
TRAIL OF CTHULHU
ETERNAL LIES
BY WILL HINDMARCH AND JEFF TIDBALL
WITH JEREMY KELLER

ETERNAL LIES

Credits



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Based on the Gumshoe System by Robin D. Laws and Trail of Cthulhu by Kenneth Hite

Special thanks to Robin D. Laws, Kenneth Hite, Beth Lewis, Cathriona Tobin, James Semple, Mike Torr, and Simon Rogers.

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Introduction

Welcome!

This book describes a grand adventure, set in the past, but which has yet to unfold. The adventure truly unfolds not in the reading of this book — though this book is rife with spoilers for the forthcoming adventure — but when you actually play this *Trail of Cthulhu* campaign using characters you devise yourselves or select from the options presented herein. These player characters (PCs), also called Investigators, thus become the protagonists in a dark and dangerous story, a tale of mystery and peril, a campaign of adventures that spans the globe and, indeed, may cost several characters their sanity or their lives. Large parts of this story were crafted in advance; the remaining parts — the unfolding tales — are created on the fly as you play.

You've read some or all of *Trail of Cthulhu*, so you know how this works.

If not, that book is where you want to start. It contains the game rules and mechanisms that work together like an engine to power this campaign. It *is* the game. This book's campaign is like a collection of game levels that combine to form a complete, epic series called *Eternal Lies*.

You may well be able to make use of this adventure for other roleplaying games, but be aware that the jargon and mechanisms within are aimed squarely at Keepers running *Trail of Cthulhu*. Still, this book can easily inspire or inform a campaign played with other games.

Enjoy.

About the Campaign

The mysteries of *Eternal Lies* stretch across the globe. The tale involves two generations of intrepid (and perhaps reckless) Investigators vying with volatile and arcane powers. Yet it can also be a tale of human drama and dangers entangled with escalating stakes that threaten to change or end lives of both enemies and beloved friends. It can be a great and frightening story, yet the people at its heart — whether they are selfish or selfless, mad with power or plagued by fear — can begin play as ambitious heroes or simply as driven everybodies.

There are a lot of ways to tell this story.

Eternal Lies easily contains enough material to fuel a complete *Trail*



of Cthulhu campaign. It can also be retrofitted to be part of a larger (or more modest) campaign by adding (or subtracting) further scenarios or subplots from other adventure anthologies or your own imagination.

Each particular group's version of this campaign in actual play is called, in this book, an *adaptation* of the campaign. This is meant to be rather like how a stage play's script or a novel may be adapted to another medium like film or the actual *performance* of the play. Through play, your choices and good or ill luck adapt the adventures implied within to create an actual instance of play that is yours. Which characters live and die? How quickly are puzzles solved and by whom? These and other questions are asked and answered differently in each adaptation of the campaign for actual play.

Your adaptation of *Eternal Lies* may be quite different from the first one you read about online or the instances that we encountered during playtesting. Good! Have at it. Make this campaign yours.

How to Read This Book

If you're going to play through *Eternal Lies* as any player but the Keeper, beware. Only the first chapter of this book is meant for you. All the rest contains secrets, background information, and spoilers galore describing the ambitions, schemes, and clues your Investigators shall explore, piece together, or unravel.

Players can safely read this introduction and the first chapter of the book without spoiling the adventure for themselves.

Keepers, further details await you in "The Keeper's Introduction."

Note that some information appears in this book more than once. These redundancies are installed to minimize the amount of page flipping necessary while preparing or actually playing the campaign. Still, these redundancies are kept to a minimum to save space.

Let's Be Discreet, Shall We?

Eternal Lies has some, let's say, *secret information* in it. Divulging it across the Internet has the potential to ruin lots of fun for lots of people who'd probably prefer to uncover those secrets for themselves, in the course of play.

So, while we'd love it if you and your players told everyone you know how much fun you had with *Eternal Lies*, we'd also love it if you were discreet, marking spoilers when you talk or write about the twists and turns among the campaign's Locales and Acts.

Thanks for that.



Players' Background & Investigators

Eternal Lies, by and large, is meant for Keepers' eyes. The campaign's secrets lurk within, waiting for the Investigators to discover them through play, but it's the players' Investigators who undertake the adventure herein. Their foes and foils want the campaign to be about them, but, ultimately, it's the players who decide how the story changes and unfolds. It's the players' characters who make things happen.

So let's make those characters good ones.

You have three key ways to fit characters to this campaign. First, you can bring in existing *Trail of Cthulhu* Investigators you've already created for other scenarios. Second, you can create new characters specifically to embark on this campaign. Third, you can select — in whole or in part — from the ten Investigators provided in this chapter.

Work with the Keeper to sort out a plan. Use options presented in *Trail of Cthulhu*, such as the point-trading option, if you like. Some play groups may want everyone to play fresh characters with the same number of build points, while other groups may be comfortable importing a favorite Investigator (who's earned just a few additional build points) from a previous adventure. One player might pick a ready-to-play character from these pages while the others create their own Investigators. It's important that the Investigators have, taken together, a wide array of Investigative and General abilities at their disposal and, of course, that all of the players feel their characters have an important part to play.

Adjusting build point totals up or down a bit, as described in *Trail of Cthulhu*, alters the competency and survivability of Investigators in sometimes subtle ways — perhaps making them more ambitious or wary during play — but won't much change a character's compatibility with the campaign. Individual choices (and good fortune) might lead an inexperienced Investigator toward a less gruesome fate than a reckless (or unlucky) colleague with more build points. A bad choice is more likely to get a character's mind or body shredded than a few build points earned through previous play.

That said, avoid large point disparities between the Investigators. What constitutes "large point disparities" may vary by play group. No one should feel like their character has a disadvantage in build points.

Eternal Lies plays especially well with characters who have, simultaneously, enough experience or competency in their backgrounds that they'd be asked to embark on this investigation *and* enough remaining ties to normal life that they have people to love… and lose.

No matter what kind of character you're bringing to *Eternal Lies*, the rest of this chapter contains information you may want to consider before play.

Investigators and the Hook

Without revealing too much about the adventures to come, here's a bit of information on the initial setup for *Eternal Lies* so you can get your character into position to embark on the campaign in a way that's true to her persona and motives, that's easy to believe or explain. Considering these issues now pays off at the beginning of the campaign by giving you and the Keeper fuel for in-character dialogues during play. The benefits of considering your character's connection to the campaign early apply whether your character is already established or created for the campaign.

The short version: A wealthy benefactor — Janet Winston-Rogers, daughter of entrepreneur and armchair occultist Walter Winston — confronted with a family mystery reaches out to one or more of the Investigators, offering money and resources to solve it. Most Investigators are invited directly by Mrs. Winston-Rogers, but others may be drawn in by other invited Investigators. The protagonists of this campaign all agree to the investigation because they are Investigators — because they are the players' characters.

Think of this character dynamic as having two key parts: Drive and repute. A Drive is already a key component of any *Trail of Cthulhu* Investigator. Repute simply describes what it is about your character that drew the attention of Mrs. Winston-Rogers. Repute explains why your character was invited to participate and a Drive explains why your character says yes.

The precise details of the benefactor's invitation and the mystery to be investigated get dealt with in the very first scenes of the campaign. Why your character is there, how exactly she was approached, what her connection is to the wealthy family in question — these

Call to Adventure: Repute

Repute can be easily tied to Occupation or standout abilities. A famed author or private investigator might be brought in to do research or footwork, for example. A character with good Athletics and Firearms might be brought in as muscle, even though he's a capable Investigator in his own right, too.

Repute has no mechanical effect or rating. Once the campaign is in motion, your repute is just background material or fertile soil for future roleplaying. It is primarily a tool to help you understand and believe your character's relationship to the campaign hook.

For now, it's enough to just consider some broad possibilities by describing your character's repute. It's enough to define repute as something like, "As a world-class expert in the occult who's down on his luck financially, I'm both skilled and affordable," or, "My character's Credit Rating and Medicine mean I have connections among the wealthy, so I might be found by the benefactor that way."

You don't have to design your character to be reputable or renowned, of course. It may be enough to simply be the only parapsychologist known to the benefactor now, for example. Either concoct a good reason why *one* of the Investigators is worth hiring and then create social chains between that one and all the other Investigators or, alternately, use the "A Society of Investigators" sidebar (p. 15) as a quick explanation for why *your* Investigators were chosen.

are matters you can reveal (or allude to) during play. Consider the matters now to give yourself some material to improvise with when you play. Don't try to be specific yet. More details about the benefactor come out during the campaign.

Playing Existing Characters

If you already have an Investigator — or cadre of Investigators — ready to confront the mysteries of this campaign, consider how you can work with the Keeper to bring that Investigator smoothly into the scenario. Read the nearby sidebar about reputation as well as the information on selecting Drives for the campaign.

Eternal Lies begins with a clear and concise hook, intended to get things rolling quickly. Perhaps the most important factor when bringing an existing character from other adventures into *Eternal Lies* is making that character mesh with the other Investigators in a compelling way — a way that shares the spotlight with potentially less-experienced characters. If you and the other players already know a lot about your character, think about how you can play your Investigator to share the spotlight, ask questions, and reveal more about newer characters. Share the stage.

Is your established Investigator already versed in the Cthulhu Mythos? Has she seen dreadful sights and impossible horrors already and lived to tell the tale? Then, in the opening scene of the adventure, consider how your character might have a different outlook on the benefactor and the initial mystery that kick off the campaign. When you get into the campaign, consider: How sympathetic is your character to those Investigators who have come before? What does her reaction say about her as a character?

Crafting Player Characters for Eternal Lies

Making an original character for *Eternal Lies* requires no special rules or guidelines beyond those presented in *Trail of Cthulhu*. That said, optional rules abound. *Eternal Lies* presents the Keeper with a play mode partway between the Pulp and Purist modes — described in "The Keeper's Introduction" — which impacts character-creation rules and options. Some groups might take advantage of the optional rule for trading points presented in the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, while others might not. *Eternal Lies* works just fine with the rules from *Rough Magicks*, as well. Make sure you and your cohorts have agreed on, and are each aware of, the special factors at work in *your* instance of *Eternal Lies*.

Be sure to consider the questions of repute and Drive, covered earlier in this chapter, when crafting your original character. Maybe take a look at the ready-to-play characters in this chapter and borrow some ideas for connections and Sources of Stability from them?

Investigators intending to take on *Eternal Lies* don't require any special traits or mechanisms, but if you want to tailor your character for this particular campaign without spoiling any of it for yourself, read and think about the following guidelines for Drives and Sources of Stability.

Selecting Drives for the Campaign

All of the Drives listed in Trail of Cthulhu are viable options for Eternal Lies Investigators. Still, a few Drives interact with the history and background of the campaign in potentially fruitful ways,

further tying your Investigator into the lore of the campaign and making it that much harder for him to be a reluctant participant. These Drives persist beyond the campaign's initial hook, of course, so what you're defining about your character is more than just why he participates — it's also what keeps him going long after other people would turn back.

For example, an Antiquarian might begin with a goal of getting paid in antiques or texts belonging to the Winston estate… before learning that there's much more of interest to be explored than already-catalogued antiquities.

The Drive of Arrogance might lead an old rival of the Winstons to "help out" at first as a means of proving his own superiority or to gloat over his family's lack of shadowy secrets.

Duty might fit a character with some old debt or loyalty to the Winston family, so that the Drive applies to the investigation via the patronage of the benefactor.

A Follower with some history in common with Janet Winston-Rogers might be asked to aid a hired Investigator, suggesting loyalty to the Winstons even as his Drive is technically tied to another player's character.

Might the desire to learn the Winston family secret be In the Blood of an orphan who believes (accurately or not) that Walter Winston is her father? That the Drive is inexplicably there might be all the reason a character needs to suspect she's a Winston, too.

A Revenge aimed at Walter Winston's past may be tempting, but it wouldn't be the mystery it is if the Investigators knew what needed to be avenged. Better to seek vengeance for all the Winstons or their ilk — those who take secrets to their graves — or against horrors that cannot be understood. Put yourself in allegiance with your patron rather than against her.

And, of course, amnesia brought on by a Sudden Shock might be a fine way to tie a character closely into the campaign's background. Let the Keeper fill in the missing pieces and reveal the experience your mind wants to deny as the campaign comes together. (This is a hard Drive for multiple characters to share — and tricky to implement, given the nature of the campaign's backstory — but the Keeper has some advice regarding it in "The Keeper's Introduction," so work together to make this work, if you like.)

Call to Adventure: Drive

Naturally, since you want to play *Eternal Lies*, your Investigator does not refuse the call to adventure, even if she is a busy and successful professional whose Occupation should keep her from flying off on mysterious adventures. Here, then, are example reasons why Investigators might suspend their own business to embark on an investigation for the mysterious benefactor, arranged according to Drive and expressed as a passage of dialogue for you to use or draw on when explaining yourself.

Adventure: "This sounds like the start of something bigger, something hidden. I hope it is. Sounds like fun."

Antiquarianism: "I don't like it when stories get lost. This may be our last chance to save this one for history."

Arrogance: "They're in over their heads. I'll get this sorted, if anyone can."

Artistic Sensitivity: "It feels like something special or… strange is going on here, and I want to know what it is. I'm open to stranger things. You?"

Bad Luck: "Careful, now. These things never go that well. I'm not that lucky."

Curiosity: "A great man's great secret? How can I not want to know? Even if I say 'no' now, I'll just keep wondering and end up sticking my nose in it later."

Duty: "This could be nothing or it could be something. I won't pretend we're not meddling in something potentially serious. That means it calls for serious people."

Ennui: "Someone, at least, is having a more interesting time of it than I've been. Why say 'no'?"

Follower: "If you're going, I'm going."

In the Blood: "It's difficult to explain. You might not understand. Maybe you will one day, though. I just have to."

Revenge: "It's an ugly world. We have to shine lights in the dark places or else evil things will grow there and come for us. Believe me." *Or:* "People have been hurt and these rich bastards covered it up. Enough's enough."

Scholarship: "I want to know what hurt the family. I want to know what they're so afraid of, to protect others from it. To understand it."

Sudden Shock: "Don't ask. Don't rush. You'll see soon enough. Heaven help us, if I'm right, we'll all see things that'll make us understand why people take secrets to their graves."

Thirst for Knowledge: "He saw something — something that changed him, something he wanted to keep from the world. That's reason enough to want to know, isn't it?"

Sources of Stability

Sources of Stability, as described on p. 48 of *Trail of Cthulhu*, remain an optional consideration for an Eternal

Crafting Player Characters for Eternal Lies



Lies campaign… and they're an awfully good fit for the material. Eternal Lies interacts with Sources of Stability in some compelling ways, so use them to get the most out of the material.

Keepers, consider making Sources of Stability mandatory for Investigators in this campaign. They'll give the Investigators visible people to protect and talk about, plus they make each Investigator's life stretch out beyond the scope of any one adventure in the campaign.

Players, you want to give your characters Sources of Stability as a means of grounding them in the larger world, dramatizing their life and times outside of the core investigations, and to give you and the Keeper dramatic material to work with when crafting scenes about love, fear, danger, and revenge. Avoid the temptation to make a loner antihero — or a group of loner antiheroes — as a means of protecting your character from peril. Peril's inevitable. It's the stuff of drama. Embrace it.

What's more, Sources of Stability may suggest where replacement Investigators come from when your initial Investigator goes mad, missing, or worse. A dead Investigator's stabilizing sibling might join the investigation (perhaps with a Drive of Revenge), moving from one PC's character sheet to a character sheet of her own, for example. Or perhaps your replacement character shares a Source of Stability or two in common with your previous character, making those Sources part of the dramatic continuity that ties the campaign together, even if the protagonist Investigators are being pushed out of play time and again.

No special guidelines are necessary for Sources of Stability suitable to this campaign, but the ready-to-play Investigators in this chapter contain numerous examples to work with, if you like.

A Society of Investigators

For an easy way to tie current and future Investigators together, without having to worry too much about who is whose cousin or colleague from university (though those are fine connections for recruiting replacement Investigators), you can decide that a quaintly private network of Investigators exists, like a National Geographic Society of driven would-be occultists and adventurers, spanning borders of class and culture.

Called simply the Society, this loose network is more like a bunch of pen pals or old college chums than a proper secret society. Individual members of the Society may know secret things, but, until *your* Investigators elevate or ruin it, it is not an occult order "in the know," really. Its true purpose is to help world travelers and historians find places to stay on their trips and to connect writers with researchers. It is no cult, no secret army, no nefarious or sinister order out to destroy anything or save the world — not yet. Its reach is limited; its resources are only those of its individual members.

Of course, its *real* true purpose is to explain the means by which replacement Investigators can join the campaign in progress without having to fly cousins and colleagues to remote corners of the globe. It is a cheap tool for explaining how Investigators already know each other or each other's work. Use it as such.

Be aware, of course, that bringing the Society into play may have long-term thematic consequences. The Society is sure to change and develop as you meet more of its members, as your Investigators keep or spill their personal secrets to other Society members, as Society members vanish or die in the course of the campaign. If you'd rather the campaign be about familial ties — another great thematic element — or about intrepid individuals rather than nebulous, modest societies, ignore this option altogether. The Society simply does not exist.

Alone Together

Is it possible to play *Eternal Lies* with just two Investigators? If the Keeper is ready to adapt, of course it is. As written, the campaign features threats and perils that may be too great for only two Investigators to overcome. Such challenges either need to adapted by the Keeper to the conditions of actual play or such challenges need to be tackled by Investigators willing to call in help from local police, well placed contacts, or old Society allies. Even with 24 Investigative build points per Investigator, contacts and cohorts may be key.

Make sure you're leaving yourself lots of threads to draw in replacement Investigators. Your PC should keep a diary, write letters, and otherwise pique the interest of allies and reinforcements.

Ready-to-Play Player Characters

This chapter presents ten characters suitable for use as player character Investigators in *Eternal Lies*. Each is described by a background, personality, and set of statistics.

A three-Investigator party allows more Investigative build points per character than four- and five-character groups. Because of this, alternate statistics are noted in {curled brackets} on the character sheets. The bracketed values should only be used when those characters compose a three-player party.

Five of these characters are specifically linked to the mystery at hand, or at least to its beginnings. These five characters either know or are known by members of the Winston family — either Walter Winston, now deceased, or Janet Winston-Rogers, his daughter. If you wish to play characters who are *personally* motivated to investigate and already somewhat integrated into the unfolding plot, pick one of these. If you wish to play characters for which you are completely responsible for determining motivation, select one without a described connection.

The characters that follow are presented in pairs. Each pair is designed to fulfill a particular niche in an investigative group. There's an alienist and a doctor, a police officer and a private detective, an antiquarian and a professor, a criminal and a dilettante, and an author and a priest. In each pair, one character is male and the other is female, one has a connection to the Winstons and the other does not. We encourage your group to select only one character from any pairing, but that is not a requirement.

The existence of these pre-generated player characters should not be mistaken as even the *suggestion* that players who'd prefer to create their own Investigators shouldn't do so. By all means, create your own custom Investigators. These ten are provided entirely for the convenience of groups that want to quickly begin play, to get some inspiration for their own original PCs, or perhaps need replacement PCs to fill a gap left by an unexpectedly dead or retired Investigator. Even if your play group chooses to create its own Investigator PCs, these pre-generated characters can provide convenient and immediate reinforcements if the initial Investigators die or go mad in the course of their adventures.

Dr. Paul Udko

Drive: Curiosity
Occupation: Alienist

Occupational Benefits:

Because you are a licensed medical doctor, you can use Medicine as an Interpersonal ability to gain access to mental records, sanitarium wards, medical records, and hospital wards.

You make Psychoanalysis tests for Psychological Triage at Difficulty 3 (instead of 4). It costs you 1 Psychoanalysis point (instead of 2) to stabilize an erratic character. You can recover 1 Stability for yourself per Psychoanalysis point you spend.

You can use Assess Honesty as forensic psychology. From the details of a crime scene, you can assemble a profile detailing the perpetrator's likely personal history, age, habits, and attitudes.

Pillars of Sanity:

- The unflagging advance of scientific understanding
- Your belief in the ability of the mind to expand its understanding to encompass anything it can perceive

Sources of Stability:

- Jonas, one of your early patients, whom you treated at Dixmont
- Dr. Masterson, a close friend on the Philadelphia licensing board
- Dr. Johns, a professor of behavioral science at your alma mater

Background: At medical school, your interest in the intricacies of the mind far surpassed any draw the menial functions of the rest of the body held. Your professional career began at Dixmont Hospital for the Insane, where your curiosity continued to thrive. While your contemporaries



were primarily driven to cure their patients of their psychological afflictions, you'd rather prolong them if only to study them better. As the Great Depression set in and the hospital lost a majority of its funding, you decided to go into private practice rather than suffer a reduced salary. But the inane complaints of the clients who could afford your services soon bored you, and you began to seek out stranger and more disturbed customers — whether they had the cash or not.

Personality: You are driven by a need to discover that which is unknown and to understand that which is elusive. From time to time this compulsion has seen you neglect good hygiene, offend the overly sensitive, and propose the unthinkable for the sake of argument. It probably explains your continued bachelorhood. Even for the social drawbacks it brings, though, you are never more alive than when debating and dissecting wild theories with the potential to explain even wilder peculiarities. You would not change the fundamental makeup of your psyche if you could.

Connection: You were hired to consult a pharmaceutical magnate named Walter Winston. Having just left Dixmont, you welcomed the stable source of income. The man had suffered some ordeal in 1924 and, according to his family, had never been the same since. At the time, you were less interested in what happened to him than the psychological barriers he had constructed to block it out. When his wife passed away in 1932, you were let go. Then when you heard that Walter died earlier this year, you suddenly became intrigued by the incident that haunted this man's life. When his daughter Janet Winston-Rogers telephoned, you thought you might have your chance to find out the truth — or something close to it.

Academic Abilities: Accounting 0, Anthropology 1, Archaeology 0, Architecture 1, Art History 0, Biology* 2, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 0, Geology 0, History 0 {1}, Languages 2 (German*, Latin*), Law 1, Library Use* 2, Medicine* 2, Occult 0, Physics 0, Theology 0

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty* 4, Bargain 0, Bureaucracy 1, Cop Talk 0, Credit Rating 3, Flattery 1, Interrogation* 2, Intimidation 0, Oral History 0, Reassurance* 4, Streetwise 0

Technical Abilities: Art 0 {1}, Astronomy 0, Chemistry 0, Craft 0, Evidence Collection 0, Forensics 1, Locksmith 0, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy* 2, Photography 0

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Conceal 0, Disguise 0, Driving 4, Electrical Repair 2, Explosives 0, Filch 0, Firearms 2, First Aid 8, Fleeing 6, Health 10, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 2, Piloting 0, Preparedness 0, Psychoanalysis* 10, Riding 0, Sanity 8, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 7, Shadowing 2, Stability 10, Stealth 2, Weapons 0

Dr. Evelyn Malley

Drive: Sudden Shock
Occupation: Doctor

Occupational Benefits:

You have access to medical records and hospital wards that the rest of the public doesn't by using Medicine or Reassurance. At Lenox Hill Hospital, you can use Reassurance to talk your way into any part of the facility.

You restore 3 Health points rather than 2 for each point of First Aid you spend to heal others. You get 2 Health points rather than 1 for each point of First Aid you spend to heal yourself.

You can spend 1 First Aid point rather than 2 to stabilize a seriously wounded victim.

Pillars of Sanity:

- The unflagging advance of scientific understanding
- Your belief in the ability of the mind to expand its understanding to encompass anything it can perceive

Sources of Stability:

- Jeffery Malley, your ex-husband
- Dr. Hastings, a fellow specialist at Lenox Hill
- Dr. Peter Trubino, your father, now retired in Rochester, New York

Background: It was never your plan to get married. It was never your plan to get pregnant. You always wanted to focus on your career. Medical school had such a cost in time, money, and social investment that you weren't going to give that up easily. But then you met — and married — Jeffery. And then you had Matthew. And you thought life had thrown your plans aside — had something else in store



for you. But something was wrong with Matthew's body. He had a growth on his lung. He couldn't breathe like other newborns. He died after three weeks. So you went back to Lenox Hill Hospital — this time as a specialist rather than as a general practitioner. Your desire to understand what happened to Matthew drove your research into birth defects, disfigurements, and other physical oddities. Somewhere along the way you lost your connection to Jeffery, too, and he filed for divorce. Maybe it's for the best. There's more to life, to the physical structure of the living, than a husband and kids and the normal things. There is the odd, the strange, and your work.

Personality: There used to be a lot more to your life: dancing on weekends, handcrafting jewelry, seaside vacations. You used to balance your career with hobbies and relaxation. But it's hard to think those are important anymore. It's hard to engage in those things without a rush of memories about the family you had. Without your work, you get sad and depressed. When you're focusing on the research or examining a new patient, that's when you feel alive and exhilarated. That's when you feel like your life has purpose. So why not embrace it? Why not just fall into the work and let it carry you through?

Academic Abilities: Accounting* 0 {2}, Anthropology 1, Archaeology 0, Architecture 1, Art History 0, Biology* 2, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 0, Geology 0, History 0, Languages 2 (Italian, Latin*), Law 1, Library Use 1, Medicine* 4, Occult 0, Physics 0, Theology 0

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty* 2, Bargain 0, Bureaucracy 1, Cop Talk 0, Credit Rating 4, Flattery 0 {1}, Interrogation 1, Intimidation 0, Oral History 0, Reassurance* 4, Streetwise 0

Technical Abilities: Art 0, Astronomy 0, Chemistry 1, Craft 0, Evidence Collection 0, Forensics* 2, Locksmith 0, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy* 2, Photography 0

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Conceal 1, Disguise 0, Driving 4, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 0, Filch 2, Firearms 2, First Aid* 12, Fleeing 8, Health 12, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 2, Piloting 0, Preparedness 0, Psychoanalysis 6, Riding 0, Sanity 8, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 6, Shadowing 0, Stability 10, Stealth 1, Weapons 0

Margaret Sullivan

Drive: Duty

Occupation: Police Detective

Occupational Benefits:

In your jurisdiction, Cop Talk allows use of police laboratories and access to the morgue.

In or near your jurisdiction, Cop Talk allows access to case files, evidence rooms, and prisoners. Farther from your jurisdiction, additional effort may be required to gain access to these, at the Keeper's discretion. (Examples of "additional effort" might include a letter of introduction from a superior back home, a local officer to vouch for you, a forged warrant, or the like.)

Pillars of Sanity:

- Basic human dignity
- Your principled concept of right and wrong
- Your pride in New York City

Sources of Stability:

- George Sullivan, your supportive husband
- Becky Sullivan, your daughter
- Sgt. Drake, your immediate superior at the precinct office

Background: After earning your degree in social work and completing female officer training for the New York City Police Department, you became one of the few woman detectives on the force. Your primary duty was to interview young women and children who were victims of violent crimes. It was you who connected the story of four apparently unrelated girls — survivors of abduction attempts — and cracked the case of a child prostitution scheme. Your work put the ringleader in jail. They still make



jokes around the office about women's intuition, but you know it was just good old-fashioned detective work and the guts to actually listen to what those poor girls had to say.

Personality: You can shoot with the best of them at the range and swear with the rest of them at the bar. After listening to personal accounts of rape and abuse all day, you're not really too concerned with what's ladylike anymore. When you need to, you turn off the crass and get professional and serious. You're not even really sure if you like your job, but you know it needs to get done, and you're not sure who else could do it.

Connection: Janet Winston-Rogers has been following your story since news of you busting that pimp came out in the Times. She engaged you in a long conversation at the Policeman's Ball and donated an impressive sum — in your honor — to the precinct. Now she's been calling you asking if you have any vacation time coming up. She's been buttering you up good. What's she up to?

Academic Abilities: Accounting 0, Anthropology 0, Archaeology 0, Architecture 0, Art History 0, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 0, Geology 0, History 0, Languages 0, Law* 2, Library Use 0, Medicine 0, Occult 0, Physics 0, Theology 1

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty* 2, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 1, Cop Talk* 4, Credit Rating 3, Flattery 0, Interrogation* 2 {4}, Intimidation 1, Oral History 1, Reassurance 2, Streetwise 1

Technical Abilities: Art 0, Astronomy 0, Chemistry 0, Craft 0, Evidence Collection* 2, Forensics 1, Locksmith 1, Outdoorsman 0 {1}, Pharmacy 0, Photography 0

General Abilities: Athletics* 8, Conceal 0, Disguise 0, Driving* 6, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 0, Filch 0, Firearms* 10, First Aid 4, Fleeing 0, Health 11, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 0, Piloting 0, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 0, Riding 0, Sanity 9, Scuffling 10, Sense Trouble* 8, Shadowing 5, Stability 9, Stealth 3, Weapons 0

Alfred Elliott

Drive: Ennui

Occupation: Private Investigator

Occupational Benefits:

You may spend points from Disguise or Shadowing after rolling the die for those tests. For every 2 points you spend after rolling the die, you increase the result by 1. In this case, you must describe something that nearly went wrong and how you barely caught it in time or lucked out anyway. This does not apply during contests, only when you are undisturbed and not under direct observation.

Pillars of Sanity:

- Your patriotic love of the United States of America
- Hope for what life has in store for you
- Faith in the Catholic Church

Sources of Stability:

- Judy Elliott, your wife
- Brad Messel, a fellow vet from the war, now drinking buddy
- George Sullivan, your former partner from when you worked the beat

Background: You were in the trenches during the Great War. Bullets caressed the air next to your tin hat, and mortar shells blossomed only footsteps away. It was miserable while you were there, but you kind of miss it now. It's hard to sleep in all this quiet. For a while, you thought being a cop would be the closest approximation to life in the infantry.



But that was a big disappointment — all paperwork and politics. Forget the uniform and regulations; you went into business for yourself. You're a real licensed private eye now. Snooping on cheating husbands, tracking down delinquents, shaking down the crooks the cops won't touch. You even get into a fistfight now and then. That gets the blood boiling again. It's not exactly St. Mihiel, but you never know where the next case could take you.

Personality: Something about life back in the States makes you tired and dreary eyed. It's not to say you don't love the wife and kids, but you spend more time out of the house looking for trouble. Maybe that's why Judy's stepping out on you (didn't take much of an investigation to figure that out). You're both good Catholics; you'll stand by each other and figure it out eventually. Confronting her wouldn't give you the same satisfaction as sticking it to some two-bit thug anyway.

Academic Abilities: Accounting* 2, Anthropology 0, Archaeology 0, Architecture 0, Art History 0, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 0 {1}, Geology 0, History 0, Languages 0, Law* 2, Library Use 0, Medicine 0, Occult 0, Physics 0, Theology 1

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty* 2, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 0, Cop Talk 2, Credit Rating 2, Flattery 0, Interrogation 1, Intimidation 1 {2}, Oral History 0, Reassurance* 4, Streetwise 1

Technical Abilities: Art 0, Astronomy 0, Chemistry 0, Craft 0, Evidence Collection 1, Forensics 1, Locksmith* 2, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy 0, Photography* 2

General Abilities: Athletics 4, Conceal 0, Disguise* 2, Driving* 6, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 0, Filch 0, Firearms 8, First Aid 4, Fleeing 0, Health 12, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 0, Piloting 0, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 0, Riding 0, Sanity 9, Scuffling* 10, Sense Trouble 4, Shadowing* 10, Stability 9, Stealth 3, Weapons 0

Ralph Haas

Drive: Thirst for Knowledge
Occupation: Antiquarian

Occupational Benefits:

Once per adventure and subject to the Keeper's approval, you may have a text or relic that pertains to your current needs back at your shop. See Trail of Cthulhu, page 10, for more information and restrictions.

Pillars of Sanity:

- The aesthetic beauty of a well-crafted object
- The amazing capacity of the intellect to create order out of chaos

Sources of Stability:

- Simon Haas, your father
- Rebecca Haas, your mother

Background: As an autodidact, you came into this business sideways. Your contemporaries all have PhDs, and you never bothered to graduate from elementary school. But their interests in relics and documents, as intense as they might be, are no match for your innate need to collect and understand as much as you can. It started, mundanely enough, with toy cars when you were an adolescent. You filled your parents' spare room with them. When you had a complete set, the pursuit lost your interest, and you sold them for a fair profit. Then you did the same with pulp novels and soon after with rare erotica. Several lucrative hobbies later, you now contend with greedy aristocrats, historians, and museum curators to get your hands on every religious relic, cultural artifact, and timeworn document you can. And you're better at it than any educated collector you've met.



Personality: You have a system. When your system works, uninterrupted, you're in heaven. Life needs structure. Ritual. Psychiatrists, like Doctor Udko, have names for people like you. But that's their system, not yours. You deal in the real world — with things. Things that can be organized, categorized, and placed with precision. Things can be studied and understood. They're so much easier to deal with than people. Mind you, you can talk to people if you need them. If they have something you want, you've learned how to work their game. The quicker you tell them what they want to hear, the sooner they give up the goods, the sooner you can put those precious objects in their precious places.

Connection: When Janet Winston-Rogers held the estate sale for her late father's belongings, you were there for every open hour. You scoured through his impressive collection of books — even picking up his Dorothy Astor collection for dirt cheap — and poured through every little trinket and art piece he left to the material world. You asked Janet about every little thing you could no matter how many times she rolled her eyes. But you must have said something that sparked her interest because late Sunday afternoon, she starting asking questions about you — questions about your collection and your methods.

Academic Abilities: Accounting 1, Anthropology 1, Archaeology 1, Architecture* 2, Art History* 2, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 1, Geology 0 {1}, History* 2, Languages* 2 (Hebrew, Greek), Law* 0, Library Use* 4, Medicine 0, Occult* 4, Physics 1, Theology 0

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty 0, Bargain* 2, Bureaucracy 0, Cop Talk 0, Credit Rating 2, Flattery 0 {1}, Interrogation 0, Intimidation 0, Oral History 1, Reassurance 0, Streetwise 0

Technical Abilities: Art 0, Astronomy 0, Chemistry 0, Craft 0, Evidence Collection 0, Forensics 0, Locksmith 0, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy 0, Photography 1

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Conceal 3, Disguise 0, Driving 0, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 0, Filch 5, Firearms 0, First Aid 3, Fleeing 8, Health 11, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 0, Piloting 0, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 3, Riding 0, Sanity 8, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 8, Shadowing 2, Stability 8, Stealth 5, Weapons 0

Dr. Louise McConnel

Drive: Scholarship
Occupation: Professor

Occupational Benefits:

Using Bureaucracy allows you access to restricted library stacks, private and government archives, and research institutions as long as you can prove your academic credentials (a Credit Rating of 3+).

Pillars of Sanity:

- The warm blanket of accumulated and known human history
- The satisfaction of a good work ethic
- The firm trust you put in the physical laws of nature

Sources of Stability:

- Robert Herbenshire, head of the Department of Archaeology at Columbia
- James McConnel, your father, a pastor back home in Virginia
- Trudy Robins, a former student and now your best friend

Background: To say that it hasn't been hard work would be a lie. Your meteoric rise — from graduating top of your class at Smith to obtaining your professorship at Columbia in only a few short years — may appear inspired and lucky to some. But they haven't been there for the grueling hours hunched over the library table. They haven't seen the meticulous research, the reading,



rereading, and tight analysis of every document. They haven't accompanied you to digs in the hot sands of Syria. That you're now on track for publication and tenure is simply the trajectory of all that work. Who wouldn't have something to say after learning everything you've learned? Perhaps, someday, a young woman will pour over your books at the library.

Personality: The people of the past have always been better friends than anyone living now. They tease you with little hints of their forgotten lives. They play games and leave clues. It's easy to get lost in the books and sketches and artifacts. Your ability to cope with the living is primarily geared towards teaching. If you know about it, you can go on for hours about it. It's all this business of flattery, faculty politics, and idle chatter that leaves you in the dark.

Academic Abilities: Accounting 1, Anthropology* 2, Archaeology* 4, Architecture 1, Art History 1, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 1, Geology 0, History* 2, Languages* 2 (Greek, Latin), Law 0, Library Use* 2, Medicine 0, Occult 1, Physics 0 {1}, Theology 1

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty 0 {1}, Bargain 0, Bureaucracy* 2, Cop Talk 0, Credit Rating 3, Flattery 0, Interrogation 0, Intimidation 0, Oral History* 2, Reassurance 0, Streetwise 0

Technical Abilities: Art 0, Astronomy 1, Chemistry 0, Craft 0, Evidence Collection 1, Forensics 0, Locksmith 0, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy 0, Photography 0

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Conceal 0, Disguise 0, Driving 3, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 0, Filch 0, Firearms 0, First Aid 4, Fleeing 8, Health 11, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 3, Piloting 0, Preparedness 3, Psychoanalysis 0, Riding 0, Sanity 10, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 8, Shadowing 0, Stability 11, Stealth 4, Weapons 3

Joseph Westmore

Drive: Ennui

Occupation: Dilettante

Occupational Benefits:

By using your Credit Rating pool, you can call on experts from any field as personal contacts. These are relatives, old schoolmates, or other aristocrats with whom you are familiar.

Pillars of Sanity:

- The honor of the Westmore name
- The satisfaction of living life to its fullest

Sources of Stability:

- James, your older brother
- Janet Winston-Rogers, the remaining heir of the Winston legacy
- Beatrice Westmore, your doting mother

Background: To say that you had a privileged upbringing would be selling yourself short: boarding school, summers in Europe, prep school, a year being social at your uncle's manor in England, Yale. Your life leisurely meanders now from yacht clubs to fancy-dress parties to slumming it at five-star hotels. The most effort you exude is during fencing practice. But traveling first class isn't an adventure. You're not keen to give up the champagne, necessarily, but the damsels on luxury liners rarely need saving. So you follow the advice your mother always repeated: dress for the life you want. You've traded in the pressed slacks and polished shoes for khakis and leather boots. Time to see the world from its streets and back alleys. Of course, you always have that safety net when you need it.



Personality: For all your education, you're the first to admit you're a bit naïve about the world. You don't blame yourself, of course. Yale is not the school of hard knocks, and your parents can be more than protective. You've always figured there's something thrilling lying in wait around the corner for you, and you will eagerly seek it out. That said, you're not shy about your ignorance. You're perfectly willing to say what you think, or whatever comes to mind, and if you're wrong, someone is sure to correct you.

Connection: The Westmores were always family friends with the Winstons. Your older brother went to school with Janet, their only daughter. You often visited for supper and often admired Walter's library when you grew bored of billiards. At the point you started to reimagine your lifestyle, you realized that Walter Winston was the man you wished to emulate. He never sat long on the throne of his pharmaceutical empire; he traveled, met with shady contacts, and got involved in things. There were terrible rumors of the kinds of dealings he was up to, and you were terribly excited about all this. It's too bad he wouldn't talk about his adventures when he came back. It's too bad he's gone now. But that won't stop you from admiring his tenacity and courage.

Academic Abilities: Accounting 0, Anthropology 0, Archaeology 0, Architecture* 2, Art History* 2, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 0, Geology 1, History 0 {1}, Languages* 2 (French, Spanish), Law 0, Library Use 0, Medicine 0, Occult 0 {1}, Physics 0, Theology 0

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty 0, Bargain 1, Bureaucracy 1, Cop Talk 0, Credit Rating* 8, Flattery* 4, Interrogation 0, Intimidation 1, Oral History 0, Reassurance* 2, Streetwise 0

Technical Abilities: Art 1, Astronomy 1, Chemistry 0, Craft 1, Evidence Collection 0, Forensics 0, Locksmith 0, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy 0, Photography 1

General Abilities: Athletics 6, Conceal 2, Disguise 0, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 0, Filch 0, Firearms 6, First Aid 4, Fleeing 0, Health 10, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 0, Piloting 4, Preparedness 3, Psychoanalysis 0, Riding* 4, Sanity 8, Scuffling 3, Sense Trouble 5, Shadowing 0, Stability 10, Stealth 2, Weapons* 8

Cora King

Drive: Adventure
Occupation: Criminal

Occupational Benefits:

When making a Conceal or Shadowing test, you may spend points after rolling the die. For every 2 points you spend after rolling, increase the die result by 1. However, you may only do this if you are undistracted and not being directly observed, and never during a contest. Describe what almost went wrong and how you barely caught it in time.

Pillars of Sanity:

- The fundamental value of a human life
- Your personal code of decent living: Assume the best, prepare for the worst, and never shoot someone in the back

Sources of Stability:

- Charlie, your on-and-off mentor and boyfriend
- George Sullivan, a former cop who's now your parole officer

Background: You were 16 when the Crash happened. With your father's suicide, you were an orphan. No home, no family, there was only the street. Rummaging through trash bins and picking pockets was a welcome alternative to prostitution, and you took to it with everything you had. A year later, you met Charlie and started running simple cons, beginning to



pull in the kind of money you could live off of. On the day you turned 21, you held up a bank… all by yourself. And when you told people about it afterwards, they wouldn't believe you. Even that son-of-a-bitch Charlie wouldn't believe you.

Personality: You feel alive when you're doing things. Real things, things that matter, things that make a difference. Most people wouldn't know something that matters from the hole in their… well, you know. You don't dislike people; you just wish that the so-called "civilized" ones could get a glimpse of how all the stuff that they think is so important — their fancy silverware and their black shoe polish and their precious daily routine — just doesn't matter. At the end of the day, everyone's just got their life and what they do with it. You aren't going to waste yours, that's for sure.

Academic Abilities: Accounting 0, Anthropology 0, Archaeology 0, Architecture 0, Art History 0 {1}, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 0, Geology 1, History 0, Languages 0, Law 0, Library Use 0, Medicine 0, Occult 0, Physics 0, Theology 0

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty 1, Bargain* 2, Bureaucracy 0, Cop Talk 1, Credit Rating 2, Flattery 2, Interrogation 0, Intimidation* 2, Oral History 0, Reassurance 1, Streetwise* 3

Technical Abilities: Art 0, Astronomy 0, Chemistry 0 {1}, Craft 2 (specialties unspecified), Evidence Collection 0, Forensics 0, Locksmith* 3, Outdoorsman* 2, Pharmacy 0, Photography 0

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Conceal 2, Disguise 0, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 3, Filch 0, Firearms 8, First Aid 4, Fleeing 0, Health 12, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 0, Piloting 2, Preparedness 3, Psychoanalysis 0, Riding 0, Sanity 8, Scuffling* 6, Sense Trouble* 8, Shadowing* 4, Stability 8, Stealth* 4, Weapons 0

Dorothy Astor

Drive: Curiosity
Occupation: Author

Occupational Benefits:

During adventure downtime for your character, you can refresh one Academic pool point up to four times per game session by reading, checking your notes and files, and the like, as long as you have time and access to reasonable and relevant resources.

Pillars of Sanity:

- Anything that can be written down can be understood
- The social fabric provides shelter from the storms of life
- God's physical landscape of beauty and goodness

Sources of Stability:

- Travis, your opportunistic publisher.
- Micah, your brother.
- Cromwell, your aging mentor, an author of popular fiction.

Background: It started as a joke, really. Books about the supernatural and the occult — readers would just eat them up. Mix a few folk tales, your mom's superstitions, and the tiniest bit of research, and you were writing one best seller after the next. You never claimed they were to be taken seriously. And then the correspondence started happening. Readers began writing letters to you by the truckload, so convinced that you held a kernel of truth about the afterlife or South American curses. They believed you. They corroborated your stories with anecdotes of their own. Of course you always took them at face value; you didn't want to insult them. And they weren't all children or particularly simple. Graduate students



— even professors — started quoting you in their papers. You started to believe you were on to something. What's more: you couldn't really prove you were wrong. Someone in a newspaper called you the leading authority on mysticism the other day. There's no going back now.

Personality: Although you have an unfettered and romantic imagination, you are uncomfortable in most social situations, with increasing discomfort arising from increasing formality. You take your social cues from those you admire intellectually, which does not always advance your best interests and probably explains your spinsterhood. Even so, you spend little time worrying about your social status, because time spent away from your writing and correspondence is all too often time wasted.

Connection: Walter Winston was one of your most dedicated readers. He began corresponding with you after your second book. An anecdote of his, concerning some sex cult, ended up in your third book. Come to think of it, much of your research for your first series was really just things you picked out of his letters, changed some names, and embellished on. That Walter himself never really picked up on this was a surprise to you; he probably just thought they were similar tales that worked to confirm his own. The letters stopped coming back in 1924, but you still sent him a gratis copy of every volume of the next two series you wrote.

Academic Abilities: Accounting 0, Anthropology 1, Archaeology 1, Architecture* 2, Art History 1, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 1, Geology 0, History* 2, Languages* 2 (French, Spanish), Law 0, Library Use* 4, Medicine 0, Occult* 2, Physics 0, Theology 0 {1}

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty* 2, Bargain 0, Bureaucracy 0, Cop Talk 0, Credit Rating 1, Flattery* 2, Interrogation 0, Intimidation 0, Oral History* 2, Reassurance 1, Streetwise 0

Technical Abilities: Art* 2 (writing, drawing), Astronomy 0 {1}, Chemistry 0, Craft 0, Evidence Collection 0, Forensics 0, Locksmith 0, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy 0, Photography* 2

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Conceal 3, Disguise 0, Driving 0, Electrical Repair 2, Explosives 0, Filch 4, Firearms 1, First Aid 0, Fleeing 6, Health 8, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 4, Piloting 0, Preparedness 0, Psychoanalysis 4, Riding 4, Sanity 10, Scuffling 1, Sense Trouble 6, Shadowing 0, Stability 10, Stealth 4, Weapons 4

Fr. Carl Meinardus

Drive: Duty

Occupation: Clergy

Occupational Benefits:

You have access to church records that the rest of the public doesn't by using Theology or Reassurance. This does not include access to secret archives, such as the "Z" Collection in the Vatican Library, but a Keeper may allow it with a sufficiently large spend.

If you are dressed as a priest or otherwise identify yourself as such, once per game session you may refresh any Interpersonal ability pool by talking to a member of your faith (but not a fellow Investigator).

Pillars of Sanity:

- Unwavering belief in God, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit
- The intrinsic good of humanity
- For everything there is reason and purpose

Sources of Stability:

- Mrs. Sloane, a trusted confidante in your former parish with whom you most certainly did not have a romance
- The Archbishop of Boston
- Fr. Simon, who leads your former parish
- Jessica Meinardus, your spinster sister



Background: When life as a parish priest didn't work out, the Archdiocese of Boston had another plan for you. Your new vocation is to travel to various towns in New England and investigate claims of miracles, ghosts, and demon possession. Where they got the idea you'd be good at this, you're not quite sure. Perhaps you showed some aptitude at seminary when you performed that emergency exorcism in the neighboring dorm room. Perhaps they're just trying to get you out of the small town where the parishioners have begun to spread unjustified rumors about you.

Personality: You had planned for a life behind the altar and in the confessional, not one on the road. You're always calm, patient, and courteous. You are serious about your new mission and have given it careful study, but you often find that the claims you investigate have more to do with the people making them than any suspected paranormal causes. It's always been your ability to listen paired with careful contemplation that has led to any success you've had.

Academic Abilities: Accounting 0, Anthropology 1, Archaeology 1, Architecture 1, Art History 1, Biology 0, Cthulhu Mythos 0, Cryptography 1, Geology 0, History* 2, Languages 2 (Aramaic*, Latin*), Law 0, Library Use* 2, Medicine 0, Occult 2, Physics 0, Theology* 2

Interpersonal Abilities: Assess Honesty* 2, Bargain 0, Bureaucracy 0 {1}, Cop Talk 0, Credit Rating 2, Flattery 1, Interrogation 0, Intimidation 0, Oral History* 2, Reassurance* 2, Streetwise 0

Technical Abilities: Art 0, Astronomy 0 {1}, Chemistry 0, Craft 0, Evidence Collection 1, Forensics 0, Locksmith 0, Outdoorsman 0, Pharmacy 0, Photography 0

General Abilities: Athletics 2, Conceal 2, Disguise 0, Driving 0, Electrical Repair 0, Explosives 0, Filch 0, Firearms 0, First Aid 5, Fleeing 6, Health 12, Hypnosis 0, Mechanical Repair 0, Piloting 0, Preparedness 4, Psychoanalysis 4, Riding 0, Sanity 10, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 7, Shadowing 0, Stability 12, Stealth 5, Weapons 0

Investigator Matrix

	Udko	Malley	Sullivan	Elliot	Haas	McConnel	Westmore	King	Astor	Meinardus
Health	10	12	11	12	11	11	10	12	8	12
Sanity	8	8	9	9	8	10	8	8	10	10
Stability	10	10	9	9	8	11	10	8	10	12
Accounting		0 {2}		2	1	1				
Anthropology	1	1			1	2			1	1
Archaeology					1	4			1	1
Architecture	1	1			2	1	2		2	1
Art History		2			2	1	2	0 {1}	1	1
Biology	2									
Cthulhu Mythos										
Cryptography				0 {1}	1	1			1	1
Geology					0 {1}		1	1		
History	0 {1}				2	2	0 {1}		2	2
Languages	2	2			2	2	2		2	2
Law	1	1	2	2						
Library Use	2	1			4	2			4	2
Medicine	2	4								
Occult					4	1	0 {1}		2	2
Physics					1	0 {1}				
Theology			1	1		1			0 {1}	2
Assess Honesty	4	2	2	2		0 {1}		1	2	2
Bargain			1	1	2		1	2		
Bureaucracy	1	1	1			2	1			0 {1}
Cop Talk			4	2				1		
Credit Rating	3	4	3	2	2	3	8	2	1	2
Flattery	1	0 {1}			0 {1}		4	2	2	1
Interrogation	2	1	2 {4}	1						
Intimidation			1	1 {2}			1	2		
Oral History			1		1	2			2	2
Reassurance	4	4	2	4			2	1	1	2
Streetwise			1	1				3		
Art	0 {1}						1		2	
Astronomy						1	1		0 {1}	0 {1}
Chemistry		1						0 {1}		
Craft							1	2		
Evidence Collection			2	1		1				1
Forensics	1	2	1	1						
Locksmith			1	2				3		
Outdoorsman			0 {1}					2		
Pharmacy	2	2								
Photography				2	1		1		2	
Disguise				2						
Electrical Repair	2								2	
Explosives								3		
Mechanical Repair	2	2				3			4	

Entries in {brackets} are values for a three-Investigator party.

Keeper Introduction

Keeper Introduction

Welcome, Keeper, to a grim and sordid saga spanning more than a decade and more than a globe. Welcome to a tale of great and terrible human ambition and petty human desires, where evils abound and the cost of battling them may be too high to bear. Welcome to a multifaceted, ever-shifting story of sin and salvation, in which the players' characters have a chance to save their world from wicked and deceitful forces… before saving it again from something colder and more terrible, if they can.

Welcome to *Eternal Lies*.

From this point on through, *Eternal Lies* as a book is meant for the Keeper's eyes only, and *Eternal Lies* as an unfolding tale is meant for the collaboration between Keeper and players. What's in here, despite our details and your hopes, is only a sketch. The actual campaign doesn't exist until you play.

This chapter looks at the hook, spine, and horrible truths of the campaign as a whole. Then we examine a summary of the campaign's background and Locales so you'll know the shape of the material you're wading into. Finally, this chapter presents core information on the recurring horrors and antagonists of the campaign so you have a central spot to refer to during prep or play. (Much of this information is repeated in key parts of the campaign, too, to reduce the time you spend flipping pages.)

First, and above all, a few words on adapting and playing *your* instance of *Eternal Lies*…

Adapting the Campaign

Here is *Eternal Lies*, a collection of clues, scenes, characters, motives, secrets, and ideas that, taken together, form the shape of a story. On these pages, *Eternal Lies* has one guise — the events that unfold in your imagination as a reader — but in play the story looks quite different. Many imaginations collide and combine to make the tale into something different from what's in these pages. The differences may be subtle or profound. They may alter the themes and motifs of the campaign in addition to the specific actions and reactions that unfold. What *happens* and what those happenings *mean* may — and should! — vary from one adaptation to the next.

And that's what your instance of *Eternal Lies* is, in a way: an adaptation. Just as different theater productions of the same script can result in distinct interpretations and presentations of a play, different adaptations of this campaign are sure to vary cosmetically, thematically, and materially. This is a good thing. It is the nature of the medium.

The text of *Eternal Lies* is less rigid and precise than a script, after all. Everything is up for grabs, ready to be altered by the Keeper for the sake of one group's tolerances, hopes, and fears. This book is merely where you begin.

One adaptation of this campaign may hew close to the text, striving to use the aims and schemes of the NPCs as a firm construct with which the players' characters interact. That's an effective and legitimate play style.

Another adaptation of this campaign may replace foes, change names, redress Locales, insert additional adventures, and more — all to make the material into something more protean, reacting to the players' tastes and whims all the more quickly. That's an effective and legitimate play style, too.

An adaptation is as much an issue of time and wherewithal as it is a matter of artistry — perhaps more so. *Eternal Lies* presents information enough to facilitate months of actual play without demanding much additional preparation from the Keeper. Yet every scene and NPC is a thing that can be pulled out, tinkered with, and reinstalled to behave a bit differently, as you like.

Perhaps you want to play close to the book so you can compare notes with other Keepers. That's great!

Perhaps you want to revise every chapter so your players won't know what to expect, even if they've heard tell of the campaign before. That's great, too!

The adaptation process is inevitable and wonderful. No matter how they play, your players will do things that we did not foresee in the text and which might change or destroy the relationships and dynamics described in this book. Let's hope so! That means your players and their Investigators are engaged, taking action, and moving the story forward.

Eternal Lies isn't meant to be a story about Investigators dying at the hands of an unstoppable, worldwide cult — it's not meant to be any one story at all. One adaptation may be about Investigators

whose personal lives unravel as they give their all to the dissolution of a profane cult. Another may be about rough and lucky Investigators who travel the globe busting chops and breaking up cult chapters and damn the consequences. All good.

In playtesting, we heard tell of NPCs being turned against their comrades by clever Investigators. Penitent cult leaders were spared and reformed. Wicked cult leaders were strapped with dynamite and fed to ancient horrors. Investigators braved ancient temples and spoke with ghosts. Investigators were afraid to enter perverse soirees in posh mansions. In one case, a U-boat got tricked into blowing up the bad guys.

Embrace the unforeseen development.

Also remember that the Investigators' foes need not wait for them. Just as a clever or lucky development may make one place go in the Investigators' easy favor, a consequence of that may be the startling readiness of the cult in the next adventure. The cult may be a rotten, backbiting tangle of shame and greed… until the Investigators make the cultists realize they have to fight to protect their drugs, their secrets, and their awful god.

The way your adaptation begins might not resemble how it ends. *Eternal Lies* is designed to draw Investigators into key areas of action and investigation by putting them on the trail of a vile and twisted cult — making it easier to predict their course and needs because clues lead back into the cult, rather than out into a global sandbox — but as the players and their characters gain more information (and build points) they become more bold. The campaign might become more and more about the consequences of previous adventures and less about new adventures.

Simply put, if *Eternal Lies* yields a rich and sprawling campaign that takes you well away from this text, that's fine. Tap into other *Trail of Cthulhu* adventures as you need. Devise your own tales. Weave in elements from this book that make sense in your unfolding story. If a subplot develops about the fallout from having a freighter torpedoed or a warehouse exploded… embrace what develops.

This same authority to embrace developments also gives you and the players the freedom to wave off certain consequences that may not be of interest to you as a group. It may be enough for the Investigators to have lawyers protecting them in the background or rich allies pulling strings with the police, if that helps your campaign stay focused and keep momentum. Just as you don't have to stop and account for every dollar or every meal, you're allowed to keep your adaptation focused on just those days when the Investigators are on the cult's case, if you like.

It's your campaign now.

Read, Rearrange, and Adapt

There's a lot of material in this book. This isn't because the book's exhaustive (it isn't) but rather to arm you with lots of information and inspiration to use while you adapt the campaign. When a player devises an idea that would never have occurred to you, you can reward them with a related clue that you recall from elsewhere in the text. When an Investigator makes an accurate deductive leap that you think might spoil a reveal later on, let it play out. Let them claim the prize for having called it ahead of time: confirmation of their cunning.

Some adaptation you can do between sessions by comparing the upcoming locale's background and scenes to the plans of the Investigators and their players. You might foresee that the Investigators will make short work of one branch of the cult. You might imagine the Investigators are going to get trounced. They may surprise you.

It's a fine line between renovating and adapting the campaign to survive a moment of player impulsivity and revising the fictional world as the Investigators move through it to ensure certain outcomes. The fictional world of the game needs to be firm and defined enough in your mind to react compellingly and understandably to the Investigators without being so brittle that the game world snaps when bent. In general, revisions to reflect the impact of the players on the game world provide more fun than those that protect the backstory's status quo from the Investigators. Everything in this text is meant to be impacted and altered by the presence and the actions of the players' characters. Sometimes the players' characters will make things easier for themselves, sometimes they won't. You must adapt.

So much of this kind of adaptation happens on the fly. Maybe an Investigator decides to kill someone before they can offer a vital core clue. (It could be a tragic accident or a drastic crime.) Since that clue is vital, you may have to decide that it's known also by someone else in your instance of the campaign or you might have to let the PCs press on, through the consequences, and walk into dangers that could've been avoided. Fortunately, part of the nature of the game is that the story is sometimes bigger than any one Investigator or party of Investigators. If their destruction is their own doing, perhaps the next lot fares better. Either way, your adaptation is not about our assumptions but about your players' choices.

The Campaign Structure

Eternal Lies is broken down into three Acts representing the beginning, middle, and end of the campaign. Each Act is then broken down into Locales — broad physical stages for play, like Savannah, GA, and Los Angeles, CA — that define the general settings for the action within an Act and encompass the campaign's scenes. Each Locale is sort of like a separate scenario within the greater campaign. Each Locale contains its own scenes that make up a fundamental unit of play: an adventure.

Like other *Trail of Cthulhu* adventures, each Locale has its own hook, spine, and horrible truths. And, of course, the campaign has its own hook, spine, and horrible truths, as well, made up of the Locales and their component scenes and clues.

The Hook

The hook for *Eternal Lies* is simple and direct: the Investigators are recruited by Janet Winston-Rogers to investigate the secret, perhaps shameful or damning, that changed her father, Walter Winston, forever — a secret he took to his grave. She hires the Investigators at the opening of Act One, kicking off the adventure, uniting the Investigators (if they are not a team already), and sending them off to the campaign's first Locale: Savannah, Georgia.

Thus the campaign begins with a small, human mystery and a matter of family. The Investigators are not confronted with the larger, global threat until the end of Act One, when they are likely to confront their Drives again, with much higher stakes.

The Spine

The spine of Eternal Lies is not unlike the spine of a single Trail of Cthulhu scenario, although it has several built-in opportunities to reorder the sequence of the Locales in Act Two. The campaign begins in New England (or wherever the PCs hail from or congregate), where the Investigators are given the hook, and then quickly moves on to an insane asylum and an overgrown plantation estate in Savannah, Georgia. Their investigation then takes them to the sordid streets of Los Angeles, where the stakes get higher and the scope of their case is revealed.

That leads to Act Two of the campaign, which consists of five Locales playable in almost any order. Clues in Los Angeles lead to Bangkok, Malta, Mexico City, and Ethiopia, which the PCs may visit in any order as they hunt down and destroy the avatars of the god-thing summoned in 1924. Clues in Mexico City also lead to a fifth Locale in the Yucatán jungle, which the Investigators may visit to gain additional tools and forbidden knowledge to use in their ongoing investigation.

Finally, after piecing together clues spread across the Locales of Act Two, the Investigators discover the true resting place of a profane god-monster called the Liar From Beyond and venture to the Himalayas to destroy it once and for all… only to discover that the end of their enemy is not the end of their problems. Not at all.

The Horrible Truth

Eternal Lies contains layers of horrible truths, revealed in each Locale along with campaign clues that help the Investigators piece together the full breadth of the story and, perhaps, in the end, save Earth. One of the truths to be learned includes the truth about a successful summoning attempt in 1924, resulting in an alien god dwelling on Earth and worshipped by a widespread cult of lunatic hedonists. The many Mouths of this dreaded being bite, suckle, spit, sing, and speak in locales across the globe. Destroying them leads to the gradual revelation that these Mouths are mystically connected to the body of the alien being, which resides beneath a mountain in Thibet.

Ideally, the Investigators take up the responsibility of thwarting the body to defeat the summoned alien god. Doing this reveals the final horrible truth that destroying the alien god completes the ritual begun in 1924 and begins the erosion of the world by the destructive gaze of a greater, more distant, and unknowable god. To save Earth, they must undo the ritual they have stumbled into by sacrificing a particular soul for the sake of the planet.

Campaign Summary

To make the most of your adaptation of Eternal Lies, you should understand the structure and flow of the whole campaign. So here it is. What follows is an overview of the campaign's Locales and campaign-level clues.

This material lays out the shape of the whole campaign, including clues and revelations that players and their characters won't discover until they have been through hours of play and adventure. In other words, what follows are serious spoilers for the whole affair. Do not read this summary unless you really intend to be the Keeper for an *Eternal Lies* campaign.

This summary does not detail the exact unfolding of events within each campaign Locale. Rather, it focuses on how the Investigators get from one Locale to another and what clues they should come away from each Locale knowing.

Act One

Play begins with a fateful meeting between the players' characters and Janet Winston-Rogers, a wealthy benefactor with a mystery in her

Campaign Summary

What Happened in 1924

Although it will be difficult for the contemporary Investigators to ever get a completely clear picture of what happened at the '24 summoning, the following general outline of the events as they transpired will help you give consistent clues as they conduct their investigations.

Echavarria, Trammel, and a dozen or so members of the cult (including Edgar Job and Savitree Sirikhan) arrived at a California farm in the mid-afternoon. They ritually prepared the area. Echavarria's secret plan was to summon the Liar From Beyond and sacrifice that deity to bring about a world-ending apocalypse that would assure Echavarria's importance, and perhaps his elevation to godhood. The members of the cult, for their part, believed that Gol-Goroth would manifest to reward them for their obedience with unsurpassed power and pleasure.

The '24 Investigators, who'd been on Echavarria's trail for a while, got wind that something big was happening late that afternoon and raced out to the farm, arriving after sunset.

By that time, Echavarria had begun his ritual to summon the Liar. Orgiastic rites were in full swing, and Minor Mouths were already beginning to manifest. Edgar Job had been selected for the central role among the rank and file, although for reasons that were known only to Echavarria. Per Echavarria's plan, Job would become the focus of the idiot god Azathoth's attention, which would destroy the world once the sacrifice of the Liar drew it. (For more background information, see "Keeper's Background: The Interrupted Ritual" on page 373.)

The '24 Investigators made a hasty plan to disrupt the ritual as best they could: with fire and guns. Using improvised incendiary bombs (what will later be called Molotov cocktails), the Investigators set the barn on fire and caught the cultists in a crossfire. As the flames roared and violence erupted, the character of the manifested Mouths changed abruptly from orgiastic to violent, in response to the change in the emotional tenor of the events transpiring. The cultists were caught in a crossfire while, at the same time, the Mouths turned on them.

Vince Stack blew Echavarria to bits with a shotgun just as the Liar manifested among the carnage in its aspect as a massive, bloated man with toothy maws in its hands. Those cultists who retained a sense of self-preservation fled — Samson Trammel, Edgar Job, and Savitree Sirikhan all escaped. Some of those who tried to flee were gunned down or were consumed by Mouths. Some were driven immediately and irreversibly mad, throwing themselves into Mouths, leaping into the fire, or charging into the Investigators' hail of gunfire. Others were ripped to shreds by the Liar's manifest form. Douglas Henslowe and Walter Winston managed to flee.

Because the Liar was not sacrificed, Azathoth's attention was not drawn to Earth and the world did not end. However, the prominence of the Liar (as a sacrifice) and Job (as the focus) were both fully established. With Echavarria's death, his plan was more put on hold than it was completely foiled. This state persists to the campaign's present day.

Once all present were destroyed to the Liar's satisfaction, its avatar dissipated, along with its Mouths, only to reform in a safer place with a plan to infuse the world with its awful essence: Nectar. Now, more than a decade later, the Liar and its cult are established throughout the globe.

past. She has, for reasons that may vary with each character, turned to the players' characters for help investigating that mystery.

Janet Winston-Rogers's father, Walter Winston, participated in an occult investigation in 1924. That investigation turned bloody and changed Walter Winston forever. He became shy, edgy, and sad. But he wouldn't confide in his daughter, wouldn't tell her the truth about what happened back then. Now Walter Winston is dead and can never reveal the truth.

What she does know is that another Investigator survived the grim events of 1924 — she knows because this man wrote to her father a few times over the years. His name is Douglas Henslowe, and he has been committed to an insane asylum in Savannah, Georgia, for years. He's the last good lead Janet Winston-Rogers has.

Mrs. Winston-Rogers suspects that the truth behind her father's past adventures leads somewhere dark. She's concerned that he left something unfinished or, worse, damaged. She wants to put right what he might have done wrong. To that end, she dispatches the player characters to Savannah with an airplane, a pilot, and a mission: follow the investigation as far as it goes.

Savannah

The investigation begins in Savannah, Georgia, with an interview of Douglas Henslowe at the Joy Grove mental hospital. There the Investigators discover another survivor of the 1924 events, a man who wasn't on the same side as Henslowe and Winston — a man called Edgar Job.

Together, the testimonies of Edgar Job and Douglas Henslowe reveal a confrontation in Southern California

between Winston's Investigators and the devoted followers of a charismatic occultist named Ramon Echavarria. People on both sides were slain. People on both sides killed. It was a night of fire and guns and sorcery and blood. Edgar Job, Douglas Henslowe, and Walter Winston were lucky to survive.

Job and Henslowe ended up at Joy Grove because of the interest of a local physician. Walter Winston had the means and the will to stay out of any madhouse. Because Walter Winston wouldn't back up their stories, Douglas Henslowe's and Edgar Job's versions of events have been officially deemed the delusions of traumatized men.

Douglas Henslowe, however, believes he's found some measure of salvation in this new investigation. He sends the Investigators to his family estate outside Savannah. There, hidden on the grounds and discovered after solving a modest riddle, is a book of Henslowe's sketches, drawn from memory, describing the events of 1924 and the "thing" that was supposedly summoned to Earth that night — the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. Buried with the book are a "magic stone" and a key to a Los Angeles safe deposit box.

Armed with the testimony of Henslowe and Job, the safe deposit box key, and perhaps with Henslowe's sketchbook, the Investigators have a clear trail to Los Angeles.

Los Angeles

The investigation in Los Angeles leads through sundry paths to the mansion of a man named Samson Trammel. Interviews and police records reveal that Samson Trammel is a surviving member of Ramon Echavarria's cult from 1924 — and he's much better off than Edgar Job. Samson Trammel is in the business of selling some mysterious narcotic called Nectar, and business is booming. He has street hustlers and movie stars in league with him, and they all convene in his mansion for sordid, tawdry soirees.

If the Investigators get inside his mansion, they discover an ongoing orgy of depraved sex fueled by Nectar and conducted in worship to a warped and grotesque mouth, huge and alive, growing from the wall in Trammel's home. It licks at the drugged, orgiastic crowd with an impossible tentacle-like tongue. It oozes Nectar.

The Investigators stand to discover vital clues in Los Angeles. First, through testimony and police reports, they may be able to suss out what really happened in 1924. Furthermore, within the mansion, they discover Samson Trammel's *Testament of the Dripping Mouthes' Emanates*, a text compiling Trammel's wisdom and experience as leader of Echavarria's old cult — the Cult of the Thousand Mouths, followers and agents of the Liar From Beyond. Trammel's *Testament* reveals the location of four other important cult sites or operations across the globe in Bangkok, Ethiopia, Malta, and Mexico City. These are four of the Locales of Act Two.

Just what is the Liar From Beyond? What manner of horrific god-creature is the Thing With a Thousand Mouths that was summoned in 1924? Where is it and what does it want? These are the questions answered by the campaign clues of Act Two.

Act Two

Act Two may find the Investigators regrouping, renewing their ambition, and checking in with their homes and families before setting out on new adventures. If necessary, Janet

Drive: Sudden Shock

Here are a few options you can use to fill in the amnesiac background of an Investigator with the Drive of Sudden Shock. Any of these might come to light through flashbacks, talkative NPCs, or perhaps a revelation brought on by, say, an enigmatic god-beast dwelling on a hideous distant moon. Note that these options may make more sense when you're more familiar with the campaign:

- The Investigator's amnesia spans almost a year — the year she was a Nectar addict. She came to in a hospital with scars on her body like she'd been burned. Her memories have been eaten by the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, which restored her ability to speak in anything but the Tongue of Lies. While she may not recognize her old dealer or fellow addicts… they certainly would recognize her.
- The Investigator's amnesia, covering a period of days in 1924, is the result of hypnosis performed on him by Walter Winston's cohorts to remove the Investigator's knowledge of Ramon Echavarria's cult. The 1924 Investigators didn't want to have to kill the PC for what he knew, so they spared his life but not his mind. (This could come out during an interview with Douglas Henslowe in Act One, though Henslowe insists the Investigator's knowledge from 1924 is no longer relevant.)
- One of the Investigator's Sources of Stability is secretly already a Nectar addict. That Source has been whispering spells to the Investigator or casting hexes against him, robbing him of memories that would out the Source as a cultist. This is especially effective if the Investigator has a tie to the Winstons, in which case the corrupt Source is spying on the Winstons to protect the cult from a possible investigation.

Winston-Rogers pushes them to further their investigation and ruin the cult's operations across the planet. The monster that the cult summoned in 1924 is still out there somewhere and Janet Winston-Rogers wants to finish what her father started by putting an end to it and its depravity.

In practice, Act Two is composed of five Locales playable in almost any order, separated and connected by scenes (some happy, some horrific) of the Investigators at home with their Sources of Stability. Clues leading to four Locales are revealed within Trammel's mansion, found in Los Angeles, and a fifth — a temple in the Yucatán — is revealed in Mexico City.

These five Locales can be visited, explored, and hopefully completed in whatever order the players like. Each Locale contains an important campaign-level clue or bit of advantageous information for the Investigators to use going forward. Those campaign clues are described hereafter for clarity.

Bangkok

In Bangkok, the Investigators confront a splinter faction of the cult founded and overseen by Savitree Sirikhan, another survivor of the 1924 summoning. On the grounds of her cult operation around Bangkok, Investigators confront hideous violence and bloodlust carried out for Sirikhan's pleasure. With a bit of luck and a lot of resolve, they overcome terrible mystical deformations and pain to destroy the hungry Mouth of the Liar that exists here.

The most important thing that the Investigators must learn in the Bangkok Locale is the location of the hideous stomach of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. It is under Mount Kailash in the Himalayas. This clue, in the form of a map, is found in the Sirikhan Library on the island of Ko Krok in the Bay of Bangkok. Delving into Savitree's library can also give the Investigators a deeper understanding of why it's important to be able to pin an identity on the Liar From Beyond; this clue becomes critical in Act Three. All of these are discussed in **Bangkok 20, "Savitree's Library,"** p. 180.

The Investigators can also learn from Mouth-keeper Xuc Pramoj of a strategy he has in his back pocket to blow up the Bangkok Mouth in the event that it ever gets out of hand. Although this plan has not been sanctioned whatsoever by his cult masters, it is nevertheless well thought out and could serve the Investigators well in disposing of Major Mouths in other Locales, in the absence of other strategies.

Ethiopia

This Locale pits the characters, in pursuit of new information about the Liar From Beyond and how it can be battled, against a harsh environment and a new manifestation of the cult. Strictly speaking, there are no truly critical campaign clues in the Ethiopia Locale. It is, in fact, theoretically possible for the Investigators to skip over Ethiopia entirely, since they learn elsewhere where and when to scale the Himalayas and do combat with the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

That said, two principal clues in Ethiopia make the Investigators' campaign-wide progress a great deal easier. The first are the Rituals of Self-Denial, which will allow them a method for both neutralizing the Minor Mouths they are likely to manifest in Bangkok and the Major Mouths that are found at most of the *Eternal Lies* Locales. The second is knowledge of the personal tie between George Ayers and Edgar Job, which will be of great help to them in convincing Job to stop the apocalypse after (if) they destroy or drive off the Thing With a Thousand Mouths in Act Three.

Malta

Malta is home to the cult's major drug-shipping operation. From the port of Valletta, Nectar is shipped throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. The whole operation is overseen by a man named Donovan who has begun to have doubts about his role in the cult. At the same time, a secretive Knight of Malta called Sir Godfrey believes that the Liar From Beyond is actually a manifestation of Nyarlathotep and does his best to recruit the Investigators to help him defeat the evil god's schemes and the Major Mouth at the heart of it all.

This Locale contains an essential floating campaign clue that can be won in a variety of places — from the local cult leader, from his notes deep in the warehouse tunnels, from an enigmatic knight, or even from a bodyguard, if necessary — and which you should have at the ready. Be ready to present this clue in multiple places to ensure the Investigators get it. The clue is this: The body of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths is only reachable in its lair beneath "the Devouring Mountain" when an unnatural ravine — a "flexing crack" — is open near the mountaintop. That ravine is open "only when the moon is dark and the stars shine down" upon that foul cleft. This clue may be found with a spell that disperses clouds and darkens moonlight to allow stars to shine down, depending on where the clue is discovered.

Mexico City

The cult chapter in Mexico City has let its duties as a hub of Nectar production slip in favor of the local leadership's pet project: recording the voice of the local Major Mouth and the woman it has mutated through magic, Letitia de la Luz. Jonathan Brooks, the American leader of the local chapter, has fallen in love with de la Luz and, along the way, begun to doubt the true motives and identity of the Liar From Beyond. Thus Brooks has spent cult funds on an

expedition to a temple in the Yucatán that he believes contains secret truths about the identity of the Liar From Beyond — and may let Brooks speak to the god-thing without Trammel as an intermediary. Thus the Yucatán Locale is revealed in Brooks's hidden office in his Mexico City penthouse.

In the larger story of the investigation into the whereabouts and identity of the Liar From Beyond, Mexico City serves a simple but important role: it's here that the Investigators learn the true name of the so-called "Devouring Mountain." Although the Malta Locale reveals when and how to access the lair of the Liar beneath the Devouring Mountain and the Bangkok Locale contains a map that shows how to navigate an unnamed mountain range, all that information is difficult to make use of without the missing key of context. Just which mountain, where in the world, is this dreaded Devouring Mountain?

The answer — that Thibet's Mount Kailash is the Devouring Mountain — is revealed to the Investigators here. It is the core clue of the Locale, discoverable in at least two places within this chapter (**Mexico City 8 "Shrine to the Thing,"** p. 280, and 9 **"The Hidden Studio,"** p. 297). The clue can be found in cult documents or wrenched directly from the mouth of local cult leader Jonathan Brooks, depending on the Investigators' approach to things.

The Yucatán

This adventure sends the Investigators into the Yucatán jungle on the trail of a previous expedition that itself went out in search of a temple complex called Chichén Xoxul. There, the Investigators hope to discover the truth about what the Liar From Beyond is and what it wants. In truth, that previous expedition encountered only horror and death. The Investigators must be cautious to avoid that fate.

The climax of this adventure is an opportunity for the Investigators to interview the ancient and alien god-being Gol-Goroth. It knows the true identity of the Liar From Beyond. That is the campaign clue at the heart of this Locale: the true name of the being that calls itself the Liar From Beyond, the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, and so many other sobriquets. It wields every other identity as a shield of lies to protect itself from scrutiny and sorcery, detection and revenge. But at Chichén Xoxul, the Investigators may learn the truth.

With that name, the Investigators may be able to better prepare themselves to battle the Liar, to combat it with spells, or to sic Gol-Goroth himself upon it. What happens next is up to them.

Act Three

Act Three moves ahead from one Locale to another on the momentum from Act Two. This Act begins when the Investigators have enough information to move ahead to Thibet and Mount Kailash on a mission to slay an alien god. It concludes with the end of the campaign and, possibly, the Earth.

Thibet

This Locale, which should feel like the climactic adventure of the campaign, challenges the Investigators to scale the Himalayas and destroy the physical body of the Liar From Beyond. The major choice in this part of the campaign is simple: How do they do it? By now, the Investigators have heard notions that explosives, spells, and enemy beings might be enough to do it. What option do they try?

At the end of this straight-forward and perilous adventure, when the Liar is presumably dead, something terrible happens. The death of the Liar completes Ramon Echavarria's original ritual, sacrificing one god to draw the attention of the great god Azathoth at the center of the universe. Azathoth's gaze threatens to gradually destroy the planet. The stars and the circumstances reveal one more step on the trail of this mystery: the Investigators are not done with Edgar Job.

Apocalypse

In this final segment of *Eternal Lies*, the gaze of Azathoth is upon the world and the apocalypse is underway. The Investigators, upon figuring out what they've done, must convince a single unlikely human — Edgar Job — to take pity on the earth and sacrifice the rest of his apparently immortal life to draw Azathoth's attention elsewhere.

In the immediate aftermath of their success on Mount Kailash, the Investigators realize that something related to their triumph has gone horribly wrong as they descend from the mountain and see that apocalyptic events are transpiring across the region and the world. They must race back to the States to discover how Echavarria's ritual can be finally thwarted and then do whatever it takes to save the planet.

What the Liar From Beyond Is and Wants

The Liar From Beyond is a potent, conniving, cowardly thing that wants a world it can drown in the Nectar it oozes. It seeks to convert humanity through Nectar addiction into a servitor species that will protect and defend it from an angry and hostile galaxy. It wants to lie safe beneath our rocky planet, sucking at life and joy through its many hideous mouths. It wants to rot our planet into a suitable, permanent home where enslaved human puppets worship it like a god.

What the Liar From Beyond Is and Wants

Since 1924, it's been pursuing this goal in relative secrecy, lying to its own cultists, worshippers, and devotees alike. It finds safety in keeping its body and its ambitions hidden away, along with its name. As far as it is concerned, things are going rather well since it was brought to Earth by that cult in 1924. The Thing With a Thousand Mouths grows ever fatter, and ever hungrier, as it sucks up human lives.

Mouths of the Liar

The Mouths of the Liar recur throughout *Eternal Lies*. They come in two general types: Major Mouths and Minor Mouths.

Major Mouths are portals that connect the Liar's areas of influence on Earth. They secrete Nectar and are direct manifestations of the Great Old One itself. They whisper in Liar's own voice. They are the size of cars.

Minor Mouths are lesser visitations of the Liar that arise spontaneously from its worship, from the saturation of an area with his influence, or due to the call of his adherents in the form of spells. The Minor Mouths do not secrete Nectar. However, applying Nectar to some surface — or person — makes it easier for a Minor Mouth to manifest there.

Both types of Mouths speak in the Tongue of Lies, by which they drive any who hear them toward horrible acts and insanity.

Major Mouths

Major Mouths are massive orifices, permanent fixtures. They take months, years, or decades to form and are brought about by the long-term venerations of human worshippers. Each is unique, with its own particular characteristics, which are described in the particular scene where they are encountered.

The Many Names of the Liar

An evil, alien being fuels and feeds on the cult at the heart of this campaign. That being hides behind many names. Only one reveals its true identity. Throughout this book, you'll see many references to the Liar From Beyond, the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, and a few similarly dreadful monikers. All these names refer to the same being, whose name we reveal only in select places throughout the text, to diminish the chances that a player idly paging through the book will catch sight of the true name. Even the cult leadership itself does not know the true name of the Liar From Beyond — it masks its identity by pretending to be ancient god-beings like Gol-Goroth, Nyarlathotep, and any other Mythos being you want to allude to. Its power is undeniable even as its identity is unclear.

To let you, the Keeper, in on the campaign's deepest secrets, we share the name with you here: the Liar is Y'golonac. Keep it secret. Allude when you might otherwise reveal. Suggest and imply, rather than state outright, until the time is right. The players and their characters must earn this revelation, perhaps in the Yucatán during their confrontation with a whole other ancient god-thing. The truth always comes with a price.

In *Eternal Lies,* Major Mouths dwell in Bangkok (**Bangkok 10, "The Sewers,"** p. 163), Los Angeles (**Los Angeles 24, "Trammel's Mansion,"** p. 113), Malta (**Malta 19, "The Mouth of Malta,"** page 255), and Mexico City (**Mexico City 19, "The Mouth of Mexico City,"** p. 303). There is also a nascent Major Mouth that may someday come into full being in Ethiopia (**Ethiopia 11, "Dallol Village,"** p. 208).

Every Major Mouth is distinct, with its own unique properties and style. Still, each is awful, horrifying, and gross. Each is also vulnerable to physical damage, though as long as the Thing With a Thousand Mouths itself still lives, it can regrow Major Mouths over time.

Destroying a Major Mouth with explosives requires a substantial amount of explosive material — exact quantities are left to the Keeper to adjudicate by comparing the damage values of explosives used to the individual Health of each Major Mouth — and a Difficulty 6 **Explosives** test. Failure on this test may well deal great damage, possibly even destroying the Mouth, but also spreads bits of its flesh and juices all about, making it easy for a new Major Mouth to form over time. Success means the explosives are delivered properly to blast the Mouth to bits and bury the remains. A character using **Explosives** as an Investigative ability can identify the consequences for failure ("It'll blow out, tossing debris all over the place") and identify a failure on sight ("That was no proper blast!").

Merely burying a Major Mouth only stymies it. It gradually *shifts* through raw rock or concrete or sand or metal until it is once again where it wants to be. It takes days or months or years, but the Thing With a Thousand Mouths is patient and determined.

Getting explosives *into* a Mouth grants a free 1- or 2-point bonus to the Explosives test, depending on how deep into the Mouth the explosives get. (Keepers, use your judgment to reward clever ideas that, say, trick a Mouth into swallowing dynamite.) Grand attempts at overkill may lower the Difficulty or succeed outright but come with their own dirty consequences like official investigations



into exploded warehouses, stolen bombs, and so forth.

The challenge to most Investigator groups should be getting close enough to an angry Major Mouth to successfully make an Explosives test.

Minor Mouths

Minor Mouths of the Liar manifest in areas where the Liar From Beyond or its associated entities focus their attention, or where their artifacts or attention have left behind strange residuum. Minor Mouths can — and do — appear on inanimate objects, as part of the living land, and upon the flesh of animals and humans, whether living or dead.

Minor Mouths are possessed of very limited powers of movement, having the capability to drift slowly — at a rate of a meter per day at the very speediest — across the surface of the object or individual on which they appear.

Minor Mouths speak only in the Tongue of Lies (see "The Tongue of Lies," p. 38) and constantly spew forth both curses and venerations in its unspeakable, vowel-ridden cant. Thus they can inflict additional Stability loss on those in earshot, at will. They are disgusting and misshapen things, little resembling the mouths of terrestrial creatures. Their teeth are rotted and foul, occurring in too many or too few rows, where they occur in any discernible order at all. Their tongues are long and prehensile — many have multiple tongues; some have a dozen. Often, their tongues sprout teeth, boils, sightless eyes, fingers of pulpy flesh, or even smaller sub-mouths upon their surfaces.

A few Minor Mouths resemble orifices other than mouths — nostrils, sphincters, and so forth — but their mechanical capabilities and unnerving capability to speak the Tongue of Lies remain unchanged.

The Capabilities of Minor Mouths

The following capabilities are possessed by the Minor Mouths. However, not all possess all of these abilities; most possess only a subset.

Where Minor Mouths appear throughout *Eternal Lies*, the text often specifies which capabilities are in play. Where it does not (as in most of the floating scenes in Act Two, for example), you should improvise based on the circumstances because the specifics are not otherwise important. Each capability indicates whether it is common or uncommon among Mouths; use that information to decide which capabilities any particular Mouth has.

Exhort: (Common) A Mouth may spew forth exhortations to perverse acts in the Tongue of Lies, which have the capability to drive those in earshot to spontaneous acts of depravity. An exhortation may be general, in which case all those who can hear it are affected, or targeted, in which case a single victim is affected. In either case, those affected must make a Stability test with a Difficulty Number of either 3 (general) or 5 (targeted). The penalty for failure is not Stability loss, but instead an immediate descent into animal behavior that lasts for 3–18 minutes (roll a die and multiply the result by 3), which may itself warrant Stability loss. Affected targets may run off, howl at the moon and stars, eat nearby organic objects (food or not), kiss or lick others or themselves, recite the words they hear in the Tongue, or some combination. By

spending Stability, Investigators can restrain themselves from these acts for up to 6 minutes per point. (Thus a 3-point spend counteracts the most potent exhortation.)

Hide: (Uncommon) The Mouth is nearly impossible to see when closed because it blends into its environment. It has a +2 Stealth modifier when closed.

Ragged Teeth: (Common) The Mouth has an unusual profusion of teeth, or its teeth are especially sharp or dangerous. Its bite damage is +2.

Searing Bile: (Uncommon) The Mouth's sputum burns the flesh. Increase its damage from all relevant attack types by +1.

Shift: (Uncommon) The Mouth can move quickly and unexpectedly across the surfaces on which it has manifested. It cannot, however, leave the immediate area — a room, a clearing, a car interior — such as to pursue Investigators across the city. It has a Hit Threshold of 4 and Athletics 6.

Tough Flesh: (Uncommon) The Mouth's flesh is calloused and hardened with scabs and dried pus, giving it an Armor value of 1 or, rarely, 2 points.

Vicious Tongue: (Common for a single tongue, uncommon for multiple tongues) The Mouth has a long, dangerous, prehensile tongue it can use to attack nearby enemies. The length of a given tongue is 1d6 meters, useful when determining permissible targets of its attacks. Its tongue damage is −1.

Game Statistics

Abilities: Athletics 1 (6 for Mouths with the Shift capability), Health 1d6, Scuffling 3

Hit Threshold: 3 (4 for Mouths with the Shift capability)

Alertness Modifier: +0

Stealth Modifier: −2 (+2 for closed Mouths with the Hide capability)

Weapon: +0 (bite), +2 (bite, for Mouths with the Ragged Teeth capability), −1 (tongue, for Mouths with the Vicious Tongue capability)

Armor: none, 1 or 2 (for Mouths with the Tough Flesh capability)

Stability Loss: +1 (or +3 if it has manifested on one's own body)

Amputation, and Worse

Investigators afflicted with Minor Mouths will want to get rid of them. While learning and practicing the Rituals of Self-Denial (see **"The Rituals of Self-Denial,"** p. 218) is an option for the perpetual neutralization of Mouths, their long-term practice would essentially remove an Investigator from the campaign, and so players are likely to consider more drastic measures.

The good news is that amputation of human limbs has been routinely survived for centuries.

In an appropriate facility — a hospital, clinic, physician's office, or the like — a character with Medicine can safely perform an amputation to remove a limb afflicted with a Mouth. Assuming a good supply of antibiotics, the patient suffers +3 damage but, unless killed by the procedure, stabilizes even if seriously wounded. That is, the patient does not lose additional Health over time, as normally occurs when a character is seriously wounded.

In the field, a character with Medicine can perform an amputation with less certitude of success. With appropriate tools, the patient suffers +3 damage as above; with improvised tools — those raided from a gardening shed or kitchen, say — the patient suffers +5 damage. As above, the patient is stable if seriously wounded.

In an appropriate facility, a character with First Aid can perform an amputation by making a First Aid test with a Difficulty of 5. On a success, the procedure works just as if the operating character had Medicine, as described above. On a failure, the patient suffers +6 damage and is not automatically stabilized.

In the field, a character with First Aid can perform an amputation with a Difficulty 7 First Aid test. On a success with proper tools, the patient suffers +3 damage. On a failure with proper tools, the patient suffers +6 damage. On a success with improvised tools, the patient suffers +4 damage. On a failure with improvised tools, the patient suffers +9 damage. The wound is not stable no matter what, even if the damage miraculously doesn't bring the patient to a seriously wounded state.

No matter the safety of the surroundings or suitability of the tools employed, amputees must be hospitalized to recover (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, page 63), whether the damage from the amputation brings them to a seriously wounded state or not. That is, no matter the circumstances of the operation, First Aid is not fruitful for immediate recovery of Health lost due to a planned amputation.

An Investigator who has a limb amputated in an appropriate facility must make a 2-point non-Mythos Stability test. This increases to a 3-point test if the procedure is carried out in the field or a 4-point test if it's carried out in the field with improvised tools. Surgeons simply make the normal Stability tests for witnessing Mouths.

With any amputation, there is a risk of infection. To avoid infection, the patient

must make a Health test against the Difficulty specified below.

Circumstance	Difficulty
Medical facilities	3
In the field, appropriate tools	5
In the field, improvised tools	7

Infected patients suffer 1 point of additional damage every 24 hours until antibiotics are administered, at which point a new Health test against Difficulty 4 can be made. If this test is failed, the Investigator continues to lose Health at the same rate until dying. At your option, a heroic Medicine spend might still save the Investigator, but only at a first-class hospital.

Amputees, of course, continue to suffer the effects of missing limbs. In addition to any penalties from fresh wounds, recent amputees suffer +1 Difficulty on Athletics, Driving, Piloting, Scuffling, and Weapons tests. At the Keeper's option, these penalties may fade over time as the character becomes accustomed to the disability. On the other hand, additional abilities may also suffer this penalty (or worse) in certain situations at the Keeper's discretion. Investigators missing an arm cannot fire rifles and shotguns at all, for example, and Investigators missing a leg will have problems with Disguise in many cases. These penalties will generally be limited to General abilities, but the Keeper's judgment prevails in such cases.

All of that was the good news. The *bad* news is that Investigators manifesting Mouths on their trunks or heads don't have the option of amputation at all.

Desperate Investigators may try to cut the Mouths from their bodies but spare the limb or from parts of the body that can't be amputated. Doing so inflicts +1 damage and appears, at first, to work… but after a few minutes, a new Mouth begins to re-form in the wound, growing lips and tongues and teeth just as when it first manifested. The horror of this intentional mutilation on top of the demoralizing effects of the Mouth's immediate return cause a 1-point Mythos Stability loss for victim and surgeon alike (or a 2-point loss, if victim and surgeon are the same person). Also, the patient must test against infection as above.

Given that removing Mouths in this way always fails, Investigators afflicted with Mouths on body parts other than their limbs are doomed (unless they keep their Mouths well fed, of course), so keep this in mind when you decide where Investigators become afflicted.

The Tongue of Lies

The Tongue of Lies is the native language of the Liar From Beyond, the indigenous speech of its perverse exhortations to corruption and debauchery. To terrestrial ears its sounds are somehow simultaneously sibilant and vowel-ridden, each of its syllables flowing into the next without pauses or spaces for a sane mind to grab hold of individual words or coherent thoughts. To perceive its utterance is to be exposed to a putrid disgorging of base degeneracy, the platonic stuff of moral decay.

To hear the Tongue of Lies unprepared requires a 2-point Mythos Stability test. If forewarned, it is a 1-point Mythos Stability test. If it is spoken by a human mouth, increase those amounts by an additional point. It is nearly impossible to comprehend how a human could physically produce the sounds of which the Tongue of Lies is made.

Stability loss from hearing the Tongue of Lies can only occur once in the same encounter, and a maximum of three times in the same Locale. (Players don't have to be told that, though.) Additionally, any Investigator who learns the Rituals of Self-Denial subtracts his Rituals rating from the Stability loss of hearing the Tongue (see the sidebar "The Rituals of Self-Denial" on page 218). The roll-your-own analogue of the Rituals (see "Denying the Mouths: Home-Grown Ascetic Practices" on page 203) does not have this effect, however.

The Tongue of Lies is spoken, natively, by the Mouths of the Liar — both Major and Minor — as well as by followers of the Liar From Beyond who have learned it either from a Mouth or through communion with the Liar itself. Many who learn the Tongue find themselves unable to recall or speak any of the other languages they once knew, as though the nature of the Tongue has rewired the nature of their human comprehension. In mechanical terms, this occurs when one who hears the Tongue of Lies loses enough Stability from the experience to become **blasted**.

Even individuals who manage to ostensibly recover their Stability through triage or other methods often take their own lives when it finally becomes well and truly clear that they will never again be capable of producing real human speech. Writers sometimes survive in silent seclusion, communicating with their fellow humans only by correspondence, fighting a rearguard action against the inevitable corrosion of their minds.



How to Read Scenes

Eternal Lies presents each scene in the campaign in a common format, making it easy to remind yourself what scene you're dealing with and what that scene is about in its core. Here's a quick primer on reading these scenes:

Scene Summary Blocks

The blocks of text that introduce each scene in Eternal Lies contain more information than you may be used to from previously published adventures for *Trail of Cthulhu* or other GUMSHOE RPGs. Most scenes contain four types of information: Scene Type, Lead-ins, Summary, and Core Clue(s).

Scene Type tells you the general function of the scene. Scene Types used in Eternal Lies include Intro, Core, Core (Event), Core (Footwork), Core (Floating), Alternate, Antagonist Reaction, Source of Stability Complication, Travel, Transition, Action, Trap, and Challenge.

Lead-ins give you an idea of the most common ways that Investigators might find their way to the scene. This is helpful when you are reading Eternal Lies for the first time and absorbing the relationships between the various scenes. It's also helpful in play when you know which clue the players need to move forward but are having trouble guiding them toward it, because it can help you work backward.

Summary boils down the whole scene into a sentence or two, giving you the gist without having to read or skim the more dense description of the entire thing. It's most helpful when you're reading Eternal Lies for the first time and trying to place everything into a mental framework or when you're reviewing a given Locale prior to or during a game session.

Core Clues enumerate, in very simple terms, what the Investigators must learn in the scene to move the adventure forward. There may be one or more Core Clue entries in a given scene, if more than one core clue must be discovered in that scene. Core clues accompany parenthetical notes that list the abilities most likely to yield the clue, and the location(s) where they are most likely to be applied fruitfully.

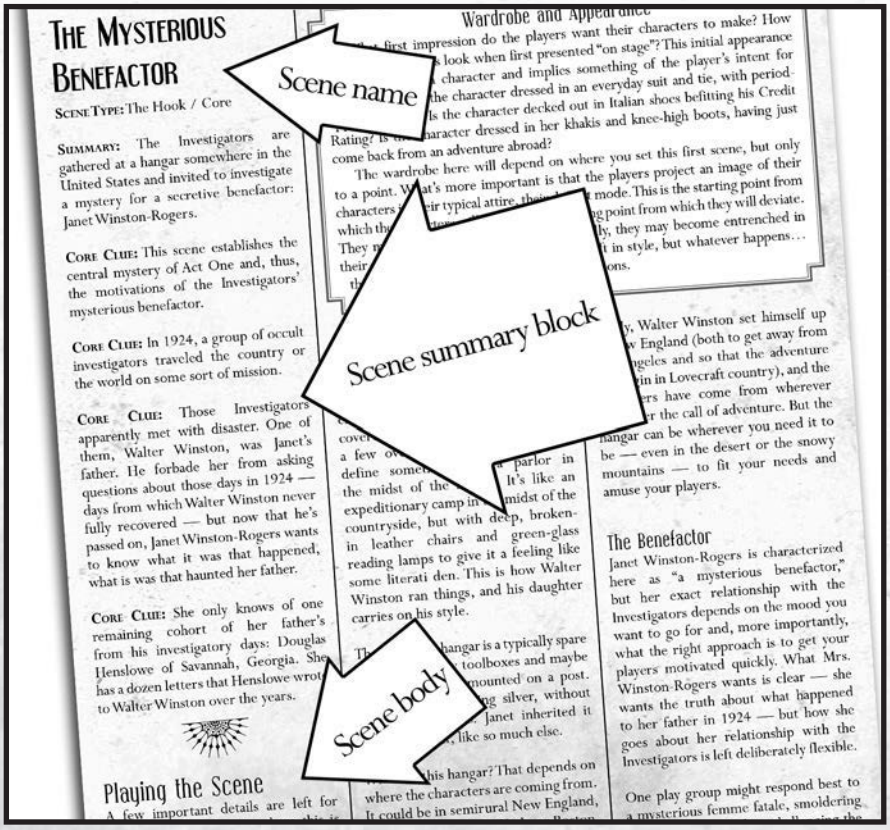
"Read-aloud" Text

Some scenes in Eternal Lies have passages of italic text that present verbatim text as it could be spoken by key NPCs in those scenes. While you can simply read that text aloud to the players when they interview those sources of information, a superior technique is to use the italicized text as a model for extemporaneous dialogue and back-and-forth conversation.

You might reasonably ask why "read-aloud" text is presented this way when it's not best used when read aloud. The answer is that a first-person presentation gives you a picture of the subject's colorful state of mind and patterns of speech as well the critical clues the subject needs to communicate. It shows rather than tells. When you interpret and reinterpret those building blocks, customizing them for the situation at your table, you're passing that show-don't-tell technique along.

Colorful Language Out of Time and Space

Some passages of read-aloud text include forceful and explicit tough-guy language, which is to say, profanity. For some play groups, this will help make those scenes seem realistic and dangerous. For others, it will spoil some sense of historical verisimilitude or be offensive. As with all read-aloud text, you will want to tailor what's actually written to your group's in-the-moment needs and tolerance for foul language.



The Campaign in Pulp and Purist Modes

Approaches to Play

Eternal Lies can be adapted to Pulp or Purist modes or a variety of play styles surrounding those modes. Remember, these modes of play are meant to help your play group find the fun you want.

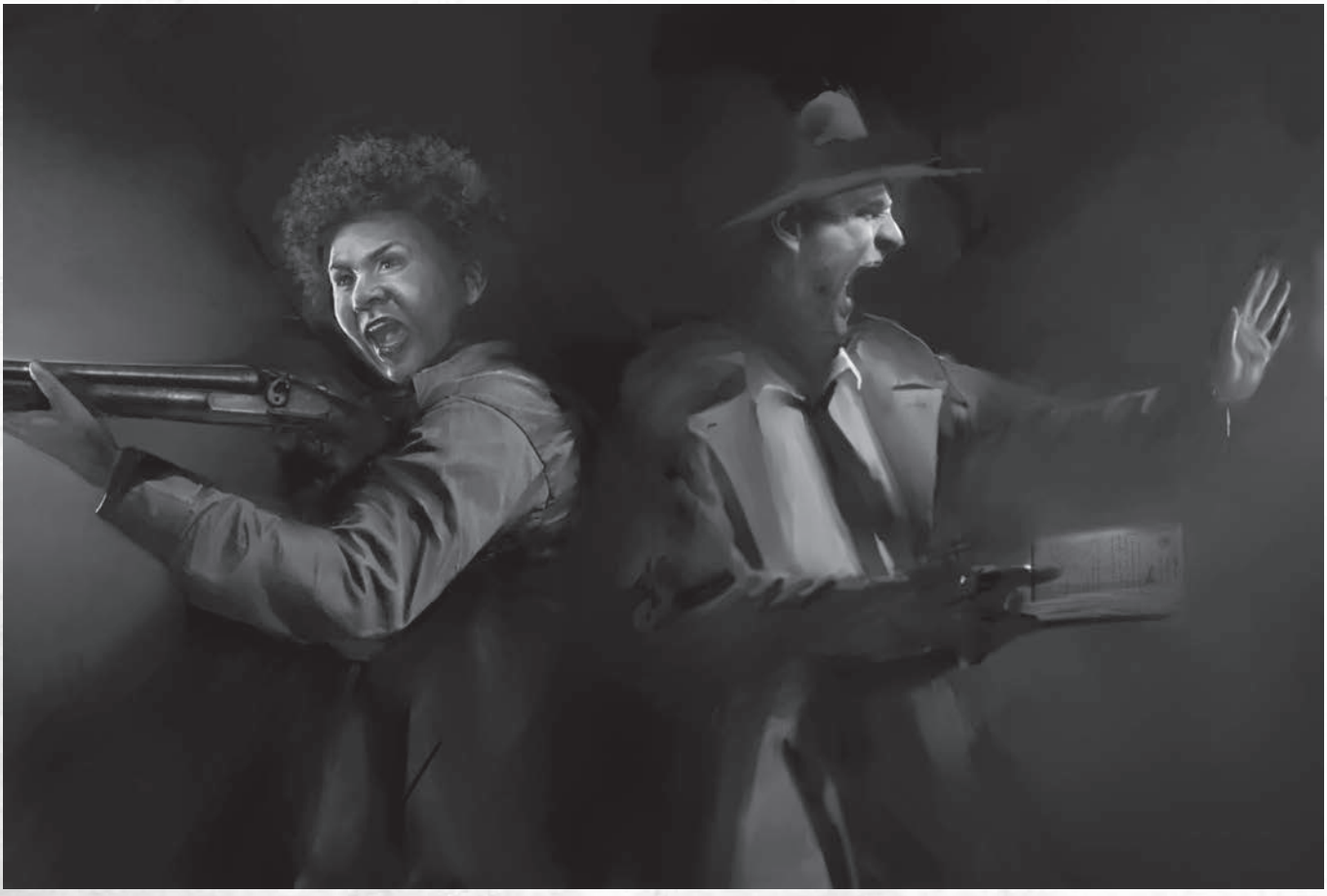
This is a long campaign, though, and tastes change. If your Purist-mode Investigators get eaten or blown up or shot dead, maybe the replacement team introduces a rough-and-ready Pulp style to your adaptation of the campaign. Maybe they arrive with shotguns and fire-bombs to take on the cult that killed their friends. Have at it.

Even as the players get a sense of what style of play they're in for when they sign up for Purist, Pulp, or Hybrid play, you have a lot of influence over the tenor and voice of the unfolding campaign. It's in the way you talk. It's in the antagonist reaction scenes you play. It's in how aggressively you play the PCs' enemies.

We heard from a few playtest groups that the campaign was less deadly than they anticipated. Some of that is the nature of the pace the players take — if they're cautious going in and careful to recoup after adventures, they'll do all right. Some of that is up to how you play the antagonists. Do they flee and warn their allies as quickly as they can? Do they launch counterattacks against the Investigators? The answer shouldn't depend solely on the cult's capabilities and motivations but on yours. Do you want a campaign that chews up Investigators or one that follows the characters you've come to love to their dramatic end?

