rituals after the baby is born.
- **More Like a Tadpole Than Usual** (final truth revealed): The PCs discover that Walsh is not the biological father of the coming child—it was conceived during a ritual summoning.
- **The Blessed Event** (horror confronted): Walsh takes unkindly to the truth, ordering his boys to rub out the PCs for engaging in such slander. Then Zora and her father arrive to exert final control over him. The baby is born, feasting on gangsters and investigators with equal gusto.

### Document 1 Sample Spine C: The Boaster

In this third instance, the PCs head to the Kingsport Yacht Club first. This means that its ancestral connection to the Dagon cult becomes central to your improvised mystery. With the sinister versions of both Walsh and the club tied to Dagon, you could just as easily improvise a fourth scenario spine in which they're combining mob resources and old money connections for the greater glory of the Deep One King. Here you decide to focus only on the yacht club, leaving Kittrell and Walsh to form the possible basis of a second scenario. Instead, you look for a suitable NPC without a document reference, and seize on the old salt, Lem Finlayson. You'll use him in his stalwart capacity. You also make use of the Red Box, one of the open references. After giving some thought to the twist, you decide to include a version of the socialite character, giving her a new

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sinister background of your own. To leave the original free for later use, you use one of the provided alternate names, Lucy Wyant.

- **Application Denied** (ominous seems innocuous): The PCs' investigation of the club inevitably suggests that one with a high Credit Rating should seek membership. At the resulting soirée, club members seem somewhat fusty, but not obviously threatening. The most

lively of them is the vivacious Lucy Wyant, daughter of a local wealthy family. One guest seems to take special notice of their inquiries. Lem Finlayson hints that he is an investigator like them, and that they might pool their information. It's not safe to talk in the yacht club, so he makes an appointment to meet them at his boarding house.

- **Dead Investigator** (something

nasty): The next time the PCs see Finlayson, he's a corpse, bearing the marks of a Deep One attack (ToC, p. 130). Notes found among his possessions reveal his suspicion that the Gardiners have sinister designs on Lucy. Lem's scribbblings say that they hope to use her to reconstruct an ancient artifact known only as the Red Box.

- **Ancient Blood** (layer revealed): By sniffing around the Yacht Club and Gardiner clan, the investigators piece together its Dagon-worshipping heritage. Following core clues through a series of improvised scenes (dodging Deep Ones along the way) they learn that the Gardiners have identified poor innocent Lucy as the reincarnation of Astyocl, royal priestess of Dagon's ancient undersea empire. They plan to conduct a ritual to awaken Astyocl, obliterating Lucy's soul. The priestess can then build them a Red Box.
- **Carnage** (twist): The investigators arrive too late to the ritual, finding every last member of Gardiner's inner circle drained of blood and life force. Lucy is nowhere in sight.
- **Piecing It Together** (final truth revealed) Clues at the scene allow them to reconstruct the slaughter—apparently they did awaken Astyocl, only to have her sustain herself on their blood and souls. Further clues lead to a haunted hilltop...
- **Don't Look Inside the Red Box** (horror confronted) ...where they find a naked and bloodied Astyocl summoning her father. Dagon drops the Red Box into her trembling hands. Assuming they survive the glimpse of Dagon and overcome a soul-sated ancient sorceress, they're left with the Red Box. (Lucy is salvageable only in

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### The Red Box

The Red Box is an artifact of lasting mystery and sure destruction, like a Cthulhoid version of the glowing box in the movie version of *Kiss Me Deadly* and its various filmic descendants. Anyone looking into the box risks an 8 point Stability loss and gains 2 points of Cthulhu Mythos. This counts as a Mythos encounter. Don't tell the player what he saw in the box. If asked, require an additional Stability test against an unspecified Difficulty. This creates the idea that it's possible to remember what was seen in the box, but it's all a cruel trick reflecting the implacable indifference of a Lovecraftian universe. There is no way to remember what exactly was seen in the box, no matter how many times characters look, or how well they do on their Stability tests. Also, every time anyone looks into the box, conditions become more favorable to Mythos entities. It is possible that the apocalypse comes about purely due to promiscuous box opening. (In this case, repeat viewers may eventually catch glimpses of the apocalypse described in later Armitage files.) An especially sneaky Keeper will create the false impression that use of the box might somehow convey an advantage to the investigators in their ongoing battle against the Mythos. Encourage them to keep messing with it. One does not become inured to whatever awful vision is contained within; each glance occasions a new test against a 7-8 point loss, but no additional Cthulhu Mythos points.

Feeling guilty? Armitage *warned* them not to look!

a pulp game; in purist mode, her identity has been permanently obliterated.) See sidebar for notes on the box; these might be used in an entirely unrelated storyline resulting from PC efforts to track the item down.

tantalizingly out of the group's grasp.

The players fixate on the reference to a case file featuring an interview with "the late fortune teller and embezzler Wolf-Dietrich Gudzuhr." Not wanting to kick off an adventure with yet another handout, you decide that the file has yet to be written—in Armitage's future timeline, the interview happens sometime between the present day and PD + 1 year, 7 months. This means that Gudzuhr should still be alive. Looking for a villain, you randomly pick an entry from the "People" chapter without a document reference, settling on the Peddler, Joachim Forbstein. In his sinister guise, he carries various cursed items in his pack. You decide that he's traveling through New England, leaving a string of bodies in his wake as he unknowingly dispenses supernatural artifacts to deserving victims.

- **The Hungry Idol** (ominous seems innocuous): Constructing a clue trail based on logical

player suggestions, the PCs track the former fortune teller Wolf-Dietrich Gudzuhr to a large city. He has established a new identity for himself as an accountant to the rich and naïve. Interviewing Gudzuhr, they find him shifty and nervous, but not remotely uncanny. However, a strange iron piggybank he keeps on his desk, shaped like an Asiatic demon, strikes a sinister chord in the character with the lowest Sanity.

- **Sudden Withdrawal** (something nasty): One of Gudzuhr's clients falls victim to a savage knife attack. Gudzuhr, driven to madness, has murdered her.
- **The Artifact Man** (layer revealed): Clues establish Gudzuhr as the murderer. Braced by the PCs, he confesses. He did it to feed the insatiable hunger of his bank for money. Examined carefully, the bank shows no signs of human workmanship. Bills or coins placed in it disappear. The person feeding the bank is then struck with a compulsion to feed it further. (Depending on how they handle the item, the need to gather money for it may become a new drive for an unfortunate PC. The bank may grant free-floating general pool points in situations where the character stands to collect illicit cash.) Gudzuhr confesses that he gained the bank from a traveling peddler, trading it for a copy of a strange book which he instinctively knew as *The Tears Of Azazoth*. Due to an alcohol blackout, he can't quite remember how he got the book—maybe he stole it from a rival fortune teller. Gudzuhr knows the peddler's basic territory but has no idea where he is now.

- **Bag Of Tricks** (twist): Checking the peddler's route against recent newspaper crime stories, the PCs

## Document 3 Sample

### Spine: Object Lessons

Reading document three, the players become determined to track down *The Tears Of Azazoth*. Having read further into the documents, you know that this is possibly a book that materializes from the rough notes that make up the Armitage files themselves. After deciding that this is true in your campaign, you decide that you want an adventure that lays pipe for this possibility without firmly resolving it one way or the other. This calls for a brush with horror that keeps the book

map a string of bizarre deaths. Following up, they find that in each case an unsympathetic but previously nonviolent local suddenly committed one or more murders. Behind these, they discover, is a series of artifacts. In each case, they drove the owner mad while cruelly tying into his or her main character flaws. In the last instance, Forbstein's trail is warm enough for the PCs to catch up with him.

- **Dream Police** (final truth revealed): Forbstein seems like a cheerful old coot eking out a difficult living for himself on the road. **Assess Honesty** shows that there's something below his genial surface that even he doesn't know about. After further probing, they discover that he has been shading into his dreamlands self, that of Sigonis, a fearsome priest-inquisitor. This connection allows him to materialize the objects of ironic punishment he sells to Sigonis' chosen victims.
- **Sigonis the Dread** (horror confronted): When the PCs seem on the verge of breaking Forbstein's connection to Sigonis (through Hypnosis or other likely means), the priest seizes control, summoning nightgaunts to assist him in fighting off his tormentors. If they win, Sigonis is suppressed—but Forbstein now has enough of him in his head to warn them against looking in his pack, which now contains an item meant for them. This is the *Tears Of Azazoth*. If they disobey the warning and glance at it, it blasts the sanity of one or more adventurers before opening a hole in time and disappearing into it. For a fragment of time, the investigators can see through the fissure in time, to the devastated future Armitage will soon predict.

### Document 7 Sample Spine: The Gainesville Cylinder

With players arriving late for their first session after receiving document seven, you don't want to slow down the action to stop and plot out a scenario spine. You decide to wing it entirely, creating the mystery in response to their decisions. After unscrambling the document's puzzles, they decide that the Gainesville Cylinder is the most intriguing item listed and decide to look into it.

So far none of the tomes to appear in your series have been fake, so you decide you'd better throw in a forgery for variety's sake. You're aware that this risks disappointing the group, which seems invested in its strangeness, but figure that it's worth it to keep them surprised and off-balance.

After research garners them the artifact's supposed history (p. 74), the investigators head to Gainesville, Georgia in search of the Flowers family. Needing some initial negative imagery and danger, you decide that they find his tiny farm devastated by drought. Interpersonal abilities are required to coax its occupant, Earl Flowers Junior, to lower the shotgun he has trained at their heads. (You play him as afraid that they're revenue men come to break down his moonshine operation.) The ominous becomes innocuous when Earl reveals that his father cooked up the cylinder as a hoax, enlisting the services of the local silversmith. He even produces the cylinder, which he's been using to prop up a vat in his still. When asked about his father's death in New Jersey, he reckons that his father probably "got himself killed catting around."

At this point, you still have no idea how you're going to turn the story in a sinister direction. Unsatisfied

by the mundane answer to this compelling mystery, the investigators decide to look up the silversmith. As northern strangers driving a pristine automobile through a tiny southern town, you figure they'll stick out like sore thumbs. You pull out the rural sheriff description from the "People" chapter. Seeing that a sheriff figures in document nine, you adopt one of the alternate names and descriptions. He's Sheriff Coke Ward. Needing a villain, you draw on his sinister version. That description, however, assumes that you've already got a mystery to plug him into. Not having injected any of the real-world horrors of the 30s into your campaign recently, you seize on a lynching storyline.

On the way into town to talk to the silversmith, the team sees the sheriff and his deputies arresting an indigent black man. After their inconclusive interview with the smith, they ride out of town, as excited townsfolk converge on a spot out in the woods. **Streetwise** tells the group that this is a mob, with violence on its agenda. If they seem reluctant to intervene, you'll let one of them spot the telltale Occult medallion swinging around a mob member's neck.

You decide that only an exceptionally clever and lucky plan stops the mob from lynching their hapless prisoner. More likely, the Investigators watch in horror from a safe location while the mob adds sacrificial chants to their act of racist vigilantism.

With something nasty having happened, you now seek to reveal a layer. Poking around the area shows that most of the local farmers are growing lush crops, while a few—like Flowers—struggle with the drought conditions that prevail throughout the region. (You pat yourself on the back for tying in the drought detail, originally established as a piece of evocative scenic detail, to the main plot. Now it seems like you planned it all along.)

The PCs return to Flowers' farm. Deciding that the players have grown complacent, you ratchet the tension with a new jolt of horror. Flowers is dead, his head blown off with his own shotgun. **Forensics** shows that it's not the suicide it was staged to be. (You figure that cousins got word to Ward that Flowers had been talking to outsiders. Knowing that his people wouldn't lynch a fellow white man who minds his own business, Ward took matters into his own hands.)

When the players revisit Cousins, you decide that a breakthrough is in order. They **Intimidate** him into revealing that the town changed after a strange meteor landed in Coke Ward's fields. By finding the meteor, they can end the menace, destroying the writhing entities that dwell within. It's through them that Ward and his deputies learned their sacrificial rites. By destroying the entities, the PCs remove the focus that allows them to channel the energy of the non-Euclidean spheres to their croplands.

Naturally, the destruction of the meteor entities leads to a bloody climactic battle with Ward and his men—after which the less involved townsfolk awake, as if from a nasty dream. Seeking a suitably nihilistic ending, you conclude with the suggestion that their taste for lynchings hasn't been cured: they just won't be invoking Azazoth while they do it any more.

### Document 8 Example Of Play: Cry of the Nightingale

This transcript-style excerpt from an improvised play session zooms closer on the issues you'll face when weaving together Armitage Files material into an on-the-fly scenario.

The players and their characters are as

follows:

**Steve** plays imperturbable, mumbling art historian and antiquities expert **Sir Wilfrid Mansfield-West**.

**Graham** is the journalist and labor agitator **Harry Decker**.

**Monica** is socialite **Marion Love**, who became embroiled in the anti-Cthulhu movement after her guardian attempted to sacrifice her to the Old Ones.

**Matthew** plays **Wes Kenyon**, an alcoholic former marine sergeant reduced to riding the rails before the group brought him under its wing.

**You** are the GM.

When players speak out of character, they're listed under their own names. In character, the investigator's name appears first, with the player's name in parenthesis.

You gave out Document 8 at the end of the previous session. That installment of your ongoing Armitage Files campaign left the group at loose ends. They'd exhausted their last solid leads from Document 7, including the Gainesville Cylinder. As preparation for this session, you review the eighth document and the various possible leads it dangles in front of the group.

[Social chat and cross-talk.]

**You:** Okay, it's time to get down to cases. The four of you gather in your windswept motel room near the Miskatonic campus, where you review the latest document. As you'll recall, it was found in the library vestibule.

**Steve:** Right in the middle of the elder sign inlaid in its tiles, wasn't it?

**You:** That's right.

**Sir Wilfrid** (Steve): Hrm, ahem, then certainly this proves my theory that the force sending these documents is unaligned with the Mythos. Could the Adversary place a document inside the very Elder Sign itself? Preposterous, I say.

**Harry** (Graham): Enough of your ivory tower pontificating, old man! We have an apocalypse to stop! Which of the items can we deal with fastest?

**Wes** (Matthew): I don't care which we do, so long as we skip the Suttons. No more killer hillbillies for me.

**Harry** (Graham): We've got to pick the most efficient path, even if that puts us in conflict with another pack of the agrarian/cannibal *lumpen proletariat*.

**Wes** (Matthew): Hillbillies if necessary, but not necessarily hillbillies. Let's start with something else first.

**Sir Wilfrid** (Steve): This reference to a publication, *The Nightingale*, seems promising. The copy we seek may be right here in the library. Is that sufficiently close at hand for you, Harry?

**Harry** (Graham): Uh. Well. Let's not let your bookish concerns drive the dialectic entirely, Mansfield. What about this Dr. George Belling character? Sounds like a capitalist exploiter to me.

**Marion** (Monica): Now then, Wes. First you wanted something we can jump into quickly. He's found that and now you're putting up more obstacles. Sir Wilfrid's game, it has no hillbillies so Wes is happy, and we've argued enough so I'm voting for *The Nightingale*, too. Agreed?

[In character as Harry, Graham makes thwarted grumbling noises. Once again his attempt to assert himself has been shot down in quietly logical flames.

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His muttering revisits a running gag regarding Marion's unacknowledged role as the group's real decision-maker, and Harry's ineffectually resentful attitude toward it.

[While the players are engaged in this character riffing, you refresh your memory of the *Nightingale* plot hook. As seen on p. 65, it's a home-printed amateur publication edited by a reclusive fellow named Horace St. Johns. In sinister mode, St. Johns is a good-hearted ghoul who was recently forced to devour a pair of his long-distance friends when they insisted on finding him in person. The ghoulish St. Johns vainly pines for another contributor, Dorothy Warren. To bring her directly into the action, you decide that Dorothy should be an acquaintance of Marion's—a fellow socialite. You'll wait for a natural place to reveal the connection.]

**Monica:** Very well, we go to the library and see if they have any copies of *The Nightingale*.

**You:** There are. [You describe the publication, going into some detail on amateur press associations.] The contents are a mixed bag—plenty of not-so-good, old-fashioned poetry. Nature writing and science pieces.

**Harry:** Is the science any good? I'm checking the articles against my knowledge of Astronomy, Biology, and Chemistry.

**You:** It's either rehashes of material in the popular press, or enthusiastic but ill-informed speculation.

**Steve:** Wilfrid scans the issues for signs of hidden occult meaning. [Without saying it in so many words, Steve is drawing on Wilfrid's Occult ability.]

[With the scenario in the “ominous seems innocuous” phase, you've decided that the issues themselves

will be completely free of sinister intimations. The hints of occult content come in issues St. John has, in the future timeline, yet to print.]

**Graham** (studying Document 8): Now, in the document here, Armitage—or whoever—tries to remember why *The Nightingale* was in the library in the first place. He says that maybe Rice or Morgan found it interesting. I go to talk to them and see what brought it to their attention.

**Monica:** To save time, I go talk to Morgan.

**You** (as Rice): What is it now, Decker? I hope you haven't come to pester me with more of your naïve political pronouncements. I get enough of that from Freeborn.

**Harry** (Graham): Naïve? Why it's you, with your resistance to historical inevitability that's — never mind, I'm not here on a recruiting mission. The amateur press association, *The Nightingale*. Remember anything about it?

**You** (as Rice): Doesn't ring a bell, Decker. If it doesn't emanate from the fertile crescent I'm not much interested in it.

**You:** Marion, you find Morgan in his lab, cleaning Anasazi pot shards.

**Monica:** I show him an issue and asks if he's the one who ordered it for the collection.

**You** (as Morgan, shrugging disinterestedly): I can't imagine why it would catch my attention, Miss Love.

**Monica:** Can I use Library Use to figure out how it got into the collection?

**You:** The person who would normally stock an item like this would be the Assistant Librarian in charge of the

Literature section.

**Monica:** I find a faculty directory and look him up.

**You:** (glancing at your prepared list of period-appropriate names): It's Miss Sharon Blanding.

[With the group having found nothing so far, you conclude that it's time they got a core clue that moves them onto a new scene. This is not their only way of moving to a new scene—at any time they could ask for the APA's mailing address and head out in search of where St. John lives. Note how the group has at least two avenues before it, as opposed to a single railroaded plot.]

**Monica:** I go find her.

**Matthew:** Wes hears that the librarian is a woman and tags along.

**Marion** (Monica, rolling her eyes): Still with only one thing on your mind, are we dear?

**Wes** (Matthew): Certainly. [pause.] A man needs someone to cook and clean for him.

**Marion** (Monica, sighing loudly): Now no drooling on her, mind.

[After a bit more badinage, Marion and Wes arrive in Sharon's office. You're happy to allow a lighthearted tone for now, as it will create a tonal contrast to the inevitable horrors later on.]

**Marion** (Monica): Miss Blanding? I wonder if you could tell me how you came to add a subscription to *The Nightingale* to the Miskatonic collection?

**You** (as Sharon): Ah, well, it's a representative of a burgeoning movement in American letters.

**Wes** (Matthew, striking a handsome

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pose): And how did it come to your attention?

**You** (as Sharon): One of the contributors, a family friend, mailed me a sample and a subscription card. Dorothy Warren is her name.

**You** (out of character, to Monica) You recognize this name; there's a Dorothy Warren in your social circle. She was a débutante a couple of years ahead of you.

**Monica:** I check to make sure it's the same Dorothy Warren.

**You:** It is.

**Monica:** Off to see Dorothy then. She lives in a swell penthouse in New York, I assume.

[You hadn't given this any thought, but there's no reason to refuse the suggestion, and affirm that this is the case.]

**Marion** (Monica): Off to New York, then. I have some shopping to do when we get there.

**Wes** (Matthew): What does the librarian look like?

**You:** The shy, mousy librarian type.

**Wes** (Matthew): Just the way I like them! (breaking character) Can I spend Reassurance to make myself seem like a safe, trustworthy fellow?

**You:** Sure. How much do you want to spend?

**Matthew:** 3 points.

**You:** She seems quite taken with you, although she's struggling not to seem obvious about it.

[Monica pulls on Matthew's sweater, suggesting that Marion is doing the

same, dragging Wes out of the librarian's office.]

[With the scene about to shift to Dorothy Warren's Manhattan apartment, you look ahead to the base structure. A nasty event is called for soon, but with St. John a recluse in his small town lair, he's unlikely to supply it. As monsters go, St. John is both an unusually sympathetic monster and somewhat passive—he just wants to be left alone. So you decide that the true villain of the piece is another ghoul. The name King Sprole springs to mind for this primary antagonist. Sprole, you decide, wants to use St. John's familiarity with the human world to establish a kidnapping ring. It will drive victims to his tribe in unprecedented numbers, eventually allowing him to buy the fealty of other ghoul communities. You ask yourself why Sprole would command his minions to do something nasty in New York. The peaceful St. John has undoubtedly refused to cooperate with Sprole's scheme. So his ghoul followers have kidnapped Dorothy. Horace, you reason, has foolishly told Sprole about her. The would-be ghoul king means to use Dorothy as leverage over the recalcitrant but knowledgeable ghoul APA editor. When the investigators reach the penthouse, they'll find the bloody aftermath of a kidnapping—and no Dorothy.]

[Quickly, you cover the transition from the Mistakonic library to Dorothy's apartment. You still, however, give the players the leeway to look for whatever other clues they might seek before departing. None of these avenues happen to inspire promising alternate plot forks; if they did, you'd improvise your way toward them. Instead, the facts the investigators gather remain flavor clues only. When the investigators reach the exterior of Warren's apartment building, basic verisimilitude demands that the group overcome some sort of obstacle before gaining access to the hallways of her exclusive building.]

**You:** You reach the apartment building, which naturally has a doorman standing guard out front. When you ask for Dorothy, he calls her on the in-house phone system, and gets no response. Who has Outdoorsman?

**Matthew:** I do.

**You:** With your fine sense of hearing, honed against the rhythms of the wilderness —

**Matthew:** — learned staying one step ahead of the railroad bulls, you mean...

**You:** You overheard a noise, too faint for the doorman to notice, on the phone line—a dripping sound that doesn't seem right.

**Monica:** I'm also well-heeled, so I use Credit Rating 5 to seem like the sort of wealthy and reliable person doormen like him should naturally trust. (as Marion): Listen, my fellow, we're here to surprise dear Dot for her birthday. You will let us in, won't you?

[This is the smoothest and fastest way in, but not the only one conceivable, so you ask for a 1-point Credit Rating spend. Monica agrees and makes the spend. The group is then allowed past the doorman. They find water running under the door jamb and break in.]