The Kind of Scary

Eternal Lies derives some of its horror from very earthly vices and crimes. On some level, the campaign is about human failings. While some players may be up for a tale of gross people treating each other badly, no one should feel the kind of uncomfortable that's not fun for them. Respect the bounds of your group's tastes and adapt out any elements that are out of place for your players' comfort zones. It is absolutely fair play to tone down the wickedness of the Mouths for the sake of your audience and collaborators in play. It's the responsible thing to do. Know the kind of scary your group is after and respect it.



The Campaign in Pulp and Purist Modes

If for no other reason, *Eternal Lies* defaults to *Trail of Cthulhu*'s Pulp mode of play due to the fact that the Purist mode's emphasis on horrific revelations from which there can be no recovery can sometimes be difficult to posit as the dramatic basis for an extended roleplaying campaign.

Even so, play groups who like the Purist mode's grim aesthetic, or who don't care for a two-fisted, double-handgun approach to the Cthulhu Mythos, can still cleave to these preferences while running Eternal Lies. We'll call this the Hybrid mode. As a general rule, it calls for the players to choose Pulp-mode options where they relate to Investigator advancement and survivability, but Purist-mode options where they are related to elements of the setting.

The key options of each type are listed under "Hybrid Mode," and from these lists, it should be clear to the Keeper which options to choose in other cases.

Of course, tinkering with these rules reveals something: that tinkering with the Pulp and Purist arrangement is allowed. Doing so can yield distinctly different adaptations of Eternal Lies, so feel free to adjust mechanics to suit the mystery, drama, and adventure you're after in your campaign. Don't feel like you must adhere to a single interpretation of the rules for the whole campaign, either — if you're finding the campaign is withering Investigators too much (or not enough) in your current mode, make adjustments for future sessions, Locales, or Acts. As long as everyone playing understands the changes and is game for them, this is fair play.

Don't adhere to a rules tweak that is diminishing your good times. Adapt the campaign for your particular audience, not for the approval of anyone outside your play group.

Hybrid Mode

Consider these guidelines for hybrid play:

- Occupation descriptions do not include Pulp-mode options.
- Alienists may not purchase the Hypnosis ability.
- Priests do not have Psychoanalysis as an occupational ability and cannot bless holy water, fend off vampires, or exorcise demons.
- Parapsychologists cannot purchase Hypnosis or have psychic powers.
- Private Investigators do not have the Chandler-inspired alternate list of occupational abilities.
- Adventure, Duty, Revenge, and Sudden Shock are suitable Drives.
- Purist-mode caps on Health, Stability, and Sanity are not in effect.
- Hypnosis is not available to Investigators.
- Investigators do have Sources of Stability, but must (as usual) spend time with them in order to recover Stability between Locales.
- Keepers do not reveal the Difficulty Numbers of tests.
- Pulp-style long-range and double-fisted uses of the Firearms ability are right out, and effective bullet-proof clothing is not available to Investigators. The full-auto option for submachine guns is not used, and Investigators are not assumed to have unlimited ammunitions at their disposal.
- Explosives can be employed. (Especially where explicitly described as an option in the Bangkok Locale — see page 145.)
- The Stability loss of repeated encounters with similar minor Mythos creatures — specifically, Minor Mouths — is reduced as described in *Trail of Cthulhu*, pg. 72.
- Players are allowed to faint in order to avoid extreme Sanity loss.
- The Anagnorisis rules are not used (save, perhaps — at the Keeper's discretion — in Act Three, once Echavarria's aborted ritual has resumed and the apocalypse is obviously at hand).
- Confidence-based Stability recovery is not allowed.
- The recovery of Sanity from "defeating the Mythos" is not possible.
- Investigators receive 1 build point (rather than 2) at the conclusion of each Locale to improve their abilities.



Death and Madness

There is a certain expectation among many Cthulhu Mythos enthusiasts that the only decent *Trail of Cthulhu* game session is one where the Investigators die or go mad at the end. And indeed, having one's character die or go mad (or both) is a big part of the fun.

However, a lengthy campaign like *Eternal Lies* calls for both the Keeper and players to take a slightly more long-term view of things. Consider: in a typical one-off *Trail of Cthulhu* scenario, it would not be fun for the Investigators to die or go mad, to the last, at the end of the Intro scene. Wholesale death and madness are fun as cathartic end points to an investigation, not as the incidental results of relatively minor plot points in the midst of a scenario's rising action.

This is not to suggest that none of your game's Investigators should die or go mad prior to Act Three. Far from it. The horror of the Mythos and the reality of its menace can't be properly communicated without death and madness. So by all means, let the Investigators drop like flies, dying gory deaths and being driven to heartbreaking insanity.

Rather, this is simply a warning that if the entire party of Investigators is eliminated from play prior to the end of the campaign, it will be hard for the players to experience the campaign as a single dramatic whole, which is presumably the experience that you're interested in having when you decide to run an extended campaign. So while you keep it real on one hand by providing fatal consequences to ill-conceived actions, take care, on the other, to maintain connective tissue over the course of the campaign.

To put it another way, for an *Eternal Lies* campaign to be dramatically satisfying in the long term, you'll need some kind of continuity from beginning to end, whether it's a continuity of one or two surviving Investigators, of a central organization, or even of serial correspondents with a central NPC. Keep this in mind when the players' knee-jerk reaction to an apparently session-ending creature or situation is to rush the thing with guns drawn and dynamite lit.



Act One

Eternal Lies is divided into three Acts, each made up of scenes set at a few distinct Locales. These three Acts define the beginning, middle, and end of the campaign as a whole and make it easier for you, the Keeper, to track and organize play. In each Act, the stakes and the tension increase and the Investigators' journey takes them deeper into weirdness and danger.

Act One is the beginning of the larger story, and so it involves mostly terrestrial obstacles and foes; the menace here is merely life threatening. As the campaign progresses, the stakes get even higher.

Act One is also a story of its own, made up of two smaller tales, each set in a distinctive Locale. Each Locale has its own spine and horrible truths to discover, and the Locales combine to form the spine for the Act. But, of course, it all begins with the hook.

The Hook

Act One includes the hook for the whole campaign — the inciting incident that sends the Investigators (and their eventual, occasional replacements) across the country and, later, the planet in search of the horrible truth. This hook, in the scene **"The Mysterious Benefactor,"** gets everything going.

The Spine

Act One's spine is simple: The Investigators are brought together by Janet Winston-Rogers, a wealthy and motivated heiress, and sent off on the trail of a previous coterie of Investigators who set out to save the world from the machinations of a debauched and sinister cult in 1924. The case takes them from a sanitarium and a swampy Southern estate in Savannah, Georgia, USA, to the rotten underbelly of Depression-era Los Angeles, California, USA.

Each Locale has its own spine, detailed in that Locale's text.

The Horrible Truth

Act One reveals the history and fate of the 1924 investigation into (and battle against) a cult bent on summoning a dreadful alien god-beast to Earth: both the Investigators and the cult were all but destroyed in one fateful night. All but. Two Investigators survived to 1937 — Walter Winston and Douglas Henslowe — and the cult lived on to become a new, widespread movement thriving at the feet of the dread alien terror successfully summoned to Earth in 1924.It has members and operations across the globe. It is a force for perversity and vice. It doses the innocent and the debauched alike with an alien narcotic, called Nectar. It is a menace.

But what is this alien beast — this Thing With a Thousand Mouths — that the cultists summoned, and how can it be defeated? It is this question that draws the players' Investigators into Act Two.

Gathering the Investigators

Chapter One is devoted to understanding the Investigators at the heart of this campaign. With the backgrounds decided on during character creation (or perhaps revealed during the play of a previous scenario or two), you should be ready to determine how Eternal Lies begins. You should be ready to gather the Investigators for the first scene.

How, exactly, you put the Investigators together depends on just who they are. Do they know each other already (which is ideal), or are they being

Pacing

This first Act takes the Investigators from the normalcy of their everyday lives into a larger world of secrets, debauchery, and insanity — yet, still, this Act represents only a shadow of the perils ahead. Your job, as the Keeper, is to facilitate the unfolding of the mystery tale that makes up this Act but also to lay the groundwork for many more chapters of exploration, discovery, and horror. Pace yourself; there's a whole campaign ahead.

That said, experienced players might grow impatient during Act One. One player's savory immersion into an unfolding mystery is another player's bore; one person's buildup to mind-bending horror is another's slog to the good stuff. Either dial up the action and weirdness in Act One (by playing out more scenes of antagonist reactions, for example) or compress Act One to get the Investigators to Act Two sooner.

One example: skip the search for the sketchbook in Savannah and simply have it available to pick up in Douglas Henslowe's study, along with the safe deposit box key that leads to Los Angeles.

brought together for the first time? Here are two ways to address the issue without spending a lot of time on setup.

In Medias Res

Start in the middle of things, with a description of the Investigators' arrival, something that sets a mood, followed up right away by a question that gives each player a chance to introduce his or her character. For example:

The starry sky above the rural road is like a threadbare cloth. The glow of galaxies beyond lends the night a pallor broken only where the road ends, at a private airplane hangar. It's bright there, flooded with artificial light, hounded by fat moths. The limousine's headlights are dim in comparison, but they glint off another limousine, parked ahead, and what looks like a posh sitting room set up on the hangar floor before a twin-engine passenger plane. It's an odd instance of civilization — of unfolded trunk shelves and lit reading lamps — amid the functional metal housing of the hangar, amid the rough weeds and woods at the verge of the airfield.

Your limousine stops, and gloved men come to open the doors. Behind them is the woman you've come to meet: Janet Winston-Rogers. Forty and vibrant, she's a splash of red against the concrete and steel, her cigarette smoke snaking around her in the air.

"Thank you for coming," she says. "I apologize for the mysteriousness of this meeting."

How do you introduce yourself?

Waste no time. Get the players answering questions about their characters straight away, and give everyone a chance to make a revealing first impression. Even if the characters already know each other, the players are probably just getting to know these characters. Give them a chance to get into character.

For some groups, this is a great way to cut right into the meat of play. Questions about how exactly the characters were contacted might be glossed over in quick asides surrounding the main action. Keep the focus on the situation at hand and let the characters explore the scene. It's all about forward movement for now.

Montage

Alternately, if the players have done a lot of work creating backgrounds and normal lives for their characters, you might want to give them a chance to show off what normalcy looks like for the Investigators. Consider a quick montage, showing off what each character was doing when contacted by Mrs. Winston-Rogers's people.

Give each player a chance to describe an image of their character's everyday life: teaching archaeology at the university, tucking the kids in at night, coming home splattered with mud, whatever. Then, either add a detail covering the mysterious benefactor's request or let the player do it.

To keep things feeling like a montage, and to keep each part of the montage from becoming a scene of its own, give the players this simple restriction: only a single exchange of dialogue, or no dialogue at all. Also, remind the players that their characters must agree to the meeting in question — it's a rule of the montage.

It's just fine for a single montage segment to include more than one character, if the archaeology professor is meeting with the antiquarian when the mysterious men in the flannel suits come, for example. Let the montage speak to a character's abilities, Drive, or personal relationships, as the player likes.

Here are a few ways a character might be approached:

- The character is approached in an exotic location by a courier, delivering a telegram.
- The character comes home to find a note pinned to her door. It reads, "I have a case for you. Limousine downstairs at 8pm."
- The character is approached at his office by a nervous little man in a white suit. "My boss has a job for you."
- The character is walking down the street when a gleaming car pulls up and two men in dark suits get out. "Dr. Jones?"
- The character gets a phone call. "Dr. Smith? Look out your window. I've sent a car for you."

Remember, the goal of the montage isn't just to demonstrate the mysteriousness and resources of the benefactor bringing the Investigators together, but to showcase the Investigator's background and character before the adventure begins. Maybe it's not unusual for the character to get these kinds of requests; maybe it is. The point is to make the Investigators seem human, exciting, or both, and then get on with the story.

Scenes

Act One contains only one scene before the Investigators are sent to their first Locale.



The Mysterious Benefactor

Scene Type: The Hook / Core

Summary: The Investigators are gathered at a hangar somewhere in the United States and invited to investigate a mystery for a secretive benefactor: Janet Winston-Rogers.

Core Clue: This scene establishes the central mystery of Act One and, thus, the motivations of the Investigators' mysterious benefactor.

Core Clue: In 1924, a group of occult investigators traveled the country or the world on some sort of mission.

Core Clue: Those Investigators apparently met with disaster. One of them, Walter Winston, was Janet's father. He forbade her from asking questions about those days in 1924 — days from which Walter Winston never fully recovered — but now that he's passed on, Janet Winston-Rogers wants to know what it was that happened, what is was that haunted her father.

Core Clue: She only knows of one remaining cohort of her father's from his investigatory days: Douglas Henslowe of Savannah, Georgia. She has a dozen letters that Henslowe wrote to Walter Winston over the years.

Playing the Scene

A few important details are left for you to decide, like just where this is all happening and how it is that Janet Winston-Rogers came to contact the players' characters for this case. Both sets of details depend on the particulars of the characters created for your campaign and may have been determined during character creation (described in Chapter One).

Wardrobe and Appearance

What first impression do the players want their characters to make? How do the Investigators look when first presented "on stage"? This initial appearance says a lot about a character and implies something of the player's intent for that character. Is the character dressed in an everyday suit and tie, with period-appropriate hat? Is the character decked out in Italian shoes befitting his Credit Rating? Is the character dressed in her khakis and knee-high boots, having just come back from an adventure abroad?

The wardrobe here will depend on where you set this first scene, but only to a point. What's more important is that the players project an image of their characters in their typical attire, their default mode. This is the starting point from which the characters will progress, the starting point from which they will deviate. They may change superficially or substantially, they may become entrenched in their style or they may undergo a radical shift in style, but whatever happens… this first look is the basis for future comparisons.

The Hangar

The hangar is strangely posh and comfortable in its little sitting area. Short folding bookshelves, full of encyclopedias, and portable tables covered in maps stand at the edges of a few overlapping area rugs, which define something like a parlor in the midst of the hangar. It's like an expeditionary camp in the midst of the countryside, but with deep, broken-in leather chairs and green-glass reading lamps to give it a feeling like some literati den. This is how Walter Winston ran things, and his daughter carries on his style.

The rest of the hangar is a typically spare place, with a few toolboxes and maybe an antelope head mounted on a post. The plane is gleaming silver, without airline decorations. Janet inherited it from her father, like so much else.

Where is this hangar? That depends on where the characters are coming from. It could be in semirural New England, outside Arkham, New York, or Boston, or it could be outside Chicago, San Francisco, or almost any other American city. The questions are, how far have the Investigators come to be here? And how far did Walter Winston choose to go to get away from the events of 1924, in Los Angeles? Ideally, Walter Winston set himself up in New England (both to get away from Los Angeles and so that the adventure can begin in Lovecraft country), and the characters have come from wherever to answer the call of adventure. But the hangar can be wherever you need it to be — even in the desert or the snowy mountains — to fit your needs and amuse your players.

The Benefactor

Janet Winston-Rogers is characterized here as "a mysterious benefactor," but her exact relationship with the Investigators depends on the mood you want to go for and, more importantly, what the right approach is to get your players motivated quickly. What Mrs. Winston-Rogers wants is clear — she wants the truth about what happened to her father in 1924 — but how she goes about her relationship with the Investigators is left deliberately flexible.

One play group might respond best to a mysterious femme fatale, smoldering in her designer clothes, challenging the wits and capabilities of the Investigators with a tough case. Another play group might respond best to a straightforward businesswoman who lays it all out on the table and appeals to the Investigators' goodwill. Cast the

Stats for Winston-Rogers and Kearns

Janet Winston-Rogers might become an important recurring character or suitable replacement PC in your adaptation of the campaign. We don't offer game stats for her, however, so that her exact abilities and contacts can expand to fill gaps in your adaptation or be defined by players who take on her role later. It's quite all right to let the character be made wholly of her motivation, her dialogue, and her demeanor for a while. When it comes time to decide her specific training or abilities, leave that to the story to suggest or the player of her character to choose.

Frank Kearns, on the other hand, is a simpler character with a simpler purpose. Here are his stats:

Frank Kearns

Three Things: Bulbous, once-broken nose. Can sleep anywhere, anytime, with ease. Never gets quite all the way to laughing.

Driving 4, Electrical Repair 5, Fleeing 5, Health 7, Mechanical Repair 5, Piloting 8, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 4, Stability 7



character of Janet Winston-Rogers in the mold that's right for your adaptation of the campaign.

The approach taken with her in the following section splits the difference, portraying Mrs. Winston-Rogers as a cautious and guarded woman on a mission, willing to let the Investigators in on what she knows, but wary of being taken advantage of by callous or boorish "adventurers." She's looking for discretion.

As the story progresses, though, Mrs. Winston-Rogers may change and adapt. Her changing relationship with the Investigators is a great way to evoke a sense of ongoing development in the storyline. See Act Two (p. 121) for some advice on how her personal dynamic (and her role in the campaign) can be developed and refined during play.

The Information

This scene is about two things: Getting information from Janet Winston-Rogers to the Investigators and introducing the Investigators as characters. The information is vital to sending the Investigators off into the scenario with clear motivation and goals. The introductions are vital to player entertainment. Unlike many scenes, it may be valuable to play for a few minutes beyond the revelation of all clues for the sake of introducing all the Investigators and getting the players into character.

It is Winston-Rogers's goal to convey all of the following information to the characters, but let it come out in a dialogue, rather than a monologue, so the Investigators can demonstrate a few of their abilities and their style of investigation. Ask the players to identify what sort of Interpersonal ability they're using when talking with Mrs. Winston-Rogers, if only to get a sense of how the characters operate. She shares all of the following information, even if the Investigators rudely resort to Intimidation. She's dealt with boors before and knows that she may have to employ intimidators to get to the truth. She's not easily insulted.

The following passages are written in Janet Winston-Rogers's voice, to give you a sense of her, but you should paraphrase these clues as you like.

- "My father was a driven man. He'd made his own fortune in the pharmaceuticals business after the War and then spent a few years traveling the world, studying folklore. That led to an interest in… the occult. He was bent on battling something, but he wouldn't tell us what it was. My mother and I watched him get ever more distant, travel ever more often, until he spent almost all of 1924 away from home. On the trail of some 'bad people,' as he called them."

- "When my father wasn't traveling, he was having meetings — secret meetings — with people he wasn't in business with. Other dabblers in the occult, I think. My mother didn't like them. This was when she started drinking."

- "Something happened in August of 1924. Something that sent him back to us rattled and unraveling. He didn't have any more secret meetings after that. He stopped traveling. But he wasn't well. He saw a psychiatrist for a few years. He burned his books. He hardly ate. He jumped at shadows, insisted he was being watched. He was… never the same. He forbade us from asking about his travels and said more than once that 'nothing mattered anymore.' When mother died, in '32, he hardly grieved. After that, he became only more paranoid and frustrated, until he finally passed away, earlier this year, as a shadow of himself."

- "That was when I found the letters — letters from a man named Douglas Henslowe, who had apparently worked with my father up until August of '24. I think he must have been one of the people father met with at the house, time and again. He wrote a few times, always asking my father to write down what had happened, what he had seen. My father never did. He never answered

those letters. But he kept them, and it looks to me like he studied them carefully, though he never, I guess, dared to write back."

- "This Douglas Henslowe wrote another letter, which came earlier this year, just before my father died. All I have to go on are the postmarks, sent from two addresses in Savannah, Georgia. I think this man must know what happened to my father in 1924. And I want to know what my father was mixed up in and… whether I should be apologizing for him or defending him. Whether he left work unfinished. Whether I'm in any danger."

- "I'll gladly lend you the use of my plane and pilot, Mr. Kearns, for the duration of your investigation, provided you do not leave the country for now. Time is a factor. Money is less so."

Janet Winston-Rogers parts with additional information if asked directly (or perhaps coaxed with an Interpersonal ability):

- "My husband passed last year in an automobile accident. And now, with my father gone, it seems the Winston line shall die with me. I would like to know that my father didn't destroy himself for an empty reason."

- "Yes, I have inherited two fortunes. Consider this investigation my one private indulgence."

- "I've never shared my father's interest in the occult, perhaps because I got to see what it cost him. To be honest with you, I'm not convinced that all the mysticism he preoccupied himself with is anything more than hokum. I'm not sure I believe in the supernatural."

Even in the midst of all that, Assess Honesty suggests that she is holding something back, out of fear or pride. A 1-point Reassurance or Oral History spend, to convince Janet that she won't be judged for sharing her story, earns the following short account: "I'll admit, I once thought my father's house was haunted. Shadows seemed to bend and warp, and odd stains appeared from nowhere. I thought I… saw things. Things in the walls. But of course it was all the nervous energy of a frightened girl. At any rate, I haven't seen any such things since my father died."

If the Investigators want to search Walter Winston's house, Janet assures them that it's not necessary. The estate sale has been completed, the house is boarded up and empty, and, more importantly, it's not what she's paying for. "I want to know what happened to my father in 1924. Tell me that."

The hangar's books and maps, many of which belonged to Walter Winston, can be used as props to demonstrate an Investigator's aptitude with certain Academic abilities, but contain no meaningful clues. The Occult ability notices that Walter Winston's portable library contains a few texts pertaining to American mysticism and folk magic, but they are entry-level material and do not paint a picture of a well-informed occultist. If Walter Winston was ever a devoted occultist, his library's been purged of the good texts.

A 1-point Flattery or Piloting spend (used to establish a professional camaraderie) on the loaned pilot, Frank Kearns, reveals that he'd been flying for Walter Winston off and on since 1932 and that he's being paid good money to report back to Mrs. Winston-Rogers on the Investigators' whereabouts and doings. He's loyal to the Winston family and isn't so sure about "all this poking about into Mr. Winston's past." He's an honest fella who got into flying "because flying around beats real work." Assess Honesty thereafter reveals a generally guarded air about Kearns, as well as the sense that his loyalty is not



for sale. Any attempts to bribe Kearns eventually make their way back to Mrs. Winston-Rogers.

Henslowe's Letters

Janet Winston-Rogers gladly offers Henslowe's letters to the Investigators, in the hopes that they will discover something about them that will shed light on her father. She has only the letters themselves and her own opinion of her father to go on now.

Her opinion:

"I don't know if my father ever wrote Mr. Henslowe back, but I rather doubt it. He wouldn't speak about what happened in '24, and I doubt he'd put any of his thoughts into writing for scrutinizing by others. I'm not even sure why he kept these letters, when he destroyed everything else from his days meddling with the mystical."

A simple analysis of the letters shows that they were sent from two addresses, both in Savannah, Georgia. The first half-dozen letters, starting in 1925, are sent from one address: 513 West Henry Street, Savannah, Georgia. Then, in 1933, three letters are sent from a second address: 23 Old Hope Road, Savannah, Georgia. Finally, starting in 1934, the remaining three letters come from the first address again, at a rate of one per year.

Library Use (using reference books of Walter Winston's, there in the hangar) reveals that the first address is located in the Savannah city limits, but the second address's postal code is located outside the city proper. (If Library Use is applied to the addresses while in Savannah, more information can be found; see **Savannah 1, "Arrival in Savannah,"** p. 54.)

Walter Winston went over the earliest messages in pencil, circling individual letters in certain key words, scratching sequences of numbers into the margins, and drawing lines from one seemingly random word to another. A character with knowledge of Cryptography recognizes this as the work of a would-be code-breaker, looking for a way into a tough cipher. A 1-point Cryptography spend, made after a few hours spent poring over the correspondence, leaves a character feeling confident that Walter Winston was grasping at shadows — Henslowe's letters contain no codes.

What they do contain are the pleas of an increasingly desperate and hopeless man, begging Walter Winston to write back with an account of what happened in August of 1924 to, as Henslowe writes, "appease my doctors, who do not believe me." The letters are repetitive and often vague, but they contain a few insights, easily gleaned the first time they are read:

- Douglas Henslowe refers several times to deaths. "Tell me they didn't die for nothing," he writes, and, "Perhaps if they'd followed me out of there, they would still be alive." It's not described who died, how, or for what.
- Henslowe regarded Walter Winston as the "leader" of their group.
- Henslowe apparently traveled "back to Savannah" right after the August events, in 1924, without seeing Walter Winston again — but Henslowe doesn't reveal where he traveled back from.

Some details from Henslowe's letters:

1. January 11th, 1925 (513 West Henry Street): "Please write back with your account of what happened. My doctors do not believe me."
2. June 16th, 1926 (513 West Henry Street): "Don't worry, I haven't told them where any of this was. And I won't."
3. July 6th, 1927 (513 West Henry Street): "Tell me they didn't die for nothing. Tell me they didn't get away with it."
4. February 19th, 1929 (513 West Henry Street): "Perhaps if they'd followed me out of there, they'd still be alive."
5. September 27th, 1930 (513 West Henry Street): "If you'd just send word, telling your version of events, perhaps the doctors would believe you. And me."

Looking At Walter Winston

Walter Winston kept his secrets well. Should the Investigators find the time to plumb the Winston manor, look over his financials, or otherwise dig for dirt on their employer in their spare time… they find there's nothing to find. Walter Winston has been all but liquidated, dissolved into dust and inheritance, with nothing but a grand and empty house and Janet Winston-Rogers to mark his passing.

Walter Winston made his money in pharmaceuticals and spent it on hospitals, particularly after he returned home in 1924. It seems, to a trained eye, very much like he tried to stay out of trouble and lead a quiet, beneficial life.

The lack of evidence may itself be suspicious to some Investigators. That's fine. Let them wonder — it creates doubt and suspense and leaves the canvas feeling wider than it is.



6. October 13th, 1931 (513 West Henry Street): "Are you ignoring me, or is this your way of trying to help me? Your silence echoes. I think you're trying to tell me something."

7. March 13th, 1933 (23 Old Hope Road): "Things are better here. I think maybe I'm free of that day at last."

8. May 25th, 1933 (23 Old Hope Road): "I'm sorry I haven't left you in peace, my old friend. I won't write again."

9. August 9th, 1933 (23 Old Hope Road): "I've made a book of everything I remember and hidden it away here. But I'll tell you where it is. Just ask."

10. February 1st, 1934 (513 West Henry Street): "It's been so long, I know. But I don't think that I'll ever be able to escape what happened."

11. April 14th, 1935 (513 West Henry Street): "It wasn't real. Perhaps it wasn't real. They tell me it wasn't real. I'm sorry if I've frightened you."

12. December 29th, 1936 (513 West Henry Street): "Do you even remember what happened anymore? I wonder if you've even opened my letters."

Departure

"Douglas Henslowe is the only person I know of who seems to know what happened to my father in 1924," says Winston-Rogers. "He must be the best place to start. Find him."

If the players want extra time to get to now each other's characters, encourage them to do that while the characters are packing, prepping, and traveling.

So, just when the Investigators have had a chance to absorb Henslowe's letters, fully converse with Janet Winston-Rogers, and get a sense of each other, it's time to get the adventure moving by departing for Savannah.



(Excerpts from Douglas Henslowe's Letters with dates and return addresses.)

January 11th, 1925 (513 West Henry Street):
"Please write back with your account of what happened. My doctors do not believe me."

June 16th, 1926 (513 West Henry Street):
"Don't worry, I haven't told them where any of this was. And I won't."

July 6th, 1927 (513 West Henry Street):
"Tell me they didn't die for nothing. Tell me they didn't get away with it."

February 19th, 1929 (513 West Henry Street):
"Perhaps if they'd followed me out of there, they'd still be alive."

September 27th, 1930 (513 West Henry Street):
"If you'd just send word, telling your version of events, perhaps the doctors would believe you. And me."

October 13th, 1931 (513 West Henry Street):
"Are you ignoring me, or is this your way of trying to help me? Your silence echoes. I think you're trying to tell me something."

March 13th, 1933 (23 Old Hope Road):
"Things are better here. I think maybe I'm free of that day at last."

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"I'm sorry I haven't left you in peace, my old friend. I won't write again."

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December 29th, 1936 (513 West Henry Street):
"Do you even remember what happened anymore? I wonder if you've even opened my

Savannah, Georgia, USA

"Ultimate horror often paralyses memory in a merciful way."

— "The Rats in the Walls"

This first Locale may be the Investigators' first time working together. Give the players time to establish and convey their characters to each other. Savannah, by no accident, is a Locale wherein the Investigators are called upon to introduce themselves to people, giving them a chance to honestly (or deceitfully) present who they are at the start of this investigation. (This may become especially meaningful when compared to any surviving Investigators in the campaign's epilogue.)

Savannah's characteristic heat and languid style get things off to a relaxed but mysterious start. Work the throttle as you like, though, adding in the provided fight scenes if you wish or letting things get off to a slow boil otherwise. This Locale is a chance to find some footing and ease into the uneasy truths hidden within.

The Savannah Spine

The scenes in this part of Act One might not unfold in the order presented here, especially if the Investigators decide to be trespassers and housebreakers. So it goes. Adjusting the order of these scenes is easy enough, since most scenes are triggered either by where the Investigators go or your own narrative instinct.

The spine of these Savannah scenes is simple: the Investigators move from one rather open area of exploration and investigation to another, most likely beginning with Joy Grove sanitarium and moving on to the Henslowe estate. Douglas Henslowe's letters lead to the Joy Grove sanitarium, where the Investigators get a tour, conduct some interviews, and eventually receive a signed letter from Douglas Henslowe that allows them proper entry to the Henslowe estate. There they solve a puzzle left behind by Douglas Henslowe and locate his hidden sketchbook and the key to a safe deposit box where evidence of the 1924 investigation remains, out in Los Angeles.

Along the way, the Investigators learn some details about the 1924 Investigators and the cult they were combating. This is just the beginning of the investigation, though, so what they learn is merely enough to pique their curiosity and lead them toward the next leg of the investigation.

If the characters deviate from this trajectory, either guide them toward the meat of the story with characters like the estate groundskeeper, Mr. Currothers, or mine the available scenes for any information the Investigators need to continue on in their alternate course. Whether they're in Henslowe's study with kind permission or via stealth, they'll be able to uncover the necessary clues to proceed ahead.

Environs: The City of Savannah

Savannah is an aged and waning city in the 1930s. Once the capital of the colony of Georgia and a prized strategic locale during the American Civil War, in the Thirties, Savannah doesn't even rank in the top 100 most populous cities in the country. In one form or another, the city has been an important part of Georgia history since 1733, when the city and the colony were founded, but in the 1930s the city's importance has diminished outside of its status as a shipping center.

Its vital shipwright businesses suffer as Georgian ingredients for the preservation of wooden hulls become obsolete in the face of predominantly iron ships. Still, huge volumes of cotton ship out of Savannah every year bound for the world at large.

As new industries come to Savannah in the 20th century for its ports and waterways, they set up shop outside of the city center. As workers come to the city throughout the 1930s in search of jobs, they settle nearby the factories where they work. The city-center population dwindles.

The city itself is built around dozens of handsome park-like squares, some large and some small, lined with brick row houses, churches, and pubs. Trees abound. Brick streets and wrought-iron gates divide the city center into a few discrete districts, each with their own squares. By 1934 some of these

parks are bisected by fire lanes and new streets to facilitate speedy travel throughout the city.

Buildings — some historic, some merely old — are torn down to make room for parking lots and new construction. The lack of demand for new construction in the city center, due to its shrinking population, will leave many buildings standing long enough to become handsomely historic in later years. So much of the city's distinctive character remains in the gaslights and bricks and wrought-iron fixtures. Yet tourism is not the business it will become later in the 20th century; the Investigators stand out simply by flying into the city in a fancy plane.

Atmosphere

This story takes the Investigators from a rundown part of the city center, where historic Victorian buildings are hanging onto life and function or lying dormant and awaiting condemnation, out to the swamps southeast of the city itself, where handsome country roads get swallowed by moss and muddy water. These locations were selected to evoke two different aspects of the city's character (and the Henslowe estate was placed out away from the city to increase the chance that the characters might be there at night).

These are not quite indicative locations for the city at large, but these are evocative settings for the character of the city that should emerge in a tale of suspense and mystery. When in doubt, draw on the mood of the city to create atmosphere and do not sweat details that would slow down play. Savannah was cast in an important role in this campaign not because of its population size or annual rainfall, but because of its atmosphere, character, and style.

Use the following "stock footage" descriptions to help bring Savannah to life for your players without simply reciting a spiel. Mix these into your own descriptions during play or paraphrase as needed.

In the City

- Savannah by Day I: The asphalt streets are eroded away here, revealing the old cobbles below. Weeds jut up through cracks in the pavement, implying the earth underneath it all.

- Savannah by Day II: The smell of the harbor comes to you through the humid air, so thick with people's sweat that it feels like you could wring the sky itself out and make it rain.

- Savannah by Day III: Red-brick antebellum buildings hide behind a veil of ivy and moss, their wrought-iron fixtures jutting out like ragged swords. Here and there, broken windows betray buildings that are empty inside.

- Savannah by Night I: A humid fog clings to the ground here, filling the narrow lanes between the buildings, weird shapes tangling in the middle distance as flapping flags and hanging moss cast their shadows into the night.

- Savannah by Night II: Long shadows flickering out from sputtering gas lamps cut across the warm yellow glow spilling out from a homey window. The city is divided into slices of light and bands of darkness, of wrought-iron bars and illuminated glass.

- Savannah by Night III: The night is hot and wet, like the inside of a mouth. A dead newspaper slips down the street on an all-but-imperceptible gust of warm wind. The sound of it brushing against the bricks is like a whisper in a foreign tongue.

In the Country

- Driving the Roads I: On either side of the road, branches reach out, dripping with Spanish moss, grasping for the meager sunlight that makes it out of the overcast sky and through the arched trees above. Everything smells wet and still, like the trees were sweating.

- Driving the Roads II: The red dirt road meanders beneath the sagging moss, the way ahead like a tunnel through the swamp, dappled with patches of light, choked with biting gnats. You can smell the clay and mud on the tires.

- Covered Bridge: The road comes to a covered bridge, like a tunnel of wood, spanning a stretch of green water and brown reeds. Logs, or maybe gators, float beneath the bridge. Inside, webs as thick as muslin span the nooks and corners.

- Intersection: Here the road forks. That way, the pavement continues on south. This way, the road turns to packed clay. At the fork, beneath a leaning, rusted street sign, a brown dog with mange lies sprawled in the heat, watching you move.



Wardrobe and Appearance

In each Locale, the Investigators have an opportunity to redefine their wardrobe for the adventure at hand. Some Locales may not require a major shift in style — going from one American city to another may not demand a new suit, depending on the character's Credit Rating — but each one is an opportunity to stop and check in with the PCs and see how or if their appearance is changing over the course of the campaign.

Does a character go from fancy suits to simple and functional attire as the campaign unfolds? Does another develop fancier tastes as a result of his time in the employ of Janet Winston-Rogers? Does a character need a cane for a while after the beating he takes on the case? Sometimes the wardrobe change is just a chance to describe a new facet of the same stoic character.

In Savannah, polite society calls for a tie and a hat, under normal circumstances, but the suit jacket may be optional, given the heat. Light-colored suits are not the fashion don'ts here that they may be in Northern circles. Suspenders, rolled-up sleeves, and a handkerchief for wiping a sweaty brow make up one good look. A respectable dress in tasteful colors can paint a woman as polite or proper, while slacks and high boots with a tailored jacket and a jaunty hat can make a woman seem fashion forward.

The heat and the humidity are likely to be big parts of the fashion here, though. People must balance comfort with proper garb. Remind players about the heat and humidity, about the sweat running down their necks and backs, and ask them if they're loosening their ties or tipping back their hats in the heat.



The Scenes

To help you plan, here's an overview of the scene settings in Savannah.

Joy Grove

The scenes set at Joy Grove establish important backstory details and thematic elements for the campaign. Here the Investigators meet actual participants in the 1924 happenings and perhaps glean a bit about their pasts and present. Two survivors from that night in 1924 are kept as patients at Joy Grove: Douglas Henslowe, the Investigator, and Edgar Job, the cultist.

These scenes unfold as the Investigators move through the hospital and interview Henslowe and Job. During their visit, the Investigators have opportunities to demonstrate their compassion and their strength, not to mention their capacity for skullduggery.

Douglas Henslowe confides in the characters — the first people to believe that he saw what he saw, presumably, in over ten years — that he hid evidence of the 1924 events on the grounds of his familial estate outside of Savannah. This sends them to…

The Henslowe Estate

The scenes set at the Henslowe estate are triggered, for the most part, by the Investigators' movements around the area.

Most of these scenes presume the Investigators have been to Joy Grove and gotten Douglas Henslowe's permission to poke around the estate. Once the characters are on the grounds, they're able to glean the clues that make locating Douglas Henslowe's cache of evidence possible. After that, they just need to do some literal digging and they'll have Douglas Henslowe's sketchbook and safe deposit box key. With that in hand, they're ready to head of to Los Angeles.

Antagonist Reactions

At the end of this Locale we offer three antagonist-reaction scenes to use to add spice, mystery, and menace to your story. These scenes are triggered either by the Investigators' overall progress in the story (e.g., after they successfully locate Douglas Henslowe's sketchbook) or by your sense of dramatic timing. If you want an extra action scene to unfold during the investigation, play "The Thugs." To add an eerie bit of menace to the proceedings, play "Dreaming of Mouths." These scenes contain further notes on when best to deploy them. Use your judgment.





1. Arrival in Savannah

Scene Type: Intro / Core

Lead-ins: Act One, "The Mysterious Benefactor," p. 45.

Summary: The Investigators arrive in Savannah — getting a sense of the Locale's character and revealing a bit of their own. Some simple research reveals a bit more about the addresses on Douglas Henslowe's letters.

Core Clue: The address at 513 West Henry Street is Joy Grove sanitarium, located on a hill just outside Savannah's Victorian District - West. (Library Use or a simple search at any library in the city.)

Core Clue: The address at 23 Old Hope Road is the Henslowe family estate, located in the swamps southeast of Savannah proper on the so-called Moss Island Peninsula. (Library Use or a simple search at any library in the city.)



The Investigators presumably arrive via Janet Winston-Rogers's plane, landing at Hunter Field, just a few miles outside of town, and arriving in the city proper by cab or rented car.

The purpose of this scene is simply to orient the Investigators in Savannah quickly and easily before they move on to Joy Grove or the Henslowe estate. As such, their investigations into the city at large, or their search for a library, can be easily glossed over or handled with a simple montage. The meat of this Locale is elsewhere.

Library Use or a simple search at the local library reveals something about each of Douglas Henslowe's addresses. The first — 513 West Henry Street — is the address of Joy Grove sanitarium, a 40-year-old mental institution housed in a huge antebellum hospital building.

A 1-point Library Use spend reveals that the head of the hospital, Dr. Lawrence Teake, is on the verge of retirement. His protégé, Dr. Jonathan Keaton, is the heir apparent, according to a recent newspaper clipping.

Library Use or a simple search determines that the second address — 23 Old Hope Road — is the Henslowe family mansion and grounds, located some 13 miles southeast of the city.

A 1-point Library Use spend discovers that the Henslowe estate is on land that's been in the Henslowe family since 1801, at least, on a stretch of ground that's ordinarily a peninsula but sometimes an island, depending on rainfall. It's called the Moss Island Peninsula. The estate is all that remains of a collection of farms and plantations that once operated in the Henslowe name. It is still home to Virginia Henslowe, who, at 89 years old, must be Douglas's mother.

Attempts to use Streetwise, Cop Talk, or Oral History on the streets of Savannah to drum up clues about Joy Grove or the Henslowes don't reveal much — both the sanitarium and the plantation are out of the public eye and neither has much fame or infamy. A 1-point Streetwise or Cop Talk spend, however, reveals that Joy Grove has had a few nurses and orderlies get arrested for stealing at the hospital. "That place isn't exactly a racket," says the contact, "but some of the staff is crooked, for sure."

Lodging and Transport

This is the first time the Investigators arrive in a new Locale during the campaign, so use this opportunity to ask the players a few questions about where the PCs set up shop, how they get around (a hired car, perhaps?), and whether or not they let Frank Kearns in on what they're doing. Some of these details may not come up when you play out the Savannah Locale, but you want to ask these questions now so that you can ask them later on, too, without arousing player suspicion. Don't only ask, "So, where are you staying while you're here?" right before you attack them where they sleep.

The airfield is little more than a few hangars and a parking lot, but finding a place for the plane is not only easy, but the responsibility of pilot Frank Kearns, so leave it to him to sort out. Hiring a car is easy if the Investigators are on Winston-Rogers's stipend or for anyone with a decent Credit Rating.

Where the Investigators stay while they're in Savannah may come up later (especially in the scene "The Thugs"), so get them to make that decision now. Do they stay in a nice hotel in the city center (Credit Rating 5+)? Do they get a motel on the edge of town? Do they split up based on their Credit Ratings? This is as much a roleplaying question as a tactical one.



2. Arrival at Joy Grove

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Following the 513 West Henry Street address to Joy Grove sanitarium (Savannah 1, "Arrival in Savannah," p. 55, or Savannah 8, "Southern Inhospitality," p. 64).

Summary: The Investigators meet the staff and possibly tour the grounds of Joy Grove sanitarium, learning a bit about Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job along the way.

Core Clue: Douglas Henslowe has been a patient at Joy Grove since 1924, in one capacity or another. Edgar Job reached the hospital later that same year. Douglas Henslowe was out of the hospital in 1932 and 1933, but Edgar has been in residence without interruption since 1924. (Medicine, Flattery, or Oral History used on Dr. Keaton.)



Joy Grove sanitarium is a hulking red-brick Victorian building with tall, narrow windows and Gothic details. Its blend of looming verticality and decorative details means it could have been anything from an imposing school to an artful factory in a past life, though in truth it has always been a hospital. Kudzu grows over half the building, choking out windows and holding the place like a green fist, pulling it down to earth.

The front of Joy Grove's ground floor is taken up with offices, file rooms, a locker room, a break room for the staff, laundry, and a kitchen. The back half consists of a cafeteria, common rooms, a game room, the dispensary, two interview rooms, and exam rooms, all separated from the front of the building by locked and barred gates. The remaining three floors are all treatment rooms, exam rooms, interview rooms, isolation rooms, and residential space for the patients.

Getting inside Joy Grove is easy — just walk in the front doors. Nurse Bethany Mae Hampton is working in the front office when the PCs arrive. Cute but not adorable, with a lopsided smile and big eyes, Nurse Hampton exudes a kind of sly wit and Southern charm. She banters if the PCs do. A 1-point Assess Honesty or Streetwise spend guesses that Nurse Hampton is out for herself more than the hospital — and that she's trying to cold read the Investigators.

If they make it clear that they're visiting a patient, she asks them to sign in and say who they're visiting. Once the name Douglas Henslowe is spoken, Dr. Keaton appears from a nearby room, his interest piqued.

Dr. Keaton is in his mid-forties, slender, bearded, and bookish, with salt-and-pepper hair. He speaks with great confidence and enthusiasm about his work, perhaps with a strange casualness, given his occupation. He seems as much like a salesman as a doctor. Assess Honesty reveals — soon if not immediately — that his confidence is practiced and only half real.

A visit with Douglas Henslowe is easy to arrange, because Henslowe is desperate for people to talk to (and Dr. Keaton is curious to witness the visit). Dr. Keaton is quick to let the PCs know that Edgar Job, another survivor of "the incident with Henslowe in 1924" is also in residence at Joy Grove. "He was one of the 'criminals' that Henslowe and his people were after — part of the cult that was attacked that night." If the Investigators want to interview Edgar Job, Dr. Keaton is game for that. "But only for a little while," he says. "I don't want Mr. Job getting too excited."

Keaton's Three Things

Tilts his head and nods when he listens. Puts a finger to his mouth when he thinks. Uses the royal "we" when talking about medicine.



Dr. Keaton is willing to let the Investigators see these patients, in part, because he wants to hear what Henslowe and Job tell people who aren't doctors or family — have the patients made real progress in getting past their haunted memories, he wonders. (Also, Dr. Keaton likes the attention he gets through his patients.)

It's not often that Dr. Keaton gets to talk shop about Douglas Henslowe or Edgar Job — two of his most personally fascinating patients — so he's only too happy to take this opportunity to do so. Dr. Keaton even offers to give the Investigators a tour of the hospital. "Before you meet Mr. Henslowe, why don't I introduce you to Joy Grove itself?" If they decline, he becomes more difficult to work with and doesn't allow an interview with Douglas Henslowe or Edgar Job unless a character uses Flattery to repair his ego or Bureaucracy to threaten to go over his head.

Before anyone can enter the residential wings or speak to a patient, though, Dr. Keaton asks that they sign mandatory waivers "in case the patients act out — it's bedlam, after all." A character with the Law ability recognizes the waiver as a standard legal tool and, reading it over, sees that the visitors are signing away their right to sue in the event of "shock, offense, assault, or battery." Anyone unwilling to sign is not admitted through the iron gates into the sanitarium.

The tour is short, but it's an opportunity to get information out of Dr. Keaton, who leads the tour, or from

2. Arrival at Joy Grove

Nurse Hampton, who stays behind with anyone that doesn't take the tour. (Investigators who remain behind may get a jump on the scene **"The Files,"** p. 62.) The tour consists only of the first two floors.

When Joy Grove opened, it was a shining example of Victorian medicine, meant to elevate the standard of care in Savannah. The building had all the impressive trappings of Victorian pride and all the looming grandeur of Victorian severity, but now it's dominated by things like the following details:

- Oversized windows sealed with iron bars and overgrown with ivy
- Decorative light fixtures that resemble staring, accusing yellow eyes
- Elaborate skylights caked with years of grime and soot
- Fine tile work undermined by years of water damage and patient abuse
- Elegant arched corridors now choked by iron gates and grilles

That the building is overwhelmed and under-maintained is clear, but the Architecture or Craft abilities recognize the quality of the original construction and the sturdiness of the building despite years of relative neglect. History or Medicine recalls that changing medical practices, especially involving mental health, caused many hospitals to renovate and retrofit themselves after the turn of the century, and, of course, many donations and grants have dried up in recent years.

Still, Dr. Keaton is friendly and proud of his institution's work, "given our limited resources," and he gets even friendlier if the Investigators somehow reveal that they are working for the estate of Walter Winston (a name Dr. Keaton recognizes from Douglas Henslowe's letters). Dr. Keaton remembers Walter Winston's considerable wealth and is eager to cozy up to a potential benefactor. Name-dropping Walter Winston makes everything easier.

Medicine (to talk shop), Flattery, or Oral History gets Dr. Keaton to open up. He talks absently, interspersing his talk of Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job with opportunities to point out a portico or a painting of the hospital founder, Dr. Lawrence Teake ("He was here when the hospital first opened in 1897!"), or the renovated exam rooms on the ground floor (done up in soft white-fabric padded walls). He reveals that Douglas Henslowe has been a patient at Joy Grove since 1924, in one capacity or another. Edgar Job reached the hospital later that same year, so that Dr. Keaton could treat both patients (and satisfy his own curiosity about their "shared psychosis"), but Edgar has never left the hospital in the intervening years because he's been deemed a danger to himself and, possibly, to others. He's institutionalized in lieu of being in prison in California for two counts of armed robbery (in 1923) and for pleaing his way down to manslaughter for his actions on the night of August 13, 1924.

Douglas Henslowe isn't allowed to leave Joy Grove by court order. When last he was out, in 1932–33, he became obsessive and violent toward himself and others. He can be signed out on temporary leave only into the custody of his mother, Virginia Henslowe.

In Keaton's own words:

"I don't know exactly what happened to these men out in Los Angeles, but whatever it was, involving gunplay and murder and a fire, it was too much for them to internalize, so they've concocted elaborate stories that externalize their fear into some kind of terrible monster."

Dr. Keaton doesn't think either patient will ever recover from what they saw:

"These men are getting better, but at this point I doubt they'll ever be right again."

At some point, Dr. Keaton may leave the Investigators alone long enough for him to talk to a nurse about preparing Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job for their interviews, giving the PCs a bit of time to take in the hospital. (This is also a fine time to play the scene **"An Encounter with Culver,"** p. 57.)

A character with Bureaucracy sees that Dr. Keaton is not as powerful at the hospital as he would like to be or as much as he lets on. Until Dr. Teake retires or dies, Dr. Keaton has to do as he's told. Still, the hospital runs well enough.

Patients dwell in private but tiny rooms when they are not together in bland, off-white common areas, marred with water stains. They play cards, they read books, they line up in hallways to receive their medicines in little paper cups from the dispensary. A few patients yell or hit themselves or waggle fingers at each other or stare too long at the Investigators, but most of them seem either subdued or sedated.

On the way back to the administrative wing of the building for their interviews with Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job, the Investigators pass a patient's room where a man, looking out through the glass at them, draws his finger across his throat in the classic sign for impending death.

3. An Encounter with Culver

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: Taking the tour of Joy Grove (Savannah 2, "Arrival at Joy Grove," p. 55). Play this scene to add a brief action beat to the story and to show the kind of peril that dwells in the halls of Joy Grove.

Summary: The Investigators witness patient Fred Culver lashing out and perhaps intervene.



While the PCs are on the tour of Joy Grove, one of the patients — an unstable psychotic named Fred Culver — breaks free of an orderly's grip and comes for them. It happens fast. One moment, Culver is calmly in the hands of an orderly, and in the next he's got the orderly sprawled on the floor from a fist to the throat. Then Culver's on a beeline for the PCs.

If Dr. Keaton is on this part of the tour, he attempts to stop Culver with words ("Stop this instant, Mr. Culver!") and then yells for more orderlies.

This is a chance for a tough PC, with points in Scuffling, to shine. In this brief scuffle, Culver is obviously the aggressor. He goes after whatever PC you like, throwing himself against and biting his target on the arms and face. (Culver only has a round or two to act in this scene, so don't be shy with his Scuffling points — spend all that you need to guarantee a hit on the first targeted character.)

Once every Investigator has had a chance to respond, the orderlies show up with a loaded syringe and heavy-duty restraints. They take Culver down and subdue him if the Investigators haven't done it already. Alternately, Culver runs just before the orderlies arrive and you can engage the PCs in a short chase through this wing of the hospital. Culver can't get out of the ward, but he can knock other patients around and cause some damage along the way.

The purpose here is twofold: to give some Investigators a chance to be tough and to start in with the theme of biting mouths. To that end, no matter how much damage Culver does with his bite (he has an unusually strong bite for a human), he leaves a nasty bruise and an ugly mark behind, at the least — something for the character in question to linger on and fret about.

If Culver deals three or more points of damage to a target, that wound becomes a leveraged clue (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 194) that can be used against Dr. Keaton in "The Files" to distract or coerce him; it's worth as much as a 1-point spend with one of the abilities listed in that scene. Even with the waivers the PCs signed, Dr. Keaton can't be too careful.

Remember that suffering an attack from a human opponent with intent to do serious harm calls for a 2-point Stability test. If Culver intends to kill (which he may, at your discretion), it is a 3-point Stability test.

Fred Culver

Three Things: Hefty, balding, ham fisted with wild eyes and yellow, crooked teeth. Quicker than he looks. Bites at the air around him.

Athletics 5, Fleeing 5, Health 5, Scuffling 5

Weapon: −1 (bite)

4. Spying on Bedlam

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Takes place any time during the Investigators' visit to Joy Grove, but especially if one of them lingers alone, wanders off, is otherwise separated from the group, or when the Investigators are left alone somewhere as a group (perhaps while Dr. Keaton arranges for the interviews). Alternately, it takes place when the Investigators examine Edgar Job's room.

Summary: One or more of the Investigators catch sight of something in the water-damaged walls of the sanitarium: a yellow-toothed mouth, forming silent words. But the image is fleeting and, quite possibly, imaginary.

Core Clue: Someone (specifically, Edgar Job and Douglas Henslowe) has been etching and painting mystical symbols on the walls to thwart scrying eyes. (Occult or Anthropology on the walls of Joy Grove.)



This scene dials up the weirdness and introduces the idea that Joy Grove sanitarium is under mystical surveillance. (It is. The Thing With a Thousand Mouths itself is monitoring what happens to Edgar Job, to whom its fate is mystically bound.)

If possible, use this scene with a PC who is alone in the residential areas of the hospital for some reason — someplace that Edgar Job might have access to (so, not the offices up front). Alternately, the scene works just fine if played out with the whole group of Investigators, even though it calls for only a single PC to notice the initial trigger for the scene: a mouth in the wall.

Select a PC without a rating in the Occult ability or, failing that, a PC with the Architecture or Craft ability. (Try not to select the character bitten by Fred Culver; you want to spread the oddity around.) The character is glancing at a particularly nasty bit of water damage on a nearby wall, near the ceiling, when he or she sees a portion of the damaged wall split into a mouth — a human-sized mouth with jaundiced lips and brown, broken teeth — and form inaudible words. (This calls for a 3-point Mythos Stability test.) Just as the Investigator reacts, the mouth shuts and thereby vanishes.

Attempts to investigate the wall discover peeling paint and crumbling plaster or tile, but no mouth. The water-damaged wall smells dank and is subtly sticky where it is damaged.

Being this close to the wall, however, reveals symbols etched into the plaster or tile, and marks painted on the wall using the water-damaged material as pigment. A character trained in Anthropology or Occult recognizes these as various symbols meant to thwart mystical scrying, the evil eye, and spells that spy magically from a distance. The symbols come from a mix of cultures and magical traditions. None of them constitute an actual spell in any meaningful capacity — they are more like vague warding graffiti.

Characters who search elsewhere for these symbols, or who inspect the walls and floors of Joy Grove for some other reason, discover these symbols in the interview room, in the common areas (e.g., the game room, the dining hall, the lounge), in Edgar Job's room, in Douglas Henslowe's room, and in the corridors that connect these areas with the common areas.

5. The Survivor

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Getting an interview with Douglas Henslowe (Savannah 2, "Arrival at Joy Grove," p. 55).

Summary: The Investigators conduct an interview with Douglas Henslowe, last survivor of the 1924 investigation.

Core Clue: Henslowe reveals what he can remember about the 1924 investigation and Investigators (described in detail below). (Oral History used on Douglas Henslowe.)

Core Clue: Henslowe shares what he knows about the cult (that they were depraved) and the thing they summoned (that Walter Winston called it The Thing With a Thousand Mouths). (Reassurance or Occult used on Douglas Henslowe.)

Core Clue: Henslowe confides that he has a notebook with more information hidden at his estate, as well as "a secret key." Henslowe writes the Investigators a note to take with them to the grounds to get access to the estate. (Flattery used on Douglas Henslowe.)

The interview with Douglas Henslowe most likely takes place in one of the hospital's interview exam rooms — a simple, cold space with three chairs, a table, and a barred window looking out into the hallway. It smells like chlorine in there. This is the space Dr. Keaton sets up for the interview.

Dr. Keaton intends to observe the interview, but he feels like he knows what Henslowe will say and so isn't as invested in shepherding Henslowe's answers (or in Henslowe's sustained recovery) as he is in Edgar Job's (see **Savannah 6, "The Summoner,"** p. 60).

Douglas Henslowe

Douglas Henslowe is out of shape, getting older, and losing his hair in the back. He's clean shaven, has good posture, but picks at his cuticles when he's thinking. He needs a haircut. He speaks with a bit of a Southern accent and uses long, drawn-out sentences. He doesn't like to be interrupted, especially not now that the day has come that he can talk about what happened.

Any bitterness he had when he woke up washed away when the Investigators showed up. If they don't take him seriously, though, the bile comes back.

Oral History gets Henslowe to talk about the good work he was doing back in 1924:

"We were traveling the country, hot on the trail of the cult that started all of this. We questioned people, gathered evidence, took pictures, traveled all over. We were like detectives, armed with our secret knowledge in… the occult. It was… an exciting time."

"We'd followed the drugs all the way across the country until we got to Los Angeles. That's where the bulk of our investigation took place. That's where everything terrible happened."

If asked, he can give a bit of information on each of his cohorts from the 1924 investigation:

"Walter Winston was a self-made man, a business man who got his start as a pharmacist, opened some drug stores, and made good money. He was our leader. It was he who gathered us together to battle the perversity in the world that this cult represented. He funded us, too. Good man. A good man."

(Age in 1924: 53.)

"Vince Stack was a tough fellow. Walter called him a "fixer." Good with a gun,

5. The Survivor

Hypnosis

Simply put, Dr. Keaton doesn't believe in it and isn't willing to subject his patients to it. That kind of deep exposure to the memories they've been trying to escape would undo years of work and potentially make both patients violently antisocial all over again.

The real reason to avoid Hypnosis in these scenes is to leave enough fuzziness behind in these interviews for the players to imagine horrific or human details in the spaces left behind (and to leave things to investigate in Los Angeles). The mystery of what went down in 1924 is bigger than these two men. So, at the risk of wasting an Investigator's points in the ability, Hypnosis is best avoided in these interviews so that the players don't have to be given a made-up psychobabble answer for why it doesn't work.

Just in case, here's a made-up psychobabble answer for why it doesn't work:

The medications and therapies that Dr. Keaton has prescribed for Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job have completely detached these men from their memories. They can still summon them up with some work, but not with the clarity to relive them, as hypnosis calls for. With these patients, hypnosis would result in little more than a detached, heavily guided interview — no new information would be gleaned.

More to the point, neither patient is truly willing, and hypnosis subjects must be willing.



good with his hands, always down to business, always ready with a drink. He's the one who waded right in there, that night, and brought hell to some of those cultists with his shotgun."

(Age in 1924: 40s.)

"Katherine Clark, such a sharp girl. She was our archivist, camerawoman, and record keeper. She hated that something like that cult could operate in secret, that people would cover up something so vile instead of revealing it for what it was, I think. Yet she's the one who got close enough to it all to get us… photographs. And she's the one who caught wind of what was happening that night in '24. She died that night."

(Age in 1924: Mid-20s.)

"And, of course, F.C. Kullman was Walter's expert in the occult. Apparently he was known far and wide for his expertise, back in the day. Walter had to pay him quite a bit to come with us out to Los Angeles, as I recall. A bit of a stick in the mud, that fellow, but bright as can be. Stuck in a wheelchair, too, but a can-do attitude."

(Age in 1924: 50s. Full name: Franklin Cormac Kullman)

Henslowe continues:

"Walter was the brains of our little band. He and F.C. did the research into what that cult was planning — into the summoning — and determined that they were using drug monies to fund their operation. It was they who figured out that the cult was already in contact with that dreadful thing, the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, and were planning to summon it, or an incarnation of it, to that barn outside Los Angeles."

"We rushed out to the barn as soon as we got word that so many of the cultists were meeting up out there. Walter said that the stars were right that night, too. Whatever that means. So we rushed out there with guns and homemade firebombs to put a stop to it. To… save the world."

"And a lot of people died that night…"

"It was a horrific fire. And there was a shootout. When that Thing began tearing people apart… people were running and screaming and throwing themselves into the fire and… into our line of fire. I know I shot some people that night. Probably killed them. I…"

"Then the Thing came for us and I saw Walter panic — I'd never seen him panic — and then all I know is that I was bolting through the high grasses with the fire behind me. Like a coward. Like a damned coward."

A bit of Reassurance ("There's nothing you could've done…") or even Occult ("Such monsters are beyond our mortal ken…") gets him to open back up:

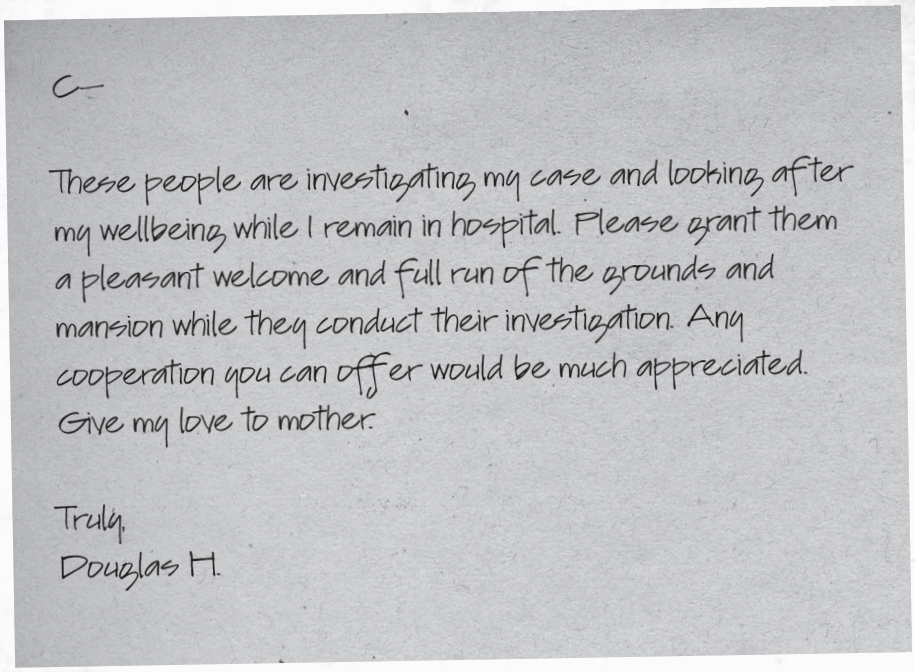
"It was the cult's fault. They were depraved. They were fornicating in the name of their wicked god, in groups. They did drugs I've never even heard of and hurt each other for sport. They were monsters."

Flattery ("You did good work, Mr. Henslowe…"), an interest in continuing the investigation (which Henslowe takes as flattery), or even just positive attention gets him to offer up concrete evidence of what happened back then:

"I hid my notebook away with a secret key to understanding more of what was going on back then. And what is almost certainly still going on, since we failed."

"You want to know where it is? Ask Frank Hickering, back at my estate."

"Take this note and give it to the groundskeeper at the house on Old Hope road. He'll let you look around."



C—

These people are investigating my case and looking after my wellbeing while I remain in hospital. Please grant them a pleasant welcome and full run of the grounds and mansion while they conduct their investigation. Any cooperation you can offer would be much appreciated. Give my love to mother.

Truly,
Douglas H.

Playing Henslowe and Job

Specific advice on the portrayal of these characters proves difficult to give. You know your audience and collaborators — the players — better than we do. One group's sympathetically complex cultist in search of peace may be another's pathetic lost cause. What we can do is tell you where to take aim.

For Henslowe, the survivor, aim your portrayal so that your players are comfortable leaving him where he is or, at least, resigned to his fate. Henslowe wanted to be a good guy, an adventurer, a savior of lives… and this is how it's turned out for him. Is it fair or not? Why is he in Joy Grove while Walter Winston got to live out his days without iron bars and orderlies? These are open questions, left to the players and their characters to consider. Your job is to dramatize the question, to make Henslowe a little sad, a little unsettling, and a little enlightening. Play him earnest. He's a little afraid of himself and the outside world and wonders if he'll ever be able to get out. Seeing that someone is finally taking up the task of finishing his work, though, gives him hope.

For Job, the former summoner, aim your portrayal so that your players are a little wary of him, maybe even happy to leave him in this place since some danger may still lurk beneath the pathos. Job is a damaged person paying a price for the dangerous and immoral company he kept in the past. Can he be reformed? Does he deserve pity or scorn? More open questions, left to the players and their characters to consider.

Know, though, that how the characters treat Job has major ramifications later on in the campaign, so think about how Job reacts to the PCs' attitudes. Do they make him feel better or worse? Do they try to heal him for helping them or break him open to find out what he knows? Do they make him think the world is worth saving? Don't play all of your cards with Job in this part of the campaign, though — make notes for yourself to use later on.

For both characters, remember that they are yours to adapt. Make them compelling for the players and their characters, build them out to react to the specifics of your play through the campaign, and you'll do fine.

6. The Summoner

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Getting an interview with Edgar Job (Savannah 2, "Arrival at Joy Grove," p. 55).

Summary: The Investigators conduct their interview with Edgar Job, a survivor of the 1924 cult.

Core Clue: Job recalls a little bit about the cult itself, but his memory is a jumble of nightmarishly deformed images fogged out by medications. He remembers Echavarria's "crazy parties" full of sex and drugs. (Oral History used on Edgar Job.)

Core Clue: Job killed Vincent Stack, one of the 1924 Investigators, by stabbing him to death. Then Job fled the scene. (Bargain or Interrogation used on Edgar Job.)

Core Clue: Echavarria cast some kind of spell that night, on the cultists. "Or on me, at least." This was right before the summoning. (Flattery or Occult used on Edgar Job.)

Core Clue: Job only saw a glimpse of the thing they summoned before he fled amidst the gunplay and fire. It had "long, weird limbs and no head, but mouths, lots of mouths." (Reassurance used on Edgar Job.)

Edgar Job is a pathetic figure. Skinny, now, with stubble all over his face and scalp, he looks like a prisoner of war, but dressed in the white-scrubs uniform of the Joy Grove sanitarium patient. He smells like cigarettes and mouthwash. If allowed, he smokes all throughout the interview.

Dr. Keaton sets Edgar Job and the Investigators up in one of the hospital's interview exam rooms — either the

6. The Summoner

Dr. Keaton and the Interview

Unless the Investigators successfully get Dr. Keaton out of the interview room during their time with Edgar Job (perhaps by getting him to show off his files in "The Files" or by conducting both interviews at once), he meddles throughout the interview with Job. Here are some things he says:

- "It's okay, Edgar. You can answer."
- "You don't have to answer that if you don't want to."
- "Edgar? Is there anything else you remember?"
- "You didn't say you were going to ask such pointed questions."
- "Let's try not to focus on the supernatural or the make-believe in this interview, all right?"

same one in which they interviewed Douglas Henslowe or the room next door, if both interviews happen at once, for some reason — which has a table, three chairs, and a barred window looking out to the hallway. This scenery is good enough to make the Interrogation ability viable here, especially if Edgar Job thinks or knows the interrogator is police. (Edgar Job is very much aware that he got away with murder; he's expecting to pay for that one day yet.)

Job isn't sure what he can believe from those days leading up to the summoning; he thinks now that he was delusional then… but also that much of what happened, happened.

"Dr. Keaton doesn't want me to relive those days or, uh, to, uh… externalize my fears. He don't like me talking about monsters unless they're me."

This desire to not undo the progress he has made makes Edgar Job a difficult interview. He wants to be helpful, but he also doesn't want to unravel years and years of psychological progress he's made. Dr. Keaton feels the same way and is quick to interrupt during this interview.

To show how helpful Edgar Job is trying to be, but also how reticent he is about the night of the incident in 1924, have him respond to just about any ability used on him. For example, though he doesn't know all of the medicines he's on, he responds to attempts to Interpersonalize Medicine or Pharmacy by saying:

"I'm on nine different pills. They're not too big. Blue ones and red ones. Two capsules. The rest are, you know, they're pills."

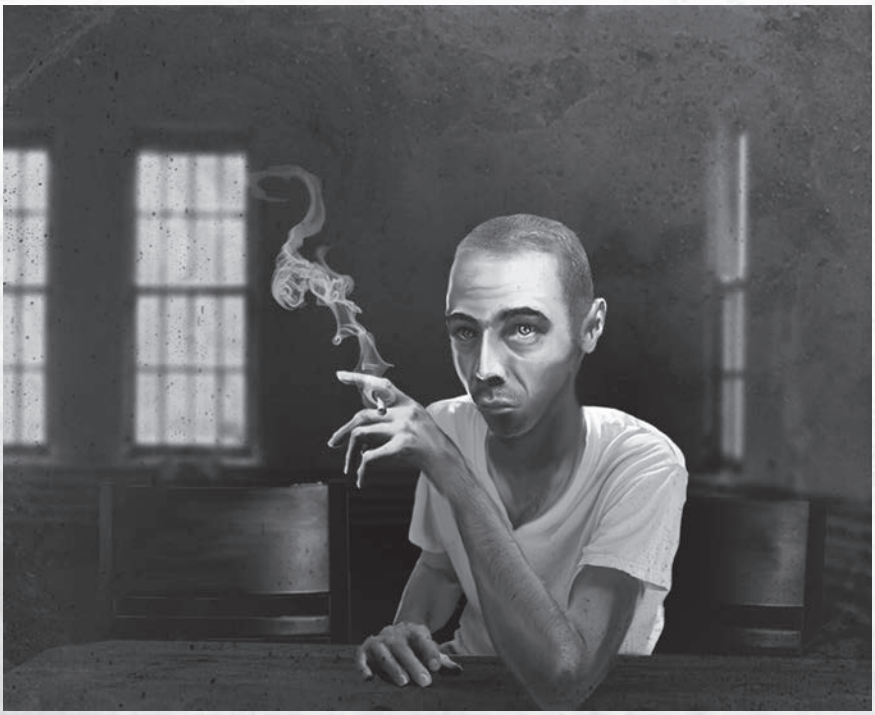
Different Interpersonal abilities elicit different bits of information from him, but on the off chance that not every ability is used, Dr. Keaton can coach Job into giving up more information. It's important that the Investigators get as much information out of Edgar Job as possible. Or, at least, as much of the information that he can provide as possible.

"I'm not supposed to ask about what happened that night. About Henslowe's friends. About Echavarria. I'm not ready yet."

To that end, mix and match the following anecdotes and clues to the questions the PCs ask, if you need to. Though Intimidation gets interrupted by Dr. Keaton with a call for orderlies, most likely, it might also shake loose a clue even though it's not listed as a relevant ability below.

Oral History draws out some of Job's early memories of his time in "the cult." Job recalls some details about the cult itself, but his memory is a jumble of deformed images fogged out by medications.

"We didn't really have a name. We were just Echavarria's, you know,



people. Cult is as good a word as anything, I guess."

"I met him around the time I was at UCLA. George introduced us, I think. George Avery? Ayers? I swear, I can hear his voice, why can't I remember this? It's all still hazy."

"That Echavarria, if that was his real name, had a hell of a library. Creepy books. He gave us ideas for things to do, sex things and things to say, out of those books."

"Threw damn crazy parties. Sex. Drugs. I was basically high from 1923 through August of '24. So my memory is not good. I remember, you know, a lot of sex. And the drugs Echavarria got us. Potent stuff."

"He promised us all. Promised me power. He said that: 'power.' Said we'd all get whatever we wanted in the new time, when Gol-Goroth was here. We called him the Fisher From Outside for some reason. This… isn't what I wanted."

A character with something to trade — like a pack of cigarettes or special privileges agreed to by Dr. Keaton — can Bargain with Job to get some information on what happened the night of the summoning. Alternately, Interrogation can get the same information out of him. Job stabbed Vincent Stack to death that night and he knows it. Then Job fled the scene.

"This one guy, with a shotgun, just… blew Echavarria away. Shot him right down. I stabbed that guy with Echavarria's knife, this big ugly knife, a few times. To get away. I was so sure he was going to kill me, too, and I had to get away from there."

"I know it was wrong. I see his face every night. I can't undo it, so it's best if I just move on. That's what Dr. Keaton says."

Either Flattery (perhaps used to imply that Edgar Job is somehow special) or Occult (used to commiserate with him) gets the clue that Echavarria cast some kind of spell that night, on the cultists. That was right before the final summoning.

"Echavarria put spells on us. Or on me, anyway. The night of the summoning. This spell, I guess it was kind of a big deal. He put it on me the night of the summoning, right before the Fisher, or, or, the Thing, showed up. I don't know what it was supposed to do, but I survived, so… maybe that's something."

With a bit of Reassurance that he won't be judged or mocked, Job can be convinced to describe the thing they summoned. He only saw a glimpse of it before he fled amidst the gunplay and fire.

"It had long, weird limbs and no head, but mouths, lots of mouths. I couldn't really make it out, and I didn't really try. I know I was screaming. Just screaming. And then I stabbed that guy, Vincent Stack, and ran the hell out of there into the fields."

"Whatever that thing was that we summoned… it wasn't what we were promised. It wasn't what he said it would be. And that thing is still out there."

What about the symbols on the walls?

[Half a smile] "We both do that, Henslowe and me. I know he watches us, the thing we summoned. But maybe he can't see us if we put up those marks. Echavarria used to have them in his library, showed them to me. That's how I learned that it's sometimes called 'the Thing With a Thousand Mouths,' too. These old things, they have a lot of names."

7. The Files

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-ins: Attempting to gain access to Dr. Keaton's files (Savannah 2, "Arrival at Joy Grove," p. 55).

Summary: The Investigators — whether through skullduggery, flattery, or bribery — get access to Dr. Keaton's files and learn more about Henslowe and Job.

Clue: Henslowe and Job are on medications that keep them in a fog. (Medicine or Pharmacy.)

Clue: Henslowe and Job have both undergone "confrontation therapy," in which they are put in the same room together, seemingly by chance, and allowed to interact. (Simple search.)

Clue: Dr. Keaton is planning on writing a book on Henslowe and Job and their "richly intertwined delusions and psychoses." (Simple search.)

Clue: The Henslowe monies are paying not just for Henslowe's treatment but for Job's as well — and this isn't being reported to the Henslowes. The money from the State of California ran out in 1931. (Accounting.)

This scene describes what the Investigators can learn by getting access to Dr. Keaton's notes or files on Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job. Getting that access requires some extra effort on the PCs' part, as Dr. Keaton doesn't open up patient files to random visitors (and he's not altogether proud of the information within these files).

Also, note that none of the clues in this scene are core clues essential to the investigation of the 1924 summoning events. Rather, these are humanizing details that reveal more

7. The Files

Sneaking Around

Exactly how hard it is to use Stealth or Filch or even Disguise to get into Dr. Keaton's office depends on you. If this sequence is being played out to give an otherwise-bored player something to do, a few simple rolls may be all it takes; call for two or three rolls at Difficulty 4. If this sequence is meant to reward a concerted effort on the part of suspicious players, a single quick roll to resolve the action might be enough; call for one roll at Difficulty 5 (and remember the rules for piggybacking on p. 57 of *Trail of Cthulhu*).

By day, while the hospital is open and busy and orderlies are distracted, reaching the office without arousing suspicion is probably just a Difficulty 4 Stealth test. If you want to make things tenser, a custodian comes by to collect garbage from the office while a character is there, requiring a Difficulty 5 test (of Stealth or Disguise, perhaps) to avoid being caught outright. Getting back out is another Difficulty 4 Stealth test.

At night, these tests increase to Difficulty 5 as the orderlies patrol the halls looking for curfew-breakers. (Anyone with the Medicine or Bureaucracy ability realizes that getting around is actually easier during the day, thanks to the busy corridors and lack of curfew.) The Locksmith ability is essential to gaining access at night. A 1-point Locksmith spend plus the Stealth test to get in and out make for plenty of hurdles for the nonessential information in these files.



about Dr. Keaton, Douglas Henslowe, and Edgar Job, and their ongoing lives at Joy Grove. Still, this information may be useful for exerting influence on Keaton, Henslowe, or Job (see "Consequences," below).

To get into Dr. Keaton's files requires a bit of persuasion or skullduggery. A 2-point Bureaucracy, Flattery, or Medicine spend (or a combination of any two abilities) on Dr. Keaton himself is enough to convince him to open up his files to an Investigator's eyes. Two characters can divide the point cost between themselves to get them both access to the scene. Additional characters must use one of the same abilities that is paying for the first two characters' access — an actual spend isn't necessary, just rating points in the relevant ability. So, if two characters use Medicine and Flattery to get into this scene ("I'm very curious about the dosage history of these two patients, Dr. Keaton, and would love to see how you've managed such capable care of such difficult patients…"), other characters can play along if they have rating points in the Medicine or Flattery abilities.

Dr. Keaton takes the eligible PCs into his office and makes small talk while they peruse his files.

Alternately, a 2-point Bargain, Credit Rating, or Streetwise spend (or a combination of the two) on Bethany Mae Hampton, the nurse, gets a character access to Dr. Keaton's office while he is off doing something else, like leading the tour or monitoring an interview. Each character who wants into Dr. Keaton's office in this way must add a point to the expenditure — Nurse Hampton doesn't want more than two people in there, lest she get caught. "If you're caught in there," she says, "you're on your own."

Other attempts to get into Dr. Keaton's files may also be viable, depending on what your players devise. What's important is that this scene rewards either a two-point spend (Intimidation and Locksmith are other options) or a clever effort to use Stealth or Filch to access the office or lift a file from Dr. Keaton's clipboard while he's distracted.

However the PCs win access, the same information is available. You may award some or all of this information, depending on how much time the PCs have to read the files without getting caught or how much background information you want in play for these NPCs.

Medicine or **Pharmacy** recognizes the medications that Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job are on and what they do: they relax and subdue the patient, cause grogginess, and generally make the user more pliant and his memories fuzzy. These are not uncommonly heavy doses or unusual medications, but it's clear that Dr. Keaton has Henslowe and Job disoriented so that they aren't overwhelmed by their memories.

A simple search of the files reveals that Douglas Henslowe and Edgar Job have both undergone "confrontation therapy," in which they are put in the same room together, seemingly by chance, and allowed to interact. When they are on their medications, these confrontations amount to little more than "a vague recollection of wary anger" and "a desire by both patients to end the encounter," in Dr. Keaton's words. When the patients were allowed to interact off their medications, they "eyed each other angrily" and "E.J. rushed D.H. once, screaming 'you tried to kill me but I'm still here' over and over."

A simple search of the files also reveals that Dr. Keaton is planning on writing a book on Henslowe and Job and their "richly intertwined delusions and psychoses." Or, Keaton writes, "maybe just a chapter?" A note in the margin says "could be my Glimpse of Madness," which Anthropology recognizes as

a sensationalistic ethnography of a sanitarium in California.

A note in Edgar Job's file says that Dr. Keaton wrote a letter to the State of California in 1931 petitioning to keep Edgar Job in treatment in Savannah, "at Joy Grove's expense," rather than transport him to prison in California. A perfunctory reply letter from the State of California, also kept in Edgar Job's file, agrees to leave Job where he is "for as long as Joy Grove can afford to keep him."

Through the lens of Accounting, Dr. Keaton's files make it is clear that Henslowe monies are paying not just for Douglas Henslowe's treatment but for Edgar Job's as well — and this isn't being reported to the Henslowes. Money from the State of California to keep Edgar Job in treatment ran out in 1931.

Consequences

What are the consequences of getting and having the information in these files?

If a character is caught in Dr. Keaton's office without permission, that character may be immediately thrown out of the sanitarium by big, strong orderlies. Dr. Keaton threatens to call the police "if you ever come back here!" Or not. Being caught may be an opportunity for a Bargain spend ("How about you calm down, Dr. Keaton, and I don't tell Henslowe where his money is going") or some other expenditure to avoid the consequences.

This is important: The likelihood of actually getting caught, and the consequences for it, depend on when this scene plays out. If this is what one character is doing while another is interviewing Douglas Henslowe, go easy. You don't want to throw anyone out while Henslowe is sharing vital clues. Simply don't catch the character in the act — no one comes by Keaton's office or notices Keaton's missing clipboard unless you say so.

Alternately, this scene might make for a great ending to the Investigators' visit, a suspenseful climax to this part of the Locale. Getting thrown out, after they've learned everything, might make things interesting if they ever try to come back (like, say, in Act Three).

What the Investigators do with the information they've learned is up to them. They might attempt to use it to humiliate Dr. Keaton or leverage it to get more time to interview Edgar Job. They might try to use it to persuade Douglas Henslowe to leave the institution (which would require a lengthy appeals process with city of Savannah lawyers). Ultimately, the consequences of revealing this information are up to you and the players — reward them for digging these clues up and let them change the status quo at Joy Grove a bit if they like. They can see the consequences of their actions if they come back to Savannah later on.

8. Southern Inhospitality

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Arriving at the Henslowe estate without first acquiring permission from Douglas Henslowe to enter the grounds (Savannah 1, "Arrival in Savannah," p. 54).

Summary: The Investigators attempt to enter the Henslowe estate and are likely rebuffed by Currothers the groundskeeper or driven away by his dogs. Clever or stealthy characters may gain access, however, and press on with the investigation in secret.

Core Clue: No one enters the Henslowe estate without the permission of Douglas Henslowe or Mother Henslowe. Mother Henslowe isn't receiving visitors and Douglas Henslowe is a patient at Joy Grove sanitarium. (Oral History and Flattery, or Intimidation and Interrogation.)

If the Investigators visit the Henslowe estate before Joy Grove, they find the place unwelcoming. The grounds are surrounded on three sides by a six-foot-high stone wall capped with wrought-iron spikes. At the front, a shut wrought-iron gate blocks the driveway. Along one wall, a gardener's gate is rusted shut. In the back, the property sinks into swampland.

Everything has the wet soil smell of a marsh, of rotting wood and mud. Giant palmetto bugs flit through the air, tap-tap-tapping against windshields and windows. Spanish moss dangles from the trees. Leaves and seeds blow through the air.

At that front gate, there hangs a bell. Ring it and Currothers comes to shoo people off the property. "Visitors ain't

welcome here," he says. And, maybe later: "I know ye ain't invited, 'cause we ain't invited ya."

Currothers walks around with a pitchfork in his hands and three huge mutts at his heels. Each hound looks like it has some mastiff blood in its veins and none of them look friendly (because they're not).

Currothers's loyalty is to the Henslowe family, Mother Henslowe above all. He cannot be bribed, intimidated, or persuaded. Official police business (whether it's actually official or a product of Disguise) might work, but Currothers knows most of the sheriffs who work these fringes of Savannah, so the Difficulty for such a Disguise is at least 5. Currothers and Mother Henslowe are law-abiding folk, though, and give people they deem to be The Law freedom to go through Douglas Henslowe's things and to explore the property.

If the Investigators try to tackle the Henslowe estate mysteries before visiting Joy Grove, Mother Henslowe might appear on the estate grounds, almost like a ghost, and plead with the Investigators to see her son and "talk some sense back into his poor head."

If the Investigators go on with their investigation by sneaking into the Henslowe estate after being turned away at the gate, Currothers might catch an intruder in the house and, instead of getting nasty, simply lean in and confide: "If Mr. Henslowe puts his name to paper, saying you can be here, I don't have to call the police on you."

The dogs roam the estate at all hours, ready to chase off unwelcome visitors. Only if people enter through the main gate with his approval does Currothers shut up his dogs in the guest house, where Currothers lives.

Hostility, Disguise, and Other Crazy Plans

If the Investigators approach the Henslowe estate as something other than civil, humane Investigators — perhaps as thieves, as thugs, or in disguise — they find Currothers and Mother Henslowe to be pushovers. They respond to Interrogation and Intimidation by giving up the bare minimum amount of information necessary to make the Investigators go away. They give up core clues and little else. If necessary, Currothers takes a beating to protect Mother Henslowe — fighting until seriously wounded if he has to.

If they feel threatened, Currothers and Mother Henslowe send for the police as soon as the Investigators are gone. They may drive into Savannah and take up residence in a hotel for a few nights, until they feel safe again.

These are ordinary folks, living on the Henslowe grounds. The Investigators have ample opportunities in the future to show how tough they are; they should feel more like thugs and less like vigilantes for playing tough with these folk.

If the Investigators use abilities like Stealth or Disguise to accomplish the bulk of their investigation on the Henslowe grounds, they may miss out on honest but nonessential insights from Currothers and Mother Henslowe, but the vital core clues are still available to them. Being sneaky or maintaining a cover story just gives the Investigators more to worry about — like visibility and the truth — while conducting their investigation.



Currothers may call the police out to the estate to drive the trespassing Investigators off. How long the police take to arrive depends on how much time you want to give the Investigators to explore before pushing them back toward Joy Grove. The police might even say, "If it's Douglas Henslowe you're interested in, you might as well go to Joy Grove and see what you're getting into."

Currothers the Groundskeeper

Three Things: Tongues the spaces where teeth should be. Uses silence to make people uncomfortable. Starts nearly every sentence he can with the words "Well, way I figure it…"

Athletics 6, Driving 3, Firearms 4, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Weapons 4

Weapon: +1 (shotgun), +0 (pitchfork)

The Dogs: Bullet, Lucky, and Spike

Athletics 10, Health 4, Scuffling 8

Hit Threshold: 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (bite)

Stability Loss: +0

9. The Henslowe Mansion

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Entering the Henslowe estate house, either with permission (Savannah 5, "The Survivor," p. 58) or without (Savannah 8, "Southern Inhospitality," p. 64).

Summary: The Investigators get the barest of tours, led by Currothers, before being allowed to conduct their investigation more or less on their own, with Douglas Henslowe's blessing. Otherwise, they must sneak about like thieves.

Core Clue: The Henslowe estate is in sorry disrepair and Mother Henslowe is not long for this earth. (Accounting with a ledger found inside and Oral History with Currothers.)



(See **Savannah 8, "Southern Inhospitality,"** p. 64 for a description of the outside of the property.) Standing proud amidst the greenery and mud, the Henslowe mansion is a classic plantation house with tall, shuttered windows and towering columns ringing porches and balconies. From a distance, the house is shining white, but up close it is streaked with mud and moss stains and takes on a greenish tint from the sullen light through the heavy leaves.

It is not quite as big as its antebellum architecture makes it look from the outside.

The ground floor is made up of large high-ceilinged rooms with large windows and large fireplaces. There's a parlor, a main hall with stairwell, a kitchen, a dining room, a den, a servant's stairwell, and three porches. The kitchen smells of garbage. Bread lies molding on the counter. The dining room is stiff and still. The animal heads hung up in the den are layered with dust. The parlor furniture looks like it's never been sat on.

Currothers shows welcome characters around these rooms, in quick succession, before saying, "The grounds go south an' east, but you won't find much out there. Mother Henslowe is in her room at the top of the stairs. Try not to disturb her. I'll be in my cottage if you need me." Use of Oral History gets him to say only, "This was a great family, and long as Mother Henslowe's still around, they still treat me right. I don't know what that boy of hers is going to do. Day's coming when she won't be around no more. An' that'll be a sad day."

Then he leaves the characters to conduct their business.

An open barrel-top desk in the parlor has a ledger in plain sight, covering the years 1930 to present. Accounting recognizes that the Henslowe fortune has been badly hit in recent years, with almost no attempts made to restructure investments or recoup losses. In about five years, the Henslowes will be out of money.

The second storey contains Mother Henslowe's room (see **Savannah 10, "Mother Henslowe,"** p. 66), two empty servants' rooms, Douglas Henslowe's bedroom, Douglas Henslowe's study (see **Savannah 12, "Henslowe's Study,"** p. 68), and two balconies. The ceiling in Douglas Henslowe's bedroom is sagging. The servants' staircase is half rotten.

All throughout the house, paint is peeling, rugs are worn flat, bulbs are burnt out. The place smells of damp plaster, stale flowers, and cat boxes, plus the swamp smells coming in through open porch doors and screened-in windows.

10. Mother Henslowe

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Exploring Douglas Henslowe's home (Savannah 9, "The Henslowe Mansion," p. 66).

Summary: The Investigators learn a bit about Mother Henslowe and what she thinks happened with her "poor Douglas."

Core Clue: Douglas, during the period when he was out of the hospital, spent a lot of time in his study and some days "poking around the grounds with a shovel, a camera, and a ball of twine." (Reassurance of Mother Henslowe.)



Mother Henslowe is a sweet, half-senile octogenarian with a modest silver wig, a flowery housecoat, and a lovely drawl. She spends most of her time sitting up in bed reading or listening to the radio and petting her cat, Virgil. She almost certainly doesn't get out of bed to talk with the Investigators.

Most any polite Interpersonal ability gets Mother Henslowe's rote reply on the subject of her poor Douglas: Something happened to him out in California while he was away on business with "Mr. Walter Winston." Her boy was attacked by "hedonists and folk of loose morals," and he defended himself. "But what he saw in California was too terrible for him to tell his mother about, and it done drove him to the hospital. Perhaps for the rest of his days."

A bit of Reassurance gets her to talk a bit about the time when she thought her Douglas was going to recover, "back in '32, when he did come home for a few months." She knows that he wrote to Walter Winston, that he spent

most of his time holed up in his study, drawing and sketching, and that he would sometimes yell and holler. "It got that I was afraid of my own son. He had wounds on him, like cuts and bruises, that he couldn't explain. Then he took to wandering the property near dark, poking around the grounds with his shovel, his camera, and a ball of twine."

If petted, Virgil reacts sweetly at first and then suddenly bites.

Impolite discourse gets two free pardons; Mother Henslowe just pretends she hasn't heard the forceful or insulting tone. The third bit of attitude or sass, however, and she cries out her open window for Currothers. "I don't want to speak to these folk any more, Currothers! Get them out of here!"

Currothers shows up to end the interview but not to throw the Investigators out of the property, necessarily. He just thinks less of them. "What're you doing, sassin' an old lady like that?"



11. The Groundskeeper

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-ins: Meeting Currothers (Savannah 9, "The Henslowe Mansion," p. 66).

Summary: The Investigators engage Currothers in direct conversation, perhaps in his cottage behind the estate, and learn a bit about the Henslowe family history and the current state of affairs.

Whether the characters visit Currothers in his home — a cottage behind the mansion — or stop him before he gets too far away in "The Henslowe Mansion," they may eventually try to interview or investigate Currothers. This scene explores what happens when they do.

First, Currothers's cottage: It's a cramped, cluttered place, dominated by a worn-out easy chair and a console radio, on which he listens to sermons and ballgames. His three dogs hover ever about, growling at strangers as they sprawl across what little floor is available. The place is all hardwoods and layered, tattered rugs. Moths beat against bare bulbs. Fishing rods hang on hooks from the walls. Mounted fish take up the opposite wall.

Currothers himself is in his sixties but looks older. The way he dresses, in threadbare plaid shirts and big boots, makes him look ready to trudge out into the swamp at a moment's notice. His hair's a mess and he's missing teeth. His accent sometimes makes him hard to understand.

Asking about the dogs or using Outdoorsman (to work up some camaraderie) or Oral History reveals that Currothers doesn't go out into the grounds after dark anymore, for fear of gators. Something out there "ate up my Bluster, an' he was such a good dog."

Further Interpersonal abilities meet with little success. Reassurance, for example, discovers only that Currothers doesn't "think much of wishin' away our troubles. What's bad is bad, that's all." You can reward especially solid roleplaying during the interview with tidbits of Currothers's inner workings, but none of these are core clues:

- "I'll keep the grounds here for Mr. Henslowe, should he ever come home, but I guess that I'll die here one day, and that's jus' fine."
- "Mr. Henslowe, if you'll pardon me sayin', has always been an odd one. Artist. Distracted by a butterfly, he'd be, and no head for the work he'd had to do. Except when he come back from the hospital the first time, in '32 — he was real focused then, on that book he was making. And then he'd wander the grounds with that camera of his."
- "My father worked for the Henslowes, and if there were more Henslowes comin', I'd've roped my son into the job, too, but he works one of them factories in the city now."
- "John's my first name."

12. Henslowe's Study

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Scouring Douglas Henslowe's study for clues (Savannah 9, "The Henslowe Mansion," p. 66).

Summary: The Investigators find Henslowe's study just as it was left when he departed for Joy Grove the second time — it's a snapshot into his mind at the time and contains clues to the location of his buried notebook and "secret key."

Core Clue: Looking inside Douglas Henslowe's copy of *Communion Rites of Victorian Death Cults*, by Francis J. Hickering, yields a photograph of the back of the Henslowe estate house. Written on the photo's face is "#1" and, written on the back of the photo, a numbered list: "2. Grant, 3. John & Mary, 4. Zachariah & Millicent, 5. Back to one." (Library Use or a simple reference to Douglas Henslowe's earlier clue discovers the book and, hence, the photo.)

Core Clue: A simple search turns up a shovel, a flashlight, a camera, a ball of twine, a jar of blue ink, and an ink-stained brush. The ball of twine contains numerous ink stains punctuated with four tight knots of extra twine tied along its length. (Simple search.)



Easiest to find in the study, since they were left out in plain sight by Douglas Henslowe the day before he returned to Joy Grove, are the following objects: a shovel, a flashlight, a camera, a ball of twine, a jar of blue ink, and a brush stained with blue ink.

The shovel and the flashlight are caked with dried mud. The camera is in good working order, but needs film. The jar of ink is dried shut, and the brush is dried to the point of uselessness. For the ball of twine, see below.

Douglas Henslowe's study also contains a sizeable library of books on anthropology, archaeology, business, American finance, art, art history, and the occult. If the Investigators have spoken to Douglas Henslowe at Joy Grove, Library Use or a simple search detects a familiar name amid the book spines: Francis J. Hickering. His name is on the spine of *Communion Rites of Victorian Death Cults*. (An Investigator versed in the Occult recognizes it as the watered-down 1912 edition, not the rarer and grotesque 1909 edition.) The book is concerned with rituals for communion with powerful spirits (and other vaguely defined beings) and with ritual sacrifice.

Inspecting the book reveals a photograph tucked into the front cover (see facing page).

The Ball of Twine

The ball of twine is marked throughout its length of twine with blue ink marks in little clusters a foot or more apart, with each cluster separated by several feet of clean twine. Each stretch of clean twine is marked by a bit of tightly knotted twine well past the halfway point between ink stains. This divides the twine either into five clusters of ink marks or into four lengths of clean twine, with each length marked by a knot.

(If the players go so far as to measure the twine, perhaps using a tape measure from Henslowe's study, tell them this: "You now have accurate measurements of the length of twine and the space between marks and knots." They can use this information as a clue in the scene "Digging in the Dark" if they find it useful, but the specific lengths and measurements may only serve to create pedantry and confusion at the game table if offered in actual detail.)

The Photograph

The front of the photograph is a low-contrast image of the Henslowe estate house as seen from the southeast, with a stretch of overgrown yard and sagging mossy branches well in view. Scratched into the image is this notation: "#1."

A **Photography**-versed Investigator notes that the photo was taken near sunset and could have been taken by the camera in the study now.

On the back of the photo is a handwritten list:

2. Grant

3. John & Mary

4. Zachariah & Millicent

5. Back to one

For more on how to use the photograph, see **Savannah 14, "Digging in the Dark,"** p. 71.



13. The Estate Grounds

(FRONT)



2– Grant
3 – John & Mary
4 – Zachariah & Millicent
5 – Back to one

(BACK)

13. The Estate Grounds

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Searching the grounds, either without knowing what to look for (Savannah 8, "Southern Inhospitality," p. 64, or Savannah 9, "The Henslowe Mansion," p. 66) or after searching the study (Savannah 12, "Henslowe's Study," p. 68).

Summary: The Investigators scour the estate grounds for clues, discovering several abandoned buildings, some modest ruins, a familial cemetery, and the rusted-out shell of a car half sunk in the swamp.

Core Clue: A Henslowe ancestral cemetery lingers in the swamp behind the house. (Simple search.)



This scene covers the overgrown grounds of the Henslowe estate, from the mansion to the swampland to the south. If the Investigators have come by Douglas Henslowe's formal invitation, this scene may not play out until the Investigators go in search of the hiding place for Henslowe's notebook. If they sneak onto the grounds, this scene may play out sooner.

This scene is mostly descriptive, but of course the players won't know that. The ruins and wreckage they find in the Henslowe yard are all just colorful details meant to give life and history to the place. Except for the existence of the cemetery, these details are little help in locating the notebook. Thus, you should feel free to streamline this scene down to something as minor as the following stock footage, if you like:

- Henslowe Estate Grounds: The Henslowe estate is slowly sinking in the swamp it once bordered. Old pillars stick out of the high grasses, marking the site of a vanished building. Broken walls outline the edges of old structures. A car lies drowned in the mud. Leaves, blown in on an old storm, stick to everything. Birds nest in the crannies of a ruined outbuilding. Reeds grow up through the splintering walls of a forgotten shed. The song of bugs carries out of the swamp beyond, where alligators float and stare out of the canopied gloom.

If you choose to play out this scene a bit to build mood or add dimension to the Investigators' trip into the Henslowe grounds, pace out the following details as you see fit:

- The ruins of antebellum buildings jut from the mud here and there. Little more than bare walls and broken doorways now, these buildings were once part of the estate's daily life. Architecture or History determines that the easternmost building was probably slaves' quarters, while the westernmost ruin was probably a kitchen.

- A few abandoned sheds stand rotting in the muck. These were once used for storage, but now they hold forgotten and ruined garden tools and huge garden spiders.

- Near the edge of the western property wall, where the stones rise up out of swamp water, the swamp is gradually swallowing the rusted orange remains of an old-style Ford automobile. A character with Mechanical Repair recognizes it as a 1909 Model T.

- At the heart of the property, where the ground slopes down into the watery mud at the swamp's edge, tombstones jut from the weeds and reeds. Some are modest old things, some are tall stone crosses, one is a weeping angel. An empty vase stands before the one marked "David and Virginia Henslowe." (See "Digging in the Dark" for more detail here.)

- Out in the swamp, in waist-deep water south of the dry property, a chimney rises out of the water at an angle. This is the remains of the original Henslowe house. Architecture or History places the chimney's carved mantelpiece in the late 18th century.

The Outdoorsman ability can be used to track Currothers's dogs all over the property and to recognize evidence of alligators along the muddy eastern edge of the property. They float out in the shallow waters of the swamp to the south as well. They're not especially large specimens, but Outdoorsman-type Investigators notice that the gators follow them about the area, watching.

In the event that you use the alligators for a quick scare or dose of action, Outdoorsman knowledge also recognizes uncommon ferocity in these gators — they're quick to strike where most wouldn't try to take down something as large as a grown human. (These gators aren't evidence of anything more sinister; they're just a tool for atmosphere.)

Alligator

The gators on the Henslowe property are smallish — only five or six feet long — but unusually aggressive (if you want them to be). They stalk eagerly and attack if a target is alone or isolated.

Abilities (land/water): Athletics 5/7, Health 7, Scuffling 10

Hit Threshold: 4

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: +1 (bite)

Armor: −2 vs. any (thick scaly hide)

Stability Loss: +0

14. Digging in the Dark

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding the puzzle in Douglas Henslowe's study (Savannah 12, "Henslowe's Study," p. 68) and searching the grounds (Savannah 13, "The Estate Grounds," p. 70).

Summary: The Investigators (and the players) use their wits to puzzle out where Douglas Henslowe hid his cache for safekeeping.

Core Clue: The photo of the Henslowe house was taken from the ancestral cemetery behind the Henslowe house, right in front of the David Henslowe plot.

Core Clue: Some of the names on ancestral tombstones correspond to the names on the list on the back of the photo: Grant (Henslowe), John and Mary (Cokeridge), Zachariah and Millicent (Henslowe).

Core Clue: The tombstones with names corresponding to the list each have faded inky blue brushstrokes on them. Each brushstroke is actually multiple strokes, in multiple layers.

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To lead who he thought would be Walter Winston to a secret notebook and hidden key, Douglas Henslowe devised a simple puzzle — really just an obscured means of marking the site where he buried his cache. For the Investigators to locate the site and dig up Douglas Henslowe's notebook and key, they must puzzle through his obtuse instructions.

This scene describes what happens when the PCs attempt to puzzle out those instructions — found in "Henslowe's Study" — and start digging. Note, however, that this scene also takes the characters through the Henslowe estate grounds, so information in Savannah 13, "The Estate Grounds," p. 70, may also be useful.

The Weather

As the Investigators get closer to the scene "Digging in the Dark," one of two things should be happening at the same time: the sun should be going down (believable if they've been to Joy Grove and driven out to the estate in the same day) or a storm should be coming in. Things are getting dark outside.

It's a hot, slow rain, offering no respite from the temperature. It's like the sky is sweating.

If you like, the weather can start up even before the characters reach the estate, so they've got to show Henslowe's letter to Currothers under umbrellas at the gates. Thus their whole time on the grounds is wet and hot and ominous.

If Investigators hesitate to explore the grounds in the weather or at night, appeal to their Drives. A soft driver ought to be enough to motivate them. They haven't come all this way to be scared off by a little rain or the sunset, have they?

Ultimately, this should have them digging in the muddy cemetery by flashlight — much more atmospheric, that.

First, the Investigators must make the breakthrough that the photograph of the mansion from behind is not showing them where to go by offering them a picture of their destination. Rather, they must begin by standing where Douglas Henslowe was when he took the picture. Walk until the mansion looks as it does in the photograph, especially through a camera, and they'll be in the right spot. (A 1-point Photography spend buys this clue, realized out loud by the purchasing character: "He had to be standing somewhere to take this picture, didn't he?")

The picture was taken from the edge of the Henslowe family cemetery, right on top of the David Henslowe plot (where Douglas's father is buried).

Next, the Investigators must investigate the headstones. Twenty-two people are buried in the family cemetery, but many stones are worn almost illegible by age. These names are still visible on separate headstones:

- David (1856-1921) and Virginia (1854-[blank]) Henslowe; tall stone cross
- Jonas Douglas Cokeridge (1897-1917); modest stone cross
- Grant Henslowe (1880-1917); modest stone cross
- Douglas Henslowe (1882-[blank]); modest stone block
- Mary-Margaret (1880-1882) and Anne Mary (1882-1883) Henslowe; weeping angel
- John (1873-1929) and Mary (1873-1929) Cokeridge; tall stone cross
- James (1831-1879) and Mildred (1834-1881) Jones; modest stone slab
- Zachariah (1830-1862) and Millicent Henslowe (1832-1899); modest stone slab

Some of these correspond to the list of names on the back of the photograph.

Next, the Investigators notice that the listed headstones each have a faded blue ink mark on them, as does David and Virginia Henslowe's. These ink stains match ink stains on the twine from Henslowe's office; gaps can even

be seen in the brush strokes where a length of twine may have been painted over. (A 1-point Arts or Crafts spend determines that the ink is the same as the jar found in Henslowe's study and that the marks on the twine indicate that a length may have been wrapped around each headstone and then brushed with ink to mark the spot.)

When two headstones are properly tied together with twine, the knot between ink marks is suspended off the ground between them by the taut twine. As twine is strung tight between tombstones, a sort of irregular rectangle is formed, with each side of the rectangle bearing a knot in the twine.

The Solution

To be clear, here's how to locate Douglas Henslowe's hidden notebook:

Tie the twine tightly around David and Virginia Henslowe's tombstone. Run the twine to Grant Henslowe's tombstone and tie it around tight so that the blue ink marks on the twine correspond to the ink marks on the tombstone. This makes the twine so taut that it can be plucked like a string in the air. Run the twine to John and Mary Cokeridge's headstone next, then to Zachariah and Millicent's, then back to David and Virginia Henslowe's, each time tying it around the headstone so that the twine is taut. This creates an imperfect square partitioned off by twine, with a knot in each length of taut twine. From above, the twine forms a lopsided grid and the knots mark coordinates. Draw an imaginary line from each knot into the center of the makeshift square and you arrive at the dig site.

The Box

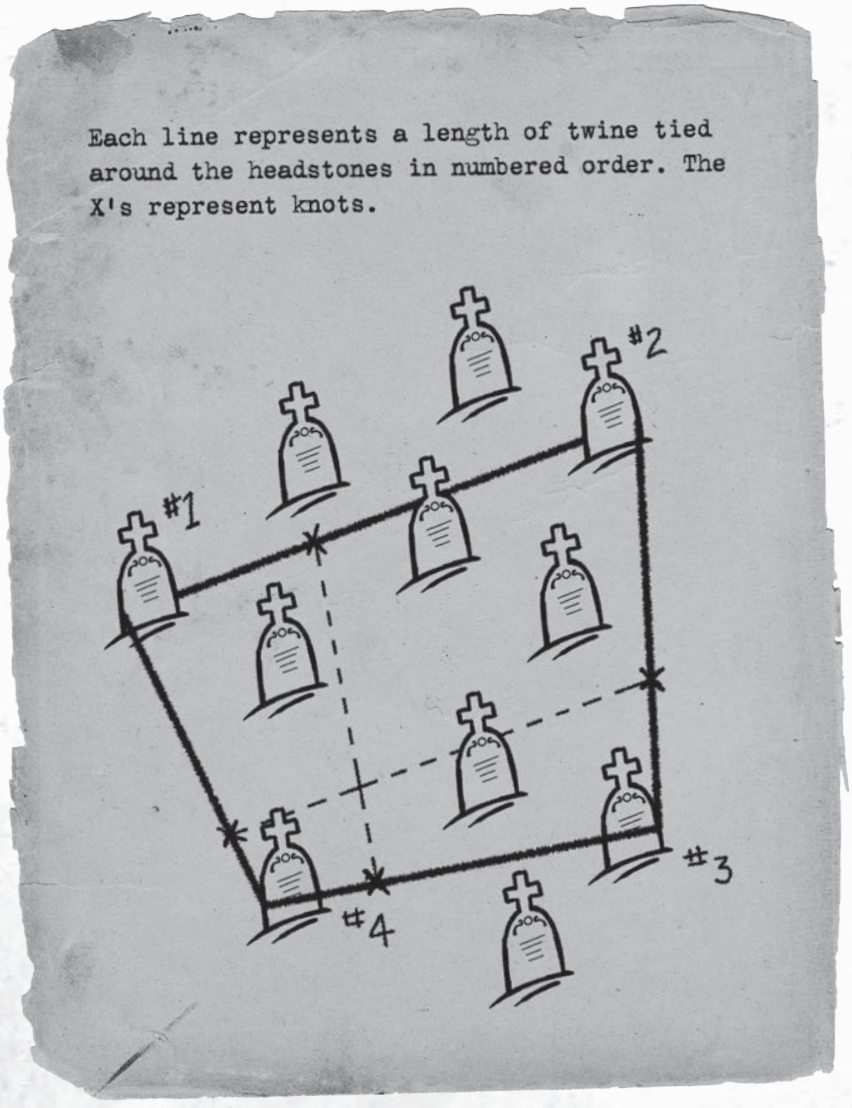
Digging Investigators discover a metal box three feet down in the mud and clay beneath the cemetery grass. It's the color of a gun, sealed shut against mud and water by three tight metal latches. It is just barely rusting.

Upon opening the box, the first thing the Investigators see is a flat and jagged square stone decorated with a raised but worn glyph resembling a lidded eye stylized into a glyph. It looks rather like it's been removed from some temple wall or statue somewhere. Someone making a 1-point Occult spend recognizes the symbol as a warding device possibly derived from artworks of the Aksum Empire, meant to block spying spells and mystical surveillance. (It matches one of the symbols etched and painted on the walls at Joy Grove in "Spying on Bedlam.")

Beneath that is a translucent envelope containing a note from Douglas Henslowe to Walter Winston.

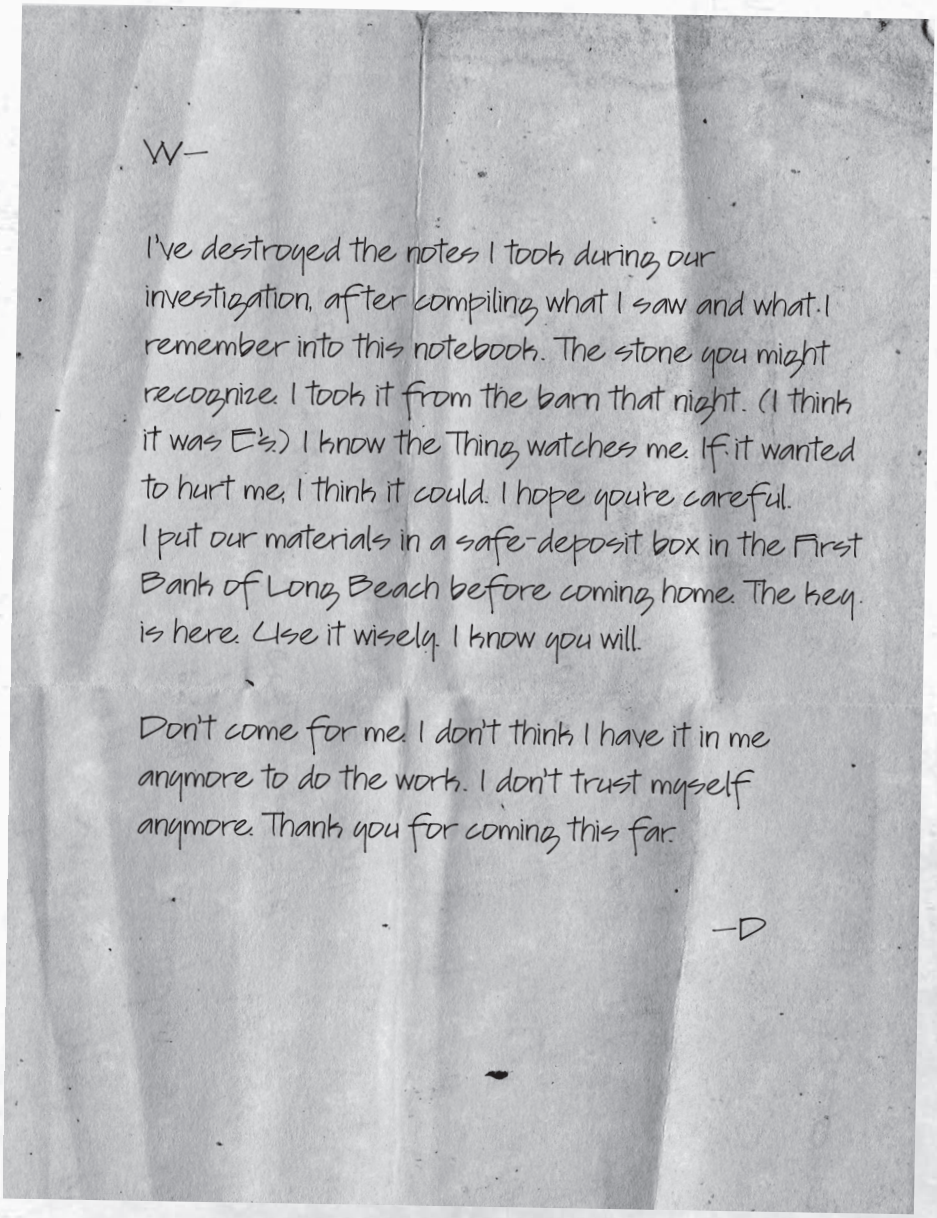
Beneath the letter, wrapped in plastic, is Douglas Henslowe's notebook. Tucked inside the cover is a small safe deposit box key. (A Locksmith recognizes it as such.)

With that, the sky pours down rain.



Henslowe's Notebook (1933; English)

This combination diary and sketchbook details Douglas Henslowe's memories of the investigation he undertook with Walter Winston and company in 1924… except it is written in a mad shorthand and a jumbled stream-of-consciousness style that leaps about through time and space. It doesn't seem to contain much information that isn't obtained by interviewing Douglas Henslowe directly at Joy Grove, but it does grant +1 to the reader's Cthulhu Mythos rating. It contains lovely sketches of the 1924 Investigators, drawn from memory (over and over throughout the book), plus page after page of gruesome and violent images of figures dancing or writhing against huge, licking flames. It also includes various drawings of a multi-limbed, headless form with arms or tentacles or legs ending in dripping mouths. Many illustrations depict this form biting off heads or tearing human figures apart.



W—

I've destroyed the notes I took during our investigation, after compiling what I saw and what I remember into this notebook. The stone you might recognize. I took it from the barn that night. (I think it was E's.) I know the Thing watches me. If it wanted to hurt me, I think it could. I hope you're careful.
I put our materials in a safe-deposit box in the First Bank of Long Beach before coming home. The key is here. Use it wisely. I know you will.

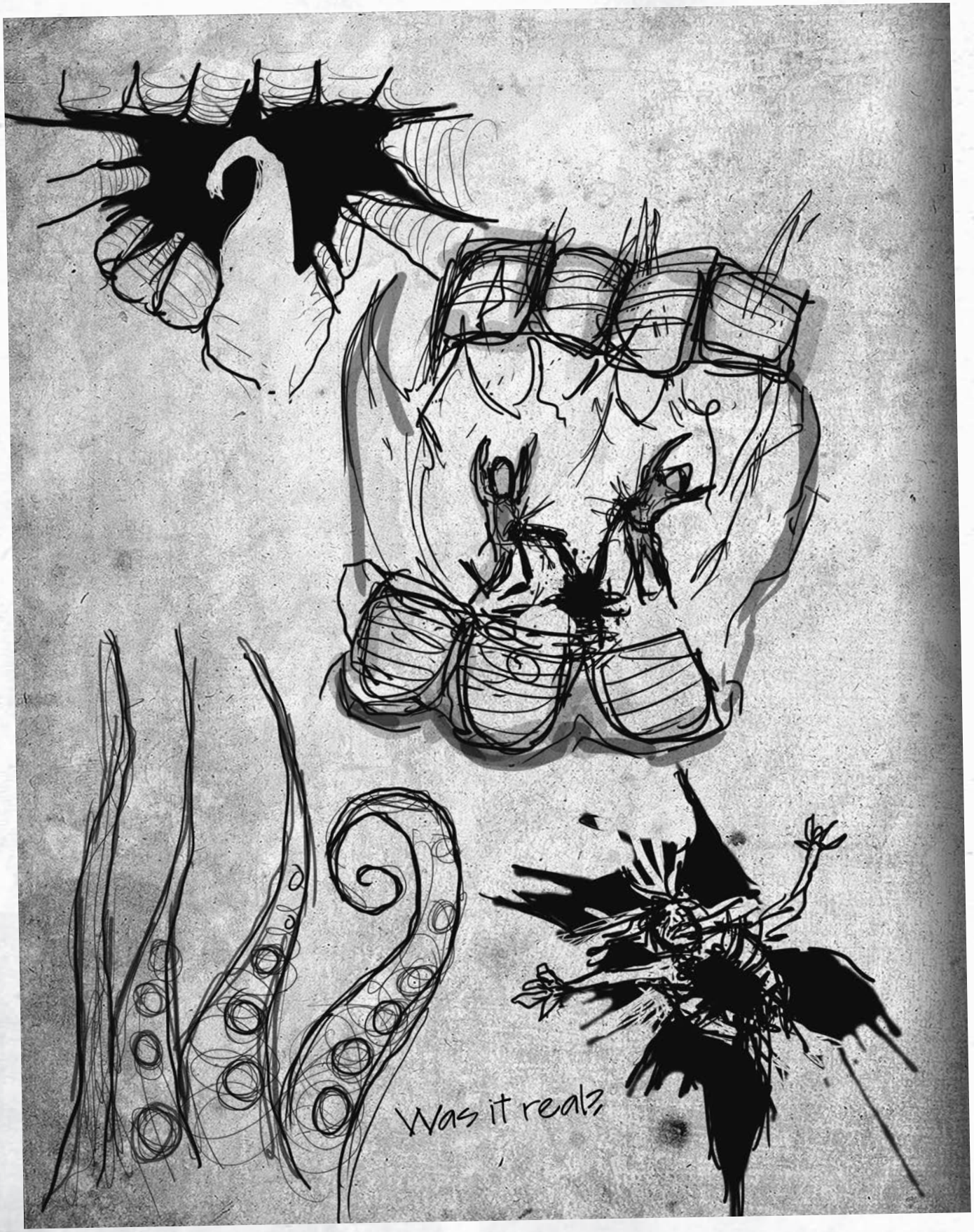
Don't come for me. I don't think I have it in me anymore to do the work. I don't trust myself anymore. Thank you for coming this far.

—D

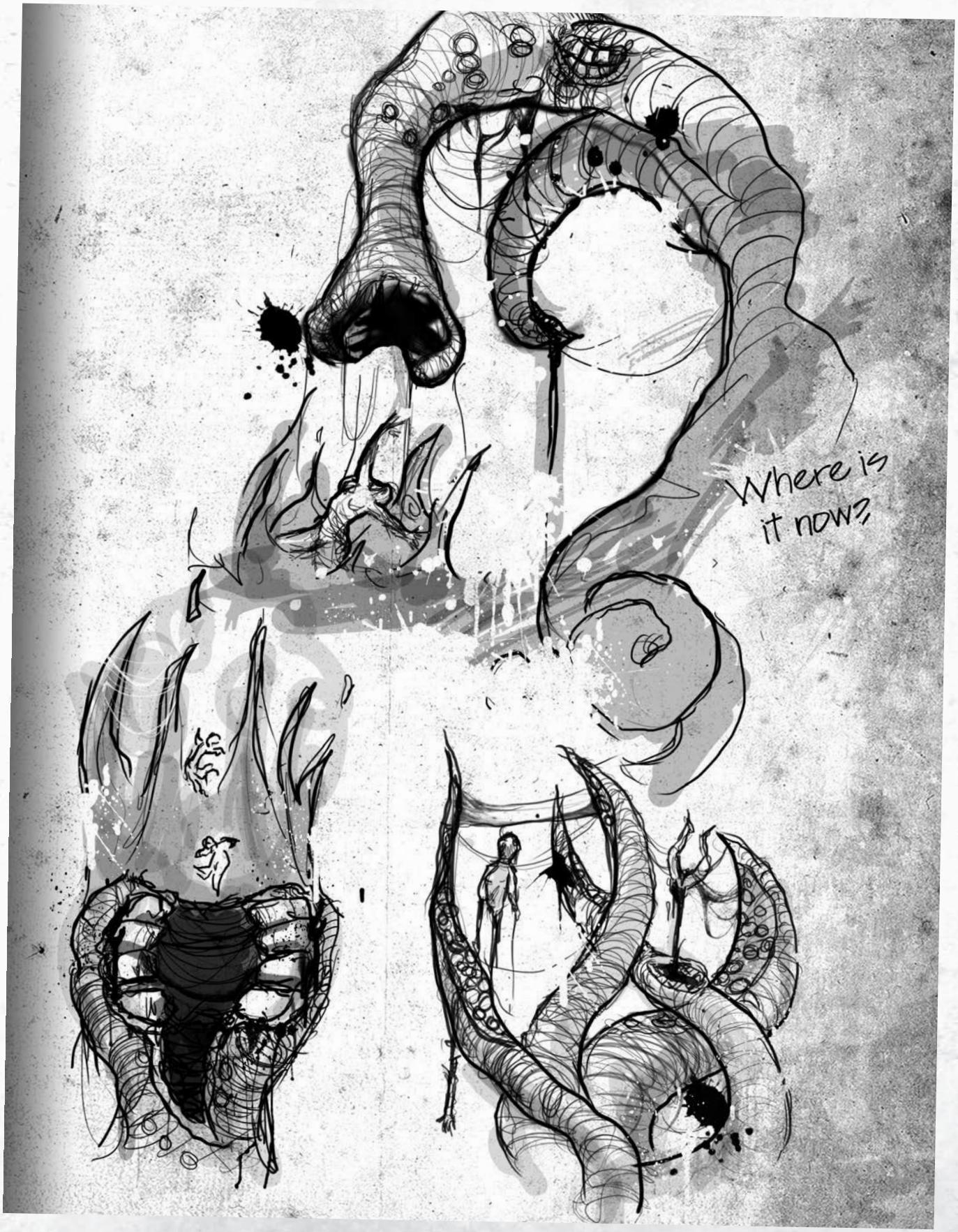
The Warding Stone

The warding stone blocks the ability of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths to get a mystical bead on subjects within a few feet of the stone, even objects that contain the Thing's own image, like Henslowe's notebook. The mystical connection that Henslowe's notebook has to the Thing, however, means the warding stone must be in especially close proximity to the notebook in order to protect it. If the warding stone gets even twelve or more feet away from the notebook, the Thing casts a spell against the notebook to destroy it. (See **Savannah 17, "The Notebook Burns,"** p. 80.)

In general, the warding stone can explain why the Thing doesn't come after the Investigators with spells from afar, if you like, although it's unlikely that the Investigators can always remain within a few feet of the warding stone for the length of time it takes to complete the campaign. If the warding stone is becoming too distracting or troublesome, the stone can be overpowered by proximity to a Major Mouth later on, causing it to crumble to dust (perhaps along with the Investigators' hopes of safety).


Was it real?

14. Digging in the Dark



15. The Thugs

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Play this scene when your unfolding story calls for a dose of action.

Summary: The Investigators are accosted by a carload of thugs intent on scaring them off the case — and possibly interested in capturing Douglas Henslowe's sketchbook and safe deposit box key.

Core Clue: The language spoken by the thugs is not anything familiar to the Investigators (Languages used by any Investigator) and may be unearthly. (Cthulhu Mythos.)

Core Clue: Some of the thugs sport tattoos in the Thai language. (Art, Anthropology or Languages (Thai) used on the body of any thug, alive or dead.)



This scene creates an action beat in the story, supplying the players with a dose of action and letting their characters know that there are active antagonists out there opposing them. These thugs are the equivalent of Raymond Chandler's man "with a gun in his hand" who come in to add new peril and momentum to the proceedings.

Play this scene after the Joy Grove investigation, when the PCs are traveling through Savannah to their hotel or to the Henslowe estate (or wherever), for a simple bout of violence, for an action climax to one session, or to get the players' attention at the beginning of the next session. Play this scene after the Henslowe estate investigation for a bit of climactic action.

When you set this scene determines where you set this scene. The thugs may attack the Investigators in transit, running them off the road with a car or two full of ready miscreants just outside of Savannah proper or in a rundown part of town; in which case they try to drag the Investigators out of their car and beat the daylights out of them. Or the thugs may attack the Investigators at their base in Savannah, whether that means kicking in motel-room doors or waiting for the Investigators outside their hangar at Hunter Field.

Just what the thugs want depends on when you play this scene. If you place it between Joy Grove and the Henslowe estate, the thugs want the Investigators to give up and go home. If you place it after the Henslowe estate investigation, the thugs want both to deter the Investigators and to collect Douglas Henslowe's notebook and the safe deposit box key. (Going after the notebook and key in this way does two things: it ties the thugs more tightly into the story, and it adds to the apparent value of the items the PCs have finally recovered.)

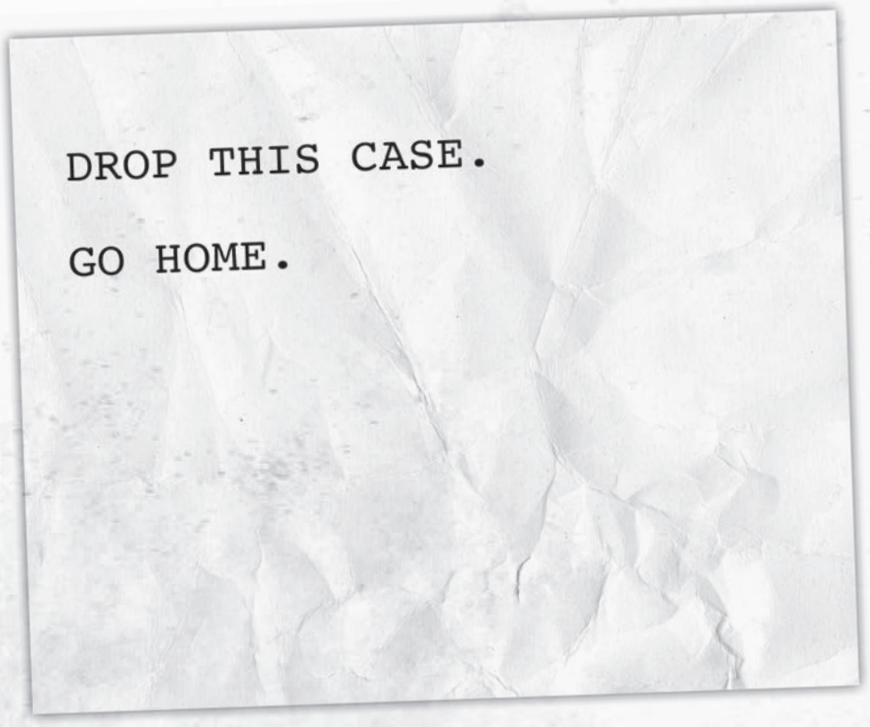
The thugs' approach to roughing up the PCs is simple: they get PCs on the

The Liar's Language

These thugs are so far gone in their Nectar addiction that they can no longer speak anything but the language of the Liar From Beyond. They couldn't rat out their bosses to the Investigators if they wanted to — and they don't want to. Given enough time and Nectar, these thugs will be so far gone that they can no longer understand earthly languages at all. Until then, they hover in a strange interstitial state wherein they can understand the earthly languages they know but cannot communicate outwardly in them.

Should they somehow get back to someone else who speaks the Tongue of Lies, of course, they could report on what they know…





ground or up against a wall and punch them until they are hurt. Then the thugs wave a note in their faces. Typed up on cheap paper, it reads simply: "DROP THIS CASE. GO HOME."

The thugs are a mix of white and Asian men, all in good shape, all skilled in causing hurting, none of them especially stylish in their approach. These are brutes.

All of them speak a bizarre, unfamiliar language made mostly of vowels, which none of the Investigators know (no matter which Languages they speak). A character with Cthulhu Mythos believes it may be no earthly language at all. These thugs speak only this strange language, though they understand English and Thai.

If the Investigators pull guns, the thugs do one of two things, depending on how you want the scene to play out: either they drop the note and back out of the encounter (giving the PCs a chance to seem like tough guys) or they pull guns, too, in an attempt to create a standoff, so they can drop the note and leave.

If things escalate to actual gunfire, the thugs fight until hurt and then attempt to escape.

During or after the scuffle, the Investigators can discern a bit about their attackers. Specifically, they all sport a few all-black tattoos. Characters with Art or Anthropology or the appropriate Language recognize Thai-language characters in the designs. Their clothes are cheap off-the-rack shirts and slacks, ties and hats. Their guns (if they have them) are Colt M1911 pistols. They're not carrying identification.

The Brutes and the Boss

The thugs arrive in a group equal in size to the number of Investigators plus one. They take one or two cars, depending on how many of them you need.

On the Trail of the Thugs

While prepping for playtesting, we had some worries that these mysterious thugs would pull the Investigators off in a fruitless direction. Author Jeff Tidball rightly pointed out that the players are free to pursue a dead end to its dead end and then come back to the larger, richer trail at the heart of the campaign. If, for example, your players say, "Thai tattoos? To Bangkok!" the appropriate response may be, "Very well, you fly to Bangkok. Now what?"

If you really want to give them some freedom, and let them get in over their heads, see the Bangkok Locale in Chapter 7 for ideas. Plenty can befall the Investigators there.



These thugs spent some time in Siam, learning how to cause pain and getting high on a quasi-mystical narcotic called Nectar (which is more fully explained later). They work for the cult that has arisen in the wake of the 1924 summoning and were sent to Savannah to watch Joy Grove sanitarium for just this purpose: to rough up and scare off anyone who looks into the 1924 happenings too closely (and, maybe, to retrieve Douglas Henslowe's evidence of the 1924 investigation, depending on when you set this scene).

The thugs come in two types: the brutes and the boss.

The Brutes

Three Things: They spit. They stare. They lick their lips a lot.

Athletics 8, Driving 6, Firearms 5, Health 5, Scuffling 6, Weapons 6

Weapon: –1 (brass knuckles, pipes, knives), +1 (pistols)

The Boss

Three Things: Also spits. Squints when angered. Stretches his punching arm like a pitcher before a baseball game.

The boss among these brutes derives his statistics from those of the PCs. His abilities are based on the highest relevant ability rating among the Investigators (but only for those abilities listed here — he doesn't have Psychoanalysis just because a PC does). So, for example, his Weapons ability is one point higher than the highest Weapons rating among the PCs.

Athletics =, Driving −2, Firearms −1, Health +1, Scuffling +1, Weapons +1

Weapon: −1 (brass knuckles, the scenery), +1 (pistol)

Consequences

The fallout from this varies a lot depending on where it takes place. Gunplay in a downtown hotel gets the Investigators arrested, for example, until Janet Winston-Rogers or perhaps a 2-point Cop Talk spend bails them out.

If the Investigators leave their attackers unconscious or dead on the side of the road, they may just go on with their lives. The people behind these thugs catch up them in Los Angeles, anyway, and the story continues.

In between those two extremes is the more likely scenario that the Savannah police take statements from everyone who can make them and arrest the attackers. Confounded by their language, the police can do little but hold them for a good long while. The Investigators have more important things to worry about, anyway, so cut the scene and get on with the next part of your story — whether it's the Henslowe estate or the flight to Los Angeles.

16. Dreaming of Mouths

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Use this scene to deliver a dose of eerie fear and menace into the tale without pitting the Investigators against anything verifiably or outright supernatural just yet.

Summary: One or more Investigators experience weird dreams, full of imagery from their time in Savannah, and are left to wonder if they're nightmares… or visions.

An Investigator falls asleep on the drive out to the Henslowe estate from Joy Grove, or on the drive back, or in a hotel room in Savannah, or on the journey from Savannah to Los Angeles. While asleep, the character's mind offers up imagery drawn from the day's experiences, combined with dread imaginings and fear.

Are these dreams or visions? As the barriers erected around the impossible slowly erode, and new truths about the occult and the Mythos are revealed, that question gets harder to answer… and the dreams become harder to brush away.

A scary dream may be a quick rattle of one's Stability but a psychic vision may chip away at it. At your discretion, a character who chooses to fixate on these dreams — say, by analyzing them or studying them for clues — elevates them from simple dreams to something akin to horrific hallucinations. That calls for a 2-point non-Mythos Stability test.

Some nightmares might seem prophetic if they are used prior to the actual events they draw on (if you use the Swamp-Mouth before the Investigators reach the Henslowe estate, for example), which is bad if you don't want the Investigators to get distracted by the source of their dreams. If these are believably mere dreams, drawn from the day's stresses and experiences, they add a facet to play — a bit of subtext — without the weight of a whole subplot.

Play this scene to foreshadow some of the future menace in the campaign. Play it again, with the same PC or with others, to put more emphasis on the supernatural or to get strong, creepy



16. Dreaming of Mouths

visuals into the players' heads while their characters are involved with subtler things.

The dreams conjured during this scene may just be dreams, brought on by what the Investigators have seen, or they may be evidence of a psychic attack being perpetrated against them by the Thing With a Thousand Mouths across space and time — ripples coming off the Thing's growing power. The truth behind these dreams might never be revealed. The human mind is a mysterious thing, and how it copes with the perilous pressures of a Mythos investigation is not always easy (or helpful) to understand.

Here are five dreams to choose from, written to address the dreaming Investigator:

Too Many Mouths

You're in Joy Grove, in an exam room, when Nurse Bethany Mae Hampton comes in wearing a surgical mask and carrying a syringe. The end of the syringe is not a needle but a groping proboscis ending in a tiny, toothless mouth. Nurse Hampton drops her surgical mask, revealing two mouths, one above the other, both smiling with teeth like a shark's. You're suddenly aware that you're in a straightjacket and leg irons as she comes for you with the hungry syringe.

You wake to find a mosquito at work on your arm.

Mouths for Eyes

You're back in Joy Grove, walking down a residential corridor, past peeling paint and broken tile, as patients press their faces to the little windows in the doors to their rooms. They stare out at you, except they have no eyes. They have mouths where their eyes should be and they're forming words, muted by the glass. Are they warning you? Pleading to be released? Calling for you? From those mouths they cry out with words and tears.

The Swamp-Mouth

You're trudging through the Georgia swamp behind [another Investigator] when the ground opens up beneath [him or her], the water rushing into a hole in the ground, lined with yellow, human teeth — dozens and dozens of teeth. For a moment, your friend is falling feetfirst into this hole, but then the mouth snaps shut, chewing [him or her] in half in three terrible bites. [He or she] screams, blood spraying from [his or her] mouth. The swamp-water-filled mouth gurgles out a scream.

You snap out of sleep with a start, all but screaming yourself.

The Gut-Mouth

You hear a voice. Your voice. Wheezing out words in a language you can't understand. But it's not coming from your own mouth. Your shirt shifts at your belly, as if being pushed on from within. It dampens, more and more. Trembling, you tear your shirt away to discover a wide mouth, tongue probing, cut across your stomach like a gash, oozing pus and blood. It yells out alien words in your voice, and when you try to call for help you find your own mouth shrinking away to nothing, closing around your tongue, swallowing your teeth with flesh. You cannot exhale, you cannot breathe. And as you suffocate… you awaken.

Swallowing the Earth

You're back home. Outside. It's cool and clear. The ground trembles. At the horizon, this way and that, you see buildings shaking and tumbling over, falling toward you, and long yellow fangs lurch out of the earth, climbing not just skyward but closing around on you, swallowing the ground, swallowing the sky, swallowing you and your home into long, wet shadows, down into a vulgar hole lined with suckers and barbs, oozing honey and blood, and just as you catch sight of the grinding and churning organ where you are headed, the mouth closes tight, blocking out the light.

You awaken slowly, uncertain where you are at first.

17. The Notebook Burns

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Any time after the Investigators have retrieved Douglas Henslowe's sketchbook (Savannah 14, "Digging in the Dark," p. 71), when you need to add a dose of menace or mystery to the campaign, play this short scene.

Summary: The Investigators discover why Douglas Henslowe had hidden his sketchbook away beneath a warding stone: wicked spells are able to destroy the book even from afar, because of the power evoked by the imagery within it.

Anytime after the Investigators have recovered Douglas Henslowe's sketchbook and separated it from the warding stone it came with, the notebook comes under attack from a spell cast by a distant sorcerer. Whether it's in a bag, in a box, or in hand, the book begins to smolder and then, suddenly, explodes in flames. (Witnessing this requires a 3-point non-Mythos Stability test.) It's illegible within seconds and ash within minutes. (A character who attempts to hold onto the book or smother the flames suffers 2 damage.)

A 1-point Occult spend or a simple use of Cthulhu Mythos (Stability loss: 3, Sanity loss: 0) recognizes the effects not as spontaneous combustion but as the result of a spell cast against the book, likely using the imagery within to form some kind of arcane connection capable of targeting the book across even a vast distance. Now that the book and its imagery of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths are destroyed, however, the sorcerer who cast the spell may lack any sympathetic connection to the Investigators. The sorcerer has revealed his or her connection to the book by destroying it. It's possible that Douglas Henslowe's renderings of the Thing were so evocative that they actually created a mystical connection with it. If so, then the sorcerer at the other end of the spell might even have been the Thing With a Thousand Mouths itself…

(In truth, that's exactly what happened. The Thing With a Thousand Mouths is attempting to protect its real identity by destroying imagery of its avatar as it manifested on the night of the summoning.)



Los Angeles, California, USA

"Doors were battered in, stragglers arrested, and candlelighted rooms forced to disgorge unbelievable throngs of mixed foreigners in figured robes, mitres, and other inexplicable devices. Much was lost in the melee, for objects were thrown hastily down unexpected shafts, and betraying odours deadened by the sudden kindling of pungent incense. But spattered blood was everywhere..."

— "The Horror at Red Hook"

The Los Angeles Locale is the climax of Act One. Its job is to move the investigation from the backward-looking Act One to the outward-looking and globe-trotting Act Two of the *Eternal Lies* campaign. It is primarily an investigation of Ramon Echavarria's 1924 cult-within-a-cult, but it transitions into a struggle between the PC Investigators and Echavarria's spiritual heir in the modern day, Samson Trammel.

Keeper's Background: What Happened in 1924

Although it will be difficult for the contemporary Investigators to ever get a completely clear picture of what happened at the '24 summoning, the following general outline of the events as they transpired will help you give consistent clues as they conduct their investigations. Be careful about revealing too much about Echavarria's secret plan, Edgar Job's role as a focus, and Azathoth too early. Unless the players are particularly astute, these details are not likely revealed until Act Three.

Echavarria, Trammel, and a dozen or so members of the cult (including Edgar Job and Savitree Sirikhan) arrived at the farm in the mid-afternoon. They ritually prepared the area. Echavarria's secret plan was to summon Y'golonac, the Liar From Beyond, and sacrifice that deity to bring about a world-ending apocalypse that would assure Echavarria's importance and perhaps his elevation to godhood. The members of the cult, for their part, believed that Gol-Goroth would manifest to reward them for their obedience with unsurpassed power and pleasure.

The '24 Investigators got wind that something big was happening late that afternoon and raced out to the farm, arriving after sunset.

By that time, Echavarria had begun his ritual to summon the Liar. Orgiastic rites were in full swing, and Minor Mouths were already beginning to manifest. Edgar Job had been selected for the central role among the rank and file, although for reasons that were known only to Echavarria. Per Echavarria's plan, Job would become the focus of the idiot god Azathoth's attention, which would destroy the world once the sacrifice of Y'golonac drew it. (For more background information, see "Keeper's Background: The Interrupted Ritual" on page 373.)

The '24 Investigators made a hasty plan to disrupt the ritual as best they could: with fire and guns. The Investigators set the barn on fire and caught the cultists in a crossfire. As the flames roared and violence erupted, the character of the manifested Mouths changed abruptly from orgiastic to violent, in response to the change in the emotional tenor of the events transpiring. The cultists were caught in the crossfire while, at the same time, the Mouths turned on them.

Vince Stack blew Echavarria to bits with a shotgun just as the Liar manifested among the carnage in its aspect as a massive, bloated man with toothy maws in its hands. Those cultists who retained a sense of self-preservation fled — Samson Trammel, Edgar Job, and Savitree Sirikhan all escaped. Some of those who tried to flee were gunned down or were consumed by Mouths. Some were driven immediately and irreversibly mad, throwing themselves into Mouths, leaping into the fire, or charging into the Investigators' hail of gunfire. Others were ripped to shreds by the Liar's manifest form. Douglas Henslowe and Walter Winston managed to flee.

Because the Liar was not sacrificed, Azathoth's attention was not drawn to Earth and the world did not end. However, the prominence of the Liar (as a sacrifice) and Job (as the focus) were both fully established. With Echavarria's death, his plan was more put on hold than it was completely foiled. This state persists to the current day.

Keeper's Background: What Happened in 1924

Once all present were destroyed to the Liar's satisfaction, its avatar dissipated, along with its Mouths.

The police arrived some time later, faced with the task of making sense of events both incomprehensible and senseless. Unsurprisingly, they were never successful.

The Los Angeles Spine

In Los Angeles, the Investigators delve into the summoning that the 1924 Investigators, led by Walter Winston, failed to stop.

First, they must find and open the safe deposit box where the 1924 Investigators hid blackmail materials that they hoped would give them leverage on Ramon Echavarria, the leader of the 1924 cult. This amounts to a mundane investigation of what's happened to the ephemera of a failed bank.

The contents of the safe deposit box lead the Investigators to pursue Echavarria, who, it turns out, also died in 1924. Investigation of other members of the 1924 cult provides additional context and information about what happened to both the '24 cult and Investigators.

Of particular note in these investigations is George Ayers, the only other 1924 cultist who knew that "Gol-Goroth" was a hoax perpetrated on the main body of the cult by its leaders and that Echavarria truly served the Liar From Beyond. Ayers is nowhere to be found in Southern California now, but the trail of clues suggests that he went to Ethiopia before the disastrous summoning in order to join researchers digging at a site that Ayers believed was connected to the Liar in ancient times.

As they proceed in Los Angeles, the Investigators are first shadowed by and then assaulted by one Jack Pizner, a private investigator hired to scare them off the case. This is a critical moment, because turning the tables on this individual points the Investigators to the present-day incarnation of the 1924 cult of Gol-Goroth, the Fisher From Outside. (There is also an alternate series of clues that lead to the contemporary cult, in the event that the PCs are unable to successfully deal with Pizner or believe that engaging him would only be a distraction from their main goal.)

The contemporary cult in Los Angeles is led by Samson Trammel, the third member of the '24 cult's ruling triumvirate. He leads — along with his partner, Captain Walker, a hard-core criminal — an organization largely devoted to distributing Nectar, the narcotic secretion of the Major Mouth that manifests in the cellar of his mansion. His mind shattered, Trammel leads the orgiastic rites of this latter-day cult that he believes venerates the Black Man, while Walker heads up the network that distributes Nectar to a legion of addicts across Southern California.

Eventually, in Trammel's mansion, the Investigators discover the autobiographical *Testament of the Dripping Mouthes' Emanates* that Trammel has been writing for the past decade. It provides many details — but withholds many secrets and poses many mysteries — about the modern-day cult as it now manifests around the world.

Although the Investigators may return to Southern California to deal with Trammel's Mouth once they have accumulated more knowledge, discovering Trammel's *Testament* opens Act Two to the Investigators and points them to the tendrils of the worldwide conspiracy of horror and perversity.

Wardrobe: Los Angeles

In the 1930s as it is now, Los Angeles is a city more accustomed to casual dress than other US metropolises. Unbuttoned shirts, loose pants, sandals… all of these are common even among important businessmen doing their work in Southern California. That's not to say that business or formal attire is outré, but, on the other hand, such clothing is not a hard-and-fast sign of the successful individual as it is in other parts of the country.

Given the Great Depression and the tens of thousands who have migrated to California because of it, there are plenty of working-class laborers to be found throughout the region in shabby clothes patched and torn, worn many seasons past their prime. It's very easy for Investigators to become practically invisible to the scions of polite society by donning such garb and shuffling slowly down sidewalks and through public parks.



Environs: Greater Los Angeles

The word "booming" does not begin to describe the explosive growth of Los Angeles and Southern California in the 1930s. Between 1920 and 1930, its population more than doubled, from roughly 575,000 to more than 1,225,000, with more than 1,500,000 on the horizon in 1940.

In contrast to the major cities of the eastern United States, Los Angeles's population pattern is dispersed. A significant network of both rail lines and highways — seen as complementary rather than contradictory in this time period — connects the network of minor municipalities like San Pedro, Hollywood, and Eagle Rock that have been annexed by the Los Angeles city proper over the past three decades, as well as independent nearby cities like Long Beach and Glendale. Much of this growth has been driven by the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

In addition to being spread out, Los Angeles is short, physically. For earthquake safety, an ordnance caps building heights within the city at 150 feet, with the 28-storey Los Angeles City Hall being the only exception.

City Hall and the Los Angeles Police Department are no less corrupt than their East Coast and Chicago counterparts in the 1930s. City jobs are often secured by bribes or quietly auctioned. The police department's Intelligence Squad openly spies on the activities of would-be reformers. The discreet cooperation of public officials and police officers is easy to come by for those of loose morals or loose change, to say the least.

Nearly all residents of Los Angeles County in the '30s — roughly 80% — hail from elsewhere in the country. Many of the NPCs that the Investigators meet in the course of exploring the Los Angeles Locale will be from other parts of the country, as well as other countries entirely, including Mexico and a variety of Asian countries. These NPCs are an excellent way to begin introducing the worldwide flavor — and worldwide impact — of the Eternal Lies campaign.

A great many residents of Southern California are white-collar workers in finance, real estate, and tourism. The film and entertainment business in Southern California is growing, but it hasn't yet approached the modern-day behemoth it will become.

Emotional Modulation in the Los Angeles Locale

The following lists provide quick-and-dirty hopeful and sinister setting details you can use to push the emotional tenor of play either up or down while the Los Angeles Locale unfolds. None are intended to provide clues or push the investigation forward, simply to provide color to influence the tone of play. Although these lists are as generic as possible, you may need to adapt some of them to make sense in the Investigators' current location or scene. All are written in such a way that they can be paraphrased, adapted, or simply read aloud as written.

Hopeful Los Angeles Beats

- It's a beautiful day in Los Angeles. The clear blue sky is interrupted only by stunning rows of green palm trees.
- A refreshing breeze reminds you that the weather's been gorgeous all day, a trend that looks like it'll continue into the evening.
- A street vendor selling an abundance of oranges, lemons, and limes smiles openly at you, then tosses you a free sample with a grin.
- The gregarious crew working a movie shoot on the corner at the end of the street goes about their business, hauling equipment and cracking jokes.
- Everywhere you turn it seems like there's another beautiful person, tall and tan and well dressed.

Sinister Los Angeles Beats

- A single tattered sheet of filthy newsprint skitters across the street — it sounds vaguely like it's hissing at you — and then lodges itself in a sewer grate where a bunch of other scraps of garbage have accumulated.



- You turn a corner and your nostrils are assaulted by the stench of a filthy vagrant's body odor mixed with the tang of the hard liquor that's left him sprawled, unconscious, on the ground.
- You catch a faint stink of burning on the wind and remember reading about a brushfire up the coast in yesterday's newspaper.
- A police car rolls past you in the street. The cop inside gives you the stink-eye for no apparent reason.
- When you get back to the car, a woody, desiccated four-foot palm frond has fallen onto your hood. You grab it to toss it off your vehicle and discover that the thing's ridges are practically barbed — ouch!

The Scenes

Play the following scenes as the Investigators explore Los Angeles and turn over rocks in the area. Whether it's footwork, putting clues together, or putting pressure on presumed villains, Los Angeles is teeming with information about the 1924 misadventures… and clues about what's happening now.

As in all Locales, be ready with the clues presented here so you can award them in response to player choices that might circumvent or cut through the order of the scenes here. What's important is that things keep moving, not that they move according to these specifications.

1. Arrival in Los Angeles

Scene Type: Intro / Core

Lead-ins: The safe deposit box key (Savannah 14, "Digging in the Dark," p. 71).

Summary: The Investigators arrive in Los Angeles.

Core Clue: The address of the First Bank of Long Beach. (Library Use at any library or a simple search of public directories.)

The Investigators most likely arrive in Los Angeles by air in the Winston plane. The Grand Central Air Terminal in Glendale, just north of Los Angeles proper, is the main airport serving the Los Angeles area, in all its art deco splendor.

Hangar arrangements are a simple matter. If the Investigators are employing the services of Janet's pilot, he rents a room near the airport to await the PCs' next need.

If the Investigators have chosen not to use Janet Winston-Rogers's plane, or don't have access to it for whatever reason, arrival by train brings the Investigators to the terminal of either the Santa Fe, Union Pacific, or Southern Pacific railway. (Los Angeles's overland rail lines won't be unified to a single location until Union Station opens in 1939.)

Tourism is a booming business in Southern California due in large part to the beautiful year-round climate, so both hotel rooms and mid- to long-term rentals are easy to come by. It is suggested that you allow the Investigators to describe the lodgings they wish to hire and simply ensure that they don't specify anything that at least one of their number's Credit Rating will not support.

Library Use at any library or a **simple search** using any public directory of Long Beach or greater Southern California is sufficient to yield the street address of the First Bank of Long Beach.

2. The First Bank of Long Beach

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The address of the First Bank of Long Beach (Los Angeles 1, "Arrival in Los Angeles").

Summary: The Investigators discover that the address they've obtained for the First Bank of Long Beach is an abandoned building — the bank they seek has defaulted.

Core Clue: Administration of the First Bank of Long Beach's assets has fallen to the newly formed FDIC, locally headquartered in the Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles. (Intimidation or Interrogation of Delores Scrim, a hooker; Reassurance of "Boils" McGillicuddy, a vagrant; Credit Rating with Jim Olson, a former employee; Library Use at the Los Angeles *Times*; or a simple search of a phone or federal directory.)

Getting to Long Beach is a trivial matter. The players may suggest whatever method of transportation they wish, or you can gloss over the specifics. Be clear, however, that Long Beach is located at the southern tip of Los Angeles County, and that a round-trip from LA's downtown takes the better part of a day.

2. The First Bank of Long Beach

Upon their arrival at the address of the First Bank of Long Beach, the Investigators discover a damaged brick edifice whose broad stone steps are badly cracked and, worse, occupied by a foul-smelling assortment of vagrants, squatters, and drunks.

It's plain to see that the building was once a bank. The name "The First Bank of Long Beach" is still inscribed in the granite above the boarded-up front doors. But it's quite clear that no banking is done here anymore, and this has been the case for some time.

Intimidation or **Interrogation** of the bums and squatters either on the steps or inside the building results in a meeting with Delores Scrim. She's a hooker who tells any male PC anything he wants to hear (including the actual story, as written out below) if it'll help her turn a trick. Interactions with Dolores are an excellent opportunity to broach or sustain the *Eternal Lies* theme of corruption.

Reassurance directed at the bums and squatters yields a series of long, drawn-out stories from "Boils" McGillicuddy, a pockmarked vagrant with an easy repertoire of colorful and improbable narratives of his adventures around the country. He's happy to share what he knows about the bank (which amounts to the actual story, as written out below) in exchange for a sandwich — or more, if he thinks he can get it.

Credit Rating can be used to pigeonhole Jim Olson, a passerby in a threadbare suit who, as luck would have it, used to work as a manager at the First Bank. He unjustly blames his old bosses for both the bank's failure and for his resulting current employment as a part-time bookkeeper at the local Ford assembly plant, at less than half his previous wages. He knows the full story of the bank's failure and embellishes it with bitter invective.

Environs: Long Beach

Long Beach in the 1930s is one of the richest oil-producing areas in the country. Derricks are in clear evidence to anyone who drives or rides into, out of, or around the city.

Much damage from the Long Beach earthquake of 1933 is still in evidence, because unreinforced masonry was the rule rather than the exception for public buildings in the area before the quake. The First Bank building was among those damaged, and, although repairs were begun on the bank building, they were not finished because of the institution's dire financial straits. Although most of the builders' tools that were left behind have long since been scavenged, scaffolding still stands both inside and outside the bank building in some places, and cracked walls and floors are very much in evidence.



Investigators attempting Library Use at the offices of the Long Beach *Sun-Herald* will be disappointed to discover that the newspaper ceased operations in 1930. There is currently no newspaper in the local area with relevant information. This is a dead end.

However, if the Investigators think to try **Library Use** with the archives of the Los Angeles *Times* (either by phone or upon heading back downtown), this yields a less colorful version of the core clue than is written out below — that the bank failed in '33 in the wake of the Long Beach earthquake. The FDIC is now the administrator of all its debts (many), assets (few), property, and records.

The Basic Story

"First of Long Beach owe you money? Snowball's chance in hell you'll see a penny, mister.

"It's a hard time for banks everywhere, you know? The earthquake in '33 was the straw that broke this camel's back. Locals tried to take out their money, and the bank plum ran out.

"You heard of the FDIC, though? Federal… somethin'-somethin' Corporation? That came through a year too late to help anyone here. Took over the books and whatnot, though. After the bank's board got more or less run out of town on a rail, that is."

If asked about the bank's physical assets — like the contents of its safe deposit boxes — anyone who knows the basic story supposes they'd be in the possession of the FDIC.

None of the locals know exactly where the FDIC's Southern California offices are located, unless an Investigator talking to Jim Olson ponies up a 1-point **Flattery** spend. However, a **simple search** of a phone or federal directory turns up the address and phone number of the Los Angeles Federal Building, which leads the Investigators to **Los Angeles 3, "The Los Angeles Federal Building,"** below.



3. The Los Angeles Federal Building

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The FDIC has taken over the administration and physical property of the First Bank of Long Beach in the wake of its failure (Los Angeles 2, "The First Bank of Long Beach," p. 84).

Summary: The Investigators persuade the functionary responsible for the matters of the First Bank of Long Beach to tell them where its former property is being warehoused.

Core Clue: The movable physical property previously belonging to the First Bank of Long Beach — including, presumably, the contents of its unclaimed safe deposit boxes — is being warehoused at a federal facility in Long Beach. (Bureaucracy, Cop Talk, Flattery, or Interrogation at the FDIC's offices in downtown Los Angeles.)

The Los Angeles Federal Building in downtown Los Angeles is a recent art deco edifice housing a wide variety of federal bureaucracies and departments. The offices of the FDIC are listed in the building directory in the lobby.

The FDIC in Los Angeles has a staff of six headed by Irving Hoff, a virtuous citizen and family man who does everything by the book, from his business to his bathroom breaks.

Hoff's direct report Marv Burlington is the FDIC staffer with the First Bank of Long Beach on his plate, although with banks still failing left and right, it's far from his highest priority.

Bureaucracy, **Cop Talk**, **Flattery**, or **Interrogation** yields a speedy referral from the office's secretary to Burlington, followed by an equally speedy admission of responsibility from Marv himself.

Once it becomes clear that the most expedient way to get rid of the Investigators and get back to more pressing matters is to tell them what they want to know, he'll say:

"Everything that was worth anything that wasn't nailed to the floor or the walls is at the federal warehouse in Long Beach. That's at… hang on a sec, I've got the address around here somewhere…"

After a brief search, Burlington hands over a scrap of paper with the warehouse's address on it.

With a 1-point **Bureaucracy**, **Cop Talk**, **Credit Rating**, or **Flattery** spend while showing him the safe deposit box key to establish a bit of legitimacy, Marv is willing to call ahead to the warehouse and authorize access to the safe deposit boxes, which will help the Investigators as they try to gain access in **Los Angeles 4** and **5**, **"The Federal Warehouse"** and **"The Safe Deposit Box"** respectively, below.

With a 2-point **Credit Rating** spend, Burlington arranges to have the safe deposit box delivered to his offices, where he uses the bank's master key (along with the Investigators' key) to open it the following day. This lets the Investigators skip ahead to **Los Angeles 5, "The Safe Deposit Box."**

4. The Federal Warehouse

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: The safe deposit boxes from the First Bank of Long Beach are currently stored at a federal warehouse in Long Beach (Los Angeles 3, "The Los Angeles Federal Building," p. 86).

Summary: The Investigators gain access to the safe deposit boxes stored in the federal warehouse.

The federal warehouse where the physical ephemera taken from the First Bank building is now being stored is in Long Beach, which requires the Investigators to make another daylong trip from downtown (or wherever they're staying).

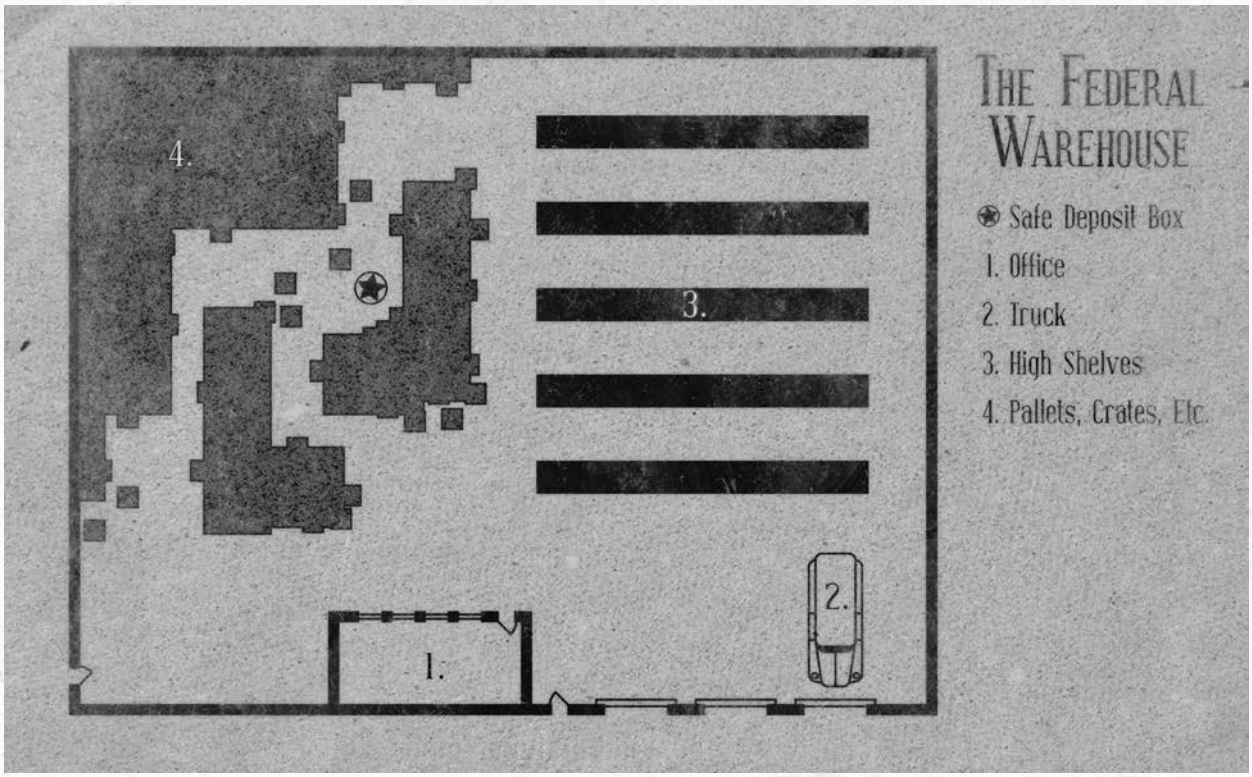
The property is surrounded by a fence that's made of boards on two sides and chain-link on the other two sides. None of these are topped with barbed wire or other countermeasures to climbing. One of the chain-link sides is shared in common with a different warehouse, part of the same development, leased by an import business that receives frequent deliveries from the Long Beach docks.

Physically speaking, the federal warehouse is unremarkable: it's a low building with a tin roof and a handful of garage doors clustered at one end that allow cars and trucks to enter in order to load and unload cargoes. It is roughly 200-feet long and 100-feet wide.

The warehouse is staffed by a security guard 24 hours a day and by a staff of two — a laborer and his supervisor — during business hours.

Inside, there are four main areas: a loading and unloading area where a

4. The Federal Warehouse



van is typically parked (and additional vehicles are parked while deliveries are being received), an area of high shelving, a broad field of low pallets and box stacks, and a walled office.

Gaining Access

If the Investigators gained access in the previous scene with a spend, they need simply introduce themselves to the supervisor and wait for him to locate the item they're after in his storage manifests.

Bureaucracy, along with production of the safe deposit box key, is also sufficient to gain access during business hours. Outside business hours, however, the security guard is determined not to allow access to anyone who isn't known to him or who doesn't have a convincing federal ID and a legit-sounding story of some kind. The guard has a good job and, in contrast to most city and county employees in the region, is not subject to bribery.

A **Stealth** test with a Difficulty Number of either 5 (daylight) or 4 (nighttime) is required to sneak into the warehouse. Investigators who fail are spotted by the security guard or one of the warehouse's staff. In such an event, a 1-point **Cop Talk**, **Intimidation**, or **Law** spend is required to avoid the police being summoned. Alternately, the caught Investigator can run for it, which leads to a chase.

Finding the Safe Deposit Box

If the Investigators secure legitimate access, they can simply wait for the warehouse's staff to bring the safe deposit box to them.

If the Investigators gain access to the warehouse on their own, a **simple search** taking 20 minutes or so is required to find the First Bank's safe deposit boxes among the hundreds of crates and cartons, many of which are poorly labeled. If this search must be conducted clandestinely, a Difficulty 5 **Stealth** test is required to remain out of sight for the duration of the search. Failure has the same consequences described under "Gaining Access," above.

The safe deposit boxes are stacked up and strapped down en masse to a wooden pallet in the location marked on the map. The box the Investigators seek and its contents are described in **Los Angeles 5, "The Safe Deposit Box,"** below.

Security Guard

Athletics 5, Health 6, Scuffling 6, Sense Trouble 6, Weapons 3

Weapon: −1 (truncheon)

Warehouse Staff

Health 5, Scuffling 2, Sense Trouble 4, Weapons 1

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (crowbar)

5. The Safe Deposit Box

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Access to the safe deposit boxes, either from a spend at the FDIC offices (Los Angeles 3, "The Los Angeles Federal Building," p. 86) or by the various means described in Los Angeles 4, "The Federal Warehouse," p. 86.

Summary: The Investigators explore the contents of the safe deposit box where the 1924 Investigators stashed materials that they hoped would constitute blackmail evidence against Ramon Echavarria.

Core Clue: Photos taken at orgies hosted by Ramon Echavarria depict Richard Spend, a movie star, among others. (Locksmith on the safe deposit box or a simple search of the First Bank of Long Beach's file. Evidence Collection or Streetwise to be aware of Richard Spend's identity as a movie star. Architecture to deduce that all of the photos were taken at the same location.)

Core Clue: Books of account document the distribution of Nectar from 1922–4. (Locksmith on the safe deposit box or a simple search of the First Bank of Long Beach's file. Cryptography to decode the books. Accounting to understand the business activities described.)



As the 1924 Investigators began to realize that Ramon Echavarria was at the center of the nefarious affairs that were the subject of their scrutiny, they decided to assemble a blackmail dossier in the hopes that it would prove useful, either to strong-arm him into giving them information, to force his cooperation, or as insurance against reprisals. As it turned out the dossier wasn't useful for any of those things, but, nevertheless, the materials they stockpiled have remained in the safe deposit box where they stashed them.

Opening the box (assuming that the Investigators still have the key) requires no test or ability if the Investigators have arranged legitimate access.

Locksmith is required to open the safe deposit box if the Investigators gained access by other than legitimate channels, in order to deal with the fact that the Investigators do not have the bank's master key.

Alternately, a **simple search** turns up the bank's master key in a file on the First Bank of Long Beach that can be found in the warehouse office, at which point it and the Investigators' key can be used together.

The Blackmail Materials

The safe deposit box contains (a) an envelope enclosing a sheaf of a dozen fading photographs and (b) a thick book of accounts.

The Photos

The photos are perverse and disturbing pictures, clearly taken from concealment, which each capture between three and a dozen people engaged in depraved sex acts in a variety of interior and exterior locations. The photos are not titillating, even to hardened or kinky Investigators. Examining them in detail requires a 1-point non-Mythos Stability test.

Slightly more than half of the photos were taken indoors in one or more residences of opulent yet tasteful decoration and costly furnishings. A few of the photos were taken outside, in private gardens. Two photos were taken in the same non-opulent working-class apartment or servant's room.

Those in the photos are well coiffed, and some wear elaborate jewelry, although there is no clothing in evidence to give clues as to the social status of the individuals shown.

One man, apparently of Latin American descent, recurs in all of the photos. This is Ramon Echavarria, who participates with obvious gusto in all of the various activities on display. Although he is the only individual who appears in all of the photos, there is no reason the Investigators would recognize him yet.

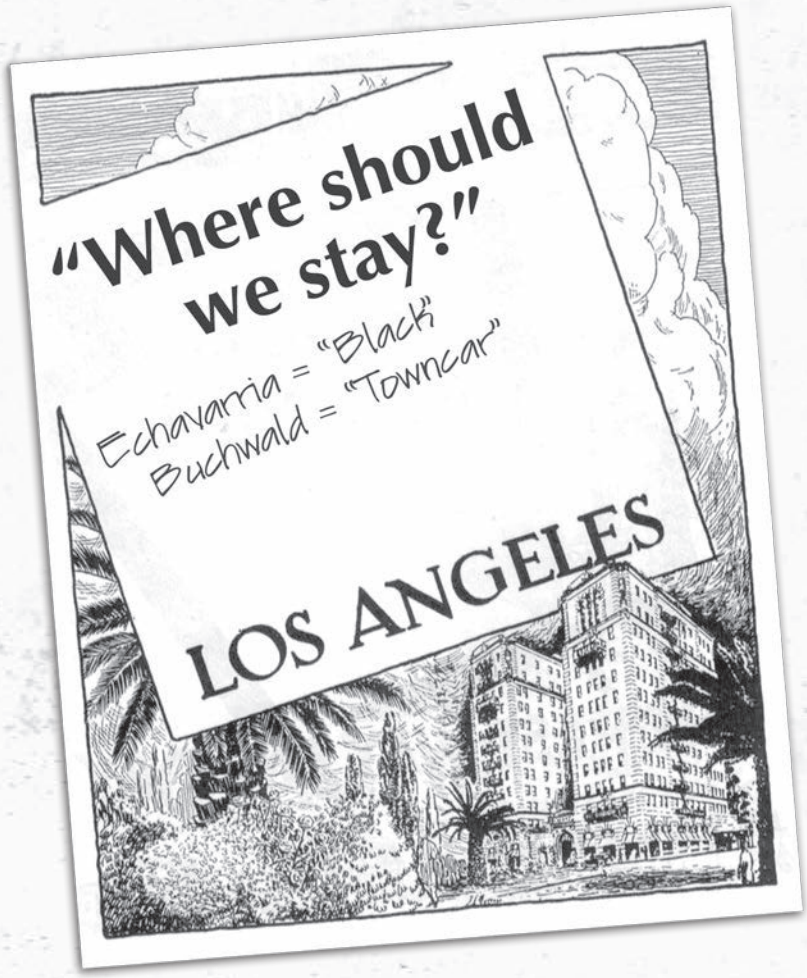
Edgar Job appears in two out of the main set of interior photos, participating with enthusiasm. He appears to be much younger in the photos than when the Investigators saw him in Savannah, although not supernaturally so — this is simply the fact of more than a decade since then spent unwell, in a mental facility.

Evidence Collection or **Streetwise** (or an Investigator's explicit background or interest in film or celebrity gossip) allows an Investigator to recognize a man who appears in three of the pictures as Richard Spend, a B-level movie actor. With a 1-point **Streetwise** spend, it occurs to the Investigator that Spend died in 1924 and that the tabloids of the time intimated that foul play may have been involved.

Architecture suggests that all of the photos, save perhaps the last two, share the same location, a single mansion and its grounds. The Investigator can't rule out the possibility that the last two may have been taken on the same grounds. They could easily be downstairs servants' quarters, a carriage-house room, or similar.

The Books of Account

The books of account are handwritten ledgers that seem to have been actual working books, as opposed to copies. (The 1924 Investigators stole them



from the home office of Abraham Buchwald, Echavarria's accountant. See **Los Angeles 10, "Abraham Buchwald,"** p. 93.) They are encoded.

Cryptography (and a day or two of laborious transcription) is necessary to turn the enigmatic columns of symbols and numbers into a comprehensible book of account.

Accounting is required to analyze the decoded books to learn that they record information about the inventories and sales, through a network of anonymous retailers identified by code names like "Slick," "Moses," and "Umbrella," of a product identified in the books by the letter "N" and tracked in very small volumes of liquid ounces. The books detail the time period from August 1922 through July 1924. A unit volume of "N" appeared to fetch roughly three dollars of "retail" price, roughly equivalent to the cost of a car tire or pair of prescription glasses in the 1930s.

The books of account do not mention either Echavarria or Buchwald by name (even after being decoded), but, rather, refer to them by the respective code names "Black" and "Towncar." A buck slip tucked into the book identifies these correspondences in Douglas Henslowe's handwriting — he was the one of the '24 Investigators who reviewed these books. It seems clear to an Investigator with Accounting that "Towncar" is the code name of the accountant who kept these books.

6. Footwork: Ramon Echavarria

Scene Type: Core (Footwork)

Lead-ins: The photos and books of account from the safe deposit box (Los Angeles 5, "The Safe Deposit Box," p. 88) or looking into "Echavarria" (Savannah 6, "The Summoner," p. 60).

Summary: The Investigators track down information about Ramon Echavarria.

Core Clue: Ramon Echavarria was a reclusive eccentric and enthusiast of the occult who died in 1924 under mysterious and violent circumstances. (Occult at any occult bookshop in Southern California. Oral History or Streetwise in the immediate neighborhood of Echavarria's former address. Library Use at the Los Angeles *Times*. Cop Talk at the LAPD.)

Core Clue: Echavarria's former address in Highland Park, and the location of the farm where the '24 summoning took place. (Architecture, Bureaucracy, or Library use at City Hall or the County Recorder's Office.)

This encounter amounts to a catchall for the variety of ways the Investigators might conduct general investigative footwork to gather information on Ramon Echavarria, based on the clues found in the safe deposit box.

Attempts to investigate the name "Echavarria" generally are futile — it would take months to track down all of the Angelinos using that name, without any guarantee that such a search would even approach being exhaustive.

Occult can be used to identify a few of the activities taking place in the photographs as intended to have a

mystical significance. An afternoon spent discreetly showing one or two of the tamer photos around in occult bookshops yields a gloomy clerk dressed in a threadbare robe who won't give his own name but is willing to identify Ramon Echavarria.

"That's Ramon Echavarria. Big shot. I don't mind telling you who he is because he's dead, so what's he going to do to me now?"

Architecture, **Bureaucracy**, or **Library Use** can be used at City Hall, downtown, or at the Los Angeles County Recorder's Office to link the full name "Ramon Echavarria" to both an address in Highland Park and to a parcel of farmland in the north part of the city proper.

However, the Investigators have to go back to the 1923 tax rolls (before Echavarria's death) in order to learn this. This becomes a clue, or verification, that Echavarria died or moved in 1924. According to the same records, he bought the Highland Park property in 1908 and the farmland in 1922, paying his taxes in full and on time for both. One Abraham Buchwald filed taxes on Echavarria's behalf in every year since 1918.

Investigations of the farmland continue in **Los Angeles 12, "The Farm,"** p. 96.

Given Echavarria's 1923 address, it requires no ability to find the house in question and confirm that it's the mansion in the safe deposit box photos.

Interviewing or investigating the current occupants of the house is a dead end. The current occupant is a real estate developer with a large family. His neighbors and pastor vouch for his good character enthusiastically.

Oral History or **Streetwise** can be used to ask around the neighborhood surrounding Echavarria's former address. Fritz McDermott, an elderly man who's lived on the block for his entire life, remembers Echavarria.

"Rich fellow. Wasn't clear where his money came from, though. Never went out to an office or anything like that. For certain values of it, I guess I'd say he kept to himself. Now, he did throw lots of parties, invited all kinds of people. I'd see movie stars show up for his shindigs, and I'd see bums and street people shufflin' in, too. Not that he ever invited me to one. And not that I'd've cared to go. He had kind of a weird vibe. Creepy? Yeah. You might say he was creepy, mister."

After Ramon Echavarria's full name is known, attempts to use **Cop Talk** to ask around the LAPD, or to investigate the police records, lead to **Los Angeles 11, "The Police Report,"** on page 95. This is the only public police document that mentions Echavarria, who was — as far as the police were otherwise concerned, anyway — a model citizen.

Library Use can also be used after Echavarria's full name is known to find his short obituary in the Los Angeles *Times*. The obituary ran on August 15th, 1924. He's identified as a long-time resident of Southern California and as a philanthropist with no surviving kin. The obituary lists his cause of death as "regrettable violence." Investigators can visit his modest gravestone in the Forest Lawn cemetery in Glendale without any trouble; there's nothing interesting about it, however.

7. Footwork: Richard Spend

Scene Type: Core (Footwork)

Lead-ins: The photos from the safe deposit box (Los Angeles 5, "The Safe Deposit Box," p. 88).

Summary: The Investigators track down information about Richard Spend.

Core Clue: Richard Spend died in 1924, nearly day-and-date with the 1924 Investigators' attack on the Echavarria cult's summoning. (Library Use at the Los Angeles *Times*, Los Angeles Central Library, or any tabloid morgue room. Cop Talk at the LAPD.)

Core Clue: Richard was survived by his sister, Yolanda Spenzel. (Library Use at the Los Angeles *Times*. Bureaucracy at City Hall.)

Core Clue: Other movie stars attended some of Echavarria's parties, including Meg Lighton, Brandon Grant, and Olivia Clarendon. (Library Use at any tabloid morgue room.)

Core Clue: Yolanda Spenzel now lives at a mid-Wilshire mansion. (Bureaucracy at City Hall or a simple search of public directories.)



It's public knowledge that Richard Spend was a B-level character actor in the films of the day, popularly admired.

It's common celebrity gossip that he died under mysterious circumstances in 1924.

Library Use at the Los Angeles *Times* turns up Spend's obituary. He died on August 13th, 1924. The obituary cites natural causes and lists sister Yolanda Spenzel as his only surviving relation. It may be interesting to Investigators who've also seen Ramon Echavarria's obituary that Spend's ran just one day before Echavarria's own.

Cop Talk at the LAPD turns up the police report on the summoning where Spend died (**Los Angeles 11, "The Police Report,"** page 95).

Library Use at the archives of either the Los Angeles Central Library or the morgue files of any of three or four different Los Angeles tabloids

provides a more sensational obituary, complete with a variety of rumors and outright fabrications about the circumstances of Spend's death. The *Filmland Express* handout is a good example.

Library Use at any tabloid morgue room turns up a wide-ranging paragraph in a story on Echavarria's parties (where, the story says, Richard Spend was a fixture) that names three other movie stars who also attended those parties. Two of the three, Meg Lighton and Brandon Grant, are minor actors who haven't worked in years and can't be tracked down locally anymore, but the third is Olivia Clarendon. At the time, Olivia was a B-level star of roughly Spend's level of fame, but over the last decade she's become one of the best-known actresses working in Hollywood, her face recognizable to anyone.

A **simple search** of public directories or **Bureaucracy** among City Hall's public records turns up a current address for Yolanda Spenzel. The address leads to a mid-Wilshire mansion (**Los Angeles 8, "Yolanda Spenzel,"** below), where Spenzel's domicile will turn out to be the carriage house.

8. Yolanda Spenzel, the Sister

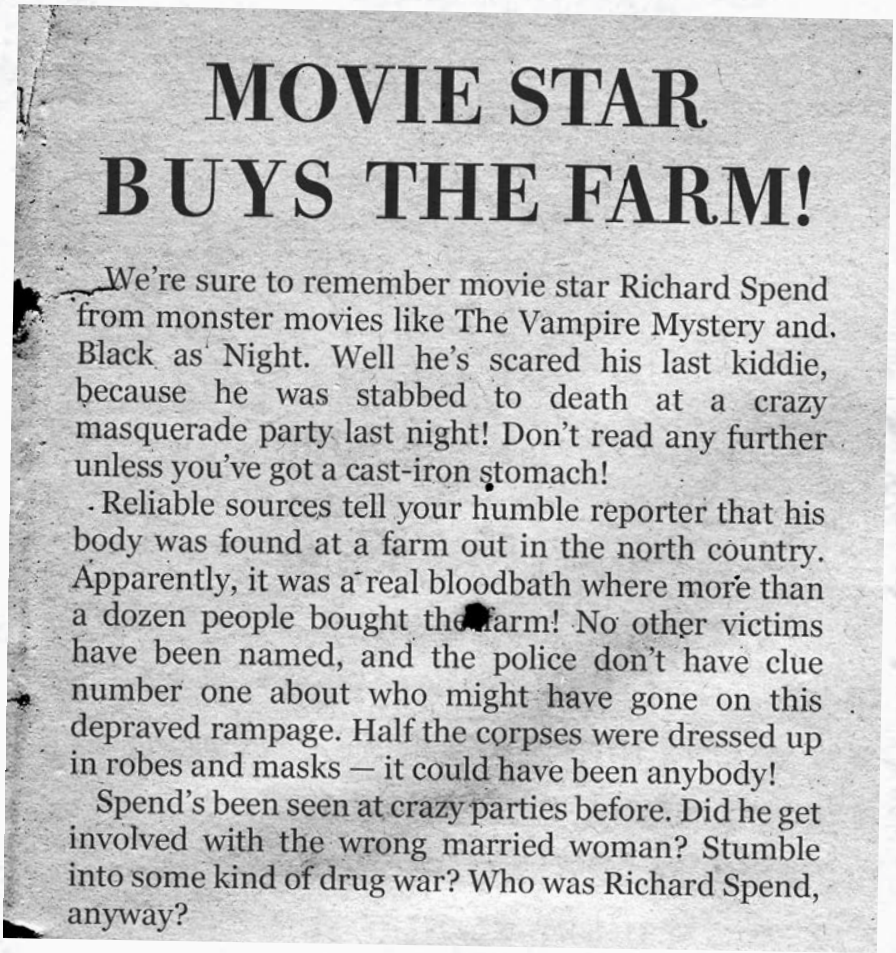
Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Identifying Yolanda Spenzel as Richard Spend's surviving sister and discovering her current address (Los Angeles 7, "Footwork: Richard Spend," p. 90).

Summary: The Investigators interview Yolanda Spenzel, the surviving sister of Richard Spend.

Core Clue: Richard Spend was mixed up with Ramon Echavarria in the months leading up to both of their deaths in 1924. (Flattery or Intimidation on Yolanda Spenzel.)

Core Clue: "Police detectives" (the 1924 Investigators) were investigating Echavarria in 1924 and asked about Nectar. (Flattery or a Reassurance spend on Yolanda Spenzel.)



MOVIE STAR BUYS THE FARM!

We're sure to remember movie star Richard Spend from monster movies like The Vampire Mystery and. Black as Night. Well he's scared his last kiddie, because he was stabbed to death at a crazy masquerade party last night! Don't read any further unless you've got a cast-iron stomach!

Reliable sources tell your humble reporter that his body was found at a farm out in the north country. Apparently, it was a real bloodbath where more than a dozen people bought the farm! No other victims have been named, and the police don't have clue number one about who might have gone on this depraved rampage. Half the corpses were dressed up in robes and masks — it could have been anybody!

Spend's been seen at crazy parties before. Did he get involved with the wrong married woman? Stumble into some kind of drug war? Who was Richard Spend, anyway?

Since her brother Richard's death in 1924, Yolanda Spenzel has been reduced to working as a domestic servant for a wealthy family living midway between downtown Los Angeles and the beachfront, in the mid-Wilshire neighborhood. (Prior to Richard's death, the proceeds of his acting career supported both of them.)

Yolanda is embittered by her fallen life; she's neither particularly good at her job nor particularly pleasant to be around.

Flattery is the most effective way to approach an interview with Yolanda. After making the Investigators wait outside the carriage-house apartment where she lives while she makes herself presentable, she relates the following:

"Not too many people coming around and asking about Ricky these days. Yeah, he got mixed up in some stuff. Which it sounds like you know. For a couple of months before he died, he was going to these parties that his friend Echavarria was throwing at his mansion. Did I say parties? I meant 'parties.' Did he ever invite me? No. Probably for the better. He never admitted it, but I think they were filming… [she whispers this:] *pornography up there. Nasty stuff, I'm*

sure, which is probably why he was always sneaking around about it, coming in at all hours, missing his calls for his real work.

"I confronted him about it. I wasn't scared of him. I never was. I told him he was being stupid. Putting everything we had worked for at risk like that. And for no reason. He laughed at me, laughed right out loud.Who's laughing now? Nobody, that's who.

"Later on, I did kind of start to get scared of him. He was moody. Sometimes he got violent. Sometime he just sat in a chair until he started, you know… drooling out of his mouth.

"I was right. I always was. Do you have a sister? [After waiting for a response:] *You should listen to her, if you have a sister."*

If the Investigators continue to press, she also recalls the following detail:

"You know, now that I think about it, the police came around once, asking about Ricky, before he died. There were plenty of people asking after he died, but now that we're talking about it, there was this pair of detectives that came around before he died. They were asking about Echavarria, too. Weird questions, too — what was Ricky reading, did he take any drugs, did I know anything about 'honey.' No, that's not it, not honey. 'Nectar.' They asked about 'nectar.' I'm sure that was the name of some perverted movie he was working on. Or the name of a hooker."

These two men were not actually policemen; they were Vince Stack and Douglas Henslowe of the 1924 Investigators, posing as police detectives as they followed leads toward the center of Echavarria's Nectar-distribution operation. Yolanda can identify either a picture or description of either of the men.

Intimidation can be used rather than Flattery to turn up nearly all of the information above, although it takes a lot more back-and-forth to get the basic story that way. Getting the information about Stack and Henslowe by this method is impossible without an additional 1-point **Reassurance** spend.

Assess Honesty suggests that Yolanda is telling the truth. She seems to get a great deal of satisfaction from the fact that she was right and that Richard ought to have listened to her.

9. Olivia Clarendon, the Movie Star

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Olivia's attendance at Echavarria's parties (Los Angeles 7, "Footwork: Richard Spend," p. 90).

Summary: The Investigators talk to movie star Olivia Clarendon, who attended a few of Echavarria's parties but never got mixed up in the cult.

Core Clue: The inner circle of Echavarria's cult consisted of Echavarria, George Ayers, and Samson Trammel. (Oral History at any film business location. Reassurance or Cop Talk on the studio lot where Clarendon is shooting on any given day.)

In 1924, Olivia Clarendon was a working actress struggling her way up the movie business's food chain. Now she's a bona fide movie star of fantastic wealth, a subject of public adoration.

As a result of her current wealth and fame, Clarendon is a hard woman to talk to. She has plenty of gatekeepers who're jealous of their various positions of trust and privilege in her entourage. Investigators looking to dredge up harmful gossip from the ancient past find themselves blocked with especial prejudice.

Using **Oral History** around the studio lots of Southern California is sufficient to learn where Olivia is shooting on any given day, but it requires a *spend* from an ability to actually gain access to her. Various abilities might work, depending on the approach. For example, **Reassurance** ("We don't mean Olivia any harm, and we'll definitely keep her name out of it") or **Cop Talk** ("Nobody wants to see this devolve into court orders and trips downtown, ma'am") are sufficient to secure a few moments access to the actress while she walks from a movie set to her limousine at the end of a day working.

A 2-point **Credit Rating** spend garners a high-society introduction from a friend of a friend, which puts the supplicant Investigator on equal social footing with Clarendon, in both her eyes and the eyes of her handlers. Jealous fans (and perhaps jealous Investigators) marvel as the Investigator, and perhaps one well-scrubbed associate, disappears into Clarendon's limousine, invited to a private dinner at her mid-Wilshire mansion.

However the Investigators gain access, Clarendon tells them that she met Echavarria while she was climbing the ladder, looking for people who could help her career. She thought Echavarria might be someone like that, but after going to a few of his parties, she became convinced that he was a Very Bad Man, a depraved pervert, devoted to Satan worship or worse. Upon sussing this out, she never talked to any of those people again.

Olivia mentions that she was first invited to one of Echavarria's parties by George Ayers, whom she knew as a UCLA professor who had helped her do research on a movie scenario she had wanted to write (but never did).

Pacing: Jack Pizner

With all of the strange people hanging around a movie set, this scene is an excellent time for an Investigator to half notice, or half suspect, that someone is watching them. Depending on how their Sense Trouble test goes, Jack Pizner may or may not disappear cleanly before he can be identified. Obviously, this only occurs if Pizner had already picked up the Investigators in the wake of them visiting the 1924 ritual site (see **Los Angeles 12, "The Farm,"** p. 96) or the LAPD to ask about the police file on the 1924 summoning massacre (see **Los Angeles 11, "The Police Report,"** p. 95).



She hasn't talked to Ayers since she realized how unsavory the Echavarria social group was, but she knows that he was a professor of ancient religions. She recalls that Ayers used to brag about being part of Echavarria's "inner circle," which she got the sense included Echavarria, Ayers, and Samson Trammel.

Olivia didn't, and doesn't, know anyone by the name of Edgar Job. If the Investigators describe Edgar Job, she remembers that Ayers had a younger friend from campus, whose name could well have been Edgar Job. She remembers that he was a math student. *"Talked my ear off about it on one occasion. Obsessive little fellow."* She can't make this connection based on Edgar's name alone, though.

If asked about Nectar, she foggily (and incorrectly) recalls that it was a mixed drink Echavarria's circle preferred.

Olivia will only tell an Investigator who used Reassurance, and then only in hushed tones out of earshot of anyone else, that she is still haunted by a brief glimpse, at one of the few parties she did attend, of Echavarria having sex with a tangle of other people—men and women—on a couch that looked to her, for all the world, like it had a mouth on it that was itself participating in the depraved acts. *"It can't have been true, of course,"* she adds quickly. *"But even ten years later, I can't get that picture out of my head."*

The couch in question appears in a few of the safe deposit box photos, although it is not manifesting a Mouth in any of them.

Assess Honesty suggests that Olivia is telling the truth about all of this, as best she knows it. The Investigators get the sense that Clarendon is very sharp and that her position at the top of the Hollywood heap is entirely justified.

Unless it began with a Credit Rating spend, the Investigators' interview with Clarendon almost certainly ends with a devoted friend whisking the actress away into a limousine, to a camera call, or to an interview with a fawning celebrity reporter.



10. Abraham Buchwald

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The books of account from the safe deposit box (Los Angeles 5, "The Safe Deposit Box," p. 88) and the tax records of Ramon Echavarria (Los Angeles 6, "Footwork: Ramon Echavarria," p. 89).

Summary: The Investigators track down information about the books of account, which leads to accountant Abraham Buchwald.

Core Clue: Echavarria ran a cult of earthly pleasures devoted to an ancient deity called Gol-Goroth, but, in 1924, a "police investigation" — unknown to Buchwald, the activities of the 1924 Investigators — led to Echavarria's death and the cult's dissolution. (Flattery, Interrogation, Intimidation, or Reassurance on Buchwald.)



Abraham Buchwald was Ramon Echavarria's accountant from 1918 until Echavarria's death in 1924. He's the one who kept the books of account that were stolen by the 1924 Investigators and locked away in the safe deposit box. In the account books, he's referred to by the code name "Towncar."

Back in 1924, Buchwald was privy to Echavarria's illegal business distributing the Nectar that flowed from the Mouth at Echavarria's mansion. Buchwald dabbled in the perverse rituals of the '24 cult without getting carried away. He had a highly profitable client in Echavarria and was willing to follow that money off the beaten path to secure the continued business. Buchwald wasn't present for the cataclysmic ritual that the 1924 Investigators attempted to abort, so he survived the cult's demise.

10. Abraham Buchwald

Buchwald quietly burned his robes and went about his business.

Today, Buchwald lives in a respectable house with his family in the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. He has an office in downtown Los Angeles where he employs a secretary to answer the phones, transcribe dictation, and do other administrative tasks. Abraham Buchwald is a successful professional, a solid family man, and an asset to society. He tries not to think about Echavarria and the strange things he heard about and witnessed in 1924.

Bureaucracy at City Hall or **Reassurance** in the course of a phone call with the professional organization of accountants in Southern California yields the address of Buchwald's downtown office based on his full name (most likely learned from Echavarria's tax records in **Los Angeles 6, "Footwork: Ramon Echavarria,"** p. 89).

Oral History or **Streetwise** used around the downtown building where Buchwald keeps his office suggests that the accountant runs a respected and respectable business.

Bureaucracy at City Hall or **Cop Talk** at the LAPD gives Buchwald's accounting business a clean legal bill of health — he hasn't been and isn't currently involved in anything shady or suspect as far as these institutions' records say.

Flattery, **Interrogation**, **Intimidation**, or **Reassurance** are equally effective approaches to interviewing Buchwald, who is easy to track down at either his office or his home. The approach used colors the interaction, but is otherwise not relevant to determining the information gained.

"I worked for Mr. Echavarria from 1918 when I opened my business until his death in 1924. He was a wealthy man, and keeping his accounts was the lion's share of my business. It wasn't particularly good for my business when he passed away, but I found other clients. I'm a family man. I support a wife, my children."

Buchwald is forthright with answers about other general questions until they begin to delve into the various illegal and perverse cult activities, at which point he clams up and claims that he has nothing further to say.

There are three routes to bringing down Buchwald's wall of silence. The first is invoking the "Towncar" code name, which proves to Buchwald that the Investigators could ruin him by turning the old books of account over to the police. The second and third are 1-point **Interrogation** or **Reassurance** spends, respectively.

Buchwald continues:

"Mr. Echavarria was the leader of a… I guess you'd call it a church. They worshipped an old-world god they called Gol-Goroth. It was very… druidic. There was a man from the university, George Ayers, a professor. He was an expert about these old religions.

"Mr. Echavarria hosted orgies. That's the plain truth. That was how they, you know, worshipped. He had a drug they all called Nectar that was worth more by weight than gold. They sold it, to people in the cult and to a few really jaded outsiders. That's what those books are — records of Mr. Echavarria's Nectar trade. It was the source of most of his money. He had inherited some money, but the lion's share was from Nectar."

Buchwald doesn't offer anything about his own involvement in the cult, but if asked:

"I was involved enough to make sure I kept getting the business. I dipped my wick at a few of his parties. I never took the Nectar, though. That stuff made them all come unhinged."

If asked about the cult's downfall:

"One day Mr. Echavarria called me up to the house, and when I showed he was raving. He said that there was a police investigation trying to bring him down. He told me if the police came around asking questions that I wasn't supposed to talk about them. Pardon my French, but no shit.

"There was a big ceremony a few weeks after that. I begged out of it. I don't mind admitting that I was frightened by the police investigation. Thank goodness I stayed away, because that was the night the whole thing blew up. I have the sense that there was a connection between the investigation and the end of it all, but I don't know what happened, and I don't want to know. I'm just glad that none of it blew up on me. I have a family, now. Children. You understand?

"You're not going to drag any of this out into the open, are you? Nothing good can come of it. Let sleeping dogs lie."

If asked about the books of account:

"Where did you get these? [Then, quickly:] *Never mind. Don't tell me.*

"These went missing from my office after I learned about the police investigation, but before Mr. Echavarria's death. I had duplicates, luckily. I was terrified that the police had gotten hold of them and would use them to put us all on trial, and that Mr. Echavarria would find out."

Buchwald can identify Echavarria as the one who corresponds to the code name "Black" in the books of account.

If asked about Edgar Job, Buchwald has a vague recollection that there was someone in the cult by that name but didn't particularly know the man. Job certainly didn't hold a position of prominence in the cult, according to Buchwald.

If asked about Samson Trammel, Buchwald remembers the man. He has

the sense that Trammel was a trusted member of Echavarria's inner circle, but wouldn't swear to it. The guy creeped him out (as did most of Echavarria's associates), and once it became clear to Buchwald that he wasn't going to get Trammel as a client, he avoided the man. He hasn't seen Trammel, or given him any thought, for a decade.

Even after all this, a 1-point **Assess Honesty** spend suggests that there's something additional that Buchwald hasn't said yet. A final follow-up along the lines of "Are you sure that's everything, Mr. Buchwald?" leads to this final morsel:

"Do you know what the strangest thing was that Mr. Echavarria ever said to me? One day, when we were sitting together in his study going over some accounts, he looked up out of the blue and said to me, 'Abraham, would you like to know something truly perverse? Those who follow me in the way of Gol-Goroth are deceived. My work goes deeper than any of them know. Prepare yourself, Abraham. Prepare yourself for that end.'

"I don't have the faintest idea what he might have meant by that. Prepare myself for what? But if what you're doing here is prying into that — that deeper thing — let me make a recommendation to you. There will be no profit to it. Go home to your families. Hold close the ones you love. There is no profit to dredging up the buried past."

11. The Police Report

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Seeking information about Ramon Echavarria or Richard Spend at the LAPD (Los Angeles 6, "Footwork: Ramon Echavarria," p. 89, or Los Angeles 7, "Footwork: Richard Spend," p. 90).

Summary: The Investigators obtain and read the police report about what the authorities found in the wake of the 1924 cult's summoning (and the '24 Investigators' failure to stop them).

Core Clue: Echavarria and others were killed in a horrific massacre in 1924, which took place on rural land owned by Echavarria. (Bureaucracy at the District Attorney's office or Cop Talk at the LAPD.)

The police report on the cataclysmic end of the Echavarria cult is a thick sheaf of documentation that tells the tale of what the police found when they arrived on the scene of the '24 cult's interrupted summoning of "Gol-Goroth."

Bureaucracy at the District Attorney's office or **Cop Talk** at the LAPD is sufficient to get access to the file, with a 1-point spend in either sufficient to have a copy of it produced by the respective agency's secretarial pool for pickup the next day.

The file accurately identifies the location of the summoning (which leads to **Los Angeles 12, "The Farm"**).

The simple version of the story that the file tells paints the dead as the heroin-abusing members of a sex club for the wealthy and privileged whose final gathering descended into an orgy of violence for no clear reason.

The gathering took place — and the bodies were all found — in or near an otherwise unused barn on agricultural land that had only recently been annexed from the county by the city. The farmland in question had not been farmed that year and was owned by Echavarria.

The barn was on fire when the police arrived, and nearly all of the dead had already expired. The remainder all succumbed to their wounds after the police arrived. Most of the bodies had been grossly mutilated, although a few had been shot instead of (or in addition to) sustaining other wounds. A medical examiner's report suggests that wild animals were responsible for many of the wounds, which were more consistent with biting and chewing than man-made weapons.

The report notes that some of the bodies were found *in flagrante delicto*. (None of these particular bodies were those of the deceased '24 Investigators, of course.)

The roster of the identified dead found on the scene includes the following:

Ramon Echavarria (body identified by one of his household servants).

Richard Spend (body identified by Yolanda Spenzel).

Four women and six men of varying description, roughly half of whom are named and were identified by next of kin, the remainder of whom are identified only as John or Jane Doe.

Vincent Stack (from identification on his person, which included a private investigator's license valid in New Jersey).

Katherine Clark (from identification found at the scene).

Franklin Cormac Kullman (from identification on his person).

The cultists' bodies were all found either in the nude or wearing robes of apparent ritual significance.

It is possible to make reasonable, but not absolute, matches between a few of the unnamed and unidentified dead with individuals who appear in some of the safe deposit box photos. (Echavarria and Spend, of course, also appear in the photos, as the Investigators probably already know.)

Stack's body was found with a shotgun in his clenched hands. Kullman's body was found near the Investigators' car, parked in foliage nearby, his wheelchair in the trunk, having apparently been dragged from the car. Clark's body was decapitated, her head never found, consumed by one of the Liar's maws.

Trails of blood and footprints leading from the scene suggest that at least one, and perhaps several, individuals escaped the events, but none were ever found by the police.

None of the unidentified dead matches the description of George Ayers, who had already left the US for Ethiopia by the time the summoning was carried out. Neither do any of the unidentified dead match general descriptions of Walter Winston, Douglas Henslowe, or Edgar Job.

In one written report, a police detective (correctly) debunks the idea that wild animals could have caused the gross damage the medical examiner ascribes to them because the relatively obvious timeline was too short.

There is a lengthy chain of correspondence between city and county officials trying to get the other party to take responsibility for the investigation, with the city eventually forced to take up the task.

Assess Honesty or **Cop Talk** used on the contents of the file suggests that although the circumstances were completely salacious and attracted some media attention at the time, none of the victims were well connected enough, or had surviving kin with the necessary pull, to warrant a continued investigation past the apparently obvious explanation for the killings — that the members of the group were deviants, and that getting high, having perverse sex, and killing each other is something that deviants do. The jurisdictional complications between the city and county further muddied the waters, leading to a less vigorous investigation than the situation frankly warranted.

In fact, a 1-point **Flattery** spend at the LAPD connects the Investigators to a veteran homicide detective named Trent Huggins. Huggins worked the massacre case back in the day. He's always suspected that there was more to the situation than he was directed to put into the official report, and it still doesn't sit well with him that it was abandoned. This spend gives the Investigators access to a friendly ear inside the LAPD, a 2-point dedicated Cop Talk pool where the LAPD is involved. Huggins can't give them any direct support but is happy to help them out on the q.t., when he can.

One final complication arises from pursuing the police file. Jack Pizner (see **Los Angeles 13, "The Private Investigator,"** p. 98) has contacts at the LAPD who've promised to alert him if anyone asks around about the file. This then triggers the beginning of Pizner's antagonist reaction to the Investigator's activities. A Difficulty 4 **SenseTrouble** test is sufficient to alert an Investigator that they have gotten a squint-eyed, suspicious look from a detective while requesting or perusing the file, but no amount of follow-up or questioning leads to additional information. Pizner has greased the cops well.

12. The Farm

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The location of farmland owned by Echavarria (Los Angeles 6, "Footwork: Ramon Echavarria," p. 89) or the location of the 1924 ritual (Los Angeles 11, "The Police Report," p. 95).

Summary: The Investigators research the land where the summoning took place.

Core Clue: The land where the summoning took place is strange and blighted even today. (Various combinations of simple search, Architecture, Geology, Biology, Medicine, and Oral History at the farm.)

Traveling to the farmland once owned by Echavarria, where the '24 ritual took place, is trivial given Echavarria's ownership records or the police report on the summoning.

A **simple search** at the location itself reveals that two buildings on the site burned to the ground some time ago. **Architecture** suggests that these buildings were a barn and a farmhouse, burning down about ten years ago.

A **simple search** further reveals that construction efforts were recently begun on the parcel formerly belonging to Echavarria — there has been fresh digging. **Architecture** or **Geology** suggests that those efforts were abandoned a few months ago.

This parcel of land is currently part of a housing development. Investigators

12. The Farm



standing on a hill and looking around (a **simple search**) discover, if they do not already know it, that a construction crew is erecting a dozen houses on an adjacent parcel of land.

Spending any significant amount of time on this patch of ground leads to a surprise encounter with a feral cat, who — apparently disturbed by their footsteps in the tall grass — sinks its teeth into an Investigator's leg, hissing and fighting and holding on until pried off or killed. This deals no real wounds — a single point of damage at the outside, and a painful limp for the next day or two.

Biology or **Medicine** after the fact doesn't reveal anything strange about the cat other than its unwarranted and homicidal behavior, save perhaps that its teeth are in worse shape than would be expected, ingrown and crooked. (But on the other hand, it *is* a feral cat, hardly an exemplar of its species.)

(It and other animals living in this area corrupted by the Liar's summoning those years ago are simply reflecting the depraved nature of that Old One, their animalism intensified and warped. Luckily, no people have lived here since then.)

Upon returning to the city, at least one of the Investigators realizes that they got a pretty bad fly bite while on the site. It swells up and gets infected but causes no lasting harm.

The Construction Crew

Using **Oral History** to interview the construction crew working on the adjacent land, the Investigators learn that they're building a multistage development of single-family homes. They broke ground a few months ago.

The development plans called for them to begin work on the former Echavarria land, but after a series of accidents there — two bad snakebites and an attack by a rabid wild dog — the crew decided to shift their work and begin on a different parcel instead. If pressed, at least one of the workers admits that he didn't sleep well, and had strange dreams, in the time that they were working the Echavarria parcel. None of the crew liked working up there, they all agree. It just gave them a bad feeling.

Assess Honesty reveals that, in addition to all of these reports being essentially true and honest, the foreman has a strange vibe and may be withholding something. He's been hired by Jack Pizner (see **Los Angeles 13, "The Private Investigator,"** p. 98) to report on anyone who shows up and pokes around the Echavarria parcel.

A 1-point **Interrogation**, **Intimidation**, or **Bargain** spend used to browbeat, rough up, or bribe the foreman results in him handing

over a scrap of paper bearing the name "Jack," a phone number, and an address. *"He gave me five bucks and told me to call him if anyone came asking about whatever happened here back in the '20s,"* says the foreman. The number and address correspond to Jack Pizner's office.

The Neighbors

Oral History taken from neighboring farmers and ranchers suggests that since '22, the Echavarria-owned land's been essentially unused. Letters written to the owner of record — whose name none of the locals can recall — inquiring about leasing the land to farm went unanswered. (Echavarria didn't farm the land from '22 to '24, and the development company that bought it from his estate has essentially spent the time since '24 acquiring the surrounding parcels and preparing to break ground, which they've only done recently.)

A few of the locals remember the massacre back in 1924 — *"Police cars and a big fire and shotgun blasts and all kind of city folk dead on the scene."* As does the police report, they put the whole thing down to the inexplicable acts of city people leading them to get exactly what they deserve. These salt-of-the-earth rural folk aren't looking forward to having city folk as neighbors when the new development is finished, and they don't care who knows it.

One rancher is willing to admit that he grazed a herd of cattle on the Echavarria land in 1926 even though it didn't belong to him. But, after he lost three head to a series of wild animal attacks ("found 'em dead, chewed on by wolves"), he moved his animals back to safer ground, and they've been safe since.

13. The Private Investigator

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Getting the attention of Jack Pizner (Los Angeles 11, "The Police Report," p. 95, or Los Angeles 12, "The Farm," p. 96).

Summary: The Investigators are threatened by Jack Pizner and offered money to butt out and go home.

Core Clue: Pizner's attention alerts the Investigators that someone in the current day is still interested in what happened in 1924 and likely opens a new trail of inquiry for them.

In the wake of the Savannah cultists' failure to dissuade the Investigators from following the trail of clues to Los Angeles, Captain Walker (Samson Trammel's right-hand operator) has hired a Southern California private investigator named Jack Pizner to deal with the problem at a remove from Samson Trammel's contemporary operation. Given that the violent approach was unsuccessful in Georgia, Walker provided Pizner with a substantial bankroll to buy the Investigators off. Pizner would rather keep the money, though, so he plans to try threats first.

Walker is also interested in finding out why the Investigators have gotten involved now and has promised Pizner a bonus if he's able to provide any information about that. This will be an opportunity for the Investigators to give up Janet Winston-Rogers's involvement, either accidentally or on purpose.

Pizner has well-greased contacts at the LAPD (see **Los Angeles 11, "The Police Report,"** p. 95) and picks up the Investigators' trail there if they show up to ask about Echavarria or the events surrounding the disastrous 1924 summoning. He's also paid off one of the construction foremen working the site of the 1924 summoning (see **Los Angeles 12, "The Farm,"** p. 96) to give him a call if anyone shows up and snoops around the site of the old barn.

Once Pizner picks up the Investigators' trail, he follows them on foot and by car for a day or more. His objective is to figure out how many of them there are, to mark the group's leader (if it seems to have one), and to figure out which Investigators are the weak links — that is, which are most likely to crumble under the weight of a good old-fashioned beating.

During this period, Investigators engage in **Sense Trouble** vs. **Shadowing** contests with Pizner in order to realize that they're being followed and to spot the PI lurking in the shadows. Dramatically speaking, you should engineer these contests for Investigators who're alone, if you can, to ratchet up the sense of menace. Don't hesitate to use the Investigators' Drives to split them up if — as in one playtest — they obsessively travel in groups.

If Pizner assembles the intelligence he seeks before being interrupted, he waits for the weak link he's identified to be alone, preferably at a remove from the other Investigators, preferably in a private place. At that point he moves in, blackjack in hand, and alternates cruel blows with pointed questions. It's just him — he doesn't bring along any extra muscle because he doesn't expect that he'll need it.

"What the hell are you doing in Los Angeles, huh?"

"*Why don't you go back home where you belong, huh?"*

13. The Private Investigator

The Drop

Under dramatically appropriate circumstances, the Keeper may allow one set of characters to get "the drop" on the other. This means that the group with the upper hand can automatically kill at least one member of the disadvantaged side if any of its members make a false move or attempt to break free. (It is also possible for an individual to get the drop on another, or a group to get the drop on an individual. It may be possible, depending on circumstances, for one person to get the drop on a small group.)

PCs always get a chance for at least one of them to make a **Sense Trouble** (or similar general ability) test to avoid being subjected to the drop. To place NPCs under the drop, they must succeed at a **Stealth** test (when sneaking up on unsuspecting targets) or an **Athletics vs. Athletics** contest (to see which side draws first.) A lost **Athletics vs. Athletics** contest means the other side gets the drop on you.

"The drop" may not be used as a shortcut to a quick kill and can only be used by characters who intend to keep their enemies at bay (perhaps to search, rob or render them captives) rather than killing them on the spot. If player characters get the drop on enemies and then attempt an instant kill, a convenient plot contrivance causes them to fail, allowing a normal fight to then proceed.

This rule, originally from *Stunning Eldritch Tales*, is appropriate for any GUMSHOE game.



"What the hell do you care what might or might not have happened back in '24, huh?"

"Look at you, you fucking academic. You're out of your depth. Why don't you go home and sit behind a desk, huh?"

"Be a shame if something happened to your family while you were across the country shoving your nose in where it doesn't belong, huh?"

Pizner is well practiced with his blackjack. While his blows are painful, they never inflict more than 1 point of damage and are aimed so as not to leave visible bruises unless he wants them to.

If Pizner's chosen victim doesn't submit to the bludgeoning, he pulls a revolver and holds it on his victim with his off hand to suggest that failure to submit to the beating will bring more deadly consequences.

Pizner isn't above delivering these beatings and questions to female characters.

Any questions leveled at Pizner during the "interview" are met with additional bludgeoning; an Investigator who doesn't get the point gets an almost baffled *"Look,* shitbird*, I'm the one who asks the questions in our little scenario here, huh?"*

Once he's cowed his victim, Pizner draws his gun (if he hasn't already) and gets right up in the Investigator's face.

"Let me speak clearly. It's time for you and your friends, [whom he proceeds to identify, in sequence, with unflattering descriptions], to get out of town. I'll be watching."

With that, he exits the scene.

Pizner continues to follow the Investigators. Use continued **Sense Trouble** vs. **Shadowing** contests as appropriate.

After a day or so (and assuming that the Investigators don't give up and go home), Captain Walker checks in with Pizner, which provokes the private investigator to move on to his backup plan of actually offering the Investigators the money he was provided.

This time, Pizner approaches the leader of the Investigators that he identified earlier. As before, he tries to catch the Investigator alone, but this time, he opts for a public location to limit the Investigator's violent recourse.