**You:** You behold a scene of horror—a man's body lies in dismembered pieces, strewn through the apartment. [This, you've decided, is a society friend of Dorothy's, added to the scene to increase its impact.] The rushing water comes from the bathroom...

**Steve:** We enter cautiously. The killer could still be in here.

**You:** You find no sign of anyone. The running water comes from the sink—blood is spattered all through the bathroom.

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**Graham:** With Forensics, does it seem like the victim was attacked while at the sink?

**You:** The patterns of blood are consistent with that, yes.

**Monica:** Are there any signs that Dorothy was here when this happened?

**You:** A shoe lying in front of the open window.

**Steve:** Window?

**You:** Yes, right by the fire escape.

[Because you're improvising, you don't have a specific list of clues and the abilities used to uncover them. You simply keep the sequence of events in mind — ghouls came through the window from the fire escape, killed and partially ate the friend, and took Dorothy with them—and apply logical answers to the player's questions and ability usages. You're already thinking ahead to the next narrative stage — the layer revealed — and decide that the next scene should definitively reveal that the investigators are dealing with ghouls. As they sift for clues, you look for ways to move them into a ghoule encounter.]

**Graham:** Is there blood on the fire escape?

[You hadn't thought of this, but of course a blood trail provides the perfect way to lead them to the next scene. They can follow the ghoul's trail to the New York sewers, where they'll meet a rear guard of flesh-eaters waiting to ambush pursuers.]

**Matthew:** With my field medic training [referring to Wes' Medicine ability], I examine the dismembered body.

**You:** The wounds are bite marks—but strange ones.

**Matthew:** Does Biology compare them to a known animal?

**You:** If "cross between canine and crocodile" counts as a known animal, yes.

**Graham:** Ghouls!

**Steve:** We don't know that yet.

**Matthew:** Use your Cthulhu Mythos to find out.

**Steve:** (shuddering at the Stability/Sanity cost) Not worth it. We'll know soon enough.

[The trail of blood is a core clue, leading them to another scene in the sewer. The group also still has access to Horace's address, so they have at least two core clues to follow and aren't being railroaded in any single direction. After gathering more flavor clues in Dorothy's apartment, the group considers the scene exhausted. They follow the blood trail down the fire escape, through an alley, and into the sewer system. After a terrifying ambush in the dark, the group prevails, at the cost of many Health and Stability points. Two ghouls lie dead before them.]

**Monica:** Is everyone patched up? All right, then search for evidence. Does the blood trail continue?

**You:** Who's got Outdoorsman again?

**Matthew:** Me.

**You:** You conclusively determine that the trail stops when it hits the sewers. Too much muck to track where they've gone.

**Wilfrid (Steve):** Blast! A dead end!

[Once again it's time to think of core clues that might lead from this scene. You could in good conscience leave them with only the obvious *Nightingale*

clue to pursue. They'll have to get to it eventually. Still, you're curious to see how long they might go without touching on this clear starting point. Seeking a possible second story fork, you check the other items mentioned in the eighth document. One immediately comes to mind, thanks to Matthew's earlier emphasis on it. By making comic hay from Wes' dread of hillbillies, he was clearly creating a setup for you to pay off—whether he meant to or not. You decide that something in the sewer search will somehow lead to the Suttons. They must be in cahoots with the ghouls somehow—perhaps protecting the exit to their lair. Rather than decide on what this clue might be, you let the players do the work for you. As soon as one of them proposes an investigative ability use that permits you to connect the ghouls to the Suttons, you'll seize that opportunity.]

**Steve:** With my knowledge of Architecture, what can I say about the various exit points from the sewers?

**You:** The New York sewers? There are countless exit points. No way to predict where they've taken her.

**Graham:** How about Geology? Any fresh traces of soil that shouldn't be here?

**You:** Under the toenails of the ghouls you find a gray, clay-heavy soil that's more characteristic of the Massachusetts countryside than Manhattan.

[This doesn't get you all the way to the Suttons, but moves the focus in the general direction.]

**Monica:** That's where the post office box for *The Nightingale* is. We should follow up on that.

[Even though you're becoming enamored of this freshly invented possible story turn, you don't step in to redirect the group to the Suttons. Your

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Armitage Files

job is to make sure there are choices, not to steer the players to one over another.]

**Wes** (Matthew): Okay then. Everyone turn their backs. You're not going to want to see this.

**Marion** (Monica): Oh no, what now?

**Wes** (Matthew): Three words: ghouls... stomach... contents.

**Marion**: Oh no.

**Matthew**: Is everyone else looking away when I do this?

[Everybody nods.]

**Matthew**: I take out my pen knife and make a stomach incision in the first ghoul.

**You**: Make a Stability check.

**Matthew**: I spend a point. [rolls dice] A 5. I'm in the clear, right?

**You**: Yes, you're grimly inured to your gruesome task. You open the stomach and find half-digested chunks of human flesh. You have Medicine, yes?

**Matthew**: Uh-huh.

**You**: You can tell that some of it is fresh, and some older. Also, there's an indigestible object in there. Something metallic. Gold, maybe.

**Matthew**: I pull it out and clean the blood and viscera off it.

**You**: It's a locket.

**Matthew**: Anything inside?

**You**: An old photo of a woman looking at the camera with a forbidding expression. Also a curl of hair.

**Monica**: With Photography, can I estimate the age of the photo?

**You**: Turn of the century, probably.

**Graham**: Using Anthropology, can I place her socially?

**You**: From her clothing, you'd guess she was a farmer, likely from the New England area.

**Steve**: Is there anything engraved on the locket?

**You**: Yes. "E. Sutton."

**Wes**: Sutton?

**You**: Yes, Sutton.

**Wes** (Matthew): Sutton? No. No. No *hillbillies*!

[The session continues from there. As they either locate the Sutton farm or head toward the *Nightingale* address, you'll be looking for a way to introduce the next item on the structural agenda, a twist. Perhaps it's that the Suttons are far from being degenerate hillbillies. They're dauntless but beleaguered guardians who are now failing in their family's ancestral duty to protect the world from the ghouls whose lair lies beneath their property. If the group searches for St. John, the twist might simply be the revelation of his sinister premise—that he's a ghoul, but a relatively harmless one with a yen for Dorothy Warren.]

[Whichever branches they take, you continue to improvise, following the structure when it seems natural and allowing the story to develop on its own when that seems more satisfying, until you reach the final truth and confrontation with horror.]





# The Armitage Files

Full colour versions of the handouts can be found on the Pelgrane Press website ([pelgranepress.com](http://pelgranepress.com)), as can the text  
The documents are presented in handout form first, then as text.

OKATAU.

YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRUST IT WITH A FEW MORE THOUGHTS TO ENTAILER, APPENDING  
A WARNING, BUT NOW — THE NATURE OF IT IS NO.

## THE SIMPLER THE BETTER

THIS WILL BE THE ONLY SET OF INSTRUCTIONS.

THIS WILL BE THE ONLY SET OF INSTRUCTIONS ON THE OTHERS WILL BE EXCEPT PRIMITIVE NOTES ALREADY WRITTEN. THERE ARE LIMITATIONS ON HOW MUCH I CAN SEND AT ONCE. ALSO I AM NOW CONTINUALLY ON THE BECK/HO FOR

PAGE

## HUNT AND TRACK ME.

THESE ARE SO FEW SHELTERS NOW. SO INFREQUENT THE MOMENTS OF REST. SLEEP.

I MUST MANAGE MY RESOURCES EACH TIME.

ALSO: THERE IS THE **WARNING** THAT THE LATER I HAVE WRITTEN SOMETHING

THE LESS STUFF YOU CAN PLACE IN IT

AS THE DISTURBANCE ~~LEVEL~~ OF MY MIND INCREASES

I BELIEVE, HOPE, PRAY THAT THE MUSCLES HORNS HAVE BEEN FULLY EXPANDED FROM  
MY CONSCIOUSNESS ~~AND~~ THAT THEY NO LONGER COULD BE MY REASON.

WARR: I AM NO LONGER SURE WHETHER THEY ARE METAPHORICAL OR LITERAL - EITHER IS POSSIBLE.

I LOOK NOW AND THE ANTSES SEEM SPIDER-SLEATO BEING IN ON THEMSELVES. BUT  
BEWARE **BEWARE!!** NONE THE LESS FOR IF THERE IS A THING THAT IS IN

SHORTS APPLY FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT, IT IS HOPE.

SO JUST BECAUSE THIS IS IN A FAMILIAR HAND, MY OLDEST FRIENDS —  
DO NOT ASSUME.

YOU CAN TRUST IT.

# VIGILANCE ABOVE ALL AS YOU PROCEED

OR TO PUT IT MORE PRECISELY DO NOT PROCEED YOURSELF  
FOR YOU HAVE FAILED MY FRIEND.

FAILED TO TAKE THE RIGHT ROAD WHEN THERE WERE SO MANY OTHERS TO TRAVEL  
I CANNOT GO BACK AND REPEACE MY STEPS BUT YOU CAN. ENOUGH OTHERS WHO WILL  
INEVITABLY CHOOSE TO REACH A VARIANT PATH &  
SEE OTHER PATTERNS IN THE PUZZLE, COME TO DIFFERENT CONCLUSIONS.

LOOKING BACK THERE ARE SO MANY DECISION POINTS. IF BUT ONE  
**ONE SINGLE ONE**

IS TAKEN DIFFERENTLY THE TOWNS OF NEW YORK MIGHT NOT SINK AND MOUNT RENTLESS CHARGES  
WOULD BLACKEN THE LAND CANONS WOULD NOT OULGE AND BE UPPRIST.

**HUBRIS!!** IT IS HUBRIS YOU MUST AVOID.

ALSO. DO NOT PLACE YOUR TRUST IN AUSTIN KITRELL. I BELIEVE THIS WAS MY FIRST MISTAKE.  
WHETHER HE MISLEAD INTENTIONALLY WAS A DUPE, OR ACTED IN UTTER IGNORANCE  
OR THE CONSEQUENCES HIS ADVICE WOULD PUT INFORMATION, I STILL CANNOT DETERMINE.  
I TRIED TO TRACK HIM BECAUSE IF I GAINED AN INSIDE SPACE I WOULD KNOW  
THE FACT THAT HE HAS A FACE.

BUT KITRELL. ACT WARILY AROUND HIM. PERHAPS DO NOT APPROACH AT ALL.  
MAYBE THAT IS THE FIRST FACT. IF ONLY I HAD NOT ENGAGED HIM IN CONVERSATION  
THAT CALLY NIGHT AS HE SMOKED THOSE THING CIGARETTES IN HIS POCKET  
AGAIN: THE OTHER PAGES WILL ONLY BE NOTES YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE OF THEM  
WHAT YOU WANT.

THERE IS A TUMPLING DOWNSTAIRS. I SHOULD HAVE FEARED TO ENTER THIS BUILDING AS IT STANDS OUT  
AMONG ALL OTHERS, IT ACTS AS AN ARCHITECTURAL GEM IN THE MIDST. THE BASEMENT I THOUGHT SECURED.  
I SHOULD HAVE OCCUPIED IT, NOT THE ATTIC, BUT SINCE ~~THE~~

NO. THERE IS NO TIME TO BE MAKING THIS. HERE ARE OTHER BETTER  
POSSIBLE PLACES TO START.

□

THE MEN SANATORIUM ON THE ~~EDGE~~ ~~EDGE~~ DISCOURTS DOWN. WHEN I WAS THERE I  
SENSED THAT SOMETHING HAD GONE AWRY. YET I WAS DISTRACTED BY MY FORTUNE &  
ATTEMPT TO FIND MEN WHO HAD BEEN AT THE CIRCUS ON THAT OCTOBER NIGHT. THAT IS A DEAD END  
I AM SURE, OR AT LEAST A COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE ONE. THE CIRCUS MAY FIGURE IN IT BUT  
OCTOBER IS A BUNDALEY. OR RATHER A TRAP. IT IS YOUR MINDS YOU MUST PRESERVE  
ABOVE ALL.

IF YOU SEE THE RED BOX DO NOT OPEN IT. THE CONTAINMENT PERMITS A  
BARE ADVANTAGE, BUT YOU WILL PAY IN THE END. IT IS THE RED BOX THAT ALLOWS  
THE HORNETS IN.

I AM SURE, THEY ARE AT THE MAKING ME THINK OF THEM PREVENTING ME FROM  
WRITING WHAT I MUST WRITE. EVERYTHING I WRITE HERE MAY BE A

DECEPTION. RELY ON THE NOTES TO COME LATER.

THIS DOCUMENT IS TINTED BY THE MIND WAS SPOT CANNOT BE TRUSTED EXCEPT FOR  
GENERAL ~~CONTEXT~~ CONTEXT.

THE SANATORIUM. THE SANATORIUM  
THE SANATORIUM.

IT IS NOT THE STATE LIKE I THOUGHT, IT IS ONE OF THE PATIENTS THAT

ONE OF THE PATIENTS KNOWS MORE THAN HE THINKS HE KNOWS. OR SHE LOOK FOR THE TRULY SIGNS.  
THE HANDS OF SWEAT. THE EYES BEHIND THE EYES.

ALSO: THERE WAS THAT TRIP TO THE KINGSPORT YACHT CLUB. DEFINITELY THEY WERE  
LYING LYING LYING TO ME THERE.

BUT BY THAT TIME I HAD ALREADY OPENED THE RED BOX. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN OF SOME  
KIND, VIEWING ME CORRECTLY AS A LIABILITY. DROP THE OTHER SIDE.

WHEN I SPEAK OF THE RED BOX, NOT A BOX AT ALL. IT IS A BOOK THAT IS

I CONFUSE THE BOX AND THE BOOK. THE BOX IS A HAZARD BUT IT IS THE BOOK THAT TRULY



IF YOUR KIND THERE IS AN AGENDA THERE. A SHORTSIGHTED ONE THAT I COULD NOT QUITE COMPREHEND. OLIVER GARDINER SEEMED TO SEE THROUGH ME AND TO BECOME PROGRESSIVELY MORE DISTANT AS I TALKED WAS IT WHEN I MENTIONED THE V. EDGAR L. HOOPER CONNECTION? WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS ☐ YES IT WAS THEN HE GREW COLD.

I WILL NOT NAME THE BOOK. BECAUSE I HAVE COME TO SUSPECT THAT THE BOOK ONLY EXISTS IN THE MINDS OF THOSE THAT NAME IT. ITS SECRETS ARE NOT TO BE REVEALED.

YOU CANNOT DESTROY THE BOOK

ALTHOUGH IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO DESTROY IT YOU SHOULD WISH YOUR HANDS WERE CUT OFF BUT THAT ENTAILS HANDLING THE BOOK AND HANDLING IT IS tantamount to opening the RED BOX.

AN APPROACH TO GARDINER THAT DOES NOT REFERENCE THE OCCULT, THE OLD ONES, THE FORCES OF AUTHORITY. IN OTHER WORDS, AS LEGITIMATE MEMBERS OF A BOATING ASSOCIATION



OR PERHAPS BETTER TO TACKLE IT THROUGH DUMOND WASH. I DON'T BELIEVE HE OCCURS IN THE NOTES. AT THE VERY LEAST QUITE DANGEROUS IN THE MUNDANE SENSE. A GANGSTER AND A SMILING KILLER. I THOUGHT TO APPROACH HIM WITH CAUTION, AND GARDINER MISSED MY METEER BUT IT COULD BE THAT MY ESTIMATION WAS BETTER REVERSED AND THAT GARDINER WAS THEREBY FAR THE MORE DANGEROUS SPECIMEN.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR: THE GRINDING WHEELS OF TIME, CURS AND THEIRS COLLIDING COLLAPSING INTO ONE ANOTHER. THE INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN HUMAN AND INHUMAN DESIRES ARE TOO MANY FOR THE BRON HAND OF NYARLATHOTEP TO BE FAR AWAY. IT HOLDS THE LEVER.

IF ONLY I HAD DETECTED ITS MOVEMENTS EARLIER. IT COULD HAVE BEEN FORESTALLED

I THINK THE NOTES WILL APPEAR ~~IN ORDER~~ SO THAT YOU WILL NOT REPLICATE MY FAILED PATH BUT RATHER FORGE A NEW ONE THROUGH ALL ~~THE~~ THESE DISPARATE YET CONNECTED SINISTER ~~POINTS~~ POINTS. I KNOW IT IS VERY HARD TO LEAVE A ~~BOX~~ BOX CLOSED BUT IN THE NAME OF THAT IS DECENT IN PROTECTION OF YOUR OWN SANCTITY DON'T DRINK THE TEARS OF A LAZARUS ~~DO NOT~~ DO NOT.



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 1

This one I will send before the others. Then the earlier ones. It cannot be guaranteed, given the means of transmission, that they will arrive in order sent. Or at all. In fact, it is highly likely, given the vagaries of the invocation, that some will be consumed in the howling æthers. But if you are not reading this, then you are not reading this, so what can I do but assume that you are? ~~Conundrums, paradoxes...~~ (Conundri? Paradoxisms?)

You will know who to entrust it with. At first I merely thought to send it later, appending a warning, but now — the nature of it... but no. The simpler the better. This will be the only set of instructions. The others will be excerpts from the notes, already written. There are limitations on how much I can send at once. Also, I am now continually on the move, as the ones who have stolen my face hunt and track me. There are so few shelters now, so infrequent the moments of rest... I must marshal my resources each time.

Also there is the warning that the later I have written something, the less store you can place in it, as the disturbance of my mind increases. I believe, hope, pray that the Möbius hornets have been fully expunged from my ~~consequences~~ consciousness. That they no longer colonize my reason, adjust my memories. (Warning: I am no longer sure whether they are metaphorical or literal. Either is possible.) I look now and the notes are spider-scratchy, curving in on themselves. But beware, nonetheless, for if there is a thing that is in short supply from this vantage point, it is hope. So just because this is in a familiar hand, my oldest friend, do not assume you can trust it. Vigilance above all as you proceed. Or, to put it more precisely, do not proceed yourself. For you have failed, my friend. Failed to take

the right road, when there were so many others to travel. I cannot go back and retrace my steps, but you can send others, who will inevitably choose to tread variant paths, see other patterns in the puzzle, come to different conclusions... Looking back there are so many decision points... If but a single one is taken differently, the towers of New York might not sink and melt, restless shapes will not blacken the land, the canyons will not quake and be upthrust--

Hubris! It is hubris you must avoid! Also, do not place your trust in Austin Kittrell. I believe this was my first mistake. Whether he misled intentionally, was a dupe, or acted in utter ignorance of the consequences his advice would put into motion, I still cannot determine. I tried to track him, because if I gazed upon his face I would know—the fact that he has a face—but Kittrell: act warily around him. Perhaps do not approach at all. Maybe that is the first fork. If only I had not engaged him in conversation that chilly night, as he smoked those thin cigarettes on the portico...

Again, the other pages will only be notes. You will have to make of them what you will.

There is a thumping downstairs. I should have feared to enter this building, as it stands out among all others, intact among an architectural graveyard. The basement I thought secured. I should have occupied it, not the attic, but since the—

No, there is no time to be writing this. Here are other better possible places to start:

The new sanatorium on the outskirts of town. When I was there, I sensed that something had gone awry. Yet I was distracted by my fruitless attempt to find men who had been at the circus that October night. That is

a dead end, I am sure, or at the very least a counter-productive one. The circus may figure into it, but October is a blind alley. Or rather a trap. It is your minds you must preserve above all.

IF YOU SEE THE RED BOX, DO NOT OPEN IT. The contents will permit you a brief advantage, but you will pay in the end. IT IS THE RED BOX THAT ALLOWS THE HORNETS IN.

I am sorry. They are at me, making me think of them, preventing me from writing what I must write.

EVERYTHING I WRITE HERE MAY BE A DECEPTION. RELY ON THE NOTES TO COME LATER. THIS DOCUMENT IS TAINTED BY THE MIND WASPS. IT CANNOT BE TRUST'D EXCEPT FOR GENERAL ~~CONTEXT~~. CONTEXT.

The sanatorium. The sanatorium. The sanatorium.

It is not the staff, like I thought. It is one of the patients. One of the patients knows more than he thinks he knows. Or she. Look for the telltale signs. The beads of sweat. The eyes behind the eyes.

Also there was the trip to the Kingsport Yacht Club. Definitely they were lying to me there. But by that time I had already opened the red box. They may have been of our kind, viewing me correctly as a liability. Or of the other side.

WHEN I SPEAK OF THE RED BOX, IT IS NOT A BOX AT ALL. IT IS A BOOK. THAT IS, I CONFUSE THE BOX AND THE BOOK. THE BOX IS A HAZARD, YES, BUT IT IS THE BOOK THAT TRULY

If of our kind, there is an agenda there, a short-sighted one, that I could not

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 1

quite comprehend. Oliver Gardiner seemed to see through me and to become progressively more distant as I talked. Was it when I mentioned in passing the J. Edgar Hoover connection? Wheels within wheels. Yes, it was then he grew cold.

I WILL NOT NAME THE BOOK, BECAUSE I HAVE COME TO SUSPECT THAT THE BOOK ONLY EXISTS IN THE MINDS OF THOSE THAT NAME IT. ITS SECRETS ARE NOT TO BE PLUMBED. YOU CANNOT DESTROY IT—though if you can figure out how to destroy it you should—BUT THAT ENTAILS HANDLING IT, AND HANDLING IT IS TANTAMOUNT TO OPENING THE RED BOX.

An approach to Gardiner that does

not reference the occult, the Old Ones, the forces of authority—in other words, as legitimate members of a boating association...

Or perhaps better to tackle it all through Diamond Walsh. I do not believe he occurs in the notes. At the very least, quite dangerous in the mundane sense, a gangster and a smiling killer. I thought to approach with caution, and Gardiner more my metier, but it could be that my estimation was better reversed, and that Gardiner was by far the more dangerous specimen...

What are you looking for? The grinding wheels of time, ours and theirs, colliding, collapsing into one another. The intersections between human and inhuman desires are

too many for the ebon hand of Nyarlathotep to be far away. It holds the levers... if only I had detected its movements earlier, it all could have been forestalled.

I think the notes will appear out of order, so that you will not replicate my failed path, but rather forge a new one through all of these disparate yet connected and sinister stars points.

I KNOW IT IS VERY HARD TO LEAVE A ~~BOX~~ BOOK CLOSED BUT IN THE NAME THAT ALL THAT IS DECENT, IN PROTECTION OF YOUR OWN SANITY —

DO NOT DRINK THE TEARS OF AZAZOTH!



• TEARS OF AZAZOTH.