"Hi, you're [name]. You don't know me. Maybe your friend [name, whom Pizner previously beat up] mentioned meeting me.

"I see that you're still in town. That's stupid, but I'll be honest, you and your friends don't seem all that bright. It pains me, but I'm going to offer you a carrot to go with the stick. You see this?"

Pizner opens up his blazer and pulls a bundle of cash partway out of the inside pocket. At a rough guess, he's carrying close to a thousand dollars. The Investigator also gets a good look at Pizner's revolver, in his shoulder holster.

"If you tell me that you and your friends are going to go home, I'm'a give you half of this cash right here, right now. And then I'm'a follow you to the train station and watch you get on a train. And then I'm'a mail you the rest of this here cash.

"And then you and me, we're never gonna see each other again. I think that'd be real nice, if we never had to see each other again.

"What'd'ya say, shitstain?"

This encounter, naturally, is highly provisional. Many tactics the Investigators might adopt change his actions and reactions.

Keep Pizner's ultimate motives — to do Walker's job by running the PCs off and finding out why they're looking into all of this now, of all times — and the resources available to him in mind while you determine what might happen and what Pizner might try.

The avenues the Investigators might follow to learn about Pizner are detailed in the next encounter (**Los Angeles 14, "Investigating the Investigator"**).

Jack Pizner

Three Things: Sweaty, and dabs at his brow with a handkerchief. Rolls his eyes dramatically when he thinks he's being lied to, or even suspects he might be. Enthusiast of foul and violent language.

Athletics 9, Conceal 10, Driving 8, Firearms 8, Health 15, Scuffling 9, Sense Trouble 10, Stealth 10

Weapon: −1 (blackjack), +0 (revolver)

14. Investigating the Investigator

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Jack Pizner's shadowing and/or intimidation of the Investigators (Los Angeles 13, "The Private Investigator," p. 98) or the name and phone number revealed by the construction foreman (Los Angeles 12, "The Farm," p. 96).

Summary: The Investigators figure out who Jack Pizner is and why he wants to run them off their investigation.

Core Clue: Pizner was hired by Captain Walker. (Intimidation and then some on Pizner, or Locksmith and Evidence Collection in Pizner's office.)

The Investigators are likely to be able to turn the tables on Jack Pizner one way or the other, whether they manage to shadow him back to his office or home once they realize he's been following them, manage to turn the tables on him when he tries to beat one of them up, or some variation on either of those. The Investigators might also be able to arrange a meeting with Pizner through subterfuge after getting hold of his name and phone number from the construction foreman at the old barn site.



It will require responsive thinking on your part to react appropriately to whatever methods and tactics the players decide to try. The following are general guidelines. Other tactics are clearly possible, from sabotaging his car to complaining to the police, but the information below should suggest enough about Pizner's nature and habits that you'll be able to react to any given plan appropriately.

Shadowing Pizner

A **Shadowing** vs. **Sense Trouble** contest is necessary, once per day, to shadow Pizner without alerting him. If the Investigators have already been to Pizner's home or office, however (such as after getting Pizner's office address from the construction foreman at the construction site in **Los Angeles 12, "The Farm,"** p. 96), they receive an additional 3-point dedicated pool of Shadowing they can use on these tests, knowing the locations Pizner frequents.

Assuming success, the Investigators will likely be frustrated to discover that Pizner spends most of his time following them. On the first day of successfully trailing him, the Investigators discover

the locations of both his office and home, if they don't already know them, as he stops by the former and spends the night at the latter. (This, in turn, gives them the dedicated pool described above.)

On the second or third day of trailing Pizner, Captain Walker checks in with him, meeting him at his office to check in on his progress. (According to the most likely unfolding of events, this comes after Pizner has beaten up one of the Investigators but before he has offered money to the Investigators to leave town.)

Interviewing or Pigeonholing Pizner

Bargain, Cop Talk, Interrogation, or Reassurance are of no use in getting Pizner to give up any useful information whatsoever. All those tactics roll off his back.

Intimidation yields the information that Pizner personally couldn't care less about the Investigators but that someone else — whom Pizner seems to fear — hired him to find out who sent the Investigators and to run them out of town.

Flattery yields a self-congratulatory remark about how running the Investigators out of town is going to pay Pizner's bills for the rest of the summer and into the fall.

Working Pizner Over

Beating Pizner up requires no particular skill, given a successfully executed plan to detain him. (During the execution of such a plan, Pizner runs rather than standing to fight, if it comes to it. Presumably, however, the Investigators' weight of numbers, if nothing else, will be sufficient to grab the PI.)

Intimidation in concert with a beating causes Pizner to give up the names of Captain Walker and Samson Trammel if the Investigators agree to let him go and leave his name out of whatever they do next. Any Investigators without violent backgrounds who participate in beating up a helpless Pizner must make 1-point Stability tests or be unsettled by this modest inhumanity.

"All right! All right! There's this guy, the Captain — Captain Walker, I don't know what his name is other than that — who throws me some work from time to time. He hired me to run you guys out of town and find out what put you onto this old business.

"I don't know why he wants to know, and I don't care. He works for this big shot up in Pasadena, Trammel, so it's probably his business. But like I said, I don't know, and I don't care."

Searching Pizner's Office

Pizner's office is on the second storey of a building containing the offices of white-collar professionals like insurance salesmen, real estate agents, transcription service providers, and the like. All of the offices open to the outside; and, like many Southern California buildings, the second storey has outside walkways rather than interior corridors.

Locksmith is sufficient to allow entry to Pizner's office either through the lock on his door or the one on his window in back.

Evidence Collection inside the office — assuming a few hours of undisturbed searching — turns up all of the following:

A sheaf of handwritten notes about the Investigators. This includes physical descriptions provided by Walker, anything Walker was able to learn from the cult thugs in Savannah that could prove useful to Pizner while not incriminating Trammel or the cult (**Savannah 15, "The Thugs,"** p. 76), and anything Pizner himself has been able to observe by shadowing the Investigators.

Pizner's contact information for Captain Walker (filed under "W," no first name) has a phone number on it that matches a phone number written on the front page of the handwritten notes (above). (This is the phone number for the carriage house at Samson Trammel's estate, where Walker lives. There's no address listed, though.)

Pizner's general file on Walker's business has copies of invoices for previous jobs going to "Attn: Walker" at an address in Pasadena. (This is the address of Samson Trammel's estate.)

A 1-point **Locksmith** spend is sufficient to get Pizner's safe open. Unless Pizner happens to be carrying it on him, the safe contains $955 of the $1,000 that Walker gave him to buy off the Investigators. (Pizner spent $45 of the money immediately on receiving it on a pricey hooker he frequents downtown when he has the money.) The safe is otherwise empty.

Searching Pizner's Home

Pizner lives in a poorly kept bungalow in Hollywood. He's got a few guns, plenty of booze, and a stash of relatively tame pornography, but, otherwise, Pizner's home is a dead end.

15. Public Auction

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Looking into the dispersal of Echavarria's estate. (Alternate lead-ins might include Edgar Job's mention of Echavarria's extensive library.)

Summary: The Investigators learn that most of Echavarria's library was purchased from his estate, after his death, by one Samson Trammel of Pasadena.

Core Clue: Most of Echavarria's library of occult texts were purchased from his estate by Samson Trammel. (Accounting or Library Use at the County Recorder's Office, and Cop Talk or Bureaucracy at Magnificent Villa Auction Services.)



In order to continue making progress in their investigations, the Investigators must — at some point — follow clues from the 1924 cult run by Echavarria to the modern-day cult run by Samson Trammel. The most likely route is by turning the tables on Jack Pizner and following that lead back to Pizner's employer, Captain Walker. However, in the event that something goes wrong there and the Investigators fail to make a connection, this alternate core clue provides a second option.

Accounting or **Library Use** at the County Recorder's Office (**Los Angeles 6, "Footwork: Ramon Echavarria,"** p. 89) turns up the name and address of the firm that handled the liquidation of Echavarria's real estate and belongings after he died.

Magnificent Villa Auction Services, Inc., has downtown offices in the same building as Abraham Buchwald. (Not a coincidence, but not a clue, either. Buchwald simply arranged for their services after Echavarria's death because they were known to him due to their proximity.) They are a prosperous business with no connection to Echavarria other than this strictly business transaction with his estate.

Their records are impeccable, and their staff scrupulously honest. The Investigators are told that the records of to whom Echavarria's property was sold (other than his real estate, which is a matter of public record) are not available for inspection.

Cop Talk, **Bureaucracy**, Buchwald's cooperation (probably under duress), breaking-and-entering, or the seduction of a Magnificent Villa staffer are all likely routes to the examination of their records.

Once they are obtained, the most interesting thing about the records is that every book of individual worth in Echavarria's library (which was appraised in its entirety by a well-compensated expert in rare books), as well as the remainder of the mundane volumes (purchased as a single lot), were purchased in the public auction of Echavarria's things by one Samson Trammel of Pasadena, whose address is also listed in the records.

If the Investigators wish, they can obtain a copy of the list of books Trammel purchased from the estate. Nothing of significance leaps out at them from reviewing the list at this point, but it may become more important to them in Act Three, because it lists *The Gaze of Azathoth* as a constituent work that can presumably still be found in Trammel's Pasadena library.

16. UCLA and George Ayers

Scene Type: Core (Footwork)

Lead-ins: Knowledge of 1924 cultist George Ayers (Los Angeles 9, "Olivia Clarendon, the Movie Star," p. 92, or Los Angeles 10, "Abraham Buchwald," p. 93).

Summary: The Investigators research George Ayers, UCLA professor of ancient religions.

Core Clue: George Ayers, a high-ranking member of the 1924 cult, went to Ethiopia in 1924 and hasn't been heard from since. (Simple search, Bureaucracy, and then Flattery or History to follow the trail to and then around the UCLA campus.)

Campaign Clue: Ayers's 1924 Ethiopia travel itinerary. (Evidence Collection on Ayers's papers and effects.)



George Ayers was — still is, technically — a professor of ancient religions at UCLA. He was also a member of Echavarria's inner circle in 1924.

Given his academic background, Ayers was the only one in the cult able to call bullshit on Echavarria's assertions that he venerated Gol-Goroth. This demonstration of Mythos knowledge prompted Echavarria to entrust Ayers with a secret: that the Great Old One on whose behalf he labored was the Liar From Beyond and that Gol-Goroth was simply a disguise favored by the Liar as a shield against mortal reprisals.

But even given his privileged position in Echavarria's cult, Ayers was not present at the cataclysmic summoning in 1924. A few weeks before the Los Angeles cult made the summoning attempt, Ayers had learned of an archaeological

dig just getting underway in Ethiopia. The dig concerned a site believed by the dig's leader, Bartolo Acuna, to be home to an ancient African cult who venerated the Liar From Beyond in ancient times. Echavarria dipped into his fortunes to send Ayers to Ethiopia as well as sponsor the dig financially, to learn the secrets of this ancient society as quickly as they could be unearthed.

But by the time Ayers disappeared in Ethiopia (see "Keeper's Background: Dallol and the 1924 Dig," p. 183), Echavarria was dead, no longer able to follow up on his absence. Determining what happened to Ayers and learning the secrets of the African site are part of the contemporary adventures in the Ethiopia Locale in Act Two.

Making the UCLA Connection

In their contemporary investigation of Los Angeles, the Investigators find George Ayers's trail relatively easy to discover. It's likely that whoever tells them about Ayers's involvement in the cult (either Olivia Clarendon or Abraham Buchwald in this Locale, or perhaps Edgar Job back in Savannah) also mentions his connection to the university. If not…

Archaeology, **Occult**, or **History** possessed by an Investigator who is over 35 years of age and has a formal academic background triggers a memory of a controversial academic paper published by Ayers in an academic journal in the early '20s. **Library Use** seals the deal when the Investigator tracks down the article and reads that Ayers was tenured faculty at UCLA at that time.

If the academic route fails, a **simple search** of a 1924 phone directory also points the Investigators to the History Department on the UCLA campus.

At the University

A university directory on campus (**simple search**) lists George Ayers as having an office in one of a dozen neoclassical buildings on the main campus. However, upon going to this office (probably asking a few students for directions on the way), the Investigators discover the name of another academic on the door, a Dr. Miles Roman.

Dr. Roman is a youngish classics professor. He began at UCLA in early 1925. Forced by crowded conditions into an office that was little more than a broom closet, and after seeing George Ayers's office go unused for more than a year, Roman convinced his department head to have Ayers's things packed off into storage, because no one knew when — or if — he was coming back from whatever sabbatical he'd gone on. Details were scarce. Roman feels suitably ensconced now, so he's comfortable telling this tale, a bit haughtily.

Bureaucracy, or any formal academic background, allows an Investigator to track down the History Department secretary, a Samantha Burnish. Burnish has worked for twenty years in the department and remembers Ayers. In fact, she remembers arranging his trip to Ethiopia, and she felt vaguely relieved with her assumption that he'd be spending a semester or two away from campus. *"He was an unsettling individual,"* she says, unwilling to elaborate further.

Burnish believes Ayers mentioned that he was going to Africa on a dig, but she wouldn't swear to it — it's been a while. She's not particularly sad that Ayers never came back but doesn't know why he didn't. She suggests talking to the History Department head, who'd have had to approve the travel and so might know more.

The university records still reflect both Ayers's presence at UCLA and a half dozen other inaccuracies of similar magnitude because of an administrative feud involving four different campus offices who all believe that it's someone else's job to update and distribute the records and directories. (Burnish, unsurprisingly, has a strong opinion about whose job it is to update the records, and it's not hers, no sir.) In the meantime, the same old information is reprinted with the current year on the cover, year after year.

Burnish never knew Edgar Job and has no information about him.

Flattery or **History** can be used to net an Investigator a brief meeting with Dr. Hamish MacDunn, the History Department's head. After a bit of prodding, MacDunn manages to summon a few relevant details about Ayers to the top of his mind (which is clearly otherwise filled with a thousand other and more recent details of historical research, campus and academic politics, and the nagging of an unpleasant wife).

MacDunn gave Ayers leave to go to Africa for a year *("Yes, must've been '24, now that you mention it"*) to pursue a dig at an ancient site, as long as he could find an outside donor to finance the trip. MacDunn believes that Ayers went alone, or, at least, that no leave was granted for any graduate students to go with him.

MacDunn recalls that Ayers continued to send back perfunctory reports "for a while." MacDunn supposes he probably had them filed away without reading them. He doesn't recall having gotten any reports from Ayers for a long time, "now that you bring it up."

MacDunn is cannier than he lets on. A perceptive Investigator — one

with **Assess Honesty** — either gets the sense or can con MacDunn into admitting that he suspects Ayers met with foul play ("or went native, which amounts to the same thing"), but that in the absence of anyone offering to confirm it for him, he plans to keep Ayers on the department roll indefinitely. Graduate students teach Ayers's classes for the time being, and MacDunn's department budget continues to collect certain payments based on the number of faculty it theoretically supports.

In exchange for keeping quiet about his scam, MacDunn is willing to direct Burnish to provide them with Ayers's 1924 travel details (see "Ayers's Things," below).

MacDunn doesn't have an opinion about whether Ayers was unsettling or strange. *("Working in academia* makes *a soul strange, sir. Step outside and look around. Hell, look at* me.")

MacDunn doesn't know and has never heard of Edgar Job.

Showing the safe deposit box photos to Roman, Burnish, or MacDunn yields a positive identification of Ayers in three of the photos. However, a 1-point **Reassurance** spend is required, after showing the photos, to prevent the viewer from setting the LAPD's vice squad on the Investigators' trail after they leave.

Library Research

Archaeology or **Library Use**, coupled with a relatively easy hour of research in the university library, turns up evidence that there was, in fact, a new dig starting up in Ethiopia in 1924 spearheaded by a Spanish archaeologist named Bartolo Acuna. See "Keeper's Background: Dallol and the 1924 Dig," p. 183, for more information.

Ayers's Things

It takes either MacDunn's directive or a 1-point **Flattery** spend with Samantha Burnish to have George Ayers's old things dredged up from deep storage in a university-owned warehouse halfway across the city and to secure unfettered access to them.

Evidence Collection, and a day of poking around these old books and papers, makes it beyond clear that Ayers was involved in Echavarria's cult, and that Ayers either did go to Ethiopia or did a damn good job of leaving a convincing paper trail. His full travel itinerary, found here, is the lead-in to the first scene in the Ethiopia Locale (see **Ethiopia 1, "Arrival in Massaua,"** p. 188).

From Ayers's private writings and notes, it seems clear that he believed in the reality of the strange beings of the Mythos.

Both Echavarria and Samson Trammel are listed in Ayers's address book (although there's nothing about them that would identify them as special compared to the dozens of other listings of legit academic contacts, graduate students, and so on). The name Bartolo Acuna appears in this book, too, but probably won't stand out for now.

Among the ephemera is an autographed promotional poster (*"Thanks for all your help!"*) for one of Olivia Clarendon's movies from the early '20s.

A 1-point **Library Use** or **Evidence Collection** spend on his records suggests that the entities Ayers was most concerned with were Gol-Goroth (aka the Fisher From Outside), and the Liar From Beyond. A careful reading of one of his unpublished (and unpublishable) papers among these records suggests that, over time, Ayers came to regard Gol-Goroth as something of an intergalactic buffoon (a strange, dangerous, and unknowable buffoon, but a buffoon nonetheless). This developing understanding tracks with Ayers's realization that Echavarria was playing his cult for fools by venerating the Liar in secret and Gol-Goroth in "public." But even so, Ayers had no idea that Echavarria intended to destroy the world with this deception. In addition to this information, this spend also provides the Investigators with a dedicated 1-point Cthulhu Mythos pool they can use in situations concerned with either Gol-Goroth or the Liar From Beyond.

Pacing: Jack Pizner

Both UCLA or Ayers's dead-end apartment are good places to raise (or re-raise) the specter of Jack Pizner's surveillance. The dusty warehouse where Ayers's old things have been stored would be a quiet, remote, and creepy location for the misanthropic PI to beat up a lone Investigator reading through dusty files.

As before, this only occurs if Pizner has already been advised of the Investigators' presence in LA in the wake of them visiting the 1924 ritual site (see **Los Angeles 12, "The Farm,** p. 96) or the LAPD to ask about the police file on the 1924 summoning massacre (see **Los Angeles 11, "The Police Report,"** p. 95).



Ayers's Apartment

Ayers's apartment has long since been reclaimed by his landlord, its contents sold off piecemeal to pay back rent or thrown out.

The landlord has no way to contact Ayers and hopes he dies in a fire — if he hasn't already — for all the trouble he caused by disappearing. This is a dead end.

17. UCLA and Edgar Job

Scene Type: Core (Footwork)

Lead-ins: Learning that Edgar Job was a student at UCLA (Savannah 6, "The Summoner," p. 60 or Ethiopia 14, "George Ayers," p. 216).

Summary: The Investigators research Edgar Job's background.

Core Clue: As a student, Edgar Job was obsessive but ultimately unsuccessful. (Bureaucracy or Cop Talk to access his records. Oral History to speak with his advisor.)

Edgar Job was a memorable but not particularly good student of mathematics at UCLA. He was an undergraduate from 1918–1922. **Bureaucracy** or **Cop Talk** produces administrative evidence that his grades were mediocre and that he focused on math coursework. There are no students or faculty who particularly remember him as an undergrad.

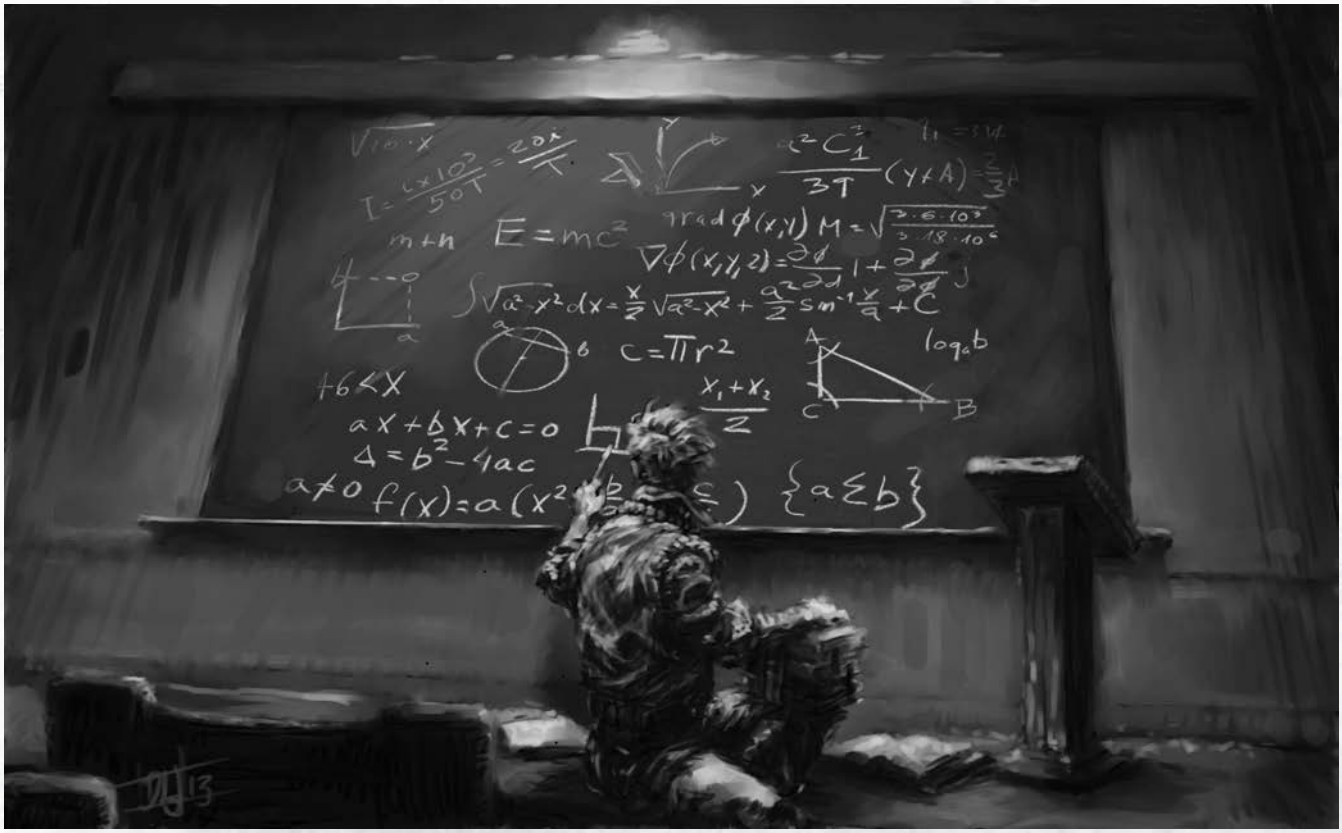
Job applied and was admitted to a graduate program of mathematical study in 1923. **Oral History** turns up the mathematics professor who was Job's advisor, Stuart Tichener. Tichener remembers Job for his desperate need to be better than he actually was. Edgar would pull all-night work sessions whose triumphant output was often completely wrong. If the Investigators wonder whether Tichener is describing the sort of misunderstood genius whose insights were lost on conventional thinkers, the professor is quite clear — Job was simply not a very good student, despite desperately wanting to be so.

Tichener recalls that Job up and disappeared in the middle of a semester. He assumed that Job had finally realized that his pursuits were largely pointless. He can't remember the year, but if asked, he thinks that 1924 sounds about right.

Tichener does not know or remember George Ayers.

There are no students left on campus who knew Job, who kept to himself anyway. Trying to track down such characters proves unsuccessful.

The core clue in this scene doesn't open up any avenues of additional investigation until Act Three, but it becomes important then as the Investigators try to determine what they must do in order to push aside the gaze of Azathoth. Knowing that Job was obsessive — and particularly obsessed with mathematics — makes him the best correspondence they know for the focus described in *The Gaze of Azathoth*. See "Keeper Background: The Interrupted Ritual" (page 373).



18. Samson Trammel, the New Mastermind

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Knowledge of Trammel (Los Angeles 10, "Abraham Buchwald," p. 93, Los Angeles 14, "Investigating the Investigator," p. 100, or Los Angeles 15, "Public Auction," p. 102).

Summary: The Investigators investigate Samson Trammel.

Core Clue: Samson Trammel appears in the safe deposit box pictures. (Simple search anywhere Samson Trammel can be seen.)

Core Clue: Someone operating from Trammel's Pasadena estate appears to be operating a contemporary drug distribution operation. (Streetwise as a general surveillance measure.)



Samson Trammel was the third — and least important — member of the '24 cult's inner circle of leadership. (The other two were Echavarria and George Ayers.) Trammel survived the disastrous '24 summoning through a combination of good fortune and cowardice, fleeing the scene at the first sign of the pending disaster. It will be helpful to read the sidebar "Trammel and Walker" on page 114 to understand Trammel's background and personality.

Although Trammel was part of the inner circle who knew that Gol-Goroth was a lie to cover Echavarria's secret veneration of the Liar From Beyond, Trammel was essentially in the dark about any concrete identity of the Liar. Since then, the Liar has managed to whisper deceit that has led Trammel to believe that "the Liar From Beyond" and "the Black Man" are one and the same — that the secret object of Echavarria's veneration was Nyarlathotep. Trammel, consequently, thinks of the Black Man as the patron of his success, and adulates him still (in name) while continuing to believe (incorrectly) that the Major Mouth in his estate and the Minor Mouths that manifest from time to time are servants of the Black Man, and always have been.

Trammel's Pasadena Estate

The Investigators probably find out about Samson Trammel's Pasadena address as part of the same clue that reveals his name. If not, a **simple search** of the usual directories is sufficient to turn up the sole address associated with his relatively uncommon name. Pasadena is about a 30 minute drive northeast of downtown with the usual heavy traffic, 15 minutes otherwise.

Samson Trammel's Pasadena mansion is easy to find and stake out. It's large, airy, and recently built, with grounds that are ample but not expansive. In addition to the main house, the grounds have a carriage house (where Captain Walker lives) and a gardener's shack. The surrounding neighborhood contains the similar newly constructed homes of other new-money Southern Californians.

Samson Trammel himself can be identified with relative ease. Although he doesn't leave his mansion on any regular schedule (such as for an outside office — he doesn't have a job per se), when he does leave he usually dresses his part as the lord of this manor — not ostentatiously, but appropriately. He wears fine suits, smokes cigars, and otherwise bears the stamp of the nouveau riche of the mid-1930s. He dines at fine restaurants, which is the most likely excursion the Investigators shadow him on.

Investigators who see Trammel immediately realize that he appears in about half of the safe deposit box photos. (He's been in them the whole time, but prior to seeing Trammel, there's no reason the Investigators would have identified him as being special.) Others, upon seeing the photos, might be able to identify Trammel directly, of course.

To understand the day-to-day operations as they appear from outside, it may be helpful to read the section "The Staff" in **Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion,"** p. 113.

Unless the Investigators seem completely stuck, Trammel's more random and debauched behaviors don't manifest publicly or in sight during the Investigators' early surveillance. See the sidebar "Trammel and Walker" on page 114 for a thorough discussion of Trammel's state of mind and typical behaviors.

Surveillance of the Mansion

To a casual inspection (that is, a **simple search**), the mansion is not obviously guarded. However, after a day or so of surveillance, it begins to become clear that a quiet staff of serious and muscular Mexicans always seems to be handy. (See **Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion,"** sub-section "The Staff," on page 115.) The Investigators also begin to notice a pattern of cult members leaving and arriving at the mansion (or even being carried out, dead). These are the celebrants who carry out the day-to-day business of appeasing the Mouth and stimulating its Nectar production. The scope of their activities is described in greater detail in **Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion,"** sub-section "The Nectar-Harvesting Chamber," on page 115.

18. Samson Trammel, the New Mastermind

Surveillance Countermeasures

Every day the Investigators spend staking out the mansion or canvassing Trammel's Pasadena neighborhood for clues, they must engage in a Shadowing or Stealth test against Captain Walker (whose statistics can be found on page 114). If the Investigators win, they go unnoticed for the day. If they fail, Walker becomes aware that they're watching either the mansion or Trammel, whichever is the case. He may not — in fact, probably does not — immediately confront the Investigators. Walker is smart, making the smart play in response to whatever the Investigators' actions are.

If the Investigators made easy work of Jack Pizner early on in their Los Angeles Locale investigations, however, they have probably gone unopposed by any direct threats for a while. If that's the case, engineer Walker's countermeasures for more speedy and direct violence than you might otherwise, to keep them fearful.

One likely option is for Walker to send a squad of LAPD vice officers on his payroll to toss the Investigators' hotel rooms (which in turn gets them evicted), bring them in for questioning, follow them around, and beat them up, all for no legitimate reason. ("It's time for you to get out of town," the growl. "Why? Never mind why. I'll tell your dead body why down in the coroner's office.") Retaliating against the police is highly unwise, leading to swift and permanent incarceration.

He might also simply send efficient street toughs to stab them to death in a back alley, making it look like a mugging turned fatal.



To pique the Investigator's interest in this location, you might have them witness one of the minor characters they interviewed earlier being escorted, blindfolded, into the mansion. Delores Scrim or "Boils" McGillicuddy (see **Los Angeles 2, "The First Bank of Long Beach,"** p. 84) or any one of the Nectar users they may have observed or interrogated — including Lee Dempson — might be among this number. To Trammel and Walker, these guests are just semi-willing participants in the endless debauchery that fuels the Nectar supply being produced in the mansion's basement. But for the Investigators, you might play upon their paranoia (allowing them to wonder why these particular individuals were chosen) or their compassion (if they showed any fondness towards the individual during the interview). And while the selected characters are not exactly innocents, you might call on any Investigators with Drives such as Duty or Adventure to feel protective of these potential victims.

Streetwise, after a day or so of surveillance, allows an Investigator to notice a recurring pattern of Mexicans in zoot suits — not exactly par for the neighborhood — pulling cars onto the property via a dirt road that approaches the estate from the rear, parking in the carriage house, and then walking to the main house, sometimes accompanied by Captain Walker. After a short time, never more than 15 minutes, the same individuals head back to the carriage house, get back into their cars, and depart by the same route as their arrival. These are the distributors for Trammel's contemporary Nectar trade. Following them is a lead-in to **Los Angeles 19, "The Los Angeles Nectar Trade,"** p. 108.

If the Investigators attempt to break in or engage in similar tactics to gather intelligence here, refer to **Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion,"** on page 113.

Talking to Trammel

Presenting themselves at the door to the mansion and asking to talk to Trammel results in Captain Walker's appearance, after a few moments, to inquire about their business. Whatever the Investigators tell him, they're pumped for information in an unsuspicious way *("And you are…?" "And you're interested in talking to Mr. Trammel because…?" "And you believe Mr. Trammel might know about that because…?"*) and then turned away politely but firmly *("I'm afraid that you've got Mr. Trammel confused with someone else,"* or *"Mr. Trammel is unable to assist with these matters"*) without being allowed into Trammel's presence.

Keep in mind that Walker knows who the Investigators are from a combination of the cult's Savannah intelligence measures and whatever information Jack Pizner might have managed to turn over to him.

If the Investigators try to sneak off to look around the mansion, refer to **Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion,"** p. 113.

Shoe Leather and Footwork

Cop Talk at both the LAPD and its Pasadena counterpart reveals that Samson Trammel does not have a police record.

Bureaucracy or **Library Use** at Pasadena City Hall turns up the routine documents filed when Trammel's mansion was built. This includes the blueprints of its two floors (but not the cellar level).

Bureaucracy or **Library Use** among state records reveals that Samson Trammel is licensed to sell real estate in California and that, while he maintained a business doing that in the late 1910s and '20s, he hasn't carried on any obvious real estate–related business activities since 1925, give or take.

Oral History in Trammel's neighborhood reveals a community of households almost pathologically concerned with their own individual business. This isn't a community so much as a collection of side-by-side outposts of the other Southern California communities from whence their owners have recently moved. There is one exception, however: Genial Brooker, the gardener from the estate next door to Trammel's, is pretty sure that there's something criminal — or worse — going on at Trammel's place. See **Los Angeles 22, "The Gardener Next Door,"** on page 112.

If the Investigators should happen to come into possession of Captain Walker's Christian name (which turns out to be "Hector"), **Cop Talk** at the LAPD reveals a moderate dossier of aborted minor charges like assault, weapons charges, and blackmail. To an Investigator with **Cop Talk** or **Law**, this gives off the general whiff of cases dropped due to bribery, either directed at the cops or the district attorney (or both).

19. The Los Angeles Nectar Trade

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The zoot-suited Mexicans who come and go at Trammel's mansion (Los Angeles 18, "Samson Trammel, the New Mastermind," p. 106). (Also, potentially, taking mention of Nectar in various Savannah scenes to the streets of Los Angeles using Streetwise.)

Summary: The Investigators learn about the logistics of Samson Trammel's contemporary Los Angeles Nectar trade.

Core Clue: Trammel's operation is distributing Nectar, a drug taken by perverts, whose origin is unknown to those who distribute it. (Streetwise to follow Nectar distributors, and Intimidation or Interrogation to learn what they know.)

Under Echavarria's leadership, the 1924 cult kept the Nectar secreted by the various Mouths that appeared around Echavarria's estate largely to itself, using a majority inside the cult as an adjunct to their rituals and orgies but selling enough of it (as recorded in Buchwald's books of account) to finance their operations.

With Echavarria's death (and George Ayers's disappearance), the leadership of what was left of the cult fell to Samson Trammel. Whereas Echavarria had inherited enough money to live a relatively comfortable life, Trammel had been a middle-class working man, a struggling real estate agent with an entrepreneurial mindset, before joining the cult. Working slowly and steadily over time, he remade the cult in an image more like a business than a religion.

Trailing a Distributor

After the Investigators pick up the trail of the zoot-suited Mexicans at Trammel's mansion, it's a relatively simple matter to shadow any given one of these Nectar distributors back to the wide variety of neighborhoods where they ply their narcotic across all social and economic strata. Call for a **Shadowing** vs. **Sense Trouble** contest only if it will create dramatic tension. The individual dozen or so members of the network are more or less interchangeable; Gabriel Cruz, Antonio Lopez, and Jesus Figueroa are the names of three of them. All live in better East Los Angeles neighborhoods, only returning there after their distribution work is done for the day.

Streetwise allows an Investigator to recognize the familiar business pattern of drug distribution fairly quickly but also the changes from the norm that are operative here. Nectar is not sold on street corners or in public places, and there's no network of lackeys or errand boys beneath the distributors who pick up their product at Trammel's mansion. Rather, the distributors call on their clients to deliver Nectar behind closed doors. Typical client users seem to include dilettantes, housewives, actors and actresses, musicians, writers, and artists. Most appear to be of at least moderate means, but a few clients are clearly down and out, spending their last pennies to get high.

To witness a physical delivery of Nectar in exchange for cash on the barrel, an Investigator must engage in a **Shadowing** vs. **Sense Trouble** contest with a distributor and his client. On success, the Investigator finds an appropriate vantage point to see into a window or onto a bougainvillea-shrouded backyard when the deal is

done. On a failure, the Investigator is spotted. The distributor's response depends on the situation but is likely to involve speedy violence, because Captain Walker has made the consequences of drawing suspicion or police scrutiny to Trammel's operation exquisitely clear to everyone who works for it.

Approaching a distributor to talk, no matter what Interpersonal ability is employed, yields a cold brush-off. Asking pointed questions that suggest the Investigator has any actual knowledge of the Nectar trade yields a promise of cooperation in an attempt to lure the questioner to some private place to either kill or capture and deliver the Investigator to Walker for interrogation.

Overpowering or kidnapping a distributor is the only effective way of learning anything useful. Once in the Investigators' physical power, **Interrogation** or **Intimidation** eventually gets the distributor to start producing useful information, although it takes several hours.

The distributors were all hired by Captain Walker, who approached them each individually, over time, for their intelligence, discipline, and ruthlessness, based on personal recommendations from his own network. All of them fear Walker, who takes pains to inculcate and maintain this fear. Most have worked for Trammel's operation for years and are comfortable in life because of it.

The distributors know that their product is called Nectar, that it takes the form of a cloudy liquid with a pungent mossy smell, and that they're not allowed to partake in it. They know that its general effect is to bring about orgiastic pleasure and that it drives most of those who take it to perverse acts. It is distributed in small glass vials and can be drunk directly, mixed with another beverage, or applied to food and eaten. It can be injected with the same effects, although few go to the trouble.

Most veteran distributors have a repertoire of tales of walking in on Nectar users performing sex acts on animals or discovering Nectar users dead from overdoses of terrestrial narcotics like heroin.

None of the distributors suspects a supernatural dimension to Nectar's effects, and none are involved in Trammel's cult of the Black Man. In fact, most are observant Roman Catholics.

A few of the more attentive distributors have heard mention of "the Black Man" while they've been inside Trammel's mansion. They've drawn the conclusion that this is Trammel's boss, and surmise that he's an African. They might further speculate that Nectar comes from some African plants that Trammel cultivates.

Other Avenues

Using CopTalk or Streetwise (or anything else) to ask around about "Nectar" generally in the neighborhoods where deliveries are made yields blank stares and dead ends. Inquiries about where a guy can buy some drugs around here yields either referrals to drug dealers selling heroin, cocaine, or marijuana, or a call to the cops.

Using **Cop Talk** to follow up on any given distributor with the LAPD yields a modest criminal background, perhaps some time in prison, and a perplexing end to crime — as far as the dossiers are concerned — at the time the individual in question was recruited by Walker. Part of Walker's deal to distributors is protection from the authorities, and he delivers.

A Typical Distributor

Athletics 8, Firearms 3, Scuffling 7, Sense Trouble 11, Weapons 8

Weapon: −1 (switchblade), +1 (automatic pistol), +1 (rifle or shotgun in car trunk)

20. Debauchery

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Following a Nectar distributor from Trammel's mansion (Los Angeles 19, "The Los Angeles Nectar Trade," p. 108).

Summary: The Investigators learn the effects of Nectar.

Core Clue: Nectar compels those who take it to carry out debauched acts whose pleasures its effects multiply. (Any appropriate Interpersonal ability on a Nectar addict, or sampling the drug.)

Core Clue: Nectar cannot be explained by conventional science. (Biology or Chemistry on a sample of the drug.)



Nectar users across Southern California vary wildly. If the Investigators approach one in hopes of learning about the substance, describe the apparent profile of users generally (they have means; they are jaded, bored, and/or artistic) and allow the players to propose the specifics of a user they'd like to approach for interrogation (such as "the least-wealthy end of the spectrum, because we want to bribe them," "a weak-looking guy," or "someone whose house is kind of remote").

From there, **any Interpersonal ability** can be employed to pump the addict for information. Given that the players proposed the NPC's nature, it's safe to assume that they asserted one susceptible to their planned angle of attack.

Typical addicts learned about Nectar from a friend, or a friend of a friend, and probably tried it for the first time with that person. Sex was probably involved, and users typically remember it as the best sex of their lives because of how far it went past what they had tried in the past, even though specifics of why are hard for users to remember or put into words. Through this same friend, typical users got a hook up to a single distributor who's been supplying them ever since.

Showing a Nectar user the photos from the safe deposit box yields a wan and knowing smile, and an almost inadvertent comment to the effect of, *"I haven't seen any of those guys before, but, they're* absolutely *high on the stuff."* Probably, the user pumps the Investigators for information on where these parties happen.

Talking about Nectar makes most users want to use it. Unless the situation is wildly and completely inappropriate, the user offers the Investigators a sample to try. The user's plan is to take some as well and let the debauchery commence. The user isn't interested in letting the Investigators take a sample away; the user's motivation is to get immediate satisfaction. See "Getting High," below for what happens to an Investigator who takes the drug.

Use of **Streetwise** after interviewing or observing one user will lead the Investigators to a particular addict named Lee Dempson. Lee differs from other users based on the obvious scars and bruises covering his body. He is actively looking for a fix and, if he suspects the Investigators have any, will physically attempt to wrest any volume of Nectar away from them. He's not armed but will use anything from a liquor bottle to a lamp as an improvised weapon.

If the Investigators convince him they don't have any Nectar or prove that he won't be able to obtain it from them, Lee Dempson will settle down and talk to them. He'll provide the same information available from other addicts above, but he doesn't mention his physical state or how he got that way. With a 1-point **Interrogation**, **Intimidation**, or **Reassurance** spend, he'll open up and reveal the particulars about the variant kind of Nectar he's looking for.

While Lee has not had too much trouble obtaining Nectar in the area, it has not given him the same high he is used to. Lee has recently returned to Los Angeles from Bangkok where he was a spectator at the fights there. See **Bangkok 7, "To the Death,"** on page 156 for more information about those rites.

"It was incredible. These two were just ripping into each other like rabid dogs. Somebody — just some joker standing next to me — throws a knife into the arena, but they were too busy gouging each others' eyes out with their thumbs to notice.

"Then I got a hit and everything became so much more intense. More wild. You know how the stuff here works on your urges? Well, this does that, but it works on something baser. Fights started breaking out in the stands. That's how I broke this arm the first time."

He received the particular brand of Nectar sold in the arena, became addicted to it, and is disappointed with anything he's been able to find back in the States. To be clear, he won't refuse Los Angeles Nectar and will enjoy it plenty; he'll just be left wanting for something different afterwards. You need not reveal the full differences between Bangkok Nectar and the standard variety at this point, but this is a chance to illustrate that the Nectar distribution is wider than just Los Angeles and there's something different to be found overseas.

If asked, Lee will tell the Investigators the proper procedure for accessing the fights as a spectator if they choose to travel to Bangkok. He'll explain what denominations of banknotes to rub together at the Fragrant Honey Shop in Phra Nakron while saying "I have come for the exhibition." See **Bangkok 6, "'I'm Looking for the Fights,'"** on page 155 for more information.

Lee Dempson

Three Things: Walks with a painful-looking limp. Can't open his right eye. Picks at the scabs on his arm.

Athletics 3, Health 8, Scuffling 3, Weapons 3

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (small improvised weapon), +0 (big improvised weapon)

Scientific Analysis

Enterprising Investigators will certainly get hold of a sample of Nectar at some point. As advertised, it is a cloudy liquid with a pungent mossy smell. It is

The Luz Recording in Los Angeles

If the Investigators spend any amount of time poking around the belongings of a Nectar addict in Los Angeles, make sure they find a copy of the Luz recording from the Mexico City Locale. See "The First Luz Recording" on page 270 for more information about the consequences of listening to it.

Of note is the fact that the record's B-side label lists a post-office box (#1629) in "Distrito Federal, México." Although this won't mean a lot to the Investigators at the moment, once they find and read Trammel's Testament of the Dripping Mouthes' Emanates, this clue will provide a sense of verisimilitude by providing one more connection to that discovery.



distributed (and effective) in very, very small quantities.

Biology or **Chemistry** and access to a laboratory (or the assembly of a makeshift one) reveal that Nectar is not similar to any known biological or chemical compound. It's possible that it's alive, but not in any known pattern, and it's not clear whether it would be best classified as an animal, plant, fungus, or something else entirely.

The uncanny and anomalous nature of Nectar requires a 1-point Mythos Stability test from all those with Biology or Chemistry who investigate it in a lab. However, upon making this test, whether successful or not, the Investigators involved have the sense that additional investigation would yield further and perhaps profound information. Sadly for them, it does not, but does require a second Mythos Stability test, this time a 2-point loss. This pattern continues ("I know that there's something else to learn here, if we only keep at it!") with no further information ever actually learned — it's always just out of reach — but with escalating tests until the Investigator gives up or goes mad. Continued investigation is not compulsory past the ever-present sense that there's a breakthrough just around the corner.

An Investigator with Biology or Chemistry who analyzes Nectar and whose Drive is **Curiosity** or **Thirst for Knowledge** is almost certainly doomed without intervention, because the Investigator will lose Stability whether continuing to research the unusual substance or not.

Getting High

Consuming Nectar results in intense physical pleasure and the complete elimination of psychological barriers to pleasure-seeking behavior.

Callback: Black Lotus Powder

If your group has played the scenario "Death Laughs Last" from the Trail of Cthulhu supplement Stunning Eldritch Tales, you can provide a nice sense of global interconnectedness by invoking black lotus powder, that scenario's critical MacGuffin, during this stage of the Los Angeles investigation. For example, you might weave in a bit of dialogue from a Nectar addict who tells the Investigators that he's tried everything, "…from coke to heroin to black lotus powder, and this stuff, this Nectar, is the most mind-blowing of any of them."

Even if the players went through "Death Laughs Last" with an entirely different cast of Investigators, such tie-ins can still be fun — and perhaps disturbing — for the players.



The substance's mossy smell belies its lack of taste, but that only puzzles you for a moment before a wash of pleasure wells up in your groin and spreads across your abdomen, sending tendrils of profound comfort to your extremities and organs.

Your vision clouds; shapes run together into pleasing agglomerations. A melody builds in your mind; you smell flowers. Your tongue explodes and it's delightful.

Your muscles relax and contract and relax, the ripples of pleasure that began in your groin now passing in intense waves across and throughout your body. Your bowels relax and you revel in the resulting sensations of warmth and weight.

If there are any other Investigators nearby:

You see a friend and can't imagine keeping these feelings to yourself. You reach out…

The Nectar-using Investigator is forward with attempts at intercourse with any and all creatures nearby but does not become violent in seeking them. It's easy enough for the object of the user's affection to eventually make it clear that they're unwilling participants before the user moves on to concentrate on something else.

Some time later — how long has it been? — you wake up lying down. You're a bit sore, but not unpleasantly so — just an agreeable tiredness. There's a tang in your mouth that's unfamiliar.

Momentarily, you realize that you've soiled yourself, but you're surprised to discover that the realization doesn't particularly bother you.

Using Nectar requires a 4-point Mythos Stability test on the first use, but never again.

A typical Nectar high lasts for a few (1d3) hours. Unlike with conventional drugs, the human body does not develop a resistance, so increased and more-frequent doses are not necessary in order to keep an addict satisfied.

The experience of using Nectar is highly addictive. An Investigator who tries it must make a simple **Stability** test, Difficulty Number 5, to pass up a clear and present opportunity to take Nectar again. Even unsupervised activities, when acquiring more Nectar is only one of a whole world of possibilities ("I could go grocery shopping, see a movie, go to be bed early, continue this stakeout, or take Nectar"), require a test, although this test is only at Difficulty Number 3. (Note, however, that these are simple tests against an Investigator's current Stability and not the kind of Stability tests that reduce a character's pool on failure.)

21. The Gardener Next Door

Scene Type: Alternate / Core (Floating)

Lead-ins: Surveilling Trammel's estate (Los Angeles 18, "Samson Trammel, the New Mastermind," p. 106).

Summary: The gardener who works at the next-door estate approaches the Investigators and offers that he's seen strange things.

Core Clue: Trammel and his man Walker are operating some kind of illegal conspiracy out of Trammel's mansion. (Reassurance after Brooker approaches a likely Investigator.)

If the Investigators are having a difficult time penetrating or surveilling Trammel's mansion, you can use this floating scene to help them out.

Alternately, since a bit of information that might prove useful later is present here (namely, the idea that it's possible to neutralize a Minor Mouth), you can offer the gardener contact to Investigators with a 1-point **Oral History** spend as they canvass the neighborhood for intelligence or clues.

Genial Brooker is a gardener of advancing age, blue collar through and through, who came to Pasadena with his employers when they moved from their previous, smaller residence in Laurel Canyon just over a year ago. He takes care of the Hampdens' grounds with love and attention to detail.

A perceptive man, Brooker has noticed the steady ebb and flow of both Walker's distributors and Trammel's cultists to and from the Trammel mansion. He's seen what could have been bodies carried out of the mansion in the middle of the night before, and he's witnessed Samson Trammel crawling, naked, through his gardens (Trammel's gardens, that is) in the middle of the night, spilling his seed into the soil.

Brooker might have reported these to the authorities, but at the beginning the comings and goings of strange people didn't seem like it warranted reporting, and later he couldn't swear that it was a body he saw being carried out. After Trammel's bizarre episode, when Brooker started to consider making a report to the police… well, that was when the Mouth appeared.

Brooker, being perceptive, spies the Investigators poking around. He can tell that they're not involved with Trammel and suspects that the good guys have finally come to do something about the menace next door. He approaches either the Investigator who makes the Oral History spend or the one who looks most like a police officer or legitimate government employee of some kind. Alternately, he approaches an obvious priest or other member of the clergy.

Reassurance can be employed to cajole Brooker to share what he's seen and then relate the following tale of what happened on the night he discovered the Mouth:

"This one night, just about dusk, as I was beset with this question — what should I do about what I seen? — I heard this whispering as I was headed up to the house. This hissing and spitting.

I thought maybe it was a cat or a raccoon, trapped up. I headed over there to the garden patch where it was coming from, all this rustling and hissing and spitting.

You'll think I'm crazy, so I'm just gonna show you.

Brooker brings the Investigators to a patch of flowers deep in the back of his employers' grounds and pulls away a blanket of moss and mulch lying on the ground in the midst of thick — and unnaturally lush — flowers.

In the ground, a calcified Minor Mouth is frozen in a biting scream. Witnessing it requires a 1-point Mythos Stability test.

"There it is. 'Cept when I saw it, it was all hissing and biting at me, and I'm not afraid to tell you that I screamed and cried and tore my shirt and wet my pants like a baby.

"The only thing I could think of was my mama's holy cross, the one the Holy Father himself blessed, or that's what she said. I ran to my shack and got that cross, and I threw it into the mouth.

"That cross is still down in that… thing. As long as it stays down there, I'm guessing I'm safe.

"Judge me if you want for keeping silent. But I'm an old man. And I'm sure not man enough to carry on a fight against the Devil himself.

"So I guess I'm laying that duty on you. Or the Lord is. Can't think of any other reason he could've sent you here."

Why Does the Cross Work?

The crucifix belonging to Genial Brooker's late mother neutralized the Minor Mouth that appeared in the Hampdens' flower bed not because of any power the Catholic god might be able to exert against the Liar From Beyond, but rather, because Brooker's mother lived such an ascetic, self-denying life that echoes of her personality have permanently infused the relic. The echoes of her discipline and puritanism have calcified the Mouth, not the power — such as it might be — of Jesus Christ.

The cross can't be retrieved from the Mouth or discovered within it. The Mouth is completely dead, now no more dangerous or suffused with the power of the Liar than a statue. It can be dug out of the ground, crushed up, or dealt with in any way the Investigators wish (although Brooker counsels against doing anything at all other than covering it up and ignoring it).

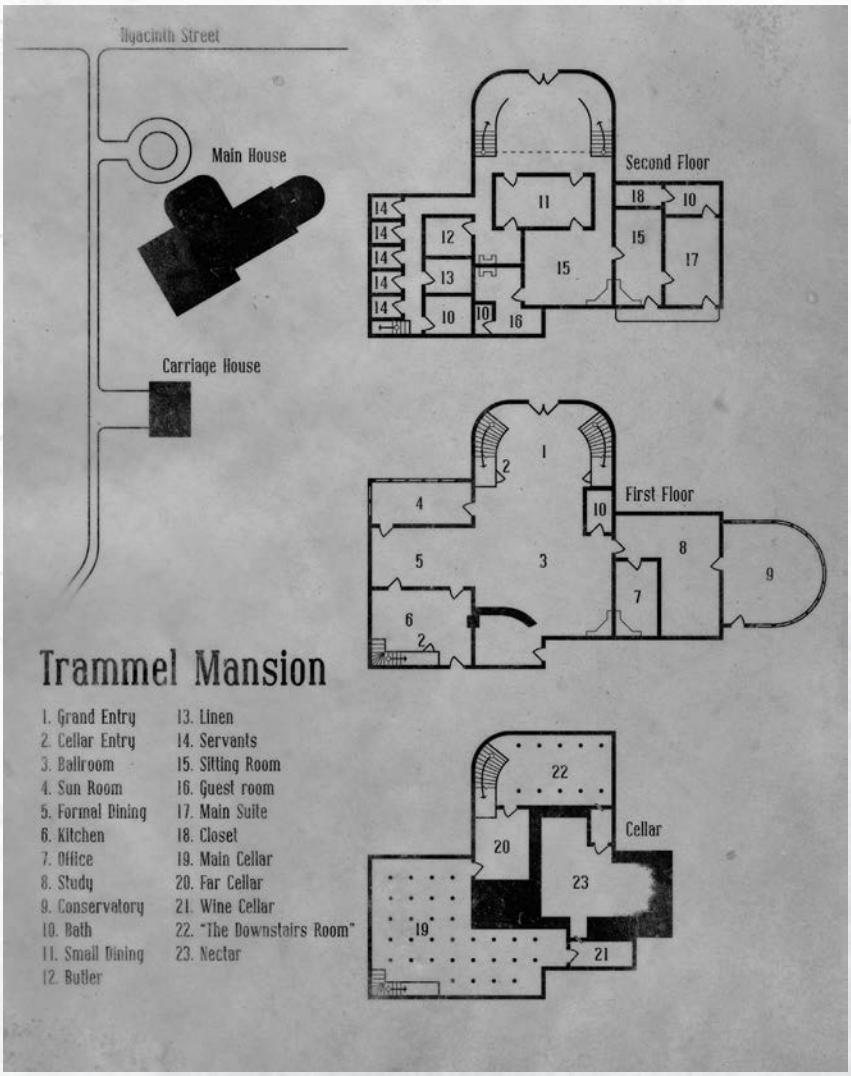
Brooker is completely unwilling to become involved in anything past keeping an eye on Trammel's estate's comings and goings. He won't help the Investigators break in and absolutely won't testify to the authorities about anything he's seen. He's simply too scared.

22. Trammel's Mansion

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Knowing the location of Trammel's mansion (Los Angeles 10, "Abraham Buchwald," p. 93, Los Angeles 14, "Investigating the Investigator," p. 100, Los Angeles 15, "Public Auction," p. 102, or Los Angeles 18, "Samson Trammel, the New Mastermind," p. 106).

Summary: The Investigators breach Samson Trammel's mansion to find out what's going on inside.



Core Clue: Gol-Goroth was Echavarria's lie, and always was. (Locksmith to access Trammel's *Testament*.)

Core Clue: Trammel believes that the Black Man is the entity motivating the Mouths and promoting the spread of Nectar. (Locksmith to access Trammel's *Testament*.)

Campaign Clue: Trammel's *Testament* is a map of worldwide cult operations that points to Bangkok, Malta, and Mexico City. (**Locksmith** to access Trammel's *Testament*.)

Samson Trammel's residence — which is also the center of his Nectar trade and the headquarters of the contemporary Los Angeles cult devoted to the veneration of the Black Man — is a mansion in Pasadena, a near-north suburb of Los Angeles. In addition to the mansion, its ample but not expansive grounds have a free-standing carriage house and gardener's shack.

Gaining Entry

The mansion proper has four entrances: the grand front entrance, the rear entrance to the patio, an entrance to the conservatory, and the servants' entrance that accesses the kitchen.

Observation by intelligent Investigators for any reasonable length of time suggests the conservatory entrance as the best bet for surreptitious entry: it gets little traffic and is concealed from the eye-lines of most of the rest of the house. The servants' entrance is used at all hours by the household staff (see "The Staff," below), and the patio entrance is the one used by the distributors who drive to and from the house and park in the carriage house. The main entrance is largely unused, but provides no concealment whatsoever.

22. Trammel's Mansion

Trammel and Walker

Samson Trammel and "Captain" Walker, the inheritors of the contemporary cult's leadership in Los Angeles, are an interesting pair.

Samson Trammel was a real estate entrepreneur in his early life. Although originally less a libertine than either Echavarria or George Ayers, who were his cohorts in the '24 cult's leadership, Trammel's hard-core use of Nectar starting in 1923 saw him descend into world-beating depths of debauchery.

The disastrous '24 summoning, however, set events into motion that changed his perspective and broke his mind wide open. The death of Echavarria and the disappearance of Ayers led Trammel to do more Mythos research on his own, which stretched his mind in destructive new directions. At about the same time, the "Black Man" (in actuality, the Liar From Beyond) showed him how Echavarria and Ayers had been lying to him. Not that the real truth was actually revealed. Rather, the Liar From Beyond "revealed" that Echavarria and Ayers had been secretly venerating the Black Man behind his back, and that the time had come for Trammel to be indoctrinated, learn the true nature of the cult's god, and ascend to be the cult's sole and supreme leader.

Trammel's mind, under the self-serving influence of the Liar, was refashioned into a fractured series of disparate personalities made up of equal parts self-styled Mythos scholar, paranoid-megalomaniac supreme leader, complete moral degenerate, and shrewd Nectar entrepreneur. Now, these personalities are essentially at active war with one another for control of Trammel's moment-to-moment activities. Although Trammel might seem perfectly normal — even respectable — for the duration of a dinner or social engagement, he's as likely to spy an attractive woman and descend immediately into a state of complete and wanton debauchery as he is to smoke a cigar. He may deliver instructions for a well-thought-out and coherent program of expansion in the Nectar trade while completely nude and masturbating furiously or go from leading a perverse basement orgy directly upstairs to a charitable public fundraiser in his main-level ballroom in the space of a minute. He is a wholly unpredictable madman of completely epic proportions.

Hector "Captain" Walker, on the other hand, is a hard-core criminal from East Los Angeles, a ruthless operator who sought out Trammel when, from the street, he saw firsthand the possibilities for Nectar in Trammel's initial distribution efforts in the mid '20s. He saw Nectar's potential, and he wanted in.

Their essential deal is that Trammel is the cult's mastermind, while Walker runs the Nectar distribution operation. Where a formal power structure must be communicated to outsiders, Walker is Trammel's representative, but, for all practical purposes, the two are partners. Walker is essentially alone in understanding the breadth of Trammel's madness. He sees the Nectar trade as having such worldwide promise that coping with Trammel's clear and persistent madness is a reasonable price to pay.

Although Walker has seen enough of the supernatural to have no illusions about the reality of the Mythos, his participation in the cult's non-business activities is perfunctory. It's clear to him that personal exposure to the Mythos destroys minds; as a consequence, he declines to expose his mind to it. That, from Walker's perspective, is Trammel's purpose. In his day-to-day life, Walker is practically an ascetic, disciplined and spare.

Walker does not use his Christian name, Hector; his criminal cohorts on the streets of East LA started calling him "Captain" when he was a teenager. The sobriquet stuck, and has now all but replaced his first name, which is useful because it makes it difficult for the legal authorities to track him.

Samson Trammel

Three Things: Titters unpredictably between sentences. Easily distractible; simply stops paying attention to those interacting with him from time to time. Stares unabashedly at the breasts of female Investigators.

Fleeing 8, Health 12, Scuffling 5, Sense Trouble 10, Weapons 5

Weapon: −1 (improvised)

Captain Walker

Three Things: Extremely economical with his speech. Clothing all precisely ironed, down to his pocket squares. Communicates truly terrifying threats without ever making a direct threat of harm.

Athletics 4, Conceal 10, Firearms 4, Fleeing 12, Health 16, Preparedness 15, Scuffling 12, Sense Trouble 16, Shadowing 10, Weapons 12

Weapons: −1 (knife), +1 (automatic pistol), +1 (Lee-Enfield rifle), hand grenade (see ToC, page 67)

22. Trammel's Mansion

Locksmith is sufficient to get any of these entrances open at times when they would be locked, which is all the time for all three entrances other than the servants' entrance, which is almost never locked.

At some — or several — points in the Investigators' violation of the mansion itself, a Minor Mouth manifests to attack them, spitting and hissing and biting. See "Mouths of the Liar" on page 35.

Mansion Overview

Every room of the Trammel mansion is not described here; this would be overkill for the wide variety of rooms that are of little interest to Investigators.

The Main Level: Trammel's mansion was built largely for entertaining, and the main level is mostly given over to a massive two-storey grand entry that gives way to a formal ballroom, the latter of which is reconfigured as a broad living space dotted with couches, overstuffed chairs, and tall potted plants whenever a soiree is not in preparation, progress, or cleanup. The kitchen and pantries, formal dining room, and sun room lie to the west of the ballroom. Trammel's study and office are to the east, with a glass-walled conservatory jutting out from the eastern side of the house to catch the morning sunrise.

The Second Storey: The eastern portion of the second storey comprises Trammel's master suite with its sitting room, bedroom, bathroom, and closet. The western end has a half-dozen small servants' room with their attendant bathing facilities and household storage. The "small dining room," as the household refers to it, is an upstairs room where Trammel typically takes his meals and where smaller, private events are held. A sumptuous sitting room and guest suite (often empty, but equally often stacked floor-to-ceiling with recovering revelers) are located behind the small dining room. Finally, the "small fireplace room" is a neglected little nook originally conceived by the architect as an out-of-the-way reading room for the staff and visitors, none of whom particularly make time for reading.

Below: The areas below Trammel's mansion divide into three sections. The rear section, accessed from the kitchens, comprises the mansion's working cellar — the "main cellar" where food and supplies are stored, the "far cellar" that's clogged with old construction supplies from when the mansion was built, and the wine cellar. The front section is made up entirely of "the downstairs room," a cool tiled chamber with couches and sitting chairs that amounts to a second, more private study (although it is rarely used as such and does not contain books). It is accessed via a door beneath one of the grand staircases in the main entryway. It is theoretically possible to travel between the rear and front sections via the far cellar, but anyone doing so would become unspeakably dirty and have to spend time moving construction supplies to cross the room. However, accessible through ingeniously hidden doors in both the wine cellar and the downstairs room is the house's dark heart, the underground chamber where the Mouth manifests and Nectar is harvested.

The Staff

There are essentially three separate staffs who work at the Trammel mansion.

The mundane staff is the cooks, maids, and a butler who take care of the residence. These are without exception unmarried, childless domestic workers who live in the mansion (in the upstairs servants' rooms). All are aware that Trammel is mad, that the mansion is a hub for both debauched and criminal activities, and that Captain Walker won't waste a second thought having them killed if they step out of line. All are satisfied to be well paid to do their work and keep their mouths shut.

The "guard" staff is a half-dozen quiet, muscular Mexicans employed by Walker. They are loyal to him personally, are aware of the full scope of both Mythos-related and criminal operations of the mansion, and concern themselves solely with security. At least three are on duty at any given time, sitting or standing unobtrusively in the corners of rooms, at the bottoms of stairwells, at the side of the carriage house, and so on. Like Walker, none of this staff partake in the cult's debauched activities.

Finally, the "production" staff makes up the Los Angeles cult proper, an ever-changing array of the debauched who carry on what amounts to a perpetual orgy. Most of this activity is confined to the mansion's basement because its main purpose is to lubricate the Mouth that manifests there and produces Nectar. The cultists are a diverse lot. Some are among the most hard-core Nectar users, others are cultists from other parts of the world, some are the homeless and willing rounded up by Walker when the supply of warm bodies runs low. It's not infrequent for cultists to go permanently insane and/or die in the process of their activities; these are dealt with by Walker's guard staff. Some are fed to the Mouth, some are buried around Southern California, some are burned in the mansion's furnace.

A fight with most of Trammel's staff hardly constitutes combat but Trammel's guards are capable of defending themselves, at least.

Trammel's Guards

Athletics 4, Firearms 3, Health 4, Scuffling 4, Weapons 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (pistol), −1 (club)

22. Trammel's Mansion

The Clues and Interesting Parts

For Investigators, the following parts of the mansion are the most interesting, containing the clues that Trammels' mansion has to give up.

Trammel's Study

Trammel's study is a Mythos library with no pains taken to conceal the fact other than secure locks on all of the doors. In addition to containing mind-blasting tomes (among them, the contents of Echavarria's library, purchased from his estate in the wake of his death), Trammel's locked desk contains the in-progress *Testament of the Dripping Mouthes' Emanates,* which is part autobiography, part ecstatic revelation, and part manual of perverse libertinism. Whatever it is, Trammel has been penning it for more than a decade. See the sidebar "Reading Trammel's Testament." This work is the campaign clue that unlocks the Investigators' progress into Act Two.

Trammel's library also contains three different sets (two of the three are only partial sets, missing volume 12) of the *Revelations of Glaaki,* and a reel-to-reel copy of the sound master for the first Luz recording (see "Keeper's Background: The Mexico City Cult" on page 263).

Finally, there are two physical objects here that will prove important in Act Three but that the Investigators would be hard pressed to realize are significant now.

The first object is a painting whose nameplate identifies it as *The Gazer's Perspective*. It is a relatively mundane view of a star field. An Investigator making a 1-point **Astronomy** spend identifies certain constellations that are well known, but doesn't recognize this viewpoint upon them — it would have to be from far away across the cosmos. Any Investigator who sees this painting and has seen the safe deposit box photos realizes that *The Gazer's Perspective* was hanging in one of the rooms of Echavarria's mansion, before Echavarria was killed.

The second object is a copy of a book entitled *The Gaze of Azathoth*. It contains a wealth of information about Azathoth and — of particular note — is the source of the "outer ritual" that Ramon Echavarria was trying to perform in 1924. (See "Keeper's Background: The Interrupted Ritual" on page 373 for more information.) Critically, however, you should note there is nothing about this book, among the dozens of other works in Trammel's library, that would attract the Investigators' attention to it at this moment. Any Investigator who looks through the library notes its presence, but that's all, unless the Investigators spend weeks digesting the library's contents, which is unlikely. Even if they do that, there is nothing about the work that seems relevant to the current investigation.

To help disguise *The Gaze of Azathoth* at this point, here is a list of books from Trammel's collection, all of which point toward his areas of interest but do not contain any immediate clues:

- *Adrift in a Storm-Tossed Sky*
- *Collected Sermons of the Float'd Tongue, Vol. II*
- *Cradle in the Ocean, The*
- *Fishing the River of Stars*
- *Gaze of Azathoth, The*
- *Geheimes Mysterium von Asien*
- *Last of the First: The Ends of Occult Dynasties, The*

Reading Trammel's Testament

Samson Trammel's magnum opus-in-progress, the Testament of the Dripping Mouthes' Emanates, takes the physical form of a thick sheaf of papers and folios variously bound by twine, rubber bands, and nothing.

It is a chaotic work clearly written by either diverse authors or a splintered madman. (The latter, of course, is true.) In addition to containing written words, many of its pages are soaked or marked with various bodily fluids or supplemented with thin shavings of organic material.

Simply beholding the physical artifact requires a 2-point Mythos Stability test. Reading it is far worse; this takes two to three days and requires an additional 4-point Mythos Stability test.

Reading the work, however, provides the following critical clues:

The "testament" provides the core clue that Gol-Goroth was Echavarria's lie — that the god Gol-Goroth has never been a legitimate focus of the cult's worship, in 1924 or now.

It also provides the (incorrect) core clue that the Black Man, Nyarlathotep, has revealed himself to Trammel as the true motivating force behind Nectar and the Mouths.

Finally, it also provides the core campaign clue that the contemporary cult has spread from California to encompass the whole world, with operations in the various other critical Locales that are part of the Eternal Lies campaign. See the sidebar "Campaign Clues From the Testament" for the specifics that will lead the team to each specific Act Two Locale.

- *Lights in My Eyes: Wisdom and Lunacy in the 20th Century*
- *Lights in Their Eyes:Wisdom and Lunacy 1840 to 1899*
- *Seeds of Forbidden Fruit*
- *Temple of Furtea-Nya, The*

Locksmith provides access to the study, as well as access to the desk.

The Nectar-Harvesting Chamber

In the basement's secret precincts there exists the heart of the cult's ongoing operations, a never-ending debauch whose activities lubricate the Mouth that secretes the Nectar upon which its operations thrive, and which whispers the madness that continue to corrupt the cult and that have driven Trammel mad.

"Never-ending debauch" is quite literal. The cultists are possessed of supernatural stamina in such proximity to the Mouth, and they're also continually under the effects of the Nectar it secretes. Although the human cogs in this machine of perversion are occasionally switched out — some go home, others take their places — this occurs on a horizon of days rather than a remotely human horizon of hours or more frequently. Trammel frequently participates in the fornication himself, sometimes for days at a time.

One cultist, having finally satiated himself after days of participation, pulls himself away from the throng of writhing flesh and lies naked in a moment of blissful rest on some bare portion of the floor. He begins mumbling to himself. If the Investigators approach close enough, they can overhear him. The most coherent portion is as follows:

"He won't rest until the whole of the human species drinks of his Nectar… sinks to his debased depths… mile-wide mouths swallowing human beings by the dozens… drowning whole cities in Nectar."

If pressed later, the cultist doesn't remember saying such things.

The first Luz recording from the Mexico City Locale often plays in this chamber, although it's just as often the case that the celebrants are too distracted to restart it or flip it over when one side ends.

In addition to the cultists, one or two of Walker's guards are typically present; they're the ones who perform the mechanical process of collecting the Nectar and preparing it for sale. They're well trained and well practiced in warding off the advances of the cultists and tuning out the Nectar-haze that fills the chamber.

A **simple search** in either the downstairs room or the wine cellar is sufficient to discover the secret passages that lead from those respective chambers to the ritual chamber.

Occult or **Cthulhu Mythos** used within the chamber suggests that the debauchery is of the same stripe as that shown in the safe deposit box photos.

Witnessing the debauchery requires a 2-point non-Mythos Stability test, in addition to the typical peril of witnessing a Major Mouth.

The cultists themselves are almost completely unfazed by the entry of nearly anyone into the harvesting chamber. Even in the face of gunfire or other violence, any individual cultist is as likely to throw himself into certain death in a state of orgiastic ecstasy as fight back, and even the latter is undertaken for its value as pure sensation rather than out of any idea that defending the Mouth is required or desirable.

Trammel is an exception to this general rule, as are Walker's guards. It takes Trammel a round or two to appreciate what's happening if the Investigators barge in while he's occupied with the revels, and then he attempts to escape out the door by which the Investigators didn't enter, to summon help and then escape. Walker's guards retaliate against interlopers immediately, and with homicidal intention.

The Mouth itself also attacks interlopers in the chamber. This, clearly, is a Major Mouth.

Destroying the Mouth by use of explosives without endangering any present Investigators requires a Difficulty 6 **Explosives** test. Failure means that any Investigators in the basement level suffer 1d6 damage from falling debris and collapsing support beams. This may not be an obvious means to deal with the Mouth when first encountered, but, if the Investigators have returned here from Bangkok after meeting with Xuc Pramoj, the keeper of the Major Mouth there (See **Bangkok 11, "Xuc Pramoj,"** p. 166, for more information), they might be keen to use this tactic.

The Los Angeles Mouth

Health 72, Scuffling 18

Hit Threshold: 3 (large)

Alertness Modifier: +2

Stealth Modifier: −2

Weapon: +8 (bite), +4 (tongue); the tongue can reach about two meters up out of the Mouth itself and often involves itself in the celebrants' orgies.

Armor: +0

Stability Loss: +2

The Carriage House

Captain Walker lives an ascetic existence in the small apartment above the carriage house. Although there are loaded guns and even a military grenade secreted in the apartment, Walker is careful to ensure that nothing incriminating — whatsoever — ever enters or is stored in this personal abode. If the cult ever falls, he intends to be able to make the argument that he was not involved in Trammel's "shocking!" operation.

Moving On From Here

Conservative players may become worried at the apparent open-endedness of the conclusion of their adventures in Los Angeles, trying to read the meta-game tea leaves about which Locale they're "supposed" to go to next, proactively trying to collaborate with you in order to avoid derailing what's obviously a relatively intricate campaign.

Feel free to make it clear that you don't have an agenda for where the Investigators go next, either by refusing to provide any tea leaves or — if the players just won't take a clue — by explicitly telling them that, after Los Angeles, Eternal Lies becomes an open matrix for a while and that they can tackle the next stages in whatever order they want. It's up to you.

An End to this Horror

Prior to their travels in Act Two, the Investigators may not believe themselves to be in much of a position to do anything definite about the Major Mouth that lurks in Trammel's estate. This was the case with at least one group of *Eternal Lies* playtesters, who figured that they'd be better equipped to deal with Trammel and his minions after learning more about what George Ayers was up to in Ethiopia.

If the players get hung up on the idea that they're missing some critical clue in Los Angeles that's needed to bring the local cult to its knees, you may wish to point out that nothing will stop them from returning to Los Angeles after visiting one or more of the global locations to which Trammel's Testament points.

On the other hand, the Investigators may simply try to wrap up Los Angeles with obvious, violent, non-Mythos measures like burning Trammel's mansion to the ground. Such tactics will definitely set the cult's Los Angeles operations back for some months. Assassinating Trammel and Walker would do the same.

The players may even get truly creative in approaching the task of countering Trammel, Walker, and the Los Angeles Mouth. Investigators with federal contacts might turn the FBI on the Los Angeles Nectar operation, as just one example.

Your job, in drawing this Locale to a close, is to roll with whatever they try, and provide sensible reactions for their actions. Even more importantly, though, you should promote a speedy and emotionally satisfying transition to Act Two, which, after all, is the meat of the Eternal Lies campaign.

For some play groups, nothing will trump the expectation that every major segment of a Cthulhu Mythos investigation should end with a violent confrontation between the Investigators and an Old One, leading to death or madness on one side or the other. Such a confrontation can certainly be staged in Trammel's cellar, given the capabilities of the Major Mouth, the celebrants present, and the paramilitary tools and capabilities at the disposal of Walker and the mansion's guards. That is to say, you shouldn't have any problem engineering a gory end to the Los Angeles Locale featuring copious death and madness, if that's what your players demand.

The Very Final Reel

Keepers who are interested in more expansive Hollywood-based Trail of Cthulhu adventures may want to cross-pollinate the NPCs and activities in the Los Angeles Locale with the open-antagonist *Shadows Over Filmland* scenario "The Final Reel," which concerns efforts to shut down a film production sponsored — beneath it all — by a secretive Hollywood cult.

Campaign Clues From the *Testament*

Samson Trammel's diverse and horrible *Testament of the Dripping Mouthes' Emanates* contains a series of campaign clues to point the Investigators at each of the Act Two Locales (with the exception of the Yucatán, which is discovered through core clues in Mexico City, and Ethiopia, which the Investigators have already probably discovered by tracking the movements of George Ayers).

Each is described below. All of these core clues should be described to Investigators who read the *Testament*. Their basic form (e.g., "a sheaf of correspondence from Siam") can be revealed to Investigators who skim the work, but the content of each clue that will allow the Investigators to fruitfully travel to the Locale and pick up the threads of investigation there cannot be learned at a skim.

Bangkok

The *Testament* contains, pasted into its pages, correspondence from "S. S." about the metaphysical nature of the being their cult venerates. Trammel's correspondent (who is Savitree Sirikhan, although this information is not recorded in the *Testament*) believes that to have this knowledge is critical, and that it's likely as not that Trammel is wrong in his own conclusions. The correspondence is written in a tone that suggests its author believes herself to be an equal, rather than a subordinate, of Trammel's. Evidence Collection suggests that Trammel's correspondent is female and well educated.

The return address on the correspondence, which can be faintly seen through the stationary and fully accessed by steaming the letter off the page, is the street address of Daniel Lowman's townhouse in Bangkok (see **Bangkok 1, "Return Address,"** p. 145).

One interesting passage in the correspondence is an explicit invitation to Trammel personally, or his Los Angeles followers, to "fight in our rites" in Bangkok, with explicit instructions on where to go and what to say in order to find the proper location. This clue is described in Bangkok 6, "'I'm Looking for the Fights'" (page 155). You may wish to reserve this clue for deployment only if needed, as described in that scene.

Malta

A short chapter in the *Testament*, handwritten earlier in the current year, offers a short treatise on various methods of "increasing the Yield of Emanates from the Most Holy Orifices of the Thing."

It largely proposes a series of particular and depraved acts that would be theoretically pleasing to the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, and therefore stimulate additional Nectar production, but no hard data is provided, except in one specific instance. The chapter cites "particular experiments conducted by Montgomery Donovan in Malta" that demonstrate that "a potent sacrifice" can "multiply by many times the blessings of our god's sputum." Library Use suggests that Trammel was a bit skeptical of this claim, even as he authored the passage.

A ledger page folded into the leaf where this chapter was recorded appears to be a record of daily Nectar production in Valletta in the early part of 1937. Production seems to have been relatively constant up until a particular date, after which it nearly triples, almost overnight. The date — a few weeks before the Investigators first met with Janet Winston-Rogers — is marked with a star. Investigators who make a 1-point Accounting spend get the idea that the post-sacrifice quantities of Nectar apparently now being produced in Malta are truly horrifying — of continental rather than regional scope.

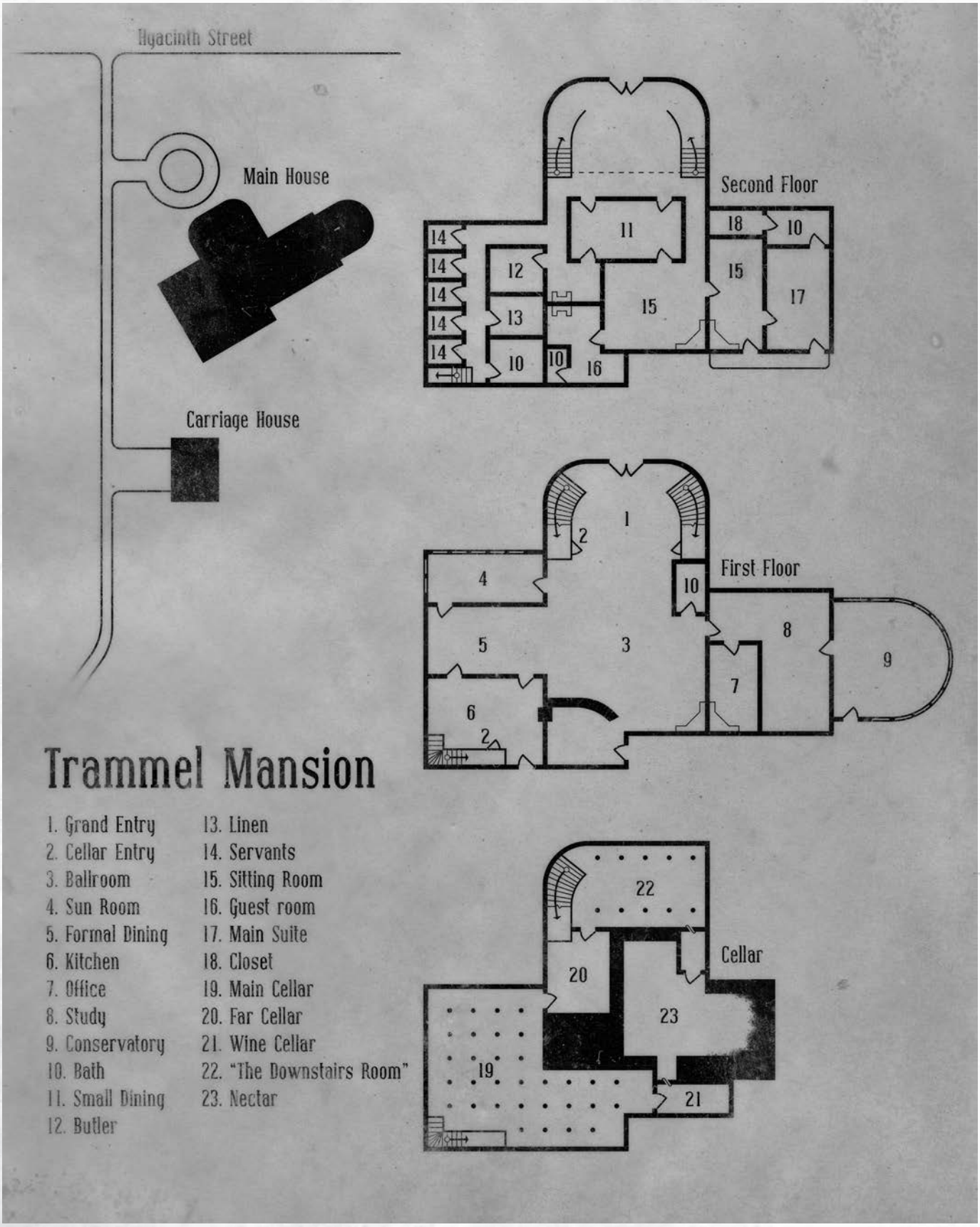
Mexico City

An unfinished chapter in the *Testament*, mixing handwritten passages and pasted-in pages of correspondence, considers the power of a Mouth's voice or "song." Few conclusions are made; the text consists mostly of suppositions and possibilities, like "the voice of a great Mouth may have the power to enchant or enlighten!" Eventually the handwritten speculation gives way to letters, written on Luz Records stationary (whose address appears to be a Mexico City post office box: #1629), which excitedly report in Spanish about "our next recording" and "the profound possibilities of new songs!"

Library Use detects a lot of tension between the lines of the letters. Each letter is more grandiose, and more defensive, than the last. It seems clear that the author of these letters — signed only as "J.B." — was not delivering the results anticipated by the earlier handwritten passages and eager letters. The letters promise "a new experience to rival that of Nectar's" and that "Nectar distribution will return to its original rates once we've prepared our album." Numerous references are made to "de la Luz" and how "the next record will change everything."

The last letter from J.B. features a new tone: buried hostility. At two points in the letter, J.B. refers to "the god" and "your god" rather than using the reverential tone he employed in earlier letters.

The last letter is dated three weeks prior to the Investigators' discovery of the Testament. A slew of blank pages separate the final letter from the next chapter, leaving room for future correspondence.


Hyacinth Street
Main House
Carriage House
Second Floor
First Floor
Cellar
Trammel Mansion
1. Grand Entry
2. Cellar Entry
3. Ballroom
4. Sun Room
5. Formal Dining
6. Kitchen
7. Office
8. Study
9. Conservatory
10. Bath
11. Small Dining
12. Butler
13. Linen
14. Servants
15. Sitting Room
16. Guest room
17. Main Suite
18. Closet
19. Main Cellar
20. Far Cellar
21. Wine Cellar
22. "The Downstairs Room"
23. Nectar

Act Two

"The world knows well the beauty, the terror and the mystery of those obscure realms into which the inspired dreamer is transported. But much as has been told, no man has yet dared intimate the nature of the phantasms thus unfolded to the mind, or hint at the direction of the unheard-of roads along whose ornate and exotic course the partaker of the drug is so irresistibly borne."

— "The Crawling Chaos"

The Shape of Act Two

The second Act of *Eternal Lies* is a nonlinear exploration of the outposts, operations, and officers of the worldwide cult uncovered in Act One. In this Act, the Investigators confront and combat the cult's operations in five distinct Locales from Bangkok to Mexico City. The order in which they approach and explore these Locales is largely up to the players, though you, the Keeper, obviously have some ability to influence their decisions. The information they are able to gather over time from these Locales combines to reveal the true and hidden location of Thing With a Thousand Mouth's terrible body.

Act Two is essentially five distinct scenarios set in five different Locales across the globe. Four of these Locales are approachable immediately after discovering their existence in the Los Angeles Locale in Act One; the fifth Locale is revealed in the Mexico City Locale of Act Two.

Only by rolling up their sleeves and wading through each Locale's unique perils and horrors can the Investigators locate and eliminate their ultimate foe in Act Three.

In between the various Locales, the Investigators are presumed to be getting in touch with their families and Sources of Stability, either directly or via telegram and the post, depending on whether the PCs need to restore their Stability. These in-between moments offer up optional opportunities for scenes of their own — this chapter presents examples of such scenes.

The Hook

The hook for Act Two is made up of clues discovered in Los Angeles in Act One. Together, those clues reveal sites across the globe, connected to the Nectar cult and the earthly schemes of the Liar From Beyond. The dreadful truth about what the cult is up to — poisoning the population with a mystical narcotic milked from the mouth of an alien god — should be enough to motivate the Investigators to intervene. (They are, after all, the protagonists of the campaign, the characters with the Drives.)

Should the Investigators be skittish about pressing on with their investigation and exploration without Janet Winston-Rogers's blessing (lest they lose their funding), they may seek out permission. She grants it readily. It wasn't just her father's old business she's interested in uncovering for herself, but his tenacity and bravery that she's interested in uncovering *within* herself — and within the Investigators. She wants to complete what her father regretted leaving incomplete.

When the PCs are motivated to continue, she supports them. If they hesitate, she is your spokesperson for motivating them.

The Spine

The spine of Act Two is actually five different spines, spread across the five Locales. Four Locales are immediately available to the Investigators at the beginning of Act Two:

- Bangkok, Siam
- Ethiopia
- Valletta, Malta
- Mexico City, Mexico

The fifth Locale stems from clues revealed in Mexico City:

- The Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico

In between these Locales, you are free to play floating scenes that explore the personal lives of the Investigators… and the efforts of the cultists to deter them. These scenes, which are optional and easy to arrange, belong not to any one Locale but to Act Two in general and are thus described in this chapter.

The Shape of Act Two

Locales, Investigations, and Refreshing Points

When does one investigation end and the next one begin? In Act Two, that's up to you. As the Keeper, the power to declare an investigation complete is part of your toolkit for crafting a compelling and challenging game experience. You decide when it's time to dole out ability refreshments and new build points (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 82).

A single investigation should consist of one Locale — which is like a self-contained scenario of its own — plus any floating scenes you choose to attach to the Locale, before or after. One investigation might consist of a single Locale and no floating scenes, while the next is made up of one floating scene at the beginning of the Locale and two more at the end. It's up to you. Your goal is to make the players' decision to save or spend Investigative points as interesting (and sometimes challenging) as possible… without going over the line into frustration.

You may set out to include one or two floating scenes as part of a single investigation but change your mind when you see how spent the characters are after, say, their time in Bangkok. That's a fair play. Floating scenes are meant to be added and subtracted as a means of controlling the difficulty of each investigation on the fly. Some floating scenes are so challenging or dangerous, for example, that characters may be unable to complete them to anyone's satisfaction if they are played after an unexpectedly taxing Locale. Don't spoil your campaign with a total-Investigator extermination just to maintain your commitment to a scene structure you decided earlier. Make the most informed decision you can in the moment.

See "The Scenes in Actual Play," at the end of this chapter, for some examples of Act Two scene structures and investigations.



How and when the PCs move from Locale to Locale is up to them. Thus the spine for Act Two varies depending on how your players approach the campaign. They may work their way east from Los Angeles, for example, or they may play early scenes of Mexico and Malta before playing the whole of Bangkok and then returning to Malta. Each Locale is designed to motivate the Investigators to complete the local investigation before moving on, but the freedom to wander from Locale to Locale remains.

(See the sidebar, "The Scenes in Actual Play," on p. 144, for examples of spines for this Act of the campaign.)

Each Locale contains **campaign clues** that interact to reveal the horrible truths of Act Two as a whole. These clues give the Investigators a sense of what to expect in Act Three and some tools to use to bring the campaign to a close therein.

The order in which the players approach the Locales may alter the way they view the campaign clues that they get — perhaps leading them to make a rash decision and proceed out of Act Two early and at their own peril. Skipping Locales and proceeding to Act Three may leave the characters unprepared and ill equipped for their final confrontation, but that is their mistake to make. If they survive, they can return to Act Two's Locales, continue gathering information and experience, and try Act Three again.

The Horrible Truth

The horrible truths of Act Two are revealed as the Investigators assemble campaign clues gathered in each Locale… and as they watch their lives come under attack by the enemies they're making in the perverse cult they oppose.

As the Investigators proceed, they must learn an unfortunate truth, revealed to them along the way by various NPCs and grim realizations via the Cthulhu Mythos ability: defeating even the Major Mouths of their godlike foe merely weakens it. In time it shall heal and grow new Mouths and restore its power unless its body is destroyed. The characters must learn where on Earth they can find the actual body of the Liar From Beyond, a.k.a. the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, how it can be reached, and how it may be destroyed.

No one Locale contains all of this information. Indeed, the Investigators may believe they can slay the Liar From Beyond by defeating all of its Mouths. They'll learn along the way that it just isn't so (see "Campaign Clues and Revelations," p. 124).

That information is the culmination of the second-Act campaign clues, but other horrible truths are revealed in Act Two. The free-floating scenes of this Act examine the cost of combating the cult and getting close to its godlike master. They explore the consequences of the Investigators' choices and Drives. They reveal the horrible truth that the Investigators risk the wellbeing of their Sources of Stability — their allies, friends, and families — by meddling in the affairs of evil… even when they meddle for the greater good.

The Race Against Time

Since half of the campaign clue about finding the Thing's body in the Devouring Ravine relates to a specific time when the body can be accessed, the players may want to track the time they spend in their various travels and activities in some detail. They may go even further, trying to suss out from the Malta clue exactly which day they must arrive on Mount Kailash. Tactically, that's a reasonable approach for them. Dramatically, it's only interesting to the extent that it makes

The Shape of Act Two



the Investigators fear that they won't make it in time.

For the purposes of the overall campaign's advancement, the Malta clue amounts to half of the clue-pair that "unlocks" the Investigators' ability to climb Mount Kailash and confront Y'golonac (the other half being the location of the mountain). If the Investigators climb the mountain without the Malta clue, they reach the top of Mount Kailash and discover… nothing, past a spectacular view. If they climb the mountain with the Malta clue, they arrive on the night of the Devouring Ravine's opening.

Some Keepers may be bothered by the magnitude of coincidence this represents — it may not seem "fair," or "realistic," to some. We encourage you to consider the mechanical overhead that would be required to track the openings and closings of the Devouring Ravine in comparison to the exact number of days the Investigators might spend taking a series of airplanes from Cairo to Calcutta, or the precise amount of time they spend recovering their Stability in New England, or doing whatever else in the long term.

We considered all of that and decided that it wasn't worth it. Too much bookkeeping for an end result that would actually make *Eternal Lies* less fun for most groups by deflating the sense of time pressure. ("We've got three weeks. We might as well spend another day goofing around in Delhi.")

There are two critical things you should understand, though.

First, the players should feel a sense of time pressure even though there actually isn't any. They don't know that you're not keeping religious count of the number of days that pass as they travel the globe, explore the Locales, and recuperate with their Sources of Stability. If you think a bit of mechanical deception will serve to increase their sense of pressure, keep a Post-it note on the inside of your game screen and make tally marks as the in-game days pass, or hand a calendar to the players and make them tick off the passing days. Pretend that it matters; ask the players how much time they want to spend with their Sources of Stability, reference this book, and make a note. The goal with all of this is for the players to be worried that they'll run out of time. If the players' discussion with each other suggests that this is a concern to them, then all's well.

Second, if the players don't seem to be feeling a sense of time pressure — if they run a full circuit of every Investigator's Sources of Stability after each Locale, if they spend a full week surveilling each of their targets of investigation, and so on — then they should experience negative consequences. Since sending them directly to failure of the entire campaign isn't really an option (again, dismissing the possibility of arbitrary and precipitous failure is an essential part of GUMSHOE's basic premise), their lollygagging should hurt them in other ways. The best consequences

for spending excessive time between Locales is to inflict additional harm on their Sources of Stability, as is broadly discussed in "Floating Act Two Scenes," p. 125. If the Investigators squander time as part of their investigations at the Act Two Locales, keep a tally of the number of instances, across the whole of Act Two, where they knowingly fritter away more than a few days without advancing the Locale's spine. The first instance is free, but after that, each time they waste an excessive period of time, assign them a −1 penalty to the "fast" category when they finally select their climbing route at Mount Kailash (see **Thibet 9, "Ascent,"** p. 359). Investigators who waste too much time over the course of Act Two will wind up arriving at the Devouring Mountain later than would be ideal, which is exactly the dramatic outcome you want, but without having to track months and months worth of time day by day (and without the potential that the Investigators will arrive at the top of Mount Kailash in order to twiddle their thumbs for a month in a complete meltdown of campaign excitement).

If this approach goes against your sense of How RPGs Should Be Played, there's no reason why you can't keep track of the whole campaign day by day. Assume that the Devouring Ravine opens just after dusk after a number of days equal to the total result of 7 dice, and remains open for a number of hours equal to the total result of 7 dice. (Let's say it's reacting to combinations of stars and moon phases that make sense only to the Liar's alien mind.) Reroll both of these totals after each opening to determine the delay until, and length of, the next opening. The overall pattern doesn't repeat in an obvious way, and is too complex to be calculated very far in advance without computing technology that doesn't exist in the '30s outside the boundaries of the Mythos. We're pretty sure everyone will have more fun with the simpler approach, though. (Consider, additionally, that this approach might allow the Investigators to bypass Malta entirely and stumble onto the Devouring Ravine when it's open by accident.)

Campaign Clues and Revelations

Each Locale offers up its own campaign clues and contributes in its own way to the revelation that the body of the Liar From Beyond must be destroyed to put an end to its power. Here, in brief, are the campaign clues from each Locale:

• **Bangkok:** It is possible to safely destroy a Major Mouth with explosives, by using them in a particular way. A map to the location of the Liar From Beyond's stomach beneath Mount Kailash (the Devouring Mountain) in the Himalayas.

• **Ethiopia:** A Major Mouth can be calcified by means of a sacrificial ritual.

• **Malta:** The Liar's place beneath the mountain opens only when the stars shine down at midnight onto a flexing crack in the rock at the mountain's peak. Meanwhile, a knight in Valletta believes the Thing With a Thousand Mouths to be Nyarlathotep, and he offers a spell to banish that god.

• **Mexico City:** The real name of the Devouring Mountain is revealed here. Additionally, the local cult leader believes the Liar From Beyond is not Gol-Goroth, and he has dispatched an expedition to the Yucatán to prove it.

• **The Yucatán:** The true identity of the Liar From Beyond is revealed, and spells that are potentially useful in its defeat are discovered or bestowed.

Note that the order in which the players engage the Locales may impact what clues they choose to trust and what are successfully disregarded as erroneous (or red herrings). It is up to the players to make sense of the clues they get, to parse the information they uncover, and sort out the truth

Paralyzed by Freedom

Without a single strict trail leading from one Locale to the next — or even just with the freedom of movement afforded by borrowing Janet Winston-Rogers's plane and pilot — it's possible for the campaign to grow too wide here in the middle, for the many options and possibilities to overwhelm the players and their characters. Unable to agree on exactly what to do next, the Investigators may attempt to do too much at once or, practically, nothing at all. One of your jobs is to help the players maintain momentum with one hand while making their many choices interesting with the other hand.

Should the players become paralyzed with options or pulled in too many directions, provide them with immediate decisions to make. This may not get them all to band together, but it provides an immediate crossroads to navigate and helps winnow their options to a selectable few.

Floating scenes can help you guide the characters to a particular Locale by asking the characters to react to an attack by the enemy cult or provoking them to retaliation. Vengeance or curiosity may lead them to a particular Locale after that. In this way, you might scheme to concoct an adventure spine by luring the players to play out Locales in *your* preferred order. Do this only if the players truly are paralyzed by their freedom, however — the point of providing multiple Locales at once is to give the *players* meaningful choices.

from the lies. Different NPCs reveal different "true" identities of the Liar From Beyond in different Locales; for example — a clue in Malta suggests the Liar is Nyarlathotep while a clue from the Yucatán says it is Y'golonac — and it is up to the players and their characters to make choices based on what they believe the truth to be given the evidence. If the players simply trust newer information over older information, the order in which they play the Locales makes a tremendous difference in what they think is true and what they think is a mistake… or a lie.

In addition to the campaign clues, you have another message to convey to the characters during Act Two: Defeating even the Major Mouths of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths won't ultimately defeat it. To truly banish or destroy it, they must confront and defeat the Thing where it sleeps. Various Locales make this point in their own way, but you may also want to underline the message with dialogue from NPCs throughout the Locales — perhaps leaning more heavily on this point in later Locales, as the cult is feeling the hurt and the Investigators are feeling on top of things.

Here are some bits of dialogue you can give to NPCs in Act Two to drive the point home:

- CULTIST: "You're just scratching at a giant — our god will grow new Mouths and renew itself in time!"
- CULTIST: "You can kill me, but my god merely slumbers. When its body awakens, it shall have its revenge on you and this world…"
- CULTIST: "Setbacks. Only setbacks. It shall heal and return. You'll see."
- ALLY NPC: "I worry that you're only stabbing at fingertips when we should be aiming for the heart."
- ALLY NPC: "I don't understand… if you can blow up its mouth why can't you blow up its guts and be done with it?"

Floating Act Two Scenes

This chapter details a selection of scenes for you to deploy to add new challenges to the second Act of the campaign. Use them to broaden the stage and portray more of the PCs' lives than just the time they spend away from their homes investigating and battling evil. Use them to add to the sense of menace in the world at large and give the villains a more active role in the story.

With these scenes, the Investigators' families and friends introduce new subplots and dramatic questions into the campaign. At the same time, some of these floating scenes depict the efforts of the villainous cult of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths to strike back against the Investigators. Thus the cult seems more actively perilous rather than waiting around at each Locale for the Investigators to show up and ruin their operation.

These scenes are all optional.

How to Use These Scenes

Use your judgment as Keeper and your narrative good sense to determine how many, if any, of these scenes to use between any two Locales. Even a single scene between Locales may distract one play group, while another may not be satisfied with just one scene of drama on the home front.

Rely on your knowledge of your players and their interest in pressing on to the next Locale. Sometimes the momentum from Locale to Locale is too good to risk interrupting. Other times, the space between Locales may not feel like a real stretch of time — a real rest or period of recovery — without a scene or two to fill the gap.

Be careful. These scenes can tax or tire characters who may desperately need recovery time. That is, in fact, part of the point to these scenes.

These floating scenes should occur either before or after the post-scenario refreshes earned for completing a Locale. The timing of the scene is vital. You're either challenging players to consider holding points in reserve during a Locale, in case they need them in a scene *after* the Locale's completed, or you're challenging them to spend newly refreshed points before the PCs have even reached the next Locale. The point is to make the decision to save or spend points more interesting, more compellingly agonizing, without outright punishing the characters or the players.

For example, consider a character who returns home to refresh Stability and spend a few days in the hospital. Perhaps that character has spent all of his points in Reassurance during his time in the last Locale. You can choose to set a scene dramatizing and complicating the character's family life either *before* the character's Reassurance points have refreshed or *after*. If you set the scene before, the character may need to call in an ally — probably another PC — to reassure an angry or worried spouse (and Source of Stability), since the character in question is out of points to spend. That can be an interesting scene, dramatically. Does the intervening PC demand a favor in return? How do the relationships between these three characters change or grow as a result of the scene? Does the troubled spouse call the spending PC the next time she is worried? You have lots of interesting avenues to explore.

If you set the scene after the refresh has occurred, the character may have no trouble choosing to make the spend himself, but then enters the next Locale down one point already. The decision is easy, dramatically, but may have tactical repercussions later on.

You're essentially affixing these floating scenes to the end of one Locale or the beginning of the next. Just how you affix them is a judgment call, a design question that you must answer as the Keeper. Perhaps a scene of domestic strife occurs once the characters return from Mexico City, still exhausted from their flight, and, then, after the characters have refreshed their Investigative pools, another scene occurs before they depart for Bangkok. It's up to you. Deploy these scenes in whatever arrangement you think will be the most dramatically satisfying or tactically challenging for the players.

See the sidebar, "The Scenes in Actual Play," p. 144, for examples of when these scenes might be deployed.

Casting

These scenes are necessarily light on details because we don't know who the principle players or Sources of Stability are. Before you can run any of these scenes, you must cast the essential parts. Who's suffering from eerie nightmares? Is it the daughter of the forthright private investigator or is it the spouse of the treacherous reporter? Whose house(s) do the cultist goons stake out? Who ends up addicted to Nectar?

The answers to these questions are yours. You might replay the same scene a couple of times with different characters cast in the key parts. Maybe cultists show up at the house of one PC following the events of Los Angeles and then at another house after the characters return from Malta. It's up to you.

Avoid picking on one character unless you know that player is up for it. Some of these scenes carry the risk of losing a Source of Stability, and it may not be fair to ask one character to make constant spends just to avoid losing a Source for good. One player's compelling subplot is another's taxing bit of tedium. If a character's child was reassured during the last lull between Locales, try showing a scene of domestic bliss during the next break. It shows what the player successfully purchased with that Reassurance spend and is also a good reward for doing the heroic, and often thankless, work of saving the world from a depraved cult.

Not everything should be a heartbreaking drag, after all.

Not Scenes, but Subplots

Some of the following scenes are not really scenes at all, but the start of potential subplots. If the players get suspicious of one NPC's nightmares and choose to investigate them, you may have two or three scenes on your hands instead of one. Roll with it or deliver clues that shut down the subplot before it turns into something uninteresting. If the players are involved and invested, that's great, but don't let them run too long down a dead-end corridor. Either put a door at the end of the subplot that opens back into the main concerns of your campaign (perhaps by putting some dialogue in an NPC's mouth that underlines what the subplot reveals about the PC's personality) or simply resolve it quickly.

Losing a Source of Stability

Several of this chapter's scenes involve the risk of losing Sources of Stability. They may be killed, they may leave the subject character's life for safer pastures, or they may simply become too unstable to grant much comfort to the character. Such are the risks of staying close to the Investigators.

So what happens when a character loses a Source of Stability? One of two things, depending on the circumstances of the loss and the tone of the campaign (which is itself determined by your generosity):

- **The Harsher Outcome:** Losing a Source of Stability costs three points from a character's Stability *rating*, which can only be replaced by finding a new Source of Stability and buying the Stability rating back up with build points awarded during play.
- **The Gentler Outcome:** Losing a Source of Stability costs three points from a character's Stability *pool*, which cannot be recovered until the character finds a new Source of Stability to replace the one that was lost. Once a new Source of Stability is acquired (see below), the three Stability points are immediately recovered.

In general, your particular adaptation of *Eternal Lies* should pick either the harsher method or the gentler method and stick with it for all characters. In actual practice, you might discriminate between Sources that are lost shockingly and horrifically — under harsh circumstances that call for a Stability test — and Sources that are lost more gently, via a mutual understanding or a gradual separation, for example. Even still, the Stability point loss from, say, finding a dead Source of Stability is often enough punishment. Use the harsher outcome only with players who want to see their characters undergo and suffer (or endure and overcome) the most terrible adversity.

In some cases, characters may choose to avoid their Sources of Stability to keep them out of harm's way. The Sources of Stability aren't technically lost, but the characters' Stability refreshes between adventures may be penalized by 3 points if you decide phone calls and telegrams aren't sufficient contact with them to warrant full ones.

Gaining a Source of Stability

New Sources of Stability are gained in one of two circumstances: when a character's Stability *rating* increases to another full multiple of three or when a character replaces a lost Source of Stability following the gentler method described earlier.

A new Source of Stability that is purchased with new build points requires no further game-mechanical activity to activate — spending the build points is enough to either introduce the NPC into the campaign or promote an existing NPC to a Source of Stability.

Replacing a lost Source of Stability may, at your discretion, be one degree more complicated if no new build points are being spent. Something should happen during play to promote an NPC, in the narrative, to a Source of Stability. Something should happen to show that the neighbor next door is now more important to the PC than any other neighbor in the building, for example — something that enriches and cements their relationship as a supportive NPC and a supported PC, even if that relationship is one-sided.

Does the PC's nice landlady know that her constant presence at the PC's flat provides him some of the stability he needs to go on with his secret life as a cult-busting gumshoe? Does the PC's brother know that he's been promoted from a trusted friend to an anchor of stability in the PC's sometimes-crazy existence? Not necessarily.

Even still, consider calling for a short scene that dramatizes the changing relationship. Maybe it's just a brief bit wherein the PC stops his landlady on the stairs to help her carry out the garbage and the PC says, "I'm glad I ran into you, Mrs. Cartwright." Maybe it's a scene where the PC and her brother have a conversation about their jobs and the brother confides, "I don't understand what it is you do, sis, but I know you're good at it. I'm proud of you." Such a scene, however fleeting or mundane, serves to usher in the new Source of Stability.

Optionally, cementing a relationship with a new Source of Stability might require a 1-point spend to elevate or enrich the relationship with the Source. If, for example, a player wants to transform a casual NPC acquaintance into a lover and Source of Stability, changing that relationship might call for a 1-point Interpersonal spend. Elevating a professional relationship might call for a 1-point spend in an Occupational ability to impress the new Source. The specific ability to be spent is fungible; what matters is the formal and apt selection of a suitable ability that puts the relationship into game terms. Such a spend can help a new relationship seem formally approved for some players — but if you use this optional rule, you should use it for all *replacement* Sources of Stability, and not for those bought with build points.

Combine all of these elements and you might result in a subplot wherein an Investigator's spouse (a Source of Stability) leaves after a fight about the Investigator's lifestyle (see **"Family Troubles,"** p. 131), temporarily costing the Investigator 3 points of Stability, and is then wooed back with a Reassurance or Flattery spend, thereby restoring the Investigator's Stability. This subplot might span a single Locale or take two or three Locales to play out, depending on when the Investigator's player has the necessary points to spend to recover the Source of Stability.



You might be able to parcel out these subplots over several breaks between Locales. Maybe one nightmare is seen as a chance for the PC to reassure her Source of Stability and sing a lullaby, but the next is seen as evidence of a problem. The third use of the same scene definitely pushes the subject into subplot territory and tells the *players* that they should be paying attention to the scene. Again, let that play out if it's interesting to the players or resolve it in just a scene or two if it's in danger of distracting or boring someone.

You may have to devise additional scenes to fill out and pay off these subplots. Without knowing the specific characters and Sources of Stability in play, we have only provided the beginning of potential subplots — things that can be resolved swiftly before returning to the main body of the campaign. These are the characters' personal lives, after all. These scenes should be personalized for them.

Motivators

Just as these scenes can be used to motivate subplots, they can be used to motivate action in the main plotline as well. Make it clear that bad things will continue to happen until the Investigators put a final end to their campaign against the cult. Make it clear that the Investigators have started something that must be finished.

Perhaps a villainous thug makes a promise: "As long as my god's alive, more of us will be back to hurt the people you love."

Perhaps a Source of Stability unnervingly observes: "I won't be able to sleep at night until I know this is all over. For good."

If the thugs in a floating Act Two scene are from a previous Locale, you're showing the players that their characters' actions have consequences, which can be dramatically satisfying. If the thugs in a scene are from an unvisited Locale, you're reminding the players that their characters have work to do.

These bits of dialogue put the notion into the fiction that the characters cannot dally for long in their personal lives. They cannot spend much time fretting or planning. They cannot wait for the right opportunity — they must make their own opportunities. It's time to press on to the next Locale or on to Act Three.

"Finish this," says an Investigator's spouse or lover, "for all of us."

Paying to Prevent These Scenes

It may not always be immediately evident to the players or their characters, but these scenes are also viable rewards for spends during play in Locales. Or, more accurately, these scenes might be *skipped* as a reward for wise spends made during play in Locales. A 2-point spend in Bargain aimed at the right cultist in Mexico City might mean that he never calls the thugs that would terrorize a Source of Stability, for example. Spending the time, energy, and ability points to hunt down the last of the fleeing warehouse workers in Malta might spare the characters' families from the scene **"Deterrence."**

Perhaps a player goes out of his way to mention that he's spending Reassurance and sending a postcard to his daughter back home while the characters are on a layover in Italy — that spend could prevent the scene **"Nightmares"** before it even happens.

You are free to throw out these scenes in response to smart plays, roleplaying choices, and other gestures and ideas on the players' part, just as you are free to activate these scenes in reaction to the PCs' choices. You might want to go so far as to tell the players, "You've circumvented a bit of danger and trouble by making that spend," or "You just bought off a later attack by the cultists," or what have you. Alternately, you can simply reward them with a quick scene of comfort and refreshment when they get home and let the lack of menace be its own reward.

More Peaceful Scenes

You might play several short, peaceful scenes between Locales or between floating scenes of conflict and trouble. A few quick images or vignettes of the characters' lives as they are refreshing themselves or healing up can go a long way toward giving context to the mayhem and madness they experience in the campaign's Locales. It's like coming up for a breath of air before diving under the dark surface again.

Here are a few ideas for vignettes you might use between other scenes:

The Comforts of Home

These scenes may be the baseline for interstitial vignettes between Locales. These are quick descriptions of the PCs back in their regular lives, healing up and remembering why they do what they do. Ask a player: "What's life like when you get back to your house?" Help the player turn the answer into a visual description or a dramatic vignette — it may be about roses and chocolates or whiskey and tears, but let it be vivid and revealing of the character.

For a more leading question, which implies a bit of menace, ask this way: "What do we see if we peer through your windows after you come home?"

If the player wants you to lead the descriptive process — explicitly or implicitly — you can do it by taking hold of a Source of Stability as an NPC and describing something sweet, supportive, or stabilizing that they do:

- A spouse brings the character some cocoa.
- A child shows off a drawing made in school.
- A neighbor stops to commiserate about sports or the weather.
- A sibling shows up with a bottle of wine for the once-regular card game.
- Old buddies go out for dinner and have their picture taken together.
- Lovers walk hand-in-hand down the lakeshore.

Tailor the vignette to the character and the Sources of Stability in question, and keep it brief. A fleeting bit of context helps humanize the characters and put the stakes of their actions into relief, but your ultimate goal is to tell a story of horror and adventure. Get on with it.

Introducing New Player Characters

New characters bring with them some exposition and baggage in the form of their backstories and Sources of Stability. Try introducing new characters by showing them in typical context first — at home with the kids or at work (whether that means fist fighting with gangsters or teaching class at the university) — and then introducing them to the rest of the bunch. Describe the characters' Drives in action; depict them interacting with Sources of Stability; show them performing the duties of their occupations. This can all go a long way toward making characters more memorable than listing their traits and putting them right onto the plane to the next Locale.

This scene might even describe the new character getting the telegram that "activates" her, pulling her from her regular life and getting her onto the train to Mexico City (or where have you). Perhaps this is the only glimpse we get of life outside the investigation between two Locales. It gives the new

character a bit of spotlight before returning to business.

Contact With Janet Winston-Rogers

Depending on what the Investigators' ongoing relationship with Janet Winston-Rogers is, they may visit her to check in, drop off receipts, pick up cash, repair the plane, or otherwise refresh themselves between Locales. Such scenes can underscore the perilous nature of the PCs' work. ("You look beaten up," she says. Or: "I wasn't sure you'd make it back this time. I read about an explosion in Valletta.") Such scenes can also prep Janet Winston-Rogers for use as a replacement character down the line, or as a love interest or Source of Stability for someone.

This may be an opportunity to reaffirm the Investigators' motives and mission. Perhaps Mrs. Winston-Rogers starts to doubt the choice to press on without official aid and needs the PCs to reverse their roles and talk her into letting them continue their work. Or perhaps she has to persuade a PC to avoid quitting the investigation.

If nothing else, this is a chance for the PCs to be pat on the back and told they're doing good work, while everyone else in the world is busy calling them mad, desperate renegades.



Nightmares

Scene Type: Source of Stability Complication

Lead-ins: Varies. Play this scene early in Act Two to make the most of the possibility that the nightmares are prophetic; play it later in the Act to show the toll that an adventurous lifestyle is taking on a PC's Sources of Stability. This scene presumes that the PC confides to some extent in the subject Source, no matter how vaguely.

Summary: A Source of Stability suffers from horrific nightmares, imagining the PC (and the PC's cohorts) in peril or being violent towards the Source or both. Are these nightmares the result of cultist interference or just the result of caring for a PC in such dire danger? Are these dreams prophetic or are they just nightmares? What is the PC willing to do to put a stop to these nightmares?

This scene challenges a PC to spend resources maintaining a Source of Stability or risk losing that Source, possibly for its own good.

The subject PC returns home — or to wherever the subject Source of Stability can be found — to find the subject Source visibly tired and worn down: he has bags under his eyes, he yawns hello, he hardly makes eye contact. If the PC asks what's wrong, the Source takes her aside.

"It's nothing. I'm just not sleeping well," the Source says, trying to keep the PC from worrying. Just knowing the Source well enables the PC to recognize this as a half-truth. **Assess Honesty** recognizes that the Source is holding back out of fear.

This is a decision point for the PC: If she presses the Source, probing deeper into the Source's problem, continue on to "The Nightmare." If she does nothing, the Source eventually cuts off contact with the PC and drifts away.

Play this scene a few times to impress on the players that they do not have a lot of time to make up their minds between Locales — while they're idling, their Sources are suffering.

If you can play the Source of Stability in this scene so well that the player chooses to let him go rather than allow him (a fictional character) to go on suffering these (also fictional) nightmares, then take pride in your abilities as a roleplayer and a Keeper.

Casting

The Source at the center of this scene can be someone very close to a PC, or it can be someone at a polite remove. The closer the Source is, however, the more painful the loss will be if the PC cannot maintain that Source and the easier the choice may be to cure the Source of his nightmares.

Consider a Source that is either very young or very old, for whom nightmares might be a significant burden. A niece or godchild, for example, might be an eye-opening source of potentially prophetic dreams — or a heartbreaking subject to leave in the pain of nightmares. Sources that are very close to the character, like siblings and spouses, make good choices if you intend for this scene to lead into **"Family Troubles"** later on, or just to contrast one Investigator's family with another's.

The Nightmare

The Source hesitates. "It's nothing," he says, "Bad dreams."

He doesn't want to relive his nightmares. If pressed, however, he reveals that he's had nightmares about the PC in danger… and nightmares about the PC putting the Source in danger.

You have some choices to make here. First, decide whether the dreams eerily reflect what has happened to the PC already, what will happen to the PC in the future, or whether they are just nightmares.

Second, decide whether these nightmares are coincidental or genuinely connected to what's happening to the PC. This scene may be stronger on its own — and less involved overall — if the nightmares are just bad dreams, unrelated to anything but the real-world consequences of the PCs involving people in their lives. On the other hand, the campaign's story is a little more tightly wound if everything links somehow back to the occult investigation at its heart. Is a tightly wound story better than one with a bit of sprawl? That's a judgment for you to make, knowing what you and your players prefer.

Once you've made those decisions, you must devise a suitable nightmare, perhaps using one of the following as the basis for your own. A nightmare is suitably eerie if it suggests what a PC has just done (in, say, Bangkok or Malta) or if it suggests a place a PC may yet visit. Your timing for this scene and your choice of nightmare depend on where the PCs have just been and where they may be headed in the future.

Alternately, the nightmare you craft might simply allude to the themes of the campaign, offering up dramatic imagery that can come to life in the players' minds without occurring literally in the campaign outside of the NPC's dreams. This implies that things happen in the world beyond what the PCs see and do. It creates a feeling that the PCs' deeds and relationships ripple out beyond their immediate presence. It suggests a larger world.

Here are a few nightmares you can use as starter kits for your own specialized scene. As an example, use the Bangkok nightmare before Bangkok to appear prophetic or after Bangkok to offer an eerie allusion. Use the unrelated nightmare to keep the focus on the Source's problems and not on the nightmare itself.

• **About Bangkok:** *"You were in a forest. A dark forest. And you were running. The ground and the underbrush were spattered with blood and with something like honey. You were bleeding, too, from a gash on your arm. And you were chasing a wolf, or something, at first. But then the wolf was chasing you. And you came through the woods all crazed and mad and bloody, and you ran up to me with a knife or a machete in your hands, and you started chopping away at me… and that's when I wake up."*

• **About Mexico City:** *"You and I were on the street in some city, listening to jazz music coming out of open windows. Just walking around. Listening and talking; I don't know about what. But then a police car drove by and you started to run, so I ran after you. We ended up in this maze of alleys, our shadows huge on the walls, and that's when you turned on me. You had a shotgun in one hand and a snake in the other. And the snake bit me, over and over, on my arms, and then I think you fired the shotgun right into my stomach… and that's when I wake up."*



• **A Stand-Alone Nightmare:** *"I dreamt that you came by [the house/the store/the campus/etc.], all scared and angry, your hat shadowing your face so I could only see your mouth, biting your lips. You came in through the door, which was smeared with bloody handprints, and you came in through the door with your knuckles all bloody and bruised. You were yelling at me to stop, to be careful, to leave you alone. I don't know why. You just kept yelling, and then you were hitting me and then you had a knife — but not a knife, something bigger — and you hoisted it over your head and were ready to attack me… and that's when I wake up."*

These nightmares are taking their toll on the Source. Until the PC does something to smooth things over, the Source continues to give these nightmares some weight, unable to shake them. Until the PC intervenes definitively, the Source continues to suffer the nightmares.

A 2-point **Reassurance** spend (made by one or two PCs) is enough to keep the Source connected as a Source of Stability until the PC returns from the next Locale. If the PC, or an ally, doesn't make this spend — perhaps because she doesn't return to the Source between Locales — the Source drifts away. He no longer sees the PC enough to warrant being called a Source of Stability.

The PC, or an ally, can attempt a two-hour-long **Psychoanalysis** test to cure the Source of the damaging dreams. The Difficulty of the test is 4 plus the number of Locales the PCs have visited since beginning Act Two, to a maximum of 8. (This reflects how long the Source has been suffering these nightmares.) If this test succeeds, the Source no longer suffers the nightmares… so be sure to ask the players if they want to dispel these potentially prophetic dreams (if you chose to make them eerily connected). That is, will the PCs continue to subject this poor Source of Stability to his nightmares so that they can glean whatever information they think they're getting from them?

PCs with access to **Hypnosis** may be able to use it to gain more information about the dreams. Anyone witnessing the Source's hypnotized recounting of his dreams can use **Occult** or **Medicine** to form an opinion on the nature and origin of the dreams: they are probably not prophetic. They are just dreams. (The players, of course, are free to form their own opinions.)

Drifting Away

If the Source is not reassured or treated for the nightmares, he eventually drifts away from the subject PC. Perhaps the PC receives a telegram or an awkward letter at her hotel while she's abroad somewhere. Perhaps the Source simply doesn't answer when next the PC comes calling or knocking. Perhaps you play a short scene in which the Source uncomfortably backs out of the PC's life.

See the sidebar "Losing a Source of Stability" for consequences to this scene.

Family Troubles

Scene Type: Source of Stability Complication

Lead-ins: Varies. This scene assumes a familial connection between a PC and a Source of Stability, though it can play just fine with good friends and close colleagues as well. The earlier in the Act that this scene is played, the more potentially vulnerable the PC's relationship with the Source of Stability seems.

Summary: Someone in the subject PC's family — like a spouse, parent, child, or sibling — is unhappy with the PC being away from home, or being secretive, or coming home bruised and distraught. The strain on the relationship comes to a head in this scene, wherein the PC must make an effort to keep the Source of Stability happy or risk losing that Source.

This scene challenges a player to decide whether to spend resources maintaining a Source of Stability or to give up that Source for its own good.

A Source of Stability is unhappy with the subject PC because he is never home, or he comes home surly and bruised, or he is lying to the Source, or for any other apt reason. The Source wants their relationship to change, possibly into something that would preclude fulfilling the role of Source of Stability — maybe the Source wants out of the marriage or in on the investigation in a way that would spoil the Source's valuable position outside the madness of the investigation. It's up to the player to either roleplay his way out of the situation and/or to make a spend to retain the Source.

If you resolve the scene with roleplaying, let the scene play out and resolve organically. It may only take a

few minutes. That's fine. That the scene exists at all may convey the important story beat without asking for an Oscar-worthy performance from any participant.

If you resolve the scene with a spend, determine in advance how big the spend should be (1 or 2 points) and what sorts of abilities are viable. **Reassurance** and **Flattery** are the clear choices, representing the PC's peacemaking and soothing efforts, but perhaps the scene involves an **Art** spend instead, representing the PC drawing pictures with his child or leaving his wife a love letter as he departs for the next Locale. If the player makes the spend, the Source stays on as a Source at least until the next break between Locales.

Use the gentler rules for lost Sources of Stability and make the cost of retaining the Source a 2-point **Reassurance** or **Flattery** (or 1 point from each) spend to force a choice on the player's part: Spend two points now to keep a nice, familiar Source of Stability or spend one point later on to promote another NPC to a Source of Stability.

If you can play the Source of Stability in this scene so well that the player chooses to solve this problem based on the NPC's (fictional) feelings, rather than making the decision based solely on tactical considerations, then take pride in your abilities as a roleplayer and a Keeper.

Play this scene a few times (drawing on multiple characters) to impress on the players that they do not have a lot of time to make up their minds between Locales — while they're idling, their Sources are unhappy or their lives are unraveling.

The Fight

The specific details of the fight must be cultivated from the subject PC's unique characteristics and relationship with the Source of Stability. A spouse may be upset about the PC's recent absences or concerned over the secrets the PC keeps about mysterious bruising or nightmares. (If one of a character's Pillars of Sanity has crumbled, a close Source of Stability is likely to notice a change in the character.) Sources who are children (or just childish) might act out by throwing tantrums or losing their tempers. Brothers or sisters may come calling to see if the PC is all right and escalate the conversation into an unexpected squabble.

To make sure the scene gets to the right emotional stakes and isn't defused early by a player who is less emotionally invested in the Source of Stability than the *character* is, you might begin the scene with the Source already wound up ("You come home to find your fiancé fuming") or enter the scene in the midst of a spat in progress ("She didn't let on how angry she was until she broke one of the plates in the sink — now she's trying to yell without waking the kids"). Maybe a character comes home to find the Source's bags already packed.

Decide where the fight is taking place and set the scene quickly. Use just a few immediately tangible and everyday details to establish the setting — the kitchen at home after the kids have gone to sleep, in the car on the way back from the train station at night, at a restaurant just after the entrees have come out — and then get right into the meat of the scene: the dialogue. Give all the major participants in the scene something to do in addition to the dialogue, whether it's to drive the car, wash and dry the dishes, or try and eat dinner.

You might involve PCs in addition to the subject PC whose Source of Stability is involved. Depending on how closely the PCs interact outside of their investigations, multiple Sources might even cooperate to confront multiple PCs. If one PC's Source of Stability springs an argument in front of the whole band of Investigators, that could be terrifically awkward and dramatically interesting, depending on your play group.

The scale of the fight is presumed to be an argument — heated, awkward, emotional — but not necessarily out of control to the point of throwing vases. The fight should be a foregone conclusion but its outcome should not be. The player must have the opportunity to resolve the scene either through roleplaying or by making the appropriate spends. The trick, then, to making this scene work is to cast the right Source of Stability in the role of the troubled family member and to play that role just right…

Casting

This scene differs from **"Nightmares"** in that this scene temporarily turns a Source of Stability into an antagonist, giving the NPC a bit more agency and goals of his or her own. This can be frustrating to some players, who don't like to see items on a character sheet turn against them. Be careful whom you cast in this scene.

You're looking not only for a Source of Stability that can show (possibly sudden, possibly unexpected) nerve and strength, but for a *player* who will enjoy roleplaying the scene. Some players may enjoy the chance to show off their characters' home lives; others may just enjoy the extra attention. If you accidentally find yourself with a resistant player, lower the stakes of the scene; make it not about losing a Source of Stability but simply about demonstrating the Source's concern for the PC. Instead of threatening to leave, the Source asks the PC to quit the investigation, thereby giving the player a chance to declare the Investigator's dedication to the investigation and cleverly balance the heroic mission with everyday life.

Playing the Role

Once you have a Source of Stability chosen for this role, you must play the part carefully. How you dramatize the Source of Stability is important. Antagonize the PC (or the player) too much, and you make a foe out of the Source. Whine or squeal too much, and you make the Source into a bother. Aim for strength and dedication to the Source's own wellbeing or that of the family — the Source and the PC are at odds, but they both want what's best for *someone*. They simply don't agree right now on what is best.

If you can make your chosen Source's issue hinge on the secrecy of the PC or the understandable ignorance of the Source, you provoke a great potential scene for the player: the opportunity to explain the magnitude (and perhaps the nature) of what the investigation is and what the Investigators are doing. This could be a heroic speech… or a protective lie. It puts the PC (and the player) on the spot and provides great fuel for a monologue either performed or implied: "Honey, this is the most important thing I'll ever do…" That sort of thing.

You want the players to sympathize with the Source. You want them to understand where he or she is coming from. If the Source has a legitimate gripe — maybe the PCs are secretive, maybe they do come home bruised and scare the children — this scene is all the more interesting.

It's possible that the Source you pick is only temporarily satisfied with the outcome of the fight, in which case you may have a subplot on your hands. Simply play another scene in this subplot after the next Locale and show how the relationship between the PC and the Source has either improved or worsened. If things are worsening, it may play to the tragic dedication of the PCs — bravely risking their relationships to save the world — or their sadly heroic sacrifice. If things improve, it can paint the characters as capably heroic — juggling family and adventure — or make the Source look that much more supportive and helpful.

The Scent of Nectar

Scene Type: Source of Stability Complication

Lead-ins: Varies. This scene may take place at virtually any time during Act Two, once the PCs have come to be known by the cult. The later in Act Two this scene is set, the more likely players and their characters may be to suspect this is a scene of antagonist retribution rather than what it appears to be: a scene of ugly happenstance.

Summary: A PC's Source of Stability comes under the influence of Nectar — but is it an addiction, or is it some sort of secret poisoning? The PC and her cohorts may have to break the Source's addiction… and may seek revenge on the drug dealer.

Clue: Nectar distribution is widespread; it will take time for the Nectar trade to dry up even after the cult is broken.

This scene challenges a PC to spend resources to repair or straighten out a Source of Stability or to risk losing that Source.

One of the subject PC's Sources of Stability — or perhaps just a close ally or family member — has become a Nectar user. Is it a plot on the part of the cult to get close to the Investigator's life and infuse it with the drug, or is it a coincidence that shows how far the Nectar has penetrated society? You must decide the truth for your instance of this scene.

Play this scene as a terrible happenstance, rather than a malicious plot, to make the world of *Eternal Lies* seem that much larger than the PCs' own lives and to demonstrate how the tendrils of the cult reach so far that the PCs' own allies may come into contact with them by chance. Play this scene as a plot on behalf of the cult to narrow your focus to the cult's battle with the Investigators and make the campaign feel like everything turns on the PCs' actions.

The PC discovers the Source of Stability or friendly ally is using Nectar through simple investigation or intervention. Perhaps another NPC comes to the PC saying, "I'm worried about Douglas. He's taken to drinking like he never did before, and I think he may be using drugs of some kind." Or perhaps the PC simply needs a few moments with the NPC to detect, via **Chemistry**, **Evidence Collection**, or **Pharmacy**, that the NPC has telltale signs of Nectar use: orange-tinted fingers, that sickeningly sweet smell, a stain on a shirt. (The PC is, after all, a world-class investigator, right?) It takes just a bit of **Intimidation** or **Bargain** to get the NPC to admit to his usage or even to reveal a half-empty vial.

At that point, it's up to the PC to decide what to do with the NPC to get him back on the straight and narrow. A 2-point **Bargain**, **Intimidation**, or **Reassurance** (or 1 point each from any two) spend, coupled with a stern but caring speech may be enough to make a change. It's a roleplaying opportunity for the PC's player. Otherwise, the NPC cannot be salvaged as a Source of Stability or contact and may drift away into a drug-induced fog over the following days or weeks. Time to recruit a new Source of Stability.

If the NPC has been poisoned, the evidence of Nectar may be harder to detect at first. Even still, an Investigator can notice a telltale crust at the bottom of a laced

The Case for Poisoning

"The Scent of Nectar" transforms from a Source of Stability Complication to an Antagonist Reaction scene with a few alterations. Perhaps the Source really is being poisoned — doses of Nectar are being injected into bottles of medicine or wine with a syringe through the cork, perhaps — and doesn't understand the change in his or her own behavior. Perhaps this is all a subtle plot on the part of the enemy cult to undermine the Investigators.

A poisoned NPC suffers from paranoia and hallucinations and indulges in unhealthily impulsive behavior — getting drunk in the middle of the day, kissing strangers, exploding in fits of rage — which may be great ways to get the PC's attention.

If you take this approach, you're treading close to a couple of other scenes presented here, and possibly creating a whole subplot for your campaign. That's fine. Just remember that the important details point back to one of the main hubs of the cult, so that the subplot feeds back into the main storyline rather than displacing that main storyline. The investigation should be brief, yielding evidence of poisoning early and revealing cultists from an Act Two Locale before long. Perhaps the crooked pharmacist reveals that the men who coerced him had tattoos (similar to those seen on the thugs in Savannah) or mentioned a need to check in with "Mr. Donovan." Whatever happens with a single Source of Stability, the fate of the world is at stake if the cult isn't stopped.

Whatever the solution to this optional side quest, let it point back to a Locale as-yet unexplored. See the sidebar "Where Vengeance Leads," p. 136, for more on this subject.



wine bottle (**Chemistry** or **Evidence Collection**) or an irregularity in pills (**Pharmacy**) that turn out to have been replaced with hardened Nectar. After that, **Assess Honesty** should satisfy the PC's concerns about whether the NPC has been using the drug willingly — she hasn't.

Casting

When selecting an NPC to be the drug-user, consider the sense of betrayal you may stir up in the PC connected most closely to the drug-user. That betrayal is inherent to this scene. You can play the NPC as a sad case in dire straits, or you can play the character as a sorry failure. If the player decides that the character is no good as a Source of Stability or a contact any longer, that's the player's decision to make. There's dramatic value in players making decisions that reflect their characters' emotional states.

This scene may work best with peers (older siblings, colleagues at university, etc.) or NPCs who look up to the PC (younger siblings, students, etc.), but draw on whatever NPC presents an intriguing conflict without making the player feel cheated. Perhaps a character's father or professor is the one on Nectar, making the intervention that much harder to cope with and the resulting conversation that much more difficult to have.

Some players won't take kindly to their Sources of Stability turning to drug use without any forewarning. This is a horror campaign; bad things are going to happen, yet still some players may insist that there should have been warning signs. Try not to cast such a player's Sources in this role. If you do, consider adjusting the spends necessary to retain the Source (or ignoring them altogether), so that the PC is not in such a tight spot.

Hey, Nice House

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Varies. If the cult of the Liar is able to learn the identities of the PCs, this scene may be played as a result. Use it to increase the atmosphere of menace and malice surrounding the cult and to project a sense of danger onto Sources of Stability and the like.

Summary: Cultists appear at the home of a PC, Source of Stability, or other ally, just to show that they can reach the PCs if need be. Where **"Deterrence"** is a scene of outright violence, this is a scene of threats either shadowy or overt.

Clue: Evidence on the threatening cultists may reveal which Locale they came from.



As the subject PC(s) return to their home, office, favorite bar, or other safe location between Locales, they notice a figure in a car observing them from across the street. This figure isn't hiding himself; he's out in the open, under a lamppost or leaning out of his car window. Just what he looks like depends on where he hails from; he could be the cult's local muscle, or he could be from any Act Two Locale. Put him in local garb with a distinctive detail, like a black suit with a red carnation or a white suit with white gloves — so the PCs can spot him again later, if need be.

As the PC(s) approach their destination, the figure leans out and says something innocuous in a threatening tone:

- "Hey, nice house. Looks like such a happy home."
- "That *your* office, mister? That *your* name on the door?"
- "Nice place. That's Eddy's bar, isn't it? Say, how *is* the old man?"

If necessary, add something even less subtle, like: "Nice house like that ought to have nice strong locks on the doors." Your goal is to say something that makes the PC have to choose between approaching the menacing figure and rushing inside to see if everything's all right. Either way, the figure runs or drives off, either sparking a chase or making a clean getaway.

In the event of a chase, the menacing figure attempts to make a clean escape (picking Difficulty 4 and 5 routes of travel) and then vanish into the night. If caught, however, he only laughs and laughs, through bloodied teeth if need be, saying, "I didn't do nothing!" and "You're jumpy! So jumpy!" and "Ease up, fella, or I'll call for the cops."

The figure has no ID on himself, is high on Nectar, and if taken and interrogated can reveal only that he got the address from his dealer (which is a lie). He cannot be broken. He insists he hasn't done anything wrong.

See "Where Vengeance Leads," p. 136, for more on clues this scene may contain.

Menacing Figure

Athletics 8, Driving 8, Fleeing 8, Health 5

Stealth Modifier: +1

Everything inside at the PCs' destination is fine. This was just a threatening signal to let the PCs know that they can be gotten to.

Deterrence

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Varies. If the cult of the Liar is able to learn the identities of the PCs, this scene may be played as a result. This scene occurs in response to the PCs' actions in an Act Two Locale. If thugs or cultists are allowed to escape or word of the PCs' efforts against the cult reach another Locale, heavies may turn up in the PCs' home lives with violence on their minds. Play this scene to demonstrate the menace and malice of the cult of the Liar.

Summary: This scene is a simple dose of action and menace, useful for spicing things up if the last Locale proved to be subdued, stealthy, or otherwise short on loud noises and physical violence. It represents not an assassination attempt but an effort to deter the Investigators from their mission through the cold application of violence. Set this scene anywhere between Locales or even during a Locale if the PCs are detected and trailed. This scene is explicit permission to throw guys with knives and guns after the PCs if you need them to feel like the cult is pushing back.

Clue: Evidence on the thugs may reveal which Locale they came from.

This scene is simple and straightforward: cultist thugs come looking for the PCs to try to deter them with violence. It may unfold anywhere on the road to or from a Locale or anywhere in the PCs' home lives if the Investigators have been successfully identified by the cultists. Play variations on this scene to demonstrate the cult's persistence or to threaten the PCs one or two at a time. Some variations on this scene include…

- Cultists accost the PCs in the rainy parking lot of a foreign airport.
- Cultists storm into a PC's office with rope and blackjacks.
- Cultists jump the PC outside his home when he takes out the garbage.
- Cultists cut off the PCs in traffic, slash their tires, and break their car windows.

The cultists in question strive to get the jump on the PCs by attacking at night and with the element of surprise. The Difficulty of the **Sense Trouble** rolls to spot these thugs before they spring their trap should be 5 or higher. The thugs themselves can be cultists from any of the Locales in this book — just import them directly to this scene.

What all variations of this scene have in common is the level of lethality — these cultists are just trying to send a message. They may go so far as to accidentally kill a single PC (or leave one for dead), but they weren't dispatched with the intentions of beating murder charges. If things escalate out of control, the cultists fight to protect themselves and to escape the scene.

Dead cultists may lead to the involvement of local police and an investigation of the PCs, perhaps leading to that troublesome line of dialogue: "Don't try to leave town." A PC who leaves town to investigate another Locale may have to slip away in secret, ask family and friends to lie, or become something of a fugitive. (This can lead to **"Family Troubles,"** for example.)

On the other hand, police contacts and a **Cop Talk** spend may smooth things over enough in the short term to allow an Investigator to continue working against the cult. Let the local police be as friendly, inept, corrupt, or savvy as necessary to keep your campaign moving in the most interesting direction.

See the sidebar, "Where Vengeance Leads," p. 136, for advice on tying a side investigation back into the heart of the campaign.

The Price You Pay

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Source of Stability Complication

Lead-ins: Varies. If the cult of the Liar is able to learn the identities of the PCs, this ruthless scene may be played as a result. If the PCs let a named or recognizable villainous NPC escape a Locale, this scene may be played as a result. Use this scene to shock or infuriate the Investigators.

Summary: An ally, friend, family member, or Source of Stability connected with the Investigators turns up dead. The cult is sending a message, louder and more terrible than it does in **"Hey, Nice House,"** and there's little the PCs can do but seek justice… or revenge.

Clue: Evidence at the scene reveals the Locale where the murderers originated and their connection to the cult.



While the Investigators were away from home, confronting the cult of the Liar, the cult's muscle was stalking and killing an innocent Source of Stability. This ugly scene is the ultimate threat against the PCs, going so far as to eliminate one of their Sources of Stability with virtually no opportunity to prevent the action. This is a harsh scene.

Play this scene if the Investigators have sufficiently riled up the cult (perhaps by destroying a Major Mouth or cult leader). Play this scene if the Investigators have been lax with their own protection and secrecy. Play this scene only if your players are good sports.

Where Vengeance Leads

Several of Act Two's floating scenes have the potential to become subplots or sideline investigations. The specific details of these investigations are yours to define in reaction to the specific circumstances of your scene and your Investigators. The two important questions to ask and answer are these: "How long should the sideline investigation last?" and "Where should it lead?"

A sideline investigation should be short — it can be a single scene, if you play it right — so that the Investigators don't get too distracted from the larger campaign. If a subplot is just what the players and the pacing are calling for, however, you can get two or three scenes of procedural investigation out of a good subplot as the PCs question witnesses, trail suspects, or revisit the crime scene.

Just where the investigation leads depends on your intent for the subplot. If you're demonstrating the consequences of the Investigators' choices, the clues may point back to a Locale that's already been completed; the subplot becomes the fallout from previous choices the characters made to spare an enemy or let one escape. If you're attempting to drive the PCs back to exploring new Locales, or to load up a Locale with pathos or vengeful energy, then the sideline investigation should point to a Locale that hasn't yet been explored.

For example, the mysterious figure who threatens a PC's home in **"Hey, Nice House"** may be hired by the last survivor of the Malta branch of the cult, in which case the clue trail leads back to the already-completed Malta Locale. Alternately, that last survivor may have telegrammed Bangkok to warn them about the Investigators, and Bangkok's cult branch is now acting to thwart them, in which case the clue trail leads back to the upcoming Bangkok Locale.

This kind of player manipulation can be tricky. You may not want them to return to Malta (the Locale may be exhausted). You may not want the players to feel railroaded into playing Bangkok next. It may simply be necessary to have a subplot investigation end in a dead end or a clue that doesn't become clear until later on. Consider what happens if the PCs lose the mysterious figure in **"Hey, Nice House,"** and then you plant him in Mexico City. The players still get a degree of closure to the subplot, but you didn't necessarily drive them to Mexico City.

To help you plant clues in subplots that point where you want them, here are some pieces of evidence you can use to fill out the sideline investigations:

- "I heard them shouting next door, shouting in Spanish, but things settled down and I thought everything was fine."
- A matchbook turns up from a restaurant in [Valletta/Mexico City/Bangkok] with the PC's address written inside.
- A thug carried a telegram with just a PC's name and address on it, sent from a completed Locale to an uncompleted Locale.
- The mysterious figure's suit was made in Mexico City, Bangkok, or Valletta.
- A Source of Stability is slain with a poison made in Mexico, Siam, or the Mediterranean.



First, decide which Investigator finds which Source of Stability dead. Select the Source of Stability carefully. Not all players will accept an unstoppable act of violence in good spirits.

Perhaps one PC discovers another's dead Source of Stability. (See p. 71 of *Trail of Cthulhu* and note that the Stability loss for discovering a Source of Stability dead is worse than the loss for merely learning that one is dead.)

Perhaps the cult is so insidious and terrible that they place the corpse of one PC's Source of Stability in another PC's home or office. This gives one character the challenge of roleplaying shock or grief and another the task of deciding how to break the news that triggers that roleplaying challenge.

The murder is hardly disguised. The Source's throat is cut, or he has been shot in the head, or he is found floating fully clothed in a pool. At the most extreme, the Source of Stability may be found in his office or living room, drowned in sticky and now-crusted Nectar.

A police investigation turns up just a few clues — nothing the PCs can't discover for themselves — and quickly loses steam. Exactly who did the killing, and where the clues surrounding the investigation lead, depends on which Locale you want the evidence to point at. See "Where Vengeance Leads" for more information.

This scene may also be a viable final scene for a character that must leave the campaign for whatever reason. Losing a friend or family member, the Investigator gives in and quits the case… or turns up dead himself, also a victim of the cult. That dead investigator might even spark a replacement character, as someone emerges from the supporting cast to avenge the dead.



Sabotage

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Varies. If the cult of the Liar is able to learn the identities or means of travel of the PCs, this scene may be played as a result. This scene attaches directly onto the beginning or end of a Locale, depicting the Investigators' sudden jeopardy on a journey to or from an adventure.

Summary: The Investigators' plane, train, or boat is sabotaged or wired to explode. Discovery of this fact gives them just minutes to deal with the situation before disaster.

Clue: The cult is on to the Investigators and is now coming for them.

This scene presents a classic adventure situation: Can the Investigators make repairs or disarm a bomb before it's too late? All of their lives may hang in the balance!

Play this scene while en route to a new Locale to get things started off with suspenseful action and to provoke point spends early. Play this scene on the way home from a finished Locale to test the PCs' abilities when they may be low on points in Investigative or General abilities. This scene can find the Investigators crash-landing into Valletta or almost drowning on their way home from Bangkok, for example, depending on your sense of timing.

The exact nature of the threat depends on the Investigators' means of travel and the degree of danger you want to put them in. Here are three options:

The White Hermits

The Investigators' train cabin, berth aboard ship, or private plane has been planted with white hermits — one of the most lethal breeds of spider on the planet, hailing from the jungles of Southeast Asia. These particular white hermits have been mystically infused with Nectar, so each bears a hideous, fanged mouth large enough to deliver its devilish toxin to a human-sized victim. (The white hermit is a fictional breed invented for *Eternal Lies*.)

Open the scene shortly before a PC of your choosing discovers one of these half-dollar-sized semi-translucent spiders descending on a fine strand of webbing. A character with **Biology** recognizes the infamous breed of spider but knows that, while dreadfully venomous, their fangs are too small to deliver a fatal bite to humans. A 1-point spend, however, immediately recognizes that *this* white hermit has a deformed mouth, enormous for the species, with huge needle-like fangs. A mouth like that could certainly penetrate human flesh!

Then the spider attacks, leaping at the nearest Investigator and making a Scuffling attack.

Once the first spider is dealt with, the Investigators discover another. Then another. At least a half-dozen of the things are crawling out from the bulkhead or a nearby vent.

If you spring these spiders on them while they are in flight, the pilot may come under attack. If the PCs are aboard a train or boat and flee their berth, the spiders spread out into the rest of the vehicle and may attack other passengers. It's up to the Investigators to save the day.



An investigation of the bulkhead or vent that contained the spiders reveals that a simple paper envelope with webbing inside has been tucked in place there. Someone *planted* these spiders here.

Abilities: Athletics 6, Fleeing 8, Health 1, Scuffling 5

Hit Threshold: 5 (tiny)

Stealth Modifier: +3

Weapon: +0 (venomous bite); after a successful attack, the spider's venom automatically does another +0 damage five minutes later. One white hermit has enough venom for two bites. (After that, its bite deals no damage.)

Stability Loss: +0 unless phobic

Bomb on Board

If the Investigators are traveling via a small enough conveyance, such as Janet Winston-Rogers's plane or a smallish boat, cult saboteurs may attempt to take them out with an explosive device.

The trick, when dramatizing this scene, is making sure that the device is both found and in a manner that makes it the Investigators' job to deal with it. Put it in their cabin or berth. Have one of them stumble upon it at the beginning of the scene. It's a classic bundle of dynamite and wires affixed to a simple timer, stashed amid their luggage or under a seat. It may be found by sheer luck, but it must be found — the whole scene is about what happens when they *find* the bomb, not what happens if they don't.

The bomb has about three minutes on the timer when they find it — more if you're feeling generous.

Once the bomb is in play, challenge the characters to disarm it or move it without accidentally setting it off. There's a good chance the Investigators will want to throw it overboard. That's fine. Make every step from the bomb's hiding place to the boat's outer rail or the plane's hatch a nail-biter. Ask a lot of questions: "How are you holding it?" and "Do you walk with it or do you run?" and "The boat is lurching; do you reach out for support along the way?"

To move the bomb may require an **Athletics** or **Explosives** test (Difficulty 5) with a special wrinkle: A player who doesn't like the result of the test can freeze and forego the consequences. Eventually the player either ends up with a satisfactory roll or runs out of time. Each roll represents about 20–30 seconds of time and one or two successful rolls are necessary to throw the bomb overboard (at your discretion).

To disarm the bomb requires an **Explosives** test (Difficulty 5) with the same wrinkle — a player who dislikes the die roll can waste the points and the time spent and skip the result. Instead of cutting that green wire, the PC waits and tries again with a steadier hand, presuming the Investigator doesn't

run out of time. It takes one or two successful rolls to disarm the bomb.

The odds are good that with enough points spent or a good enough roll, the characters will succeed. If they don't… the bomb goes off.

See the damage for a bundle of dynamite on p. 67 of *Trail of Cthulhu*. A character interacting with the bomb is presumed to be at point-blank range, but with enough forewarning to toss the thing just before detonation (to explain the possibility that the character survives the blast). Characters on hand to advise or help are at close range. Onlookers are a near range.

If the bomb is planted on a boat, use your judgment — a small or medium-sized boat may sink, while a large boat probably does not. If you ruthlessly set this scene on a plane, *the characters are probably all doomed*. Replacement characters may set out to confront the cult of the Liar with the knowledge that the previous cadre of investigators all perished on the case.

Proper Sabotage

Agents of the cult of the Liar may tamper with Janet Winston-Rogers's plane in a fashion that is not discovered until the plane is airborne. A fuel line is loosened so that it comes loose during flight. The landing gear is damaged so that it will not deploy. Perhaps the pilot is subtly poisoned and goes comatose at the stick. All three may be possible, each revealed in turn in a sequence of ridiculously dramatic escalations.

It's up to the Investigators to land the plane — without landing gear and well before the runway.

This scene pits the Investigators against a crash landing. To successfully put their plane down in a water landing, they must either immediately spend enough **First Aid** points to awaken the pilot (5 points ought to do it) or make a very difficult **Piloting** test (Difficulty 7). At your discretion (especially if a PC is trained in Piloting) it may be too late for First Aid to pull the pilot out of his coma — the scene may be about an Investigator's attempt to land their out-of-control aircraft.

If the characters fail to land the plane successfully, everyone on board suffers +5 damage in the crash (+8 for characters not somehow strapped in). A successful landing results in bumps and scratches. Either outcome attracts the attention of local authorities and doubtless raises a lot of questions about just what happened to the plane and how.

If the characters are en route to a Locale when this scene unfolds, they may begin already injured or even hospitalized. The news of the characters' crash landing doubtless makes the local radio and papers — thereby warning the cult that the characters are alive and in town.

If the characters were on their way home when this happened, they may have plenty of time to recover from their wounds… but insufficient First Aid points remaining to help the pilot. He eventually recovers or dies, or a 1-point **Medicine** spend may keep him alive, at your discretion.



Haunted by Mouths

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Varies. If the PCs have destroyed a Major Mouth, or if a PC is dosed with Nectar (voluntarily or not), this scene may be played as a result. Play it to dramatize the consequences of coming into contact with Mouths, Nectar, or the truths of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

Summary: The subject PCs suffer from terrible visions of mouths throughout their lives — but are these hallucinations or actual manifestations of the Liar's power?

Clue: The haunting of Walter Winston may have been caused by exposure to Nectar or the attention of the Liar From Beyond following the night of the '24 summoning. The Liar may be able to observe the subject PCs supernaturally, wherever they are.



This scene finds one or more PCs haunted by gruesome mouths that may be hallucinatory visions or actual spying and tormenting maws.

Before you play this scene, decide if the subject PCs are experiencing mere visions or whether they are genuinely stalked by the power of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. Eerie visions dramatize the effects of the investigation on the PCs, suggesting that madness may be creeping in or that the power of Nectar has made an impact on the Investigators' minds — they're especially good for characters that have lost a Pillar of Sanity or plummeted into the depths of serious Stability loss. Actual visitations from the power of the Thing portray the reach and menace of the Investigators' awful foe and keep the PCs on their toes — they're especially good for keeping the characters motivated, since

the only way to stop these visitations is to stop the Thing.

Whether the images are real or not, the experience is almost the same. If the following hauntings are hallucinatory, the traces left behind either vanish in seconds or prove to be nothing but water damage.

Each of these triggers a 3-point Mythos Stability test for characters who witness the effect:

- *The wall cracks and the plaster parts, forming a vulgar mouth-like gash of fleshy tissue from which an eyeball emerges and, blinking a hideous membrane, regards you. It drizzles out honey-like drops as it stares. When you move, the gash closes, leaving behind a harmless crack in the plaster and a gooey stain.*

- *At the spot where two floorboards meet, the wood itself flexes and opens to reveal rows of yellow human teeth and a pair of flabby orange lips. They mouth words at you, and a tongue works behind the teeth to tap out wet sounds. Before long the mouth shuts and vanishes, leaving the floor normal except for a slick and sticky stain.*

- *From somewhere in the room, you hear a voice reciting alien words, unintelligible except for familiar names slipped in between eldritch syllables. Your name. Your friend's name. Walter Winston. Valletta, Bangkok, Los Angeles. . . . Echavarria. Where is that voice coming from?* [After a search:] *As you pull back the bookcase, you find a tear in the wallpaper and, for a moment, a fleshy shark-toothed mouth pressing through from the other side of the wall, oozing amber juice from its broken lips. No sooner have you seen it, though, than it recedes and disappears, leaving curled and crusted wallpaper behind.*

- *You open your eyes to find your bed wrapping itself around you, closing like a mouth. Fang-like teeth tear through the covers from the mattress below, and some obscene tongue slathers against the bedspread from below, yellow mucus seeping through the cloth.* [After the PC takes action:] *The bed slumps back to a mundane state, the covers wet with mucus and pierced in a circle with ragged holes. You're slick with musty slime.*

The difference between visions and visitations is in the evidence left behind. All those water stains and damaged wallpapers contain traces of Nectar (**Chemistry** proves it), secreted across space by the manifesting supernatural power of the Liar From Beyond. This proves that the character is haunted, but probably grants little real comfort.

If it's necessary to make the players take these hauntings seriously, the visiting Mouths can attack and deal actual damage. Keep the attacks player-facing, however. Call for **Athletics** or **Fleeing** rolls (Difficulty 3) to avoid sudden, gnashing Mouths (which deal −1 damage). Increase the Difficulty to 5 for an effort to escape a giant, constricting Mouth like that in the bed visitation above (which deals +0 damage).

Play this scene as a rapid-fire bout of visitations, threatening to drive the subject PC mad from Stability loss, if the haunted Investigator must leave the game for some reason. "Quit your cause," say the Mouths. "Leave me. Come against me no more."

For characters who have been especially careless around the cult (or have perhaps taunted the Liar or its minions), frequent hauntings can serve double duty as proof that the character is successfully making an impact and as consequence for questionable or reckless behavior around Nectar and Mouths.

At your discretion, fleeing a residence that's known to be haunted by the Thing's power ends these visitations (because the cult is casting spells against the abode they have on file for the Investigator). Otherwise, the default assumption is that these hauntings follow the Investigator around the globe (because they are manifestations of the Thing's attention, not the cult's, and the Thing has the Investigator's "scent" now). Thus a character may choose to relocate with his or her family to spare them from the visitations, or the Investigator may be forced to leave that family behind to spare them, which can have consequences on Stability recovery if family members are Sources of Stability.

The Anti-Investigators

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Varies. If Savitree Sirikhan learns either that the Investigators are a threat or that they possess Mythos knowledge, she may send her team to either eliminate them or loot their resources. If the Investigators eliminate the Bangkok cult but leave evidence of their identities behind, the team may track them down either for vengeance or at the direction of surviving cult leaders.

Summary: The Investigators come to the attention of a highly competent team of their counterparts on the other side and are targeted for either elimination or as a source of Mythos information not already in Savitree Sirikhan's possession.



Much of the wealth generated by the Bangkok cult's operations goes to fund Savitree Sirikhan's Cthulhu Mythos–related investigations around the world. Much of that wealth goes to motivate, supply, and equip the small team of specialists in her employ who travel

the globe securing artifacts, buying (or stealing) tomes and books, and kidnapping experts in the Mythos and witnesses to its manifestations. Think of them as anti-Investigators, the Investigators' counterparts aligned with the bad guys.

Sirikhan's team may get wind of the Investigators if the team winds up in Bangkok at the same time the Investigators are there (they are usually abroad doing their work), by correspondence from Savitree or Daniel Lowman, or by passing through Bangkok after the Investigators have been there and picking up any clues the Investigators may have left behind.

The team is aware that Savitree has peers in other parts of the world, but she has kept the team insulated from Trammel, Donovan, and Brooks as an internal security precaution. Nevertheless, if Savitree dies, it's not beyond the team to find the other Locale's cults and make their specialized services available to them.

Although names for the team members are provided below, the individuals in these roles are essentially fungible. If the Investigators manage to take out the team's leg-breaker, for example, they'll be able to find a new one with more or less the same skill-set in time for a future encounter. They can also hire an essentially limitless supply of street thugs from whatever locality they find themselves in and rarely hesitate to do so. The only way for the Investigators to get the team permanently out of their hair is to wipe them out or convince them to give up the chase.

Among themselves the team generally speaks French. Collectively they can speak and read most of the modern — and dead — languages of the world. Given Sirikhan's backing, they have an at-will Credit Rating of 5, but can access even more funds than that given time.

Keep this in mind: Sirikhan's team is smart, experienced, and resourceful. Don't sell them short, don't let them die like fools or mooks in a back-alley knife fight. They're the kind of antagonists who adapt to changing situations and even adapt their goals depending on their opportunities. Although they are presented here in the form of a single scene, you should have no difficulty involving them on a recurring basis if the campaign would benefit from it.

Husain Soliman, the Expert

An extremely knowledgeable intellectual with incurable wanderlust and broad paranoia. Verifies sources and performs research.

Three Things: Unconsciously dusts surfaces with his hands. Squints and sniffs when speaking with those he considers distasteful. Never steps on a door's threshold.

Anthropology 3, Archaeology 2, Athletics 4, Cthulhu Mythos 4, Evidence Collection 2, Health 8, History 4, Interrogation 1, Library Use 6, Scuffling 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fists)

Phajol Khadpo, the Mystic

An individual with a sixth sense who keeps the team on the trail of those who would otherwise elude them, alerts them to strange threats, and verifies the otherworldly nature of some artifacts.

Three Things: Constantly touching those he speaks with. Always hungry and always eating. Does not laugh, ever.

Assess Honesty 3, Athletics 4, Cthulhu Mythos 1, Firearms 2, Health 7, Occult 5

Alertness Modifier: +3

Weapon: +0 (double Derringer)

Luc Fauche, the Negotiator

The team's face, who organizes their travel, negotiates to make purchases (both of mundane goods and occult artifacts), and cleans up messes.

Three Things: Always has a toothpick at hand, and cleans his teeth frequently but unobtrusively in a pocket mirror. Never says "yes," always "of course." Sits with his legs crossed and picks lint off his pants while doing so.

Athletics 8, Bargain 5, Cop Talk 2, Disguise 6, Firearms 4, Health 11, Flattery 3, Locksmith 2, Forensics 2, Oral History 2, Preparedness 12, Reassurance 4, Scuffling 4, Streetwise 4, Weapons 6

Alertness Modifier: +2

Weapon: +0 (automatic pistol), −1 (gold-plated switchblade)

Alex Kramer, the Leg-breaker

When a violent approach is needed or security is a concern, Alex takes care of business.

Three Things: Has a tattoo of a massive beetle on the back of his right hand, which disappears into his cuff. Stops to listen to buskers. Exhales loudly a lot.

Athletics 12, Firearms 9, Health 22, Interrogation 3, Intimidation 5, Scuffling 20, Weapons 7

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: +2 (elephant gun), +1 (9mm pistol), −1 (brass knuckles)

The Shabby Purveyor

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Varies. If the cult of the Liar is able to learn the identities of the PCs, this creepy scene may be played as a result. Even if the PCs protect themselves, this scene may be played to demonstrate the reach and insidiousness of the Liar From Beyond.

Summary: The Investigators are approached by a shabby purveyor of occult smut, a man who tempts them to debauchery or violence, a man who may be an incarnation of the Liar From Beyond itself.

Clue: The Liar From Beyond can materialize in near-human form and, perhaps worse, may know who the Investigators are.



This scene finds the Investigators confronted by a shabby purveyor of occult smut, intent on selling or giving them a book "that I'm sure will help you in the coming days…"

Set this scene someplace innocuous yet public, someplace where the Investigators may feel exposed if they were caught with smut. It might be a public thoroughfare in the town they call home; it might be a plaza in Valletta or Mexico City; it might be the airport in Bangkok or the café in Mérida. This floating scene can slide right into the midst of any Locale.

The shabby purveyor appears as a pasty elderly man with bony fingers and a large, ratty coat. He approaches the subject PCs with a few quiet words: *"Hey… hey there, travelers. I have something for you."* He keeps his palms against his body, but his hands are always in motion. His nose is runny. He offers a toothy, roguish grin. When he has the PCs' attention, he holds open his coat. He's dressed in ragged clothes underneath and has a waterlogged tome under his arm.

"This is for you," he whispers. *"I brought this for you."*

If the PCs express an interest, the shabby purveyor offers to sell it to them. What's the cost? It should be peculiar and perhaps reveal knowledge of the Investigators' past.

For example:

- *"The money. The money you got from the Winston girl."*
- *"That watch you got from your grandfather. I'll trade you."*
- *"Tell me a secret — a true secret."* (He responds to a lie with: *"Who do you think you are? You can't lie to me!"*)
- *"A kiss,"* he says, a drop of translucent snot falling clear of his nose.

Who is this man? *"Just the messenger. Someone thought you should see this,"* he says, patting the tome, *"and I'm delivering."*

If the Investigators balk or move on, the shabby purveyor makes his final offer. *"He'll be mad if I don't give this to you. Just take it. Just take it!"* He wags the book in the air in their faces, desperate and shameless.

If they accept the book, the purveyor gives it up, winks once, and wanders away.

If pursued, or even chased, he turns a corner and disappears. If grabbed, he hisses through his mouth — and through mouths in his palms — and then vanishes, leaving just his crusty, stained coat behind. (No one on the street seems to notice his behavior.)

If the Investigators ignore him and move on, he cusses and curses them. *"To hell with you lot! To the deepest pit! May you be chewed and swallowed and shat out like the rest! I hope your children die! I hope you piss pus and your mouths shrivel shut! May your hearts turn to coal and your eyes burst! You'll be lying together in blood and shit in the final days! Your lies shall all be known!"*

The Tome

Nameless and vile, the waterlogged book contains page after page of woodcuts, etchings, photographs, and handwritten stories depicting depraved acts of torture, mutilation, incest, bestiality, necrophilia, and worse. It portrays mouths biting, mouths chewing, mouths sucking, mouths spitting, mouths bleeding, mouths oozing. It is apparently a collection of imagery and handwritten accounts from the medieval era to the present, a kind of grotesque scrapbook remembering cults and individuals that might shock even Echavarria's 1924 cultists. It is horrifically inventive and explicit. And it is wet to the touch, as if just drawn from some fetid cistern.

Skimming the book requires a 3-point Mythos Stability test, as stuck-together pages seem to ooze pus and bile. Poring over the book grants +1 to Cthulhu Mythos, for it is a kind of catalog of acts meant to get and hold the attention of the Liar From Beyond, but requires a 5-point Mythos Stability test to be made at the beginning of the investigation immediately following because the character is visibly shaken from spending time with the tome.

Also within the book is, apparently, a spell to contact and bind the Liar From Beyond. If asked for details, provide these:

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Cost: 3 Stability and 1 Sanity

Time: One hour of drinking Nectar and chanting.

A use of the Cthulhu Mythos ability reveals that this spell is actually a trap — the spell has no power to *bind* the Liar, only to make it stir. Those who cast this spell are immediately subject to the scene **"Haunted by Mouths."**

Using Cthulhu Mythos to identify and analyze this spell is no great revelation, on its own, but it brings with it the dread realization that the shabby purveyor was, himself, an incarnation of the Liar From Beyond and that the book is something it *wants* the Investigators to possess. That realization calls for a 3-point Stability loss and a 1-point Sanity loss, for it reveals that the Liar can reach out and find the Investigators, and perhaps their families, if it likes. Of course, the *players* may well reach this conclusion on their own, without using the Cthulhu Mythos ability, thereby saving their characters some Sanity and Stability loss.

What to do with the book once they have deemed it dangerous or unwanted? Burning it releases a noxious cloud of poison vapor (+0 damage to all within close range) before the book finally explodes in a burst of bile and Nectar — that sends an immediate signal to the Liar, giving it an immediate mystical connection to the site where it was burned. Mouths appear there before long, as in **"Haunted by Mouths."** Burying it eventually causes a Mouth to grow over the burial site. Dropping it in the sea causes the book to eventually wash up, waterlogged but otherwise (and impossibly) unharmed, on some distant shore.

Confrontation with the Dead

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Varies. Play this scene after the Investigators have killed some people, good or bad, right or wrong. Play this scene to add an element of dread and doubt to the story — to raise questions about the toll their actions are taking on their humanity.

Summary: The Investigators encounter the ghost or shade of someone whose death they have witnessed or caused during their misadventures. This ghost has a demand… and perhaps a warning for the Investigators.

Clue: Varies.

This scene presents the Investigators with a visitation from the dead. Is it what it appears to be — assistance from beyond the veil of death — or is it a ploy by the Liar From Beyond to lull or lure the Investigators?

Play this scene to add a new element of creepiness to the campaign and to give foreshadowing a tangible presence in the narrative itself. This scene lets the characters confront their own past actions, converse with a dead witness (to gain clues they may have missed), or glimpse what is yet to come.

First, decide what function you want this scene to serve. Then, cast an appropriate dead character — PC or NPC — in the role. If you're after a bit of eerie lamentation and a straightforward haunting, any dead character can do. If you're giving the players a second chance to interview a dead NPC, obviously you'll need a dead NPC with information they can use. If you're after a bit of grim prognostication, a character they can trust is best for getting them to believe it, while a character they might not trust so much can lend menace and doubt to the omen.

Any dead character from any Locale in Acts One or Two is fair game for this scene. This scene could even be how the Investigators come to learn that the character is dead. Imagine their confused surprise when Mother Henslowe or a Source of Stability turns up cold but talkative in their Maltese hotel room and is later reported dead back in the States.

The dead character is waiting for the subject PCs somewhere. The Investigators enter their hotel room, turn on the light, and there she is in a chair by the window. Or she's waiting under a streetlamp, in the rain, outside the bar where the Investigators convene. Or she comes to them in their cabin during a terrible storm at sea.

She is chilly to the touch, like a traveler in from the cold, but seems otherwise flesh and blood. Casual passersby can see her just fine until you decide it's time for her to vanish, at which point she leaves the room and is never seen again… or perhaps even disappears in mid blink. Let the character's very presence be what's eerie, rather than surrounding her with ghostly sounds or flickering lights. If the scene calls for more atmosphere, make sure she arrives wet from the rain outside and, if you like, portray her as being in a dreadful hurry, checking out the window every few seconds as if she could be found out at any moment.

No matter how relatively mundane she seems, the dead visitor constitutes a supernatural creature seen up close. That calls for a 4-point Stability test. A visitation by someone known to be dead calls for a 7-point test from Investigators who knew the deceased well (*Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 71).

Confrontation with the Dead

What does she have to say? Either she's there to offer a bit of information that you need the PCs to have but which they have been unable or unwilling to successfully uncover during their investigation to date — like the core clue to any scene the characters somehow skipped or the helpful bonus information behind a spend they chose not to make — or she is there to warn them about something in their future. She is, essentially, a mouthpiece for you to help the Investigators out at the expense of rattling their emotional cages. You can also use this dead visitor to allude to a theme of your campaign ("I know you lied to me before I died") or to send a signal to your players via their characters ("You're surrounded by death now. So many dead at your hands. Too many"). She is a narrative instrument, surreal and inexplicable.

If you choose to use the dead visitor to foreshadow an upcoming Locale, be careful. You know the threats the Investigators face, but not how those threats will be confronted or how future situations will turn out. Be vaguely menacing ("The island outside Bangkok will be ugly") or state facts that can take on double meanings after they are encountered in actual play. She might say "They're waiting for you in Mexico City," without specifying whom she means, so that later you can have someone friendly in Mexico City, like Elena Alcatruz, say something like, "I feel like I've been waiting for you, somehow." (Or, if the cult is on to the Investigators after what happened in Bangkok, it might really be the cult that's waiting for them in Mexico City, in which case Konovalov might say, "We've been expecting you.")

Here are some examples of ways the dead visitor might foreshadow a Locale or guide Investigators through one:

- "Listen, when you get to Malta, look for him at the hospital. You'll meet him at the hospital." (This could refer to Montgomery Donovan, his son Monte, or to the Knight Hospitaller.)
- "Don't turn on each other in Bangkok. All of you might not make it out, but do not turn on each other." ("All of you" could mean the group as a whole or the whole body of any one Investigator.)
- "Follow the expedition. You have to know what *they* want to know." (This refers to the Yucatán expedition launched from Mexico City, but the players might not know that when this scene takes place.)
- "Ayers knows because he was there. What he knows might even help the focus to do the right thing in the final days." (This hints at what the Investigators are to do in Act Three during the apocalyptic final days of their investigation… and perhaps the planet.)

The Scenes in Actual Play

Here are some examples of Act Two's structure, mixing Locales and floating scenes to create a distinct experience:

• **"Domestic Bliss" + Malta + "The Shabby Purveyor:"** Following their harrowing experiences in Los Angeles at the end of Act One, the PCs get a dose of their ordinary lives with their Sources of Stability. As the PCs wrap up in Valletta, they are approached by the shabby purveyor. *Investigation concluded, abilities refresh.*

• **"Haunted by Mouths" + Mexico City + "Sabotage: Bomb on Board":** The PCs are haunted by mouths at home before they depart for Mexico City. After making short work of the cult in Mexico City, they discover a bomb hidden aboard their plane as they are bound for the Yucatán. *Investigation concluded, abilities refresh.*

• **The Yucatán + "Confrontation With the Dead":** In Mérida, after returning from their adventure in the Yucatán jungle, the PCs discover a Source of Stability waiting in their hotel room. She warns them about the future, alluding to Ethiopia and Act Three. *Investigation concluded, abilities refresh.*

• **"The Price You Pay" + Bangkok:** An Investigator discovers that the Source of Stability who contacted them in Mérida was murdered the day before and couldn't have been with them in the hotel in the Yucatán. Now seeking revenge, the Investigators head to Bangkok. The Keeper intended to follow Bangkok with "Sabotage: The White Hermit," but Bangkok proves to be action-packed enough that the additional scene would be overkill, so she skips it. *Investigation concluded, abilities refresh.*

• **Janet Joins + "Family Troubles" + Ethiopia:** Following the death of an Investigator in Bangkok, Janet Winston-Rogers joins the investigation full time as a replacement character. Then, an Investigator's spouse, after weeks without his wife at home and after learning about the murder of someone else close to the investigation, wants out of the situation. The Investigator lets him go, then heads to Ethiopia with the rest of her cadre, where a new adventure unfolds in the desert. *Investigation concluded, abilities refresh.*

• **A New Source + Tibet:** The Investigator with the home-life troubles recruits a new Source of Stability at the university where she works before the Investigators proceed to Act Three.

We hope you'll share your own example structures for Act Two at the Pelgrane Press website or favorite appropriate forum.



Bangkok

"As I glimpsed it I could not help thinking of all the hideous legends I had heard in the last twenty-four hours — legends which portrayed this ragged rock as a veritable gateway to realms of unfathomed horror and inconceivable abnormality."

— "The Shadow Over Innsmouth"

Keeper's Background: The Thai Splinter

Savitree Sirikhan is a Siamese native who lived in Los Angeles in the early 1920s. A violent sadomasochist, she was attracted to and joined Echavarria's cult on its merits, becoming an enthusiastic participant in its orgiastic rites as well as a willing foot soldier when the Thing With a Thousand Mouths required that its will be done by brute force.

Savitree was never privy to the Echavarria-Ayers-Trammel inner circle. She wasn't aware (at the time) of any deception on Echavarria's part, didn't have any inkling of any duplicity behind the veneration of Gol-Goroth as the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

Savitree survived — barely — the disastrous '24 summoning. She fled both Los Angeles and the United States in its wake, fearful that the government would track her down and either jail or execute her. She fled with Daniel Lowman, a Nectar addict and sometime invitee of Echavarria's orgies. Lowman had never been part of the cult proper — the inner circle had judged him unfit — and so hadn't been present at the disastrous summoning. He did, however, work for the federal government as a customs inspector, and his connections helped both of them escape. Savitree secured his assistance by promising him an uninterrupted supply of Nectar once they reached Bangkok.

On their arrival in Bangkok, Savitree and Lowman lived in the island estate owned by Savitree's family of prosperous aristocrats. Over time, their depravity became increasingly obvious to Savitree's extended family in relative proportion to the frequency with which said family began to disappear or meet more obviously fatal ends.

As Savitree's supplies of Los Angeles Nectar began to run low, she followed instructions from a folio she had stolen from Echavarria's library that enabled her to court the attention of The Thing With a Thousand Mouths, eventually attracting its notice and favor in Siam. With Lowman's devoted assistance, she slowly built the Thai cult into its current form.

Today, Savitree's Bangkok cult stages bloody fights to the death at the center of an impenetrable urban maze in Bangkok. In the sewers beneath the fighting pit, the remains of the losers are fed to the Major Mouth the cult venerates. The cult also stages displays of torture, self-mutilation, and worse for jaded outsiders who find witnessing such activities compelling.

The Siamese Mouth's diet of violence produces Nectar that causes profoundly violent mania in those who consume it. All those who participate in the fights drink the stuff (or are force-fed it if they prove otherwise unwilling) in order to intensify their ready brutality. The more bloodthirsty the fights, the more potent the Nectar becomes; the more potent the Nectar, the more bloodthirsty the fights become.

Although the contemporary Bangkok cult's nexus is in Bangkok, Savitree herself rarely visits the city. She instead lives on a jungle island off the Siamese coast, where her family's slowly crumbling and now all-but-deserted estate lies. Two Minor Mouths have manifested on her body due to the intensity of her personality and her fervor for violence.

Savitree herself pursues twin obsessions: First, she conducts Mythos researches dedicated to eventually answering the question that Echavarria's successor cults have been collectively unable to answer — specifically, the true identity of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. In pursuit of this goal, she has become an accomplished scholar, learning many languages and accumulating a great deal of knowledge in a wide variety of scholarly areas. Second, she hunts and kills her own cultists — as well as other unfortunate and less-willing victims — on her island in *The Most Dangerous Game*–style contests that range through and across the jungle island. Her opponents are afflicted with Minor Mouths by ritual magic as the contests

begin, which forces them to compete (as opposed to escape); those who do not feed their enemies to their Mouths are eventually consumed themselves.

Money is the critical lubricant for the Bangkok cult's activities. The cult raises money by selling admissions to the fights, by claiming the personal possessions of those who die in the fights, by running the bookmaking activities associated with the fights, and by providing otherwise unobtainable "tourist opportunities" to the jaded, perverse, and wealthy from all seven continents. When these latter opportunities prove fatal, the cult stands ready to take — by legal or less scrupulous means — the often considerable wealth of the unfortunately deceased.

Funds are critical to the cult for two reasons. The first is operational: Bangkok as a city is both intensely crowded and intensely corrupt, and it would be impossible to operate what amounts to a spectator blood sport, even underground, without returning a vast portion of the proceeds to the rightful authorities in the form of graft. The second is academic: Savitree directs massive quantities of capital at Mythos research, using it to purchase books and other primary sources at auction, hire expert teams to travel to the far corners of the earth to do direct research, and fund the efforts of kidnappers who snatch the learned from the world's centers of knowledge and bring them to her in order to share their knowledge with her. (Naturally, those kidnapped eventually wind up hosting Mouths and facing Savitree in the jungle.)

The Bangkok Spine

In Bangkok, the Investigators uncover a ring of brutal death-fights in the city of Bangkok. Whether by accident or design, they discover that the key figure in the Bangkok cult lives on a jungle island in the Bay of Bangkok. Traveling there either after being kidnapped or by following a trail of clues, they must confront this leader, Savitree Sirikhan. She will only be defeated by violence.

The Investigators arrive in the Locale tracking down an address, which they learn corresponds to the townhouse of one Daniel Lowman, an American expatriate. In investigating Lowman, they learn that he's not only a Nectar addict but also involved in some kind of criminal enterprise involving substantial sums of money.

By peeling back the layer of Lowman's activities, the Investigators learn that secret death-fights take place at an underground location at the center of an urban warren in a gritty part of Bangkok. These fights are overseen by fearsome cultist Thawi Udom, who leads an ever-changing cast of cultic minions who live in the Bangkok sewers.

When they find and gain access to the death-fights, the Investigators discover that the Bangkok Nectar has a different character than the Nectar in other parts of the world. Instead of inducing sensual pleasure, the Bangkok substance brings about a state of ecstatic but psychotic violence in those who take it. Furthermore, they likely learn that the remains of those who are defeated in the fights are sluiced into the sewers below the fighting ring, where they are fed to the Bangkok Major Mouth.

By investigating the sewer complex where the cultists live and the Major Mouth is found, it's possible that the Investigators will also learn, from the strangely neutral keeper of the Bangkok Mouth, of a strategy to use explosives to neutralize a Major Mouth without unwisely spreading its cancer into the environment.

As they follow these leads, the Investigators are likely to slip up, with a likely antagonist reaction seeing them kidnapped and transported to Ko Krok, the island where Bangkok cult mastermind Savitree Sirikhan hunts captives for sport to feed the pair of Minor Mouths she harbors on her body. If this happens, one or more Investigators are likely to be afflicted with Minor Mouths themselves before being unleashed from their pit-prisons to kill or be killed.

It's also possible for the Investigators to follow a less dangerous route to Ko Krok, but even if they do, they will still have to face Savitree Sirikhan at some point in order to freely access the valuable information she has hoarded in the extensive library of Mythos sources she has been building since fleeing Los Angeles in 1924. In either case, in addition to learning from the physical artifacts of Savitree's researches, they may be able to learn something of Savitree's background from the last survivor of Sirikhan's extended family, her blind maternal grandmother.

By the end of the Locale, they will have claimed the campaign clue that points them to the physical location of the stomach of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, high in the Himalayas.

Campaign Clues

The most important thing that the Investigators must learn in the Bangkok Locale is the location of the hideous stomach of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths under Mount Kailash in the Himalayas. This clue is found in the Sirikhan Library on the island of Ko Krok in the Bay of Bangkok. Delving into Savitree's library can also give the Investigators a deeper understanding of why it's important to be able to pin an identity on the Liar From Beyond. Some clues may become critical in Act Three — especially those among the Sirikhan Library materials — even if they are opaque during Act Two. All of these are discussed in **Bangkok 20, "Savitree's Library,"** p. 180.

Emotional Modulation in Bangkok

The following lists provide quick-and-dirty hopeful and sinister setting details you can paraphrase, adapt, or simply read aloud as written to push the emotional tenor of play either up or down as needed while the Bangkok Locale unfolds. They are divided into two geographic groups: there are positive and negative beats for use in the city of Bangkok and positive and negative beats appropriate for Ko Krok. None are intended to provide clues or push the investigation forward, they simply provide color to influence the tone of play. Although these lists are as generic as possible, you may need to adapt some of them to make sense in the Investigators' current location or scene. All are written in such a way that they can be paraphrased, adapted, or simply read aloud as written.

Hopeful Bangkok City Beats

- Birdsong drifts out an open apartment window, a welcome distraction from gloomier thoughts.
- A European missionary walking down the street with a string of prayer beads in her hand spies you and smiles as she passes.
- A toothless street-corner vendor hands you a mango. *"No charge,"* he says in awful but nevertheless comprehensible English. He repeats it again when you look unsure: *"No charge."*

Sinister Bangkok City Beats

- You see a pair of kids fighting in the dirt. They can't be older than ten, but they're beating the heck out of each other, bleeding from their noses, going at it with savage brutality. When they see you taking an interest, they run for it, disappearing down an alley.
- Across the street, a rooster spooked by a hustling pedestrian jumps off the sidewalk to be run over by a panel van that splatters its guts across the cobblestones.
- With no warning whatsoever, it starts to pour, quickly soaking you through with too-warm rainwater.

Hopeful Bangkok Island Beats

- The sun quite suddenly comes out from behind a cloud, sending shafts of light down through the tree cover.
- You spy a broad-leafed tropical plant that must have been handcrafted by a divine maker, so perfectly does it hold two cupped hands' worth of rainwater, fresh and pure.
- You emerge from the trees at the shoreline and see, out across the water, the mainland rising up. It may be far away and across the water, but there's still a civilization, and you're still part of it.

Sinister Bangkok Island Beats

- The undergrowth claws at you as you pass. Even after emerging into a clearing, you can still feel its phantom fingers on your flesh.
- You catch a sudden and intense whiff of decomposition and try to tell yourself that it's not — it can't be — human flesh.
- There's a sinister hoot off in the jungle, disturbing both for its inhuman nature and the fact that you can't tell which direction it came from.



The Investigators can also learn from Mouth-keeper Xuc Pramoj of a strategy he has in his back pocket to blow up the Bangkok Mouth in the event that it ever gets out of hand. Although this plan has not been sanctioned whatsoever by his cult masters, it is nevertheless well thought out and could serve the Investigators well in disposing of Major Mouths in other Locales, in the absence of other strategies.

Travel to Bangkok

Investigators traveling to Siam from Ethiopia can find a series of sea passages to take them out of the Red Sea, across the Indian Ocean (with stops along the way), and into Southeast Asia. Particularly wealthy Investigators may be able to make better time, with fewer irrelevant stops, by simply hiring a tramp steamer to make the trip.

It's also possible to make the trip from either the Ethiopia Locale or from Europe by air. The British Airways trunk line connecting London to its Indian and Australian colonies passes through Baghdad, Basra, Karachi, and Calcutta before Bangkok; it continues, after Bangkok, to Singapore and points in Australia.

Direct passage from Los Angeles or Mexico to Siam is relatively difficult, however. Most ocean liners in the period travel the North Atlantic to serve cross-Atlantic immigrants, with many fewer companies making passages across the Pacific. Even mail coming to Australia generally comes via Europe, with the contract to deliver the Australian mail being held by the Orient Steam Navigation Company, which operates a fleet of liners that depart from England every two weeks. Transpacific passage is not impossible to book from Los Angeles by any means, but Investigators may face frustrating delays and high prices.

Environs: Siam

Siam is mountainous in the north but dominated in its central regions by the Chao Phraya river valley, which flows through the city of Bangkok into the Bay of Bangkok, which is the northern extent of the Gulf of Siam. In the south, a narrow isthmus of land becomes the wider Malay Peninsula. Temperatures range from the low 60s to 100° F. March and April are dry and hot, while the rainy season, which runs roughly from May until October, brings monsoons — except in the south — in May and July. Siam's land mass is comparable roughly to that of France or the state of California, and it has slightly more than 13 million inhabitants in the 1930s.

Siam was an absolute monarchy for centuries, but in 1932 a legislative assembly was formed in the wake of a bloodless revolution; it shares power with the Siamese king in a constitutional monarchy.

Local currency circulates in both notes and coins. It is chiefly denominated in baht, but it's also broken down into a variety of smaller divisions.

Siamese nationals generally speak the Siamese language, in a variety of dialects that are broken down geographically. Even though some remote tribes have entirely unrelated native languages, even their people can often communicate in Siamese in some form or another.

Although neither French nor English are commonly spoken in Bangkok, it is not more than passing difficult — especially in a large city such as Bangkok — to use **Bargain** or **Streetwise** to find, within five or ten minutes of asking around, someone who can provide quick-and-dirty translations between Siamese and French or English. If time or the circumstances do not permit those avenues, a 1-point spend in whatever Interpersonal ability is relevant to the communication at hand is necessary for effective communication. As you wish (and especially if things seem to be going too easily for the Investigators), you may choose to penalize Investigators who lack **Assess Honesty** with some petty scam or fraud at the hands of their impromptu interpreter.

Common names for translators or other locals might include Anong, Jaruwan, Kamol, Manit, Punnee, Tida, or Winai.

Siam becomes Thailand in 1939. As with Ethiopia in Africa, Siam is the only nation of Southeast Asia never to fall under the direct colonial rule of an outside power.

Wardrobe: Bangkok

Sartorially speaking, Western Investigators fit in easily in Bangkok, where the typical wardrobe in the 1930s is heavily influenced by European colonialism and the international travel of the trend-setting Siamese king and royal family. Dress in the "Raj pattern" combines a buttoned jacket with a standing collar with the traditional *chong kraben*, a long wrap for the legs whose end is drawn between the legs and tucked behind the waist. However, even this level of traditional dress is falling out of favor with the burgeoning middle class, which increasingly wears clothing, especially business and formal clothing including suit jackets and neckties, made locally after European patterns. Women of means wear European-style blouses and skirts.

Traditional dress for women takes the form of a long tube skirt called a *pha sin*, typically pulled up to just below the breasts. With increasing Westernization, women — especially in the city — do not go topless, instead covering their upper torsos with shawls.

The Scenes

Here are the scenes that make up the venture in Bangkok. Play these scenes in whatever order the Investigators access them. Always be ready to reveal and supply clues in response to clever stratagems and choices made by the players, even if it would seem to circumvent what this chapter expects. Your adaptation of this Locale might be unlike anything you expect.

1. Return Address

Scene Type: Intro / Core

Lead-ins: A return address on correspondence between Savitree Sirikhan and Samson Trammel that is part of Trammel's *Testament* (Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion," p. 113).

Summary: The Investigators arrive in Bangkok and track down the address of Daniel Lowman's townhouse in the city.

Core Clue: The location of Lowman's townhouse. (Oral History or Streetwise.)



Upon their arrival in Bangkok, the Investigators must discover the actual physical location associated with a postal address in their possession. Modern players who own smartphones equipped with GPS-enabled mapping applications are likely to underestimate the difficulty of connecting a physical location with a known address given complications like an address recorded in a foreign language, concerning a city organized into unfamiliar postal divisions, being sought by a party of strange nonnatives who are perhaps inappropriately blunt and probably (by this point) not entirely stable.

Given these difficulties, it requires the better part of a day and either **Oral History** or **Streetwise** for the Investigators to ask around, find the right part of the city, ask around again, grease a postal worker's palm, follow a wrong lead to an alley in a shifty neighborhood, and finally arrive at the actual location of Daniel Lowman's townhouse, from whence Savitree's correspondence with Samson Trammel was mailed and at which the crate of Luz recordings from Mexico City was received.

2. Lowman's Townhouse

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Learning the location of Daniel Lowman's townhouse (Bangkok 1, "Return Address," p. 149).

Summary: The Investigators surveil and/or search Daniel Lowman's townhouse.

Core Clue: Lowman has dealings with unsavory individuals who stop by to talk to him. (Interrogation of Arun and Thep.)

Core Clue: Lowman has Nectar on hand and is most likely a Nectar addict. Although he has some local Nectar, he also has a personal stash of Nectar from Malta. (Evidence Collection.)

Core Clue: Lowman has a copy of the Mexican recording in heavy rotation. (Evidence Collection.)

Core Clue: Lowman has a wicker basket containing thousands of dollars (in local currency) of cash. (Evidence Collection and Accounting.)



The townhouse where Daniel Lowman lives is located in a bohemian district of Bangkok. His neighbors are artists, students, academics, and the city-dwelling relatives of aristocrats in the Siamese out-country. In addition to homes, townhouses, and apartments, the street has storefronts and other buildings including restaurants, tea shops, bookshops, and modest Buddhist temples. The city streets here are paved with cobblestones, though nearly all traffic passes on foot. A majority of those on the streets wear traditional garb, but many also wear European dress.

Unless the Investigators specify a desire to approach the townhouse at night, Lowman is not at home when they first arrive.

Using **Oral History** or **Streetwise** to inquire in the surrounding neighborhood reveals that Lowman is a quiet American. He speaks fluent Siamese but keeps to himself.

Surveillance

Surveilling Lowman's townhouse is simple, with plenty of easy vantage points from which Investigators can cover both the front and rear doors.

After an hour or so, Investigators watching the rear door see a pair of seedy-looking individuals dressed in working-class clothes approach via the alley. Investigators in back must engage in **Shadowing** tests, to blend in with foot traffic, or **Stealth** tests (Difficulty 4) to remain unnoticed.

Assuming the Investigators remain undetected, the two pound on the door, shout for Lowman by name, look up into the windows in an attempt to verify that he's not at home, and then retreat back down the alley, vaguely disgruntled, when he does not come to the door.

If the Investigators question this pair (either on the scene or after following them for a while), they can use **Interrogation** to learn that their names are Arun and Thep, and that they represent a collection of workers

at the docks who believe that they are entitled to a share of the cult's graft that Phao Bantow has so far been unwilling to part with. (Although, note that Arun and Thep do not refer to the organization as a "cult" — they aren't aware of a religious motivation for its operations.) Arun and Thep *are* aware of the death-matches, although neither has personally attended them, and so neither knows exactly how to get in. They have no knowledge of the inner workings of the cult, of Nectar, of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, or of anything similar. The main thing that the Investigators can learn from watching or interrogating this pair of low-level criminals is that Lowman is mixed up, somehow, in shady affairs.

Daniel Lowman, of course, also eventually returns to his home, at whatever dramatic moment seems most appropriate. Unless the Investigators take steps to intercept him, he locks his door and retires to his bedroom to take Nectar and drift off to sleep.

Arun and Thep

Three Things: Turn to each other and shake their heads frequently. Point their fingers in the faces of those they're trying to intimidate. Keep putting their hands in their pockets.

Athletics 4, Health 9, Scuffling 4

Weapon: −2 (fists)

Searching the Place

Locksmith is the surest and simplest route to gain entry to Lowman's townhouse. An **Athletics** test (Difficulty Number 3) can also be used to gain entry to a rear balcony, whose door Lowman does not typically keep locked, with failure resulting in a nasty and embarrassing fall to the alley below, for +0 damage.

A **simple search** of the place suggests that Lowman is well off and fastidious. It seems clear that he lives alone, has no family (or, at least, no pictures of them), and does not conduct any sort of business from his house. Most of the clothing he keeps is Western, consisting of conservative sweaters, slacks, and button-down shirts.

Evidence Collection takes twenty minutes or so for each of the clues enumerated below. There is no evidence of Savitree Sirikhan to be found in Lowman's townhouse — no correspondence, pictures, or the like. There are likewise no records of the cult's activities, either criminal or religious. Lowman receives written instructions from Savitree by courier every week or so but destroys them after committing their contents to memory so as to leave no evidence of his involvement nor that could lead the meddlesome back to her.

Nectar

Lowman keeps a locked felt-lined wooden box under his bed. It contains several dozen vials of Nectar. About half originates in Malta, while the other half is local in its origin. The difference is clear in the packaging: The local Nectar is in opaque vials marked with a local manufacturer's stamp in Thai script. The Maltese Nectar is in the same glass vials the Investigators have probably seen if they've been to the Malta Locale, but which otherwise bear no identifiable markings.

Lowman is a Nectar addict but prefers the mellow, sensual Nectar from Malta and Los Angeles to the savage local stuff. There are about a half-dozen empty vials in the Maltese style, which should suggest Lowman's use of the Maltese Nectar.

The Luz Recording

Lowman has a windup phonograph in a trunk in his bedroom. Although he owns several records, it seems clear that most are not listened to with any frequency. However, on the turntable itself when an Investigators opens the record player is a copy of the Luz recording from the Mexico City Locale. The Investigators may or may not be aware of its significance, depending on whether they've encountered it before (perhaps in Mexico City or at Samson Trammel's mansion in Los Angeles). If they listen to it, the effects are as described in "The First Luz Recording," p. 270.

Lowman is obsessed with the recording, which he listens to in the privacy of his bedroom even when he is not high on Nectar.

Semen-Stained Handkerchiefs

When high on Nectar, Lowman masturbates. Several handkerchiefs, bearing his initials and encrusted with his semen, can be found in the drawer of his nightstand. **Biology** readily identifies the crusty substance, if the handkerchiefs' placement does not.

Basket of Cash

A wicker basket in Lowman's living room that appears to be mainly decorative turns out to contain — beneath a black scrap of cloth — tied bundles of local cash, mostly 100- and 1,000-baht notes, but with plenty of bills of lesser denominations mixed in. An Investigator with **Accounting** can quickly estimate that the basket contains the rough equivalent of $5,000 U.S. dollars.

This is the most recent payoff drop that Lowman is scheduled to deliver to Phao Bantow (see **Bangkok 5, "Phao Bantow,"** p. 155). The basket came to him from Thawi Udom, the cash being the direct proceeds of the cult's bookmaking operations. Of course, if the Investigators do not search Lowman's townhouse before he makes the payoff, there is no basket of cash to be found (but see the sidebar "Long-Term Surveillance," since more cash arrives weekly).

If the Investigators Steal the Cash

If the Investigators stole the basket containing Lowman's money, you have two options. The first is that Lowman goes directly to the waterfront the next morning when he realizes that the money is gone. There, he pays a boatman to take him to Savitree's island in order to receive instructions about what he should do. This would be a way for the Investigators to unwittingly skip a fair number of the encounters that might otherwise take place in Bangkok. This isn't a problem, per se, but does deprive them of the opportunity to witness the fights and to learn Xuc's Pramoj's theories about blowing up Mouths with explosives. So, if you'd rather not see the PCs skip so far ahead, you may instead assume that Lowman goes to Thawi Udom for more cash in the immediate term and makes plans to confer with Savitree in a few days' time.

In either case, Lowman is shaken up by the disappearance of his cash and takes steps to increase his personal security. Other than looking over his shoulder quite a lot more often, he has Thawi detail two of the cult's goons to follow him at a distance of two or three steps, to provide both extra eyes and some muscle in the event they're needed.

Long-Term Surveillance

If the Investigators decide that the safest course of action in Bangkok is to surveil Daniel Lowman for more than a day or two before making their move, they can certainly do so. Unless cultists in earlier Locales know that the Investigators are headed for Bangkok and tip off the locals here, there's little that can alert Lowman to the fact that he's being watched other than the Investigators' potential for failure at shadowing and watching him.

Every afternoon or evening (depending on how many other errands he needed to run that day), Lowman retires to his bedroom to take Nectar and listen to the Luz recording. He remains there until morning.

Every other day or so, Lowman buys groceries from the market.

Every third say or so, there are fights. Lowman goes to them about every other time but does not always stay very long. The nights when he goes to the fights are the latest he ever stays out, and he's clearly jonesing on his way back to his townhouse on these nights.

Exactly every week — usually the day after a fight night — Lowman either picks up a basket of cash from the Labyrinth or has it delivered by Thawi Udom to his townhouse. The next day, Lowman delivers it to Phao Bantow's office.

About once a month, Lowman calls on Savitree on her island. He's gone overnight when he takes these trips.

Lowman has an irregular schedule of taking care of Savitree's business. He sends parcels, purchases supplies, meets with Savitree's global team (see **"The Anti-Investigators"** on page 140), delivers threats to potential competitors, and the like, but none of these activities appear to repeat on any particular schedule (and, indeed, they do not).

3. Shadowing Lowman

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding Lowman at his townhouse (Bangkok 2, "Lowman's Townhouse," p. 149).

Summary: The Investigators shadow Daniel Lowman as he goes about both his own and Savitree Sirikhan's business.

Core Clue: Lowman delivers the cash from the basket to a government building and places it directly into the hands of Phao Bantow's right-hand man.

Core Clue: Lowman threatens a street thug, who appears to be deeply cowed even though Lowman is a nebbish. The thug has been trying to start up a competing arena of fights. (Intimidation used on the thug.)

On the morning after the Investigators first spy Daniel Lowman at his townhouse, Lowman leaves his house early. (Unless, of course, they interrupt his routine by kidnapping him, breaking into his house to interrogate him, or doing something similar.)

Lowman is a medium-height white American, which makes him taller than most of the Siamese nationals in Bangkok. His sandy brown hair has gone too long without a cut, and he wears very pronounced glasses with large shell frames. Most locals with whom Lowman does business refer to him by the Thai nickname "Waen," which means "glasses."

He goes forth carrying the basket of cash that the Investigators may have seen inside his townhouse. His lack of particular regard for the basket is a bit strange, given the amount of money it contains. He holds it loosely under one arm while he goes to the market and buys an array of produce for his day's meals. (He uses money from his own pocket to purchase this food.)

Following Lowman without being noticed requires a contest of **Shadowing** and **Sense Trouble**, with Lowman testing first. Lowman's Difficulty Number is 4 no matter what. The Investigators' Difficulty Number is 4 as well, unless they've done anything to alert Lowman that he's under scrutiny (such as stealing the cash or leaving clues behind in his townhouse that it's been searched), in which case their Difficulty Number increases to 5. Make one test for each side before each of the three errands Lowman makes today.

After shopping, Lowman walks through a seedy part of town with no apparent fear for his safety, where he accosts a figure who appears to be a street-corner thug. Investigators shadowing Lowman from a distance can't hear the details of the exchange that the two of them have (which occurs in Siamese, in any case), but from their body language, Lowman seems to be threatening the tough, pointing a finger in his face and speaking sharply.

This individual is called Siripong, a commonplace criminal who has, in recent days, been heard to suggest to others of his acquaintance that it wouldn't be hard to set up a competing arena for fights to the death and make a lot of money in the process. The Bangkok cult can't have that, of course, and Lowman has been dispatched to see that it's known in no uncertain terms that anyone starting up a competing franchise will find himself being chopped limb from limb for the entertainment of a roaring crowd, his remains run down the labyrinth's sewer as a gory mess.

After Lowman's visit, Siripong seems sufficiently cowed, and has little interest in talking to the Investigators about the encounter. If pressed with **Intimidation**, Siripong gives up a few basics about the situation. See **Bangkok 6, "'I'm Looking for the Fights,'"** p. 155.

Next, Lowman heads for the government's administrative offices for the district where the Labyrinth is located, where he hands off the basket to Phao Bantow's right-hand man, Plaek (see **Bangkok 5, "Phao Bantow,"** p. 155, for the full details).

After delivering the money, Lowman returns home to spend the rest of the day lost in a Nectar high.

This whole series of errands is entirely commonplace for Lowman. His status in the cult is known widely enough among those who might be dangerous to him that he does not fear for his safety, and he makes this trip on a weekly basis, so it's entirely mundane to him. The order of his errands is based on convenience: with the market close to his house, the slum where Siripong dwells slightly farther, and the government center just past that.

4. Interrogating Lowman

Scene Type: Core / Alternate

Lead-ins: Finding Lowman at his townhouse (Bangkok 2, "Lowman's Townhouse," p. 149).

Summary: The Investigators question Daniel Lowman.

Core Clue: Lowman is the chief agent of the mastermind behind both local Nectar distribution and secret Bangkok death-matches fought at an underground location; he knows many details about these operations. (Both Intimidation and Interrogation.)

Alternate Core: Lowman is a Nectar addict. (Interrogation.)

The Investigators will have many opportunities to question Daniel Lowman. What they can learn depends somewhat on when and how they approach him.

If the Investigators make it clear that they know what Nectar is, **Interrogation** is sufficient to get Lowman to cop to being an addict. He seems keen to have them know that he likes the stuff that comes from Malta better than the drug as it's produced locally, though. He has the idea that this marks him as more cultured. Depending on when the Investigators come to Bangkok, this may be the first that they've heard of geographical differences in Nectar. If questioned about the differences, Lowman claims to prefer the sexual nature of the foreign Nectar to the savage tone to the local stuff.

If pressed with both **Intimidation** and **Interrogation** about the Gol-Goroth cult's worldwide organization, criminal activities in Bangkok, what

4. Interrogating Lowman

may have happened in Los Angeles (either recently or in 1924), and/or the Thai thugs the Investigators may have encountered in Savannah, the following can be learned from Lowman:

- Lowman is the chief agent of a shadowy mastermind named Savitree Sirikhan, who originated secret death-matches that are fought, on an ongoing basis, at an underground location in Bangkok, and which are attended by a wide variety of both lower- and working-class locals, as well as thrill-tourists from other parts of Southeast Asia and even occasionally the rest of the world.

- The death-fights take place in a slum-warren of aging buildings in a bad part of town that all connect to each other via backdoors, strange passages, roofed-over courtyards, and underground tunnels. People call this agglomeration "the Labyrinth."

- Lowman says that part of the local criminal operation involves the manufacture and sale of Nectar. There is no distribution network locally, though — it's a retail operation whose sole point of sale is the underground fights. And Lowman downplays the Nectar operation's importance; he knows that the cult makes most of its money in admission fees to and betting on the most savage spectacle in town.

- A man named Thawi Udom is in charge of the death-fights and the production and sale of Nectar. Udom technically reports to Lowman in their enterprise's chain of command, at least as far as Lowman is concerned. (Udom's take on the matter is slightly different; see **Bangkok 9, "Thawi Udom,"** p. 162.) Lowman finds Udom distasteful and frightening in roughly equal measure, though he's careful never to let Udom realize the latter.

- Lowman knows that Savitree has connections with others who have Nectar-distribution operations in other parts of the world. He has mailed correspondence on her behalf to dozens of foreign cities. If specifically asked about Los Angeles, Malta, Mexico City, and Savannah, he confirms having mailed letters — and sometimes packages — to all of those locations. If asked about Ethiopia, he claims (truthfully) never to have mailed anything within 1,000 miles of there. (The "dozens of cities" clue may cause a great deal of alarm for the players. Great! In truth, however, most of Savitree's correspondence relates to the acquisition of Mythos tomes and knowledge rather than to the worldwide cult's Nectar-distribution activities. There's no way the Investigators can learn this at this juncture, though, since Lowman has never been stupid enough to open and read any of the packages he's entrusted to mail.)

- Lowman's chief responsibilities involve making sure that the police officers and government officials responsible for the district where the fights are staged are paid off. This, he reports, is relatively easy business because corruption in the government is widespread. Operationally speaking, Lowman collects a basket of cash each week from Thawi Udom and delivers it — again, each week — to the agents of Phao Bantow, who takes care of distribution inside and among the various government bureaus and individuals.

- Lowman admits, if asked about strange deities and religions associated with whatever names and practices, that his superiors subscribe to such beliefs, but he doesn't know very much about them, and he's not particularly interested in them.

- Lowman doesn't know anything about the processes of manufacturing Nectar and has never seen a Mouth (either Major or Minor). (Savitree's estimation of Lowman's tolerance of the deeply disturbing is more or less the same as Echavarria's was: he'd be driven mad in short order. Thus, she's kept those aspects of the operation hidden from him, even the Mouths on her body.)

Lowman leads the Investigators to believe that he does not know the identity of the criminal mastermind whose mouthpiece he is, but this is completely false. A 1-point **Assess Honesty** or **Interrogation** spend is sufficient to see through his dodges and protestations. Once they press him in the wake of such a spend, the Investigators can force Lowman to admit that Savitree Sirikhan is the name of his criminal superior and that she is a Siamese national whom he met in Los Angeles, where he lived until 1924, as a bureaucrat in the employ of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Lowman recognizes the name Ramon Echavarria; he remembers the parties that Echavarria hosted through a haze of psychological warmth and coarse lust, even though he was only invited to a very small handful of the events. Lowman met Savitree at one of these parties, and he admits that the two were lovers while they lived in Los Angeles. It becomes clear through questioning that Lowman was not part of Echavarria's cult, however, and that he and Savitree are no longer intimate. (Exceptionally observant Investigators may eventually connect the end of their time as lovers with the appearance of Savitree's first Minor Mouth. This isn't a clue, per se — just an interesting and perhaps tragic correspondence.)

Lowman says that he came to Siam with Savitree after something — he still doesn't really know what — went wrong in California in '24. He followed her, in large part, because she promised to provide all the Nectar he

4. Interrogating Lowman

Over Phao's Head

Upon learning of Phao's rampant corruption, it's possible that do-gooder Investigators will try to go over his head in either the city or national government, trying to get him into trouble and/or attract the attention of the proper authorities onto the death-matches in hopes of seeing them shut down.

Because such a course of action is unlikely, and, frankly, doomed to near-certain failure, specific encounters for this line of action are not provided.

If Investigators go down this road and you want to discourage it, improvise a scene in which the Investigators meet with an apparently solemn and well-connected central-government bureaucrat in a bar in a nice Bangkok neighborhood. After listening to the Investigators' accusations, the bureaucrat leans in close and earnestly informs the Investigators in quiet tones that Phao Bantow is a well-liked and well-respected man in Bangkok who has been pleased to pick up the tab for the cocktails that the Investigators have been enjoying. Phao knows that for American foreigners to disappear or — God forbid — die in Bangkok will only bring hassles and inconvenience to everyone concerned. The bureaucrat suggests that the Investigators finish their business in Bangkok with all reasonable haste and then return to whatever locales they call home. *"Godspeed,"* says the man with an impassive grin, collecting his briefcase and leaving a large banknote on the table for the bill as he departs.

On the other hand, if you'd like to add further adventures to *Eternal Lies* in the Bangkok Locale, Bangkok political machinations among Phao Bantow and his various political and criminal allies and enemies would be a fruitful area for development. One idea to get you started might arise from the earnest efforts of a scrupulously honest government minister responsible for building and maintaining orphanages in the city. He's at the end of his rope with the knowledge that government funds are routinely routed everywhere other than the care of orphans because of the graft that Phao Bantow receives. If the minister in question learned that the Investigators were working against Phao, he'd certainly step forward to help them, especially if they were able to keep his name out of it.

could use once they arrived. Lowman has sometimes assumed that there was some kind of falling out between Savitree and Echavarria — a lover's quarrel? — but doesn't know for sure and honestly doesn't care. He's surprised to learn that Echavarria is dead if the Investigators tell him.

(It requires a spend to learn this information at this point only because learning about Savitree at this juncture in the Bangkok Locale amounts to a bit of a shortcut. The Investigators can learn the same information — without the additional background on Lowman and Savitree's Los Angeles history and relationship — at the fights. See **Bangkok 9, "Thawi Udom,"** p. 162.)

Lowman's Gambit

In the relatively likely event that the Investigators demand that Lowman assist them by helping them find or meet Savitree Sirikhan, Lowman deploys a gambit that has worked for him several times in the past when undesirables of one type or another have showed up looking for her: Lowman tells the Investigators that she will be at the death-fights and that he will bring them there and point her out to them.

In truth, Savitree very rarely visits Bangkok at all, much less goes to the Labyrinth or attends the death-fights. Lowman's plans are, rather, to speak an admittance code phrase



that's a variant on the true phrase. The variant is prearranged to indicate that the doorman is to summon Thawi immediately because Lowman is in trouble. The likely outcome is that Thawi's goons will descend on the Investigators after they reach the arena, taking them captive. See **Bangkok 7, "To the Death,"** p. 156 and **Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned,"** p. 161, for specific ideas about the kinds of situations that are likely to play out.

Daniel "Waen" Lowman

Three Things: Constantly pushing his thick glasses back up the bridge of his nose. Stammers when angry or making threats. Swears in English (when speaking Siamese).

Firearms 2, Health 8, Scuffling 3, Sense Trouble 5, Stability 5

Weapon: −2 (fists), +0 (Remington double Derringer; +1 Difficulty to find on Lowman's person; point-blank range only)

5. Phao Bantow

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Observing Daniel Lowman's delivery of the basket of cash (Bangkok 3, "Shadowing Lowman," p. 151).

Summary: The Investigators do investigative legwork to learn about Phao Bantow, a Bangkok public servant.

Core Clue: Phao Bantow's key qualification for public service in the Bangkok political ward where he works is his efficiency in collecting and distributing graft from and to a very wide variety of individuals at all levels of society. (Oral History or Streetwise.)



By shadowing Daniel Lowman, the Investigators can witness him handing a basket that they likely know to be full of cash over to a man in the front courtyard of a local government building. This exchange is a relatively mechanical one: Lowman and Plaek — the man to whom he gives the basket — appear neither friendly nor antagonistic, and their brief business is conducted with neither show nor secrecy.

That the building is a government office is obvious.

Oral History in the area immediately around the government building allows an Investigator to learn Plaek's name upon providing a description and to learn that he serves as right-hand man to Phao Bantow, who holds a position that amounts to the American equivalent of alderman, city councilman, or ward boss in this part of Bangkok. He's an influential man, not to be crossed.