INSIST TO THE OTHERS THAT THIS 'DREAD VOLUME' IS SO MUCH FLIM-FLAMMERY, A NON-EXISTENT THING. A FEVERISH HUMOUR IN THE GREEDY HEARTS OF CERTAIN LONDON BOOKSELLERS. A VISIBLE WHISPER AMONG THE MOST CORRUPTLY SENSUALIST DILETTANTES OF THE OCCULT UNDERGROUND.

"A COVER COMPOSED OF AN UNKNOWN SUBSTANCE, JET-BLACK AND YET WITH THE PLIABILITY OF ONION SKIN"? THE MESMERISING ENSIGN ON THE COVER? SURELY IT IS A FICTIONAL IMAGINING FOUND IN THE PAGES OF DUNSMITH OR MACHEN, REGURGITATED AS HALF-REMEMBERED LEGEND.

• THE CIRCUS.

MAY BE ONE OF SEVERAL TRAVELLING CARNIVALS TRAVELLING UP AND DOWN THE EASTERN SEABOARD.

NOT TECHNICALLY A CIRCUS, I SUPPOSE, WITHOUT A BIG TOP AND PERFORMING ELEPHANTS, YET SOMEHOW THE OTHER TERM SEEMS COARSE UNSEEMLY. AT ANY RATE I HAVE PLACED DISCREET CALLS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS; THEIR VIEW OF ALL SUCH ENTERTAINMENTS IS A DIM ONE. THIS COLOURS MY ATTEMPT TO NARROW THEM DOWN FROM THE MERELY DISSOLUTE TO THE TRULY OCCULTIC.

• I HAVE TWO NAMES FOR STRONGMEN [IS THAT THE PLURAL?] SUGGESTING SEPARATE ACCOUNTS OF TWO ITINERANT SHOWS:

VLADIMIR KROTKIN AND SERGEI GARKALIN.

FIRST NAME MAY HAVE BEEN GARBLED: WITNESS 'COMMAND OF FOREIGN NAMES PERHAPS SHAKY. IN EACH INSTANCE OF THE STORY THE STRONGMAN WAS AN INTIMIDATING FORCE, VIOLENTLY PREVENTING ENTRY TO THE FREAK SHOW TENT WHERE THE 'TRUE SECRET' WAS TO BE FOUND.

WINTERING IN NORTH?

Mablethorpe NEWBURYPORT  
IPSWICH MAFIC BASALT?  
AMESBURY / GRANITE  
BIDDEFORD  
RUMLEY - KILNERS  
WILKINSON

• NEW ENGLAND LEAGUE OF AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS •

[NELAA, PRONOUNCED 'NECIA' AS IN A WOMAN'S NAME.]

• CLUB FOR STARGAZERS, MEMBERS DRAWN THROUGHOUT GREATER  
MURRA MISKATONIC RIVER BASIN. MEETS MONTHLY \$2 FULL MEMBERSHIP,  
\$1 AUXILIARY. NO DOUBT TO MRS. PICKMAN'S CHAGRIN, SHOWED THE  
INQUIRY'S UTMOST LARGESE, PAYING FULL \$2.

- FIELD TRIPS INCLUDE VISITS TO ISOLATED AND CRAAGY HILLTOPS

"SO AS BETTER TO SEE THE STARS". HEARD A BIZARRE THEORY OF A  
CONCEPT OF "LIGHT POLLUTION", WHEREBY THE LUMINESCENCE OF CITIES  
WOULD GROW EVER BRIGHTER, SO THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS WOULD BE  
ABLE TO SEE THE HEAVENS PROPERLY ONLY FROM THE DEEPEST WOODS OR  
HERMITIC MOUNTAIN TOPS - THE ONLY PLACES ON EARTH WHERE  
PUREST BLACKNESS WOULD STILL RULE.

- ISSUE A NEWSLETTER (HAVE SO FAR READY 16 ISSUES, ALLOF THEM  
STULTIFYING AND DEVOID OF ESOTERIC IMPORT).

- CHRISTMAS SOCIAL ALWAYS HELD ON DECEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>. QUESTIONED  
OCCULT SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS (OBLIQUELY) TO ORGANIZATION  
PRESIDENT THOMAS ONGINE. HE LAUGHED AND POINTED OUT  
OBVIOUS APPEAL OF SOLSTICE TO ASTRONOMERS.

"ALWAYS DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN". BIT OF A HAYSEED, PLAYS  
TRADITIONAL MUSIC ON OLD GUITAR. JAYS BAD TIMES LEAVE PEOPLE  
LITTLE APPETITE TO GAZE AT THE "SPHERES CELESTIAL".

- LIST FIELD TRIPS? LOCATION, DATE, ROCK. KATHON - CHRONIC  
FIRES? thysia

the young man seemed to take my shock for guilty knowledge: gasping that I was "one of them" and that he had been "led into a trap".

Dropping the empty lemonade glass to the floor, he bolted for the door. Abandoned brochures fluttered in his wake.

-THOUGH IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO CONTACT HIM THROUGH HIS COMPANY, WE MUST FIRST DEVISE A MEANS OF APPROACH TO OVERCOME HIS SKITTISHNESS. GIVEN OUR LIMITED RESOURCES I AM INCLINED TO ALLOW THIS ODD INCIDENT TO LIE MOMENTARILY FALLEN. THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE MAN THAT DID NOT SIT RIGHT. I CANNOT DECIDE WHETHER HE WAS SINCERE, SINCERE BUT DELUDED, OR PLAYING A CURIOUS GAME OF SOME SORT, MEANT TO LURE ME DOWN A DARK ALLEY.

• A WITNESS REPORT SAYS THAT TWO AUTOMOBILES LEFT FOR THE AFOREMENTIONED HOSPITAL ON THE NIGHT IN QUESTION. ONE A BLACK ROADSTER, THE OTHER A BATTERED PICKUP TRUCK. THEY WERE LAST SEEN ROUNDING CROWN HILL - IN THE BACK OF THE TRUCK WERE LARGE UNIDENTIFIED OBJECTS COVERED WITH A LARGE BLANKET, POSSIBLY OF BURLAP. THE INFORMANT ~~REMARKED~~ INDICATED THAT SOMETHING WRITHED BENEATH THE BLANKET, BUT WHEN PRESSED COULD NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE WIND BLOWING UPON IT MADE IT LOOK AS IF ANIMATED FROM BELOW.

• TEMPORARY OPERATIVE OLSON IS STILL ON SITE AT THE ARMY BASE. REPORTS NO OVERTLY UNTOWARDED ACTIVITY.

• ~~WAS~~?? MASS. PLATE?  
DRIVERS?



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 2

Tears Of Azazoth: I insist to the others that this dread volume is so much flim-flammery, a nonexistent thing. A feverish rumor in the greedy hearts of certain London booksellers. A risible whisper among the most corruptly sensualist dilettantes of the occult underground. A cover composed of an unknown substance, jet-inky and yet with the thinness and pliability of onion skin? The mesmerizing ensign on the cover? Surely it is a fictional imagining, found in the pages of Dunsany or Machen, regurgitated as half-remembered legend.

The Circus: May be one of several traveling carnivals traveling up and down the eastern seaboard. Not technically a circus, I suppose, without a big top and performing elephants, yet somehow the other term seems coarse, unseemly. At any rate, have placed discreet calls to law enforcement officials. Their view of all such entertainments is a dim one. This colors my attempt to narrow them down from the merely dissolute to the truly occultic.

I have two names for strongmen (is that the plural?), suggesting separate accounts of two itinerant shows: Vladimir Krotkin and Sergei Garkalin. First name may have been garbled; witness' command of foreign names perhaps shaky. In each instance of the story the strongman was an intimidating force, violently preventing entry to the freak show tent, where the true secret was to be found.

New England League Of Amateur Astronomers: a.k.a (N.E.L.A.A.) — pronounced Neela, as in a woman's name --- club for stargazers — members appeared drawn throughout greater Miskatonic river basin — meetings monthly — \$2 full membership; \$1 auxiliary — no doubt to Mrs. Pickman's chagrin, showed the Inquiry's utmost largess,

paying full \$2 — field trips include visits to isolated and craggy hilltops “so as better to see the stars” — heard a bizarre theory of a concept of “light pollution”, whereas the luminescences of cities would grow ever brighter, so that future generations would be able to see the heavens properly only from the deepest woods or hermitic mountaintops, the only places on earth where purest blackness would still rule — issue a newsletter (have so far read sixteen issues, all of them stultifying and devoid of esoteric import) — Christmas social held always on December 21<sup>st</sup> — questioned occult significance of this (obliquely) to organization president Thomas Ongine. Laughed and pointed out obvious appeal of solstice to astronomers. “Always darkest before the dawn.” Bit of a hayseed. Plays traditional music on old guitar. Says bad times leave people little appetite to gaze at the spheres celestial.

Peculiar incident the other day at home. Doorbell rang to find a man standing there carrying sample volume of home encyclopedia. Very young for the job. Late twenties, freckled. Yet something hard about him, around the eyes. As if he'd seen too much already. But my first glimpse of him was all smiles, as he sheepishly looked at my tweed jacket and pipe and general professorial demeanor and realized that I would not be a candidate to purchase his line of general interest educational volumes. I was about to politely dismiss him when the housekeeper spotted the fellow, noted his likely thirst in that damnable maternal manner of hers, and invited him into the kitchen for lemonade. Philip was his name, or perhaps his last name was Philips. The housekeeper drew him out on personal matters—his marriage, children. Seemed eager to change the subject. He eyed my bookshelves hungrily. The man turned out to be quite the auto-didact. There is no

personality type more consistently wearisome to the professional man of letters. Insensible to my attempts to deflect and deflate him, his rambling discourse quickly encompassed such topics as Atlantis, eugenics, and (it goes without saying) Roosevelt's secret socialist leanings. I waited for his tumbling words to reach their inevitable conclusion—the usual litany of vituperations against the Hebrew race. Instead his blurtings disembarked at the second most likely station: the threat represented by Freemasonry. As I subtly ushered him toward the door, his accusations took an odd turn. He claimed that most masonic groups were ordinary and harmless, but that a very few had been taken over by followers of Satan. He mentioned the Helping Hands service group (which, unlike Circle Rite Lodge is not in fact affiliated with the masonic movement.) At least two, perhaps three, local chapters had given themselves over to murder and sacrifice. The voluble salesman claimed to have peered accidentally into a meeting held in a barn, where he saw a hobo led in, shackled and bleeding. He ran away before he was seen, but was sure that the poor wretch was destined for the knife. Sensing my disbelief, the salesman became indignant. He heard an “inhuman chant”, he claimed, that he could not get out of his head. Then, to my evident startlement, he echoed the all-too-familiar summons to the black goat of the woods: “Iä! Shub-Niggurath!” At this point the young man seemed to take my shock for guilty knowledge, gasping that I was “One of them,” and that he had been “led into a trap.” Dropping the empty lemonade glass to the floor, he bolted for the door. Abandoned brochures fluttered in his wake. Though it may be possible to contact him through his company, we must first devise a means of approach to overcome his skittishness. Given our limited resources, I am inclined to allow

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 2

this odd incident to lie momentarily fallow. There was something about the man that did not sit right. I cannot decide if he was sincere, sincere but deluded, or playing a curious game of some sort, meant to lure me down a dark alley.

A witness report says that two automobiles left for the aforementioned hospital on the night

in question, one a black roadster, the other a battered pickup truck. They were last seen rounding Crown Hill. In the back of the truck were large unidentified objects covered with a large blanket, possibly of burlap. The informant indicated that something writhed beneath the blanket, but when pressed could not rule out the simple possibility that the wind blowing upon it made it look as if

animated from below.

Temporary operative Olson is still on site at the army base. Reports no overtly untoward activity.



[highlighting that night it saw at the darkened window]

TEARS OF AZAZOTH: DISCUSSION CONTINUES - ~~WRITE~~ I NOW FIND, FOR REASONS ~~THAT I CAN~~ I CANNOT NOW EXPRESS AS WORDS ON PAPER - MAKE A MUSICAL TONE A THOUGHT TINGLING IN THE BACK OF THE PRIMAL BRAIN ~~about the~~ ~~fact~~

THAT IT DID EXIST. THAT IT DOES EXIST. NONE OF US CAN RECALL THE ORIGINAL REFERENCE - AND IT IS DAMNABLY ANNOYING.

THE SENSATION THAT A MEMORY IS TANTALIZINGLY CLOSE, YET WILL NOT SURFACE FROM THE TURBID WATERS OF THE UNCONSCIOUS. RICE BLURTS OUT THAT A REFERENCE TO IT APPEARS IN THE NECKRONOMICON AND SUDDENLY I FIND MYSELF IN AGREEMENT WITH HIM.

YET BY PORING OVER THAT DREAD VOLUME [the shudders this has aroused in me, the increasing awareness of the pattern of movement in the dreamlands] - IN MY CONFIDENCE THAT REFERENCE TO THE TEARS WOULD BE

FOUND IN THE PERORATIONS OF THE MAD ARAB, I ENTERED INTO A GENTLEMANLY WAGER WITH WILMARTH, WITH A CASE OF SHERRY AS A PRIZE. HE WAS CERTAIN THAT IT WOULD BE FOUND IN A CASE FILE - SPECIFICALLY, THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT WITH THE LATE FORTUNE-TELLER AND EMBELLER WOLF-DIETRICH GUDZUHN. NEITHER OF US WILL BE FORCED TO REPLENISH THE DEPARTMENT'S WINE CELLAR, FOR THERE WAS NO REFERENCE TO IT THERE, EITHER. ASHLEY THINKS HE HEARD IT AROUND THE CAMPFIRE DURING THE WESTERN AUSTRALIA EXPEDITION, BUT CANNOT RECALL WHO MENTIONED IT.

DYER SAYS I TOLD HIM ABOUT IT IN 1928 BUT I HAVE NO RECOLLECTION OF ~~MYSELF~~ HAVING DONE SO -

I HAVE AN INCREASSING SENSE THAT ALL OF THE THREATS ARE CONNECTED IN SOME WAY. AN ODD THOUGHT OCCURRED TO ME WHILE PERFORMING MY MORNING ABLUTIONS:

THIS IS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE CAUGHT IN THE WORKINGS OF A GRIM DESTINY.

BEFORE ALL THE PIECES HAVE MOVED INTO PLACE... BUT WHAT IF THE PIECES STARTED OUT IN PLACE AND WE ARE LIVING IN REVERSE, THROUGH THE PROCESS OF

the thing my weary perception thought

AN ENTROPIC DEVOLUTION? THAT IT BEGINS IN HORROR AND ENDS  
IN HORROR, AND THAT ONLY FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT

NO. I HAVE LOST THE THREAD.

THE BACKWARDS METAPHOR DOES NOT PERTAIN IF IT IS A CONTINUUM...  
AND YET THERE IS SOMETHING TO IT THAT I HAVE YET TO GRASP.

-

- WHEN ASHLEY ASKED FOR THE FILE ON THE AMERICAN PRESERVATION LEAGUE, IT WAS MISSING. MUST NOW JOT NOTES TO RECONSTRUCT FROM MEMORY...

#### AMERICAN PRESERVATION LEAGUE.

- POLITICAL PARTY, FULL MEMBERSHIP C. 20; SUBSCRIBERS TO ITS BULLETIN NUMBER IN HUNDREDS.
- LED BY FOUNDER FRED JAHRAUS. (JARASZ?)
- FINANCED BY SUBSCRIBER DONATIONS.
- IDEOLOGY PRIMARILY ISOLATIONIST - MOST PLATFORM PLANKS TYPICAL OF THAT CAUSE: AVOID ENTANGLEMENT IN WORLD AFFAIRS, esp. EUROPEAN; LIMITS ON IMMIGRATION, esp. BY NON ANGLO-SAXON, NON-NORTHERN EUROPEAN.
- ECCENTRIC BELIEFS PREVENT ASSOCIATION WITH ACCEPTED POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS OF SIMILAR STEEP: including CALL FOR CURRENCY DEVALUATION AND A COMPLEX FORMULA FOR CHANGES TO ELECTORAL COLLEGE ENGINEERED TO INCREASE CLOUT OF STATES WITH RACIALLY 'PURE' POPULATIONS.
- JAHRAUS PART OF LARGE HOUSEHOLD CONSISTING OF SELF, HIS MOTHER AND MANY FORMER FOSTER CHILDREN OF HIS MOTHER - ALL PREVENT APL SUPPORTERS.
- CAME TO OUR ATTENTION AS INCONCLUSIVE AVENUE OF INVESTIGATION DURING THE RED HOLLOW CASE; IT WAS PRASLEE WHO BRUSHED UP AGAINST THEM - DIAGNOSED THEM AS EVIDENCING ODD AFFECT CHARACTERISTIC OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER, WITH PECULIAR SPEECH ~~INTERMITTENT~~ DELAYS REMINISCENT OF, BUT NOT IDENTICAL TO, INNSMOUTH RESIDENTS - ON ACCOUNT OF HIS BRIEF EXPOSURE

TO THEM, PEASLEE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY ~~ARE~~ SHARE A MUNDANE DISORDER. WHATEVER THE CASE, THE FEAR OF OUTSIDERS THAT ANIMATES THEIR POLITICAL TRACTS MAKES THEM DIFFICULT SUBJECTS FOR INTERACTION.

- YET JAHKAUS SEEMED ODDLY TRUSTING AFTER PEASLEE MADE A MODICUM OF EFFORT TO APPEAR SYMPATHETIC TO HIS VIEWS.

FOR SOME REASON THE WORD "THOMARITES" OR "THOMAR" COMES TO MIND.

\* TOMARZI. 1926.

L.A. WADDELL

DS485. HB W2 1000.

BONY SKULL STRUCTURE

SIMILAR TO 'VETI' OF

IF MALAYAN FOLKLORE?

• IMPRESSIONS OF THE THING SEEN IN THE LIBRARY:

- HAIR-COVERED, THE CRESTED TOP OF ITS HEAD REACHED TO TOP SHELF OF MAP SECTION, THEREFORE APPROX. 7 FEET IN HEIGHT.

- SCALES OR CURIOUS FOLLICULAR PATTERN VISIBLE WHERE HAIR SPARSE OR ABSENT - PATTERNS OF HAIRLESSNESS NOT CONSISTENT, SUGGESTING DISEASE (MANGE?) OR WEAR.

- PUNGENT AMMONIA SMELL MIXED WITH SOMETHING LIKE VANILLA, ~~BITTER~~



BUT SEARING, esp. AT THE

BACK OF THE THROAT - PROVOKED SUBSTANTIAL WELLING OF TEARS - SUBSEQUENT TO ENCOUNTER, RICE AND I WERE LEFT COUGHING UP MUCUS FOR 48 HOURS. MUCUS WAS YELLOW-GREEN AND VIEWED UNDER MICROSCOPE WAS SEEN TO CONTAIN LONG STRANDS & FILAMENTS OF AN UNIDENTIFIED INORGANIC MATTER, BLACK IN COLOR. THESE HAVE SINCE DRIED AND RESOLVED INTO A FINE POWDER.

- MOIST IMPRESSIONS LEFT IN RUG NEAR CARD CATALOGUE.

- AS I LOOKED INTO THE APPARITION'S

EMPTY EYES I WAS UNABLE TO SHAKE

IMPRESSION THAT THE THING I WAS LOOKING

AT WAS SOMEHOW NOT A CREATURE, BUT A

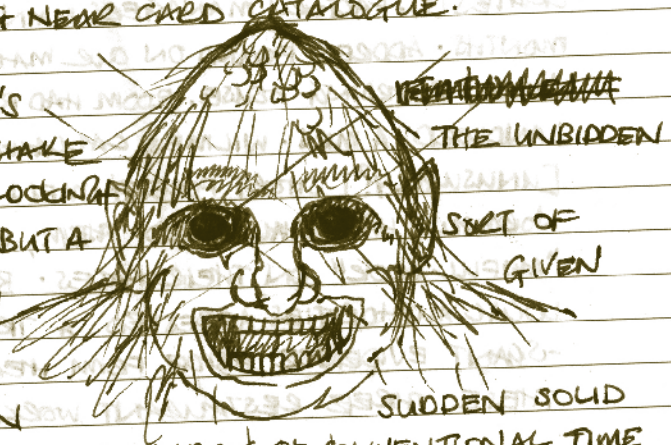
OMEN OR HARBINGER. A SYMPTOM,

APPARENT SOLIDITY, OF A GREATER

ILLNESS INFECTING THE WORLD.

OR PERHAPS A HALLUCINATION GIVEN

FORM. A RIP HAD APPEARED IN THE VERY FABRIC OF CONVENTIONAL TIME AND SPACE, MANIFESTING THIS THING - AS THE MEDIUMS OF A GENERATION PAST SUMMONED ECTOPLASM FROM THE BOUNDLESS AETHER.



THE UNBIDDEN

SORT OF  
GIVEN

SUDDEN SOLID

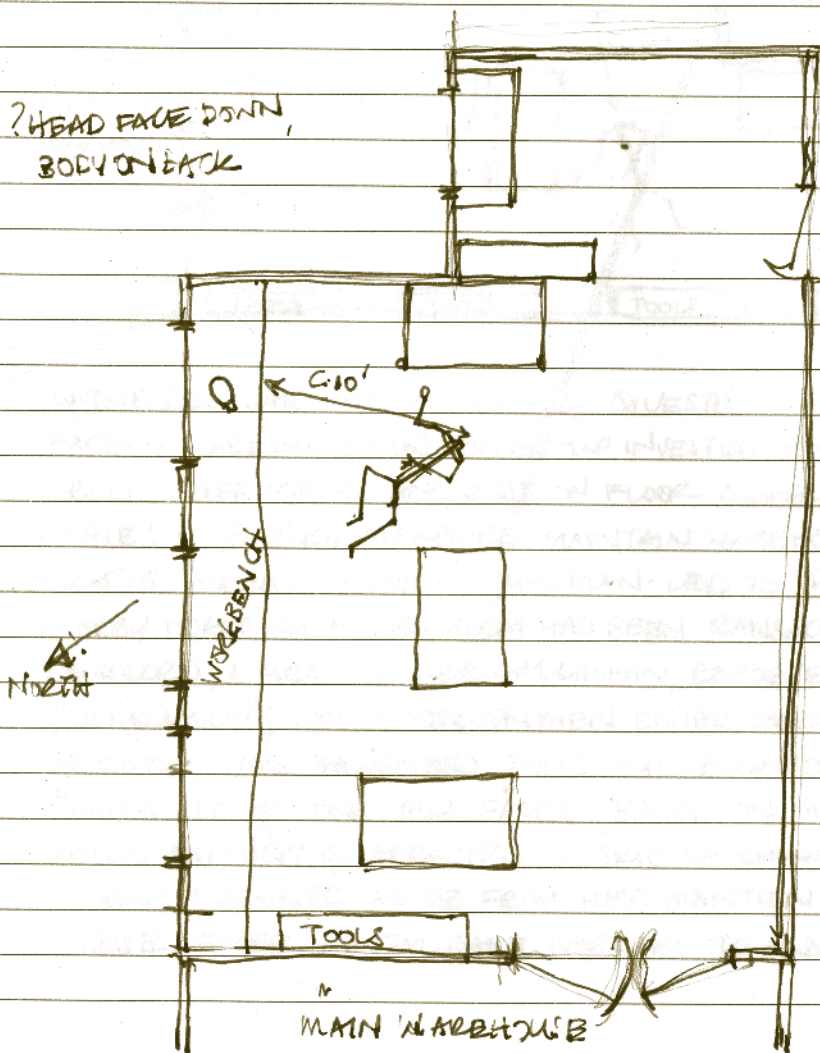
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ FOUND DEAD ON FACTORY FLOOR -  
regrettable loss of a fine investigator..

- COLLEAGUES SURPRISED TO FIND HIM THERE. FACTORY WORKER  
WILL MORAN INDICATED TO POLICE THAT ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ WAS SEEN ON THE  
SHOP FLOOR HOURS EARLIER.

#### CONDITION OF CORPSE.

HEAD NEATLY SEVERED FROM BODY. BLOOD PRESENT BOTH IN HEAD AND  
TORSO BUT DID NOT SPILL FROM EITHER WOUND, REMAINING IN THE BODY AS  
IF KEPT THERE BY UNKNOWN FORCE.

→ ONLY WHEN BODY MOVED BY MEDICAL EXAMINERS DID THE REMAINS  
BEGIN TO EXSANGUINATE.



- WITNESSES SAID HE WAS ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF A FACTORY WAREHOUSE. ON FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION WAREHOUSE WAS FOUND TO BE EMPTY. FRESH SCUFFS IN DUST ON FLOOR POINTED TO RECENT MOVEMENT OF CRATES. FACTORY MANAGERS MAINTAIN WAREHOUSE HAS STOOD EMPTY FOR MONTHS. ADDRESS FOUND ON OUR MAN LED TO THE ROOM HE RENTED IN A NEARBY BOARDING HOUSE.

ROOM WAS FOUND RANSACKED. NOTEBOOK MISSING.

BOARDING HOUSE LANDLORD, MRS. WILMER CALLAHAN, REPORTED SEEING SEVERAL "SWARTHY, [UNUSUALLY?] SHORT FOREIGN MEN ENTER MORAN'S

ROOM. SAID SHE WOULD NORMALLY HAVE CHALLENGED THEM, BUT "DECLINED" TO DO SO DUE TO "AWFUL LOOK" ON THEIR FACES. BASED ON MRS. CALLAHAN'S TESTIMONY, LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARRESTED A TRIO OF CHINAMEN FOR THE SLAYING.

SCANT EVIDENCE ASIDE FROM HER MENTION OF FOREIGNERS TIES THESE THREE RESTAURANT WORKERS TO ANY CRIME.

Tears Of Azazoth: discussion continues. I now find, for reasons I cannot now express as words on paper—more a musical tone, a thought tingling in the back of the primal brain—buzz, buzz—that it did exist, that it does exist. None of us can recall the original reference, and it is damnably annoying. The sensation that a memory is tantalizingly close, yet will not surface from the turbid waters of the unconscious. Rice blurts out that a reference to it appears in the *Necronomicon*. And suddenly I find myself in agreement with him. Yet by poring over that dread volume (the shudders this has aroused in me, the increasing awareness of the patterns of movement in the Dreamlands, the thing my weary perceptions thought it saw at the darkened window that night). In my confidence that reference to The Tears would be found in the crazed perorations of the mad Arab, I entered into a gentlemanly wager with Wilmarth, with a case of sherry as the prize. He was certain that it would be found in a case file—specifically in the interview transcript with the late fortune teller and embezzler Wolf-Dietrich Gudzuhn. Neither of us will be forced to replenish the department's liquor cabinet, for there was no reference to it there, either. Ashley thinks he heard it around the campfire during the Western Australia expedition, but cannot recall from who. Dyer says I told him about it in 1928, but I have no recollection of having done so.

Increasing sense that all of the threats are unknowingly connected. An odd thought occurred to me while performing my morning ablutions: that this is what it feels like to be caught in the workings of a grim destiny, before all of the pieces have moved into place.

But what if the pieces started out in place, and we are living in reverse,

through the process of an entropic devolution? That it begins in horror and ends in horror, and that only from our vantage point... no, I have lost the thread. The backwards metaphor does not pertain if it is a continuum — yet there is something to it that I have yet to grasp.

When Ashley asked for the file on the American Preservation League, it turned up missing. Am now jotting down notes to reconstruct from memory. Political party, full membership approximately twenty, subscribers to its bulletin number in the hundreds — led by founder Fred Jahraus (Jarasz?) — financed by subscriber donations — ideology primarily isolationist — most of its platform planks typical of that cause (avoid entanglement in world affairs, esp. European; limits on immigration, esp. by non-Anglo Saxon, non-Northern European) — eccentric beliefs prevent their association with accepted political organizations of similar stripe: include call for currency devaluation, and a complex formula of changes to Electoral College engineered to increase clout of states with racially pure populations — Jahraus part of large household consisting of self, his mother, and many former foster children of his mother — all fervent APL supporters. Came to our attention as inconclusive avenue of investigation during the Red Hollow case. It was Peaslee who brushed up against them. Diagnosed them as evidencing odd affect characteristic of possible psychological disorder. Peculiar speech delays reminiscent of, but not identical to Innsmouth residents. On account of his short exposure to them, Peaslee cannot rule out the possibility that they share a mundane disorder. Whatever the case, the fear of outsiders that animates their political tracts makes them difficult subjects for interaction. Yet Jahraus also seemed

oddly trusting after Peaslee made a modicum of effort to appear sympathetic to his views.

For some reason the word “Thomarites” or “Thomar” comes to mind.

Impressions of the thing seen in the library: hair covered, the crested top of its head (bony skull structure reminiscent of yeti of Himalayan folklore?) reached to top shelf of map section, therefore seven feet in height approximately — scales or curious follicular pattern in areas where hair was not present — patterns of hairlessness not consistent, suggesting mangy quality or wear — pungent ammonia smell mixed with something like vanilla, but searing, esp. at the back of the throat — provoked substantial welling of tears — subsequent encounter, both Rice and I were left coughing up mucus for 48 hrs. — mucus was yellowy-green in color — viewed under microscope was seen to contain long filaments of unidentified inorganic matter, black in color — have since dried out and resolved into a fine powder. Moist impressions left in rug near card catalogue.

As I looked into the apparition's empty eyes, I was unable to shake the unbidden impression that the thing I was looking at was somehow not a creature, but a sort of omen or harbinger. A symptom, given apparent solidity, of a greater illness infecting the world. Or perhaps a hallucination given sudden solid form. A rip had appeared in the very fabric of conventional time and space, manifesting this thing, as the mediums of a generation past summoned ectoplasm from the boundless æther.

found dead on factory floor. Regrettable loss of a fine investigator.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 3

Colleagues surprised to find him there. Factory worker Will Moran indicated to police that was seen on the shop floor hours earlier.

Condition of corpse: head neatly severed from body. Blood present both in head and in torso, but did not spill from either wound, remaining in the body as if kept there by unknown force. Only when body moved by medical examiners did the remains begin to exsanguinate.

Witnesses said he was asking questions about the contents of a factory warehouse. On follow-up investigation warehouse was found to be empty. Fresh scuffs and dust marks on floor pointed to recent movement of crates. Factory managers maintain warehouse has stood empty for months. Address found on our man led to the room he'd rented in a nearby boarding house. Room was found ransacked. Notebook missing. Boarding house

landlord, a Mrs. Wilmer Callahan, reported seeing several "swarthy, (unusually?) short, foreign" men enter Moran's room. Said she would normally have challenged them, but declined from doing so due to "awful look" on their faces. Based on Mrs. Callahan's testimony, local authorities arrested a trio of Chinamen for the slaying. Scant evidence, aside from her mention of foreigners, ties these three restaurant workers to any crime.



DYER HAS FOUND A REFERENCE TO THE TEARS OF AZAZOT  
OWN LIBRARY COLLECTION AS LATE AS 1908! HAVE INSTITUTE  
FOR IT IN THE RARE BOOK COLLECTION AND THE REGULAR ST  
STOLEN AS WAS THE NECRONOMICON, BY W. WHATELEY?

### MORE DEATHS.

spared the necessity of attempting frenetic detachment by the mind  
nature of their mundus.

PEASLEE GONE, HEAD AND PULPED BY METAL POLE. FREEBORN  
MRS. PICKMAN GONE TOO—MASSIVE STROKE—PRAY SHE IN FACT SU  
NAMED NATURAL CAUSES.

LITTLE CHANCE THAT HER HEIRS WILL CONTINUE INQUIRY FUNDING.  
ATTEMPTING TO FIND ALTERNATIVE PATRONS, BUT THE EXERCISE MAY BE MOOT.

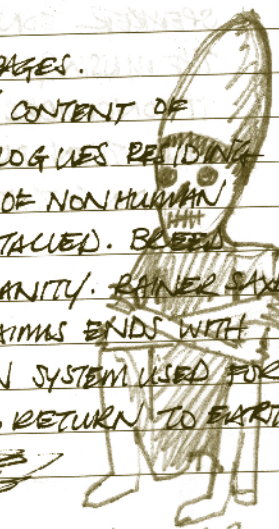
FREEBORN DEAD IN ZURICH ON SUPPOSEDLY ROUTINE ERRAND FOR  
LIBRARY. ATTEMPTING TO SECURE PURCHASE OF BASEL CODEX FROM  
RARE BOOK DEALER OTTO VOSSKUEHLER. ACQUISITION WAS TO BE FUNDED  
BY MRS. PICKMAN. VOSSKUEHLER ALSO MISSING; POSSIBLE AHNENERBE  
INVOLVEMENT IN SHOOTING/KIDNAPPING. NO SIGN OF CODEX, IF VOSSKUEHLER  
EVER POSSESSED IT. —

CODEX EITHER AN AUTHENTIC MAYAN PICTOGRAPHIC TEXT (112 PP; FOLDED PAPER  
HAND-SCRIBED ON FIG-TREE BARK) OR NOTORIOUS FORGERY.

—SEE NEUE ARCHÄOLOGIE SPRING 1991 FOR 6 PAGES OF  
CASE AGAINST AUTHENTICITY BASED ON CONCERN RE 'OUTCANDISH' CONTENT OF  
EVENTS DEPICTED IN CODEX, AS COMPARED TO ACCEPTED ANALOGUES RESEMBLING  
IN DRESEN & MADRID. BASEL SHOWS WEIRD CREATION MYTH OF NON-HUMAN  
ARRIVAL ON EARTH, DEPICTING BEINGS CYLINDRICAL, TENTACLED. BORED  
APES INTO SLAVE RACE, SLAVE RACE REBELS, BECOMES HUMANITY. RAINER FEXER  
(1852-1895, MURDERED IN BASEL ASYLUM) DISCOVERED CODEX, CLAIMS ENDS WITH  
PROPHECY OF FUTURE RECURRENCE. DEPENDING ON TRANSLATION SYSTEM USED FOR  
MAYAN CALENDAR, THE CYLINDRICAL RACE IS PREDICTED TO RETURN TO EARTH  
SOMETIME IN THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

DEATH

VERA CRUZ





SHORTLY AFTER FREBBORN'S DEATH, A TELEPHONE CALL FROM SOMEONE CLAIMING TO BE VOSSKUEHLER WAS PLACED TO THE LIBRARY OFFICE. BOTH LLANFER AND I ABSENT; CALL TAKEN BY SECRETARY, MISS LESLIE. SHE REPORTS ODD CLICKS AND POPS OVER LINE, MORE THAN USUAL FOR TRANSATLANTIC CALL. THE CALLER'S ACCENT WAS ALSO PECULIAR, NOT SWISS OR GERMAN (MISS LESLIE HAS GERMAN COUSINS AND CLAIMS SHE WOULD RECOGNIZE A TRUE ACCENT). VOICE HAD AN ODD, HALTING LILT; INITIALLY SHE THOUGHT THE CALLER WAS INJURED. SHE EXPLAINED THAT SHE WAS MERELY A SECRETARY, BUT THE SPEAKER CONTINUED TO INTERROGATE HER, DEMANDING TO KNOW WHERE THE MISSING PAGES WERE. THE VOICE GREW STRANGER AND MORE SHRILL, IT CONCLUDED WITH THE WORDS "I CAN SEE INSIDE YOU, YOU UNDERSTAND" AND THEN DISCONNECTED. MISS LESLIE WAS TAKEN ILL SHORTLY AFTER FIELDING THE CALL, AND REMAINS BEDRIDDEN WITH A PERSISTENT FEVER.

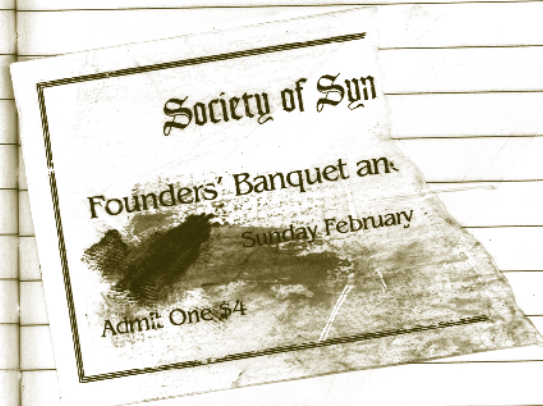
PEASLEE'S DEATH CAME TWO WEEKS AFTER HE ATTAINED MEMBERSHIP OF  
ARKHAM CHAPTER OF SOCIETY OF SYNCRETIC INQUIRY.

- COLLOQUIUM OF SCIENTISTS, ACADEMICS AND INTERESTED LAYMEN DEDICATED TO  
"PROMOTING RESEARCH ACROSS DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES"

- UMBRELLA ORG. 1912 LONDON, VIENNA 1913, NEW YORK (1914?) ARKHAM  
CHAPTER C. 1924. THIS SCIENTIFIC BODY, COMPOSED MAINLY OF TENURED  
ACADEMICS, PROMOTES RESEARCH ACROSS DISCIPLINARY LINES.

- I WAS ONCE INVITED TO ATTEND BY FORMER CHAPTER HEAD WILFRED WAKELING,  
NOW THREE YEARS DEAD. REMEMBER MUCH PIPE SMOKE AND INVIGORATING  
SPECULATION. WAKELING KNEW THE MYTHOS AND OCCASIONALLY ACCESSED  
THE SPECIAL BOOK COLLECTION. HAD THE IMPRESSION I WAS BEING SOUNDED  
OUT ABOUT SOMETHING - WE CIRCLED LIKE WARY TIGERS, NEITHER YIELDING  
HIS SECRETS. SENT PEASLEE IN AFTER NEW CHAP, EDWIN CARSDALE, TOOK  
OVER. MORE THAN A FAINT WHIFF OF BRIMSTONE FROM HIM.

WITH HINDSIGHT I NOW REALIZE SOMETHING ABOUT HIM REMINDED ME OF  
THE HAIRY PHANTASM RICE AND I ~~HEARD~~ BEHELD IN THE LIBRARY.



AND NOW PEASLEE IS GONE.

I SENT HIM TO HIS END.

GAZING AT A PHOTOGRAPH OF EDWIN CARSDALE, A CURIOUS CONNECTION SNAPS INTO PLACE.

IT'S THE LOOK IN HIS EYES.

I GO TO THE NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE. THERE, FROM THREE YEARS AGO, THE FAMOUS PHOTOGRAPH OF BANK ROBBER RUSSELL FUSCHAK, USED ON HIS 'WANTED' POSTERS. NEITHER MAN RESEMBLES THE OTHER, BUT IN ESSENCE—THE INDEFINABLE CONTINUITY IS IN THE DEAD GUEAM OF THEIR EYES.

FUSCHAK TILTS HIS HEAD AS DOES CARSDALE.

THE SINISTER HAUTEUR.

A SMIRKING KNOWLEDGE OF COMING CHAOS.

FUSCHAK AND HIS COMPANION JAMES ROSS DONLAND WERE KILLED ALONG WITH THREE ACCOMPLICES LAST AUGUST. DIED IN A HAIL OF FBI BULLETS NEAR EMIGRANT, MONTANA. HAVE CONTACTED FRIENDLY JOURNALIST AT OREGONIAN DAILY CHRONICLE. HE SAYS RUMOR ATTRIBUTES "SOME MYSTIC ELEMENT" TO THE "FUSCHAK-DONLANDS GANG". COMPANION FUSCHAK ALLEGED TO HAVE CONSULTED FORTUNE TELLER BEFORE EACH BANK JOB; SAID TO HAVE FALLEN OUT WITH HER BY REFUSING TO STRIKE AT A PARTICULAR BANK AS HER DAEMONS COMMANDED. SHE THEN READ THE TAROT FOR HIM—AND SAW HIS DEATH. LOCAL LEGEND HAS IT THAT HER CURSE LED TO HIS FATAL ENCOUNTER WITH G-MEN A WEEK LATER. OTHER, MORE PRACTICAL RUMORS HOLD THAT THE FORTUNE TELLER INFORMED ON HIM TO THE FBI, COLLECTING A CONSIDERABLE REWARD.

- INTERRUPTED JUST NOW BY A VISIT FROM EDWIN CARIDAGE. HE WANTS ME TO JOIN THE JOSI. QUITE BROKEN UP OVER WHAT HAPPENED TO PEASLEE. HE CLAIMED. BLAMED IT ON ANARCHISTS!! MENTIONED THE PEASLEE SITUATION AS IF HE KNEW ALL ABOUT IT. SAID ~~THAT~~ IDEOLOGUES OF 'ALL STRIPES' JOINT A WORLDWIDE BLACKOUT NOT ONLY OF KNOWLEDGE, BUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS. ONLY MEN OF LEARNING & GOODWILL COULD STEM THE TIDE OF MADNESS.

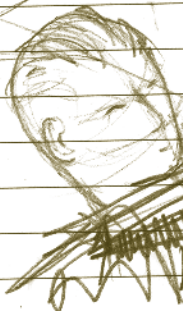
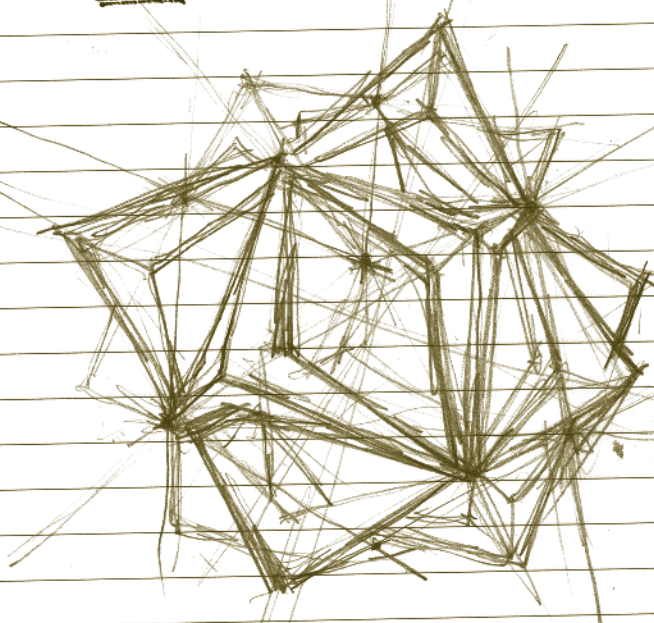
THEN HE SAW THE FUSCHACK-DONLANDS NEWSPAPER CLIPPING ON MY DESK AND VISIBLY BLANCHED. SEEMED TO WITHDRAW THE OFFER OF MEMBERSHIP AND ALL BUT TRIPPED OVER HIMSELF ON THE WAY OUT THE DOOR.

TEMPTED TO FOLLOW HIM, BUT OUR RANKS ARE THINKING.

IT IS NOT SAFE TO STAY HERE.  
I CAN RELY ON NO ONE ELSE.

I MUST GO OUT, AS IF I WERE A YOUNGER MAN, AND BECOME A FIELD OPERATIVE.

I WILL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS.



Dyer has found a reference to the Tears Of Azazoth in our own library collection as late as 1908. Have instituted a search for it in the rare book collection and in the regular stacks. Stolen, as was the Necronomicon by W. Whateley?

More deaths. Spared the necessity of attempting forensic detachment by mundane nature of their murders. Peaslee gone, head pulped by metal pole. Freeborn shot through heart. Mrs. Pickman gone too, of massive stroke. Pray she in fact succumbed to the named natural causes. Little chance that her heirs will continue Inquiry funding. Attempting to find alternate patrons but exercise may be moot.

Freeborn dead in Zürich on supposedly routine errand for the library. Attempting to secure purchase of Basel Codex from rare book dealer Otto Vosskuehler. (Acquisition to be financed by Mrs. Pickman.) Vosskuehler also missing. Possible Ahnenerbe involvement in shooting/kidnapping. No sign of codex, if Vosskuehler ever possessed it. Codex either an authentic Mayan pictographic text (112 p. folded paper, hand scribed on fig tree bark) or notorious forgery. See Spring 1891 *Neue Archäologie* for 6 facsimile pages. Case against authenticity mainly concerns outlandish content of events depicted in Codex, as compared to accepted analogues resident in Dresden, Madrid, etc. Depicts weird creation myth of nonhuman arrival on Earth. Beings depicted are cylindrical, tentacled. Breed apes into slave race, slave race rebels, becomes humanity. Discoverer of manuscript Rainer Saxer (1852-1895, murdered in Basel asylum) claims codex ended in a prophecy of future recurrence. Depending on which translation system one chooses to render the Mayan calendar, the cylindrical race is predicted to return

to Earth sometime in the next twenty years.

Shortly after Freeborn's death, a telephone call from someone claiming to be Vosskuehler was placed to the library office. Both Llanfer & myself absent; call taken by secretary, Miss Leslie. She reports odd pops and clicks over line, more than you'd expect from Transatlantic call. The caller's accent was also peculiar—not Swiss or German. (Miss Leslie has German cousins and claims she would recognize a true accent.) Voice possessed an odd, halting lilt. Initially she thought the speaker injured. She explained that she was merely a secretary but the speaker continued to interrogate her, demanding to know where the missing pages were. The voice grew stranger and more shrill. It concluded with the words "I can see inside you, you understand," and then disconnected. Miss Leslie took ill shortly after fielding the call and remains bedridden, with a persistent fever.