Going to the Police

The Investigators — especially those who are cops or other law-enforcement agents at home — may decide to take Daniel Lowman's obvious criminal activities to the local police. If they do, they immediately discover the depth of corruption endemic in the local bureaucracy. A scene similar to the one described in "Over Phao's Head" transpires, save that it occurs in the closed office of a mid-ranking police official.

Investigators who press the matter are jailed, framed for crimes and then jailed, attacked outright in the streets, or worse. None of the corrupt officials here wish to see their comfortably lubricated way of doing business disrupted by nosy foreigners.



Streetwise can provide the same information as Oral History, with the additional intelligence that Phao is known to be an extremely efficient conduit of graft, which is his primary qualification for public service. He takes in money from a wide variety of businesses both criminal and legitimate, skims enough to maintain his lifestyle, and pays out to an extremely extensive network of politicians (both up and down the Siamese power structure), police officers, businessmen, criminals, and so forth. Phao is well liked by all of these because he's extremely dependable, if (strictly speaking) thoroughly corrupt.

6. "I'm Looking for the Fights"

Scene Type: Core / Alternate

Lead-ins: Shadowing Daniel Lowman to his meeting with street thug Siripong (Bangkok 3, "Shadowing Lowman," p. 151), a clue in Samson Trammel's correspondence with Savitree Sirikhan inviting Trammel's underlings to "fight in our rites" when they visit Bangkok (Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion," p. 113), information gleaned from Lee Dempson (Los Angeles 20, "Debauchery," p. 109), or player-instigated footwork on the streets of Bangkok.

Summary: The Investigators learn about the secret underground death-fights and how to find them.

Alternate Core: Fights to the death are secretly staged in an underground Bangkok location known as the Labyrinth, and, in order to gain admittance, one must present oneself to a particular merchant and speak a particular phrase. (Streetwise.)



Here are several alternate routes by which the Investigators can find the Bangkok cult's underground death-fights if they do not learn about them by interrogating Daniel Lowman. The testimony of Lee Dempson in **Los Angeles 20, "Debauchery,"** p. 109, provides another.

Taking to Siripong

If the Investigators trail Daniel Lowman and see him hassle enterprising street criminal Siripong about his nascent competing fights, they can use **Intimidation** on Siripong in order to learn that the death-fights exist and how to find them:

"Yes, yes, there are fights, all right? I'll tell you how to get in if you leave me alone. Go to the side door of the Fragrant Honey Shop in Phra Nakron. Hold two bills, like this, you see? [He holds a pair of banknotes of particular denominations] *Say, 'I have come for the exhibition,' just like that. You heard none of this from me."*

Reading the Testament

If the Investigators have read Samson Trammel's *Testament* carefully, they may be attracted to what they previously assumed was a throwaway passage in a bit of correspondence from "S. S." (Savitree Sirikhan) to Trammel, which Trammel has pasted into the leaves of his foul work:

"Our rituals, of course, have evolved along different lines than your own. I extend the invitation to you, and indeed to any of your followers, although I am certain you will not accept it, to fight in our rites in Bangkok. You may instruct your disciples to present themselves at the Fragrant Honey Shop in the Phra Nakron, saying to the doorman 'I have come to join with the circle of excess.'"

This clue is best delivered if the Investigators get stuck in Bangkok and don't know how to shake their investigation loose. You might say something like, "You pass by a shop on the street and its name — the Fragrant Honey Shop — sticks in your mind. It occurs to you, after a minute, that you've heard that name somewhere before… in Trammel's book, you think, as you consider it." From there, the Investigators delve back into the *Testament*, and play can proceed once more.

Hitting the Streets

Investigators who use **Streetwise** and simply take to the streets, private investigator–style, to ask around about Daniel Lowman or death-fights eventually come up with fruitful leads that point them to the Labyrinth. They learn that the fights are a brutal and savage spectacle the likes of which can't be seen anywhere else in Bangkok, or probably in the world. They're told that to find them, they should go to the side door at the Fragrant Honey Shop in Phra Nakron district and speak the code phrase to the doorman, *"I have come for the exhibition,"* while offering a pair of banknotes of particular denominations.

Investigators who wear down their shoe leather looking for general information about a "Thing With a Thousand Mouths," an "Eternal Liar," a "Gol-Goroth," a "Nyarlathotep," or any similar Mythos entities or concepts meet with no success.

Investigators who hit the streets looking for Nectar as it would be distributed in other Locales do not find it because there is no street network of Nectar distributors in Bangkok as there is in other Locales and the effects of Bangkok Nectar are substantially different than the effects of Nectar milked from the other Mouths. Investigators seeking a drug related to sexual experiences, for example, will have no problem finding brothels and opium, and, while such leads may seem promising at first (and while the Investigators are likely to waste a day or more running them down), they all eventually turn out to be essentially mundane in nature.

7. To the Death

Scene Type: Core / Alternate / Action

Lead-ins: Learning of the death-fights and the Labyrinth, either from Daniel Lowman (Bangkok 4, "Interrogating Lowman," p. 152) or via other routes (Bangkok 6, "'I'm Looking for the Fights,'" p. 155).

Summary: The Investigators witness the Bangkok death-fights.

Core Clue: Slain combatants' physical remains disappear through a grate in the fighting floor. (Simple search.)

Core Clue: The Thing With a Thousand Mouths is worshipped here with great and violent abandon. (Simple search, with Anthropology, Cthulhu Mythos, or Theology for context.)

Alternate Core: Thawi Udom is the death-fights' operations manager. (No particular ability required, but Bureaucracy quickly figures it out.)

The Bangkok death-fights occur on every third night in the Labyrinth, an agglomeration of buildings in a densely packed, highly built-up area near Chao Phraya River where it flows through the city.

The arena where they take place is the shell of a gutted warehouse that does not have any direct doors or passages that lead to any main street or thoroughfare. Rather, those who attend the fights present themselves at the side door of the Fragrant Honey Shop, which, in addition to serving this illicit purpose, is also a legitimate (well, "legitimate") retailer of spices and specialty cooking ingredients.

Entrance

Those coming to attend the fights speak the code phrase, *"I have come for the exhibition,"* and offer local banknotes of two particular varieties. They are then escorted through a series of twisting hallways, alleys, and passages that pass through several different buildings before they arrive at the central arena.

Those coming to participate in the fights — offering themselves as combatants — speak the code phrase *"I have come to join with the circle of excess."* These volunteers are led through a different series of corridors that lead them, eventually, to an underground warren where they are told to wait in a small room whose door their escort proceeds to lock behind them. (You have noted, of course, that the route by which Investigators are likely to learn this particular code phrase — via Savitree Sirikhan's letter to Samson Trammel as presented in the *Testament of the Dripping Mouthes' Emanates* — does not make it clear that it is a means by which those speaking it volunteer to fight to the death in a bloody public spectacle. Won't the Investigators be surprised!)

Finally, those entering the Labyrinth in the company of Daniel Lowman may hear him speak the phrase, *"We are here for the purposes set forth in times of old."* Lowman proceeds to lead those accompanying him through a long (longer than necessary) series of hallways, courtyards, and passages — up and down a series of staircases, even — that eventually also lead them to the main arena. However, while they've been traversing these routes, the doorman has run to warn Thawi Udom that Lowman is accompanied by individuals who are a danger to the cult, and Thawi's goons will be ready for them when they arrive.



The Arena

The main arena room where the death-fights take place is the gutted shell of what was once a warehouse of many rooms. It has a high ceiling with timber rafters lost in darkness and spiderwebs, home to bats and birds.

A rectangular central fighting pit is surrounded by a waist-high *yotsume*-style bamboo fence whose upright posts and canes have been sharpened to dangerous points, most of which are bloodstained and gristle encrusted. (Imagine a split-rail fence with vertical bamboo poles lashed to the horizontal rails, sticking up — pointedly so — between the ground posts.) The pit is roughly fifteen feet by ten.

The floor of the arena is hard-packed dirt, with a large sewer grate, about a yard square, in its rough center. The gaps in the grate's cast-iron cover are large — much larger than would be safe in the street, for the holes are wide enough to easily allow a foot to pass through. These broad holes allow the passage of the physical remains of slain combatants to be hacked up and pressed through, falling to the sewer below. Where necessary, the grate swings up on hinges to allow a full body, a large torso, or the like to be dumped below.

The arena floor takes up only a relatively small portion of the warehouse. Rude risers are set up on three sides of the pit, but there are no benches for seating. Spectators stand on the risers, jostling each other and cheering. It's not uncommon for rowdy spectators to fall off the risers, or trip on the next-higher one, bruising themselves or knocking over other onlookers. Fights often break out.

There Is No Map

No map has been provided of the arena warehouse on purpose: to provide a tactical diagram of the place would be to place a rectangle inside another rectangle and, in so doing, do a complete disservice to the frightening and disorienting aspects of the area that, simply put, can't be shown on a map.

As Keeper, do not draw a map of this area for your players. Provide, instead, vague (and perhaps inaccurate) guesses to the players about how far it is to this or that landmark. Comment that it's hard to be sure about anything concrete given the darkness, the smoke from the bonfire, the shouting of the bloodthirsty onlookers, and the bats skipping among the rafters that throw constant and alarming flashes of motion at the edges of one's vision. And all that's *between* fights. During a match, the roar of the crowd intensifies and the spectacle of Nectar-enraged combatants attempting to hew and chop each other limb from limb is nearly impossible not to gape at.

In one corner of the warehouse, a concrete stairwell leads down into the floor, down to what it seems must be below the level of the street. This descends to the sewer level, where combatants wait and Xuc Pramoj feeds the Bangkok Mouth. Combatants come up into the arena via this stairwell.

When the fights are underway, the room is lit by a bonfire that's built on the fourth side of the arena floor, with pole torches providing occasional illumination in other areas. Even so, the whole of the arena is quite dim, with the far corners receiving almost no illumination that those going to them don't bring with them. Although the smoke from the fire can largely escape through a wide variety of gaps in the roof and at the edges of the rafters, the entire warehouse becomes noxious with smoke in relatively short order.

Though dim, the noise in the place is thunderous, with spectators cheering and jeering at the combatants, the bookmakers, each other, anyone, and no one. On a typical night, when the fights are underway, as many as a hundred people come to watch. Many bring strong drink, which they imbibe from flasks or jars over the course of the night. Many smoke or eat opium they have brought.

The only mind-expanding substance that can be purchased inside the arena is Nectar. A skinny cultist watched over by a burly enforcer mans a foul repurposed dentist's chair a slight way off from the arena floor. A spectator seeking Nectar pays the enforcer, sits in the chair, and tilts his head back while the other cultist plugs his nose and sends a shot of Nectar straight down his gullet. This is diluted stuff — cut with liquor, typically, but sometimes with water, urine, turpentine, or kerosene — with the effect of arousing (but not quite compelling) a willing lust for violence with no other mechanical effects. The shots come from a large cooler with enough capacity for the night, which is brought up from the sewer level at the beginning of a night's events. There is a steady flow of spectators moving back and forth from the risers to the chair and back.

The Arena at the Game Table

In describing the arena scene for the Investigators, the thing to remember is that the fights are distilled violence, horror, and chaos. Avoid at all costs the temptation to describe a sensible contest structure to the players. As a roleplaying gamer who likes rules and structures, you'll be tempted to describe overarching rules and guidelines by which contests are fought, in order to make the contests more like games. (And the other players are likely to want to understand what's going on in those terms.) But here's the thing: they're violent, nonsexual orgies of hurt and death in the superficial clothing of tournament sport. If anything, you can probably unnerve your players — who probably like the structures of games given that they're playing one right now, in real life — by making it clear that there *isn't* any rational, game-like structure at work here. Not in the slightest.

Also, in describing the scene to the Investigators, dial the gore knob all the way to the end of the scale. You've read, maybe, that oblique suggestions and sideways allusions are more effective at engendering horror than a fire hose of viscera. While that may be true as a general rule, this scene is the exception, the time when you ignore that advice and go for as much horrible physical carnage as you can describe.

Investigators with **Biology** or **Pharmacy** and access to reasonable tools and supplies who obtain a sample are able to analyze it (at a later time, obviously) and identify its constituents. Analysis of Nectar is subject to the same dangerous cycle of Stability loss described in Los Angeles 20, under "Scientific Analysis," p. 110.

Fight!

On a given night, anywhere between three and a dozen events transpire in the arena. The typical event is a fight to the death between two combatants, who come into the warehouse from the stairwell to the sewer level. Each is thoroughly high on undiluted Nectar. On their arrival at the arena floor, they climb over the fence at opposite ends and have at it without preamble. Anywhere between one and a handful of cultists escort a given fighter, making sure they make it to the pit and get over the fence before they start to fight (which is not to say that a spectator isn't occasionally beaten by a Nectar-enraged combatant en route from the sewer to the pit). Combatants are sometimes given weapons, sometimes not. Sometimes, a single weapon is thrown into the center of the pit for the combatants to fight over. Common implements run the gamut from purpose-forged weapons (swords, knives) to tools (axes, mauls) to improvised weapons (bottles, cement blocks). The cult has never provided firearms, but, on one or two occasions, a spectator has thrown a pistol into the ring, which proved both popular with the homicidally minded crowed and less dangerous than might be expected, given the poor aim of the intoxicated fighters and limited ammunition available.

The thing that's most striking about the fights is the furious and savage wrath with which the combatants assault each other. Even Investigators who've seen the effects of Nectar — or experienced them first-hand — find what they see

Siamese Nectar

Bangkok Nectar is broadly similar to Nectar harvested from other Mouths: a high lasts 1d3 hours, the drug is highly addictive, the human body does not naturally develop resistance to it, and so on. The rules for addiction are the same as those described in Los Angeles 20, under "Getting High," on page 111, and apply across Nectar types. (That is, a Nectar addict will seek to consume either type if it's at hand.)

The difference between Nectar types is that those who take Bangkok Nectar seek violence rather than sex. While high, users immediately and bodily attack any living creature in their proximity, starting with the closest targets. Hand-to-hand attacks are favored over ranged attacks — fundamentally, the greater the opportunity for visceral savagery, the better — but where the former are impossible, users often hurl implements at hand at any targets who present themselves. Deprived of outlets for their violence, users rage against restraints or seek the nearest possible victims with a great — and occasionally cunning — single-mindedness. Users sometimes forego immediate bodily violence to seek out efficient weapons that are also relatively close at hand, but that's not universally true.

Those high on Bangkok Nectar never make Consciousness Rolls; they are always considered to be successful when they would otherwise be forced to do so. They are, however, affected by the penalties associated with being **hurt** and **seriously wounded**, but do not cease their raging until they die, when their Health pools fall to −12.

Using Bangkok Nectar requires a 4-point Mythos Stability test on the first use, but never again on subsequent use, for those who've never had any kind of Nectar before. Those who've had "standard" Nectar must make a 2-point Mythos Stability test on the first use of the Bangkok Nectar, but never need to check again for either type after that. This works in reverse (a 4-point test for Bangkok Nectar, followed by the 2-point test for standard Nectar) for an Investigator who tries Bangkok Nectar first, followed by standard Nectar later.

Bangkok Nectar is biologically and chemically identical to Nectar from other Mouths and carries the same dangers from lab analysis. See Los Angeles 20, under "Scientific Analysis," p. 110, for further information.

here surprising and shocking, given how different the effects of Bangkok Nectar are from the Nectar produced by other Mouths. No Investigator, regardless of background or experiences, is able to avoid a 3-point non-Mythos Stability test at witnessing one of these fights. Whether an Investigator succeeds or fails, however, one test is enough to harden the Investigator to further tests from witnessing the fights.

Fights are not divided into rounds. They have no formal structure; combatants rarely break from fighting even to catch their breath. A combat ends with one or the other combatant dead. It's unclear whether it's an effect of the Nectar or a habit that's grown up from the wild abandon of the fighting culture, but victors in the ring almost invariably bite off and consume some portion of the fallen's flesh, whether a finger, ear, eyeball, or mouthful of bloody, fleshy muscle.

Victors sometimes fight again against a new opponent brought up from the sewers; other times, they're goaded back out of the ring and down the stairs. Spectators sometimes wind up in the ring, either voluntarily from their violent intoxication or involuntarily from being thrown into the ring by their violently intoxicated fellows.

On most event nights, gruesomely violent events that are not fights, per se, are interspersed as spectacle. Sacrificial victims are plainly and simply hacked limb from limb; Nectar-enraged animals are pitted against each other; innocent civilians are horribly tortured as they scream and cry for mercy… essentially, no depraved act of violence is off limits.

From time to time (between fights, obviously), cultists with machetes and push brooms enter the ring to hack up the corpses of the fallen and squeegee the blood and gore down the sewer grate. This is a core clue that should lead the Investigators to the sewer level below the arena floor; it requires no ability to observe — that is, obtaining this clue amounts to a **simple search**.

Thawi Udom: The Nerve Center

The chaos and savagery of the arena are under the thumb and control of Thawi Udom, a massive Siamese built of muscle and menace. His body is tattooed and scarred from top to toe, his nose has been broken so many times it's practically missing, and his teeth that remain have been filed to points. He is shaven bald. His speech has the character of bone grating on bone. He carries a massive machete on his belt; it is heavily bloodstained from frequent use.

Thawi is everywhere and nowhere, all at once, both on the arena floor and in the sewers below. Whenever there's an important decision to be made (Is it time to start the next fight? Should we kill this interloper, or bring him below? Are we done for the night?), Udom is at hand, nodding his head or shaking it, or barking out terse orders, to instruct his

minions about what they should do. The cultists beneath him follow his orders without question or thought, throwing away their lives as he commands. If the Investigators did not learn it from interrogating Daniel Lowman, it is clear to them upon witnessing the fights for even a short while that Udom is wholly in charge here. (Although it does not require an ability to realize that Udom is at the top of the operational pecking order here, offer the realization to an Investigator with **Bureaucracy** first, if it makes sense to do so.)

Although a complete monster and sadist, Thawi Udom is also cunning and perceptive. He's difficult to fool, and he knows his physical environs with absolute intimacy. He is trusted by Savitree Sirikhan to oversee this most important center of the Bangkok cult's operations with good reason.

"Praise the Mouths!"

Investigators who spend time among the spectators during a fight event — the equivalent of a **simple search** — do not get the sense of organized religious practice, except for the following:

- If Echavarria's Los Angeles orgies could be thoughts of as practices of depraved veneration, then what's happening here could be considered similar, save being shone through a lens of violence rather than lust.

- There's a strange undercurrent of vocabulary related to eating, biting, and mouths among spectators and cultists alike. The crowd shouts encouragements and exultations like "Consume him!" and "Mouths be filled!" during fights, but without any particular understanding of why or any obvious ends. If a spectator were somehow sobered up and questioned about using particular vocabulary, he'd shrug it off as simply being the kind of thing that's said at the fights, and how should he know why?

In the end, Investigators who think about what they have witnessed, through the prism of **Anthropology**, **Cthulhu Mythos**, or **Theology**, get the sense that the group is on the right track in their investigations of the global cult of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths by coming here, but they also get the idea that the worship of entities from Outside, here, is more an unconscious byproduct of the physical acts than it is the goal of these unwitting celebrants. The probable exceptions are Thawi Udom and his direct cultist minions, whose practices seem a bit more formalized than unconscious.

Other Clues

If the Investigators kidnap, follow, or attack Thawi Udom, jump to **Bangkok 9, "Thawi Udom,"** p. 162, for more information.

If the Investigators attempt to kidnap, follow, or interrogate any of Thawi's cultic minions, this is relatively easy to accomplish, but also relatively pointless, as they don't know anything all that useful. Their lives are organized around serving Thawi and the Mouth. They live communally in the sewers beneath the arena, perform the manual labor of maintaining the Labyrinth and harvesting Nectar, and man the death-fight events. They worship and love the Mouth; they're not aware of (and would not care about) any Mythos entity greater than the Mouth's physical manifestation here. They are as likely to allow themselves to be killed as they are to succumb to Interrogation; play such scenes by ear and allow the needs of the unfolding drama to guide the information that the Investigators are able to elicit. Generally speaking, what the cultists tell the Investigators should guide them to either Thawi Udom or the sewers beneath the arena.

If the Investigators kidnap, follow, or interrogate mundane spectators, the common pattern comprises lower-class laborers and scum-of-the-earth who heard about the death-fight by word of mouth, liked what they saw

Splitting the Party

The nature of this antagonist reaction is such that it may be relatively easy for the cult to kidnap a few — but not all — of the Investigators. This eventuality makes reasonable sense as the overall plot goes: a few Investigators simply disappear after going out on some errand, whether routine or investigative, and, when it becomes clear that they're not coming back, those who remain must find them. Separating the protagonists is a staple of the horror genre.

That said, splitting the party up isn't always an appetizing option at the game table, for two reasons. First, it requires the players to be diligent in separating their player knowledge from their character knowledge. (Either that, or you've got to send half the players out of the room for scenes where their characters aren't present, and no one came over for gaming so they could be sent out of the game.) Second, it means that some segment of your play group can't do anything until their Investigators are rediscovered.

On the other hand, with patient and mature players, you could really ratchet up the tension by cutting back and forth between the kidnapped Investigators' travails (see **Bangkok 14, "Imprisoned,"** p. 170) and the investigative efforts of their counterparts who're looking frantically for them.

Whether you split the party by kidnapping some subset of the Investigators comes down, in the end, to whether you think that the players will have a better time, or a worse time, while split apart. There's no right answer.

and experienced the first time they came, and have been coming back ever since. Few have families; most live in relative squalor. None know anything of any use about the cult's doctrines, about the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, about any of the cult's central figures (Sirikhan, Udom, or Lowman), or the like.

NPCs at the Arena

Here are game statistics for some of the NPCs found around the arena.

Thawi Udom

Three Things: Always making fists and rubbing them. Makes whisper-growling sounds in his throat while listening to others. Delivers orders monosyllabically.

Athletics 10, Health 18, Scuffling 12, Sense Trouble 10, Weapons 6

Weapon: +1 (massive machete)

Udom's Cultist Minions

Three Things: Furrow their brows while making slow comprehension. Blink and shield their eyes in daylight. Quick to bludgeon or hack even suspected interlopers.

Athletics 3, Health 9, Scuffling 5, Sense Trouble 4, Weapons 4

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (general purpose bludgeon), +0 (machete)

Typical Spectator

Three Things: Shouts or speaks way too loudly for the context. Very free with thrown punches, especially sucker punches. Dressed in low-quality clothing.

Athletics 3, Health 8, Scuffling 3, Weapons 2

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (small improvised weapon), +0 (big improvised weapon)

8. The Tables Turned

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Any incident where the Investigators expose themselves to Bangkok's principal antagonists and leave an opportunity for the antagonists to track them down.

Summary: Thawi Udom and a swarm of cultists corner the Investigators and beat them into unconsciousness to transport them to the island where Savitree Sirikhan dwells.



At some point in Bangkok, the Investigators are more than likely to tip their hand to the Bangkok cult. Three likely ways this might happen include:

- If the Investigators interrogate Daniel Lowman, allow him to get a good look at any of them, and allow him to survive, Lowman's government and underground contacts are likely to be able to identify and find a group of particular foreigners in the city within a day or so, at least for the kind of cash bounty Lowman and the cult can afford to offer.
- If the Investigators compel Lowman to bring them to the fights, he has an established passphrase to alert Thawi Udom that all is not well (see **Bangkok 7, "To the Death,"** p. 156).
- If obviously foreign Investigators spend a lot of time asking around unsubtly about the death-fights on the streets of Bangkok, word is likely to get back to Lowman, Udom, or both.

These are just examples. Few groups of Investigators are so subtle that there's no reasonable basis to say that they've tipped their hands to the antagonists, especially when their enemies are relatively observant and well prepared, as the Bangkok cultists are. Keep in mind, during the initial scenes in Bangkok, that this antagonist reaction scene is coming up and you shouldn't have much trouble figuring out how and why it transpires.

Once the cult knows about the Investigators, their general strategy for dealing with them is for Thawi Udom to gather up an overwhelming group of rank-and-file cultists armed with bludgeons, to identify a place where they can ambush the Investigators all together, to prepare by dispatching one or two cultists to stand by at any obvious routes of possible escape from the ambush site, and then to move as a mass to beat the Investigators into unconsciousness, even if they agree to go along quietly.

Neither Thawi nor the cultists are high on Bangkok Nectar when they attempt this apprehension. Thawi knows that engaging in violence in that state will, more likely than not, lead to the Investigators being killed, and he wants to send them to Savitree rather than simply beat them to death.

Statistics for Thawi Udom and Udom's rank-and-file cultist minions can be found in **Bangkok 7, "To the Death,"** p. 156.

In the event that the Investigators don't tip their hand, or Thawi Udom's ambush isn't successful due to some incredible luck or martial prowess on the Investigators' part, **Bangkok 12, "Finding the Island,"** p. 167, is an alternate route by which the Investigators can advance to Bangkok's natural end.

Nabbing Thawi's Goons

Enterprising Investigators may kidnap, corner, and/or interrogate one or more of Thawi Udom's rank-and-file goons. Unfortunately for the Investigators, these individuals are practically worthless as information sources.

These cultists have a variety of personal backgrounds that generally involve having been scum-of-the-earth with a propensity for violence and little in the way of redeeming qualities. Most are either insane or halfway there from a mixture of their prior life experiences and their experiences since joining the cult.

All cultists live in the sewers beneath the Labyrinth and are aware that a hideous Mouth dwells in a secret chamber attended, mainly, by a man they call Xuc. They know that the remains of fighters killed in the ring are fed to this mouth. Some of them have heard of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, but many have also concocted and are happy to share their own completely improbable cosmic explanations for what they see daily. Investigators with Assess Honesty have no luck identifying what's true and what's made up, since the cultists with their own ideas nevertheless believe them wholeheartedly.

The cultists are all aware of Nectar, which they call by that name, and most take it regularly. The cultists often fight among themselves for any or no reason. Their life expectancies are short, and new recruits are constantly joining their ranks.

Their tasks involve doing anything Thawi tells them to, from bottling and diluting Nectar to knocking heads to killing enemies of the cult to providing security at the fights.



9. Thawi Udom

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Identifying Thawi Udom at the death-fights (Bangkok 7, "To the Death," p. 156) or turning the tables on him (Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned," p. 161)

Summary: The Investigators follow, interrogate, or trick Thawi.

Core Clue: Thawi Udom is the operations chief of death-fights staged to stimulate the production of Nectar in the Bangkok Mouth, provide financial benefit to the Bangkok cult, and glorify the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. He knows many details of the Bangkok cult's disposition and operations. (Interrogation is likely.)



Thawi Udom is most likely to be encountered at the death-fights; it is easy for the Investigators to identify him as the figure in charge if they manage to infiltrate the Labyrinth (see **Bangkok 7, "To the Death,"** page 156). He is a massive, frightening Siamese with copious tattoos and scars and a brutally violent disposition.

The bullet points below summarize the information the Investigators may be able to learn from Thawi by following, interrogating, or somehow tricking him. Use your judgment about which ability or abilities are necessary. **Interrogation** is the most likely option. Thawi's disposition essentially renders him immune to physical or psychological threats arising from Intimidation.

For the most part, this information duplicates information that can be learned by interrogating Daniel Lowman and so is characterized as an alternate core to **Bangkok 4, "Interrogating Lowman,"** p. 152.

- The head of the Bangkok cult is a shadowy mastermind named Savitree Sirikhan, who originated the secret death-matches, which are attended by a wide variety of both lower- and working-class locals, as well as thrill-tourists from other parts of Southeast Asia, and even occasionally the rest of the world.

- The death-fights take place in a slum-warren of aging buildings in a bad part of town that all connect to each other via backdoors, strange passages, roofed-over courtyards, and underground tunnels. People call this agglomeration "the Labyrinth." Thawi knows its architecture intimately, as well as the architecture of the sewers below the Labyrinth proper.

- In the sewers beneath the Labyrinth, a giant and hideous mouth — an earthly manifestation of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths — consumes those who die in the fights and secretes Nectar, which is consumed by combatants and spectators alike, and brings them into communion with the Thing's savage and outer-worldly temperament.

- Thawi directs the efforts of a high-turnover (they die a lot) group of cultists who assist him in running the fights and harvesting Nectar from the Mouth. He recruits new cultists from among the most enthusiastic spectators at the fights. All of the cultists live with him in the Labyrinth sewers.

- A strange man called Xuc Pramoj also lives beneath the Labyrinth. Although Xuc has a more distant relationship with the Mouth than the rest of the cult — and does not even consider himself part of the cult, per se — he provides vital assistance to Thawi in placating the Mouth and enabling the collection of Nectar.

- Sirikhan recruited Thawi from among early fighters due to his

grim enthusiasm for violence and apparent willingness to adopt a single-minded devotion to the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. Thawi remembers very little, now, about his life before the fights.

- Sirkihan also recruited Xuc at about the same time. Thawi doesn't know anything about Xuc's background and, frankly, doesn't care about it.

- The cult is funded by selling Nectar, charging admission to the death-fights, taking bets on their outcomes, and taking possession (that is, stealing) the assets of many of the fights' deceased losers. Thawi bundles up cash from the fights and turns it over to Daniel Lowman, who uses it to make sure the fights are not disrupted. Thawi knows next to nothing about the specifics of Lowman's activities.

- Thawi knows that Lowman sees him as an underling but, since Thawi also regularly reports directly to Savitree on the island where she lives, doesn't think of himself that way. That said, Thawi doesn't respect Lowman enough to correct what he sees as Lowman's megalomaniacal misunderstanding. (As a practical matter, though, Lowman and Thawi collaborate well enough, given that each is responsible for a vastly different area of operations.)

- Thawi knows that Savitree hosts two Minor Mouths on her body and that he is not supposed to allow Lowman to find out about them.

- Thawi personally venerates the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, whom he has also heard Savitree refer to as Gol-Goroth. To be clear, however, Thawi knows nothing about the worldwide cult and nothing about Savitree's broad search for Mythos lore. He has never heard of the Liar From Beyond or any other Mythos entities. (If he learned about the other cults in the other Locales, he wouldn't be impressed with their emphasis on sex and orgiastic experience.)

Thawi Udom's statistics are provided where he is first encountered; see **Bangkok 7, "To the Death,"** p. 156.

10. The Sewers

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Gaining access to the Labyrinth, most likely via the death-fights (Bangkok 7, "To the Death," p. 156), but perhaps by learning of the Labyrinth's location by interrogating Daniel Lowman (Bangkok 4, "Interrogating Lowman," p. 152).

Summary: The Investigators descend into the sewers beneath the Labyrinth to explore the "backstage" areas of the death-fight arena, meet Mouth-keeper Xuc Pramoj, and perhaps bear witness to the Bangkok Mouth itself.

Core Clue: A Major Mouth in the sewers beneath the Labyrinth consumes the remains of those slain in the death-fights and produces Nectar.

Partial / Alternate Campaign Clue: Someone has buried explosives around the Bangkok Mouth.



There is one relatively obvious way and a dozen secret byways by which the Investigators might enter the sewers beneath the Labyrinth. The relatively obvious way is by descending the concrete stairwell in the gutted warehouse where the death-fights are held (see **Bangkok 7, "To the Death,"** p. 156). "Relatively obvious" is a complicated assessment, of course; the entrance is relatively obvious only

And Again, No Maps

Maps of the Bangkok cult's sewer stronghold are not provided in order to eliminate your temptation to turn an exploration of the sewers into a traditional RPG dungeon crawl. The Investigators' experience of the sewers should be one of spatial confusion and psychological repulsion interspersed with horrible discoveries rather than of an archaeological exploration where recording a marching order leads to repeated discoveries of treasure in the form of information dumps.

That is, as the Investigators explore the sewers, you should find yourself saying things like this:

"You slink down a curving, flooded passageway awash in feces. Through a rough doorway that looks like it was hacked from an older tunnel with a pickaxe, you spy a rough iron grate with a hinged door in it. Through the grate you can see what look like they might be cells, but the only light in there is thrown by a few meager, scattered candles, so God knows whether you're right or what else might be waiting in there."

Conversely, you should *never* find yourself saying things like this:

"You go another 30 feet and find a doorway on your left. You can see prison cells through the door."

Notice not only the difference in the level of description but the fact that the prior description avoids providing omniscient physical descriptions. Describe the area *as the Investigators experience it*, not (necessarily) *as it actually is*.



once the Investigators have gained access to the fights, which is not simple.

The many secret passages by which Thawi and the cultists often come and go, conversely, are impossible for the Investigators to stumble upon randomly and very difficult to find even if they know the general boundaries of the Labyrinth itself. To find an entrance after learning about the general outlines of the Labyrinth — from Daniel Lowman, say — requires a 1-point **Architecture** spend.

The sewers comprise three general regions: the staging areas, the living quarters, and the Mouth chamber. All of them reek with the pungent, mossy smell of Nectar, with the stench being most concentrated in the Mouth chamber.

Staging Areas

These chambers are operational areas where death-fighters await their turn in the ring above.

One central, twisting hallway in this area connects a series of more than a dozen cells ranging from casket- to closet-sized, where humans can be imprisoned. Doors vary from solid metal portals scavenged from above-ground buildings, to sewer grates set in wall holes, to portcullis-style gates. Some contain rotting corpses, but their presence does not prevent the cultists from pressing cells back into immediate service to house fresh captives.

The cells do not have mechanical locks, as a general rule — the keys would be lost in the disorganization and darkness of the sewers more or less immediately — but, rather, have simple bars and the like, which can be operated from the outside of any given cell by anyone who walks up. However, there are a few keyed cells to which Thawi Udom alone possess the keys.

The cells are generally empty between fights, but one or two captives who have survived or been kidnapped in the last day or two are often imprisoned in the staging area to await the next events. On the evening of an event, the cells are typically full of a combination of volunteers and other, less voluntary, participants. Even those who've elected to participate freely are kept locked up, lest their violent natures cause problems. Many have been given Nectar to prepare them to fight, and these often howl and rage in the darkness.

The twisting hallway connecting the cells empties into a larger chamber that's usually lit by at least one lantern that's kept burning. Here, a series of tables are used to prepare Nectar doses, sharpen and stack weapons, and carry out the other operational tasks necessary to keep the fights running. This chamber is hardly ever completely empty, even between fights.

Living Quarters

The cultists live in a series of foul interconnected chambers of varying sizes. Although none of the chambers themselves are flooded, the passages that connect some of them are ankle deep with city sewage.

The cultists don't have individual belongings, per se. Communal tools and implements like dishes, weapons, rotting baskets, and so forth are simply scattered around the floors and stored in shelf-like wall alcoves. Filthy items of clothing and bedding are also strewn about the living areas and are claimed and used or worn by whomever finds and takes them first.

Light is generally provided by candles and lanterns, but, when cultists are not present or have fallen asleep, these lights usually burn out and are not relit until cultists return or are awakened.

The exceptions to the communal nature of the living quarters are the chambers belonging to Thawi Udom and Xuc Pramoj.

Thawi Udom's chambers contain a stained military-issue cot and a trunk containing a broad collection of firearms and ammunition. They are in poor repair but are kept on hand in case of an emergency. Udom has a collection of personal clothing and belongings that he keeps on a shelf. The cultists resist entering this chamber — Udom has beaten cultists to death for doing so without his permission.

Xuc Pramoj's living chamber has a significantly different character than those of the cultists. Pramoj has a great many personal items, which are arrayed on shelves — wood, stone, and brick — around the room. These dozens of knickknacks are mementoes of his military service. Many are military in nature (rounds of ammunition, decorations, campaign maps), but many are keepsakes related to people he met while in the army. Xuc sleeps on a cot with bedding that he washes in clean water every few days.

Of particular interest are the box of demolitions fuses that Xuc keeps on one high shelf and the metal box of dynamite that he keeps in a floor alcove, underneath a wooden panel that's under his cot. The nature of the fuses is obvious (the box says *"Fuses"* right on it), but, given that it is mixed among Pramoj's other things, the fact that the fuses might be of particular interest to the Investigators above the other bric-a-brac here is not clear. The box of dynamite is not labeled but can be opened easily enough by anyone who finds it. The material is well stored; it's clear to anyone with **Explosives** that whoever stored the stuff here is caring for it appropriately.

Xux Pramoj and what he knows are described in **Bangkok 11, "Xuc Pramoj,"** p 166.

The Mouth

The Bangkok Mouth has manifested in a large, elongated room with a pronounced slope. The higher end of the room lies directly beneath the fighting arena in the warehouse above; the sewer grate in the fighting pit allows whatever falls or is pressed through to fall into the room at the upper end. At the lower end of the room, the Bangkok Mouth slavers. The floor of the chamber is channeled ever so slightly, so that liquid flows slowly and solid remains can be sluiced downward, toward the Mouth, with minimal effort, and, in addition to the general slope from the upper end of the room to the lower end, the edges of the chamber at the lower end have been raised with dirt and cement such that the Mouth is the absolute lowest point of the chamber, and everything must drain toward it.

The floor and walls, near the grate especially, are grotesquely spattered with blood and other human fluids, dried and otherwise. Chains hang from the ceiling in a half-dozen places, their ends hooked to accept lanterns to illuminate the chamber. A collection of implements — rakes, shovels, hooked poles, and push brooms — hang on the walls at the upper end of the chamber. These are used to keep the flow of viscera moving steadily downward during the fights and to collect Nectar (see below). Xuc keeps the tools clean enough that they don't rot or rust, but, nevertheless, all are quite stained with blood and worse from heavy use.

When he is not in his chambers, Xuc Pramoj is found here.

The Mouth itself is more broadly circular than other Mouths the Investigators may have seen, with generally triangular teeth set in both its lumpy gums and the soft flesh of its gullet, in vaguely shark-like arrangement, although less regular. The Mouth has no lips and only a short, stumpy tongue, which is not able to reach up into the room.

As all other Mouths can, it speaks the Tongue of Lies and can use its perverse speech to blast the minds of those present (see "The Tongue of Lies," p. 38).

The Nectar that the Bangkok Mouth produces is horked up in gouts of chunky liquid, most of which rains and drains back down to be re-consumed. The ceiling above the Mouth is spattered with these gruesome retchings. Although there are troughs and depressions in the lower end of the room where the Mouth's heavings can pool and be harvested, its noxious Nectar-vomit is most productively collected with bowls and pails hung on hooked poles by Xuc or the cultists, who stand by at the lower end of the room when the Mouth's regurgitations are most active. This duty is dangerous because, unless care is taken to avoid ingesting the Nectar as it is spewed around the chamber, it winds up affecting those who carry out the harvesting, and so, after too long at this duty, fights break out among harvesting cultists, which almost invariably leads to one or more of them being bludgeoned to death with the tools at hand and/or shoved into the Mouth.

A 1-point **Architecture** spend here points an Investigator toward a strange pattern in the way the cement is poured in the sloping at the lower end of the room. These are the places where Xuc Pramoj has buried and secured explosives. A small hole in each area permits a fuse to be inserted. Digging carefully into the cement, which takes on the order of 15 minutes, reveals encased TNT with redundant blasting caps. Digging violently into the cement — such as with pickaxes — may or may not detonate the explosives, at your option.

Knowledge of Explosives is not particularly helpful in this situation, as this deployment is highly nonstandard (clever, largely safe, and apparently effective, but entirely nonstandard). However, if the Investigators have already investigated Pramoj's living quarters and discovered his fuses and dynamite, you may suggest a 2-point **Explosives** spend to allow an Investigator to realize the broad strokes of the situation — that there are explosives buried in the cement — before anyone does anything rash like take heavy tools to the floor.

See **Bangkok 11, "Xuc Pramoj,"** for more information on Xuc's plan for destroying the Mouth if it ever becomes necessary.

The Bangkok Mouth

Health 102, Scuffling 24

Hit Threshold: 3 (large)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: −3

Weapon: +8 (bite), +2 (bile); the bile horked up by the Mouth is caustic and burns the flesh. Any victim bitten suffers an immediate bile attack. The Mouth can also attack those too far away for biting by spitting and retching its bile. The bile is also — of course — raw Nectar. Any victim burned by it must make a Difficulty 4 Athletics test to avoid ingesting some and suffering the full effects (see "Siamese Nectar," p. 159). All characters standing in a two-yard radius can be attacked at once with bile in the same round, though a separate attack is made against each.

Armor: −2 vs. any (stiff and leathery gums and throat)

Stability Loss: +2

11. Xuc Pramoj

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Investigating the sewers (Bangkok 10, "The Sewers," p. 163).

Summary: The Investigators meet and question Xuc Pramoj, the Bangkok Mouth-keeper.

Campaign Clue: It is possible to safely destroy a Major Mouth with explosives by using them in a particular way. (Reassurance on Xuc.)

Puey "Xuc" Pramoj is a sewer-dwelling Quasimodo who serves the Bangkok cult while standing outside it. Xuc's grandfather was a native Siamese member of the French Foreign Legion who fought in the Sino-French War in 1885. Xuc served, in his teens and twenties, in a variety of national and mercenary military units, becoming a hardened veteran. Xuc almost always wears his grandfather's old Foreign Legion regalia (now tattered, but still recognizable). He is in his indeterminate 30s. "Xuc" is a Thai word for "feces," the name adopted for him by the cultists who share his work in the sewers. He himself does not consider the name to be particularly pejorative and uses it himself.

It's not clear how or why Xuc came to live in Bangkok and work for the cult, and he's a strange individual. He's neither stupid nor easily dominated, which suggests that he works for the cult not because he's cowed but because he finds some value in the work or the cult's mission. He's neither kind nor cruel, but he treats the death-fights and existence of the Mouth as simple facts of life. He does not consume Nectar and seems to not be affected by it in any case. He has no interest in explaining himself to anyone, but Thawi has come to rely on his stability and work ethic.



While not mad, he is far beyond further psychological damage from anything he might see in his environs. No amount of Interrogation or Psychoanalysis proves useful in probing the depths of the man's thoughts and feelings. He is intended to be a cipher.

Xuc is not stupid — he knows that the Mouth is a dangerous, dangerous manifestation. (Of what? Xuc has no idea. He is singularly disinterested in the cosmic ramifications of the Mythos at large.) Because of that danger and given his professional knowledge of explosives, he has rigged the Mouth chamber to be easy to destroy by burying charges of TNT in the sloping cement around the orifice.

Xuc has no fear of talking to the Investigators — neither fear of the Investigators nor fear of getting in trouble with the cult for whatever he might say. To question him generally is a **simple search** that simply requires the Investigators don't harm or threaten him.

Here's what Xuc knows that's likely to be of interest to the Investigators:

- Xuc lives in the sewers and works for the cult because he wants to. He isn't willing to elaborate. He makes it clear, though, that he is not a *member* of the cult — or, at least, that he doesn't consider himself a member.
- Xuc has served in military operations all over Southeast Asia. He's seen lots of horrible things, but all of them were terrestrial — invented and carried out by malicious people rather than otherworldly forces.
- The Mouth is dangerous. It consumes living cultists all the time through their own stupidity or bad luck.
- The Mouth is unpredictable. It eats what's put into it without fail, but it vomits forth Nectar unpredictably. There are occasionally droughts and surfeits of production, the former of which anger Thawi, who sometimes tosses cultists or captives into the Mouth during dry periods in hopes that it will provoke production, but Xuc maintains that there's no correspondence between the volume of feeding and the frequency or volume of Nectar production.
- Because the Mouth is dangerous and unpredictable, Xuc has a plan in place to destroy it if it ever becomes necessary. (He doesn't provide any specifics without Reassurance. The details available in that case are given below.)
- Xuc has never taken Nectar and always wears a face mask while in the Mouth's presence to avoid accidentally ingesting any. He's seen how Nectar affects others and has no interest in losing control to violence. He's seen lots of people die in battle because bloodlust made them do stupid things.
- The cult has a leader who stands above Thawi. Xuc doesn't know who that is and doesn't care.

Reassurance is necessary to learn about Xuc's backup plan for destroying the Mouth. Specifically, the Investigators must reassure him that they won't do it. Xuc has no interest in disrupting the status quo here and doesn't see any need to do so at this time.

Xuc believes that the Mouth can regenerate itself from its own fluids in the event that it's destroyed, and there is some truth to this idea. (Xuc has seen small, nascent mouths begin to form on dead flesh that's ripened too long in the Mouth chamber. He has always shoved such flesh down into the Mouth to get rid of it long before an actual manifestation could begin, though.)

In order to get rid of the Mouth for good, Xuc believes it would be wise to blow it up from within as well as cover it under rubble. Doing only one or the other, Xuc believes, would be risky. If simply buried, Xuc believes the Mouth would eventually eat its way out. If only blown up from within, Xuc suspects that the resulting rain of its viscera would spawn dozens or hundreds of new Mouths across whatever area was affected. Thus, Xuc's plan — should it ever become necessary — is to pack a corpse (or living victim) with dynamite on a short-to-moderate fuse, feed it to the Mouth, then light the buried TNT charges around the Mouth chamber (and then run like hell) such that the Mouth would be buried under a blanket of rubble that would limit the spread of the Mouth-flesh explosion to follow in short order.

In any case, Xuc has arranged his quarters and supplies such that he needs only a minute to pack a body with the dynamite hidden under his cot and another minute or two to feed the body to the Mouth and plant and light the fuses from his quarters in the small holes where he's buried TNT in the cement surrounding the Mouth. At that point, his plan is to run like hell.

Xuc's only worry — which he may or may not share without further questioning — is that the internal explosion might not work — that it might just serve to make the stomach at the other end of the Mouth mad. (*"Because a Mouth's got to have a stomach, hasn't it?"*) But in any case, after enacting this plan, he doesn't intend to stick around and find out what kind of consequences there might be for having misjudged the situation.

If the Investigators haven't given any prior thought to the idea that there might be some greater entity on the other end of the Major Mouths they've seen, Xuc's musing is an excellent way to presage the action of Act Three, when the Investigators will literally visit the horrible innards of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths in the high Himalayas.

In any case, Xuc's demolitions plan is sound. Blowing up a Mouth from within after first burying it in rubble (or some other appropriately dense and resistant covering) will both destroy the Mouth and prevent a rain of Nectar-soaked viscera from spreading like fungus spores across a wide area to corrupt the surrounding people and land.

Xuc Pramoj

Three Things: Has a perpetual sniffle. Laughs with loud barks at strange and often inappropriate moments. Missing most of his teeth.

Athletics 5, Explosives 13, Firearms 4, Health 6, Scuffling 4

Weapon: −2 (fists), +0 (revolver)

12. Finding the Island

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Shadowing Daniel Lowman (Bangkok 3, "Shadowing Lowman," p. 151) or Thawi Udom (Bangkok 9, "Thawi Udom," p. 162).

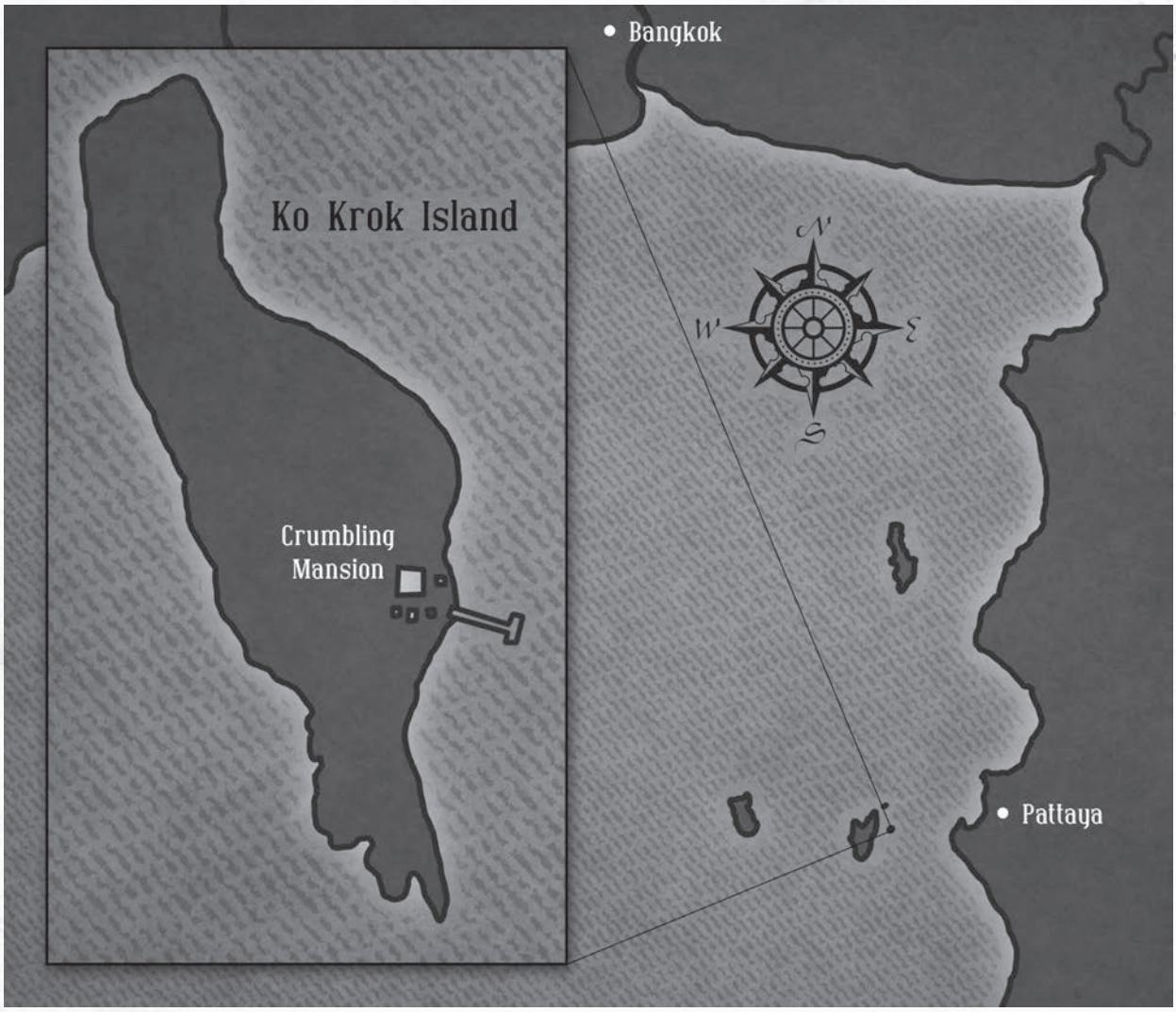
Summary: The Investigators trail either Daniel Lowman or Thawi Udom to the island where Savitree Sirikhan dwells.

Core Clue: The location of Savitree Sirikhan's island off the coast of Siam. (Either successfully tailing their quarry to the island or Intimidation or Interrogation on the boatman.)

If the Investigators never open themselves up to the cult's antagonist reaction of kidnapping them and transporting them against their will while unconscious, to Savitree Sirikhan's island (see **Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned,"** p. 161), this scene provides an alternate route to move the investigation there. It allows the Investigators to shadow either Daniel Lowman or Thawi Udom to the island to confer with Savitree (in the case of Lowman) or to deliver unwitting opponents for her hunts (if Thwai Udom is their quarry).

You should avoid staging this scene until after the Investigators have had the opportunity to infiltrate and investigate the death-fights. Otherwise, it's possible that they'll miss the valuable information that they can learn there (and, of course, that they'll avoid the grim circumstances and experience you can inflict on them in that constellation of scenes). The fights are also one of the cultists' best opportunities to turn the tables on the Investigators.

12. Finding the Island



However, if you judge that the time is right, call for a series of contested **Shadowing** vs. **Sense Trouble** tests between the Investigators and their target. If they are shadowing Lowman, he simply goes out one morning to hire a boat, which takes him to the island and waits for him to be ready to return. If they are shadowing Udom, the logistics are a bit more complex because Udom has unconscious captives, but the gist is the same: Udom and some cultists transport the captives from the Labyrinth inside a panel van under cover of night, carry the blanket-wrapped figures from the van to a waiting (slightly larger) boat whose owner is well paid to ask no questions, and head out into the bay.

You have two options with this surveillance. First, you can make your rolls in secret and claim failure even in the event that you succeed, treating this line of investigation more like the uncovering of a clue than like a typical GUMSHOE contest. Alternately, you can send a failure on the Investigators' part directly back into **Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned"** (page 161): upon realizing that he's being followed, either Lowman or Udom engineers an opportunity to ambush the Investigators, knock them out, and transport them to the island.

In the former case, unless the Investigators come up with a clever plan for stowing away on the hired boat (which could come down to **Stealth** vs. **Sense Trouble**, if you wish), they'll need to follow up after their quarry's return with **Intimidation**, **Interrogation**, or a 1-point **Credit Rating** spend in order to get the boatman to spill the fact that he provided transport to a small private island known as Ko Krok, which is part of a small collection of islands about 50 miles south-southwest of the Bangkok docks, five miles or less from a fishing village called Pattaya on the eastern coast of the Bay of Bangkok (see "Questioning a Boatman," p. 169, for more details).

13. Investigating Ko Krok

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Learning that Ko Krok is a relevant location (Bangkok 12, "Finding the Island," p. 167).

Summary: The Investigators do some footwork and learn more about Ko Krok, the island where Lowman or Udom went.

Core Clue: Local villagers in Pattaya shun the island of Ko Krok; none who have set foot on it in the last few years have been seen alive, although one deceased villager's body was found recently and there was something disturbing about it that the locals won't talk about. (Oral History and Assess Honesty, followed by Reassurance or Intimidation.)

Core Clue: Ko Krok is a private island, owned by a Siamese aristocrat who shares the Sirikhan family name. (Bureaucracy or Library Use.)

Investigators who shadow Daniel Lowman or Thawi Udom in order to find Savitree Sirikhan on the private island of Ko Krok may wish to know more about that place before going there on their own. The most fruitful options are questioning the boatmen who've ferried either man there, asking the locals in the fishing village of Pattaya about it, or doing administrative research at local libraries or government offices.

None of this information necessarily constitutes a core clue, in the most technical sense, since the Investigators can discover the island's location and proceed there without knowing the background details that this scene reveals. However, the Investigators may seek more information about the island so they know what they're getting into (which means that you should have an idea about those details), and that process of investigation may serve to heighten their apprehension and so serve a dramatic purpose.

Questioning a Boatman

If the Investigators used Intimidation, Interrogation, or a 1-point Credit Rating spend to learn that Lowman or Udom went to Ko Krock, that same ability use gets general follow-up information about the island: Ko Krok is a rocky private island covered with low tropical growth, about a half-mile long, 130 feet tall at its highest point, without any villages or settlements. The only dock on the island lies below a compound of buildings that look, to the boatman, like a private residence for someone wealthy, but he admits that's speculation. The whole place looks from the dock like it's deserted. He's made the trip a dozen or more times and has never seen anyone there. However, he's never been off the dock, either.

Asking Around in Pattaya

Oral History can be used to ask the local villagers in the coastal fishing village of Pattaya about Ko Krok. In addition to the basic geographic information described in the previous section, the villagers can tell the Investigators the following:

- Ko Krok was once the private residence of the aristocratic Sirikhan clan, who were generally well liked if moderately reclusive. However, over the last decade or so, transit back and forth from the island to the mainland has trailed off to nothing, and now no one seems to live there. No one knows where the island's residents went (either the family or their servants and household), when exactly they left, or why.
- Villagers who're known to have gone to the island in the last few years have disappeared, never returning, their boats disappeared.
- The island is now shunned by locals with any sense in their heads and given wide berth by boats traveling to the nearby, larger island of Ko Lan.

An Investigator who uses **Assess Honesty** to evaluate the truth of the second bullet point, above, has doubts about its full veracity, however. Further use of **Reassurance** or **Intimidation** leads to the suggestion that the body of one local fisherman who is thought to have landed on Ko Krok was found on shore about a month ago and that something about the body — something maddeningly unspecified and about which the individual will not elaborate — was deeply disturbing. The only concrete information that can be pried loose is that this man's body was cremated according to Buddhist custom and so is not available for examination.

The additional application of a 1-point Reassurance or Intimidation spend can break through this barrier of reluctance to elaborate, leading to a late-night meeting with a villager who expresses a willingness to part with additional information, but only for a (inconsequentially minor) price, and only in secret.

At this middle-of-the-night meeting, the villager tells the Investigators that when the body was discovered, it had a grotesque and misshapen mouth on its shoulder where the arm should have been and that even though the body was clearly and completely dead, the mouth continued to slowly but steadily gnaw on the man's bloated, water-logged flesh, consuming it. The body was burned nearly immediately; the mouth screamed and howled horrible curses in a strange and unearthly tongue while it burned. If the Investigators have heard and can

vaguely describe the Tongue of Lies, the villager confirms that the general character seems to match. Descriptions that the Investigators give of other Minor Mouths they may have seen match the villager's description of this mouth in general terms. (The variations that might be noted are the general variations among all Minor Mouths.)

Administrative Research

Bureaucracy or **Library Use** can be used in Bangkok to establish the Sirikhan clan as the owners of the island of Ko Krok for generations, since its bestowal on them by the Siamese king for their loyalty.

General research into that clan using the same abilities is sufficient to produce, after a day or so of digging, a reasonably accurate extended family tree of as many as two dozen Sirikhan brothers, sisters, cousins, and their offspring who seem likely as not to be alive in the current year based on their dates of birth and who list Ko Krok as their place of residence.

The current hereditary owner of the island — its governor, legally and technically speaking — and scion of the clan would be one Kongdech Sirikhan. Savitree Sirikhan is also one of the names on this list of extended family. She's a niece of Kongdech, according to the records. Savitree's name may or may not mean anything to the Investigators, depending on what they were able to learn from Lowman (**"Interrogating Lowman"**) or Thawi (**"Thawi Udom"**). They may also be looking for someone with the initials "S. S." from Trammel's correspondence (see **Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion,"** p. 113) or an unsent letter found in Mexico City (see **Mexico City 8, "Shrine to the Thing,"** p. 280)

A 1-point spend in either Bureaucracy or Library Use turns up a bit of official correspondence suggesting that attempts by the king's administrative staff to contact Kongdech over the last two years have been unanswered. (The reason for the letters is inconsequential: some administrative issue roughly equivalent to census taking among the Siamese highborn. The essential nature of the clue is that correspondence has gone unanswered.)

14. Imprisoned

Scene Type: Trap / Challenge

Lead-ins: Being kidnapped by the Bangkok cult (Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned," p. 161).

Summary: The kidnapped Investigators awake from unconsciousness to find themselves imprisoned.

Investigators kidnapped in **Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned,"** p. 161, return to consciousness in separate, irregular pits, about ten feet deep and five feet wide. They've been stripped naked; any weapons or tools they had when they were kidnapped have been taken way.

A Quick Glimpse

If it would help build tension, one of the Investigators looks up to see Savitree Sirikhan looking down through the grate. She wears a plain shift that conceals the Mouths on her body and carries only a small stoppered jar (it contains Nectar) in her hands. She looks down emotionlessly, makes no demands, does not respond to communication, and disappears again after just a few seconds. She does not look in on the other Investigators, for reasons that are never revealed.

The walls of the pits are rocky, and their floors are irregular. Most have puddles of cold, dirty standing water at the bottom. Tropical insects of alarming size scurry near and across the Investigators' feet. It smells like wet, muddy jungle. Investigators known to have delicate constitutions have, perhaps, vomited on themselves while they were unconscious.

The pits are covered at the top with iron grates though which only sky can be seen. Investigators who listen for noises of the city, or civilization of any kind, hear nothing of the sort.

The Investigators' separate pits are scattered across a rocky hillside clearing, irregularly spaced, but easily within earshot of each other. It's impossible for an Investigator at the bottom of one hole to know how close anything else is, though, so, while the Investigators can call out to each other, none of them can be sure that their enemies aren't also in earshot.

Investigators who were **hurt** or **seriously wounded** during their kidnapping have received enough first aid to bring them to a Health pool of between 1 and 6 (have each player roll a die). Otherwise, the Investigators' state of Health when they awaken should correspond sensibly to their status when kidnapped.

Dramatically speaking, it's best to stage the coming to of multiple Investigators in this scene one at a time, withholding the knowledge that all of the kidnapped Investigators are in proximity to each other until it no longer generates any additional tension.

Pick the least capable Investigator (physically or psychologically speaking) to wake up first. Hammer on the Investigator's imprisonment, helplessness, and complete ignorance of his or her whereabouts. Whenever that Investigator starts shouting for aid,

the next Investigator is roused from unconsciousness by those shouts.

Players willing to make a 3-point **Preparedness** spend *as well as* invent a convincing explanation for how it could possibly have happened can have a small tool such as a set of nail trimmers, hair pin, small jackknife, or the like in their pit with them. Nothing larger or more helpful is conceivable given the fact that they've been stripped naked.

Any Investigator with a single pool point remaining in **Athletics** is able to climb the uneven walls of the pit in order to reach its grate. (No points must be spent to do this; having pool points remaining is simply a threshold of stamina and capability for this task.) The grates are rusty but solid and do not have doors or hatches. Rather, each is locked to four metal posts set in the ground near the pit. To imprison or free an Investigator requires removing a padlock from each post.

The posts are set at the bare edge of a prisoner's reach, which makes picking the locks impossible for all but professional escape artists. Getting out that way requires a 3-point **Locksmith** spend, which you may consider reducing to a 2-point spend for a character whose background suggests an expertise in this kind of thing. Pre-generated ex-con Investigator Cora King might be such a character, for example.

The best escape tactic is for a thin Investigator to dig away at the lip of the pit, undermining the grate enough to squeeze out underneath its edge, between a pair of posts. Investigators have no tools for this, of course, and the rocky ground makes it a near-impossible course. Mechanically speaking, escaping in this way requires a Difficulty 8 **Mechanical Repair** test.

Staging the Affliction and Hunting

You have two options for staging the hunts. The first is for Savitree to afflict and release the Investigators one or two at a time, hunting them each across the island in turn. The second is for Savitree to release them all at once for a single one-versus-many pursuit.

Choosing the serial option — several hunts staged separately — requires you to also decide whether Savitree afflicts the Investigators with Mouths all at once or only in advance of each one's individual release for the hunt.

Afflicting all of the Investigators in the same ritual lets you steamroller them with a massive Sanity-blaster all at once, but, on the other hand, listening to the horrible screams of their fellows without knowing just what's going on over in their pit-prisons might be even more terrifying for those who'll be afflicted later on.

Use your judgment, driving toward whatever will be most horrifying in your game's situation. If you're in doubt, choose the serial option, which can make for a more interesting hunt given that the freed Investigators will be faced with the grim moral choice of whether to concentrate on hunting Savitree or freeing their fellows from their pits.

Feel free to entertain the players' notably clever escape ideas, especially if they're dramatic or carry the threat of injury on failure.

An Investigator who escapes is on a rocky hillside that's a clearing in a low-canopy jungle. Because of the hillside's slope, the Investigator can spy the ocean beyond, as far as the eye can see. (The clearing faces the south side of the island of Ko Krok, toward the Indian Ocean. Although the Siamese mainland can be seen from the island, it lies to the east.) Slim glimpses of an estate built in European style can be seen through the trees perhaps a hundred yards away to the north. The estate is described in **Bangkok 18, "The Crumbling Estate,"** p. 177.

One Investigator's escape is, sadly, of little immediate help in freeing the other Investigators. The best improvement in the situation is the escaped Investigator's access to better improvised tools in the form of stout branches from the jungle that could be used as digging tools or levers. Access to these reduces the Mechanical Repair Difficulty to free additional Investigators from their pits to 6.

Past trying to escape, the Investigators are stuck waiting for their captors to return. Lying down to sleep or rest is a nonstarter for any but the shortest Investigators given the pits' dimensions, even if the wet, uneven floors didn't make the idea of lying down pretty repugnant. Once it becomes clear that the Investigators aren't going to be able to escape (if that's the case), and once you've afflicted the Investigators with a few choice descriptions of the horror of their conditions (after, say, one of them finally becomes resigned to the fact that there's nowhere other than the floor of the pit to defecate), move on to **Bangkok 15, "Morsels,"** p. 172, but only after each Investigator's helplessness has provoked a 1-point non-Mythos Stability test.

15. Morsels

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Remaining trapped in the pits on Ko Krok (Bangkok 14, "Imprisoned," p. 170.

Summary: Savitree Sirikhan afflicts trapped Investigators with Minor Mouths.

Savitree Sirikhan's intention is to hunt trapped Investigators across the island of Ko Krok. Before she releases them and the contest begins, however, she afflicts them with Minor Mouths, using Nectar and ritual magic to goad the Mouths' speedy growth.

The Nectar used in the ritual serves as a catalyst and point of infection, so first Savitree appears at the top of an Investigator's pit, holding a long, sharpened wooden spear. This occurs around dusk. She proceeds to jab the spear down through the grate, stabbing at the Investigator. She doesn't seem emotionally invested in the attack — it doesn't seem like she's trying to kill the Investigator — but that's not particularly comforting. The spear tip has been coated with Nectar, which an Investigator who (a) has been in close proximity to Nectar before and who (b) makes a **Sense Trouble** text of Difficulty 4 realizes has Nectar's pungent, mossy smell.

Savitree persists in stabbing downward — use the regular rules for combat tests — until she's successful at drawing blood (that is, inflicting at least one point of damage), which is sufficient to serve her ritual purpose. Her Weapons pool is 8; she avoids spending pool points now, though, unless absolutely necessary to impale a particularly uncooperative Investigator, reserving them instead for the hunt to come. (The rest of her stats are enumerated in **Bangkok 17, "Savitree Herself,"** p. 175.) Savitree becomes irate with any Investigator who manages to snatch the spear out of her hand without suffering an injury but quickly returns with another spear to try again. Although a determined Investigator can make her task difficult, Savitree will eventually be successful; it's just a matter of time.

The wounds Investigators suffer from this attack don't feel abnormal. They don't burn, bleed more (or less) than normal, or the like. They do, however, enrage afflicted Investigators more than they might expect. That's due to the violent character of the Bangkok Nectar. (Investigators with Stability pools currently standing at 6 or more retain the self-awareness to consider their own rage a bit objectively. Those with lower Stability than that simply find that they're really, really pissed off… *as they should be!)* These Investigators are not — yet — experiencing the full effects of Bangkok Nectar, though. This emotional response is just a bit of foreshadowing.

An hour or more passes as night falls. The Investigators can hear, and then smell, a fire being built and lit nearby. Investigators who climbs to the top of their pits to try to get a look can see Savitree building a massive bonfire. She works at this by herself. Such Investigators can also see that she has discarded the shift she wore earlier and, in her nudity, can bear witness to the pair of hissing, drooling Minor Mouths that afflict her, one on her left forearm and one on her right thigh. This requires the typical Stability tests for witnessing Minor Mouths (see page 35–38).

Once the fire is built, Savitree begins the profane ritual to quicken the Mouths' formation on the Investigators' bodies. Investigators who've heard the Tongue of Lies recognize that the ritual is being conducted in that language. If you judge that it would be particularly demoralizing and the players aren't already feeling grievously hosed, part of the ritual involves burning the Investigators' clothing and personal possessions in the bonfire.

About this time, Investigators who've been stabbed begin to notice their wounds pulling apart and becoming mouth-like. Lips are starting to form, and teeth. One Investigator notices an exposed flap of wounded flesh or muscle moving by itself, becoming tongue-like. At the moment Investigators realize there's a Mouth slowly forming on their own bodies, they must make 7-point Mythos Stability tests. Delicate Investigators or those who become **blasted** may pass out from the realization. Failure is likely to have a direct and immediate effect on these Investigators' Sanity ratings and may drive them immediately and incurably insane if their Stability pools were at a low ebb when they were kidnapped. Recall, conversely, that Investigators who learned the Rituals of Self-Denial in Ethiopia suffer reduced trauma from Mouths (see "The Rituals of Self-Denial" on page 218).

The locations of the Investigators' Mouths are best informed by the downward stabbing of Savitree's long spear. Wounds on the head or shoulders make sense, as do defensive wounds on the hands or forearms. Assign each Investigator's Mouth-wound a body location that makes sense. (However, make sure you read the sidebar "Amputation, and Worse" on page 37, first, so you have a full understanding of the consequences of Mouths manifesting on severable limbs as opposed to more vital locations.)

16. To the Death, Again

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: The Investigators (some or all) are ritually afflicted with Minor Mouths (Bangkok 15, "Morsels," page 172).

Summary: The afflicted Investigators are freed from their pits to hunt Savitree Sirikhan across Ko Krok — and be hunted by her.

Once afflicted Investigators have manifested full, spitting and hissing, Minor Mouths, Savitree Sirikhan speaks for the first time, addressing them in English:

"Now the time comes for my Mouths to hunt you, and for yours to hunt mine. In victory, the maw upon you will feast on my flesh rather than your own. In defeat, your flesh will nourish my own. To decline the fight is to be slowly consumed by the orifice you manifest.

"The hunt begins!"

Savitree then moves quickly, dropping the key to each Investigator's set of grate-locks down into the pit with them. Then she disappears into the jungle.

With the keys in hand, getting out requires only an **Athletics** pool threshold of 1 (as described in **Bangkok 14, "Imprisoned,"** p. 170) to scale the pit's walls, followed by the patience of Job: Unlocking a single padlock is a Difficulty 6 **Mechanical Repair** test that takes a few minutes of fumbling at extreme reach; even Investigators without the Mechanical Repair ability may still attempt this test. Investigators with **Locksmith** are automatically successful. Unlocking all of the padlocks on a given grate is, thus, mechanically inevitable for every determined Investigator with a functional Athletics pool but will take a while.

Investigators who manage to unlock their grates and shove them aside find that they are on a rocky hillside clearing in the jungle. Their respective pits are irregularly spaced in no particular pattern. The only other feature of any significance is a charred patch or rock where a bonfire either is, or was, burning.

The Investigators' tests to escape — and the rest of their activities for the



next few scenes and perhaps longer, for that matter — are complicated by the afflicted Investigators' Mouths, which, now that they have manifested, are starting to get hungry. Investigators who inadvertently bring their Mouths close to their living flesh (bringing an arm close to a Mouth manifesting on his stomach, for example, or vice versa) suffer an attack. These are the normal biting attacks of Minor Mouths. That is, they are +0 bites that attack from a Scuffling pool of 3 that refreshes daily. Investigators who actively take pains to keep their manifested Mouths away from their healthy flesh must make a 1-point **Sense Trouble** spend each time they make any General ability test. Investigators who don't go to these lengths (or can't, in the event that their Sense Trouble pools are depleted) suffer one attack in the course of each General ability test they make.

Remember that Mouths are capable of hissing, spitting, drooling, howling, screaming, and speaking in the Tongue of Lies. Use these capabilities to both unnerve the Investigators and complicate their efforts at stealthy or delicate tasks.

On a more positive note, when an afflicted Investigator rolls a natural 6 while attacking in close combat, the Investigator's Mouth also attacks the target.

Investigators are likely to invent ways to protect themselves from their Mouths. Wrapping them in cloth, leather, or the like is temporarily effective. That is, it slows the Mouth down, but all of them eventually manage — whether it takes a few minutes or a few hours — to chew their way free of such bindings. Imprisoning a Mouth behind a more durable barrier would be effective save that none exist on the island. It's possible to imagine, for example, a metal cuff that would shield an Investigator from the biting depredations of a Mouth on his wrist, but where's an Investigator going to come by something like that? In the extremely long term, a Mouth thwarted in this way would eventually migrate across the Investigator's flesh to free itself.

If an Investigator tries to cut a Mouth off his body or amputate a limb bearing one, see "Amputation, and Worse" on page 37.

The Hunt

The contest between Savitree and the Investigators is a wide-open stalk-and-fight to the death across the rocky jungle island of Ko Krok. Savitree Sirikhan's statistics and tactics are described in the next scene, **Bangkok 17, "Savitree Herself,"** p. 175.

There are essentially four substantive areas on the island: the jungle, the shore, the pits, and the estate.

The jungle and shore are described in sections that follow. The area of the prison-pits has been described above.

The decrepit Sirikhan estate, which is the only manmade feature of note on the island, is described in **Bangkok 18, "The Crumbling Estate,"** p. 177.

There is no way off the island save by making a five-mile swim for shore. Boats come only when Daniel Lowman or Thawi Udom come to the island, precisely because any boats kept here could be used by Savitree's prey to escape. Swimming to shore requires five **Athletics** tests of escalating Difficulty: 4, 5, 5, 6, 7. Each test requires a separate **Sense Trouble** spend to avoid suffering an attack from any Mouth that may be afflicting the Investigator. Investigators who turn back partway must make Athletics tests going back down the Difficulty ladder to make it back to the island. Investigators who fail to reach either the mainland or return to the island drown.

The Jungle

The jungle is thick and low monsoon forest comprising a thick tangle of vines, creepers, brush, shrubs, and trees. It does not have the kind of sun-blocking canopy that characterizes tropical rain forests. This lack mostly serves to make passage more difficult for the Investigators, though, because the kinds of short, tangled plants that make walking difficult have little difficulty receiving the sunlight they need to thrive.

The ground is rough and uneven, with several substantial high points and ravines. The island's highest point is about 130 feet above sea level.

An Investigator with **Outdoorsman** who searches for a given terrain feature ("Is there a natural pool underneath a tree somewhere? I want to set a trap.") finds it. Without Outdoorsman, the Investigator is out of luck or finds a desired area only after some inconvenient or harmful episode.

There are no dangerous animals of substantial size on Ko Krok but plenty of crawly bugs and snakes, and no shortage of birds, rodents, monkeys, and so forth. See "Jungle Dangers," next page.

A number of trails crisscross the island, leading circuitously to the shore, estate, pits, and each other. Many of the trails are booby-trapped with spikes and pits (and spiked pits) left behind by Savitree's various defeated quarry. Again, see "Jungle Dangers," below.

Remind the players, frequently, that the Investigators are naked and without tools or weapons. Their flesh is constantly scratched and torn by rocks, thorns, and bark. Those afflicted with Mouths must endure their spitting, cursing, and howling.

Investigators with **Outdoorsman** can fashion simple spears from wooden shoots with relative ease; these are +0 weapons. Those without Outdoorsman wind up with −1 arms. There are no implements to be found on the island other than what can be scavenged from the estate (see **Bangkok 18, "The Crumbling Estate"** p. 177).

Jungle Dangers

Use the following menu of possible dangers in the jungle to punctuate any period where it seems as though the players aren't sure what to do next. The hope is that they'll eventually get the idea that as soon as they stop moving, something bad happens. You should also consider posing some danger whenever things seem, otherwise, to be going too positively.

These dangers are by no means exhaustive. Use your imagination, especially when inventing dangers related to specific perilous activities the Investigators may attempt — climbing trees? lighting bonfires? — while hunting Savitree or trying to escape the island.

Thirst: The Investigators probably haven't had any water to drink — unless they drank from the muddy puddles in their pit-prisons — for 24 hours or more. Investigators with **Outdoorsman** can find safe water in the jungle for themselves and anyone with them. An Investigator without Outdoorsman must either go without water and suffer the effects of being **hurt** (regardless of Heath pool remaining) or risk drinking potentially unsafe water. Potentially unsafe water slakes thirst (eliminating any hurt penalty), but, half the time (roll a die), it causes long-term illness: in 1d6 × 4 hours, the Investigator suffers +0 damage and the effects of being hurt resume (again, whatever the actual Health pool) from the effects of diarrhea or other unpleasant microbial afflictions. **Medicine** or **First Aid**, 24 hours of rest, and a return to a positive Health pool value are necessary for recovery. At your option, long-term tropical parasites may also be contracted by consuming unsafe water.

Hunger: Although the Investigators have probably not had much to eat recently, they are not in danger of starving in the immediate term. Even so, flavorful descriptions of faintness and pain brought on from lack of food are likely to prove alarming to the players.

Biting Snakes and Stinging Insects: An Investigator who fails a Difficulty 4 **Sense Trouble** test steps on or near a poisonous snake or insect that proceeds to bite or sting the Investigator. An immediate Difficulty 4 **First Aid** test can take care of the immediate effects of the poison by sucking or bleeding it from the wound. Otherwise, the stung Investigator suffers 1 point of damage every hour until brought to a medical facility and treated by someone with **Medicine**.

Uneven Ground: An Investigator who fails a Difficulty 4 **Athletics** test suffers a twisted ankle or a foot cut by the rocky, uneven ground. This causes −1 damage in the immediate term, but also reduces the Investigator's speed and agility; the character suffers a +1 Difficulty penalty to Athletics, Fleeing, Scuffling, and Weapons tests (which is cumulative with penalties for being **hurt** and **seriously wounded**) until the wound heals in 1d6 days.

Booby Traps: An Investigator who fails a Difficulty 4 **Sense Trouble** test falls into a pit or steps on a sharpened stake, suffering +0 damage.

Those Who've Gone Before: The Investigators stumble on the chewed and regurgitated remains of one of Savitree's former conquests. The flesh and gristle have been stripped from the bones, and the bones themselves have been scratched and splintered by her Mouths' teeth. It's clear what happened here, and this is a 1-point non-Mythos Stability test generally or a 2-point non-Mythos Stability test for anyone who is currently afflicted with a Mouth.

The Shore

Nearly all the way around the island, the shoreline consists of a narrow strip of flat sand beach that varies between five and ten yards wide between the jungle and the water. Near the estate, a rotting wooden dock stands empty of boats, and clear ground slopes gradually up to the estate grounds. On the back side of the island the shoreline is rocky, with steep rock ascents rising straight out of the water.

17. Savitree Herself

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Action

Lead-ins: Coming to Ko Krok, either by being kidnapped (Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned," p. 161) or following the trail of clues (Bangkok 12, "Finding the Island," p. 167).

Summary: The Investigators (or a subset of them) fight against Savitree Sirikhan, and perhaps try to interrogate her.



Savitree Sirikhan is a small Siamese woman of physical and intellectual intensity and fitness. She is a profound sadomasochist. Her history is described at length in the "Keeper's Background: The Thai Splinter" section (page 145).

Sirikhan is most likely to be encountered by the Investigators in their imprisonment leading to a hunt-contest or by surreptitiously landing on Ko Krok and observing her from a distance.

Sirikhan at the Hunt

The Investigators have a deadly opponent in Savitree Sirikhan. She has hunted many on her island, which has given her both an intimate knowledge of the lay of the land and a polished ease at pursuing human prey.

Savitree's raw statistics are likely to prove deadly to as many as three Investigators who engage her in direct physical combat, although Savitree always prefers to engage enemies one at a time, watching groups of opponents until they split up; ambushing from the shadows, from above, or even from below; and otherwise taking whatever advantage she can.

The following list proposes tactics or events that can be staged during the hunt:

- Savitree leaps from a tree down onto an oblivious Investigator.
- Savitree steps out into the open to confront an Investigator. What he may or may not see in time is that there's a concealed, spiked pit between them that he'll fall into if he charges her.
- As an Investigator steps over a narrow ravine, Savitree reaches up from below, out of a pile of vegetation, to grab her ankle and twist it horribly. The Mouth on Savitree's forearm takes a solid bite of the Investigator while she hurls her bodily downhill onto the jagged rocks of the broadening, descending ravine.
- Savitree leaves an unconscious Investigator in an open clearing as bait for the other Investigators.
- Savitree taunts the Investigators from positions of concealment in the jungle. She varies between speaking in English, Siamese, and the Tongue of Lies.
- Savitree throws a spear from concealment and disappears back into the brush.
- Savitree waits until nightfall to strike again.

If the Investigators could really use a break, remember that although Savitree has more experience hosting Mouths than the Investigators do, she is no more her Mouths' master than they are. Her Mouths' hissing and howling can easily give away her position, bite her flesh, or the like.

Savitree Sirikhan

Three Things: Holds her eyes unnaturally wide open. Physically bites on her tongue with an open mouth while listening to others speak. Runs her fingers over the sharp teeth of her manifested mouths.

Athletics 15, Conceal 6, Firearms 2, First Aid 4, Health 15, Preparedness 6, Scuffling 12, Sense Trouble 12, Shadowing 6, Stealth 9, Weapons 10

Alertness Modifier: +2

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: −2 (fists and feet), −1 (sharp rock), +0 (improvised spear)

Savitree is afflicted with two Minor Mouths, which manifest on her left forearm and right thigh. When she fights in hand-to-hand combat, one of these Mouths can launch its own attack if Savitree's raw, unmodified die roll is a five or six. (This is higher than the benefit afforded to Investigators because Savitree has two Mouths and she is practiced at using hers to her benefit.)

Interrogating Savitree

Capturing and interrogating Savitree Sirikhan in order to learn about the worldwide conspiracy of descendants



of Echavarria's 1924 Los Angeles cult is a nonstarter: she is secretive to the point of madness and her masochism nullifies every tactic of Interrogation other than extremely clever logic traps. (And confounding those is the fact that Savitree isn't stupid, either.) If held captive and interrogated, Savitree remains infuriatingly silent, watching carefully for opportunities to escape and taking them, even if dangerous or painful.

Even with her intransigence, the section below outlines what Savitree knows — or thinks she knows — so that you can present her actions consistently for the Investigators to decode as best they can.

What She Knows or Thinks She Knows

The '24 summoning disaster in Los Angeles shaped Savitree's current approach to the Mythos. Her fundamental belief is that to approach a Mythos entity by the wrong route — that is, without knowing its true identity and nature and name —

whether to venerate or destroy it, is to invite disaster.

This belief is the root of her obsession with discovering the truth about the Thing With a Thousand Mouths and of her decision to remain at arm's length from the death-fight venerations in Bangkok: since she doesn't know anything truly substantial about the Thing, even now, she can't be sure when or whether its veneration is going to blow up in the faces of anyone who's unfortunate enough to be standing in proximity.

With her Mythos researches of the past few years, Savitree has come to believe (correctly) that Echavarria and his inner Los Angeles circle in 1924 were lying to the cult when they said that their rituals venerated Gol-Goroth and that their interrupted '24 summoning was oriented toward summoning Gol-Goroth to earth.

However, in Savitree's correspondence with Samson Trammel, she allows him to believe that she still buys that lie. She thinks that Trammel is probably wrong about Nyarlathotep being the Old One wearing the clothing of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths — her researches simply don't reveal a correspondence there — but she doesn't have a better idea.

She once thought the Y'golonac avenue promising, but teams that she sent to find the Himalayan stomach were unable to do so (because they did not have the Malta clue, and so went at the wrong time), and so she has dismissed the idea that Y'golonac is doing anything other than sleeping in the modern day.

18. The Crumbling Estate

Scene Type: Core / Action

Lead-ins: Coming to Ko Krok, either by being kidnapped (Bangkok 8, "The Tables Turned," p. 161) or following the trail of clues (Bangkok 12, "Finding the Island," p. 167).

Summary: The Investigators search the Sirikhan estate.

Core Clue: There is an elderly blind woman living at the estate.

Core Clue: Savitree Sirikhan has an extensive Mythos library. (Locksmith to pick the doors.)



The slowly disintegrating Sirikhan estate comprises a mansion and collection of outbuildings constructed in a neoclassical European architectural style. Until recently, it was home to the extended aristocratic Sirikhan clan, but, over a period of years, Savitree's depredations have eliminated all but one of her relatives, her blind and elderly maternal grandmother.

Searches of the grounds and buildings are described in the remainder of this scene. Observations and interactions with Savitree's grandmother are described in **Bangkok 19, "Grandmother,"** p. 178.

Outbuildings and Outside Areas

The Docks: A pair of wooden docks jut from the shoreline out into the bay. Investigators who come to the docks looking for a way off the island are disappointed: Savitree sunk the last of the family watercraft many years ago. (Unless, of course, Daniel Lowman or Thawi Udom are known to be on the island. In that case, the boat that brought them is tied up on the dock and its pilot anxiously awaiting the return of his passenger so he can get the hell off of this creepy island.)

The Boathouse: Like the docks, the capacious boathouse near the docks is empty of watercraft. It does, however, contain many improvised weapons (hammers, belaying pins, saws, etc.) and fodder for building more (beams, nails, spikes, and so on).

The Greenhouse: The glass windows of the small greenhouse have all been shattered over years of disuse, and the plants that were once cultivated within have formed a thick blanket of dense foliage. The copious broken glass may be useful to Investigators.

The Garden Shack: A small building that once housed the servants charged with maintaining the grounds and their tools. The place is a boneyard, with the remains of a dozen or more people — some of Savitree's relatives, some of the staff, a few deceased victims of the hunts — strewn about the place. Discovering this is a 1-point non-Mythos Stability test. Past that, the shack is a goldmine of improvised weaponry, from pruning hooks to lumber saws.

The Well: A stone-lined well tucked behind the garden shack is the Island's only source of fresh water, other than rain.

The Patio Walk: At the rear of the mansion, an extensive series of patios and gardens descend the hillside. Some were once tiled, others cobbled, others neatly kept lawns lined with tropical flowerbeds. Now, all these are completely overgrown with creepers and shrubbery, the furniture that once provided a half-dozen comfortable groupings for looking out over the ocean now serving mostly as places where the vines can climb toward

the sun. The one exception is a single chair set on the highest patio level closest to the mansion itself. Savitree's grandmother patiently keeps it clear of any foliage that grows near it, and she can frequently be found there during the daytime, sitting still and facing toward the sun.

Inside the Mansion

Although the main three-storey mansion edifice has dozens of rooms, most are functionally identical for the Investigators' purposes: They're uninhabited chambers of broadly varying size, from closets to a grand ballroom, where damp, slowly molding furniture has sat unused for months or years. Many rooms show signs of violence, with chairs overturned or broken, artworks fallen from their mountings, and windows shattered. Some rooms contain the corpses of Savitree's family or household servants. All have been reduced to skeletons, and most show signs of gross physical trauma, the gnawing of Mouths, or both.

The mansion no longer possesses functional gas, electricity, or running water, and its septic system has long since become full and backed up human sewage into the mansion's lavatories and basement. (Savitree and Grandmother both use bedpans, which Savitree empties in the jungle.)

The chambers within the mansion that deviate substantially from this general description, or are likely to be of particular interest to the Investigators, are described individually below. Otherwise, you should improvise the particulars of any given area the Investigators enter or simply gloss over them while getting to the interesting bits.

Grandmother's Suite

Savitree's blind grandmother lives in a small suite of rooms on the ground level, at the rear of the mansion. The furniture in them remains well arranged and in good repair. Grandmother dusts and cleans these areas herself, slowly and methodically ("since the servants went away…"). The consistency of her furnishings and belongings' arrangement is a touchstone of Grandmother's ability to function. A doorway from her sitting room leads directly onto the upper patio where she likes to sit during the daytime. For information about encountering Grandmother, see **Bangkok 19, "Grandmother,"** p. 178.

The Library

Savitree has taken over what was originally the mansion's formal library with her Mythos researches and as her living quarters, as well. The room's windows are kept closed and locked, their thick drapes always pulled, even when Savitree is present. There are two doors to the library, which are always kept locked except when Savitree is here, the keys well hidden behind the floor molding in an adjacent room. Finding the keys is a 1-point **Evidence Collection** spend. Picking the locks without the keys simply requires **Locksmith**.

Furniture for seating has been removed from the room (and stacked haphazardly in an adjoining once-bedroom), with only a ring of desks and tables remaining. Savitree spreads out her folios, tomes, notes, and drawings on them, walking among them while conducting her researches. She works by candle- and gaslight, even during the day. When tired, she sleeps on a cot in the corner of the room.

Massive bookshelves run from baseboards to crown moldings over every inch of wall space, and even so, her books are stacked knee deep on the floor in most corners of the room. A series of more than a hundred notebooks are filled with her crabbed writing, the notes she's taken in her readings. All are recorded in Siamese.

For more information about what the Investigators can learn here, see **Bangkok 20, "Savitree's Library,"** p. 180.

19. Grandmother

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding Savitree's maternal grandmother at the Ko Krok estate (Bangkok 18, "The Crumbling Estate," p. 177).

Summary: The Investigators observe and/or interrogate the only living person on the island of Ko Krok other than Savitree Sirikhan, her blind maternal grandmother.

Core Clue: Savitree Sirikhan has been seeking an answer to some esoteric question for years. She is consumed with answering this question, obsessed by it. (Bargain or Flattery after using Reassurance to get Grandmother to respond.)

Alternate Core: Savitree has a secret library that she's been accumulating for years. (Bargain or Flattery after using Reassurance to get Grandmother to respond, if the Investigators haven't found it on their own.)

Savitree Sirikhan's maternal grandmother, Ravee Natenee, is a canny old woman doing her best to seem harmless in order to prolong her life long enough to escape the island of Ko Krok and her murderous granddaughter, Savitree Sirikhan.

Ravee is in her 80s, old and frail, and has been blind for twenty years or more. Her clothing is stained and torn, and her body odor is intense. It's a miracle, a testament to her will and

19. Grandmother

patience, or both that she continues to live in her situation and surroundings. Yet she soldiers on.

Ravee observed that something strange had happened to Savitree in America when she returned to the family estate in 1924, and she never trusted Daniel Lowman, who also lived on the island for a time. She didn't realize how dangerous Savitree truly was, though, until too many others among the family and staff had "disappeared." She protected herself by appearing oblivious and pretending senility, but she knows that she only has so long to live — at some point, she fully expects to be killed in the night, struck down in broad daylight, or simply starved to death, since Savitree is the source of her food and water.

The central goal of her life is to escape from Ko Krok; her chief obstacle to doing so (other than her complete lack of physical capabilities) is the knowledge that her granddaughter is evil and duplicitous.

Because Ravee must be suspicious of anyone who speaks to her, it takes **Reassurance** to even get her to talk back to an Investigator, although any Investigator with **Assess Honesty** notes that Ravee is always paying very close attention to anyone who passes nearby, although always concealing her attention by staring in another direction, sometimes pretending to be asleep and sometimes humming mindlessly to herself.

An Investigator who manages to talk to Ravee with Reassurance can then use either **Bargain** or **Flattery** to offer either a quid pro quo ("We'll get you off the island if you'll help us") or express acclaim for her impressive survival skills, respectively, to get her to answer questions. Assuming that a dialogue is opened by one of these two routes, Ravee tells the Investigators what she knows, which amounts to the following points. Most of these are interesting historical trivia, but two points — this scene's core clue and alternate core — are also mixed in among them.

- Savitree was something of a black sheep among an extended family of Siamese aristocrats. She had always had perverse interests, which were largely ignored when she was a child, because she kept to herself.

- Savitree lived in California in the early '20s. No one was particularly sad to see her go. She returned to Siam in 1924, however, with an American — Daniel Lowman — in tow.

- Relatively soon after Savitree's return, members of the staff and extended family started leaving the island in ways that Ravee only figured out much later were covers for their homicides. Staff members "moved on to other jobs," cousins "went on long trips," uncles and aunts "decided to live on the mainland for a while." This continued over the course of years. The number living at the estate had been reduced to about one-third of its original population before anyone really understood that there was something truly dangerous going on. At that point, what amounted to a bloodbath put an end to nearly all the rest of the clan. Ravee survived by feigning complete ignorance of what was happening around her. The final purge was not a recent event; it occurred some years ago, although Ravee has lost track of exactly how long ago it truly was.

- Ravee speaks, when Savitree is around, as though many of her offspring — sons, daughters, grandsons, and granddaughters — are still alive and living on the island. She knows that they are not, but speaks of them because it makes her seem senile and makes it seem like she doesn't know what Savitree has done.

- Some unnatural animal or creature lives on the island with Ravee and Savitree. It hisses and spits, growls and cries out in a strange cant. She thinks that it's some kind of pet that belongs to her granddaughter. (In fact, this "creature" is the pair of Mouths on Savitree's body.)

- Savitree has long been obsessed with finding the answer to some esoteric question. She talks, and occasionally rants and whispers, about things like "learning the truth," "understanding the hidden identity," and "finding the one who stands behind the mouths." Ravee says that this obsession dates from even before the bloodbath.

- Savitree has accumulated an impressive library, which seems to be the main way she investigates this question that consumes her.

- Visitors occasionally come to the island and speak with Savitree, but Ravee knows that most of these are Savitree's coconspirators, and so Ravee pretends to elevated ignorance and senility when they're around. Ravee thinks that these visitors sometimes bring her books, which she adds to her library.

- Desperate people sometimes run through the estate, ranting at her for safety and about "mouths." These, too, she ignores for fear that Savitree will think she has learned the truth about what's going on around her.

- Ravee doesn't know whether Savitree ever leaves the island or not. She knows that Savitree is occasionally gone from her presence for days at a time, but Ravee has no way or knowing where she goes.

If a dialogue with the Investigators ever comes to a question of Ravee's survival, Ravee reverts to senseless babbling and goes so far as to cry out to Savitree, drawing her attention to



the Investigators' presence. This is only likely to occur in the event that Ravee suspects Savitree is already watching her interact with the Investigators anyway. In essence, Ravee tries to prove her loyalty to her granddaughter by "alerting" her to the interlopers that she already knows are present.

Truly, though, Ravee wants to escape the island and get forever away from her psychopathic progeny. She is beyond conservative in her approach to achieving this, however, a strategy whose correctness has been borne out many times, and to which the fact of her survival is testament.

Grandmother Ravee

Three Things: Looks slightly to the side of those speaking to her. Breathes with difficulty. Coughs frequently.

Health 4

Weapon: none

Saving Ravee

It's a small victory, to be sure, but, in a Pulp-mode version of *Eternal Lies*, Investigators with relevant Pillars of Sanity who save Ravee Natenee from the island and see her to some safe place where she can live out the rest of her life in relative peace recover one lost point of Sanity. "Relevant Pillars of Sanity" means Pillars compatible with the salvation of a blind grandmother from horrible forces. Examples might include "the innate goodness of mankind," "the triumph of the human over the inhuman," "perseverance in the face of darkness," and the like.

20. Savitree's Library

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding and gaining access to Savitree Sirikhan's library on Ko Krok (Bangkok 18, "The Crumbling Estate," p. 177).

Summary: The Investigators gain access to the voluminous Mythos lore that Savitree Sirikhan has amassed in her inquiry into the nature of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

Campaign Clue: A map to the location of the Liar's stomach beneath Mount Kailash in the Himalayas.

Although the Investigators may find and gain access to Sivitree Sirikhan's library on their initial exploration of Ko Krok, they stand to be interrupted by Savitree's hunting and the Mouths they may have been afflicted with, and so sifting this massive breadth of information is best attempted after those problems have been dealt with.

Savitree's library is easiest to consider, mechanically, as a single Mythos tome. (See *Trail of Cthulhu*, pages 104–5). Collectively, it is both a clue and a resource. Savitree's journals, however, are considered separately.

The Sirikhan Library

"Skimming" the Sirikhan Library — reviewing the whole of it with the goal of understanding, broadly, what it contains — takes a single Investigator with **Library Use** a month. Multiple Investigators with Library Use can divide that time by their number. An Investigator without Library Use can also contribute but as the functional equivalent of half a researcher. As described in the rule book, Investigators making 1-point **Library Use** spends double their skimming speed; an Investigator making a 2-point spend discovers the vital clue right away.

"Poring over" the entire library is the work of years and completely impractical within the bounds of the campaign. One possible exception might be that an Investigator who stands to be sidelined from continuing adventures due to grievous injuries or near-madness could be left behind on Ko Krok to continue the group's researches while that player creates a new Investigator to use as the party presses on to other Locales.

As a single, massive resource, the Sirikhan Library provides 6 dedicated pool points in Cthulhu Mythos. A more mobile version could be condensed to the size of a footlocker given a day or so of culling out the best works; it would represent 3 dedicated pool points in Cthulhu Mythos.

As a clue, the most important thing that the Investigators can learn from the library in the immediate term is

the location of the Liar's stomach, deep within Mount Kailash in the Himalayas, as recorded on a relatively modern survey map. (Savitree made the map herself from diverse older sources. When her team went to that location, however, they found nothing, because they went at the wrong time of year.) Given the 2-point Library Use spend suggested above, the map is found within an hour of delving into the library. Otherwise, it is discovered after three or four days of skimming, depending on how many Investigators are working to digest the information here.

Although this is a critical clue, it will not necessarily seem to be one to Investigators who have come to Bangkok relatively early in Act Two. If the Investigators have already been to Malta and uncovered the campaign clue there — that the stomach of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths beneath "the Devouring Mountain" can only be entered at certain times — then the counterpart to that information that this clue represents will be immediately clear. If the Investigators already believe that Y'golonac is the true Liar From Beyond, the real Thing With a Thousand Mouths, knowledge of the location of its terrestrial bowels will likewise be obviously desirable.

If, on the other hand, nothing the Investigators have learned so far would suggest the importance of this information to them, don't allow the 2-point spend at all. Not yet. In that case, offer the spend as soon as they come upon other information in Malta that would unlock their understanding of the importance of the location of the Liar's stomach. At that point, one or more of the Investigators who skimmed the Sirikhan Library can be offered a 1-point **Library Use** spend in order to remember that there was a map in the Sirikhan Library that makes sense now — and they can roughly approximate that map (enough to keep the campaign going) with that Library Use spend. With a Difficulty 4 Preparedness spend, perhaps the actual map is even among papers they packed up and brought with them when they left Siam. Otherwise, someone may have to go back to Siam.

(The point here is not to penalize the investigators for coming to Siam first but to give them another bite at the proverbial apple, turning spends into clues not from the environment but from the character's *memory* of the environment. The map is just one of countless documents until it's put into context with other clues.)

Savitree's Journals

Savitree Sirikhan's journals — dozens of books containing handwritten notes that record the minutiae of her investigations into the nature of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths — are considered a single tome.

Skimming the whole takes four days for an Investigator who can read Siamese (and is impossible for an Investigator who cannot). As usual, a 1-point **Library Use** spend can halve the time investment, and a 2-point spend allows an Investigator to understand the gist of her studies within a few minutes.

The critical clues in Savitree's journals are as follows:

- Savitree doesn't believe the Thing With a Thousand Mouths is Gol-Goroth and suspects it isn't Nyarlathotep either, even though her correspondence with Samson Trammel takes the opposite position on the latter because she's trying to keep him in the dark about what she really thinks.
- Savitree has learned that Ramon Echavarria, George Ayers, and Samson Trammel called the true entity of their veneration the "Liar From Beyond," but she hasn't been able to attach that epithet conclusively to a known Mythos deity.
- Savitree believes that the knowledge she seeks — the true cosmological identity of the Thing/Liar — is important because of the exceptional danger of approaching the veneration of a Great Old One in the wrong way. She has organized the Bangkok cult in the way that she has largely to remain apart from the Major Mouth and its feeding because she fears that something horrible and potentially apocalyptic could arise from the Bangkok Mouth at any time.

These "clues" are background information necessary to explain Savitree's activities, the Bangkok cult's operations, and so on rather than clues that unlock further advancement. However, if the Investigators get the sense — or hear for a second or third time — the importance of knowing which entity they're dealing with, that will be a valuable understanding for them as they approach Act Three.

What Else?

Savitree's library is enormous, and the players may ask about additional, specific contents. If it becomes important or interesting, the library explicitly contains:

- Correspondence from the heads of the other cults in Los Angeles, Mexico City, and Malta.
- Travel papers suggesting that Savitree employs at least one party of thugs and researchers who travel the globe tracking down tomes for her and that they've been *everywhere*. These papers suggest, furthermore, that the Siamese thugs from Savannah are associated with the Bangkok cult and are perhaps a splinter of this research band that has been detailed to look after Edgar Job and Douglas Henslowe in the long term.
- A dedicated pool of 3 points in Occult; a dedicated pool of 2

points in each of Anthropology, Cryptography, Theology, and Astronomy; and a dedicated pool of 1 point in each of Archaeology, Architecture, History, Chemistry, and Pharmacy. However, none of these dedicated pools can be conveniently separated out from the library and transported — the knowledge here is diffused across the whole collection. Thus, these points can only be spent by Investigators who remain here or who return here to research the answers to specific questions.

- A nearly complete set of the volumes of the *Revelations of Glaaki* (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, page 107), including the elusive Volume 12. Notably absent from this collected wisdom of the cult of Y'golonac is a copy of the 1924 ritual that Ramon Echavarria and the '24 cult were attempting. (This, of course, is because the ritual did not venerate or empower Y'golonac as a ritual in that book would, but was instead calculated to sacrifice the entity to destroy the world.)

- A partially reconstructed copy of the '24 cult's ritual, which Savitree was able to identify based on her recollection of the way it began. This copy omits any mention of the ritual's purpose, unfortunately.

Wrapping up

Wrapping up Bangkok may be a longer process than ending the Investigators activities at other Locales.

First, there's a fair bit of research to be done on Ko Krok. There's no rushing this; it simply takes as much time as the players want to invest.

Second, one or more Investigators may need to seek medical intervention in order to deal with their affliction by Mouths. Investigators willing to make a 1-point **Credit Rating** spend can gain access to medical facilities and equipment of the type specified in "Amputation, and Worse" on page 37. If the Investigators must also hire the capabilities of a skilled doctor because none of them have appropriate skill in Medicine or First Aid, a 2-point **Credit Rating** spend on top of a 2-point **Streetwise** spend are required, and witnessing a Mouth could drive the shady surgeon they manage to track down mad, on top of it.

Once they're done in the Bangkok Locale, though, transit to the other Locales is easy enough to come by — no backtracking to civilization is necessary before the journey onward can begin, as it is in places like Ethiopia and the Yucatán.

These last two bullet points are not campaign clues, per se, but represent important bits of information that the Investigators are likely to understand fully only after the apocalypse is upon them in Act Three.

What's more, this library can contain any spells or lore you need the Investigators to have for future Locales or Acts in the campaign. This is a good place to reveal the spell for brewing space mead, for example, or even the means of opening a hyperspace gate, if the players have missed those opportunities in other Locales. Stay flexible.



Ethiopia

"I was traveling in a parched and terrible valley under the moon, and afar I saw it protruding uncannily above the sands as parts of a corpse may protrude from an ill-made grave. Fear spoke from the age-worn stones of this hoary survivor of the deluge, this great-grandfather of the eldest pyramid; and a viewless aura repelled me and bade me retreat from antique and sinister secrets that no man should see, and no man else had dared to see."