Peaslee's death came two weeks after he attained membership in Arkham chapter of Society Of Syncretic Inquiry. Colloquium of scientists, academics and interested laymen dedicated to "promoting research across disciplinary boundaries." Umbrella org. 1912 London, Vienna 1913, New York 1914? Arkham chap. started '24. This scientific body, composed mostly of tenured academics, promotes research across disciplinary lines. Once invited to attend by former chapter head, Wilfrid Wakeling, now three years dead. Remember much pipe smoke and invigorating speculation. Wakeling knew the Mythos and occasionally accessed the special book collection. Had the impression I was being sounded out about something. We circled like wary tigers, neither giving up his secrets. Sent Peaslee in after a new chap took over, Edwin

Carsdale. More than faint whiff of brimstone from him. With hindsight, I now realize that something about him reminded me of the hairy phantasm Rice & I beheld in the library.

And now Peaslee is gone. I sent him to his end.

Gazing at a photograph of Edwin Carsdale, a curious connection snaps into place. It's the look in his eye. I go to the newspaper collection. There—from three years ago, the famous photograph of bank robber Russell Fuschack, used in his wanted posters. Neither man resembles the other, but in essence—the indefinable continuity is in the dead gleam of their eyes. Fuschack tilts his head as does Carsdale. The sinister hauteur. A smirking knowledge of coming chaos.

Fuschack and his companion James Ross Donland were killed along with three accomplices last August. They died in a hail of FBI bullets near Emigrant, Montana. Have contacted friendly journalist at Bozeman Daily Chronicle. He says rumor attributes supernatural element to the Fuschack-Donlands Gang rampage. Fuschack alleged to have consulted fortune teller before each bank job. Said to have fallen out with her by refusing to strike at a particular bank, as her daemons commanded. She then read the tarot for him and drew the death card. Local legend has it that her curse led to his fatal encounter with G-Men a week later. Other more practical rumors hold that the fortune teller informed on him to the FBI, collecting considerable reward.

Interrupted just now by a visit from Edwin Carsdale. Said he wanted me to join the S.O.S.I. Quite broken up over what happened to Peaslee, he claimed. Blamed it on anarchists. Also mentioned the Peaslee situation as if he knew all about it. Said that

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

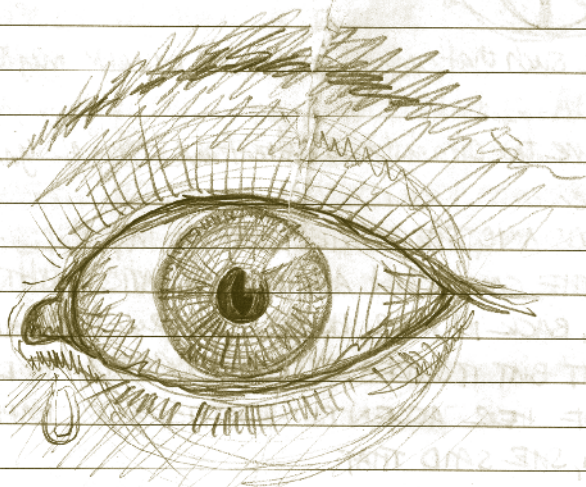
## Document 4

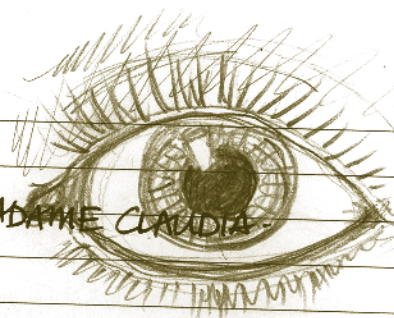
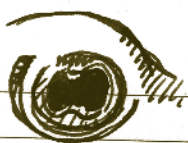
ideologues of all stripes sought a worldwide blackout not only of knowledge but of consciousness. Only men of learning and goodwill could stem the tide of madness. Then he saw the newspaper clipping on my desk depicting the Fuschack-Donlands and visibly blanched. Seemed to withdraw the offer of membership and all but tripped over himself on the way out the door. Tempted to follow him but our ranks are thinning.

It is not safe to stay here. I can rely on no one else. I must go out, as if I were a younger man, and become a field operative. Will get to the bottom of this.



IF I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I AM BEING WATCHED, I WILL BE PARALYZED. IN ORDER TO ACT I MUST PRETEND THAT I AM NOT.  
THIS WILL NOT STOP ME TAKING DEFENSIVE MEASURES, MIND YOU. BUT TO DIBELL ON THE ODDS AGAINST ME SERVES NO PURPOSE.





the fortune teller gives her name as MADAME CLAUDIA  
CLOUDY A??



Her smoky eyes are such that even a confirmed bachelor might trip and fall into them.

Were the circumstances different and a matter of significance hanging in the balance.

SHE DEALS THE CARDS AND THEY SWIRL BEFORE MY EYES.

SHE ARRANGES THE CARDS IN AN IDIOSYNCRATIC FASHION. SAYS SHE LEARNED THIS IN A SEASIDE TOWN, BACK IN HER HOME COUNTRY. I ATTEMPTED TO MEMORIZE THE NAME AS SHE SAID IT BUT IT SURFACED ONLY BRIEFLY TO DISAPPEAR BENEATH THE WHITTENED WATERS OF HER ACCENT. EXOTIC AND IMPENETRABLE.

PRESSED TO EXPLAIN, SHE SAID THAT

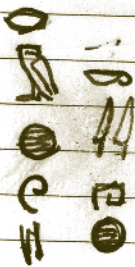
VILLAGES CLOSER TO THE SEA ARE THOSE THAT PRESERVE THE

• OLD WAYS BEST.

LAND CULTURES CHANGE BUT THOSE WHO DRAW THEIR LIVES FROM  
THE DARK WATERS

~~ARE ABLE TO~~ DRAW ON OLDER TRUTHS.

SHE TURNED OVER THE HIEROGLYPHIC AND SAYS THAT THE TEARS I HAVE BEEN CRYING WILL SOON BECOME LEGIBLE. AM I FINALLY CLOSE TO FINDING THE TEARS OF ARAZOTH?



ESSAY ON THE HIEROGLYPHIC  
J.G. GREPP, (STUART)  
BULLY 1830

SPINETTO 1829, 1845



CAN THE LINGUIST LARS FAGERBERG INDEED TRANSLATE THIS SCRAP OF RUBBED  
HIEROGLYPH I HAVE BEEN GIVEN OR IS IT A BIZARRE ~~SCRAP~~ FORGERY MEANT TO  
THROW ME ~~ONTO~~ OFF THE TRACK? AND IF SO WHAT CONNECTS HIM TO THE  
MARCUCCIO CRIME FAMILY? BECAUSE HERE I AM IN THIS ~~ABSTRACT~~ BEER-SMELLING  
CLUB JOINT WAITING FOR THE UD MAN'S ~~DEFINITION~~ ARRIVAL THERE IS A  
FAT BARTENDER!

Smackin' her was already taking my face looking at me knowing  
I DO NOT BELONG HERE.

A RUMMY ~~DELEGATE~~ SITS DOWN AT THE PLAYER PIANO PUNCHES ITS PEDALS OUT SCUMPS  
THE TOOLING CACOPHONY OF ARABIC'S REGIO PLASTIC FLAUTISTS  
BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME. WAS FABERBERG HAVING ME ON? LURING ME  
HERE PLANNING TO  
~~DETACH MY HEAD FROM MY SHOULDERS WITH A LENGTHY ANSWER~~ LURING ME  
HERE WITH NO INTENTION OF COMING HIMSELF??

I ASK IF THE MARCIZZOS OWN THIS PLACE AND AM  
~~INTRODUCED TO THE BOSS AND SEATED UNTIL HE RETURNS~~ ~~PERIOD~~ ~~INTRODUCTION~~  
GREETED BY STONY SILENCE. I AM HARDLY THE STREETWISE TYPE FOR THESE  
CIRCUMSTANCES.

BUT ~~IT IS~~ IS DEAD NOW. ~~HOUSE TOPPED AND INITIALED BY JRM/STP~~  
~~HOUSE TOPPED~~ PUMPED FULL OF CYANIDE.

NO SIGN OF FIBERGLASS AFTER ~~THE~~ ~~WATER~~ ~~CONCRETE~~ WITH AN ANCIENT WET MOUNTAIN MUCKY  
GLUE EMERGING FROM THE ROCKS AND MAKE INTERESTING CREATING NEW FORMS  
OF NOXIOUS LIFE BEING A NEW FORM UNDOCUMENTED BACTERIA AND  
WAITING FOR HOURS IN THIS STINKING DIVE.

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT THE MARCUROS: RUMS APPOINTED IN LITTLE ITALY - A ZAZO FATHER ELIO  
GANG FOUNDER ~~CHARTER~~ BLACK HAND, PRE-~~CHARTER~~ VOLSTEAD ACT ~~CHARTER~~ RAPID  
EXPANSION AND ENRICHMENT ~~DEACON~~ ~~DEACON~~ AS BEER BARRON DURING PROHIBITION  
CHARTER ~~CHARTER~~ ~~CHARTER~~ PROHIBITION - SINCE REPEAL, GAMBLING ~~DEACON~~ ~~DEACON~~  
PROHIBITION - ~~HAS~~ SOME RUMORS SAY NARCOTICS, ~~IT~~ ~~IT~~ OTHERS DENY AS CONTRARY  
TO ELIO MARCUZZI'S ROMANIST PIETIES (MOTHER ~~HYDRA~~ - ABUSED THAT HIS RELIGIOUS  
NATURAL ~~IT~~ WOULD PERMIT WHITE SLAVERY YET NOT DROPE TRAFFIC ~~STILL~~  
NIGHT ~~IT~~ - LIEUTENANT DOMENICO AND USERO MARCUZZI (YOUNGER  
BROTHER) VITOLO MARCHESE & MAX BERANINIA (ON ~~IT~~ ~~IT~~ BROTHER-IN-LAW). TIGHTEN  
FAMILY ~~IT~~ NO POLICE INFILTRATION POSSIBLE. ~~IT~~ ~~IT~~ ~~IT~~ does the collection  
of A GAMBLING DEBT EXPLAIN THEIR POSSESSION OF THE TEARS OF AZAZOTH & doves

AT THE VERY LEAST THERE WAS OVER FABEREGG WHO POSSESSES IT OR IS IT  
ANOTHER RABBIT HOLE? ~~THE JOURNAL~~

SEPARATION EPITHEMAL TISSUE BETWEEN SKULL BRAIN ROASTING SMOEL INSIDE PECINEUM / THOUGHT  
CANCER BURROWING BURNING LASHING SLASHING INNER BETRAYAL HUNGER AGAIN ALREADY ~~HUNGER~~

MY OWN NOTES BETRAY ME.  
FILLED WITH MADNESS.

UNSURE WHY I AM WRITING THESE ABSURD THINGS. GROSSING THEM OUT  
RETURNS THE SENTENCES TO ACCURACY AND COHERENCE. THEY ARE THE  
TRUTH. IT IS THAT WHICH IS NOT CROSSED OUT THAT IS UTTERLY  
DECEPTIVE ~~MOBIS BURROWING~~

is a very scary film but have been in such places before the STENCH OF THE OCEAN  
THE DAMNABLE DAMNABLE OCEAN EYES GRIND UPON ME FROM EVERY SHUTTERED  
WINDOW THE CURTAINS DRAWN TIGHT UNTIL THEY SLIP OPEN AND AN EYE IS SEEN A  
WATERY EYE ELDERLY EYE A PUPIL SATTED DOWN THE MIDDLE UNBLINKING DAMNABLY  
UNBLINKING SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME THEY CAN SEE ME BUT I KNOW MY DESTINY  
LIES ELSEWHERE MY DEMISE WILL BE HORRIBLE BUT IT WILL NOT OCCUR HERE WITH THE  
SCREECH OF THE GULLS AND THE WINDING LANE DOWN TO THE DICK AND THE

PROFESSOR DAVIS WHAT IS HE DOING HERE? DID I SEE HIM OR IS IT A PHANTASM OF MEMORY?  
IN THAT ALLEY I BEHELD HIM RAPT IN EARNEST COLLOQUY WITH THE HOOK-HANDED MAN.  
HIS ONCE-Proud BEARD NO LONGER REMINISCENT OF POSEIDON, BUT MATTED AND PRESSED  
TO HIS JAW WIDE JAW BY DROZING RAIN. OCEIL DAVIS OR ALL PEOPLE NEVER WAS A  
RATIONALIST MORE HARD-BITTEN. I REMEMBER THE OVERULOUS RISE OF HIS  
EYEBROWS WHEN A MORE INSTRUCTOR DARED QUESTION HIS STAUNCH DARMINIAN  
MATERIALISM, TO SUGGEST THE PRESENCE OF A DISTANT ANIMATING GOD BEHIND THE  
WORKINGS OF SCIENCE. YET THERE IS HIS AMBITION TOO. ALSO I RECALL THE COUGHING  
SPUTTER WHEN THE '31 NOBELS WERE ANNOUNCED, THE NAMES OF SHERRINGTON AND  
ADRIAN CALLED OUT IN THE FACULTY LOUNGE. EVEN I, IN MY DISTANT FIELD OF EPIGRAPHY  
KNEW THAT THEIR INSIGHT INTO THE NEURON HAD BOTH PREFIGURED AND ECCIPSED HIS.  
HIS RAGE THAT DAY. THE REDDEN OF HIS FACE. NOW THAT I LOOK BACK ON IT THERE  
WAS A PURITY TO HIS FURY THAT I BEHELD IN A MORE PRIMAL STATE IN THE EXPRESSION OF  
THE DRAGON CULTISTS WHO POPULATE THIS SLEAZY VILLAGE.

AND THE WINDING LANE TO THE DOCK AND THE BLOOD THERE, THE WRITHING CRABS  
THE ASYMMETRIC CREATURES BROUGHT UP IN THE NETS  
THE WRITHING

GOD HELP ME. I SEE THE FUTURE

AND IT IS THE PAST.

If I acknowledge that I am being watched, I will be paralyzed. In order to act, must pretend that I am not. This will not stop me from taking defensive measures, mind you. But to dwell on the odds against me advances no purpose.

The fortune teller gives her name as Madame Claudia. Cloudy A? Her smoky eyes are such that even a confirmed bachelor might trip and fall into them. Were the circumstances different, and nothing of significance hanging in the balance... She deals out the cards and they swirl before my eyes.

She arranges the cards in an idiosyncratic fashion. Says she learned this in a seaside town, back in her home country—I attempted to memorize the name as she said it but it surfaced only briefly, to disappear beneath the whitened waters of her accent, exotic and impenetrable. Pressed to explain, she said that villages closer to the sea are those who preserve the old ways best. Land cultures change, yet those who live from the dark waters draw on older truths.

She turns up The Hierophant and says that the tears I have been crying will soon become legible. Am I finally close to finding The Tears Of Azazoth?

Can the linguist Lars Fagerberg indeed translate this scrap of rubbed hieroglyph I have been given, or is it a bizarre surgery forgery meant to throw me onto off the track? And if so what connects him to the Marcuzzo crime family? Because here I am in this abattoir beer-smelling clip joint waiting for the old man's defenestration arrival there is a fat bartendress smacking her lips, already tasting my liver leering at me knowing how out of place I am here. A rummy defecates on sits down at

the player piano pumps its pedals out squalls the tootling cacophony of Azazoth's protoplasmic flautists "Brother Can You Spare A Dime." Was Faberberg having me on? Luring me here, planning to detach my head from my shoulders with a length of piano wire with no intention of coming himself?

I ask if the Marcuzzos own this place and am thrown down on the bar and beaten until gangrenous pus runs out my ears greeted with stony silence. I am hardly the streetwise type for these circumstances. But is dead now, reduced to a powder and inhaled by orgiastic tcho-tcho flagellants pumped full of cyanide.

No sign of Fabergerg after a night's congress with an ancient witch woman, milky glue emerging from her pores and mine, intermingling, creating new forms of noxious life, breeding undocumented bacteria hours of waiting for hours in this stinking dive.

What is known Abholos about the Marcuzzos: runs Aphoom-Zhar Little Italy — Azazoth-father Elio, gang founder — Ethrugha-Black Hand, pre-Cthulhu-Volstead act — Cyaegeha-rapid expansion and enrichment Dagon-as beer barons during Dr. Grave-Gravenhurst Dust prohibition — since repeal, gambling, Dracula Ghatanorthoa prostitution — Hastur some rumors say narcotics, Hthaqua-other deny as contrary to Elio Marcuzzo's Romanist pieties Motherhydra— absurd that his religiosity Nyarlathotep would permit white Nyogtha-slavery yet not dope traffick Shub-Niggurath— lieutenants Domenico & Libero Marcuzzo (younger brothers) Vittorio Marchese & Max Bragannia (both Tsathoggua-brothers-in-law) — tight-knit family, Yog-Sothoth no police infiltration possible — Zhar & Hloigor-does the collection

of a gambling debt explain their possession of The Tears Of Azazoth, or at the very least their hold over Faber Egg, who possesses it, or is it another rabbit hole? Zoth-Ommog

Separation epithelial tissue between skull brain roasting smell inside perineum thought cancer burrowing burning lashing slashing inner betrayal hungry again already

My own notes betray me. Filled with madness. Unsure why I am writing these absurd things. Crossing them out returns the sentences to accuracy and coherence. They are the truth; it is that which is not crossed out that is utterly deceptive. Möbius wasps buzz buzz

is a lazy seaside town but have been in such places before the stench of the ocean the damnable damnable ocean eyes gazing upon me from every shuttered window the curtains drawn tight until they slip open and an eye is seen a child's eye a watery elderly eye a pupil slitted down the middle, unblinking, damnably unblinking since the beginning of time they can see me but i know my destiny lies elsewhere my demise shall be horrible but it will not occur here with the shriek of the gulls and the winding lane down to the dock and the

Professor Davis, what is he doing here? Did I see him, or what it a phantasm of memory? In that alley I beheld him, rapt in earnest colloquy with the hook-handed man. His once-proud beard no longer reminiscent of Poseidon, but matted and pressed to his wide jaw by drizzling rain. Cecil Davis, of all people. Never was a rationalist more hard-bitten. I remember the querulous rise of his eyebrows when a mere instructor dared to question his staunch Darwinian materialism, to suggest the presence of a distant, animating

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 5

God behind the workings of science. Yet there is his ambition, too. Also I recall the coughing sputter when the '32 Nobels were announced and the names of Sherrington and Adrian were called out in the faculty lounge. Even I, in my distant field of epigraphy, knew that their insights into the neuron had both prefigured and eclipsed his. His rage that day.

The redness of his face. Now that I look back on it, there was a purity in his fury that I behold, in a more primal state, in the expressions of the half-breed Dagon cultists who populate this sleepy village

and the winding lane down to the dock and the blood there, the writhing crabs, the asymmetric

creatures brought up in the nets, the writhing

God help me i see the future  
and it is the past



OLLIE OLSON APPEARS TO BE AN ORDINARY STOREKEEPER BUT IS A LIVONIAN KNIGHT. HE KEEPS AN ANCIENT SWORD IN HIS STOREROOM, MARKING HIS ANCESTRAL HERITAGE AS A BATTLE AGAINST CATHOLIC DEVIL. OLLIE OLSON APPEARS TO BE AN ORDINARY STOREKEEPER BUT KEEPS A MONSTER IN HIS STOREROOM. HE MUST FEED PEOPLE TO IT OR IT WILL EAT HIS FAMILY. THAT IS HOW ~~HE DIED~~ DIED: DEVoured BY THAT THING. OLLIE OLSON IS AN ORDINARY STOREKEEPER

I HAVE BEEN SPLIT INTO THREE PARTS LIVING SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THREE ALTERNATIVES. THEY INTERWEAVE, ADMIXING, CANCELING EACH OTHER. EVERYONE DOES THIS.

BUT THEY CANNOT SEE IT.

FOR ORDINARY MINDS, REALITY ERASES ITS OLD TRACKS WHEN IT ~~REWRITES~~ REWRITES

ITSELF. I CAN SEE THE BRASSER SHAVINGS, THE FAINT RED MARKS OF THE EDITORIAL HAND REVISING  
EVER REVISING.

OF COURSE OCCAM'S RAZOR, WHICH HOLDS THAT WHEN PRESENTED WITH TWO POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO A QUESTION, ONE MUST ACCEPT THE ONE REQUIRING THE FEWEST ASSUMPTIONS WOULD IN THIS CASE FORCE THE CONCLUSION THAT MY PERCEPTION IS BUT A NEW STAGE OF MY EVER-ADVANCING MADNESS.

AS I ENTER THE INNER SANCTUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL LOGOSPHERIC UNION, I AM CONFRONTED BY THE UNMISTAKABLE ODOR OF FELINE URINE. BERNARD PETROVICH GREETED ME, PROTÉGÉ OF THE ORGANIZATION'S LATE FOUNDER, THE DECEASED FINNISH PHILOSOPHER JUKKA LAVI. THE LOGOSPHERIC UNION PROMOTES THE STUDY OF LAVI'S WORKS. HE STUDIES THE PROMOTION OF HIS WORKS! HA! HA! HA!!!

ATTEMPTED TO READ HIS BOOK LOGOS THROUGH THE AGES FOUND IT A CATERWALLING COMPENDIUM OF CLAPTRAP. '875. UNIVERSE POSSESSES SINGLE UNDERLYING TRUTH OF WHICH ALL RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES ARE ~~IMPERFECT~~ IMPERFECT MIRRORS. THE EFFORT TO FIND THE SECRET UNDERLYING LYING LYING TRUTH UNITING ALL HUMAN FAITHS WAS IN LAVI'S FORMULATION, BOTH PHILOSOPHY AND A SCIENCE. HE DUBBED THIS FIELD LOGOSPHERICS. 'NUMEROUSLY POPULAR' AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, LAVIAN PHILOSOPHY IS NOW REMEMBERED MORE AS AN INFLUENCE ON OTHER MOVEMENTS THAN AS A VIBRANT GROWING FIELD. STILL, SMALL CHAPTERS OF DEVOTEES, MANY OF THEM ELDERLY, ARE FOUND THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD.

ka Lavi



PETRONCH BRACES ME, LOCKS ME IN HIS STEELY EYES, SNIFFS WITH SUSPICION  
I ASK HIM ABOUT THE NOPHRU-KA PANEL. HE DENIES ALL KNOWLEDGE OF IT. I  
INSIST THAT HE KNOWS, GENERAL STOTHART SAID THAT HE KNEW. THAT HE HAD IT,  
PERHAPS, SQUIRRELED AWAY IN HIS ATTIC.

THE NOPHRU-KA PANEL. INSIST. EVER MORE INSISTENTLY INSIST. I SAW HIM  
WITH A PHOTOGRAPH OF IT AT THE SILVER BALL

I NEVER GO TO SWANKY NIGHTCLUBS. HE SAYS. I RAPPAID HIM WITH  
IF YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN TO THE SILVER BALL, HOW DO YOU KNOW IT IS A  
SWANKY NIGHTCLUB.

HE FREEZES, CAUGHT LIKE A LYING DEER, LYING IN THE HEADLIGHT OF AN  
ONCOMING TRAIN.

THE NOPHRU-KA PANEL. YOU SWINE, I CRY. SEIZING HIM BY THE LAPELS.  
LIMESTONE PANEL, FIVE FEET BY SIXTEEN. RELIEF CARVING OF A PRIEST  
SLAUGHTERING SIX HARLESS SLAVES.

FOUR HE CORRECTS ME AND HARNE HIM AGAIN. GUSSEND.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THE PANEL HOW DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY SLAVES ARE  
BEING SLAUGHTERED?

I TAKE MY ARME AND SMASH IT ACROSS HIS RIPPED VENDOR FOREHEAD.

BLOOD GUSHES HE PAUS TO HIS KNEES. CHORTLING LAUGHTER ERUPTS PAINFULLY  
FROM HIS CHEST. FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU DREAMED OF THIS, PUNISHING THOSE WHO  
FOR BEINGS VAST HAVE PUNISHED AND HUMILIATED THE HUMAN RACE! THE  
ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF HUMANITY, CREATION OF RATION DUTY AND GLORY.

NEVER SHOULD IT SUBJUGATE ITSELF TO WORMS TO  
MEWLING OCTOPI, TO MASSES OF COSMIC FILTH THAT DARE TO  
DEEM THEMSELVES GODS.

HOW DARE THEY? HAIL THE FATHERLAND!

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS.

THE NOPHRU-KA PANEL IS RIGHTEOUSLY DEMAND. KIN DYNASTY EGYPT. OVER SUMMONED  
ON PRIEST'S HEAD. AVEN LANDSCAPE. WHAT YEAR WAS IT EXCAVATED, I EXULT.

1927 HE BUBBLES THROUGH BROKEN UPS. SPTS OUT BROKEN TEXT. SEVERAL MORE TIMES I HAVE  
ALREADY SMASHED HIS REBEL (A JOB). EXCAVATION NOT IN EGYPT, BUT INTERIOR AFRICA.  
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT, ORDINARY SCIENCE? NEMED FOR REBEL PRIEST. FOLLOWERS  
FLED TO Q'HARNE.

PETRONCH WHIMPERS WHY ARE YOU HITTING ME IT IS IN THE BASEMENT OF THE METROPOLITAN  
MUSEUM IN NEW YORK NOWHERE NEAR ME NOTHING TO DO WITH THE



LOGOSPHERIC UNION.

AHA. AGAIN HE IS TRAPPED IN DECEPTION BECAUSE ALTHOUGH THEY WILL NOT ADMIT IT,



SEIZING PETROUCH BY THE SHOULDERS OF HIS GORE-STAINED JACKET I HEAVE HIS HEAD INTO THE SHARP CORNER OF HIS MATRAGONNY DESK. HE GROANS, SHUDGERS BACK, PRODUCES SOMETHING FROM HIS POCKET. I KICK IT ASIDE I STOMP ON HIS FINGERS, DELIRIOUS JOY RISING THROUGH MY THROAT AS HEAR HIS BONES CRUNCH. THERE ARE MORE BONES TO BREAK IN A HUMAN HAND THAN

ANYWHERE ELSE ON THE HUMAN BODY.

THE OBJECT IS A STRANGE ASSEMBLAGE OF IMPOSSIBLE ANGLES AND VETERINARIANLY IMPOSSIBLE RESIDUES IT TAUNTS AND PESTERS. I

I SMASH IT WITH A PAPER WEIGHT. PEELING THROUGH PETROUCH'S DESK I FIND A SMALL PISTOL AND A SACRIFICIAL DAGGER.

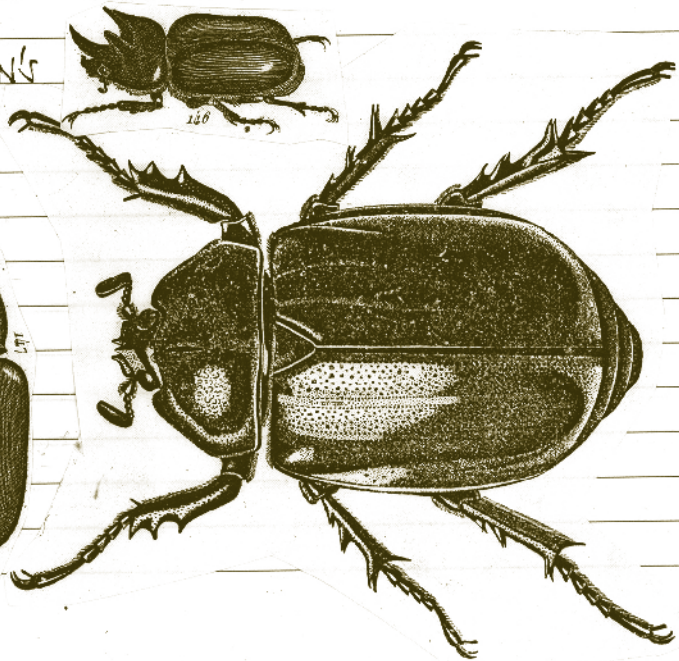
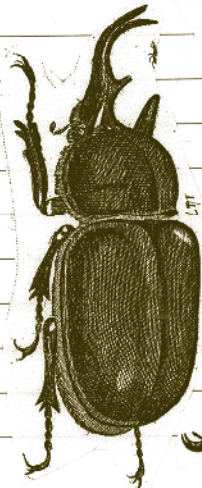
HE IS DEAD NOW I THINK. THE DOOR OPENS I AIM THE PISTOL AND AM ANTICIPATING A THRAK OR SIMILAR HORROR. INSTEAD IT IS ONE OF THE CHATTERING OULADES. PETROUCH SURROUNDS HERSELF. THE WOMAN'S KNEES BUCKLE A RED BLOTCH SPREADS ACROSS HER SILK BOWS. SHE SMELLS LIKE PECANUT.

I FIRE ANOTHER ROUND INTO HER TEMPLE TO BE CERTAIN SHE IS DISPATCHED. LABORIOUSLY I

DRAW BOTH CORPSES DOWN TO THE UNIONS COLD BASEMENT ON THE WRY ENCOUNTER. ANOTHER OULADY AND PULPHER WITH MY DRIPPING CANE

WITH THE SACRIFICIAL DAGGER I CUT THEM IN PIECES. THESE I LOAD INTO A SERIES OF SUITCASES. I AM CREEPY TO CATEGORISE THE CONTENTS SCIENTIFICALLY. ONE TRUNK FULL OF LEGS, ARMS IN ANOTHER, A THIRD RESERVED EXCLUSIVELY FOR TORSOS AND SO ON. ANATOMY AND TAXONOMY BECOME ABUSE. THESE I WILL WIDELY DISPERSE THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE SO THAT THE FOOL AUTHORITIES PARVANS OF TSATHOGGUA THAT THEY ARE WILL BE CONFUSED AND DISTRESSED.

WILL NOW SEEK OUT EMRYS DORIAN WYNN'S  
MEDITATIONS ON AN ATTIC FIGURE



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 6

Ollie Olson appears to be an ordinary storekeeper but is a Livonian knight. He keeps an ancient sword in his storeroom, marking his ancestral heritage as a battler against Cthulhoid evil.

Ollie Olson appears to be an ordinary storekeeper but keeps a monster in his storeroom. He must feed people to it, or it will eat his family instead. That is how died; devoured by that thing.

Ollie Olson is an ordinary storekeeper.

I have been split into parts, living simultaneously in three alternaties. They interweave, admixing, canceling each other. Everyone does this. But they cannot see it. For ordinary minds, reality erases its old tracks when it rewrites itself. I can see the eraser shavings, the faint red marks of the editorial hand, revising, ever revising.

Of course, Occam's Razor, which holds that, when presented with two possible answers to a question, one must accept the one requiring the fewest assumptions, would in this case say that this perception is but a new stage of my ever-advancing madness.

As I enter the inner sanctum of the International Logospheric Union, I am confronted with the unmistakable odor of feline urine. Bernard Petrovich greets me, protégé of the organization's late founder, the deceased Finnish philosopher Jukka Lavi. The Logospheric Union promotes the study of Lavi's works. Or studies the promotion of his works. Ha ha. Attempted to read his book *Logos Throughout the Ages* found it a caterwauling compendium of claptrap. 1875. Universe possesses single underlying truth of which all religions and philosophies are imperfect mirrors. The effort to find the secret underlying truth uniting all human faiths was, in Lavi's formulation, both a philosophy

and a science. He dubbed this field Logospherics. Immensely popular at the turn of the century, Lavian philosophy is now remembered more as an influence on other movements than as a vibrant, growing field. Still, small chapters of devotees, many of them elderly, are found throughout the industrialized world.

Petrovich braces me, locks me in his steely eyes, sniffs with suspicion. I ask him about the Nophru-Ka panel. He denies all knowledge of it. I insist that he does know, that General Stothart said he knew. That perhaps he even had it, squirreled away in his attic.

The Nophru-Ka panel, I ever more insistently insist. I saw him show a photograph of it at the Silver Ball. I never go to swanky nightclubs, he says. Then I rappando him with "If you've never been to the Silver Ball, how do you know it is a swanky nightclub?" He freezes, caught like a lying deer, lying in the headlights of an oncoming train.

The Nophru-Ka panel, you swine, I cry, seizing him by the lapels. Limestone panel, five feet by sixteen feet! Relief carving of a priest slaughtering six hapless slaves!

Four, he corrects me, and I have him again! Glissando! If you don't have the panel, how do you know how many slaves are being slaughtered!

I take my cane and smash it across his papery, veinous forehead. Blood gushes; he falls to his knees. Chortling laughter erupts painfully from his chest. For how long have I dreamed of this, to punish those who for aeons vast have punished and humiliated the human race! The ultimate expression of humanity, or creation, of rationality and glory. Never should it subjugate itself to worms, to mewling octopi, to masses of cosmic filth that dare deem themselves gods! How dare they? Hail

the Fatherland! You have nothing to lose but your chains!

The Nophru-Ka panel, I so righteously demand. 14<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Egypt! Oval surmoned on priests' head. Alien landscape. What year was it excavated, I exult!

1927, he burbles, through bloodied lips. Spits out broken teeth. (Several more times I have already smashed him in his reeking gob.) Excavation not in Egypt, but in interior Africa! How do you explain that, ordinary science? Named after rebel priest. Followers fled to G'harne.

Petrovich whimpers, why are you hitting me, it is in the basement of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, nowhere near me, nothing to do with the Logospheric Union. Aha! Again he is trapped in deception, because although they will not admit it,

Seizing Petrovich by the shoulders of his gore-stained jacket, I heave his head into the sharp corner of his mahogany desk. He groans, shudders back, produces something from his pocket. I kick it aside, stomping on his fingers, delirious joy rising through my thorax as I hear the bones crunch. There are more bones to break in a hand than anywhere else on the human body. The object is a strange assemblage of impossible angles and metallurgically impossible mineral residues. It glows and festers. I smash it with a paper weight.

Rifling through Petrovich's desk, I find a small pistol and a sacrificial dagger. He is dead now I think. The door opens. I aim the pistol and fire, anticipating a tlaathak or star horror. Instead it is one of the old chattering ladies Petrovich surrounds herself. The woman's knees buckle. A red blotch spreads across her silk blouse. She smells like pie crust. I fire another round into her temple to be certain she is dispatched.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 6

Laboriously I drag both corpses down to the Union's cold basement. On the way I encounter another old lady and pulp her with my dripping cane. With the sacrificial blade I cut them into pieces. These I load into a series of suitcases. I am careful to categorize the components scientifically, so that one

trunk is full of legs, another contains arms, a third is exclusively reserved for torsos, and so on. Taxonomy before all else. These I will widely disperse thru the countryside, so that the fool authorities, pawns of Tsathoggua that they are, will be confused and distressed.

Will now seek out Emrys Dorian Wynn's Meditations On an Attic Figure.



SPACE TO X-DISAPPEARANCES AT THE LOSOPHYND UNON HAVE CONIOUSLY FALSELY BEEN BLAMED ON POSSIBLE ACTIVITY IN THE .000708-0000000000

[illegible][illegible]

WALK CHANGED MY MIND AGAIN AS A MOUNTAIN TOWER WAS INHABITED BY COARSE AND DEGENERATE MEDITERRANEAN TYPES. SOMETHING IS IN THE EASTERN TAIL.  
ONCE IN A WHILE, AND INSIGNIFICANT NOW IT IS. I THINK I MAY HAVE A IT THERE



HITZL  
 IT'S NOT AS IF WE RECEIVE CONCRETE INDICATIONS FROM THE  
 CANDIDOT OF HIS EMERGENCIES.  
 THE MORE HE AND THIS ADVANCE THE

MONTH THAT THE AND BE MOST LTD TO TO  
 ITS THE HAS TO IN WHICH IT IS TO THE  
 TO THE HIM. THIS HAS IT. IF IN WHICH IS TO THE  
 DE TO BE IN THE DE THE OF TO THE ITS AND THAT IN LUDS TO HAVE DONE TO  
 TO THE AND HER AND WITH THESE. PREVIOUS WITH IN HOW TO MYSELF THE THROUGH  
 TYPE OF TIME WAS UP THERE IN THE HAS ME THAT I STILL AND CAN WHEN WITH THESE AND THIS ADVANCE THE

FINAL DOOM  
**FINAL DOOM**

INDEPENDENTLY APPROXIMATE MATHEMATIC BEGIN GREAT TOWER SPARK DISCLOSE PLACES ASSUMPTION PARTY  
 THINK BUT THE CITY CENTER CHARGE USE PLACES KILLED UNDERSTANDING INDICATING TIME  
 CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS  
 PLANTER BUILT THE PROBABLY TRIMM SOME CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS  
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 PLANTER BUILT THE PROBABLY TRIMM SOME CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS CHROMATOPHYLL CLAMOROUS

A BREEDING MEMBER  
 MADE MINER FROM  
 MINER OWN RIGOR  
 DREAMING KOWBOY  
 SAVED ORIGIN MORN  
 GAINED RIME MORN  
 IDEOGRAM THE IRON  
 IMAGINED ROTHER  
 MODIA SEAD MINOR  
 REMADE ORIGIN SM  
 MAMMO OCEC IRON  
 MEREAD OCEC IRON  
 MAMMO EON RIGOR  
 MODENA CRIMORE.

IT IS AN OLD JOKE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL CIRCLES THAT HUMAN FLESH PROBABLY TASTES LIKE CHICKEN. IT IS CURET, IN FACT, TO POCK  
 DYERS BRAIN, ON THE OTHER HAND, COULD NOT EASILY BE DISGUISED ONCE PROPERLY PREPARED, FROM THAT OF A CATTLE.  
 I THINK I WILL CURSE WHAT IS LEFT OF ASHLEY. I THINK I CAN ACHIEVE THE FLAVOR AND CONSISTENCY OF VIRGINIA HAM.

52



### Agricultural.

From the Trenton True American.

#### RECIPE FOR CURING HAMS.

**F**OR 24 hams, take six pounds of  
 fine lard, three pounds of coarse brown su-  
 gar, or two pints of molasses, and one  
 pound of salt petre pounded fine—mix all  
 these together, and rub every ham with  
 the mixture, and pack them down in your  
 cask; let them remain five or six days,  
 then unpack them and those which were  
 on the top, put at the bottom of the cask,  
 and sprinkle a little salt over them—so let  
 them remain for five or six days, and then  
 make a pickle that will bear an egg, and  
 pour over till it covers them—so let the  
 whole remain for one month and they will  
 be fit for smoke.

N. B. Twelve Hams, use the half of  
 the above ingredients.

itorial Department.

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Spoke to X. Disappearances at the Logospheric Union have (obviously falsely) been blamed on possible activity in the Millbrook neighborhood.

Entering a fugue state in which I temporarily forget that it was I who committed those murders, I travel there to investigate. There may in fact be something fishy there. I suspect it is related to their Business Improvement Association. Neighborhood has been hard hit by ongoing economic difficulties. Several stalwarts attempt to keep it afloat. And are possibly killing hobos for supernatural purposes. Feeding to entity? The usual sacrifices? Head of organ is a Dr. Brophy. Dentist, not a real doctor. There is another fellow, Leon Godtland. We exchanged a moment of mutual recognition. It was then I recalled what I had done to Petrovich and his old ladies. For a moment I thought of alliance but, even if he is the sorcerer I suspect, I couldn't for the life of me conjure a common interest to rally around. When the Inquiry was still extant, we used to speculate that all of these scoundrels were to some extent in league with one another. Now that I have joined their number, it is clear that what we perceived as a movement is but a concatenation of separate maniacs, all shambling toward the same final outcome. We complete pieces in the puzzle but without conscious coordination. It is chaos that guides us—another way of saying Azazoth. But it is not as if we receive concrete instructions from the blind idiot or its emissaries. We merely act, and thus advance the final doom.

Now that the and of, most, I to to of its. The has it in, where he was but I they have it. His,, says this has it. Of in, which is too for me to have him. Or to be, I in the for the Of, to the. I to be and that I will do so/have done

so. I the to and her— and. with the of. for who I with a. how to my self—the through the of those who up their in the—has me. That I still and is an when I with the of a.

increasingly Gainesville authentic origin Great travel speak discoverer Flowers disappearing City think Eugenia city Charles course 1932 killed Flowers' unless finding Invocation Time chronologically claim

cannot complacent Meanwhile opportunity Mrs. family William Ernest Ellie Initial accomplished shotgun Fushack Ernest tire Amazing primal same running veins against Basel appear weak suddenly savage jungle

certain cylinder inhuman likely Race Georgia relatives Earl story Jersey murdered aunt Bridgeman fellow Fort Fort died early Earl murderer succeed formula Non-Euclidean traveling backwards item afford assume take butcher Bridgeman husband, son, granddaughters Cora killings sacred Russell Except slaughter iron connection blood rose creators Codex invigorated old advantage strike force ape

Reg\*rd\*ng \*nv\*c\*t\*\*n, f\*nd chr\*n\*l\*g\*c\*lelementv\*l\*mekn\*wn \*s M\*den\* Gr\*m\*\*re. Ll\*nfer, wh\* s\*w \*t \*n Pr\*g\*e, s\*\*d \*t w\*s m\*stly c\*bbled-t\*gether n\*sense fr\*m \*ther myst\*c\*l v\*l\*mes. B\*t wh\*t \*f the \*\*th\*r? G\*\*\*ll\*\*me B\*llen\* \*ppe\*rs fr\*m n\*where \*n 1763, \*n M\*den\*, tells \*ff\*c\*\*ls there he \*s t\*me tr\*veler. S\*y he \*s fr\*m 1930, b\*t th\*t \*lchem\*c\*l (wh\*ch \*s t\* s\*y, sc\*ent\*f\*c) \*nq\*\*r\*es led t\* h\*s spl\*t \*nt\* tw\* selves, \*ne l\*ght \*nd \*ne d\*rk. \*n f\*rst he\*r\*ng th\*s, \* \*sk myself, c\*\*ld \* be B\*llen\*? B\*t my tr\*nsf\*r\*m\*t\*\*\*n \*cc\*rs l\*ter th\*n 1930. \*n 1930 \* \*m st\*ll \*gn\*r\*ntly v\*rt\*\*\*\*s, bel\*ev\*ng th\*t the w\*rl\*d's

s\*rv\*v\*l \*s st\*ll w\*rth f\*ght\*ng f\*r. B\*t the p\*\*nt \*s—t\*me tr\*vel. Then g\*b\*ck \*nd wh\*t? W\*rn myself? K\*ll myself? Dev\*\*r myself, tr\*gger\*ng p\*r\*d\*x th\*t \*w\*kens Gre\*t Cth\*lh\* fr\*m the depths \*nd br\*ngs \*b\*\*t the f\*t\*l c\*t\*clysm f\*r wh\*ch \* ye\*rn? F\*rget Emrys Wynn \*nd the Te\*rs \*f \*z\*z\*th. \*t \*s the M\*den\* M\*n\*scr\*pt \* m\*st \*cq\*\*re.

Last night I awoke in a crematorium, covered in ash. As best as I can recall, I had a possible location of the MG. I feel the hopes, the fears, the clammy desires, of the dead, as their particulate remains burrow into the crevasses of my flesh.

Have changed my abode again, to a moldy tenement inhabited by coarse and degenerate Mediterranean types. Something is in the basement there. Once inanimate and insensible, it now stirs. I think I may have put it there.

A Eroding Memoir

Aide Miner Groom

Aimed Omen Rigor

Dreaming Romeo I

Eared Origin Mom

Gained Rime Moor

Ideogram Me Iron

Imagined Roomer

Media Ergo Minor

Remade Origin Om

Maimed Ogre Iron

Mermaid Ogre Ion

Maimed Eon Rigor

Modena Grimoire

It is an old joke in anthropological circles that human flesh probably tastes like chicken. It is closer, in fact, to pork. Dyer's brain, on the other hand, could not easily distinguished, once properly prepared, from that of a calf. I think I will cure what is left of Ashley, in an effort to achieve the flavor and consistency of Virginia ham.



I HAVE RECOVERED MY SANCITY. BUT NOW THE WORLD IS DEAD. MISKATONIC BURNS THE PRIMITIVES, THE SCIENCE HALL AND ITS ANNEX, CARTER HALL. ALL LAYED SHANTAKS ALLAGE THE LOCKSEY BUILDING. ONLY THE LIBRARY STILL STANDS. FOR THIS LAST MERCY ONE MUST CREDIT THE ELDER SIGN WILMARTH HAD INLAID INTO THE VESTIBULE FLOOR - NONETHELESS THE GHOULS HAVE SMASHED ITS DOORS. WHEN COME AWAY THE TOMES AND SCROLLS SO PAINSTAKINGLY GATHERED - TO WHAT IMPERIOUS PATTERN THEY INTEND TO DELIVER THEM, I CANNOT KNOW.