— "The Nameless City"

"Again there were only the desert and the evil moon and the shards of an unguessed past."

— "The Shadow out of Time"

Keeper's Background: Dallol and the 1924 Dig

In roughly the fourth century BC, the area around Dallol, Ethiopia, was home to a secretive mystery cult that venerated the Liar From Beyond. The cult was eventually found out and destroyed by the local king, and the Major Mouth that was the focal point of their worship was calcified by the devotions of the king's wise men.

A hereditary secret society of guardians was charged with the safety and preservation of the calcified Mouth. The order has persisted for more than two millennia, to the present day. The group has no name, for fear that a label will make it easier to neutralize or counteract it. The order's members refer to themselves simply as "Guardians," a term we will capitalize for the Keeper's ease, even though they would not.

Near the time of Christ, the Guardians learned of and came to possess an esoteric ritual capable of opening a rift in the earth, which interested them because of its potential to destroy for all time the Mouth they guarded, ending their labors. After the deliberation of nearly a generation, they elected not to enact the ritual to destroy the Mouth for fear that to do so would risk the attention and wrath of the slumbering Liar. Even so, they retained the knowledge and artifacts that would allow them to enact the ritual if that dire need ever arose.

In 1923, Spanish archaeologist Bartolo Acuna reinterpreted passages in the *Revelations of Glaaki* to learn the location of the Mouth's ancient site, which is in modern-day Dallol, Ethiopia. Acuna organized an expedition that arrived in Africa in June, 1924. They set to work excavating the outer buildings at the site and soon discovered the protective bas-relief that sealed the inner ritual chambers where (although they did not know it yet) the ancient calcified Mouth was located.

As the expedition was being organized, Acuna had been in correspondence with George Ayers at UCLA. Ayers had learned of the dig and was keenly interested in investigations related to the Liar *and* to *Revelations of Glaaki*, being concerned, as that work is, with Y'golonac. Ayers suspected Y'golonac might be the true Old One at the center of Ramon Echavarria's grand scheme. Acuna's chief problem at the time of their corresponding was funding, which Ayers was able to solve because of his relationship with Echavarria, who soon became the chief funder of the dig. At Echavarria's insistence, Ayers left Los Angeles to join the expedition in Ethiopia. He arrived in early August, at about the time the summoning disaster in California ended Echavarria's life and the entire '24 cult.

One of the first things that Ayers did was to see that a fragment of the bas-relief was sent to Echavarria in Los Angeles, both to cement continued funding and to demonstrate Ayers's own continued relevance to Echavarria's cult. (He was worried he'd been sent to Ethiopia to get him out of the way.) Echavarria was dead by the time the fragment arrived. Douglas Henslowe stole the fragment on his way out of town, hoping that the protective qualities described in Ayers's accompanying note would help him elude the wrath of the summoned entity he believed to be Gol-Goroth, even though Ayers's note also cast doubt on the summoned Old One's true identity.

Keeper's Background: Dallol and the 1924 Dig

Although they had been slow to oppose the dig at first, by the end of summer the Guardians had shaken off the dust of their centuries of inactivity and were opposing the dig with every method at their disposal, creating political, logistical, and labor problems for Acuna, Ayers, and their allies. One of Acuna's letters to the Universidad Complutense de Madrid describes the dig's fall and winter progress that year as "leaden," suggesting that the project was "cursed by conspiratorial forces… just beyond [their] grasp."

(Acuna's letter is available as a handout, which the Investigators can get from the Universidad Complutense either by going there or through correspondence. If the Investigators do not directly correspond with the university, Janet Winston-Rogers or her contacts may be able to forward the letter to them. The letter is not a critical clue, though, so if the Investigators do not collect it, it's not a problem.)

Even for their difficulties, more than a year's worth of the academics' persistence pitted against the relatively meager resources of the Guardians in the modern day saw the dig eventually gain access to the inner ritual chambers and the calcified Mouth in December, 1925. They took pictures, made records, and wrote accounts that survive to the current day, largely in Acuna's possession.

The Guardians decided that their doomsday had come and assembled to perform their ancient ritual. As a result, the Dallol volcano erupted in 1926, destroying the dig site and killing most of the academics and local laborers who'd been hired to work it. By sheer luck, however, both Ayers and Acuna were negotiating for a resumption of use of the rail line with the Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale in Mersa Fatma when the eruption began (the Guardians had managed to turn the CMC against the academics), and so neither of the two men were killed.

For Acuna, this was the final straw. He became depressive and went back to Spain without ever returning to the dig site.

The devout Ayers, however, returned to the site of the eruption. His veneration of the Liar From Beyond had by that time advanced to the point where he personally manifested a Minor Mouth on his body. When he arrived back at Dallol, the Guardians nabbed him, intending to simply tie up the remaining loose ends by killing him. But the individual Guardians assigned the task took pity on him, deprogramming him and teaching him ancient ascetic habits that would keep the Mouth on his body in check. Ayers disappeared into the desert to live out the rest of his life alone in the farthest wind-scourged removes of Ethiopia.

Acuna returned to Spain for a time, but the tumultuous political climate there pushed him away even as ancient African archaeology, his life's obsession, lured him back. He has spent the last decade working on a variety of only marginally successful academic projects, always finding himself short of funding, in bed with the wrong partners, and falling victim to ever more outré ill fortune.

He has lately been hired by the Italian cultural ministry to transport the recently looted Obelisk of Axum to Rome. He plans to use most of the money they've allocated to move the Obelisk to instead fund a laundry list of other research he's more interested in. The Investigators can find Acuna near Adua, where he's camped with a company of Italian soldiers, fuming at transport delays that have befallen his party due to the war currently unfolding between the Italian army and tribes of Ethiopia.

What none of these parties know — with the exception of the Guardians, who have a diffuse fear that it might be true — is that the destruction of the Dallol Mouth attracted the eye of the Liar From Beyond back to Ethiopia. Its perverse whispers on the desert wind since 1926 have corrupted the tribe of Afar who once labored for the CMC in the Dallol area, harvesting salt deposits and hauling them across the desert to the railhead. This tribe has devolved into what is, today, a cult of flagellants whose leader, a widow named Tshombe, manifests a Minor Mouth that the cult members allow to bite them, and from which they are slowly learning the Tongue of Lies. In their reverence for the greater entity they have named the Agony on the Wind, the cult will, if left alone, eventually manage to manifest a new Major Mouth in the area after a 2,500 year absence of the Liar's active influence.

The Guardians are aware of the rise of this flagellant cult that makes its home at Dallol village, but of the three Afar tribes among whom the Guardians are active, two have been conscripted to fight against the Italian army in the north and recently been massacred and the third is both stretched thin and in denial about how profoundly the Liar could affect a cult in just a few years, especially after sustaining such a grievous blow as the destruction of one of its earthly orifices in a volcanic eruption.

The Ethiopia Spine

In Ethiopia, the Investigators traverse African ports on the Red Sea and eventually head squarely into the hottest desert on Earth in search of George Ayers and the site of the archaeological dig he left Los Angeles to join.

The Investigators arrive in the Locale in the Eritrean port of Massaua to

Keeper's Background: Dallol and the 1924 Dig

discover an Italian army in the process of prosecuting a war against the African nationals of Ethiopia. The Investigators learn the lay of the land with little difficulty, and, although they aren't able to discover anything about George Ayers's whereabouts right off the bat, they soon discover that Bartolo Acuna, the Spanish archaeologist with whom Ayers had come to Ethiopia to collaborate, has recently been hired by the Italian government and is relatively close by, at a military camp.

The Investigators travel — sooner or later — to meet with Acuna, a dodgy alcoholic who can tell them a great deal about the long slow disaster that the 1924 dig became, up to its end in a volcanic eruption in 1926. He informs the Investigators that he last saw George Ayers boarding a train for the dig site in the wake of the eruption, while he, himself, gave up and returned to Spain.

Traveling south along the coast, the Investigators arrive in Mersa Fatma, a fallen industrial port where an Italian colonial monopoly, the Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale, once shipped potash mined in the desert to points north. They learn more about the lowland desert into which they must travel while securing guides, equipment, and perhaps access to a derelict railroad. In addition, they begin to realize that their lines of inquiry have attracted some attention among a small group of locals.

These natives — the Guardians — assess the Investigators as they travel between Mersa Fatma and the inland tribal village of Kolluli, and, unless the Investigators completely blow it, the Guardians ally themselves with the Investigators. The Investigators learn that the Guardians were responsible for the eruption that destroyed the dig in 1926 and that they took pity on George Ayers in the aftermath, turning him away from his debased worship of the Liar and teaching him practices that neutralized the Minor Mouth on his body. As far as they know, he still lives alone in the deep desert beyond Dallol.

The Investigators learn, either in Kolluli or by stumbling into Dallol village, that the modern-day Dallolites have

(Translated from the original Spanish)

Director Vega,

You have asked for a clear accounting for our progress, and although it is tempting to paint a happy face on our experiences in order to reassure you, frankly, I no longer have the stamina for it.

Our progress, in short, is leaden. After our initial successes and promising discoveries on the outer walls, our momentum has come to a complete halt. Our supplies have been interrupted time and again, our workers subscribe to an incomprehensible array of holidays on which they will not work, and I am beginning to believe that the American, Ayers, is a drug addict.

In all frankness, it is as though we are cursed by conspiratorial forces operating always just beyond our grasp.

That is my accounting of our progress.

Yours, frustratedly,

Bartolo Acuna

been transformed into a self-injuring cult that worships a deity they call the Agony on the Wind. Although they do not know it, this is a new manifestation of the Liar From Beyond that seeks to establish a new beachhead in Africa, after millennia of absence, in the form of a new Major Mouth. The Dallol cult becomes the Investigators' main and climactic antagonist in Ethiopia.

At what remains of the dig site the Investigators can confirm, through their direct investigations, much of what they've heard about the dig's violent end, and, through all of their travel inland from Mersa Fatma, the desert heat itself becomes an increasingly horrible natural antagonist.

Eventually, the Investigators must travel deep into the hellish desert in search of George Ayers. When they find him they are able to learn — if they wish — the Rituals of Self-Denial, practices which can help humans resist both the physical and psychological damage caused by Minor Mouths manifesting on their bodies. They can even put what Ayers can teach them together with knowledge of materials collected from Bartolo Acuna to arrive at a hypothesis about how a Major Mouth could theoretically be neutralized, although the cost in human life to do such a thing would be great. Finally, the Investigators can learn that Ayers was a close personal friend of Edgar Job back in the 1920s. Although this information is not of immediate use, it may well be of critical importance to them in Act Three, when the apocalypse is at hand.

Wardrobe: Ethiopia

The Ethiopia Locale is the chance for the Investigators to break out their *Lawrence of Arabia*–style garb: flowing robes, sandals, and the like.

Local women wear dresses ornamented with woven threads, and local men wear pants with knee-length shirts. Both men and women wear shawls around their shoulders and sometimes their heads.

Italians and other Europeans in Ethiopia and Eritrea wear Western dress, and some natives in the coast's larger cities have also adopted these conventions. The invading Italian military, of course, wear military uniforms that are particularly unsuitable for the desert heat.

Dress among the native tribes farther removed from cities becomes more and more outlandish to "civilized" Investigators. The customary dress of the Afar people, through which region the Investigators will travel, is described in the sidebar "The Afar People" on page 202.



Campaign Clues

Strictly speaking, there are no 100% critical campaign clues in the Ethiopia Locale. It is, in fact, theoretically possible for the Investigators to skip over Ethiopia entirely by learning elsewhere where and when to scale the Himalayas and do combat with the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

That said, two principal clues in Ethiopia will make their campaign-wide progress a great deal easier. The first are the Rituals of Self-Denial, which will allow them both a method for neutralizing the Minor Mouths they are likely to manifest in Bangkok as well as for neutralizing the Major Mouths that are found at most of the *Eternal Lies* Locales. The second is knowledge of the personal tie between George Ayers and Edgar Job, which will be of great help to them in convincing Job to stop the apocalypse after (if) they destroy or drive off the Thing With a Thousand Mouths in Act Three.

Travel to Ethiopia

Air travel in the 1930s is limited to the wealthy or those with a critical need for speedy travel over long distances, such as manufacturer's representatives or bankers.

Transatlantic flights will not begin regular service until 1939, although zeppelins cross the Atlantic on regular schedules. The *Graf Zeppelin* regularly crosses from South America to Germany in the 1930s, and the *Hindenberg* crossed from Germany to New Jersey nearly a dozen times in 1936 before its well-known end. The trip across the Atlantic took about three days and cost roughly $400 per person.

British Imperial Airways provides weekly service from London to central Africa along a trunk line running from London through Paris, Rome, and Athens to Cairo, Wadi Halfa, Khartoum, and eventually Cape Town in South Africa.

Travel across the interior of Africa is slow and difficult by car or beast, and sensible travelers headed for port cities — like Massaua — will travel by water. Flying boats — seaplanes with aerodynamic hulls crafted for water landing — are much in use for regional travel in the Mediterranean and Red Sea and can even be chartered in larger cities. Ships of all sizes also make both scheduled and chartered trips between African ports.

For detailed information on air travel in the 1930s, Simon Carryer's article "Air Transport in the 1930s," appeared in Pelgrane Press's *See Page XX* webzine in October of 2007.

Emotional Modulation in the Ethiopia Locale

The following lists provide quick-and-dirty hopeful and sinister setting details you can paraphrase, adapt, or simply read aloud as written to push the emotional tenor of play either up or down as needed while the Ethiopia Locale unfolds.

Hopeful Ethiopia Beats

- *"Afternoon, sir."* English! You could kiss the smiling Italian who gives you a cheerful half-wave as he continues down the street the other way.
- A smiling African girl in a checkered European-style dress skips up to you and offers a basket of striking flowers for you to peruse, perhaps to make a purchase.
- Just when you need it, a spot of shade. Thank heavens.
- The lack of sensible streets leaves you momentarily confused, but a passing tribesman notices your disorientation and nods his head, indicating the building it must have been clear you were looking for. He grins in response to your grateful smile.
- Simple food and fresh water have never tasted so good to you as they do today.

Sinister Ethiopia Beats

- A one-armed amputee with a horrible scar where his left eye should be glares at you as you walk past his alms bowl. He lets loose a vehement string of invective in some native tongue that you can't identify, much less understand.
- Out of nowhere, wood cracks! You jump, your eyes darting to the sudden destruction. Looking more closely, there's a deformed bullet embedded there. It could have come from anywhere, could be collateral damage from a firefight a mile away. You can't leave this war zone soon enough.
- A thick pall of flies rises off a jackal's body, lying ignored on the ground.
- Your hands full, you use your shoulder to wipe a drop of sweat off the side of your face. In turning you head, you see a mangy wild dog watching you — staring right at you — from a hundred feet off.
- You grab your canteen to take another swig of water and realize that it's empty again. You glance nervously over at the larger waterskins that serve as everyone's reserve. How long until those run out, too?

Environs: Ethiopia and Eritrea

Ethiopia is a large, land-locked country in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea, an Italian colony in the 1930s, is sandwiched between Ethiopia and the Red Sea, to Ethiopia's north and northeast.

At its higher plateau elevations in the central and western portions of Ethiopia,

Talking to the Locals

In order to use Interpersonal abilities among the general populace in the Ethiopia Locale, an Investigator must speak Italian, Arabic, or Afar. (This "general populace" restriction does not apply to named NPCs. In the case of specific NPCs, specific language barriers are discussed explicitly.)

Unless aided by an interpreter, an Investigator who speaks only English (or some other nonrelevant European language, like French or German) must generally make a 1-point spend to activate an Interpersonal ability that would otherwise function without a spend. For example, whereas possession of Bargain would normally be sufficient to secure lodging in Massaua, an Investigator without an interpreter and who does not speak Italian, Arabic, or Afar would have to make a 1-point Bargain spend to find a suitable place to stay.

Investigators who *do* speak one of the local languages can act as interpreters for their allies, of course, but in the event that none of the Investigators speak the local languages, local interpreters can be hired. In Massaua, finding a suitable interpreter requires either **Bargain** or **Streetwise**. As an additional complication, if none of the interpreter-hiring Investigators have **Assess Honesty**, you may decide, at your nefarious whim, that the interpreter will eventually do something inconvenient or dangerous with the information he learns by translating for the Investigators, from getting them in trouble with the Italians to telling local criminals about their valuables to warning the Dallol cultists that the Investigators are coming.

Suitable names for local African translators of convenience include Asfaw, Gouled, Nyanzi, and Syad. Many also go by French or English first names, examples including Philip, Lazare, David, and Conrad. Quick names for Italian nationals willing to serve as translators include Aldo, Lucciano, and Tommaso.

As a final point of consideration, the constant invocation of language barriers is an excellent way to constantly remind the players that their Investigators have moved beyond their domestic comfort zone. They are not in Kansas — or remotely close to it — anymore.



the climate is relatively comfortable in comparison to other regions similarly close to the equator, ranging from roughly 40° F to 80° F, depending on the time of year. Rains are short in the spring and more intense in the summer and into the fall. The predominant climate is tropical monsoon.

The lowland Afar Region nearer to the Red Sea, however, where most of the African portions of *Eternal Lies* take place, is a hot and dry area that amounts to scrub desert. This lowland is known to geologists as the Danakil Depression. Much plunges to or falls below sea level. Dallol — the site of the 1924 dig — is quite literally the hottest location on Earth. Average highs in the summer months exceed 115° F, with the average lows dropping only to 88° F. Rainfall is nonexistent.

The area has a wide variety of indigenous languages — more than 80, by some counts. Amharic and Afar are the pair of Afro-Asiatic languages spoken in the areas of the country where the Investigators are most likely to travel, with Italian the obvious language of common usage by the colonials, and English also spoken by many. Arabic is not uncommon. The vast majority of native Africans are not literate, in contrast to most of the European colonists.

Ethiopian religious practice is roughly two-thirds Christian and one-third Muslim, with a variety of traditional religions also practiced, especially in the lowlands where the Investigators are likely to travel. Churches and mosques are easily found in the cities where the Investigators will travel.

The Scenes

The following scenes unfold as the Investigators travel across, and dig into, the Locale. As always, be ready to dole out clues when the Investigators circumnavigate the structure here or surprise you (and us!) with great ideas. It's important that the adventure keep expanding and unfolding as a reward for their shared time and savvy attentions.

1. Arrival in Massaua

Scene Type: Intro

Lead-ins: George Ayers's 1924 travel itinerary (Los Angeles 16, "UCLA and George Ayers," p. 102).

Summary: The Investigators face logistical hurdles at the Ethiopian port city of Massaua.



By whatever methods of travel, the Investigators eventually arrive in the African port of Massaua, most likely following the travel itinerary left behind by George Ayers at UCLA (**Los Angeles 16, "UCLA and George Ayers,"** p. 102).

The Italian military presence in Massaua is overbearing, with soldiers and their transport, from cars and trucks to camels, choking the roadways near the port. Many local buildings have been commandeered for use as barracks, with many temporary shelters also

1. Arrival in Massaua

Environs: Massaua

The African port city of Massaua is found in the Italian colony of Eritrea, and it's the largest, best port on the eastern coast of Africa. Massaua suffered a significant earthquake in 1921 and was still rebuilding when Acuna, Ayers, and the original dig team arrived and passed through in 1924, but major rebuilding — especially of the port — was finished by the late 1920s.

Architecture is mixed. Ottoman buildings are predominant, but Western-style buildings include St. Mary's Cathedral and the Banco d'Italia.

As the Investigators arrive, Massaua is a massive military staging ground for the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. The ports are filled to capacity and beyond with both large vessels and smaller dhows that travel the immediate coast.

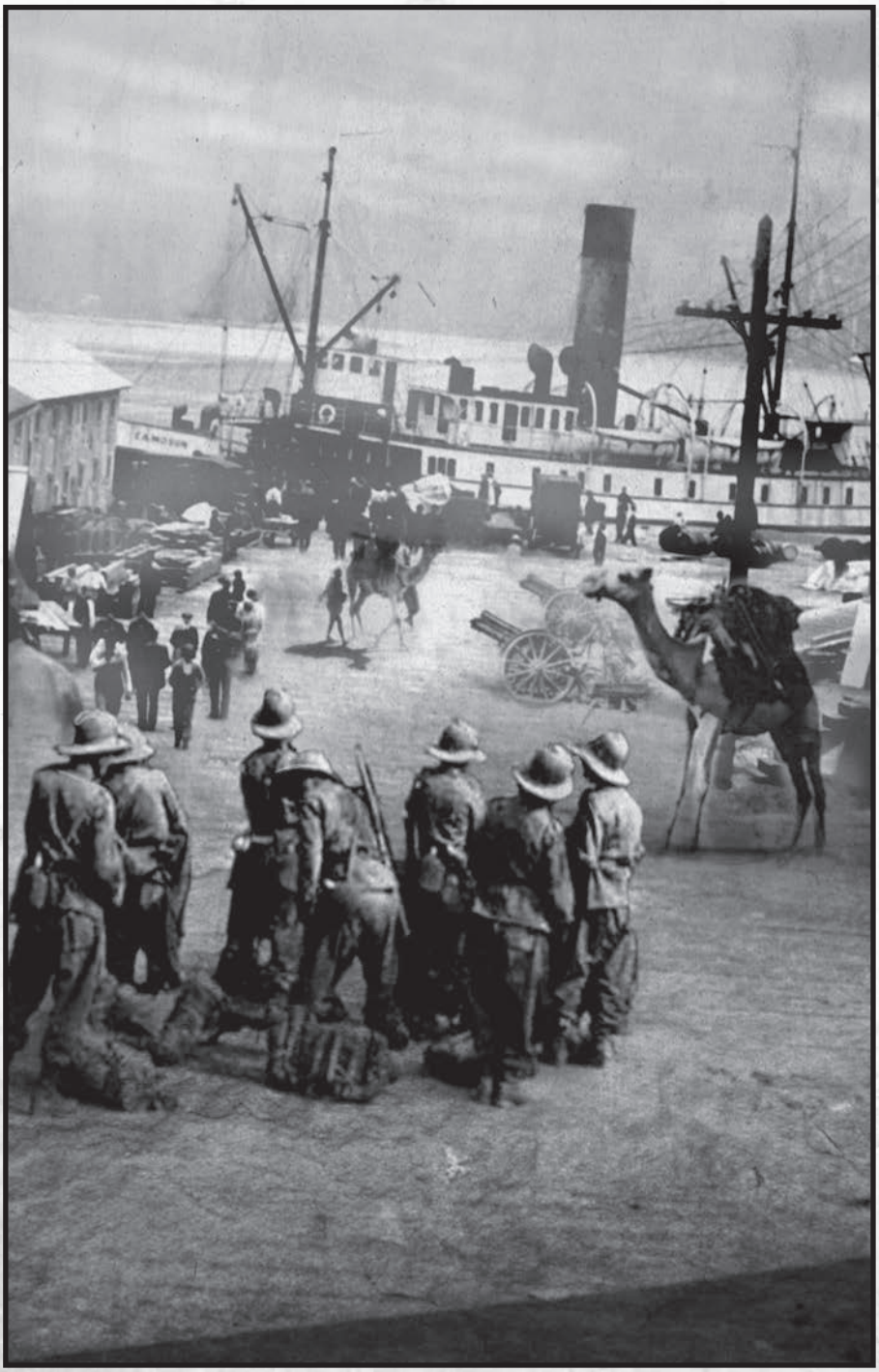
having been set up both inside the city limits and outside it.

Unless they sneak into the area on some overland route, the Investigators must deal with one or many Italian functionaries upon their arrival by boat or rail, to explain their reasons for traveling to the area.

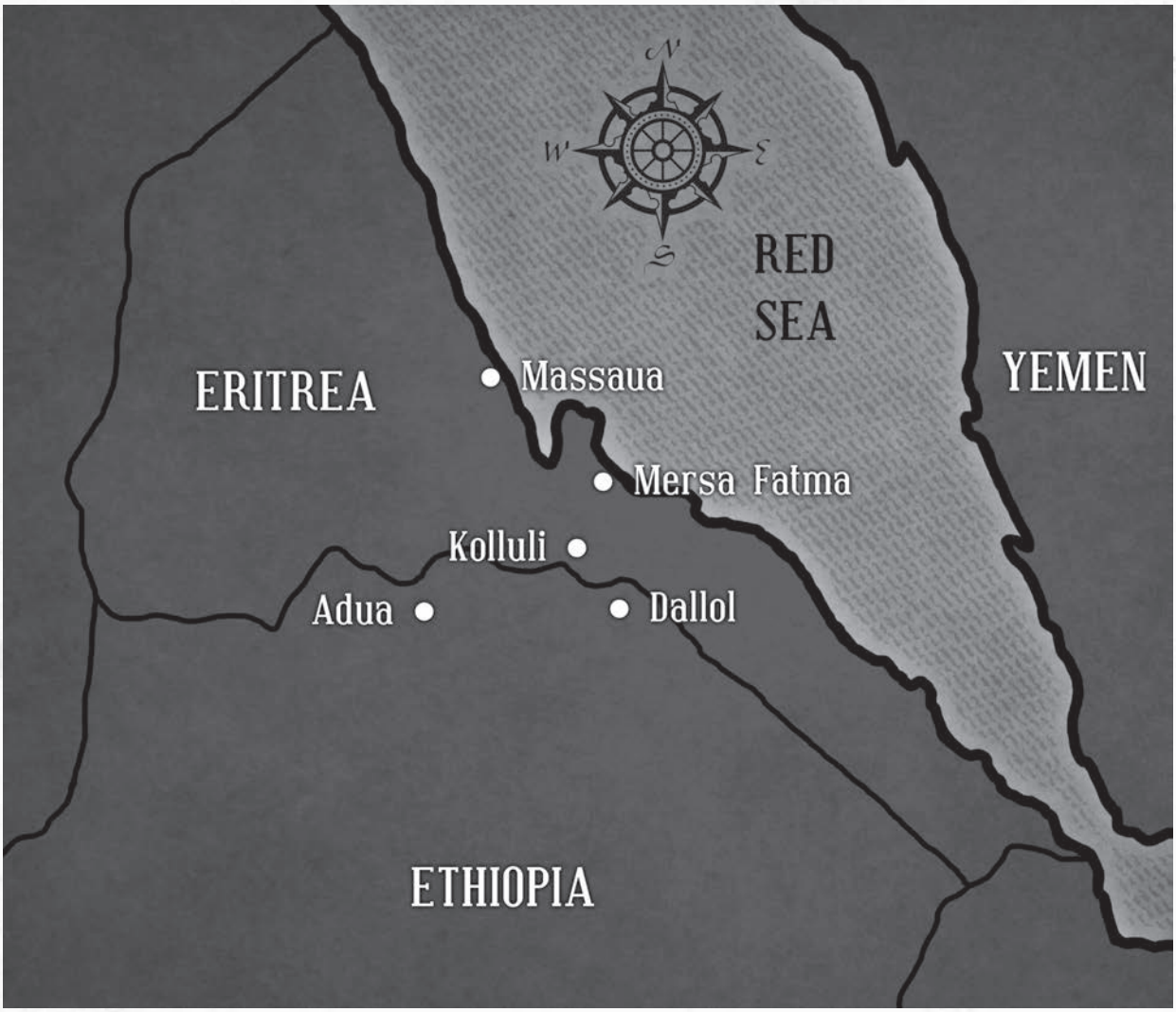
Carlo Salvatore, Entry Inspector

Carlo Salvatore is a sample bureaucrat whom the investigators can meet at whatever point of entry they cross. Carlo is an officious individual whose self-importance is overshadowed only by his paranoia. He volunteered to travel to an African posting to promote his career. He speaks both English and Arabic, although neither very well.

Reassurance or **Bureaucracy** is sufficient to diffuse Carlo's suspicions unless any of the Investigators are obviously unsavory, dangerous, or African, in which case Carlo's worries about sabotage and smuggling must be diffused before the Investigators are allowed into the city proper. If given any trouble, Carlo would be thrilled to have suitable cause to summon the police and have the Investigators jailed; it would pleasingly demonstrate both his authority (to the Investigators) and his diligence (to his superiors).



1. Arrival in Massaua



With a 1-point **Reassurance** or **Bureaucracy** spend, or if any of the Investigators have **Languages (Italian)**, the Investigators can acquire official travel papers from Carlo that will allow them unimpeded travel and access in later scenes of the Ethiopia Locale.

Having signed such papers, Carlo will vouch personally for the Investigators' good character if it's ever required — to do any less would call into question his original issuance of such papers, which wouldn't do.

Carlo Salvatore

Three Things: Smiles broadly while keeping his lips shut over his teeth. Compulsively folds and unfolds papers. Spits frequently.

Bureaucracy 1, Firearms 1, Health 8, Scuffling 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fists), +0 (automatic pistol)

Accommodations

If the Investigators are planning to remain in Massaua overnight, it's not trivial for them to secure accommodations given the crowded conditions. **Bargain** is necessary to secure beds under a permanent roof, and the lodging costs more than cheapskates in the party would like (although not nearly enough that it would require a Credit Rating spend — the high price is an annoyance, not a hurdle).

2. Massaua Investigations

Scene Type: Intro

Lead-ins: Arriving in Massaua (Ethiopia 1, "Arrival in Massaua," p. 188).

Summary: The Investigators learn the lay of the land for the Ethiopia Locale.

In Massaua, a **simple search** — asking around, checking easily acquired maps, cross-referencing against the Ayers itinerary, and so forth — is sufficient to give the Investigators an understanding of the greater area as it will be important to them in the Ethiopia Locale. The following points hardly rate the status of core clues, but understanding them will help the players assemble a context for the adventure:

Massaua is the regional hub of commerce, the major port in the area. It's the Italian staging ground for a conflict between Italy and Ethiopia that's generally taking place to the west, in the Ethiopian interior.

Mersa Fatma is a small port farther down the coast from Massaua. Like Massaua, it's in Italian Eritrea rather than Ethiopia proper. It's the next logical stepping-stone to Dallol, the site of the 1924 dig. Dhows travel regularly between Massaua and Mersa Fatma.

The **Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale** (CMC) is an Italian company that mined salt from the Dallol area through the 1920s. They built and own a rail line that runs from Mersa Fatma to a railhead called Iron Point, which is near Dallol.

Dallol village is a very small outpost of civilization — if it could even be called such — over the Eritrean border, in Ethiopia proper.

If the Investigators come into Ethiopia by some route other than that taken by Ayers and the 1924 dig team, most of this information is easy to come by with a simple search in other places as well. Use your judgment, tending toward generosity with such basic information. Remember that the fun for the players is in figuring out what to do once they have the clues, not in figuring out where the next bread crumb is located.

A 2-point **Oral History** spend in Massaua allows the Investigators the opportunity to find out, by rather extreme happenstance, that a Spaniard and academic named Bartolo Acuna has recently passed through Massaua and was most recently seen at the Hotel Internazionale, the main hotel for foreigners in the city. (An Investigator with an academic background happens to be talking to a local academic who knows Acuna, or something similar.) Acuna, of course, is the Spanish archaeologist who organized the 1924 Dallol dig; his name was most likely found among George Ayers's records in **Los Angeles 16, "UCLA and George Ayers,"** p. 102. Investigators who follow up this lead proceed to **Ethiopia 3, "Finding Acuna,"** the next scene.

Other than Acuna, no one the Investigators can find in Massaua knows anything about George Ayers or the Dallol dig that began in 1924. Attempts to locate any kind of local cult that venerates the Liar From Beyond, the Fisher From Outside, or the Thing With a Thousand Mouths do not yield fruit.

Whenever the Investigators choose to press on to Mersa Fatma, passage by dhow down the coast is easy to secure, requiring no ability.

Provisions and Native Guides

If the Investigators try to buy any significant stores of gear in Massaua, **Bargain** and excessive funding must be applied, exactly as with any accommodations they may have been fortunate enough to find, unless they made a spend to acquire Italian travel papers, in which case they can buy whatever they need, almost without limit, including military ordnance and hardware, from the army's quartermaster corps without hassle or excessive expense.

If the Investigators seek a native guide in Massaua, frustrate their efforts. The Europeans they're able to find are all engaged in the war effort. The vast majority of African natives in Massaua are here to take advantage of the opportunities to either supply or fight for the Italians and have no interest in traveling to the desert with the Investigators. If necessary, suggest to the Investigators via some local mouthpiece that it will be both easier and less expensive to hire the services of a guide to the south, in Mersa Fatma or from among the inland tribes in that region.

3. Finding Acuna

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Learning that Bartolo Acuna has been recently seen at the Hotel Internazionale via a spend (Ethiopia 2, "Massaua Investigations," p. 191) or through Sinuhe Djau (Ethiopia 6, "The Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale," p. 198).

Summary: The Investigators track Acuna from the hotel to his present whereabouts.

Core Clue: After spending a few nights at the Hotel Internazionale, Acuna traveled inland with a column of Italian infantrymen. (Streetwise with the hotel staff, Oral History in Massaua, or either Cop Talk or the benefits of an earlier spend, also in Massaua.)

The Investigators pick up Bartolo Acuna's trail at the Hotel Internazionale in Massaua, the largest hotel in the city, which caters almost exclusively to Europeans and extremely wealthy locals.

Streetwise and a few liras are all that's necessary to find and grease the wheels of a member of the hotel staff who remembers Acuna. Acuna was extremely pleased to have secured the cultural ministry's contract to transport archaeological spoils of war out of the country, telling anyone who'd stand still about this triumph. This was a few weeks ago, though, and Acuna has since checked out of the hotel. The Investigators' source of information remembers, though, that Acuna was going to be traveling with the large column of infantrymen leaving Massaua at the time.

Oral History in the form of asking around town is able to easily secure the information that a massive column of soldiers did, in fact, leave the city about two weeks ago, headed west toward Adua.

Either **Cop Talk** (expressed in the form of its sister language, "Military Talk") or the official travel papers accessed by the spend in **Ethiopia 1, "Massaua Arrival,"** p. 188, can provide the Investigators with detailed information on where that infantry division is now, encamped outside Adua, waiting for certain bureaucratic issues with their supply train to be resolved.

Traveling to this location is as simple or as difficult as you'd like it to be. In the easiest version, the Investigators hitch a ride with a quartermaster's van headed directly from Massaua to the encampment and arrive after a pleasant afternoon's drive. In the most difficult version, the Investigators must spend three days walking or riding camels to Adua — all motorized transport having been nationalized — and are attacked by guerillas en route. Investigators who are veterans of the Great War may be especially traumatized by such attacks, suffering flashbacks to horrific trench warfare and so forth.

Upon arriving at the expansive military encampment, any of the abilities used thus far in this scene (**Streetwise**, **Oral History**, or **CopTalk**) are sufficient to get roundabout but eventually accurate directions to the tent containing "the sour Spanish academic."

Guerilla Fighters

In the event that you are cruel enough to afflict the Investigators with a guerilla attack while they're en route from Massaua to the encampment where Acuna is bivouacked, use these statistics for the attackers.

Ethiopian Guerillas

Athletics 7, Firearms 6, Weapons 4

Weapon: +1 (saber), +0 (bolt-action rifle)

4. Bartolo Acuna

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding Bartolo Acuna (Ethiopia 3, "Finding Bartolo Acuna," p. 192).

Summary: Bartolo Acuna, the leader of the 1924 dig, tells the Investigators what happened at Dallol in 1924–6.

Core Clue: In 1923, Acuna came to suspect, from reinterpreting a critical passage in the *Revelations of Glaaki*, that a sex cult was centered at Dallol in ancient times. (Anthropology, Archaeology, or Occult, and also Flattery, on Acuna.)

Core Clue: The 1924 dig was plagued with all sorts of problems nearly from the start. Progress was excruciatingly slow, as if by some conspiracy. (Anthropology, Archaeology, or Occult, and also Flattery, on Acuna.)

Core Clue: The dig produced the stone fragment that the Investigators found in Savannah. Those who crafted the relief it came from believed it was protective. (Anthropology, Archaeology, or Occult, and also Flattery, on Acuna.)

Core Clue: The dig eventually penetrated the ancient site and discovered a calcified Major Mouth from ancient times, but a volcano erupted at the site soon thereafter. (Anthropology, Archaeology, or Occult, and also Flattery, on Acuna.)

As the Investigators know (from reading George Ayers's correspondence in Los Angeles, probably), Bartolo Acuna is the archaeologist from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid who organized the 1924 Dallol dig. He returned briefly to Spain after the 1926 Dallol eruption, but political conditions there — the long run-up to the Spanish Civil War

4. Bartolo Acuna

— drove him back to Africa, where he has continued to study ancient African archaeological sites with what funding he can scrape together. He hasn't been to Dallol in almost a decade, though.

Acuna has recently managed to get himself hired by the Italian cultural ministry to oversee the transport of looted Ethiopian cultural artifacts, including the Obelisk of Axum, back to Rome as spoils of war. He's traveling with the army to rendezvous with the employees of the cultural ministry who're currently babysitting the looted artifacts he's to take charge of. When the Investigators find him, he's stewing in his tent, drinking heavily and fuming that a bureaucratic snafu has brought the infantry division he's traveling with to a halt.

Acuna is happy to admit to his tent any Investigator who has the **Anthropology**, **Archaeology**, or **Occult** abilities, or liquor. Neither opportunities to talk shop with knowledgeable foreigners nor opportunities to acquire decent drink come frequently enough in Ethiopia for Acuna's liking.

Contemporary players may look askance at Acuna's naked willingness to collaborate with the looting of cultural artifacts. Depending on the atmosphere you want to foster, you may or may not wish to remind them that few first-world authorities in the 1930s were at all disapproving of the appropriation of cultural relics.

Flattery is the effective route to learning from Acuna the broad outlines of what happened at Dallol while the dig was active, as laid out in the question-and-answer section below. Alternately, a wealthy Investigator can agree to sponsor Acuna's next dig himself, to the tune of a 3-point **Credit Rating** spend. (Or, an Investigator with **Bargain** can negotiate the Credit Rating spend down to 2 points.) **Assess Honesty** suggests that Acuna is broadly telling the truth, although it's clear that he generally shades his narratives to inflate his own importance and intelligence.

Acuna's Accounts: Tone and Emotion

Bartolo Acuna has a lot to tell the Investigators, and you could go wrong by making his account of the 1924 dig a series of verbal bullet points read off as a list. To keep the encounter interesting, remember these points:

- The scene is set in a military camp in a war-torn African nation. There are frequent distractions, loud noises, and the constant threat of attack.
- Acuna drinks heavily as the interview continues.
- What happened at Dallol — all of the frustrations of the dig, capped off by its complete destruction — was a severe psychological blow to Acuna.

If the interview ever becomes downright boring, you can either inject mortal peril or end it immediately — even before the Investigators have managed to wring all of the encounter's core clues out of Acuna — by announcing a surprise Ethiopian attack against the encampment.



Bartolo Acuna: Questions and Answers

Rather than present this information as a very long piece of read-aloud text, the following question-and-answer pairs communicate the gist of what is known to Acuna, which you should dole out depending on the actual questions the Investigators ask.

How did you know George Ayers?

"I cast a wide net in search of funding for the dig I was organizing. He contacted me — I assumed he learned about it through the academic network. In any case, he was instrumental in securing money. His friend Echavarria paid nearly the entire expedition's expense."

What led you to Dallol in the first place?

"I had become interested in an ancient text that had been acquired by the Universidad Complutense, where I worked, the Revelations of Glaaki. *It had been translated before, but I did new work on the fragments concerning an ancient deity concerned with orgiastic ritual. Those passages, properly interpreted, suggested an ancient focus of worship at what I believed was Dallol. Naturally, I was vindicated when we arrived and we unearthed the temple exactly where I expected we'd find it."*

(The Investigators may have access to a copy of the *Revelations of Glaaki*, either from Samson Trammel's library in Los Angeles, the Sirikhan Library, or through their own contacts or Occupational abilities. With access to a copy of the *Revelations* and a 1-point **Occult** or **Cthulhu Mythos** spend, an Investigator can corroborate Acuna's interpretation of the passages in question.)

What happened in 1924? What happened to the dig you organized?

"We arrived in country in June of that year, organized our supplies, hired guides and porters.We were on site at Dallol by… well, July or August. It only took us a few months to find the outer walls buried under the earth, but in the end, they were right where the Revelations *said they'd be.*

4. Bartolo Acuna

"The reliefs on the doors that sealed the inner complex were different from other works from the same period. They were protective, it seemed to me. Ayers arrived around that time, and he was very interested in them. He insisted that we send a fragment back to Echavarria in Los Angeles. We did, of course. I still have a picture of it.

"It was about that time — just at the cusp of our success — that everything slowed to a crawl. Our laborers began to have misgivings, the CMC suddenly became unreliable in relaying our supplies, bandits destroyed critical equipment. Each delay begat more. We would spend weeks, sometimes months, at a complete standstill.

"It was 1926 by the time we finally managed to get inside the inner complex. From then, just a few short days to the sanctum at the center of it.

"There was… well, there was…

"There was a mouth there. A statue of one, I mean, carved in detail like you've never seen, made of some rock we hadn't seen before, probably quarried in the brine fields before Christ, boiled off now, fallen beneath the crust.

(The "statue," of course, is no such thing, but rather, the calcified remains of what was once — thousands of years ago — a fully living Major Mouth.)

"A giant, screaming mouth, all tongues and a dozen kinds of teeth and lips that were… well, obscene.

"I have some sketches…

"Our troubles seemed to redouble themselves. The company cut off our supplies. We were both loathe to do it, but there was no course other than for Ayers and I to travel back up the rail line to Mersa Fatma and talk to the pinheads ourselves.

"We heard of the eruption after having spent a completely pointless day negotiating with company men — the whole site destroyed, fallen to the bottom of a crater thirty yards across, awash in lava. Gone. Our associates dead, some of the laborers apparently blaming us for the whole fiasco, as though we could cause a volcano to erupt.

"I couldn't bring myself to even go back to the site."

(Acuna is able to provide some sketches, both of the Mouth and of some of the reliefs on the wall of the chamber where they found the Mouth, after rooting around papers and records in trunks stacked outside his tent.)

What are these reliefs?

"The reliefs we found inside the temple, in the chamber with the statue, were of a different character from those on the outside of the temple. The interior reliefs showed the ancient people venerating some deity represented by the mouth, preparing themselves for its worship, making offerings to it, even feeding themselves to it."

What happened to Ayers?

"Ayers told me he had to see the site for himself, so he went back up the railway.

"I never saw or heard from him again. No sense speculating what happened to him. A thousand things meant us all ill by that point. Take your pick of angry laborers, bad supplies, lava floes, the hottest place on the planet. Maybe it's a miracle we'd survived as long as we had.

"If you're trying to find him, the last people I know of to see him are the tribe who travel the area near and around Dallol village. They worked for the CMC back during the dig, hauling salt to the railhead on their camels. We usually traveled with them between the railhead and the dig, for safety and their knowledge of the desert. Some even worked for us at the site."

What caused the volcano?

"You're not looking for the geological explanation, I take it? That's the only one I have.

"It'd be a breathtaking coincidence for the whole place to burn right after we finally managed to get inside, wouldn't it? Well, that's what happened. Honestly, it doesn't much matter to me why it happened. And the honest truth is that I don't know why.

"We didn't pull a lever when we found the inner chamber, if that's what you're asking. We didn't break the magic seal, or speak any cursed words."

What have you been doing since the eruption?

"I went back to the university. I worked there for a while, but the whole country's gone mad. I want to do my work, here. I've been around Africa for the past decade, moving from project to project, finding work where I can, leading others where money can be found."

Can you help us find the dig site? Will you come with us to Dallol?

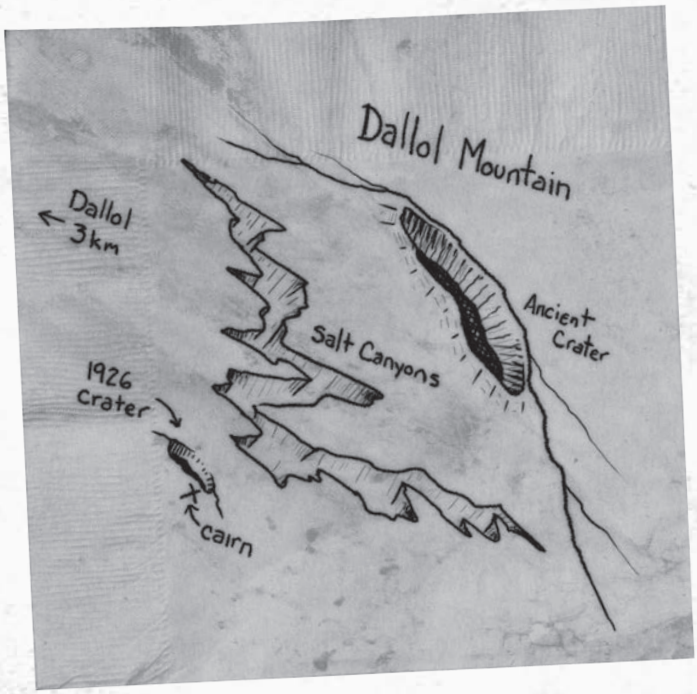
"I have work here that I would not soon abandon. I can draw you a map of where the site was — of the general area around Dallol. That might help you. But you can also ask anyone in the area — Dallol, Kolluli, even the functionaries at the CMC. They know the lay of the land, know where our dig was located."

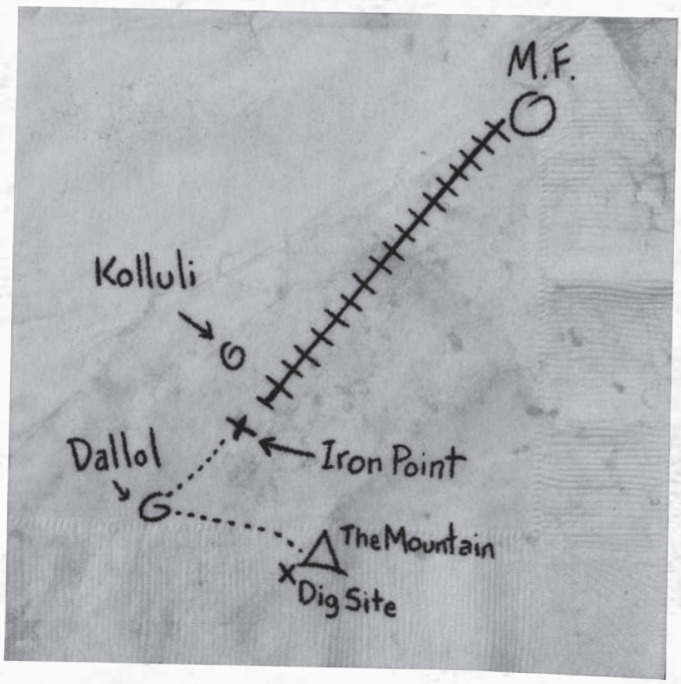
Bartolo Acuna

Three Things: Drinks to excess. Has insufferable halitosis. Slips into Spanish without realizing it while drunk and must be reminded to return to whatever language was being spoken before.

Anthropology 4, Archaeology 5, Art History 2, Athletics 3, Firearms 3, Health 9, Preparedness 3, Scuffling 4

Weapon: −2 (fists), +0 (automatic pistol)





5. Mersa Fatma

Scene Type: Travel / Core / Alternate

Lead-ins: Understanding that Mersa Fatma is on the most intelligent route to the Dallol dig site (Ethiopia 2, "Massaua Investigations," p. 191).

Summary: The Investigators travel by dhow from Massaua to Mersa Fatma and get a sense of the lay of the land there.

Core Clue: The most sensible route from Mersa Fatma to Dallol is via the railway completed in 1918 by the CMC. However, the CMC is currently in hibernation in Africa. Although a skeleton crew remains, gaining access to the railway requires the cooperation of the CMC station chief. (Oral History around town in Mersa Fatma.)

Alternate Core: If the Investigators haven't learned it from Bartolo Acuna, they can discover here that the Dallol dig site was destroyed in 1926 by a volcanic eruption. (Oral History around town in Mersa Fatma.)

It requires neither unusual skills nor great cost to procure passage by dhow from Massaua to Mersa Fatma. The dhows that travel up and down the coast vary widely in size, from small craft accommodating just a handful of people to large cargo vessels. There's no reason not to allow the Investigators to specify any characteristic that they wish about the ship they take, from its size to the general nature of any other cargo or passengers it might be carrying to the general reputability of its captain and crew. Being able to specify these things is of no consequence, and the leeway is as likely to make the players feel nervous as feel secure.

Oral History is necessary to learn the general lay of the land in Mersa Fatma — there are no maps to be purchased or comprehensive histories to be read. Using this ability is subject to the language barriers described in the sidebar "Talking to the Locals" on page 188 unless the Investigators head straight to the CMC complex (which is obvious to any arriving Investigator, given the way it dwarfs the rest of the town), in which case they can learn the basic facts available in this scene in their pick of the languages known to Renzo Segni, the CMC chief, or Sinuhe Djau, his assistant.

Common local knowledge includes the following:

- The Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale (CMC) was at the nucleus of a dramatic population growth in Mersa Fatma in the 1910s. This Italian company primarily mined potash from inland sites such as Dallol. Mersa Fatma was the port by which these resources left the area.
- In 1929, the discovery of significant potash resources elsewhere made this African mining unprofitable. The CMC withdrew, leaving behind only a small staff to look after its assets

5. Mersa Fatma

Environs: Mersa Fatma

Mersa Fatma is a small town on Eritrea's Red Sea coast. Several hundred people live here, though the population fluctuates significantly with the seasonal movements of the larger area's nomadic tribes. A large portion of the town's permanent populace works the docks or labors on the ships that travel up and down the coast.

Ethnically, the residents of Mersa Fatma are a mix of native Africans from a variety of the tribes of the area, with a very small smattering of Europeans — mostly Italians — who came to the area with the CMC as part of the general colonization efforts or to man the small army garrison. Three Catholic missionaries staff a small church. (They came since the eruption, so none of them have any firsthand information about the 1924 dig.)

Mersa Fatma was once more populous, but the CMC's withdrawal from the area was the death knell for the potash industry that had otherwise employed many, and those who found themselves out of work generally went back to the tribes from whence they had come or moved to other towns and cities looking for continued or better work.

The largest building in town is the CMC warehouse and administrative complex at the docks, to which the rail line from the desert runs directly. Even though the complex is of relatively modern construction (having been finished in 1918), it's all deserted save a small nucleus of offices where Renzo Segni has made the headquarters of his little African empire. The skeleton crew left behind by the CMC to care for its physical assets spends no small amount of time running squatters and desert creatures out of the cavernous warehouses that now stand empty.



in the event that the company ever decided to resume local operations. The local population declined swiftly with this cessation of operations. (Note that the discovery of potash resources elsewhere is only part of the story, but it's the part that's widely known. See **Ethiopia 6, "The Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale,"** p. 198, for more information about how difficulties with the local Afar also contributed to the CMC's effective withdrawal from the region.)

- Of the six local men who compose the current CMC skeleton crew, Renzo Segni is the Italian company man in charge, Sinuhe Djau is Segni's Egyptian assistant, and the rest are native Africans from the local area. Segni has three local wives and many children by them. Most locals do not approve of these arrangements, but Segni is very wealthy by local standards, and it pays to overlook his foibles.

- The Eritrean and Ethiopian desert in the area inland from Mersa Fatma is scrub desert lowland, hotter than hot. Foreigners — even Africans who aren't from the local area — would be foolish or suicidal to travel alone in this wilderness.

- Dallol village lies roughly 53 miles inland from Mersa Fatma, across the desert. No more than two dozen souls live there. (This population estimate turns out to be old and inaccurate. See **Ethiopia 11, "Dallol Village,"** p. 208.) There isn't a road, per se, that goes to Dallol village. The camel track that does persist is frequently obscured by shifting sand and overgrown with scrub.

- A volcano erupted at Dallol mountain (which is near to, but not directly beneath, the village) in 1926 and destroyed a foreign archaeological dig site that was active at the time. (Investigators with **Geology** are aware that the entire Afar region is subject to violent tectonic activity. Given that, the 1926 eruption is not immediately suspicious, at least not outside its proximity in both place and time to the dig they're interested in.)

- A 50-mile rail line runs from the CMC warehouse to a railhead terminal at Iron Point, which is near Dallol village. It was used to haul potash, back in they day. It is an unusual gauge and hasn't seen use in years. The locomotive and cars are probably still in storage somewhere in the CMC complex, though.

- The rail line runs near a small village, Kolluli, close to Iron Point. That would be a good place to hire a guide who could bring the Investigators from Iron Point to Dallol.

- From Iron Point, it's another 6 miles overland to Dallol village and, from there, a short walk to the volcano. The track that covers this route, too, is frequently obscured.



The Heat

From the Investigators' arrival in Mersa Fatma to the end of the Ethiopia Locale, take every opportunity to torture the Investigators with the merciless heat of the Afar lowlands. As the party presses on toward Dallol and beyond, they should be made to feel as though they are on a terrible journey over the surface of the sun that will eventually see their arrival at the very center of Hell itself.

To this end, afflict the PCs with a combination of both descriptive and mechanical penalties. The following lists are your go-to reference. Use your imagination and the specific circumstances of the moment as additional fodder. What labors are the Investigators performing? Who else is nearby? What Drives are they subject to that may be compelling them to work harder than is altogether wise?

Descriptive Effects of Heat

The Investigator's clothing becomes damp with sweat and sticks to the skin. Garments must be constantly adjusted, to the Investigator's annoyance and distraction.

The Investigator's hair becomes damp, clinging to the neck and forehead. The Investigator must squint to see through dripping sweat. Flies buzz around the character's head.

Even short exertion — as simple as a five-minute walk — requires an out-of-shape Investigator to sit down for a short breather, which is not refreshing and is eventually abandoned for its futility.

Upon extended exertion in the heat, the Investigator's soaking clothing begins to chafe the skin, leaving broad raw regions. If the Investigator continues laboring without First Aid, skin begins to rub away and bleed.

The Heat Track

The effects of each position on the heat track are cumulative with those of lower levels.

0. The Investigator is not suffering from heat. (Not mechanically, anyway.)
1. The Investigator can only make spends after first resting for ten minutes to gather his or her thoughts and spirits.
2. The Investigator's Difficulty Numbers for contests (including opponents' Hit Thresholds) increase by 1.
3. The Investigator's Difficulty Numbers for all tests increase by 1.
4. The Investigator can only make one spend per day and must make it in the morning after a good night's sleep, before the day's temperature begins to rise.
5. The full effects of extreme heat (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, page 68) apply. Specifically, the Investigator cannot make spends whatsoever and suffers the combined effects of 2 and 3, above, on Difficulty Numbers.



Assuming exposure to the sun as well as the heat, the Investigator becomes gruesomely sunburned. Angry red skin one day gives way to peeling flakes the next day, and the day after that, raw blisters, as progressively deeper layers of skin become progressively burnt.

The Investigator's mouth becomes so dry that, for a moment, swallowing is impossible. A moment of panic subsides after the Investigator finally — finally! — manages to produce enough thick spittle to lubricate his or her throat.

The sun wheels around the sky — the Investigator falls to the ground in a faint. If alone, the character awakens some time later, eye to eye with an overeager (and now quite sullen) carrion bird.

Mechanical Effects of Heat

The basic mechanics for extreme heat (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, page 68) are applied incrementally in the Ethiopia Locale to give the players a more gradual sense of rising dread over their slowly eroding capabilities.

Track each Investigator's status on a six-position continuum, called the "heat track," in this Locale. Zero marks an Investigator's normal, unimpaired state, while five marks the full effects of extreme heat as described in the core rules. You may wish to copy or print a spare version of the track, where you can track each Investigator's current location by writing or with tokens.

Advance and withdraw each Investigator one position at a time at your whim, based on their activity levels, susceptibility to despair, and familiarity with deprivation and extremes of climate. As a general guideline, refrain from moving an Investigator more than one position in either direction per day except in extreme circumstances.

At your option, you can allow an Investigator with First Aid or Medicine to spend time attending to one or more Investigators in order to prevent an advancement, to reduce their position on the heat by one level, or even to make a 1-point spend to bring an Investigator back to the zero position on the track.

You should never assign a mechanical penalty without providing an accompanying colorful description. This serves you best by planting the idea that descriptions of the heat are accompanied by in-game penalties, so that as the Investigators progress in the Locale, simple descriptions of heat become sources of momentary alarm, even when they're not accompanied by penalties.

6. The Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale

Scene Type: Core / Alternate

Lead-ins: Visiting the CMC's offices (Ethiopia 5, "Mersa Fatma," p. 195).

Summary: The Investigators meet with the skeleton crew left behind to maintain the CMC's physical assets in the local area.

Core Clue: In addition to changing global conditions, deteriorating relations with the local Afar helped push the CMC out of the area in 1929. (Flattery of Renzo Segni, or Interrogation of Sinuhe Djau.)

Core Clue: The CMC's relationship with the 1924 dig team was uneven, blowing hot and cold. (Flattery of Renzo Segni, or Interrogation of Sinuhe Djau.)

Core Clue: Bartolo Acuna is currently working for the Italian government, and has been seen in Massaua in recent days. (Flattery of Renzo Segni, or Reassurance of Sinuhe Djau.)

Alternate Core: Any of the core and alternate core clues available in Ethiopia 5, "Mersa Fatma," p. 195, are also available here. (Oral History among any of the NPCs in this scene.)



The Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale's presence in Mersa Fatma is simultaneously dominating and irrelevant. It is dominating because the physical remains of its presence loom so large in the form of a complex of warehouses and administrative buildings that overshadow everything else in the village. It's irrelevant because there are fewer CMC employees here (at six) than there are CMC warehouses (at seven).

The nucleus of CMC operations is found in the executive offices of the main administration building. Once used by the CMC's *Direttore Generale delle Operazioni in Africa Centrale*, they are now occupied by Renzo Segni, its local custodian of holdings and assets. In addition to serving as the center of his business operations, Segni's three wives and their children live in the ample surrounding offices, which their household furnishings have transformed into homey apartments that are nevertheless in discord with the abandoned offices and hallways of the largely uninhabited complex.

Segni's assistant, an Egyptian named Sinuhe Djau, whom Segni hired in Cairo and who shoulders most of the burden of local operations, also both lives and works on the site. Sinuhe oversees a staff of four local men named Bilali, Hawaryat, Nadiope, and Zenami. Their primary tasks include inspecting the property, fixing deteriorating buildings and equipment, running off squatters, and driving away animals. Sinuhe travels to Massaua once a month to collect their payroll and operating funds from the branch of the Banco d'Italia there.

The Investigators can approach any of these NPCs; varying interpersonal approaches work best for each.

Renzo Segni

Flattery is the key to unlocking Segni's cooperation. He has been a CMC employee since he was 15 and was assigned to Mersa Fatma at the beginning of his career. He can provide all three of the core clues described in the summary above, along with as much elaboration as the Investigators are interested in listening to.

The deteriorating relationship with the Afar in 1929, Segni believes, arose due to the meddling of a group of influential wives among the families living at Kolluli. Although the CMC never directly employed a great many of those families, the interrelationships among the area's tribes allowed those women to exert influence on their relatives that led many of them to shirk their duties, interrupt them altogether for extended periods, steal supplies, and spread their malcontent to others. (This is a perception rooted in truth. In 1924, the Guardian families were centered in Kolluli, and they worked subtly to undermine the CMC even after driving off the dig.)

Segni's take on the odd relationship between the CMC and the 1924 dig staff is that it arose from the fact that (in his opinion) Bartolo Acuna was unbalanced and his partner, George Ayers, was a drug addict. Although the dig staff was supposed to have an ongoing arrangement with the company to move their incoming supplies from Massaua to Mersa Fatma and Dallol village, both their instructions and payments were sporadic, and the former were sometimes contradictory. One day, Acuna would send word that deliveries of some particular supply were to be stopped, and, a few weeks later, he'd arrive in Mersa Fatma in person raving about the outrageousness that he hadn't received any of that particular supply in weeks. (Acuna's mania is Segni's projection. Segni did, in fact, stumble across Ayers taking Nectar once in 1925, but it didn't particularly impair him. Rather, the strange and contradictory communications reflect the Guardians' meddling. Between intercepting some communications and forging others, going in both directions, they were able to bring the dig's progress to an effective standstill for months at a time.)

Segni is aware that Bartolo Acuna is back in the country because Sinuhe mentioned having run into Acuna in Massaua the last time he made a trip there to withdraw operating funds. Segni has no further information about that, however. He refers curious Investigators to Sinuhe.

6. The Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale



Past these elaborations on the core clues of the scene, Segni knows everything there is to know about the CMC's assets in the area, including the locomotives and train cars stored in Warehouse Five ("Magazzino Cinque").

Segni is the epitome of the European colonial gone native. Although he hasn't descended to *Heart of Darkness* depths, he'll get there within the next decade or so if left to his own devices. He is the absolute ruler of his company domain and, due to the resources the company provides, the de facto boss of any person or location in Mersa Fatma that he turns his attention to. Luckily for the locals, his attention is mostly expended on his large family and his company underlings.

The sole local exception to his dominance is the staff of the local church, whose members actively disapprove of his lifestyle and person. For his part, Segni ignores them.

Investigators whose self-respect will allow them to pay obsequious homage to Segni's dominance will find it easy to secure nearly any cooperation they might request, as long as it doesn't run directly counter to the company's obvious interests. The most obvious request would be the use of a stored locomotive and the company rail line that runs to Iron Point. Segni could probably also be persuaded to loan the services of one of his employees to serve as a native guide, provide supplies and provisions, and so forth. However, other than flattery and adulation, there isn't a great deal that Segni wants for, so offers of money and similar inducements prove to be nonstarters.

Renzo Segni

Three Things: Refers to the CMC as "we," even when relating events for which he was neither present nor responsible. Fans himself to stay cool. Smokes Italian cigarettes.

Bureaucracy 3, Health 10, Scuffling 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fists)

Segni's Family

Oral History works to question any of Segni's three wives or many children. They are only capable of communicating information about the current state of the complex's operations, though, and know nothing about the 1924 dig or the circumstances that led to the CMC leaving the area in 1929. They are aware that a virtual graveyard of locomotives and train cars are stored in a particular warehouse near the train track. Word that the Investigators have questioned any of Segni's families eventually gets back to him, however, and raises his ire.

Sinuhe Djau

Sinuhe Djau is not willing to talk to the Investigators about company business without Segni's permission. Even so, either **Interrogation** or a solid beating (the latter requiring no particular ability but constituting gratuitous violence costing 1 point of Stability) can be used to compel him to talk anyway, since he realizes that information about the CMC's local operation isn't so important that he should even attempt to stand up to either physical violence or its threat. (Afterwards, though, news of an interrogation or use of force get back to Segni and bring about his wrath.)

Sinuhe has been a CMC employee for as long as Segni has and knows much the same information his boss does about the 1924 dig and the 1929 withdrawal. Sinuhe, however, is much more willing

to afford an equal share of the blame for both to unsurprising clashes of culture between the local tribes and the European company men.

Reassurance is sufficient to learn about Acuna's recent presence in Massaua from Sinuhe, because he does not regard this information as being related to the company's interests. And in fact, Sinuhe has a bit more information than his boss about Acuna's current whereabouts. Sinuhe did, in fact, run into Acuna by chance when he was last in Massaua, about three weeks ago. Acuna spent most of the encounter bragging about his accomplishments of the past decade and waxing grandiose about the critical government operation he was about to undertake. Sinuhe can name the Hotel Internazionale as the place where Acuna was staying at the time. If the Investigators return to Massaua to follow this lead, refer to **Ethiopia 3, "Finding Acuna,"** p. 192.

Sinuhe is a practicing Christian, who attends mass each morning at the small church in town. He disapproves of the lifestyle that Segni has adopted since his company masters left the village but keeps his judgments to himself for both practical and spiritual reasons (specifically and respectively, these reasons amount to the fact that he'd like to keep his job and that he is not perfect, either). A 1-point **Theology** spend would be a sufficient substitute for both Interrogation and Reassurance, above, and, if the Investigator making the spend explicitly asks, could further be used to convince Sinuhe not to report the Investigator's queries to his boss.

Sinuhe Djau

Three Things: Wears Western clothing rather than local dress. Fingers a necklace with a cross pendant that he wears on top of his clothing. Chews on his mustache.

Athletics 3, Bureaucracy 2, Health 11, Preparedness 6, Scuffling 2

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fists)

The Workers

Oral History or Credit Rating 3+ allows the Investigators to approach the local workers who report to Sinuhe. They freely describe their duties, although they are loathe to tell the Investigators anything the might imperil their jobs. Although a few of them worked for the company in 1929, none had any administrative duties, and so none know anything of great use to Investigators who ask about the dig or the company's withdrawal. The workers refer Investigators who ask about such things to Sinuhe and happily provide introductions if asked; it's clear that they respect him.

CMC Workers

Athletics 5, Health 10, Scuffling 4, Weapons 3

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (improvised tools)

Train Robbery

It's unlikely but possible that the Investigators will attempt to bypass Segni and those in his orbit by simply stealing one of the locomotives from Magazzino Cinque, driving it out onto the tracks and out into the desert. Given how few employees there are to oversee so much space, it's not even an impossible plan.

Locksmith is necessary to get into the warehouse. A Stealth test, Difficulty Number 4, is necessary to do so without arousing attention. The Difficulty is reduced to 3 if they carry out this bit of breaking-and-entering at night.

Then, a Mechanical Repair test, Difficulty Number 5, is necessary to get the locomotive that looks like it's in the best shape actually running again. This is noisy business; another Stealth test, this time Difficulty Number 5, is required to continue to elude notice.

Driving a train requires a Driving test, Difficulty Number 4. Although it would not under normal conditions, failure here results in a complete derailment of the locomotive given the poor state of the tracks and switches.

Getting the train moving, after all this, results in the Investigators' escape to the desert. Although they'll most certainly be seen, they can move fast enough over the rail to avoid being caught by anyone who wasn't standing completely at the ready to give chase on camel, car, or motorcycle.



7. The Guardians

Scene Type: Core (Floating)

Lead-ins: Arriving and investigating in the Mersa Fatma/Kolluli/Dallol village area.

Summary: The very few remaining Guardians in the local area try to figure out what to make of the Investigators — and most likely befriend them.

Core Clue: The Guardians exist, have an ancient provenance, and count as their enemies the same evil force(s) that the Investigators appear to be arrayed against. Today, however, they can bring to bear only a shadow of the capabilities they had even as recently as 1926. (Reassurance and Bargain with any contemporary Guardian.)

Core Clue: A strange new cult has arisen in Dallol village. (Oral History with any contemporary Guardian.)

Core Clue: Today, Ayers still lives (as far as they know) as an ascetic near Adua. (Interrogation with any Guardian.)



The Guardians are a secret society dating from ancient times whose ages-old task remains to preserve civilization from the otherworldly threats of perverse Outside forces. Specifically, they were tasked with ensuring that the Dallol Mouth, neutralized before the time of Christ, was never reawakened. It is a testament to the seriousness with which the local tribes take their ancestral promises that this mission didn't fade from their communal attention and wasn't revealed to outsiders over the centuries. In older times, it probably also had something to do with the fact that new initiates into their mysteries were brought before the calcified Mouth — a perverse and hideous thing — to see that their duties had a concrete purpose. "If we falter," goes part of their rite of initiation, "none will stand against the maw. Its jaws will crush our animals, our families, ourselves. We must not fall."

Today, Guardians are found among three tribes of Afar. Knowledge of the Guardians' mission and duties are not common knowledge among these tribes; their ancient trust is kept secretly by the elders of their communities, who initiate younger adults only as needed to keep the knowledge alive or as younger bodies are needed to discharge the group's duties. The women of these communities are more active in remembering and transmitting the Guardians' lore from generation to generation than the men are.

The Guardians' activities are fundamentally reactive. To discharge their duties does not require day-to-day communication or even day-to-day awareness. Different Guardians are known to each other, even from tribe to tribe, but their functions as Guardians can go unacknowledged among more prosaic social interactions for months at a time.

Unfortunately for the Guardians, they are currently stretched very thin. Two of the three tribes have relocated far to the north in order to assist in the military operations against the Italian invaders. This has left only three Guardians behind in the area around Dallol. Two (Maathai and Muhoho) are women who live in Kolluli, and one (who goes by the European name Jerome) is an aging laborer based in Mersa Fatma who works ships up and down the coast.

This "encounter" with the Guardians will more likely play out as a series of separate interactions, which are likely to begin before the Investigators become aware of the Guardians as a group.

The three Guardians who remain in the area keep their ears to the ground for anyone — especially outsiders — asking around about the Dallol area, which the Investigators will certainly be doing. Jerome is the group's first line of defense. Unless the Investigators take steps to keep their inquiries extremely circumspect, he observes and follows them, trying to gauge the nature of

Guardian Encounters

Here is a small collection of suggestions about how the Guardians might become known to the Investigators over the course of the developments in the Ethiopia Locale. It should be easy for you to improvise similar encounters in the same vein.

- A local man (Jerome) keeps showing up in the locations in Mersa Fatma where the Investigators are gathering information.
- Some of the Investigators' travel papers go missing. Jerome has stolen them to get a sense of where they're really from and what they're up to.
- One of the Guardians approaches and tries to convince an Investigator that outsiders who travel to Dallol invariably die. If they resist being run off so easily, it opens the way for more fruitful discussions.
- One of the Guardians searches the Investigators' books or notes while they're out, looking for indications — one way or the other — about the Investigators' purposes and loyalties.
- At Kolluli, a doctor or other medical professional among the Investigators is brought to a local woman. The Guardians there observe the Investigator's actions closely; this is a test of both compassion and skill.



their interest, and, more importantly, their intentions. Use periodic **Sense Trouble** vs. **Shadowing** contests. Depending on what kind of emotional beat you need at any given time, this may lead to simple Investigator obliviousness, a vague sense of being watched, a chase into the wilderness, or the emergence of a satisfied Jerome to offer an alliance to the Investigators. Jerome speaks English.

If the Investigators manage to elude Jerome's attention, the two women in Kolluli become aware of the Investigators' passage no matter what they do, given how few foreigners — essentially, none — travel overland in the area. Their approach is the same as Jerome's: distant watchfulness leading to whatever reactions (consistent with their goals) are dramatically effective.

In either case, the Guardians eventually come into contact with the Investigators. **Reassurance** is necessary to make it clear that the Investigators share common purpose with the Guardians, which is sufficient for a Guardian to reveal the very broadest outlines of their order's provenance and aims.

"We are an ancient body, secret among even our own people, trusted to ensure a great evil does not arise again as it did in the time of our ancestors. It seems as though your aims might mirror our own. But can we trust you? This is what we must ask ourselves."

Bargain is required to learn about the Guardians' active opposition to the 1924 dig. The negotiation is not for money or other real consideration, though. Rather, in order to tell the Investigators anything else, the Guardians must feel as though the Investigators are also giving up information that they would otherwise keep secret about their recent horrific experiences, about what they may have done to fight against the Mythos, and about their fears for the future.

"You may have guessed it, but I will confirm the truth of it: Our body opposed the foreigners who came those years ago to dig at Dallol. Although our alarm was great at what they were doing, we opposed them quietly, sabotaging their supplies, undermining them among their allies, undermining their progress at every turn. But they were tenacious. Both their chief, Acuna, and the American, Ayers, were obsessed with penetrating the ancient chambers.When they finally did, we had no choice but to open the seals upon our most potent heritage and end the shrine in fire."

At no point does a Guardian say anything so direct as, "We used a ritual to make a volcano erupt." Nevertheless, it should become clear to the Investigators that the Guardians did, in fact, bring those forces to bear. (**Assess Honesty** will, at the very least, convince an Investigator who has it that the Guardians believe they directly made the volcano erupt.)

If the Investigators have gotten this far and want to know why the Guardians didn't go nuclear two thousand years ago:

"Why destroy the Eating Pit and risk the wrath of the stomach it feeds? If the Mouth is still, are our purposes not served equally well?"

Oral History can be used with any Guardian as an entirely separate line of questioning to inquire about Dallol village. The Guardians can tell them that the Afar in that area have become strange in recent years. They no longer travel their old nomadic routes and rarely leave the village. The other tribes of the area have come to shun them, uncomfortable in their presence. They avoid going into town to trade with them, even if it means traveling farther to collect goods that they need.

If the Investigators asking about Dallol have also used Reassurance and Bargain to learn about the Guardians' aims and past, they are likely to follow up by asking about a possible connection between the destruction of the Major Mouth and the rise of this strange behavior among the Dallolites. The Guardians are not inclined to believe that there's any connection, because there's no obvious relationship between the dig, the eruption, and the Dallolites' reclusive behavior. Furthermore, years passed between the volcano's eruption and the rise of the Dallolites' strange behavior.

The Afar People

The nomadic Afar are herdsmen who travel by camel and raise goats, sheep, and cattle. Most communities spend the drier months near to the Awash River and move to higher ground in the winter rainy season. They live in domed tent-houses built from a branch framework covered by grass mats. A community's tents are clustered together in camps.

Politically, the Afar are organized along both clan and class lines, with clans making up extended families and classes providing an indication of whether a given individual is a leader or worker. Afar are predominantly Islamic and speak the Afar language.

Both men and women wear waist cloths, which women dye brown and men wear undyed. Women wear necklaces and go bare breasted. Married women wear black head scarves; their hair is often braided and woven with beads. Men often wrap shawls around their torsos and carry staffs used to herd animals.

The Afar diet consists largely of milk and meat, with sorghum-based porridge and pancakes supplementing these foods.



Even so, **Assess Honesty** gives an Investigator the sense that the Guardian providing this information is not so sure that there's no connection. Both Maathai and Muhoho (but not Jerome, who is more sure of himself) can be talked into admitting that they should probably be taking a more active approach to learning more about what the villagers are up to. If they weren't stretched so thin, a more direct investigation would probably have been undertaken, they say. If such an admission is made, the Guardian in question does her best to lay a responsibility on the Investigators to learn more and report back:

"You are going to Dallol. Surely it would be the responsibility of those undertaking such a journey to share with those who might come behind, someday, of the dangers of that road. If a poisoned tree flowers in the land, those who see it for what it is would be as evil as those who planted it to keep their knowledge secret."

Investigators who agree to share what they learn will find the Guardians willing to provide supplies and practical guidance, within reason. Neither of the women can travel overland with the Investigators to serve as guides, but they can recommend reliable guides from among their tribes. These guides are not Guardians, and so do not know the society's secrets, but they are trustworthy and dependable. Up to a pair of guides can be hired; they introduce themselves by the European names Richard and Charles.

In addition to the general intelligence described above, with a 1-point **Reassurance** or **Flattery** spend, the Investigators can also learn that the Guardians' oral lore includes the awareness of a series of ascetic practices, the Rituals of Self-Denial, that can neutralize Minor Mouths of the Liar. ("Small jaws," the Guardians' call them, as opposed to the "Eating Pit" they have guarded since ancient times.) These practices include long periods of ritual abstinence from food and drink, even longer periods of silence, absolute celibacy of both thought and action, and other physical and mental denials. None of the three surviving Guardians actually knows these practices and cannot teach them. Even so, knowing that such techniques exist, and being aware of their broad outlines, lowers the Difficulty of Stability tests to 4 for encountering Minor Mouths for the remainder of the campaign.

Any of the three contemporary Guardians in the area can tell the Investigators that when a posse of Guardians, including a ten-years-younger Jerome, was sent to apprehend Ayers after the volcano's eruption, they discovered a Minor Mouth on his body. The group took pity on Ayers, due in no small part to Ayers's fast-talking (a multi-point spend on his part). The Guardians taught him, over the course of some weeks, the Rituals of Self-Denial. Ayers's Mouth became dormant as he adopted these practices.

Interrogation is required to get any of the Guardians to give up Ayers's current location because they believe (probably correctly) that if the Investigators go talk to him, they'll imperil his calm state of mind, which is the only thing that's keeping him alive. If gentle Interrogation is applied, the Guardian being questioned is obviously disappointed with him- or herself for giving up the fact that Ayers went to go live in the desert near Adua (where the climate is less punishing than it is here in the Dankali basin). He or she asks the Investigators to leave Ayers alone, for his survival's sake. If forceful interrogation is applied, the Guardian is actively angry about having been pressured into endangering Ayers and will not help the Investigators any further.

Denying the Mouths: Home-Grown Ascetic Practices

An Investigator who becomes aware of the Rituals of Self-Denial can make a 1-point Occult or Theology spend and invest a week of time (during travel is suitable) to cobble together a "roll-your-own" version of the Rituals of Self-Denial that will turn out to be modestly effective.

As long as such an Investigator observes a profoundly simple diet, meditates for most of his waking hours, refrains from exertion, is entirely abstinent from sexual and violent activities, and speaks no more than a few dozen words a day, a manifested Mouth on that Investigator's body becomes and remains calcified as long as these practices persist.

Mechanically speaking, an Investigator observing these practices cannot use abilities more than once per day (this restriction is on all abilities collectively, not particular abilities individually), may not make any spends whatsoever, may not speak more than one or two sentences at a time, may not use General abilities to attack or defend. Other activities must, of course, remain within the spirit of the regime described in the prior paragraph.

If observed, this ascetic regime prevents a manifested Mouth on the Investigator's body from speaking, moving, drifting around the Investigator's body, exhorting (per its ability), attacking (the Investigator or anyone else), or causing further Stability loss to the Investigator. The Mouth transforms, physically, from being a livid and swollen thing to taking on a dull, scabrous, and emaciated appearance.



Jerome

Three Things: Stands with impossibly good posture. From time to time, looks past those he's speaking with, toward the horizon. Ends conversations abruptly when he considers a decision made, moving to immediate action.

Athletics 8, Conceal 4, Disguise 6, Driving 4, Firearms 5, First Aid 4, Health 12, Mechanical Repair 4, Preparedness 8, Scuffling 7, Shadowing 4, Weapons 4

Weapon: −2 (fists), +0 (bolt-action rifle), +1 (saber)

Maathai and Muhoho

Three Things: Smile broadly, genuinely welcoming and motherly. Ask open-ended questions, seeking more knowledge than they tend to give away. Offer food and drink.

Athletics 4, First Aid 8, Health 9, Preparedness 9, Weapons 2

Weapon: −1 (improvised tools)

8. The Rail Line

Scene Type: Travel / Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Access to the rail line, either by Segni's permission or through thievery (Ethiopia 6, "The Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale," p. 198).

Summary: The Investigators travel inland by rail from Mersa Fatma, over the Ethiopian border, to the railhead at Iron Point.

The rail line that runs from Mersa Fatma to Iron Point is 50 miles long, with no branches or switches after the few just outside the CMC warehouses that allow trains to be moved around the CMC property near the port.

The line was originally built to haul heavy trains, and so was robustly manufactured. However, this is counterbalanced by a lack of maintenance for nearly a decade. Luckily for the Investigators, they won't be using it to haul minerals.

The trip by rail takes the better part of a day, not because the trip is of a particularly consequential distance, but because the locomotives are geared to haul heavy loads rather than make good time, and because slow travel is advisable given the condition of the equipment and rails. Furthermore, the Investigators must stop from time to time in order to shovel deep drifts of sand and dirt off the tracks, or else risk derailment.

Hit all those who join in the shoveling with plenty of unpleasant descriptions of the heat, as well as an advancement on the heat track (see "The Heat" on page 197). If you wish, you may exempt from penalties those who are laborers by trade, are native to desert climates, have **Outdoorsman**, or are willing to make a 1-point **Preparedness** spend on having packed particularly appropriate desert garb.

It's entirely possible that the Investigators will ignore the locomotive entirely, instead using the train tracks as a simple point of reference for travel by camel or on foot. Traveling to Iron Point this way takes the better part of two days, with an overnight camp in between. Investigators won't need to stop their conveyance to dig out the tracks but will suffer the heat more directly as they progress more slowly across the desert landscape. Describe the heat in truly hellish terms and assess one heat track advancement each day (see "The Heat" on page 197).

Natural Color

As they leave Mersa Fatma behind, the Investigators have well and truly departed from civilization. The desert scrubland in the immediate area is flat. Towering mountains are visible in the far west, but only through thick bands of hot air rising off the baked landscape.

Flora consists of grasses, shrubs, and several species of "dragon trees," squat trees with thick trunks and stiff leaves. The Investigators are able to see zebras, gazelles, and wild asses in the distance, largely ignoring them as they pass. The perceptive may also spy leopards hunting these beasts, or packs of hyenas and jackals. Native birds range in size from larks to ostriches.

You should be able to cast any of these natural features as either hopeful or sinister as you may need from moment to moment. Mountains may alternately glower or provide a firm and comforting presence, vegetation may be pleasantly fertile or irregularly fecund, and so forth.

As the Investigators draw closer to Dallol, they also begin to see strange and colorful geographical formations. Hot springs and centuries-old evaporation of seawater have left behind thick stratified salt deposits in extremely vivid yellows, tans, browns, reds, and even greens. Irregular fingers and pillars of minerals push up from the ground. As above, these unusual features can be painted as either beautiful or ominous, as the situation demands.

Things Go Wrong

If things have been going too smoothly for the Investigators so far in the Ethiopia Locale, this scene is a good moment to deal them a significant setback. There are two options: a breakdown or a bandit attack.

If the Investigators have been doing altogether too well, you can combine the pair. If, on the other hand, the players are feeling oppressed by significant setbacks so far in the Ethiopia Locale, don't hassle them with either — a smooth trip inland may be just the thing to help them get their feet back underneath them.

Breakdown

A breakdown obviously applies only if the Investigators are traveling by train. Call for a series of increasingly difficult **Mechanical Repair** tests, starting at Difficulty 4, with tests becoming more difficult one point at a time until a Herculean Investigator succeeds at a Difficulty 8 test and arrives, against all odds, at Kolluli, where the locomotive promptly gives out.

Given a failure earlier than that, though, the train gives up the ghost in the middle of the desert, forcing the Investigators to travel by foot for the remainder of the way to Dallol — or, at their option, to turn back, although most of the Investigators agree that they traveled more than halfway down the line before the breakdown.

Pressing ahead (or turning back) may require the Investigators to leave behind heavy gear, at your option. Walking over the hellish terrain brings with it additional and oppressive descriptions of grim heat and further advancement along the heat track (see "The Heat," p. 197). As before, you may exempt hardy Investigators, native Investigators, those who possess **Outdoorsman**, and/or those willing to make a 1-point **Preparedness** spend.

Bandit Attack

If you think the dramatic atmosphere would benefit from mortal peril, go for the bandit attack. The bandits are local tribesmen of poor morals, hoping to benefit from the chaos of the invasion by enriching themselves. (They are not part of the degenerate Dallol cult; they're simply bad men, not degenerate Bad Men.) There is one bandit per Investigator, plus one more for good measure. The bandits either spot the train (or Investigators' camels) from a distance or were tipped off by allies in Mersa Fatma about the Investigators' pending trek.

When the bandits race out from between a pair of hills up ahead, the Investigators can try to outrun them, try to take them out with gunfire, or pursue both strategies at the same time.

For their part, the bandits hope that threatening the Investigators with rifles will get them to stop the train and stand with their hands in the air long enough to be relieved of their easily transportable valuables. If the Investigators call their bluff, however, they simply open fire. They're just as willing to loot corpses as living victims.

If the Investigators are on foot, outrunning the bandits will simply not work.

If the Investigators are riding camels, outrunning the bandits is a by-the-book contest of **Riding** among all those driving camels. When a bandit fails, he is out of the chase. When an Investigator fails, that Investigator's camel is overcome by the bandits, and one of them leaps from his own camel onto the Investigator's, where hand-to-hand combat (or the Investigator's surrender) comes next.

If the Investigators are riding a train, the train's driver must make a series of three **Driving** tests, of Difficulties 5, 4, and 3, to get away. Each threshold is attempted as many times as necessary, until the driver succeeds. Failing at a later threshold does not mean the Investigator must start over at the first one. The bandits do not make Riding tests under this arrangement; the burden of escape is entirely player-facing.

After each Driving test, the bandits and Investigators may let loose with a round of gunfire. Shooting from the moving train or shooting at bandits on galloping camels increases a target's Hit Threshold by 1; doing both at once is cumulative. Investigators on the train do have the advantage of full cover, if they think to take it, which increases their Hit Threshold by 1 more.

If the Investigators have been far too successful thus far, you may decide that the bandits have dragged a rusted-out old lorry across the tracks, which the Investigators notice either after their second Driving test or after their first Driving test with a 1-point **Sense Trouble** spend. Stopping the train in time requires a **Driving** test, Difficulty 3 (or Difficulty 4, if the Investigators explicitly said that they were speeding up in response to the bandits' appearance). Crashing through the wreck without derailing the train requires a **Driving** test, Difficulty 4.

Bandit

Athletics 9, Firearms 5, Health 9, Riding 6, Weapons 5

Weapon: +1 (saber), +0 (bolt-action rifle)

9. Kolluli

Scene Type: Travel / Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Traveling along the rail line (Ethiopia 8, "The Rail Line," p. 204).

Summary: The Investigators have the opportunity to acquire supplies, accumulate information, hire guides, and/or join a salt caravan.

Core Clue: A strange new cult has arisen in Dallol village. (Oral History and Reassurance with any local resident.) (Also, encounters with the Kolluli Guardians are likely, so see also the core clues at Ethiopia 7, "The Guardians," on page 201.)



Investigators traveling along the rail line between Mersa Fatma and Iron Point can see from the tracks, with no difficulty, the small collection of standing tents and permanent buildings made of salt blocks that compose Kolluli, the native village that stands just a few miles short of Iron Point.

If the Investigators come by locomotive, a collection of curious villagers are standing outside to watch the train's arrival as it comes into sight. No trains have come down the track for a matter of years, but the sound of the approaching locomotive is nevertheless unmistakable to the natives. The adults remain in the village to watch, but a handful of children run down closer to the tracks, the better to see this unusual sight.

If the Investigators wish, they can completely ignore the village, whichever way they're traveling. The residents are content to ignore travelers who ignore them.

If the Investigators approach the village, they're met by a collection of the local tribe's adult men, who remain peaceable as long as the Investigators are obviously peaceable.

At first, the locals are interested in finding out where the Investigators are going, why they're going there, and who they work for. Depending on how the Investigators present themselves, the locals may either assume that the Investigators work for the CMC or another mining company (which would be welcome because it might herald new work for the villagers), or might suspect that they're somehow involved in the war (which would be entirely unwelcome). The villagers have no reason to suspect that the Investigators would be interested in the dig site or the strange behavior of the Dallol villagers, until and unless the Investigators bring it up. That has the possible exception of the local Guardians, Maathai and Muhoho, who could have received intelligence from their ally Jerome.

Until the villagers know which to think, they're cautious. Assuming that the Investigators don't make enemies with abrasive or stupid antics, the villagers warm up to the Investigators as — if nothing else — an unusual and therefore interesting deviation from the norm. Even if one or two Investigators act strangely or alarmingly, **Reassurance** on the part of any other Investigators is sufficient to keep things on an even keel.

Bargain is sufficient to see reasonable requests for trade in supplies or information accommodated, assuming good relations. The services of a guide, enough camels for the Investigators, supplies of food and water, and other sundries can all be accommodated, assuming a modicum of resources on the Investigators' part. (And even if the Investigators have been stripped of every item of worth that they own — by the bandits, say — the locals still take pity on them enough to see them back to civilization.)

If the locals learn that the Investigators intend to go to Dallol village, they counsel against it, saying that the tribe of Afar who has come to dwell there in recent years has become strange and perverse. If the Investigators ask follow-up questions, the Kolluli tribesman are confused about why the Investigators might want to burden themselves with knowledge about things that are obviously best avoided.

A combination of **Oral History** with **Reassurance** that the Investigators are good people can help the Investigators learn more about the modern-day Dallolites. (Oral History and Reassurance can come from the same or separate Investigators.) In brief, the Kollulites know the following:

- The tribe that now lives in Dallol was once broadly nomadic, as most tribes of Afar are. Although some members of most tribes settle down in villages or cities from time to time, individuals often cycle back and forth from the nomadic group to the stationary place, on and off over their lifetimes. However, the rooted Dallolites appear to have slowly, over the last few years, become something like an anchor for their nomadic brethren, until the whole extended tribe now lives in Dallol and no longer travels with the seasons. The Kollulites see this behavior as entirely deviant — both morally and logistically suspect.

- The tribe that has come to inhabit Dallol village is the one from which most of the workers on the 1924 dig came. (Although there were also other dig workers who came from other tribes who do not exhibit any strange behavior today. In fact, one or two live here, in Kolluli.)

- For decades prior to coming to rest in Dallol, many members of the Dallol tribe mined and carried salt from the salt fields to the coast to barter

and trade. Many other tribes carry on this trade, even today. Kolluli is a minor hub for this trade, but none of the Dallol tribesmen appear to engage in it any longer, and, in any case, the Kollulites have made it clear that the Dallolites are no longer welcome in Kolluli.

The Kollulites are extremely reticent to but, given the continued application of Reassurance, will discuss the following two points:

- Afar who have traveled close to Dallol village in recent years sometimes have extremely disturbing dreams in the night. With a 1-point **Reassurance** spend, one man of the tribe confides, in private and on the condition that this information not be shared with others, that on one such trip he had repeated nightmares in which he chewed off his own limbs. On one night, he awoke to discover that he had bitten his own arm hard enough to make it bleed. He can show Investigators the pinkish scars his teeth left in his deep brown skin.

- The Dallolites hurt themselves. On the rare occasions where they've been seen outside Dallol in recent years, many are bandaged, most have copious scarring, and some have even had open wounds on their bodies. A few Kollulites report having seen Dallolites cutting and even biting themselves.

The locals here don't know what has given rise to all this perverse behavior, but it scares them, and they fear that talking about it too much, or too openly, invites the same ill fortune upon themselves.

If the Investigators ask whether, or suggest that, the strange behavior might be related to either the dig or the eruption, the Kolluli locals take no position and express no interest in investigating either in order to find out. As far as they're concerned, continuing to shun the Dallolites is the best plan in both the short and long terms. They won't hinder the Investigators, but neither will they condone such obviously ill-advised inquiry.

What none of these parties know — with the exception of the Guardians, who are aware — is that the destruction of the Dallol Mouth did attract the eye of the Liar back to Ethiopia, as the Guardians feared it might. Its perverse whispers on the desert wind since the 1926 eruption have corrupted the tribe of Afar who worked for the CMC in the Dallol area harvesting salt deposits and hauling them across the desert to the railhead. This tribe devolved into what is, today, a cult of flagellants whose leader manifests a Minor Mouth, which the cult members allow to bite them, and from which they have learned the Tongue of Lies. Revering the greater entity they have named the Agony on the Wind, the cult will, if left alone, eventually manage to manifest a new Major Mouth in the area after a 2,500-year absence of the Liar's active influence.

Throughout this scene — and in the scenes to come — keep constantly in mind the cultural details and communication difficulties described in the sidebars "The Afar People" and "Talking to the Locals" (pages 202 and 188, respectively). The Investigators are about as far from the proverbial Kansas as they'll be until Act Three takes them into the remote Himalayas, and, as they talk to the natives here, you should drive home that nearly every interaction between an Investigator and a tribesman is fraught with difficulties of communication or the constant danger of erroneous cultural assumptions. Investigators with **Anthropology**, even if they're not known to be familiar with African tribes in particular, fare slightly better in these interactions than their companions who lack it because they've at least spent time in their lives thinking generally of, if not experiencing, profound cultural differences.

Remember also that the Guardians who live secretly among this tribe, Maathai and Muhoho, will be quietly observing and testing the Investigators to asses their purpose and loyalties (see Ethiopia 7, "The Guardians," page 201). If the Guardians are able to determine that the Investigators are working against the agents of the Liar, or if they have received intelligence from Jerome saying the same, they will find an opportunity to pull one or two of the Investigators aside to speak with them separately, compare notes, and offer alliance.

10. Over the Desert

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Arriving at either Kolluli or Iron Point (Ethiopia 9, "Kolluli," p. 206).

Summary: The Investigators travel the last few miles through the desert to Dallol village, the Dallol volcano, or both.

Whether they depart from Kolluli or Iron Point, whether they travel by foot or camel, and whether they're heading for Dallol village or the Dallol volcano, the Investigators are eventually going to have to travel overland in the brutal Ethiopian desert. Even the worst combination of these options (travel from Kolluli, on foot, to the volcano) is only a single day's travel, but the extreme heat and malevolent influence of the Liar From Beyond on the desert wind combine to make it a particularly horrible day.

Assuming a native guide, the Investigators need simply follow the leader in order to arrive at their destination. Otherwise, one of their

number must have **Outdoorsman**, an accurate map, and appropriate orienteering tools to chart the course to their destination.

Past the challenge of taking the right route, the Investigators have heat and horrific visions to deal with. See the sidebar "The Heat" on page 197 for the former. If you've been doing your job right since the Investigators' departure from Mersa Fatma, most of the Investigators should be at least one or two ticks advanced on the heat track, and one or two may be significantly advanced. Continue your descriptions, intensifying them and handing out further advancements liberally, even — now — to Investigators who've gotten off easy in earlier scenes due to their occupations, backgrounds, or Outdoorsman abilities. As far as any sensible person would be concerned, the Investigators are traveling overland onto the Biblical plains of Hell.

There are two events that are likely to transpire as the trek plays out. Each is described below.

Bitten

At either the high heat of the afternoon or in the deepest black of night, the most exhausted Investigator begins to hallucinate. Allies with **Medicine** or **First Aid** can see that the character's suffering from heat exhaustion. Rest and hydration are the obvious curatives, but even those only stabilize the situation for the duration of a stop or ten or fifteen minutes. And the longer the trip is drawn out, the more Investigators advance further on the heat track, and the deeper their exhaustion becomes.

Eventually, something like this happens to the most far-gone Investigator:

You have never been so hot in your life. Your clothes cling to your body, no longer even wet — all sweat has long since evaporated from the husk your body is becoming.

Blinking your eyes no longer lubricates them against the dust, so you leave them closed for long moments, forging ahead blindly, listening for your [companions' or camels'] footsteps.

Your head pounds. Your [feet or bottom] ache. Even your hands are stabbed with sharp pains in this —

At this point, one of the other Investigators notices that the Investigator to whom you've been making this description has taken a huge, bloody bite out of the fleshy base of his or her thumb.

Presumably, their action to stop this is what jerks the biting Investigator from the state of reverie. The Investigator comes back to attention with a small lump of warm, wet flesh in his or her mouth and a rivulet of blood running down a forearm.

For the biter, this event requires a 3-point non-Mythos Stability test. For witnesses, it's a 2-point test.

The biter also sustains a point of damage and suffers the increase by 1 of the Difficulty Numbers of all tests and contests involving that hand, which, naturally, is the Investigator's dominant hand. This penalty will persist for the remainder of the Ethiopia Locale.

After this event, although the effects of heat continue, and perhaps compound, nothing similar occurs.

Watched

As the Investigators near their destination, a **Sense Trouble** test that meets Difficulty Number 4 is sufficient for an Investigator to notice that their party is being watched from a far-off hilltop by a single camel rider silhouetted against the far-off mountains, who's openly observing them with a pair of binoculars. All that can be discerned of the watcher from this distance is that he is — from his dress and skin color — a native Afar.

This individual is one of the denizens of Dallol village. Although they do not regularly patrol these areas, the Agony on the Wind sends their wisewoman Tshombe whispers of the goings-on in the area around the village, and it is in response to the intelligence of travelers on the desert that this watcher was sent.

This individual continues to openly watch the Investigators, remaining at a distance of more than a half-mile, until it becomes clear where the Investigators are going, at which point he returns to Dallol. He returns immediately to Dallol if the Investigators try to make contact.

11. Dallol Village

Scene Type: Core / Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Arriving in Dallol village (Ethiopia 10, "Over the Desert," page 207).

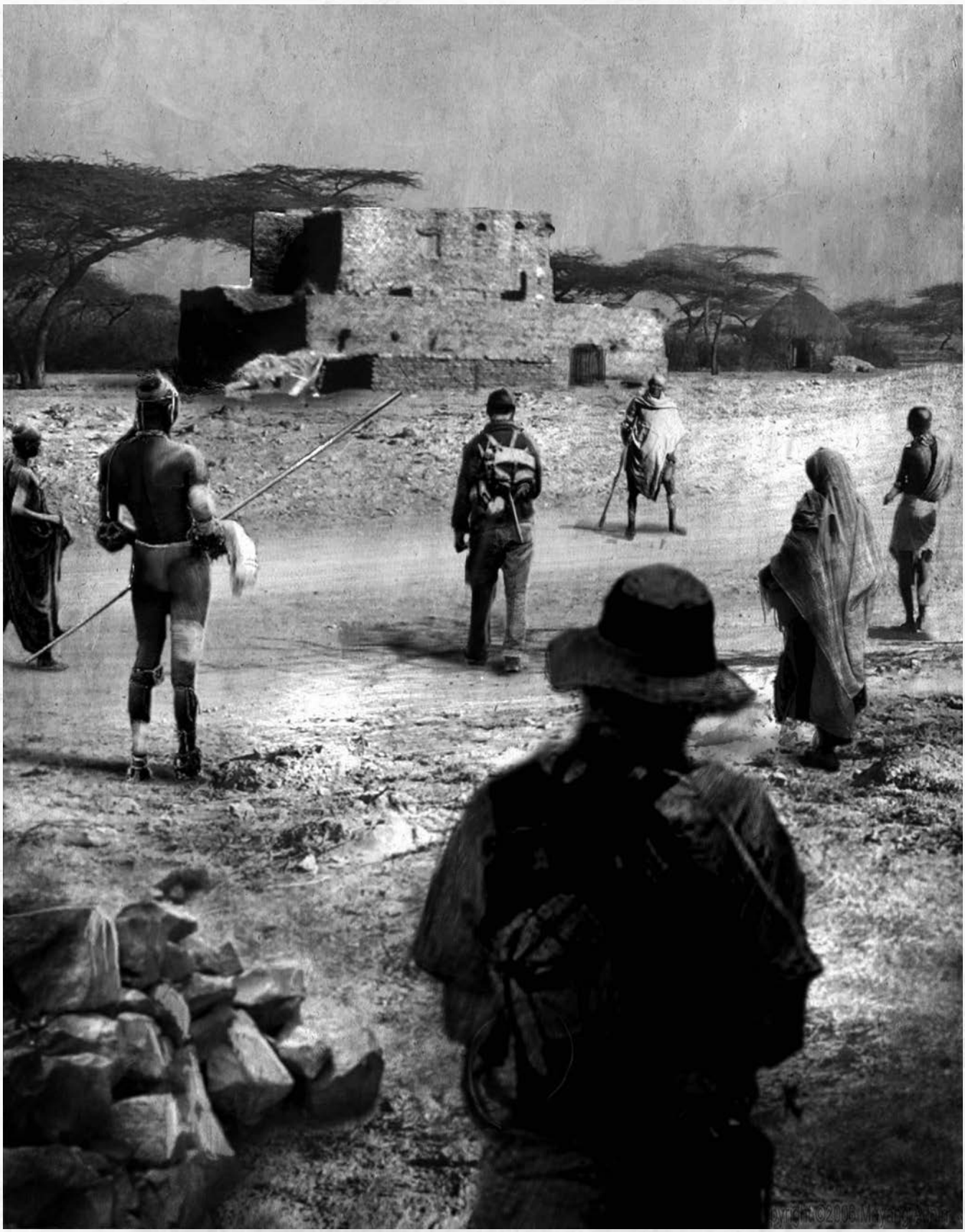
Summary: The Investigators probe Dallol village and interact with the cult of the Agony on the Wind. Eventually, they provoke the suspicion and wrath of the villager-cultists.

Core Clue: The local populace comprises a self-mutilating cult of the Agony on the Wind, their name for the Liar From Beyond. It is led by an elder who hosts a Minor Mouth on her body. (Roleplayed interactions with the Dallol villagers, with no abilities required — an extended simple search, essentially.)



The cult in Dallol village is dominated by the Liar From Beyond. They know its speechless voice as the Agony on the Wind due to the wordless directives and dreams it sends them, which

11. Dallol Village



compel them to mutilate and flagellate themselves in its name.

All those who dwell in Dallol are devoted to this cult; none remain who were able to resist the voice of the Agony. The small handful who resisted its whispers either fled Dallol, were driven out, or were killed.

The cult numbers nearly 80 men, women, and children. Its leader and prophet is a wisewoman named Tshombe. Before the Agony came, she was the wife of one of the tribe's respected elders. She was the first to hear the Agony, and her husband and children have all perished since then — willingly — in intense episodes of self-harm driven by her urgings. A large part of Tshombe's status in the cult now arises due to the laudable sacrifices her family has demonstrated in the Agony's name and the honor this brings them.

The cultists in Dallol are the primary antagonists of the Ethiopia Locale, and so you should take care in the way that you introduce them to the Investigators and in the way that they interact with the Investigators as the events of the Locale come to a climax.

Physically speaking, Dallol village is much like Kolluli village. Both have a few permanent buildings made from salt blocks, supplemented by tents in the native style. The only unusual thing is that perhaps there are more tents here than the Investigators might have expected. Whereas in Mersa Fatma they were probably led to believe that no more than two dozen souls live in Dallol permanently, there are at least that many *tents* here. **Anthropology** suggests — if the players don't think of it themselves — that this means there are that many *households* here, not that many individuals.

Any native guides who have led the Investigators here stop and set up camp at a quarter mile's remove from the village, within sight of its building and tents, but just barely. They are unwilling to go any farther. The Investigators are likely to want them to come along to act as interpreters; they will not. (They do promise not to leave without the Investigators, however, and **Assess Honesty** leads an Investigator who has it to believe that they are not lying.)

There is no clear sign from a distance of anything unusual about the populace; although, if you think it's likely to make the players nervous, make a point that the children of this village (in contrast to the Investigators' experience at Kolluli) do not run out to meet the Investigators as they arrive.