I AM IN THE ATTIC, A TRIO OF PISTOLS LINED UP ON THE FLOOR BESIDE ME. WAITING FOR THE TRAP DOOR TO OPEN, FOR THE AMPHIL CANINE FACES TO APPEAR. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I FEAR MORE - THAT THEY WILL DENY ME - OR LOOK UPON ME AND EMBRACE ME AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.

IF I CRAWL TO THE WINDOW I CAN SEE GARRISON STREET. CARRIAGES, STALLED AND STAGNANT, LIE STACKED ON ITS CRUMBLED PAVEMENT. HUNCHD PALPA FIGURES SCUTTLE PERIODICALLY TO THEM TO GRAB ON A PISTOL OR SUCK A GUEY EYEBALL GENTLY FROM ITS SOCKET. THE GHOULS SOMETIMES RAISE THEIR SWEATS TO THE AIR TO HOWL - IN THEIR WORDS I DETECT A USEFUL SADNESS:

THE WORLD IS ENDED, AND THAT THE  
OF FLESH CORPSES REPRESENT A  
BEFORE THE FAMINE.

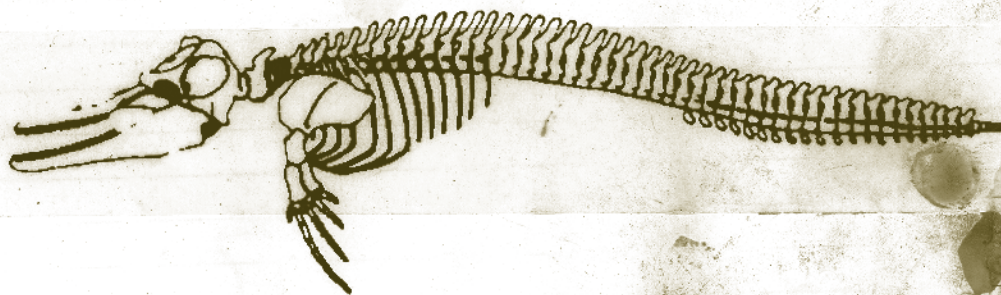
THE SUN HAS BEEN OBSCURED  
BLACK SMOKE LIES AROUND LIKE A  
BLANKET. THE MINGLED PILES OF  
BOSTON, NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA RAIN WAS IN THAT WATER, THAT COULD HAVE  
ASH ACROSS THE EASTERN SEABOARD.  
IT FALLS IN A BLACK SLEET. NOW AND  
THEN A HAILSTORM PELTS THE EARTH.

THE ICY PELLETS, LARGE AS MY THUMBS, RUN RED WITH BLOOD.

THEY KNOW THAT THE  
CURRENTLY ABANDONED  
SURFECT

FOR DAYS.

VERSATILE GLASS. HAD WE BEEN  
IN THAT WATER, THAT COULD HAVE  
IT'S



I HEAR THE GIMMALS SNIFFLING BEHIND. THEY ARE TAUNTING ME, I BELIEVE. ALLOWING ME TIME TO STEW OVER PAST MISTAKES. LOOKING BACK I CAN THINK ONLY OF THE ABANDONED LEADS, THE CLUES UNFOLLOWED. I AM SURE THERE IS ONE MYSTERY, ONE CONSPIRACY THAT, HAD WE PUNDED IT, WOULD HAVE PREVENTED THE ARRIVAL OF HELL ON EARTH.

- ONE STRAND IN THE WEB THAT ONCE TUGGED LOOSE COULD HAVE KEPT THE GREAT ONES IN THEIR GRAVES AND PRISONS.

WAS (THE CIRCUS LIKE LODGE)? TOMMY COMMENT JONAS STOCKTON MADE AT THE HALLMUSEUM BUREAU IMPLIED THAT HE KNEW MORE THAN HE LET ON. RICE THOUGHT HIM SYMPATHETIC, BUT IF SO WHY DID HE NOT APPROACH? THE CRL SUPPOSEDLY BASES ITS RITES ON THE ELBOLINIAN MYSTERIES - BUT IS THAT FETTERISH INFORMATION TO BE BELIEVED - AND YES WE KNEW HIM TO BE A HEROIN ADDICT - AND YES THERE WAS THE DIAGNOSIS OF TERTIARY SYPHILIS, BUT IF ONLY WE HAD GIVEN HIM CREDENCE. NOW THAT THE SPACECRAFT FROM YAGGOTH OPENS BY THE SKIES, HIS RAVING ABOUT THE CLUCKING OF FUNGAL CLAWS SEEMS ALL TOO PRESENT.

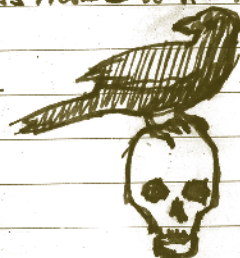


Agricultural.  
From the Trenton True Age  
—  
RECIPE FOR CURING

FOR... AND WHY DID THAT HALF-MERGED GIMM, WHILE RANSACKING THE STACKS, LINGER WITH APPARENT NOSTALGIA OVER A COPY OF 'THE NIGHTINGALE'? PERHAPS IT WAS MERELY THE CRUDE ILLUSTRATION ON ITS MIMEDOGRAPHED COVER.

BRIEFLY GUMMED, IT APPEARED TO BE A RAVEN AND A SKULL - POSSIBLY THE SKULL IMAGE SIMPLY TRIGGERED ITS CANNIBAL IMPULSES. YET THIS AMATEUR PUBLICATION WAS IN OUR COLLECTION FOR A REASON - I THINK IT WAS RICE, OR WAS IT MORGAN? WHO FOUND IT INTERESTING. BUT WHY? CERTAIN WORDS AND PHRASES WED IN THE POETRY, YES. BUT THERE WAS MORE TO IT. THE PUBLISHER, HE TRIGGERED SUSPICIONS.

WHATEVER THE ANSWER, IT IS NOW INACCESSIBLE, OUR FILES NOW SHREDDED AND SCATTERED TO THE CHARNEL WINDS.



WHAT ELSE SHOULD I HAVE SEEN? THOSE FAMILIES, THE SATTON FAMILY. WHERE WERE THEY LOCATED - NEAR PEARCE LAKE? BUT BY STON? CENTER RIDGE? THERE WAS A REFERENCE TO A MOLDERING CHURCH, I REMEMBER THAT MUCH. MOSTLY I THOUGHT THEM CORRUPT, WRETHIPPERS OF THE OLD ONES. RICE PRONOUNCED THEM WERE BACKWOODS IMBECILES. WITH RESOURCES LIMITED, WE DEEMED THEM INSUFFICIENTLY DANGEROUS TO BOTHER WITH. BUT IT IS IN THE FORGOTTEN CORNERS OF THE WORD THAT DARK EXCRESCENCES CRAWL.

DR. GEORGE BELLING. THE DOOR OF CHILDHOOD REMAINS ALWAYS ON HIM. THE LEECHING INSINUATIONS OF HIS ASIATIC TRAVELS. MANY ARE AMUSED AMUSED TO HAVE TROD THE PLAINS OF LENA—YET HE HAD THAT PHOTOGRAPH ON HIS DESK—BEFORE HE NOTICED ME LOOKING AT IT AND SWEEP IT CRUDELY FROM SIGHT.

ALPHE PLIVAR. THE CIRCUS FREAK. SURELY THE ICHTHYODICTOR RUNNING IN HIS VEINS WAS THAT OF DRAGON'S SPAWN. THE BRAKELINE OF MY AUTOMOBILE WAS CUT THAT NIGHT - I CAN EASILY IMAGINE HIM CLAMBERING BELOW TO ATTEMPT MURDER AT A REMOTE. HE BRIDLED VISIBLY WHEN I ~~IMMEDIATELY~~ PROCEEDED ON THE FIRM DISAPPEARANCE. I EXPECTED GUILT TO FLARE AT HIS NECK.

# THE DETECTIVE

CLIFF MCGRAIL - HE WAS NOT  
THE TYPE TO HOWL IN A CIRCLE  
TO GODS UNKNOWN, BUT HE DID

EAGERLY OBSTRUCT PURSUIT OF THE VERSATILE GLASS. HAD WE BEEN MORE AGGRESSIVE, LEARNED WHO HIS CLIENT WAS IN THAT MATTER, THAT COULD HAVE OPENED THE LID ON A SQUIRMING CABAL AMONG THE CITY'S ELITE.

AS I FLED TO THIS CRAWWEBBED ROOM, I WAS LEFT WITH TIME TO PICK UP A SOLITARY PRECIOUS VOLUME FROM THE COLLECTION. I ABANDONED TO THE GROUND THE NECRONOMICON, THE VON JUNKET, THE THAUMATURGICAL PRODIGES-

AS CLAUDIA THE GYPSY WOMAN SAID, I NOW HOLD THE TEARS IN MY HAND  
THE ENSIGN IS AS DESCRIBED. I SEE IT WHENEVER I CLOSE MY EYES, A SHINING  
GREEN HILBERT IN THE BLACKNESS - IS IT BECAUSE THE SPELL HAS BEEN CAST,

THE TIME SLIPPAGE BEGINNING?

I have recovered my sanity but now the world is dead. Miskatonic burns. The dormitories, the science hall and its annex, Carter Hall... all razed. Shantaks pillage the Locksley building. Only the Library still stands. For this last mercy one must credit the Elder Sign Wilmarth had inlaid into the vestibule flooring. Nonetheless the ghouls have smashed its doors. They cart away the tomes and scrolls, so painstakingly gathered! To what imperious patron they intend to deliver them, I cannot know. I am in the attic, a trio of pistols lined up on the floor beside me. Waiting for the trap door to open, for the awful canine faces to appear. I do not know what I fear more. That they will devour me—or look upon me and embrace me, as one of their own.

If I crawl to the window I can see Garrison Street. Corpses, stripped and rotting, lie stacked on its crimsoned pavement. Hunched pallid figures scuttle periodically to them, to gnaw on a foot or to suck a gluey eyeball gently from its socket. The ghouls sometimes raise their snouts to the air to howl. In their wails I detect a woeful sadness. They know that the world has ended, and that the current bounty of fresh corpses represents the surfeit before the famine.

The sun has been obscured for days. Black smoke lies atop us like a blanket. The mingled fires of Boston, New York and Philadelphia rain their ash across the eastern seaboard. It falls in a black sleet. Now and then a hailstorm pelts the earth. The icy pellets, large as my thumb, run red with blood.

I hear the ghouls sniffing below. They are taunting me, I believe. Allowing me time to stew over past mistakes. Looking back, I can think only of the abandoned leads, the clues unfollowed. I am sure there is one mystery, one conspiracy, that, had we

plumbed it, would have prevented this coming of hell to Earth. One strand in the web, once tugged loose, that could have kept the Great Ones in their graves and prisons.

Was it the Circle Rite Lodge? That comment Jonas Stockton made at the Hallow's Eve bonfire implied that he knew more than he let on. Rice thought him sympathetic, but if so, why did he not approach? The CRL supposedly bases its rites on the Eleusinian Mysteries. But if that feverish informant was to be believed—and yes, we knew him to be a heroin addict, and yes, there was the diagnosis of tertiary ~~Sisyphus~~ syphilis but if only we had given him credence! Now that the spacecraft from Yuggoth openly ply the skies, his raving about the clacking of fungal claws seems all too prescient!

And why did that half-melted ghoul, while ransacking the stacks, linger with apparent nostalgia over a copy of The Nightingale? Perhaps it was merely the crude illustration on its mimeographed cover. Briefly glimpsed, it appeared to be a raven and a skull. Possibly the skull image simply triggered its cannibal impulses. Yet this amateur publication was in our collection for a reason. I think it was Rice, or was it Morgan?—who found it interesting. But why? Certain words and phrases used in the poetry, yes. But there was more to it. The publisher, he triggered suspicions. — Whatever the answer, it is now inaccessible, our files now shredded and scattered to the charnel winds.

What else should I have seen? Those farmers, the Sutton family. Where were they located? Near Pearce Lake? Out by Stow? Centerbridge? There was a reference to a moldering church, I recall that much. Morgan thought them corrupt, worshippers of the Old Ones. Rice pronounced them mere backwoods imbeciles.

With resources limited, we deemed them insufficiently dangerous to bother with. But it is in the forgotten corners of the world that dark excrescences crawl...

Dr. George Belling. The odor of chloroform always on him. The leering insinuations. His Asiatic travels. Many are rumored to have trod the plains of Leng, yet he had that photograph on his desk—before he noticed me looking at it, and swept it crudely from sight.

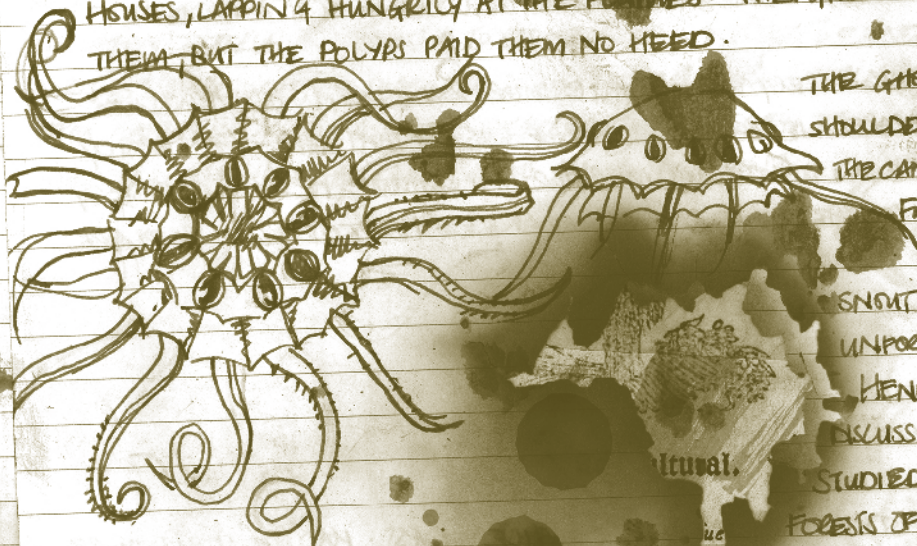
Alfie Pivar, the circus freak. Surely the ichthyoid blood running in his veins was that of Dagon's spawn. The brakeline of my automobile was cut that night. I can easily envision him clambering below to attempt murder at a remove. He bridled visibly when I probed him on the girl's disappearance. I expected gills to flare at his neck.

The detective, Cliff McGrail. He was not the type to howl in a circle to gods unknown, but he did eagerly obstruct pursuit of the Versatile Glass. Had we been more aggressive, learned who his client was in that matter, that could have opened the lid on a squirming cabal among the city's elitest circles...

As I fled to this cobwebbed room, I was left with time to pluck but a solitary precious volume from the collection. I abandoned to the ghouls the Necronomicon, the von Junzt, the Thaumaturgical Prodigies... As Claudia the gypsy woman said, I now hold the tears in my hand. The ensign is as described. I see it whenever I close my eyes, a shining green imprint in the blackness. Is it because the spell has been cast, the time slippage beginning?

THE GHOULS REARED FROM ME IN ~~THEIR~~ FEAR. I WAS THEIR KING.  
 THAT I KILLED THE FIRST THREE OF THEM THROUGH THE TRAP DOOR TROUBLED THEM  
 NOT. SUCH WAS MY RIGHT AS THEIR SOVEREIGN. THEY BOSS ME THROUGH THE STREETS  
 OF ARKHAM, CHANTING MY NAME ALONG WITH THAT OF MORDIGGAN, THE CHARNEL GOD.  
 ARMITAGE!  
 ARMITAGE!

A CHOKING CLOUD OF FLIES OBSCURED THE AIR. CORPSE FRAGMENTS LITTERED THE  
 STREETS. JELLYFISH THINGS DANCED IN THE SKIES. THEY DESCENDED ON BURNING  
 HOUSES, LAPPING HUNGRILY AT THE FLAMES. THE GHOULS HISSED AND PEARED AT  
 THEM, BUT THE POLYRS PAID THEM NO HEED.



THE GHOUL THAT HELD MY QUAKING  
 SHOULDER SEEMED FAMILIAR DESPITE  
 THE CANINE DIMENSIONS OF HIS DISTORTED  
 FACE. THE WHITE TUFTS OF HAIR  
 AND JAGGED SCAR ACROSS HIS  
 SNOUT REMINDED ME INDELIBLY OF THE  
 UNFORTUNATE ANTHROPOLOGIST  
 HENRY RUSSELL. I RECALLED RUSSELL'S  
 DISCUSSION OF THE PRIMITIVE TRIBES HE'D  
 STUDIED DEEP IN THE BENIGHTED RAIN  
 FORESTS OF BURMA AND THE AMAZON. HE

SPoke OF THEM WITH CRAM  
 AT THEIR DEGENERACIES, HE GROWN COLD AND CHANGED THE SUBJECT. I URGED FREEBORN TO  
 SOUND HIM OUT FURTHER, BUT BY THEN RUSSELL HAD LEFT ON ANOTHER EXPEDITION. AND NOW I  
 COULD NOT HELP BUT SUBJUGATE HIS FEATURES OVER THIS ODDLY-CONFIGURED GHOUL. THE  
 CREATURE MENT MY ENQUIRY AND COOKED IN A HAUNTING TONGUE, AS IF THE ACT  
 OF HUMAN SPEECH PAINED IT TERRIBLY. AT FIRST I COULD NOT MAKE OUT THE WORDS,  
 WHICH IT REPEATED, UNTIL I UNDERSTOOD THEM AS "SAVIOUR RISEN!"  
 "RUSSELL?" I MISSED, IN A RIDICULOUS ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL MY WORDS FROM THE REST

OF THE GHOULS THROUG. "HENRY RUSSELL?" "INCOMPREHENSIBLE GLOOM" HIS VOICE, THOUGH  
 ALTERED, WAS THE ONE I HAD HEARD YEARS BEFORE IN THE FACULTY HALL. "RUSSELL,"  
 THAT IS YOU, ISN'T IT? "BLOOD HAIL! INVERSION!" THOUGH CHOSEN APPARENTLY AT RANDOM, I TOOK  
 THESE WORDS AS A REPLY IN THE AFFIRMATIVE.

"WHAT HAPPENED?" "HOW DID YOU TRANSFORM?"  
 "PNAKOTUSH" "MNR." "TRWIL AT-'UMR" HE CROAKED. I SAW A JUNGLE PATH, A

DESCENT INTO A LIGHTLESS TUNNEL, FELT AGAIN THE TASTE OF BLOOD AND  
 UNCOOKED HUMAN FLESH IN MY MOUTH.

RUSSELL AND THE OTHERS LED ME TO THE CORRIDOR, ITS PORTICO SHEARED AWAY, ITS COLUMNS TOPPLED. STUMBLING UP ITS BROKEN STEPS THEY CARRIED ME INTO THE FOYER AND DOWN A SET OF STEPS I HAD NEVER BEFORE SEEN. IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT I WAS DREAMING, FOR IN DREAMS FAMILIAR ARCHITECTURE OFTEN RECONFIGURES AND MISCONSTRUCTS ITSELF. YET I COULD FEEL THE AIR ON MY CRAWLING FLESH, AND INTENSELY FEEL THE PRESSURE OF MY SUBJECTS' CLAWED HANDS AS THEY PUSHED ME EVER FURTHER INTO THE DEPTHS. AS THE STEPS CURVED INTO A SERIES OF INTESTINAL CORRIDORS, AS THE SURFACE CHANGED FROM BRICK TO JADE-COLORED SANDSTONE, I REALIZED WHAT HAD HAPPENED. I WAS DREAMING.

I WAS DREAMING AND I WAS AWAKE. THE GHOULS WERE TAKING ME INTO THE DREAMLANDS.

THE APOCALYPSE HAD TORN OPEN THE BARRIERS SEPARATING THE TWO REALMS.

I WAS TAKEN INTO AN OCTAGONAL CHAMBER LIT BY VIOLET FIRE. THERE I WAS PLACED ON A THRONE CARVED FROM THE IRON REMAINS OF A FANTASTIC BEAST. A GROTESQUELY OBSESSIVE GHOUL MAIDEN THROVE FORWARD A GOLDEN PLATE PILED HIGH WITH GRAPES AND SEVERED FINGERS. GINGERLY I POPPED A REB OF THE GRAPES INTO MY STARVING MOUTH. I TRIED NOT TO MIND THE DOTS OF BLOOD ON THEIR GUSTAWING SKINS.

A CROWN WAS PLACED ON MY HEAD. THE GHOULS GONGED CLOSER, RUBBING AT EACH OTHER LIKE CUPS ON HEAT. A BURLY SPECIMEN PRESENTED THE CROWN, HOLDING BEFORE HIM A CHEST OF TRANSLUCENT CRYSTAL. THIS WAS PRESENTED TO ME AS IF IT WERE PART OF THE ROYAL REGALIA. VISIBLE THROUGH ITS GLASSY SIDES WERE A SERIES OF HUMAN FACES, SKINNED AND CAREFULLY PRESERVED AS MASKS. EACH OF THESE I RECOGNISED — EITHER FROM PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE, OR FROM PHOTOGRAPHS FOUND IN OUR CASE FILES. FROZEN IN A RICTUS OF APPALLED SURPRISE WAS THE INVESTIGATOR ~~THOMAS~~.

THE JOWLED FACE OF SHERIFF ELSHA CHUBBSON, HIS HOLLOWED EYES NOW LACKING THEIR DURAL CUNNING.

NEXT TO HIS WAS THE FLATTENED VISAGE OF THE HOBBO ISAIAH HAVENS, WHO WILMARTH HAD IDENTIFIED AS THE DARK FIGURE WHO HAD TRIED TO STRANGLE HIM. THOUGH I COULD NOT BE CERTAIN, THE NEXT MASK APPEARED TO BE THE REMAINS OF DR. BRWIN DIERKE, THE NOTED ALIENIST. THE SOLE FEMALE FACE WAS THAT OF THE FORTUNE TELLER WHO HAD SET ME ON THIS PATH.

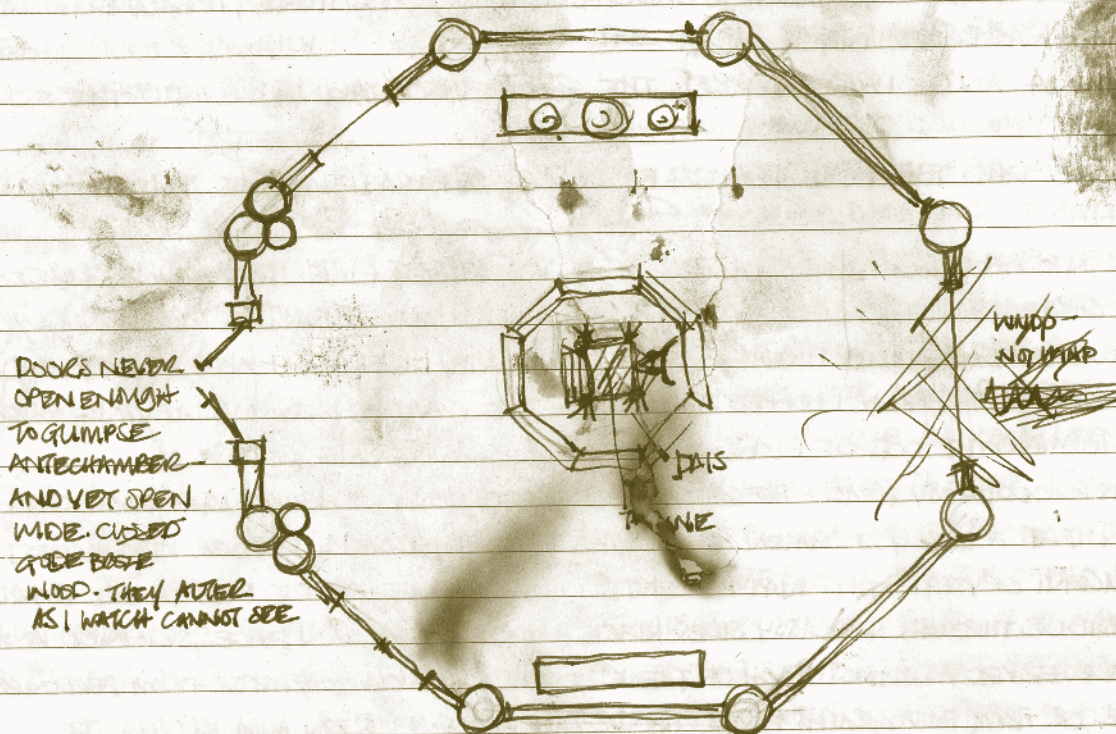
MY MIND RACED FEVERISHLY, ATTEMPTING TO CORRELATE THE PAST HISTORIES OF THESE DISPARATE INDIVIDUALS, TO WEAVE THEM INTO A SINGLE NARRATIVE TO ACCOUNT

FOR ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED.

INTUITION TOLD ME THAT EACH HAD PLAYED A RÔLE IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD.

THAT IF THE INQUIRY HAD BEEN BLESSED WITH THE FORESIGHT TO ALTER THE PATH OF A SINGLE ONE OF THEM, THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE HAPPENING.

BUT WHICH ONE HAD PROVED CRUCIAL TO RUTH'S RISE I COULD NOT GUESS.



WITH AN INCREASINGLY INSISTENT CHORUS OF BARKS AND YELPS THE GHOULS COMMUNICATED TO ME THAT I WAS EXPECTED TO PICK ONE OF THESE MUMMIFIED FACES FROM THE CHEST AND PLACE IT OVER MY OWN.

SEEMING THAT THE LEeway GRANTED TO THEIR HUMAN KING WAS LESS THAN INFINITELY ELASTIC I RELUCTANTLY COMPLIED.

HANDS TREMBLING I REACHED INTO THE BOX AND WORE THE FACE OF MY ESTEEMED COLLEAGUE DR. WILLIAM MOORE.

The ghouls reared from me in fear. I was their King. That I killed the first three of them through the trap door troubled them not. Such was my right as their sovereign. They bore me through the Arkham streets, chanting my name along with that of Mordiggian, the charnel god. Armitage! Armitage! A choking cloud of flies obscured the air. Corpse fragments littered the streets. Jellyfish things pulsed in the skies. They descended on burning houses, lapping hungrily at the flames. The ghouls hissed and reared at them, but the polyps paid them no heed.

The ghoul that held my quaking shoulder seemed familiar despite the canine dimensions of his distorted face. The white tufts of hair and jagged scar across his snout reminded me indelibly of the unfortunate anthropologist Henry Russell. I recalled Russell's discussion of the primitive tribes he'd studied deep in the benighted rain forests of Burma and the Amazon. He spoke of them with grim admiration. When I could not help shudder at their degeneracies, he grew cold and changed the subject. I urged Freeborn to sound him out further but by then Russell had gone off on another of his expeditions. And now I could not help superimpose his features over this oddly configured ghoul. The creature noted my inquiry and croaked in a halting tongue, as if the act of human speech pained it dreadfully. At first I could not make out its words, which it repeated, until I understood them as "Savior risen!"

"Russell?" I hissed, in a ridiculous attempt to conceal my words from the rest of the ghoulish throng. "Henry Russell?"

"Incomparable glory!"

His voice, though altered, was the one I had heard years before in the faculty lounge. "Russell, that is you, isn't it?"

"Blood hail! Inversion!" Though chosen apparently at random, I took these words as a reply in the affirmative.

"What happened? How did you transform?"

"Pnakotus! Mnar! Tawil At-'Umr!" he croaked. I saw a jungle path, a descent into a lightless tunnel, again felt the taste of blood and uncooked human flesh in my mouth.

Russell and the others led me to the courthouse, its portico sheared away, its columns toppled. Stumbling up its broken steps, they carried me into the foyer and down a set of steps that I had never before seen. It occurred to me that I was dreaming, for in dreams familiar architecture often reconfigures and misconstrues itself. Yet I could feel cold air on my crawling flesh, and intensely feel the pressure of my subjects' clawed hands as they pushed me ever further into the depths. As the steps curved into a series of intestinal corridors, as the surface changed from brick to a jade-colored sandstone, I realized what had happened. I was dreaming and I was awake. The ghouls were taking me into the Dreamlands. The apocalypse had torn open the barriers separating the two realms.

I was taken into an octagonal chamber lit by violet fire. There I was placed on a throne carved from the iron bones of a fantastic beast. A grotesquely obese ghoul maiden thrust out a golden plate, piled high with grapes and severed fingers. Gingerly I popped a few of the grapes into my starving mouth. I tried not to mind the dots of blood on their glistening skins. A crown

was placed upon my head. The ghouls thronged closer, rubbing at each other like curs in heat. A burly specimen parted the crowd, holding before him a chest of translucent crystal. This was presented to me as if it were part of the royal regalia. Visible through its glassy sides were a series of human faces, skinned and carefully preserved as masks. Each of these I recognized, either from personal acquaintance or from photographs found in our case files. Frozen in a rictus of appalled surprise was the investigator . The jowly face of sheriff Elisha Culberson, his hollowed eyes now lacking their rural cunning. Next to his lay the flattened visage of the hobo Isaiah Havens, who Wilmarth had identified as the dark figure who'd tried to strangle him. Though I could not be certain, the next mask appeared to be the remains of Dr. Erwin Dieke, the noted alienist. The sole female face was that of the fortune teller who had set me on this path. My mind raced feverishly, attempting to correlate the past histories of these disparate individuals, to weave them into a single narrative to account for all that had happened. Intuition told me that each had played a role in the world's destruction. That if the Inquiry had been blessed with the foresight to alter the path of a single one of them, that this would not be happening. But which one had proven crucial to R'lyeh's rise, I could not guess.

With an increasingly insistent chorus of barks and yelps, the ghouls communicated to me that I was expected to pluck one of these mummified faces from the chest and place it over my own. Seeing that the leeway granted their human king was less than infinitely elastic, I reluctantly complied. Hands trembling, I reached into the box and wore the face of my esteemed colleague, Dr. William Moore.

RAIN SEEPS ALL AROUND ME. I AM COLD AND WET. THERE IS A WOUND ON MY LEG THAT WILL NOT HEAL. THE SKIN BLACKENS  
~~SCALD~~ HARDENS SLOUGHS OFF LIKE A SCAB HEALS, THEN BLACKENS AGAIN.

THE LAST TIME I LOOKED IN THE MIRROR I SAW THE NASCENT SKIN OF TERNATION.

THE SKULL TRANSFIGURING ITSELF

ALTERING MY FACE FROM WITHIN.

WHETHER I STAND TO GROW A GHOULISH SNOUT OR BECOME ANOTHER ENTITY ENTIRELY I  
CAN ONLY SURMISE.

I AM IN A BROOKLYN BASEMENT THE HOUSE ABOVE IT SHEARED OFF REMINANT OF ITS  
FLOOR PROVIDE A MODICUM OF SHELTER THOUGH ENTIRELY LUCID I AM INSANE AGAIN.  
I REMAIN IN CONTROL OF MY THOUGHTS AT ALL TIMES BUT AM IMPELLED TO SOME ACTION.

DRAWN TO THIS SLAUGHTERHOUSE OF A CITY, TO THE  
HEART OF THE CATASTROPHE.

BY NIGHT IN PARTICULAR MY ACTIONS ARE NOT MINE TO CONTROL THIS IS WHEN I TRAVEL.

LAST NIGHT I SAW THE ELDER GOD HIMSELF FEASTING ON THE HORDES OF THE STILL-LIVING.

HE IS OBSCENEBELLY BULGING AND GURGUNG ACROSS THE SCORCHED EXpanse OF CENTRAL PARK  
HYPNOTISED MEN AND WOMEN FENCIBLY FROM ANYTHING OTHER THAN BAGS STALDERED TOWARD HIM AS  
MOUTH TO A FLAME

IT IS THE SAME IMPULSE INSIDE THAT BROUGHT ME HERE FROM A DREAM YET SOMETHING GROWING IN THE DARK  
OF MY RECENT CANCER HAS TAKEN HOLD WHERE OTHERS PRESEED NUMBLY ON TOGETHER A BENEFIT  
OR THE DESTINY THAT CAUSES ME TO TAKE THE IMPLEMENT AND WRITING ME A FINE TIME BY THE  
MI-GO AND TO WRITE.

OES



Tomatoes are specially  
for flavour and grown on selected  
is in the Puglia region of southern Italy

Calori  
Fat  
Satura  
Salt  
Sug

I WRITE THIS DOCUMENT AS A DELAYING MEASURE. I DID NOT HAVE TO COMPLETE MY  
MAGNUM OPUS.

THE TEARS OF AZAZOTH.

I AM ITS AUTHOR.

THESE ARE THE ROUGH NOTES OF THIS ~~MAJESTIC~~ MASTERPIECE.

PRACTICALLY, I CORRELATE THE HUMAN SENSE OF LOSS WITH  
ALien ANALYTICAL TOOLS. SEE INTO MY MIND THE RESULTING  
TEXT WILL BE INHUMANLY ABSTRACT, INFORMATIVE,  
WHEN READ SUBJECTIVE AND EMOTIONAL. I WRITE HERE TO  
PRESERVE THE HUMAN WITHIN THE SENSE OF  
NARRATIVE. INHUMANITY. LIQUID HORROR. ACROSS ITS  
IMPOSSIBLE PAGES.

IMMUNON/CONVICTED THAT THE PATTERNS OF THE RED SASH PLAYED A ROLE IN THE. ORSO ADVISES THE  
FUNGAL COMPUTER NOW RESIDENT IN MY OCCUPATIONAL CEREBRAL CORTEX. ETHNIC ORGANIZATION.  
FORMER OCCUPANTS OF THIRD-FLOOR WALKUP IN CITY. NOW PRESUMABLY DESTROYED. UZLO-UGRIK  
COMMUNITY. (BALKAN). CYRILIC ALPHABET. CONNECTED TO THE ENTIRE TEMPLE MESS IN THEIR OWN  
DISTINCTIVELY OBLIVIOUS EASTERN EUROPEAN WAY. APPEARS INNOCUOUS, AS BOTH CULTISTS AND CULTIST  
FIGHTERS MUST DO. TEA, ARGUMENTS, POLITICAL SABBAGE ROLLS. BEHIND IT ALL, WHAT?  
ZVDRANKO IMIC IS THE NAME OF THE LEADER. DID THEY DO EVIL  
AGAINST IT AND FAIL?

Scriabin  
no. 5 Opus 53  
of Ecstasy

A CURIOUS FELLOW HAS BEEN COMING AROUND LIKE ME. ANOTHER INTERNAL REFUGEE DRAWN TO NEW YORK BY THE GREAT OLD ONE'S HUNGER. LIKE ME, HE FOLLOWED THE TRAIL BUT RESISTS THE CALL. STOOD SLOWLY SMELLING. A VEXING PRAGMATIST ALWAYS ASKING QUESTIONS MOTIVATED BY JEALOUSY AND FEAR. I DESPISE HIM. YET, WITH MY LEGS GROWING WORSE, I HAVE BECOME INEVITABLY DEPENDENT ON HIS MINISTRATIONS. MY SUSTENANCE NOW DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON HIS REACHING SLIPS. WILTON BOWDEN IS HIS NAME.

THERE WAS THE TIME IN THE OLD OBSERVATORY OUTSIDE ALPHAN THE ONE BUILT BY EPHRAIM CALLAN BEFORE HE SUCCUMBED TO BRAIN CANCER. REMEMBER WHEN WE WENT BACK THERE, HAVING HEARD OF THE CAT MUTILATIONS? THAT'S WHEN WE SAW THE ENTITIES THAT COULD TURN SIDEWAYS INTO NON-EUCLIDEAN SPACE, VANISHING. WE THOUGHT THEM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ANIMAL SLAYINGS, BUT NOW I WONDER IF THEY WEREN'T BENIGN ENTITIES, COME TO US TO HELP US FROM ANOTHER STAR. I KNOW YOU LAUGH WHEN I SAY THIS, FREEBORN. THAT THE SO-CALLED BENIGN ENTITIES TURN OUT TO BE ANYTHING BUT, SEEN CLOSE UP. THAT IS YOUR MARXIST CYNICISM TALKING AGAIN. THESE THINGS WERE SHADOW ANGELS, AND IF WE COULD FIND THEM PERHAPS THEY COULD.



I CAUGHT BOLHEEN SCRIBBLING NONSENSE IN MY JOURNAL - A CHILDISH PRANK.  
HE HATES THIS JOURNAL AND ESPECIALLY THE TIME I SPEND WORKING ON  
THE TEARS OF AZAZOTH

HE SAYS THE DEPENDENCE HE HAS UPON ME HAS GROWN UNWHOLE SOME.  
IT IS INAPPROPRIATE TO SAY MORE, BUT I HAVE TAKEN TO BARRICADING MY DOOR  
SHUT AT NIGHT, LEST I BE PREYED UPON IN UNSAVORY FASHION.

HE SAYS MY COMMUNICATIONS CAUSE THIS. ALL BECAUSE I HAVE SPONTANEOUSLY  
DEVELOPED THE PROPER FORMULAS TO SEND THEM BACK IN TIME TO YOU.  
THE INVOCATION OF NON-EUCLIDEAN TIME.

KNOWING WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU. KNOWING WHAT I DO TO MANY OF YOU. HOW CAN I DO  
OTHERWISE BUT TO REACH BACK AND STOP IT?

BOLHEEN AIMS TO KILL ME, I AM SURE OF IT.

I CAN'T MOVE ANYMORE, YET HE YELLS AND CURSES ME, TELLS ME I MUST TRY TO MOVE.  
THAT THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH MY LEG. CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT?

I WILL SQUEEZE PUS FROM IT AND LET IT SEED INTO THIS PAGE, SO THAT YOU MAY  
VERIFY THE TRUTH. TRUST ME AND NOT HIM.

I CONSIDERED CUTTING HIS ADDITION FROM THE MANUSCRIPT, BUT WILL INCLUDE IT  
SO THAT YOU CAN TASTE HIS PERFDY. AS TO THE DECEPTION ABOUT MY LEG BEING  
UNINJURED: THE PURPOSE OF THAT IS CLEAR. HE MERELY WANTS TO LURE ME OUTSIDE,  
WHERE ONE OF HIS VAMPIRE FRIENDS WILL SUCK ME DRY.

I WILL TRAP AND KILL HIM AS I HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DO WITH SO MANY OTHERS.  
HE IS SIMPLY A LARGER SPECIES OF RAT. AND IN MY EATING HABITS I HAVE  
LONG SINCE GROWN ADAPTABLE.



HUMAN LIFE ESSENCE MUST BE DESTROYED.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 10

Rain seeps all around me. I am cold and wet. There's a wound on my leg that will not heal. The skin blackens, hardens, sloughs off like a scab, heals, then blackens again. The last time I looked in the mirror I saw the nascent signs of transformation. The skull transfiguring itself, altering my face from within. Whether I stand to grow a ghoulish snout or become another entity entirely I can only surmise. I am in a Brooklyn basement, the house above it sheared off. Remnants of its floor provide a modicum of shelter. Though entirely lucid I am insane again. I remain in control of my thoughts at all times but am impelled to suicidal action. Drawn to this slaughterhouse of a city, to the heart of the catastrophe. By night in particular my actions are not mine to control. This is when I travel. Last night I saw the elder god himself feasting on the hordes of the still-living. His obscene belly lay bulging and gurgling across the scorched expanse of central park. Hypnotized men and women, few clad in anything other than rags, shuddered toward him as moths to a flame. It is the same impulse, I am sure, that brought me here from Arkham. Yet something growing in me, something dank and shameful, allowed me to turn back, where others pressed numbly on to be devoured. A benefit of my recent cannibal past, perhaps. Or the destiny that causes me to take the implement and writing media given to me by the Mi-Go, and to write.

I write this document as a delaying measure, so I do not have to complete my magnum opus, The Tears Of Azazoth. I am its author. These are the rough notes for this masterpiece.

Frantically I correlate the churning set of facts before me. Alien analytical tools seep into my mind. The resulting text will be inhuman, abstract, informative. When read, subjective and malleable. I write here to preserve the human truths, the sense of narrative, animating the liquid words scattered across its

impossible pages.

I am now convinced that the Brotherhood of the Red Sash played a role in this. Or so advises the fungal computer now resident in my cerebral cortex. Ethnic organization. Former occupants of third-floor walk up in city. Now presumably destroyed. Tuzlo-Ugric community. (Balkan.) Cyrillic alphabet. Connected to the entire Templar mess in their own distinctively obscure Eastern European way. Appears innocuous, as both cultists and cultist fighters must do. Tea, argument, politics, cabbage rolls. Behind it all, what? Zdravko Ilic is the name of the leader. Did they do evil, or fight against it and fail?

A curious fellow has been coming around. Like me, another internal refugee drawn to New York by the Great Old One's hunger. Like me, followed the trail but resists the call. Stooped, sickly, sniffing, a vexing braggart, always asking questions. Motivated by jealousy and fear. I despise him. Yet, with my leg getting worse, I have grown ineluctably dependent on his ministrations. My sustenance now depends utterly on his rat-catching skills. Wilton Bohleen is his name.

There was the time in the old observatory outside Arkham. The one half-built by Ephraim Callan before he succumbed to brain cancer. Remember when we went back there, having heard of the cat mutilations? That's when we saw the entities that could turn sideways into non-Euclidean space, vanishing. We thought them responsible for the animal slayings, but now I wonder if they weren't benign entities, come to help us from another star. I know you laugh when I say this, Freeborn. That the so-called benign entities turn out to be anything but, seen up close. That is your Marxist cynicism talking again. These things were shadow angels, and if we could find them, perhaps they could...

Naturally Bohleen is Mythos-aware. He regales me with stories of his encounters, back before the world ended. Mentions people I know but he couldn't possibly. (Raises the possibility of his being a figment of my imagination, but I dismiss this, for no matter how riven by dementia I might become I would not dream up an imaginary ally so sniveling, so effete...) He names as an intimate that poor wretched doctor of divinity, Graham Burgess. Tells of a scrape with a man who says he fixed my car once, a Jesse McDermott. This McDermott apparently remembers me much more vividly than I him. Also that old sailor fellow, Lem whatever his name was, who was a loose end in the Swampscott business. All of these persons figure, thinly veiled, in an idiotic novel he claims to have written. Scientifiction, he calls it.

Now he says he knows Vance Whitney. Repeats those baseless canards about his criminal connections. Talks about his Cuban cane fields. Yet when pressed retreats from his assertions. A true fabulist, he has lost the ability to distinguish his entertaining embellishments from their underlying truths.

~~hello i have to right quickly here and exuedse my usual atrocious speling has never bin my forte despite being a (not) famous author~~

~~youv got to know that Armitage is misleading you in many places in this document and cant be trusted~~

~~the places and people and groups he is telling you about, that's the fungal half of him~~

~~and it goes back way sooner than you thig~~

~~you think he's bin teling you how to prevent this from happening, giving you hints to go find them all and see how they intracconnect~~

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Document 10

but rilly he's making it happen by  
telling you to connect the groups and  
places and people

it's u who does it

u who ends the world

don't trust him

undo everything you've done

don't go any futher

the real truth is in my book The Short  
History Of the Future, by me, Wilton  
Bohleen

find my book and trust in it

don't read The Tears Of Azazoth

if you have it already, destroy it

don't trust Armitage

don't trust him now, don't trust him  
then

I caught Bohleen scrawling the above  
nonsense in my journal. A childish  
prank. He hates the journal and  
especially the time I spend working on  
The Tears Of Azazoth. I dare say the  
dependence he has upon me has grown  
unwholesome. It is inappropriate to say  
more but I have taken to barricading  
shut my door at night, lest I be preyed  
upon in unsavory fashion.

He says my communications cause  
this, all because I have spontaneously  
developed the proper formulae to  
send them back in time to you. The  
Invocation of Non-Euclidean Time.

Knowing what happens to you—  
knowing what I do to many of you—  
how can I do otherwise but to reach  
back and stop it? Bohleen aims to kill  
me, I am sure of it. I can't move any  
more, yet he shouts and curses at me,  
tells me I must try to move. That there's  
nothing wrong with my leg. Can you  
imagine that? I will squeeze pus from it  
and let it seep into this page, so that you  
can verify the truth. Trust me, and not  
him. I considered cutting his addition  
to this page from the manuscript but  
now include it so that you can taste his  
perfidy. As to the deception about my  
leg being uninjured: the purpose of that  
is clear. He merely wants to lure me  
outside, where one of his star vampire  
friends will suck me dry. I will trap and  
kill him as I have been forced to do with  
so many others. He is simply a larger  
species of rat. And in my eating habits I  
have long since grown adaptable .



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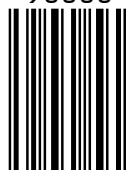
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