As the Investigators draw near, several dozen people of all ages and both genders assemble near the edge of the town, silently awaiting the travelers. As the Investigators draw closer, and as they may have heard at Kolluli, they can see that many of the locals here are bandaged, especially on their hands and arms, and, where they are not bandaged, many are scarred. By the same token, many of the villagers are missing fingers, and a few are missing hands or feet. This is even true of the children.

The Investigators are likely to ask, eventually if not immediately, about whether the Dallolites' wounds and scars are consistent with biting; any Investigator with **Medicine** or **First Aid** can say with confidence that many are but also notices other scars and wounds more consistent with cutting, crushing, whipping, and other types of trauma.

What happens depends in large part on how the Investigators approach the villagers.

Until the Investigators demonstrate that something else is the case, the villagers assume that the Agony has sent the Investigators to this place or that the Investigators have followed its whispers across the desert in order to commune with it and join their number. If the Investigators are carrying any objects on which a Minor Mouth has manifested earlier in the campaign or are carrying any other relics related to the Liar From Beyond, these in particular have been sensed in Tshombe's dreams, and their arrival is anticipated. (Exception: Any such objects that have been shielded by the stone fragment unearthed in Savannah are invisible to the Liar, and are therefore not anticipated.)

Procession

In accordance with the villagers' basic assumptions — and again, until and unless the Investigators demonstrate otherwise — the Investigators are treated as respected visitors to Dallol. Thus, the villagers invite the Investigators — with gestures and pantomime, most likely, as none of those who come out to greet the Investigators speak any language but Afar — to follow them toward the center of the village. Some villagers simply watch them go and then turn back to their daily business, but a fair number join what turns into a procession toward the salt-block building where Tshombe lives, with the Investigators at the center.

As they walk, the Investigators may notice several of the villagers hurting themselves — cutting themselves with small blades, bits of glass, or their own fingernails or teeth. Investigators who notice this may also notice that such actions draw reserved signs of approval from other villagers nearby.

A girl is jabbing at her arm sharply, and a glint of light reveals some edge of glass in her hand. Blood trickles down her arm and from between the fingers that grip the shard. An older relative, perhaps her mother, comes up behind her and takes the glass out of the girl's hand. Any relief you might have experienced is interrupted when the elder stabs the glass into her own leg.

A man is biting on his bottom lip so hard that blood streams down from his teeth. He absentmindedly wipes at the blood and smears it across his chin.

A boy, no more than fourteen, steps out from the crowd and steps up to you. He offers a small, rusty knife in his open hands. His eyes look generous as his lips peel back in a grin of blood-stained teeth.

At the building, two villagers precede the Investigators in, each drawing his hand across a block of salt in the doorframe in which many shards of glass have been embedded. This draws blood; many villagers have clearly done this in the past because dried bloodstains extend nearly to the ground on that side of the frame. The Investigators are watched to see if they follow suit. There are mild nods of approval for those who do, but no consequences for failure to do so. Drawing one's hand across the shards is painful — more painful than would be expected, if a player asks — but not significant enough to inflict Health damage. The experience is accompanied by a sound like a rushing of wind, but unless the Investigators compare notes, they may not realize that what they heard was not actually a meaningless rush of desert wind, and, in any case, the experience does not threaten Stability loss. Other villagers follow the Investigators in; all of these also run their hands down the glass shards until they are slick with blood.

Talking with Tshombe

Inside, Tshombe awaits the Investigators in the outer room of the building. It's clear that the building must comprise at least two chambers, from both its size and a doorway obscured by a hanging cloth that leads deeper into the building.

Tshombe appears to be in her 30s, neither old nor young compared to other women in the village. Unlike other native women, however, who go bare breasted, Tshombe wears a shawl wrapped around her torso, which is doubly odd in that the outlines of only one breast can be seen beneath it.

Also already in the building (in addition to the two villagers who preceded the Investigators) is a very old and grossly mutilated Afar man who sits on a stump of some native wood. Both of his eyes are gone, hollow sockets gaping where they once were. Both of his feet have been severed, and his entire right arm is gone at the shoulder. This man, Habte, knows enough French (or other non-English European language, if none of the Investigators speak French) to act as a very slow interpreter between Tshombe and the Investigators.

Habte's many sacrifices to the Agony have resulted in the accent of his speech drifting rather naturally toward the hissing vowel-sounds of the Tongue of Lies. (Imagine, for example, a person speaking English in a deeply foreign accent.) Although Habte's vocabulary has remained unchanged, and he is not capable of actually communicating in the Tongue, the effect is notable, and probably alarming, for any Investigator who's heard the Tongue of Lies spoken to date in the campaign.

Everyone sits. Tshombe says something in Afar to Habte, who translates for the Investigators:

"The Wind is pleased that you have come to us."

Unless the Investigators are carrying relics related to the Liar From Beyond, allow the Investigators to lead the conversation at first. Most likely, they'll work their way around to asking the questions that led them to the Ethiopia Locale.

On the other hand, if the Investigators are carrying the Liar's relics, Tshombe asks to see them, describing them in what rough detail Habte is able to translate. Tshombe has seen them in her dreams and so can provide accurate descriptions of everything but the stone shard (and anything protected by it). If pressed, Tshombe is willing to answer the Investigators' questions as a quid pro quo for being allowed to observe these relics.

If the Investigators ask about the 1924 dig, Tshombe is disinterested — disgusted, almost — at the idea of discussing events that transpired "before we heard the wind-whispers." If the Investigators press this line of questioning, Tshombe admits that she remembers the dig and that some of the men of the tribe worked with the Westerners who led it, but she becomes extremely frustrated and agitated if the Investigators continue to press her about it. These are events from an irrelevant and uninteresting past.

If the Investigators ask about the eruption, Tshombe suggests that the cataclysmic event marked the moment when the Agony first began to speak, although she admits that it took her, and the rest of the tribe after her, many years to understand what it was saying, to appreciate the magnitude of its speech, and to organize their lives around its worship.

If the Investigators ask about the nature of the Agony on the Wind, Tshombe is remarkably forthcoming. She reports that her tribe first heard its voice some years ago. She says that it revealed slowly to them, in dreams and signs, the ways of its veneration. Their worship has been rewarded, she says, by the increase of their number in Dallol — many of their relatives from the tribe have come to join them since they came to dwell permanently in the village. As the Investigators can plainly see ("as you must *know*, if you, too, have heard its voice"), the voice of the Agony is the voice whose counsel opens the way to the purest of experience.

At some point during the interview, Habte holds out his good hand in Tshombe's general direction, groping blindly. This is best staged so that it follows from discussion between the villagers and Investigators about the nature of the Agony and the privilege of worshipping it. Tshombe takes Habte's hand and moves it beneath her shawl. Strange and disturbing movements of the fabric are accompanied by a faint hiss and a wet tearing. Habte's face is wracked with an ecstatic pain, and, a moment later, rivulets of blood drip down Tshombe's belly beneath what the shawl covers. Habte writhes on his stump, tears of pain and joy leaving dusty tracks on his cheeks. Although Tshombe does not uncover the Mouth that has consumed and replaced her left breast, witnessing this event calls for a 5-point Mythos Stability test for all those who're present.

If the Investigators ask to leave (or flee!), they are permitted to go. The villagers all become caught up in this ecstatic moment.

If the Investigators continue to observe, the event continues for perhaps a minute before Habte withdraws his bloody hand and holds it triumphantly in the air, the villagers speak and shout triumphant words in Afar, and a strong villager stands, picks Habte up, and carries him through the covered doorway into the rear room.

The departure of their translator suggests an effective end to the Investigators' interview with Tshombe, but, if any of them remain, she holds out her hands as if to take an Investigator's hand into her own. In the unlikely event that an Investigator offers a hand, she passes it beneath her shawl, where her Mouth bites and chews its flesh in much the same way. This causes −2 damage and provokes a 6-point Mythos Stability test for the one experiencing it and a 4-point test for witnesses (unless any missed seeing Habte do the same, in which case it is a 5-point test).

If — more likely — the Investigators demur, she simply nods, stands, and disappears into the inner chamber. The other villagers stand and begin to file out.

When the Investigators emerge from Tshombe's home, hit them with an immediate heat-track advancement as they step back into the sun and are buffeted with a boiling, angry gust of wind.

The Inner Chamber

If the Investigators enter the inner chamber (immediately, by stealth later on, or by whatever means), the light is dim — no windows or doors allow sunlight in. On the dirt floor, a shallow oblong depression roughly ten feet long by five feet wide is edged with salty dirt stained brown and red with blood, most dried, some fresh. (However, because all of the earth in the Dallol area is multicolored with the copious salt deposits, it takes **Biology**, **Geology**, or good light and an extended examination to say with certainty that the majority of the dried red coloring is from blood.)

If the Investigators followed Habte in, he is either in the process of crawling around the depression on his knees, smearing blood around its perimeter, or has lapsed into unconsciousness after having done so.

If the Investigators have seen a Major Mouth in any of the other Locales, the correspondence is obvious and striking. As the Investigators are likely to guess, the villagers are in the process of preparing a suitable place for a Major Mouth to manifest with their sacrifices of pain and blood. A full and final manifestation is still much agony and many months off, but, if the Investigators don't intervene one way or the other, the cultists will eventually be successful.

Next Steps

It should be your objective to slowly but continually ratchet up the general overall atmosphere of menace and horror over the course of the Investigators' interactions with the Dallol villagers, from the moment of their arrival at the village.

The initial stage of the villagers' perhaps unsettling welcome must eventually give way to a sense that the Investigators are under a pending threat, because the only way to avoid being found out as pretenders to the worship of the Agony is to actively engage in self-mutilation, to actively offer one's flesh to Tshombe's Mouth, and so forth, which — presumably — the Investigators will not.

As it becomes clear that the Investigators are pretenders, perhaps over the course of an overnight stay at the village or at a camp outside it, Tshombe and the villagers begin to become disgruntled with them and then, slowly, angry. At some point in this escalating antagonism, the Investigators are likely to try to escape the village and surrounding area, either by sneaking off or fleeing outright.

Depending on how things have been paced thus far, this may lead directly to an open chase, a violent confrontation between the Investigators and the villagers, or the Investigators' simple escape.

In whatever case, let the chips fall where they may. An open chase across the desert might lead to some or all of the Investigators being caught and dragged back to Dallol or to their escape. The chase might even continue all the way back to Kolluli, at which point the Dallolites ultimately, and reluctantly, give up their pursuit.

11. Dallol Village



A violent confrontation between a handful of Investigators and perhaps a handful of guides on one hand and the entire population of Dallol village on the other hand is unlikely to go well for the Investigators unless they've brought along a machine gun and planned for the eventuality of having to enact a massacre.

Sneaking away is probably the safest way the Investigators can go. This is a fine option, dramatically speaking, because it leaves a real, high-stakes threat dangling behind the Investigators to violently confront them in a later scene or to harry them out of the Locale.

One potential curveball you might throw at the Investigators, if they left one or more guides at a camp removed from Dallol, is a return to said camp to discover that the guides have been slaughtered, presumably by villagers. The deaths of their guides will naturally make further travel — whether to the volcano, to Ayers's retreat, or even back to either Iron Point or Kolluli — much more difficult.

A word of staging advice: If you or your group has the expectation that any given Locale will end in a horrible orgy of death and violence, keep in mind that the Dallol cultists are the Ethiopia Locale's antagonists for such a confrontation. If you spend them too soon, your group may find that their experience of the Locale ends with a dramatic whimper rather than a bang, even if (for example) it culminates in the relatively successful outcome of learning from George Ayers how to neutralize a Mouth.

Lost in the Desert

If the Investigators have native guides who're killed in the desert, they are left needing Outdoorsman, a compass, and an accurate map to find their way back to some point of their choosing. If the Investigators lack any of these things, they're out of luck in choosing a destination.

With Outdoorsman and a compass (which is to say, with Outdoorsman and either Preparedness or an explicit earlier statement about bringing a compass), the Investigators can eventually find their way back to the Red Sea shore after a journey of several days. Push their heat tracks to the end over the course of those days, leavings doubts about whether their water will hold out.

With an Outdoorsman spend and a compass, the Investigators can luck into finding some specific destination they're seeking, such as Kolluli, Iron Point, the rail line, or the volcano site. However, they can not find George Ayers this way.

If the Investigators become lost in the desert without a guide or Outdoorsman, you have three options, and the one you choose boils down to your preferred aesthetic of punishment for failure in a roleplaying game. The first is that they all slowly die of dehydration. The second is for a tribe of Afar to discover them as they wander the desert and help them back to civilization. The third option — perhaps the most interesting — is to fade out on the dying Investigators, to fall back to new (or established) second-string PC Investigators (letting the players think that the lost Investigators have perished in the desert), and then reintroduce the recuperating first-generation Investigators — no doubt grossly scarred in both physical and psychological terms — in Kolluli when the second string arrives.

Tshombe

Three Things: Rolls her head ecstatically while talking. Slurs her speech. Trembles periodically.

Health 7, Scuffling 2, Sense Trouble 4

Weapon: −2 (fists; if she rolls a natural six on her attack, her Mouth can launch its own attack)

Habte

Three Things: Hissing, vowel-ridden accent. Taps appendage stumps while translating. Long, stringy whiskers.

Health 4, Sense Trouble 2

Villager (Combatant)

Athletics 8, Firearms 3, Health 8, Weapons 3

Weapon: −1 (knife), +0 (bolt-action rifle)

Villager (Noncombatant)

Fleeing 2, Health 6, Weapons 1

Weapon: −1 (improvised tool or implement)

12. The Volcano and Dig Site

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Traveling to the dig/volcano site (Ethiopia 10, "Over the Desert," p. 207, or Ethiopia 11, "Dallol Village," p. 208).

Summary: The Investigators visit the Dallol volcano and 1924 dig site, and unearth evidence that they have not been misled as to the events of 1924–6.

Core Clue: The dig site and ancient temple have been completely demolished by a volcanic eruption. (Geology and Evidence Collection at the site, with supporting clarification available via Anthropology, Biology, Forensics, and History.)

If the Investigators Bypass Dallol Village

If the Investigators bypassed Dallol village, traveling directly to the dig site instead, the Dallol villagers become aware of the Investigators anyway. Initial contact occurs in exactly the same way as in Ethiopia 10, "Over the Desert," p, 207 (see the "Watched" portion of that encounter).

Determine the villagers' reaction to the Investigators' presence based on the dramatic needs of the unfolding story. Keeping in mind that the villagers are your primary antagonists in the Ethiopia Locale, you may decide that the Dallolites attack en masse in the night, send an envoy to invite the Investigators to meet Tshombe in the village, continue to watch the Investigators from a distance, or something entirely different.

One excellent spine for the unfolding Ethiopia drama would be for the Dallolites to continue to observe the Investigators from a distance as the Investigators travel deeper into the desert in search of George Ayers. The Agony on the Wind would be delighted to consume Ayers after being thwarted for all this time, but due to Ayers's asceticism, its awareness has not been able to find him. If the Investigators were to unwittingly lead the Agony's cultists to Ayers, it would be a deliciously accidental promotion of the Liar's desired ends.

Upon their arrival at the site, all Investigators immediately advance one tick on the heat track, regardless of their skill and background. (In the 1960s, weather surveys will identify Dallol as the literal hottest place on earth. The annual average high temperature here is 106° F.)

Dallol mountain is on a broad expanse of colorful salt flats periodically interrupted by mineral pillars and brine pools. The immediate landscape is similar to what the Investigators have seen so far as they've traveled around Kolluli, Iron Point, and the Dallol village.

The squat Dallol "mountain" rises only about 150 feet above the plain, a stretched oval roughly 2 miles by 1 mile. The southwest side of the mountain boasts impressive salt canyons caused by slow erosion over the centuries.

The top of the mountain sports a very broad crater, but it's also a very old one. An Investigator with **Geology** can identify it as such, and — after a few minutes scanning the horizon from a high lookout point — can point the group to the much younger crater, almost a mile to the southwest of the mountain, that was ground zero of the 1926 eruption. It's roughly 30 yards across and a relatively shallow depression. If the Investigators have a description of the area from Bartolo Acuna, or are here with any Afar who visited the dig site when it was active, they can confirm that the new crater overlaps the dig site.

Again, with Geology, an Investigator can explain to the others that eruptions of this type ("phreatic subaerial," a conspicuously academic Investigator may wish to note) occur when magma from below the earth's surface comes into contact with underground water and the resulting steam explosion throws earth and rock into the air before collapsing on itself to form the type of crater now in evidence. In more temperate environments, such craters typically become lakes. This explanation isn't at odds with the functioning of the Guardians' spell, which has the essential effect of coaxing a lava flow close enough to the surface to do whatever destructive work the landscape might put it to.

Just outside one of the crater's walls, the Investigators discover (no ability needed) a small cairn. It's clear that it was assembled after the eruption, because it certainly wouldn't have withstood that upheaval. If the Investigators wish to desecrate it, they discover the remains — partial, in most cases — of five native Afar who were killed in the eruption and whose bodies could be recovered. With **Anthropology** or **Forensics**, the Investigators can confirm that these are native bodies and that George Ayers's remains are not among them. Desecrating the cairn may, at your option, cause the Investigators difficulties with any guides in their employ and/or any of the Dallol villagers who may be surveilling them.

Evidence Collection, digging tools, the better part of a day, and one more advancement on the heat track for each Investigator can be put to good use here. (Any Investigators who do nothing but find shade and hydrate themselves can avoid this additional

heat track advancement, but the fewer Investigators who search, the longer the search takes. With only a single Investigator doing the work, a thorough search takes three days.) The following clues are found:

- It is clear that the dig was at ground zero for the eruption. Fragments of the scientists' mundane tools (shovels, picks, stakes, and so on) are recovered up to a mile away (or as far away as the Investigators bother to search for them), blown through the air by the steam explosion. Any Investigator can find these, without any particular ability.

- In addition to the scientists' tools, body fragments of some of the ill-fated dig workers can be found in the immediate area of the crater. An Investigator with **Forensics** is most likely to find these. Such an Investigator can rule out obvious signs of death from causes other than standing at ground zero of a sudden volcanic eruption, in case the Investigators are trying to rule out a cover-up for some other violent attack or event. That is to say, there is no evidence that these bodies were gnawed, shot, tortured, or the like prior to their obvious cause of death.

- In addition to the tools, fragments of the ancient structure can be found. These are rather harder to identify than either of the previous two classes of evidence, because the passage of millennia had their way with these fragments even before geologic forces demolished them. As with the tools, they were thrown over an area of miles. An Investigator with **Anthropology** or **History** is most likely to find these fragments. They are consistent, per such an Investigator, with the ancient constructions found at other African sites. There are no fragments of the protective relief large enough to be useful to the Investigators or that can even be identified conclusively as such.

- Finally, a participating Investigator with **Biology** discovers what seem to be fossilized teeth in the crater and its immediate surroundings. They seem not to correspond to the kinds of animals known to inhabit the area in either the modern day or (with **History**) earlier eras. Similarly, they are not human teeth. They do all share similarities with each other that suggest they came from the same type of creature, as opposed to being the remains of different types of animals. If the Investigators heard Bartolo Acuna tell of the "statue" discovered by his dig, they immediately make the connection upon finding these and realize that Acuna's statue was nothing of the sort, but rather a once-living, fossilized thing. (If none of the searching Investigators have Biology, fall back to an Investigator with **Forensics**, or failing that, to the one who has **Evidence Collection**.)

The players will almost certainly realize that the teeth are the calcified teeth of the ancient Mouth that was demolished in the eruption. Only the fact that the inner chamber of the temple was so far underground limited the area over which they were scattered. If the players do not make this connection themselves, reveal it in a dream the next night to a low-Stability Investigator who has seen a Major Mouth thus far in the campaign. This Investigator dreams, perhaps, that the teeth of an exploding Major Mouth riddle his body as he watches, for some reason unable to move or run.

Broadly speaking, this scene is a bit unusual as a core clue in that it amounts to a confirmation of no clue. That is, by coming here, the Investigators don't learn anything they haven't already heard. However, there's value to them in confirming it, if for no other reason than that it confirms that the Mouth that used to be here has been destroyed and that if they wish to learn more, they will have to press on and find George Ayers.

If you judge that the Investigators could use a win in order to balance out a downward trend of failures leading up to their arrival here, you may wish to present the site's clear-cut evidence of the destruction of a Major Mouth as a positive development, perhaps even permitting the Investigators to recover a point or two of Stability over the course of a contented night's dreamless sleep.

13. Needle in a Haystack

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Knowing that George Ayers now dwells alone in the desert (Ethiopia 7, "The Guardians," p. 201).

Summary: The Investigators search for George Ayers, whose whereabouts can only be roughly guessed at, in the vast Ethiopian desert.



At some point, the Investigators will press on past even Dallol and the volcano site into the deep desert in search of George Ayers. Barring terrible luck and complete stupidity, they will do so with the assistance of one or more native guides, and perhaps even one or more of the surviving Guardians.

This scene, in which the Investigators search the broad Ethiopian desert for a single man who may not even wish to be found, is short and flavorful, but, ultimately, its successful completion in the discovery of George Ayers is not in doubt. That is to say, as long as the Investigators have a guide, they will

find Ayers. (If the Investigators don't have a knowledgeable guide who knows who they're looking for and where he's likely to be found, they do *not* find Ayers, full stop.)

However, the Investigators don't know that their success is assured — they don't even know if Ayers is still alive — so your job in this scene is to draw out the search for exactly the amount of time that keeps the players in suspense and not a moment longer. At the first sign of suspense turning to boredom or irritation (and hopefully, before that moment, of course), move on to the next scene.

The process for finding Ayers that the Investigators' guide suggests is to check known water sources in the desert, look for signs of human visits at each, and then follow any that look like they were made by a single individual (as opposed to groups, which is how tribal visits will appear) to wherever they lead. The Guardians have been able to provide a few leads to start the Investigators' party on a reasonable track.

While the search continues, push all of the Investigators all the way to the end of the heat track. Don't hesitate to jerk them around on this front. Perhaps their guides note with relief that the next few oases they'll check are on higher ground, where temperatures are likely to be cooler, but, upon traveling to these, the party learns that those oases have dried up and a direct return to the hotter lowlands will come sooner rather than later. The bottom line is that even Investigators with Outdoorsman, with extensive experience in the desert, and with vast reserves of personal badassery are completely and entirely out of their minds from the heat by the time their party finds Ayers. Particularly frail Investigators may even fall into complete semiconscious delirium, at your option.

As this desert travel continues, continue to keep in mind any possible antagonist reactions from the Dallolites, ranging from distant surveillance to surprise attacks in the night.

Eventually, the Investigators' guide finds a promising trail at a freshwater oasis deep in the desert, or Ayers finds the Investigators' party. Both cases are lead-in points to the next scene.

14. George Ayers

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Discovering George Ayers's whereabouts (Ethiopia 13, "Needle in a Haystack," p. 215).

Summary: The Investigators find and question George Ayers.

Core Clue: The specific personal practices that can neutralize a Minor Mouth. (Reassurance on Ayers.)

Core Clue: Any missing pieces in the Investigators' understanding of the aims and operation of the 1924 Los Angeles cult. (Reassurance on Ayers.)

Core Clue: Ayers and Edgar Job were personally friendly in Los Angeles. (Oral History on Ayers.)

Campaign Clue: A Major Mouth can be calcified by means of a sacrificial ritual. (Reassurance on Ayers in combination with Occult on the sketches of the ancient temple's interior which Acuna could provide.)

For the past going-on-ten years, George Ayers has lived alone in the desert, an extreme ascetic forced to extraordinary self-denial in order to keep at bay the Minor Mouth manifested upon his body by an addiction to Nectar and an uncommon personal devotion to the Liar From



Beyond. As described earlier (see **Ethiopia 7, "The Guardians,"** p. 201), Ayers was apprehended after the 1926 eruption by Guardians who took pity on him. Ayers proceeded to have a crisis of conscience and personality, learned how to control himself in the starkest of terms, and disappeared into the desert where he has remained ever since.

The Investigators discover Ayers by one of two routes, either by finding his trail at a source of water or by being discovered by him.

In the case of the former, the track that the Investigators follow is discovered by their guide, but at first dismissed as being too old to be of much use, having been left nearly a month ago. (*"And if this person hasn't come back for more water since then, he's either dead or moved on."*) But the trail — after nearly being lost over hard ground and rock — leads eventually to a dry grotto where Ayers lives. It simply turns out to be the case that he consumes so little water as to be nearly unbelievable and so doesn't need to go collect it very often.

14. George Ayers

If Ayers discovers the Investigators, this arises while he is on his way to or from a water source. He happens to spy them and would normally ignore them (or even hide from them), but for some reason he feels moved to remain in the open — silhouetted against the sky while standing atop a prominent rock, perhaps — while the Investigators approach him.

Ayers is a white American of European descent, very deeply tanned and profoundly lean. He's not starving, and although his ribs and bones are manifest beneath his skin, he does not seem to be unhealthy. Ayers's hair and beard are uncut and unkempt, and have been so for many years. He wears no clothing whatsoever and no protective gear of any kind. His feet and hands are deeply calloused, his skin like leather.

In the direct center of Ayers's belly is a calcified Minor Mouth, in full view of any who approach him. The thing is a half-open and lopsided sneer of unwholesome lips and teeth turned chalk-dusty. It is completely still, entirely inanimate. Because of it, to view Ayers from the front requires a 3-point Mythos Stability test.

Ayers moves with deliberation, never stumbling when he steps, never rushing to move, never distracted from the focus of his attention, rarely blinking. He wastes no motion.

Ayers confirms his identity with a nod, at first.

The first time Ayers speaks, it takes him a while to make a noise. He has quite literally not spoken a verbal word in years, and the physical apparatus of his throat and vocal cords do not leap back to the challenge. Ayers does not panic at this; he simply works his mouth until sounds emerge.

Ayers answers questions put to him with as few words as possible, wasting no speech. He answers no question he does not wish to speak on; he simply ignores it, remaining silent.

Broadly speaking, and assuming **Reassurance** that the Investigators are enemies of the Liar From Beyond, Ayers is willing to help them. He has been fully disabused of his former veneration of the Old One, and, while he himself seeks only to remain apart until his life ends, he supports the efforts of the Investigators to oppose the Liar and lead others from beneath its domination.

Ayers is living proof that extreme asceticism can neutralize a Minor Mouth. Among the practices he observes are the consumption of only the barest quantities of water and food, very long periods of meditation on the barest fact of his own existence, and absolute sexual abstinence of both thought and deed. He is willing to describe any and all of these practices, although he does not bring up sexual abstinence, having essentially driven the thought of sex so far from his mind that he's momentarily surprised to be reminded such a thing exists in the world.

Ayers is willing to teach these practices to any Investigator who's interested in learning them, although this instruction will, per Ayers, not be a short process, and will be arduous not only for the Investigator(s), but also to Ayers, who will have to spend his own precious mental energies on efforts other than simply preserving his body. (See the sidebar "The Rituals of Self-Denial," p. 218, for more information.)

Ayers remembers the activities and personalities of Echavarria's 1924 cult, up to the point of his departure for the dig. He can provide any missing pieces that the Investigators may with to ask him about. He knows nothing specific about the disastrous summoning that ended the cult, although he began to have the sense by 1926 that something ill had befallen his coreligionists, given that Echavarria had been out of contact for more than a year. He isn't interested in learning what happened to the cult; he lacks even the slightest personal curiosity about the matter.

Ayers can confirm that he was a friend of Edgar Job's. In fact, Ayers was the one who introduced Job to Echavarria. Job recalls that Echavarria took an unusual interest in Job, for reasons that Ayers never understood. Ayers remembers Job fondly but sadly. It does not surprise him to learn that Edgar is in Joy Grove, though, given his obsessive personality.

An Investigator with **Oral History** who probes Ayers about the cult notices a reaction — the faintest of smiles — when the name of Edgar Job is mentioned. Further questioning along those lines eventually provokes Ayers to recall that the two of them had grown to become close platonic friends even outside the cult. Ayers is saddened to learn that Job is apparently now a hostage to his psychological demons but is heartened if the Investigators tell him that Job is having any success in recovering his mind, especially if he's told that it's due to Job's evolving mastery of his own thought processes.

Finally, any Investigator who (a) has **Occult**, (b) learns the outlines of Ayers's personal practices, (c) understands that these practices are what have calcified the Minor Mouth upon Ayers's body, and (d) has seen and studied Bartolo Acuna's sketches of the reliefs on the inside of the destroyed temple can stitch this knowledge and these clues together into the idea that it might be possible for one or, more probably, many individuals to purify themselves according to Ayers's example, and then neutralize a Major Mouth by feeding themselves to it. This, naturally, would be fatal to anyone who carried out such a course of action, and there's no way to prove in advance of

trying it that it would work. However, in point of fact, this is one route to neutralizing a Major Mouth.

Lines of questioning on emotional subjects or long periods of simple discussion eventually weaken Ayers's grip on his Mouth. That is to say, the longer that Ayers's mental efforts are directed at anything other than self-denial, the more his Mouth begins to stir. This first manifests as stomach pains that he's more than able to endure without emotion, but eventually, the Mouth begins to achieve color past its chalkiness, begins to moisten, starts to move, and so forth. Ayers attempts to return to his meditations long before the Mouth can return to awareness and begin to consume him, unless you deem it dramatically appropriate for Ayers to sacrifice himself to his own Mouth in order to ensure that the Investigators learn from him how to combat the Mouths that he now knows still exist around the world.

Any Investigator who watches Ayers's manifested Mouth slowly and painfully consume him over the long course of learning the Rituals of Self-Denial from him (see the sidebar) must make a 5-point non-Mythos Stability test.

The Investigators will eventually have their questions answered, or Ayers will stop willingly answering more. Although the Dallolites may still be lurking about and may perhaps mass to stage a climactic assault against the Investigators and/or Ayers (if the former led them to the latter), the Ethiopia Locale effectively concludes once the Investigators learn what Ayers knows.

The Rituals of Self-Denial

The Rituals of Self-Denial that can help a human resist and eventually calcify a Minor Mouth that manifests on his or her body are not magical or even Mythos-related, except insofar as extreme acts of self-mastery amount to either magic or super-science.

To learn and internalize this broad grab bag of practices requires two paired investments — spends and time — which are made in tiers. Making a 1-point spend in Cthulhu Mythos, Hypnosis, Occult, Psychoanalysis, or Stability, and investing a week of time, gives an Investigator a rating of 1 in the unique ability Rituals of Self-Denial. An Investigator who has a rating of 1 can then make a 5-point spend in any combination of the same roster of abilities and invest a month of time in order to achieve a rating of 2 in Rituals of Self-Denial. A 25-point spend and one-year investment boosts the rating to 3, and so on, into complete impracticability (a 125-point spend and 10-year investment for a rating of 4, a 625-point spend and 100-year investment for a rating of 5, and so on).

Rating points in Rituals of Self-Denial directly reduce Stability loss from Mouths of all sorts and from hearing the Tongue of Lies, whether spoken by a Mouth or human. They also directly reduce damage caused by any Mouth's biting or other direct attacks. With a Rating of 3 (which is Ayers's rating), for example, an Investigator suffers 3 fewer points of Stability loss from seeing a Mouth and has any damage such a Mouth inflicts on him reduced by 3.

Whenever a manifested Mouth's potential damage is reduced to 0, that Mouth fully calcifies. That is, to calcify a Major Mouth, individuals with enough Rituals of Self-Denial rating points to fully neutralize the greatest damage that Mouth can inflict by biting can sacrifice themselves to the Mouth in order to calcify it. This sacrifice results in their death, sadly. For example, a Mouth capable of inflicting +4 damage by biting could be neutralized by the sacrifices of 10 people with ratings of 1 (each) in Rituals of Self-Denial (because 10 is the maximum possible damage: 6 + 4 = 10).

George Ayers

Three Things: Deeply weathered skin. Uses an extreme economy of speech when communicating. Manifests an obvious and calcified Mouth.

Archaeology 5, First Aid 9, Health 12

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fists)

Wrapping Up

After the Investigators have learned all they can, or wish to know, from George Ayers, avoid dragging out the Investigators' return trip to civilization. Although it may take them more than a week to return to civilization by way of Kolluli, Mersa Fatma, and so forth, reduce this to a few brief sentences at the game table if at all possible.



Malta

"But as the gate swung wider and the sorcery of the drug and the dream pushed me through, I knew that all sights and glories were at an end; for in that new realm was neither land nor sea, but only the white void of unpeopled and illimitable space."

— "Ex Oblivione"

Valletta, Malta, in *Eternal Lies* is a blend of real-world history and fabulist invention based on a vibe of truth. The Valletta the Investigators explore in this chapter is a shadowy reflection of the real Valletta, corrupted and debased by an insidious cult of drug-dealing villains. By the time the Investigators arrive, Valletta has been subject to the influences of Nectar and the cult for years. Those influences have taken a toll.

Evidence discovered in Los Angeles in Act One reveals a cult presence in Valletta, Malta, somehow involving a man called Montgomery Donovan. Investigations prior to reaching Malta suggest that it may be at the heart of the Nectar trade in Europe and Africa. If the Investigators have visited other Locales in this act of the campaign, they may well come to Valletta expecting to find a Major Mouth of the Liar From Beyond at the center of the Nectar operation. (They won't be disappointed.)

The investigation in Valletta is meant to take the PCs to a variety of sites within the larger Locale, but especially headstrong Investigators may dive directly into a confrontation or two that speed up — and thus shorten — the story here. Let them. It's their choice to make. The consequences for such actions, whether abrupt and sweet or lingering and painful, are theirs to explore.

The horrible truth at the heart of the cult's Valletta operation is that great power often requires great sacrifice. Montgomery Donovan made a sacrifice to empower the Major Mouth in Valletta and in so doing alludes to the sacrifice Ramon Echavarria intended to make in 1924 — an intention that comes to haunt the Investigators in Act Three. Donovan's sacrifice and power may cost him his son and, depending on the actions of the Investigators, his life.

What sort of sacrifices have the Investigators made to gain power? What have they given up to chase the cult of the Liar halfway around the planet? What more will they sacrifice to save — or change — the world?

The Malta Spine

This investigation's spine is a complex sprawl surrounding the life and work of Montgomery Donovan and the people connected to him — some of them in secret. The Investigators have a lot of freedom in Valletta, yet the case is likely to lead them back to a few central encounters with key characters, like cult leader and kingpin Montgomery Donovan or solitary knight Sir Godfrey Welles. Along the way, the characters may explore Valletta's aged, beautiful, and treacherous waterfront, a hospital infiltrated by cultists, and a network of ancient catacombs.

Practically speaking, the spine of Malta takes the Investigators in two main directions, both of which may be explored in full and both of which lead, in their way, to the Mouth of Malta. The most direct investigation takes the PCs to the Valletta harbors, through a seaside warehouse, and underground to the Major Mouth that gushes forth with horrific quantities of Nectar. A second route of investigation, following Montgomery Donovan, leads to a hospital with a dirty secret and a well-meaning knight on a secret mission, then possibly connects back to that seaside warehouse or leads under Valletta to a hidden passage that lets out… at the cult's Nectar-spewing Major Mouth.

At various points throughout the investigation, the PCs have the option of switching their approach to the case or widening their focus. They may even split up.

Along the way, the PCs have opportunities to rescue innocents caught in the cult's web or to be rescued themselves. They may confront a literal boatload of Nectar smugglers. They may chase or be chased through the charming alleys of Valletta. Adventure abounds.

Whatever they do, however, they must uncover this Locale's campaign clue so that they may enter the abode of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths during Act Three.

Floating Campaign Clue

This Locale features an essential floating campaign clue that can be won in a variety of places — from the local cult leader, from his notes deep in the warehouse tunnels, from an enigmatic knight, or even from a bodyguard, if necessary — and which you should have at the ready to feed to the players. It is vital to acting in Act Three and is one of the essential prizes for exploring this Locale.

The clue is this: The body of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths is only reachable in its lair when an unnatural ravine — a "flexing crack" — is open near a mountaintop in some far-off place. That ravine is open only "when the moon is dark and the stars shine down" just so upon that foul cleft.

Thus other Locales reveal the "what" and the "where" necessary for confronting or destroying the Thing With a Thousand Mouths; this Locale reveals the "when."

This fact may be learned alongside a spell that disperses clouds and darkens moonlight to allow stars to shine down, as well, depending on where the clue is discovered. (See the scene **"Nectar Tunnels,"** p. 254, for details.)

You are free to move the cloud-dispersing, moon-darkening spell from the Nectar tunnels to Sir Godfrey's library (or anywhere else, frankly) to make sure the Investigators find the spell — perhaps at a dramatically appropriate moment — if you want the spell in play. Put the spell in Sir Godfrey's library to make him more valuable. Put the spell in the Nectar tunnels to reward the PCs for investigating during the Locale's action-packed climactic scenes.

The spell, however, is a bonus. The actual clue is the fact that the flexing crack shall only be accessible "when the moon is dark and the stars shine down." Investigators may be able to act on that clue by simply visiting the flexing crack (ideally in Act Three) when the moon is dark.

Key Cast

Montgomery Donovan: Head of the Valletta chapter of the Cult of the Thousand Mouths and responsible for distributing Nectar throughout Europe and North Africa from Malta. This is a name the characters have in their possession when they reach Malta, thanks to the book found in Los Angeles. Montgomery Donovan is a British businessman, drug addict, and sex addict who came to the cult via Trammel's parties in Los Angeles and rapidly rose to power using his natural charisma and considerable financial resources. In the past year, however, he has found himself widowed, his son dying, and his grip on the Maltese branch of the cult slipping.

Monte Donovan, Jr.: The elder Donovan's son, installed at the Hospital Superbissima in Valletta, where nurses plied with Nectar work around the clock to cure his mysterious ailment.

Sir Godfrey Welles: This strange soul, this Knight Hospitaller, is among the last of an aged order still protecting a few secrets hidden beneath the island of Malta. Sir Godfrey, however, is a curio in the ranks — he is certain that Nyarlathotep, an ancient enemy of the order, is behind the Cult of the Thousand Mouths and their potent Nectar. He also knows another way into the den of the Mouth of Malta…

Alexi: A young boy caught by chance in the cult's wake and now dying in the Hospital Superbissima next to Monte Donovan, Jr. This boy needs the Investigators' help!

Diana Hantz: Head of logistics for the Maltese branch of the Cult of the Thousand Mouths, Diana Hantz is a bright, charming sociopath whose interest in the Liar From Beyond is purely tactical. She wants power over people's minds and the cult gives her that. She is a cunning charlatan in her own right, but she wants to be exquisite. She hopes that a god of lies will give her the power to lie her way to wealth and power. She's halfway there already. She is also the woman who rushes in to fill Donovan's place if he is taken out of his position by the Investigators.

Victor Prescott: Montgomery Donovan's head of security, Mr. Prescott is a mountainous Englishman and devoted member of the Cult of the Thousand Mouths. He is also deeply addicted to Nectar and much more devoted to the Mouth of Malta than he is to either Montgomery Donovan *or* Diana Hantz. Prescott's a minor character, included in part to demonstrate that some cultists in Malta are devoted to the cult and in part to provide an additional named foe for the Investigators to defeat in dashing combat, if it comes to that.

Captain Aldavar: Captain of the freighter ship taking on a cargo of



Keeper's Background: The Maltese Cult

Nectar bound for Europe, Aldavar is a Nectar-using career sailor with contacts all over the world and no desire to die for the Maltese cult. If he can, he'll make off with the last great supply of Nectar from Valletta and sell it to his contacts in Europe.

Keeper's Background: The Maltese Cult

Montgomery Donovan came to Valletta in 1932 because he needed somewhere to orchestrate Nectar creation and shipment and his import/export business had already done well for him there. He brought his family because he expected to stay in Malta for a good many years and his family was important to him. Soon they had a townhouse, a yacht, and a steady supply of Nectar — everything was going as planned.

They couldn't produce Nectar fast enough for the addicts in Europe and the Mediterranean. Donovan took this problem to the Major Mouth that he and his cultists (like Diana Hantz and Victor Prescott) had summoned and pleaded with it to give them more Nectar. "I'll do anything," Donovan said one night. "Anything."

Then, early in 1937, the Major Mouth answered him. It spoke in a hideous layered mockery of Donovan's own voice. It demanded a sacrifice. Something important to Donovan must be given up in exchange for more Nectar. "The more serious the sacrifice," said the Mouth, in Donovan's voice, "the more potent the power."

Cultists volunteered, in Nectar-induced ecstasy, to be sacrificed, but no more Nectar came. A favored cultist was sacrificed against his will. No effect. "It must be precious to you," said the Mouth. "Give me someone precious to you."

Donovan chose his son, Monte. But when the time came, Donovan couldn't go through with it. Instead, he gave the Mouth his wife, Portia… and the Nectar flowed as never before.

Diana Hantz and Victor Prescott were impressed, until they saw what the sacrifice had done to their once-ruthless leader. Donovan was wracked with grief. For days after the sacrifice, he did not leave his townhouse. He was a wreck.

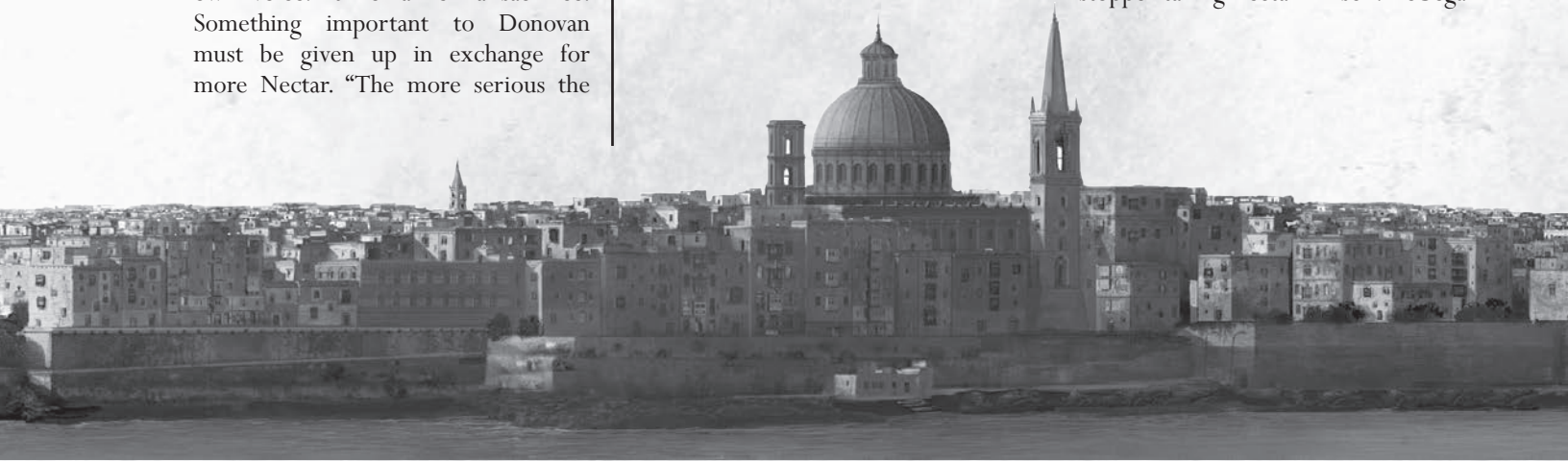
Then Monte fell ill, and Donovan took it as a sign that he was being punished, perhaps by God, perhaps by the Liar From Beyond, perhaps by the ghost of Portia. Desperate to save his son, Donovan checked him into the Hospital Superbissima. When the doctors there proved unable to help young Monte, Donovan turned to Nectar and magic to help, hoping that the god behind the Mouth would reward his faith.

At the same time, Donovan secretly stopped taking Nectar himself. He began

Wardrobe: Malta

Valletta is a Mediterranean city with a Mediterranean climate, warm and dry. Lightweight suits and hats are the order of the day for men, often with a jacket thrown over the shoulder after it's been shed in the heat. For women, both European and Mediterranean styles are in fashion, ranging from loose and comfortable dresses to handsome pantsuits. Valletta is full of travelers and visitors, too, wearing everything from sturdy dungarees to functional khakis to loose-fitting Middle Eastern tunics, depending on where they hail from and why they've come to Valletta — work or play.

The Investigators' journey in Valletta may take them from high-class spots like the Royal Opera House to the sea salt and grime of the city's warehouses, and they may wish to dress the part. Inappropriate attire might keep them from following Montgomery Donovan into a fabulous restaurant yet fancy duds may prove to be a liability in the cramped catacombs beneath the city. At your discretion, wearing the wrong clothes for a given scene can increase the Difficulty by 1 for things like Athletics, Scuffling, and Shadowing tests and contests… or can ruin the clothes. (Let the player decide which.) Sometimes, of course, a nice suit ruined by misadventure is just the right look for a bold Investigator.



to burn his collection of pornography and blackmail photos. He is looking for a way to take Monte and run without bringing the full force of the cult down on them. He hopes that, by dropping his weapons (the blackmail photos) and demonstrating he's not a threat, he can escape the cult's retribution and become just another sap in its shadow.

As Donovan presently continues to unravel, Diana Hantz and Victor Prescott prepare to make their move to replace him. Right now, while Donovan is malleable, he is valuable for his deep pockets and his status among the cultists. When he becomes a liability, however, Diana springs into action. Perhaps she'll put a gun in his mouth and make him write checks. Perhaps she'll hide his son from him until he names *her* the new cult leader. Whatever it takes.

Then the Investigators show up.

Travel to Valletta

If the Investigators still have access to Janet Winston-Rogers's plane, travel to Valletta from Europe or North Africa is easy. Without Winston-Rogers's plane, a flight to Valletta is expensive (Credit Rating 5+), with a spend required for every two characters without their own money for airfare. Flying Investigators set down at an airstrip outside of the municipality and can ride into the city center via bus (Credit Rating 1+) or rental car (Credit Rating 4+).

Malta's a small island. If the Investigators don't come by air, they must come by sea. Perhaps they travel on a regular transport ship from Italy or Sicily (Credit Rating 2+); perhaps they charter a ship from their favorite Mediterranean port (Credit Rating 5+, depending on distance).

Valletta is a rich and varied port, so however the Investigators come they may be able to blend into the regular flow of visitors and tourists to avoid attracting attention. On the other hand, if the cult is actively watching them, the Investigators may be spied on by cultists posing as fellow travelers if they come via public means. Vetting private charter crews, for sea or air, requires a 1-point **Assess Honesty** spend. Vetting fellow passengers might require up to a 2-point spend, at your discretion, if the PCs travel via a particularly crowded ship or plane.

Once they're in the heart of Valletta, on or around the Xiberras Peninsula, travel from site to site is easily done on foot or by taxi, so travel need not be a major part of play if you don't want to worry about it.

Environs: Valletta, Malta

Malta is a small, rocky island in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily. It is an ancient, long-inhabited land with megalithic ruins suggesting prehistoric settlement going back thousands of years, to 5,000 BC and beyond. Ancient Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Normans, and more would inhabit the island over the millennia, leading to a culturally rich and artistically diverse identity. As an ideally positioned Mediterranean port, the island has long been coveted by navies, merchants, and pilgrims looking for a safe stopover spot for refueling, trade, and worship.

To sorcerers and occultists investigating the ancient magical rites and powers of prehistoric civilizations, Malta is an important destination. It may be a site of Atlantean power or a remnant of a prehistoric valley flooded when the Strait of Gibraltar gave way and admitted the Atlantic waters, thereby creating the Mediterranean Sea. Its ruins contain countless forgotten inscriptions in vanished and unearthly languages. Its landscape contains fossils of long-lost species and traces of ancient magic. It is a place rich in mysticism and history.

In 1530, the island was given by Charles I of Spain to the Knights Hospitaller, who would thereby come to be known as the Knights of Malta. Following the Great Siege of Malta by the Ottomans in 1565, which the Knights of Malta famously endured, the fortified city of Valletta was founded and named in honor of their Grand Master, Jean Parisot de la Valette.

He would die in 1568, but the city that bore his name would eventually draw admiration from throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. The knights called it "the Most Humble City of Valletta," yet the glitterati and royalty of Europe called it *Superbissima*, meaning "Most Proud." To the locals, it is simply *Il-Belt* — "The City."

The Knights of Malta held the city until 1798, when it was taken from them through Napoleon's military treachery. After being admitted to port to resupply, Napoleon captured and looted Valletta. With his own French garrison in place and his handpicked leaders in control of the city, Napoleon departed for Egypt. The French administrators were not popular, but the people of Malta endured.

The reign of the Knights of Malta in Valletta was over… on the surface. A few chapters of knights went underground to combat the French forces in secret,

Emotional Modulation in Malta

The following lists provide quick-and-dirty hopeful and sinister setting details you can use to push the emotional tenor of play either up or down as needed while the Investigators explore Malta.

Hopeful Malta Beats

- Gulls sing and cry over the harbor, drifting through the air on invisible currents, careless and free. It's a lovely day.
- An old couple plays chess outside of a tiny Baroque café. The woman makes a joke in Maltese and they both laugh and smile.
- The wind carries the smell of spices and tea down from an open window. Someone is plucking idly at a guitar up there.
- The blue of the bay peeks out between buildings, dotted with little white triangular sails and big red container ships. It is a peaceful day, or just another business day, for some of the souls of Valletta.

Sinister Malta Beats

- A storm blows in, its thunderhead rolling in dark and low, lightning splaying across the sky and touching the sea.
- A dead gull lies rotting in the street, half-crushed by passing cars, its feathers matted and sticky with blood.
- An old woman in a black shawl glares at you with an evil eye, then, abruptly, laughs you out of her thoughts.
- As you walk the streets of Valletta at night, bulbs hiss and sputter. Just as you stop to light a cigarette, a bulb nearby pops and goes dead.



and at least one chapter maintained its secrecy even after the island was freed from French rule by the British in 1800. When Britain finally took control in 1814, the Maltese people welcomed them, yet one chapter of the Knights of Malta remained hidden to ensure the safety of Malta and its secrets should further skullduggery lead to another betrayal of the Maltese people.

As of 1937 Malta is a part of the British Empire, though the fleet once stationed in Valletta moved out of the island a few years earlier to take up residence in Alexandria.

Atmosphere

Valletta is a lovely city, brimming with Baroque architecture, lush gardens, charming piazzas, and orderly, narrow streets. By day, its vibrant collection of churches, shops, cafés, and parks make the city feel alive with activity. By night, gas lamps and electric lights twinkle in the narrow alleys and avenues, giving the city a shadowy and mysterious charm — an attitude more seductive than dangerous, on its face.

The Second World War's bombs have not yet fallen on the city, so its architectural history leads back, unbroken, through the centuries to 1566. Yet the city is not afraid to experiment with modernist architecture. A townhouse features sleek glass balconies jutting from its Baroque façade. A modest art deco office building crouches between two old-stone structures decorated with florid arches. The place is a curious and handsome mix.

The air carries the salt of the sea mixed with fresh breads and floral scents from grand gardens. The bells of ships at sea ring in off the waters. Gulls cry. On the surface, Valletta is a lovely city.

It is only when the Investigators dig into the poison well beneath the city, begun by the cult of the Liar From Beyond and ruled over by Montgomery Donovan, that the rot becomes apparent…

The Scenes

The substance of this Locale is, of course, the story that unfolds as the Investigators explore. The choices they make reveal and dramatize their story here, one scene at a time. While these scenes are numbered in a particular order, the spine of this Locale is such that scenes may unfold in different combinations than they are presented here.

Let the Investigators explore as they will, using the arrival of Sir Godfrey or an attack by the cult to influence the course of the story when you feel it's necessary to keep the Investigators on a lively, fruitful path.

Even still, space does not allow us to examine every possible course of action the Investigators may undertake.

Sabotage En Route to Malta

If you're interested in using the Act Two floating scene **"Sabotage"** during your campaign, Malta is a good Locale with which to pair it or a similarly dangerous and violent scene, since a hospital in Valletta plays a potentially important part in the local investigation. If PCs are going to heal up in a hospital during an investigation, it might as well be this one.



Improvise. Use the material here to devise new scenes and antagonist reactions that help to keep the story compelling, connected, and at least somewhat believable. If the Investigators opt to infiltrate Donovan's fortress-like townhouse and wait for him to come back, use the statistics for his bodyguards to play that out and see if they are successful. If the Investigators opt to wait aboard Donovan's yacht for him, let them — Donovan eventually arrives with his entourage.

Above all, keep the story moving.



1. Arrival in Valletta

Scene Type: Intro / Core

Summary: Writings by Trammel regarding Montgomery Donovan's experiments and the ledger entry showing the results (Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion," p. 113).

Core Clue: Someone named Montgomery Donovan lives in a harbor-view townhouse in Valletta. A warehouse in Donovan's name operates in the Grand Harbor. A yacht registered to him floats in the bay. (Library Use on public records.)



Valletta is a vibrant, culturally rich city, modern in many ways and charmingly antiquated in others. Characters may take a room at a Valletta flop house (Credit Rating 1+) or hotel (Credit Rating 2+), or they may rent a suite or apartment if they expect their investigation to run long (Credit Rating 5+). A few rundown hotels serve the dockside workers and travelers with cheap lodgings, while nearby harbor-view hotels cater to the wealthier sojourner. The posh rooms of Valletta are as lush and comfortable as any, done up in Baroque or modern art deco styles, depending on the suite and venue.

The city is alive with colorful piazzas, cafés, gardens, museums, shops, and more. If the characters wish to stock up on supplies, they'll find Valletta equipped with most everything they need. As an island economy, however, many objects — from spirits to weapons — get imported from abroad rather than produced locally, so prices may be higher than they would be on the mainland, at your discretion.

A full investigation into Montgomery Donovan takes place in more specific subsequent scenes, but a few quick peeks into the local municipal records and newspapers are easily done here. **Library Use** at a city records office turns up lots of property and paperwork in Montgomery Donovan's name — specifically a harbor-view townhouse in western Valletta near the Great Siege Road, a yacht registered in Donovan's name, and a warehouse owned by him in the western end of the southern harbor — but none of the available information is especially telling. City records paint a picture of a very wealthy man with almost no legal footprint.

Interpersonal abilities used at the records office are met with wary deflections. *"If it's not in the records, I can't help you,"* the clerk says, and, *"I'm sorry; I'm not sure who that is."* **Assess Honesty** reveals the clerk is telling the truth. Should the Investigators climb the bureaucratic ladder, however, they find that upper-tier officials in the city bureaucracy may answer the same way… but are lying. Anything short of a proper **Interrogation** or a life-altering Credit Rating 6+ bribe doesn't get more information out of such personnel. At best, all they know anyway is that *"Montgomery Donovan pays handsomely for his privacy"* and *"Whatever it is he ships out of that warehouse of his is legal, as far as I know."* (Asking for actual spends here may be unfair, since this information is unworthy, but the gesture, the *willingness* to make the spend, may reveal what's really important: the officials are looking the other way, even when offered threats or money.)

Library Use at the local library reveals that Donovan has kept himself out of the papers almost completely. He appears only in a single photo taken of him and his wife, Portia, at a black-tie fundraising function at the Royal Opera House — their names in the

photo caption seems to be Donovan's only appearance in local newsprint. In that photo, they look happy.

Inquiring about the Donovans at the Royal Opera House (using **Flattery** or **Credit Rating** to get a conversation going) reveals only that they donated a generous but not record-breaking sum of money almost a year ago, "before poor Mr. Donovan was widowed." Freelance photographer Jerome Humphrey can be located using the **Photography** or **Library Use** abilities, but he doesn't recall much in particular about the Donovans except that they were having a nice night and that Mr. Donovan didn't want his name in the paper. *"His wife, though, she said it was fine. She wanted him to relax and have fun."*

That newspaper photo of the Donovans is a leveraged clue. It helps to jog memories in the scene **"Valletta Footwork,"** since few people know Montgomery Donovan by name but quite a few recognize his face from trips about town. It's not that big a city.

Remember that Montgomery Donovan has bribed agents throughout the Valletta police and business communities. Investigators who make use of contacts in those areas — perhaps going to the police for official aid with an ongoing international investigation — open themselves up to discovery by Donovan's people. Whether a particular use of, for example, **Accounting**, **Bureaucracy**, or **Cop Talk** attracts unwanted attention is up to you to decide, based on how grandiose the contact is and how brash, crass, or bold the Investigator is. Let Donovan-friendly people report back to the cult about such Investigators if it adds interesting drama or menace to the tale. If it just creates another plot thread to trip over, deem the PC lucky to have made contact with someone forthright. When in doubt, a 1-point spend in the appropriate ability describes either a contact untarnished by Donovan's bribery or an Investigator savvy enough to avoid attracting attention, even in the midst of bought-and-paid-for spies.



The evening's fundraising efforts raised record amounts from remarkable glitterati at a gala affair. Montgomery and Portia Donovan are new donors to the opera house.

2. Valletta Footwork

Scene Type: Core (Footwork)

Lead-ins: Canvassing Valletta's neighborhoods looking for information on Montgomery Donovan (Malta 1, "Arrival in Valletta," p. 224).

Summary: The Investigators turn over rocks in Valletta in an attempt to locate Montgomery Donovan.

Core Clue: Montgomery Donovan is easy to discover but hard to get near. His operations in Malta are large yet mysterious — easier to find than to foil.

Core Clue: Something happened to Donovan's wife. No one has seen her in months.

Core Clue: Donovan travels with an entourage.

This scene contains just the clues that Investigators obtain from doing footwork to inquire about Donovan around his turf — turf further explored in the scenes **"Donovan's Domains"** (covering his townhouse and yacht) and **"Pursuing Donovan"** (covering attempts to shadow or confront the man himself).

Most of Valletta is unaware of the name Montgomery Donovan. For a man as rich and powerful as Donovan may be, he has a minimal profile in the community. Should the Investigators have a photograph of

2. Valletta Footwork

Donovan, however, a few more people recognize him from his movements throughout the city. This scene covers the information about Montgomery Donovan that Investigators can get out of the local populace.

Consider playing this scene as a montage-like series of encounters with citizens whose paths have crossed Montgomery Donovan's in one way or another. All the players have to do is bring a photograph of Donovan to the right neighborhoods, and they automatically get the appropriate information, delivered in a series of short quotes.

If the players want to dig deeper than a montage seems to allow, either shift to another scene (depending on where the Investigators dig) or reiterate this clue: Montgomery Donovan is a reclusive, protective figure, little known by his neighbors and seemingly without friends. Digging deeper in the public sphere turns up nothing else… and that in itself is a clue.

Rather than break Valletta into discrete neighborhoods to be scoured and canvassed by diligent Investigators, we've categorized the available clues based on their relationship with Donovan's day-to-day life. The Investigators may stumble into these areas as they canvass the city or they may enter these areas directly based on other clues they get about Donovan in other scenes. Each clue comes with an NPC sketch and environment to deliver the appropriate information. Dole these out whenever Investigators with a photo or accurate description of Donovan (e.g., "a lanky, reclusive Englishman with an entourage") come calling. Alternately, award these clues to cunning players who employ plans or techniques, in this scene or others, that we haven't thought of.

On Nectar-Free Streets

Treat attempts to locate the local Nectar trade through street dealers and other pedestrian sellers as a **simple search** of the cityscape for evidence of the drug's sordid business. Investigators quickly discover that Valletta has no detectable street-level Nectar trade. They fail to find dealers or even commonplace awareness of where to find the drug in town. Only when the Investigators contact people adjacent to the Nectar clues presented in this chapter do they find leads to local supplies of the stuff. (For example, describing Nectar to a hospital employee may spark a recollection.)

You should override this fact to reflect the Investigators' actions in previous Locales. If, say, Nectar has made the international news, of course people in Valletta have heard of the stuff. Maybe an NPC says something like, "That's a drug they do on the continent, isn't it?"

What's happening isn't that Valletta is weirdly, mystically free of Nectar but that Donovan has a deal with some of the city's influential people: they don't poke their noses into the Nectar trade and, in exchange, Donovan keeps Nectar off the streets of Valletta. (This deal won't last, of course. Sooner or later the cult intends to drown the world in the Liar's drug. For now it's a matter of convenience to the cult.)



Around Donovan's Townhouse

Old men playing chess in the nearby piazza: *"Of course we've seen him. He always looks like he's hiding, but it's hard to miss him with those seven or eight fellas he travels with. Lives right over there, he does. He's a rich one."*

The starving wild-haired artist in the piazza, sketching portraits for coin: *"Oh, yes. I drew his wife and their son, some months ago. Portia and Monte, I think their names were. Haven't seen either of them lately, but they always traveled with a handful of people. Staff, I guess? He does, too. On days when he comes out, he heads southeast through the city with, I don't know, half a dozen people? Must be important, I guess?"*

The elderly gardener woman in the nearby park: *"I know him. Englishman. Lives just there. Can't say much about him. Don't know him. Don't know anybody who does. Snappy dresser, though."*

The young barista in the café just up the street: *"Sure, he comes in from time to time. Gets an espresso with lemon. Used to come in with his wife. Not seen her in some time, and he's quite the sorry one lately, isn't he? Is she gone? Is he all right?"*

Around the Yacht Pier

Grizzled, salty fisherman with lines cast off the pier: *"Ah, the Brit. That's his yacht out there and this here's his pier. He almost never uses it, and it's a good spot. Why, is he complaining that we fish here? Hardly says anything to anyone; I'd be surprised if he gave two damns."*

Waiter at the café across from the pier: *"Ah, sure. He's the English gentleman who comes by with his retinue now and again. Banker or businessman, I guess. Keeps his yacht anchored out in the harbor and goes out there on a little boat, now and again, in the evenings. Spends some nights out there, I think."*

Around the Royal Opera House

Maître d' at a posh nearby restaurant in a 17th-century building: *"That's Mr. Donovan. He has a regular table with us. Comes in now and again. I'm not in a position to say anything more about him, I'm afraid."*

Usher at the Royal Opera House, smoking in a nearby alley: *"Oh, sure. Mr. Donovan. He and his wife used to come by all the time. He still does, but hardly ever makes it through a show anymore. Something happen to them? A shame, if so. Nice folks."*

Classy waiter at a cozy café nearby: *"Ah, yes. Mister Donovan comes and enjoys an espresso here sometimes, usually on the patio with his entourage, before he heads to the hospital. I don't think I should say more. Nice fellow and it's not my place."*

Around Donovan's Warehouse

A dockworker smoking outside a nearby warehouse: *"Oh, yeah. He owns that warehouse over there. Comes in a fancy car, sometimes, to inspect whatever it is they house over there. Ships come and go from their private dock. Did he do something? Always seemed sort of scared to me, traveling with all those guys. His warehouse people carry rifles, too. Must be high end, whatever his business is."*

A dockworker sitting on a bench near the warehouse fence: *"I don't know him, and I don't know what makes him so special. Went up to one of his guys once, to get a light, and I thought he was going to pull his gun on me. Had it in a shoulder holster under his jacket. Those guys at that warehouse… they're hiding something. But I'm not getting involved."*

3. Donovan's Domains

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Staking out or infiltrating Donovan's mansion or yacht (Malta 1, "Arrival in Valletta," p. 224).

Summary: The Investigators dig into Donovan's life and learn a bit about him, perhaps coming into direct conflict with his bodyguards and staff along the way.

Core Clue: Montgomery Donovan lives in a fortified townhouse in Valletta, protected with state-of-the-art security and magical wards. (Crafts or Explosives on the outer doors; Cop Talk, Intimidation, or background knowledge on the guards; Occult on the stonework.)

Core Clue: Donovan burned a stack of pornographic pictures in his home fireplace. (Photography.)

Core Clue: Donovan has supplies of Nectar literally gathering dust in his mansion. (Architecture, Evidence Collection, or Craft to get into Donovan's secret room.)

This scene covers those details the Investigators can uncover without coming into direct contact with Donovan. If their actions in this scene do lead them to a direct confrontation or interaction with Donovan, see the scene **"Pursuing Donovan"** for clues revealed from the man directly.

Investigators who prowl around Donovan's townhouse or ride out to his darkened yacht can gain a bit of information about the man; those who infiltrate the townhouse can learn a great deal.

The Yacht

The Donovan yacht, called *Elegance*, is anchored a short distance off the northwest Valletta coast, visible from the Donovan townhouse's top floors. Anyone with even cursory knowledge of shipping lanes and harbor practices knows that it's in the way out there, but there it floats all the same. Characters can reach the yacht by motorboat or rowboat (easily rented with Credit Rating 3+) or even by swimming (**Athletics** Difficulty 5; failure costs an exhausted swimmer 1 Health and calls for another Athletics test).

Once aboard, Investigators are likely free to rummage through Donovan's things — Donovan seldom visits *Elegance* anymore and no one is stationed aboard it. A spotter at the townhouse keeps an eye on the yacht through binoculars, occasionally, but a **Stealth** test (Difficulty 6 during the day, 5 at night) avoids detection from land (by mooring rowboats on the far side of the yacht, carefully aiming flashlight beams, etc.).

The yacht is not especially large — three modest cabins, a galley, and a sitting room — made out of gleaming light woods and white-painted slats inside. More seating is available on deck, both fore and aft. The bridge is on top and the engines are accessible beneath doors both in the aft deck and below decks.

The boat has clearly been cleaned out of valuables and locked down for safety's sake, yet still there are clues here for savvy Investigators:

- A **simple search** notices that the bar is all but dry — row after row of empty bottles suggest not that it has been cleaned out for storage but that someone drank the supply down to nothing. Unwashed glasses and mugs are scattered about the boat. **Chemistry** or **Pharmacy** recognizes

that each one was used for alcohol, mostly without mixers.

- **Art** or **Art History** notices mountings for paintings and prints on numerous walls, all of them empty now. This (or **Evidence Collection**) leads a character to notice symbols painted on the walls in an almost-clear liquid, visible only at certain angles. These symbols would have been covered by the now-absent paintings. **Occult** recognizes these symbols as wards against witchcraft and magic. **Chemistry** or **Pharmacy** identifies the substance as watered-down Nectar.

- The closet in the main cabin is crowded with fine dresses, both formal and casual. **Craft** or even **Flattery** recognizes these as the work of top-tier designers from France, Italy, and the Americas. In the back of the closet is a guitar case containing… a Spanish-made guitar.

- The other two cabins are probably for guests, decorated as they are with generic nautical tchotchkes and bare beds. Their closets are empty.

- The galley is cleaned out. All that's left on the shelves of the main room are popular novels of the day — mild romantic dramas and children's adventure stories — though most of the shelves are empty.

The yacht can be started with **Piloting** (Difficulty 5), **Mechanical Repair** (Difficulty 4), or a **Locksmith** spend (to manipulate the lock on the ignition).

If Donovan's security men spot someone trespassing on the yacht, they respond first by sending two guards out in a motorboat to investigate or scare off trespassers. If those guards do not return for some reason, a half-dozen more guards come out to the boat after notifying the police on Donovan's payroll. All of these guards come from Donovan's townhouse (meaning it's possible for 8 of his dozen men to be lured away in this fashion). If time permits, and trouble is evident, guards from the warehouse may be posted to the townhouse to replace missing muscle.

In the event of serious and evident violence at the yacht, police are called quickly, with Donovan's bribed officers in command of a serious retaliatory force consisting of dozens of armed officers in a handful of motorboats. Investigators may quickly get in over their heads or become fugitives.

Donovan knows that there is little of value left on the yacht; it does little but remind him of his wife. He gladly authorizes men to firebomb the thing or riddle it with bullets if it means eliminating his enemies (and especially if the Investigators are notorious among the cultists at this point).

The Townhouse

Montgomery Donovan lives in a fortified townhouse in northwest Valletta, located on a hill just south of Great Siege Road, overlooking the waters north of Valletta (and Donovan's yacht). Although the townhouse stands right up against the street, it is protected with state-of-the-art security (and magical wards). A private garage, underneath the house, is the only access in the rear, aside from windows. The whole affair was constructed in the 17th century and renovated in the early 20th. It's a structure of solid stones and sturdy bricks, with no windows on the house's right or left sides except for the topmost fourth storey, which stands higher than the neighboring buildings.

Watching the house is fairly easy, with the street out front leading through a small piazza where any inconspicuous person might spend the day without attracting attention. Monitoring the house from the rear is possible from farther up the hill, perhaps from a nearby rooftop. Blending into the background of Valletta's daily life requires a **Shadowing** test (Difficulty 4, +1 at night, +1 for characters conspicuously dressed), while staying hidden on a nearby rooftop most likely requires **Stealth** (Difficulty 5, –1 at night).

Staking out the townhouse doesn't reveal a great deal about Donovan or his operation but may lead into shadowing him on his trips through Valletta, as described in **"Pursuing Donovan."** Binoculars and simple surveillance yield the following clues:

- Donovan keeps his curtains drawn on all but the fourth storey's front windows. A roving sentry is stationed around those windows day and night; he peers out with binoculars every half hour or so. (He's checking on the yacht.)

- Donovan departs his home in the late morning and returns before sunset every day that he's watched. He departs on foot, with an entourage of six-to-eight men, but his car — a silver town car with tinted windows — leaves about 90 minutes after he does and heads southeast. (It's going to pick him up from the hospital or opera house to take him to and from the warehouse.)

- Servants come and go: A grocer is allowed inside the front door for about 10–15 minutes every other morning. The cook, valet, and cleaning lady are all live-in staff. The chauffer arrives in the morning and goes home at night. He comes and goes through the garage.

Closer inspection (e.g., peering in windows) or interaction with the house can reveal the following clues:

- **Electrical Repair** notes that electricity is a relatively recent addition

to the structure, running as it does in conduits along the walls and ceiling. Cutting electricity to the building might be possible with a Difficulty 5 **Electrical Repair** test if a character can get inside the garage (with a **Locksmith** spend). The garage door is simply a pair of swinging wooden doors, manned by one of the house guards.

- **Languages** may recognize the languages spoken by people who come and go. See the sidebar for details on the staff of the Donovan townhouse.
- **Crafts** or **Explosives** notices that the doors to the townhouse are reinforced against blasts, fire, and other means of invasion.
- **Occult** recognizes the decorative symbols in the house's stonework as variations on protective glyphs and wards against the evil eye, while **Architecture** reveals that the gargoyles at the top of the townhouse, one on each corner of the building, are antiques but additions to the house, probably imported from Germany. They serve as guardian figures.
- **Evidence Collection** finds the building to be carefully scrubbed outside — clean to an unusual degree. (Donovan wants to make sure that no one else is painting his home with Nectar sigils.)

Getting Inside

Getting inside the townhouse requires either ingenuity and luck or brute force and luck. The house is typically home to Donovan's full staff plus four to six armed guards. We don't have the room to entertain every possible means of entry here, but here are some shorthand ways to address a few possible means of entry:

- **Disguise** is extraordinarily tricky as Donovan's employees all know each other. Passing one's self off as a particular servant or guard requires a Difficulty 8 test for every five minutes of contact, given the general paranoia and protectiveness of the Donovan household. Disguising one's self as a repairman or other third party requires a Difficulty 5 test for every five minutes for everyone except Donovan's valet, who keeps his schedule and knows that no one is expected; against him the Difficulty is 6. Passing one's self off as a grocery deliverer, however, is a Difficulty 5 test and earns a 15- to 20-minute pass into the kitchen.
- An **Architecture** spend surmises from nearby building shapes, the depth of the gutter drains, and the history of Valletta architecture that tunnels may reach the Donovan house below grounds. This was true before Donovan had those exits sealed. Although access to the drainage tunnels is easy (if dirty) enough, it takes a sturdy sledgehammer and an hour of noisy work to knock down the old tunnel's barrier into the Donovan townhouse. Such an attempt brings guards and gets the police called quickly. **Explosives** (Difficulty 4) can blast that barrier straight down but likewise results in an immediate call to the police (even by neighbors). An invasion through the tunnels allows just five to ten minutes before the house is evacuated and police arrive.
- Scaling the house and entering through a fourth-storey window requires an **Athletics** and a **Stealth** test (Difficulty 5 each), plus a **Filch** test (Difficulty 5) at the top to finesse open a window. This is, in many ways, the easiest way inside.
- **Electrical Repair** can cut power or phone lines to the house from the tunnels underground (if **Architecture** has revealed them) with a Difficulty 5 test, though this puts the guards and Donovan on watch almost immediately if they're at home.

Donovan's Staff

Donovan's staff is small but loyal. They know he's a businessman in imports/exports, and they know that he traffics in goods that are secretive and (maybe) illegal, but he treats his staff well and pays very well, so they go along. They simply believe the townhouse to be haunted; they don't suspect that Donovan is a sorcerer, cultist, or narcotics dealer. None of his staff are members of the cult — Donovan has kept his home separate from that, in part to keep his staff from Nectar-seeking and getting ideas about power grabs.

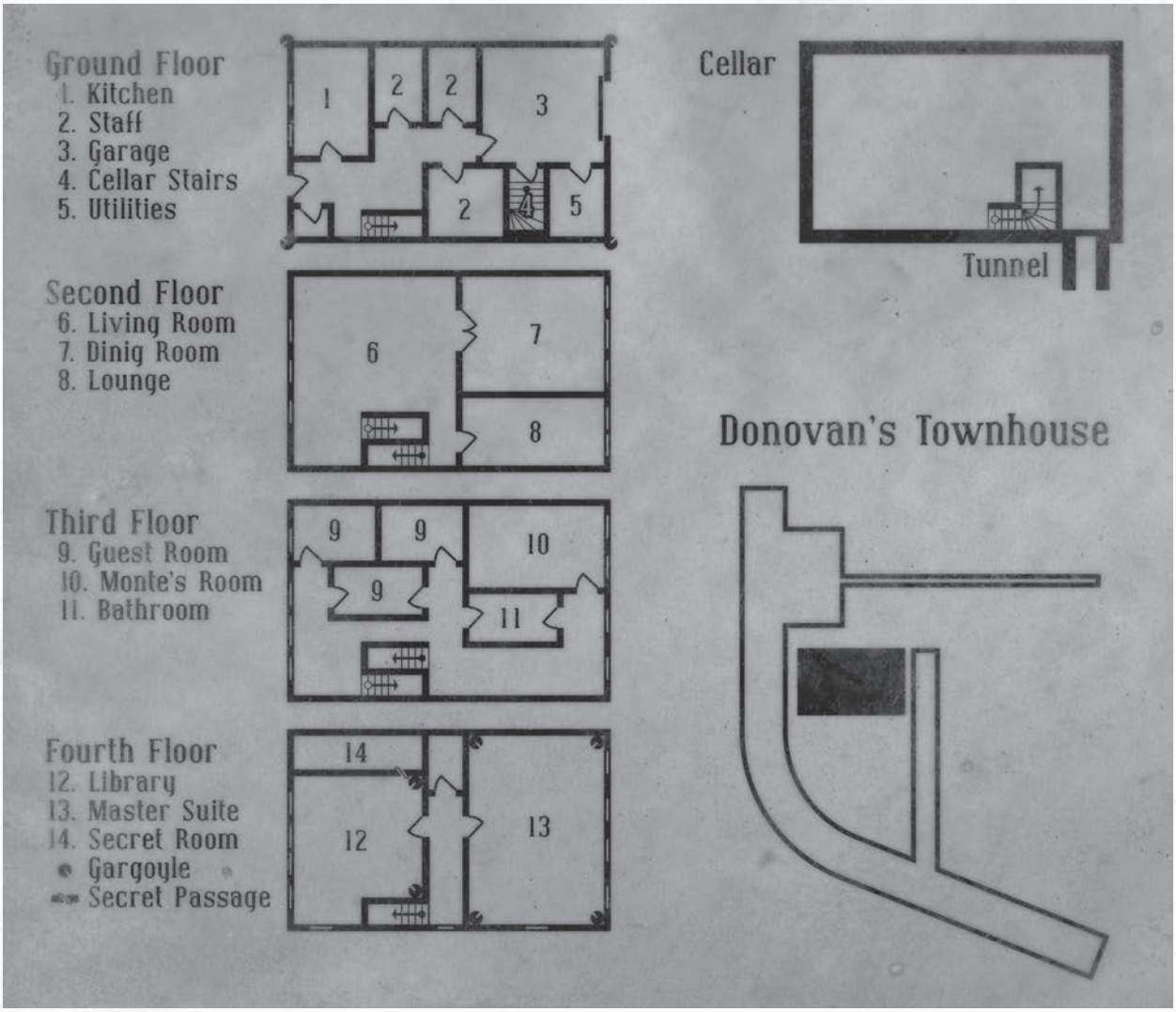
Donovan's Staff

Athletics 3, Credit Rating 3, Driving 2, Fleeing 4, Health 2, Scuffling 2, Weapons 2

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (improvised weapon)

- **George Husington, the Valet:** English. Has been in Donovan's employ for fifteen years. Speaks English and French. **Awareness Modifier:** +1
- **Margarite Delacourt, the Cleaning Lady:** French. Has been in Donovan's employ for four years. Speaks English and French.
- **Silvio Salvano, the Cook:** Maltese. Has been in Donovan's employ for 18 months. Speaks Maltese, English, and French.
- **John Lucas Brichard, the Driver:** Maltese. Has been in Donovan's employ for two years. Speaks Maltese, English, and Italian.

3. Donovan's Domains



- Violence perpetrated against any one guard must either put that guard down to 0 Health in one blow or accompany a Difficulty 6 **Stealth** or **Athletics** test to silence a guard that would otherwise scream for help. For example, one character might cover a guard's mouth while another clobbers him over the head.

- A use of **Intimidation**, made with a threat of violence (say, by pointing a gun at someone), gets the staff but not the guards to quietly surrender. A 1-point **Intimidation** spend and a similar threat of violence is required for each guard encountered alone. If two guards are encountered, a 2-point spend is necessary.

  Three or more guards probably leads to violence.

When the guards are wary, increase the Difficulty of Disguise and Stealth tests by 1.

A combination of grand distractions and subtle infiltration may be the best way to get a few Investigators inside. Guards cannot notice someone climbing the rear of the building if they are guarding only the front or the basement against something more obviously suspicious.

Even a good plan doesn't completely negate Donovan's mystical security: the imported gargoyles…

Donovan's Guards

Donovan has 12 guards on private retainer, with three off duty and residing in nearby apartments at any one time. The nine on-duty guards are typically divided into two groups. One group of five guards Donovan wherever he goes while a group of four guards the townhouse. In the event that Donovan has been warned about the PCs by someone from another Locale, the number that stays on Donovan increases to six, leaving just three at the townhouse.

On the chauffer's day off, one of Donovan's guards drives the car. On the cook's day off, the maid cooks. On the maid's day off, the valet cleans.

3. Donovan's Domains

Donovan's operation makes minimum contact with outside persons. Everyone gets vetted before they get near Donovan.

The guards are all ex-military mercenaries from England or the United States, recruited during Donovan's various business dealings. They are well paid, well trusted, and well trained. They know that Donovan is involved with "weird shite" and that he is shipping drugs out of the country for sale — they share in the profits. These are bad men. They enjoy the idea that they are involved in something secret, profitable, and powerful.

In truth, about half of Donovan's guards are itching for outsiders to try something — they seldom if ever have occasion to defend their client from serious threats. Donovan warns that such threats are coming but, to date, no threat has emerged.

Enter the Investigators.

An Investigator with military or mercenary training, **Cop Talk** or **Intimidation**, or 8 or more points in **Firearms** intuits that these men are military trained, ready to fight, and packing heat. It's the way they move.

Donovan's guards are so itching for a fight that they respond to sudden noises like a car backfiring or a banging door by swarming to protect their client and going for their guns.

(Unbeknownst to Donovan, two of his guards are subject to bribery. For the Investigators to take advantage of this, they must make contact with the right guards. A 2-point **Assess Honesty** or **Streetwise** spend made while conversing with a bribable guard, perhaps idly, determines that he is for sale. Place the two gettable guards anywhere in the mix that you like; they are most likely for sale because they are frustrated to be left at the townhouse again and again, but they may be on Donovan's roving detail if that makes things more interesting for your story. To bribe either of these men requires having a Credit Rating of 5 or higher. Bribed guards will take actions up to and including abandoning their posts but won't act against Donovan directly.)

Donovan's Personal Guards

Three Things: Well dressed. Quiet. Unflappable.

Athletics 8, Credit Rating 4, Driving 5, Health 6, Firearms 8, Scuffling 8, Weapons 5

Alertness Modifier: +0 (+1 if wary)

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (trench knife), +0 (automatic pistol)

Gargoyle Mouths

In addition to his human guards, Donovan's imported German gargoyles are mystically empowered by a spell recited to Donovan by the Major Mouth: Grant Sight to Stone. If the outdoor gargoyles witness anyone enter the townhouse by a means other than the front door or garage, they trigger Minor Mouths to form on themselves and on gargoyles installed in the fourth-storey residence. These Minor Mouths form within the stone of the gargoyle mouths. They spit, they hiss, they cry out for the attention of human guards… and they mystically inform the Major Mouth beneath the warehouse of the intruders. The Major Mouth then informs the warehouse cultists, who dispatch people to check on Donovan. (This also leads Diana Hantz to conclude that Donovan is slipping and it is about time to make her move.)

Abilities: Health 5, Scuffling 5

Hit Threshold: 3 (stationary)

Alertness Modifier: +1 (mystically enhanced)

Weapon: −1 (bite), −3 (spat Nectar; victims are considered to have ingested a dose of Nectar, with all the effects and side effects that come with it, see p. 35.)

Armor: none

Stability Loss: +1

Investigating Inside

Inside, Donovan's townhouse is artful and impressive, but largely unrevealing. Only a few rooms contain clues useful to the Investigators:

- **Throughout the House:** Donovan's papered walls are dotted and streaked here and there with stains the maid is unable to combat. They appear to be minor water damage, but **Chemistry** or **Pharmacy** determines the stains to be thin Nectar. (If the Investigators have seen Mouths manifest in other scenes, they may surmise what these stains represent: Mouths forming on the walls throughout the house.) Investigators with **Art History**, **Anthropology**, or **Archaeology** may appreciate Donovan's considerable art collection, made up mostly of gray-market artifacts from Egypt and Rome, landscape paintings, and, lately, Baroque antiquities from around Malta.
- **Staff and Guard Rooms:** An Investigator can surmise the Credit Ratings of Donovan's staff and guards from their possessions and lifestyles.
- **Donovan's Library:** (Note that intruders to this room trigger the gargoyles mentioned under "Donovan's Guards," above.) Donovan's library contains a variety of valuable **History** texts and rare books worth a middle-class salary. His desk sports

a photograph of Montgomery, his wife Portia, and their son Monte, looking happy aboard their yacht. A ledger in his desk seems to track Donovan's finances, but **Accounting** reveals it to almost certainly be a dummy — he simply isn't bringing in enough money to pay for all of his guards, according to that book. One book on the shelf catches the eye of characters with **Theology** — *The Gateway to the Godhead* — but instead of being a copy of that rare text, it is a dust jacket disguising a thin handwritten journal that contains only the spell Grant Sight to Stone.

- **Donovan's Bathroom:** The toilet here is stained and streaked orange from flushing Nectar. **Chemistry** or **Pharmacy** confirms that the stains are Nectar-based.

- **Donovan's Master Bedroom:** (Note that the gargoyles in this room have not been mystically endowed.) The fireplace in this room contains flat, black ashes that **Photography** recognizes as burned photographs. On the mantle is a photographic portrait of Portia Donovan. Donovan's bedroom is not as wide as it should be given its place in the house; **Architecture** notes this almost immediately. **Evidence Collection** or **Craft** discovers scuffs on the floor near the room's bookshelves and, afterward, any of those three abilities inspires an Investigator to try manipulating the gargoyle on the wall above the bookshelf. (All of this occurs without spends, though you may want to let the players interact with the environment before implying or revealing how to access the secret door.) Turning the gargoyle's head releases the latch on a secret door in the bookcase, which pulls out to reveal…

Spell: Grant Sight to Stone

This spell grants sensory ability to gargoyles, decorative eyes, and other architectural fixtures suitably brined in hawk's blood and herbs as laid out in the text. By adding Nectar to the mix, the spell also opens the subject fixture up to inhabitation by the powers of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, effectively turning them into easy receptacles for Minor Mouths. The use of Nectar also forms a psychic connection between the mystic sensor and the nearest Major Mouth, informing it when the fixture "sees" anything amiss. The specific terms of normalcy are given to the fixture when the spell is cast; to change the terms, cast the spell again.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4
Cost: 3 Stability or Magic
Time: 30 minutes to apply Nectar to a fixture and recite the incantation



- **Donovan's Secret Room:** This narrow space is stacked with case after case of bottled Nectar, literally gathering dust. The shelf at the rear of this chamber (reached by squeezing past the cases) houses black archival boxes, half of which are empty and half of which contain both professional and amateur pornographic photos, some of which may be blackmail material and some of which are clearly exhibitionist in nature. They are poorly organized and, **Photography** notes, match the ashes in the bedroom. Donovan has been slowly destroying his supply of smut out of guilt.

4. Pursuing Donovan

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Locating Donovan (Malta 2, "Valletta Footwork," p. 225, Malta 5, "Watching the Warehouse," p. 236, or Malta 10, "Monte, Jr.," p. 241).

Summary: The Investigators pursue Donovan, covertly or overtly, and discover the kinds of places that Donovan visits in Valletta — and perhaps the strengths and limits of his armed escorts.

Core Clue: Montgomery Donovan dines alone. He visits his son in the hospital. Mrs. Donovan is dead and buried. He visits his warehouse.

Core clue: Montgomery Donovan is a remorseful, grief-stricken man ready to make his way out of the cult, if he believes that he and his son can escape the gaze of a crazed god. (Reassurance and Oral History.)

Floating Campaign Clue: This Locale's floating core clue may be discovered here, from Donovan directly. He knows that the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, whatever it is, can be reached through "a flexing crack in some far-off mountainside, which opens only 'when the moon is dark and the stars shine down,'" but he doesn't know where the mountain is. (Reassurance.)



This scene covers what happens when the Investigators focus their attention on Montgomery Donovan, Sr., directly, whether by shadowing him or attacking him. Make certain that you've read the previous scene, however, as vital information about Donovan's guards and townhouse in that scene may impact the way this scene unfolds.

4. Pursuing Donovan

If the Investigators make a move against Donovan at his house or yacht, you'll be running a combination of **"Donovan's Domains"** and this scene. If they get close to Donovan on the streets of Valletta (or anywhere else, really), rely on the nature of Donovan's guards (described under "Donovan's Guards" in the previous scene) and the locations described here to conjure the details you need to dramatize the scene — see "Moving Against Donovan." Once the Investigators get close to Donovan, wherever that may be, they have a chance to get him talking — see "Donovan Talks."

Shadowing Donovan

If the Investigators shadow Donovan, they have a shot at gaining a great deal of information about his life and operations and may discover him at his weakest. What follows is a stop-by-stop account of Donovan's typical day out, with details that may be of interest to Investigators intending to attack or kidnap the man. Vary these stops a bit from day to day if the Investigators watch him for multiple days; he visits a different café or skips the opera house every other day, for example. What's important is that the Investigators can glean clues about the cult's operation in Valletta by tailing Donovan.

Here are his typical stops, in order:

- **10:00 a.m.:** Donovan departs the townhouse on foot with his entourage. He stops at a nearby café or bakery for an espresso and a pastry. There he reads the paper, surrounded by his entourage and other piazza or café bystanders. *Visibility:* High. *Vulnerability:* Low.

- **11:00 a.m.:** Donovan heads southeast through Valletta towards Republic Street and the Royal Opera House. He walks by a donor wall and touches a plaque. (It reads, *"In loving memory of Portia Donovan."*) Perhaps he takes another espresso from a nearby café. *Visibility:* High. *Vulnerability:* Low.

- **Noonish:** Some days, Donovan walks northeast to a small private garden cemetery and, unlocking the gate, enters without his entourage. The garden cemetery is walled in stone and wrought iron and contains the grave of Portia Donovan. He stays for about fifteen minutes. *Visibility:* Low. *Vulnerability:* Moderate.

- **1:00 p.m.:** By one o'clock, Donovan has reached the Hospital Superbissima in east Valletta. Once there, his entourage takes up positions at the entrances to the third-floor Intensive Care Ward while Donovan proceeds inside to visit a boy there in Room #304. (This is young Monte Donovan, see **Malta 8, "Hospital,"** p. 239) Meanwhile, at the Donovan townhouse, his car and driver depart for the hospital. *Visibility:* High. *Vulnerability:* Moderate.

- **1:30 or 2:00 p.m.:** Donovan meets his car downstairs and enters with three guards (two in back with him, one up front). The remaining guards head back to the townhouse on foot. The car drives southwest, around the Grand Harbor, and back northeast to the warehouse off Newcastle Drive. *Visibility:* Low. *Vulnerability:* Moderate.

- **About 2:30 p.m.:** Donovan is driven through the checkpoint at the warehouse fence line. His driver parks outside the warehouse, and Donovan enters with his reduced entourage. There he remains for anywhere from one to six hours (roll a die). While inside, he observes production of Nectar, oversees bottling and the books, and spends a great deal of time in his office, fretting and scheming. *Visibility from outside:* Low. *Vulnerability:* Low.

- **3:30 to 8:30 p.m.:** Donovan departs the warehouse for his townhouse, perhaps with a box of bottled Nectar (for his own "personal use," but which he is storing or flushing at home lately). The car drives through Valletta, back to the townhouse in 30–45 minutes. *Visibility:* Low. *Vulnerability:* Moderate.

- **Afterward:** Donovan either stops for supper in Valletta (1 or 2 on a die) or proceeds directly home (3–6 on a die). Once home, he is in for the night, where he may dine, read, listen to the radio, and burn photographs until odd hours. *Visibility from outside:* Low. *Vulnerability:* Low.

Shadowing Techniques

Donovan's guards are always on the lookout for tails. **Shadowing** the entourage is easy at first (Difficulty 3), but becomes one degree more difficult for each stop made throughout the day (Difficulty +1) from the townhouse to the warehouse. Once Donovan has spent at least an hour in the warehouse, the Difficulty resets to 3.

Swapping out one tailing Investigator for another resets the Difficulty to 3 and starts the Difficulty climb from location to location again. Conspicuous clothing increases the Difficulty by 1 immediately, while a costume change lowers the Difficulty by 1.

Failure on a Shadowing roll either means being spotted by Donovan's guards or losing track of Donovan and his entourage — let the player choose which. Spotted tails are quietly noted by the guards, permanently increasing the Difficulty for that character to shadow Donovan by 1. Tails that persist, following Donovan from one location to another, are confronted at the second location with subtle threats: *"Do we have to involve the police in this?"* they say, and, *"If you continue to follow us, we'll consider that spying."* If the tail doesn't quit, the guards go so far as to rough him up

(using fists and aiming to drop the PC to 1 or 2 Health) before they depart that location.

Moving Against Donovan

Each stop in Donovan's day carries with it a description of his *Visibility* and *Vulnerability*. These are simply guidelines for you to use when determining Difficulties for plans that attempt to get close to Donovan during those stops. Easier situations mean fewer guards, slower reaction times, and lower Difficulties.

If the characters move against Donovan in a high-visibility area, guards are plentiful and the police are called swiftly. In low-visibility areas, people may not notice that Donovan has been gotten to for some time (they may assume he is safely ensconced somewhere, for example).

If the characters move against Donovan when he is more vulnerable, it simply means there are fewer guards with him at the time. (Unless the PCs have whittled their numbers somehow, Donovan never has fewer than three guards with him.)

Let the Investigators devise whatever convoluted scheme they like to get close to Donovan, if that's their goal. They may attempt to kill him outright or they may ignore him in favor of exploring the warehouse directly. Whatever they do, use the information available throughout this Locale's scenes to react to their plans — remembering, of course, that, while it's a Keeper's job to provide a dramatic unfolding of events, it isn't the Keeper's job to thwart schemes. A sound plan may well catch Donovan's thugs by surprise and put the Investigators on top for a while, leaving the cult reeling until Diana Hantz can get things under control again. (Knowing her, it won't take long.)

Donovan's Personal Guards

Three Things: Well dressed. Quiet. Unflappable.

Athletics 8, Credit Rating 4, Driving 5, Health 6, Firearms 8, Scuffling 8, Weapons 5

Alertness Modifier: +0 (+1 if wary)

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (trench knife), +0 (automatic pistol)

Donovan Talks

Perhaps Donovan is held at gunpoint in the back of a car. Perhaps he's been smuggled away from his wife's grave. Maybe he's bloodied and beaten in the midst of his groaning and unconscious guards, or maybe he's cornered in his own townhouse. Whatever the Investigators have done to get close to Donovan, they're "interviewing" him now.

Donovan is remarkably cooperative. By the time someone gets face-to-face with Donovan, enough things have gone wrong in his life that he knows he's in trouble. He seeks to minimize that trouble by talking. Besides, Donovan half expected some sort of comeuppance or karmic retribution for the things he's done, and the Investigators might embody the price he's fated to pay. More than that, Donovan is actually desperate to talk to *someone*. Insane as it might seem, even an **Interrogation** is an opportunity for him to open up in a way he hasn't been able to since his wife… "passed."

Thus, getting Donovan to talk is relatively easy. It just takes a bit of **Reassurance** that he and his son — especially his son — won't be harmed if he talks. Here are some details that Donovan shares if questioned directly:

- **The warehouse:** *"The warehouse? It's overseen by Diana Hantz, who is sure to come after me if she thinks I've spoken to you. She and our head of security, Victor, live at the warehouse and have devoted their lives to the cult. You'll never get around them."*
- **The local cult:** *"We have fifty people working for us locally, not including my private guards. Bottlers, guards. I handle the accounting. Our books and records are in my office at the warehouse. Downstairs, near the font. The font of Nectar."*
- **The global cult:** *"They've gotten distracted and lazy overseas. We're the leader of Nectar exports worldwide. Europe and North Africa receive our product, all of our product, out of this operation. I don't know what they're doing in Bangkok or Mexico City, but they've let themselves get distracted by the promise of power greater than wealth… I was like them once."*
- **The Mouth:** *"It's huge, now. Thirty feet wide, at least. I — I don't know how you'd kill it. Maybe you can't. You'd need grenades or dynamite. Perhaps… perhaps if you were to bury it, it would starve. Or perhaps it would simply* move *through the stone… I don't know anymore."*
- **Floating Locale Clue — The Thing With a Thousand Mouths:** *"It's here, on Earth. I don't know where, exactly. I was told by Trammel that it dwells beneath some far-off mountain, accessible through a crack that opens 'only when the moon is dark and the stars shine down.' A moonless night. I have a… a rite, a… spell that will hide the moon and part the clouds so the crack will flex open. It's in my office in the warehouse. But I don't know where to go to perform that rite. They might know in Bangkok."*

A use of **Oral History** or pointed questions about his family gets a more personal account out of Donovan:

- *"I want… out of all this. I want my son to be free of it. I've already lost my wife to this."*

4. Pursuing Donovan



- *"We needed the Mouth to produce more Nectar, but it demanded a sacrifice — a mystic sacrifice — in exchange for more Nectar. It had to be something important to me, something powerful, the Mouth said. 'The more serious the sacrifice, the more potent the power unleashed.' We tried a few volunteers, but the Mouth wasn't satisfied with them. We… considered Monte. My son. But I couldn't go through with it. So… sweet heaven, I offered it my… my wife. My dear Portia. The Mouth took her and, since then, we've been all but drowning in Nectar."*

- *"That's all I can take. My son has been very ill. We've tried medicine; we've tried Nectar and magic; we've tried everything. I thought that maybe if I gave Portia to the Mouth, it would heal my son. But he's only getting sicker. It's like he's cursed. I need to get him out of this, away from them. I'll do anything."*

Donovan the Liar and the Pawn

Donovan is wracked with grief and wants out of the cult, but he's no fool and he's not a good guy. The Investigators trust him at their own peril.

If used as part of a scheme to get inside the warehouse, Donovan either gives up the Investigators to Diana Hantz and the warehouse guards when the Investigators are at their most vulnerable… or Hantz turns on Donovan at the first sign that he's betraying the cult. It's possible that both circumstances develop — that Hantz turns on Donovan just when Donovan is planning to turn on the Investigators — resulting in a messy coup in which warehouse guards have to decide whom to side with, Hantz or Donovan. If that happens, the best the Investigators can hope for is a window in the gunplay during which they can either bolt from the warehouse or get deeper inside.

Donovan's thinking is that he can best escape the cult not by siding with the Investigators but by proving to the Thing With a Thousand Mouths and to Hantz that he is trustworthy to *them* even though he no longer wants to head the local operation. He's hoping for a situation where he can raise his son outside of the cult without being murdered on his way out — even if that means being watched by the cult forever after.

As a result, **Assess Honesty** can yield complex results when used on Montgomery Donovan. He genuinely wants out of the cult, he genuinely wants to raise his son in peace, but he doesn't much care if the rest of the world drowns in Nectar and blood, and he has no allegiance to the Investigators. He's also a terrific liar himself, and thus much of what he says reads to Assess Honesty attempts as "inconclusive."

Note that Donovan's timeline here is a lie that **Assess Honesty** reads as Donovan "holding back" or "lying to himself." Donovan's been lying to himself for a while about this, so he can't always sort out the truth. The Investigators might be able to shake the truth out of him with a 1-point spend of **Interrogation** or **Intimidation**: Monte, Jr. didn't actually get sick until after Portia was sacrificed. *"It feels like Monte's being sacrificed next, now,"* Donovan might say, *"and there's nothing I can do about it!"*

Montgomery Donovan, Sr.

Three Things: Smells like cologne. Wears a fine silk handkerchief in his pocket. Sweats a lot.

Athletics 4, Credit Rating 7, Driving 2, Firearms 3, Fleeing 7, Health 10, Magic 3, Riding 6, Scuffling 2, Sanity 2, Stability 5, Stealth 5

Alertness Modifier: +1 (paranoid)

Weapon: −2 (fists)

5. Watching the Warehouse

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Approaching, but not entering, Donovan's warehouse (Malta 1, "Arrival in Valletta," p. 224, Malta 2, "Valletta Footwork," p. 225, or Malta 4, "Pursuing Donovan," p. 232).

Summary: The Investigators observe Donovan's warehouse to glean information on its operations, maybe even going so far as to walk right up to it, but do not yet gain entry.

Core Clue: The warehouse is especially active at night. Dozens of workers and guards mill about the place. Armed guards control entry and exit at both entrances. (Simple search.)

Core Clue: The workers are preparing a shipment to go out on the *Thyrsus*. That ship arrives in about three days and departs 24 hours later. (Bargain, Streetwise, or a Credit Rating 4+ bribe on the harbormaster.)

A stakeout of Donovan's warehouse is straightforward, requiring just a bit of poise and a lot of time. A few minor interviews can be conducted in the area without triggering retribution from the warehouse personnel directly. This scene covers what the Investigators can learn from sniffing around the warehouse without approaching it directly. (For that, see **Malta 17, "In The Warehouse,"** p. 252.)

Local surveillance spots include cars parked in neighboring lots, hidden rooftop vantage points, and boats passing slowly in the harbor. A good pair of binoculars makes the warehouse visible from plenty of vantage points. Most of the clues available require the equivalent of a **simple search** and a bit of patience — one night's observation ought to do it.

- The warehouse is a simple cement-and-corrugated-metal building with few entrances and high, closed windows. Aside from the light pouring out through those dirty windows, there's little way of seeing what's happening inside.

- The warehouse is especially active in the evening, starting around 4:30 p.m. and going until midnight or so. Dozens of staff work inside the well-lit building while ten or so guards patrol the grounds, rifles in hand. At least two men are posted on the warehouse roof at all times.

- **Bureaucracy** used on the harbormaster reveals that the warehouse is owned by Montgomery Donovan and overseen by Diana Hantz. No business name or other permits are on file. (**Assess Honesty** or **Streetwise** makes it clear that the harbormaster has taken a bribe so as not to care about that.)

- **Bargain**, **Streetwise**, or a bribe (Credit Rating 4+) in the harbormaster's office learns that a freighter, the *Thyrsus*, is due to arrive at the warehouse dock from Italy in three days and to stay for about 24 hours before departing for France.

- Careful monitoring of the roving guards notices that they stick to the paths in the gravel surrounding the warehouse. Not one of them deviates from these paths.

6. Field of Mouths

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Attempting to sneak up on the warehouse or the ship (Malta 5, "Watching the Warehouse," p. 236).

Summary: The Investigators discover the ground around the warehouse is teeming with Minor Mouths, including Mouths on rubbery proboscises, fearsome and vigilant. These things make it all but impossible to approach quietly — even if the Investigators stay silent, the Mouths won't.

Alternate Core: A character injured by one of these mouths becomes psychically certain that there's a Major Mouth nearby, connected to all these Minor Mouths, because the Investigator can *hear* it.

A Frontal Assault

Perhaps the Investigators have lots of firepower and an urge to use it. Perhaps they underestimate the Health and ferociousness of simple warehouse workers. Perhaps they just don't care about the legal consequences. They want to storm the place.

This is their mistake to make, but it's your responsibility to see to it that the players have plenty of information available so that they have a fair ability to realize that this is a reckless and dangerous course of action. Make sure they have a chance to observe the ample and armed guards patrolling the warehouse and the nearby waterfront, for example.

If the Investigators attempt a frontal assault, that may be a fine alternate time for Sir Godfrey Welles to make his first appearance either by appearing in the midst of their attack to aid them (and help them escape) or by stepping in, just moments before the PCs spring into action, to warn them off. Either way, he can lead them to his hidden refuge beneath the city and into the scene **"Hospitaller Shrine."**

Any character that treads the ground around the warehouse without staying on the paths triggers this encounter. A field of Minor Mouths stretches from the gravel around the warehouse down into the water around the private dock, making it all but impossible to sneak up on the warehouse this way.

This field is what injured Alexi the orphan (now kept in the hospital with Monte Donovan), who came here to fish. (See **"The Orphan Boy."**)

This field withers and dies if the Major Mouth is slain. Otherwise, each individual mouth must be slain to make a safe path through the field — perhaps a fire or explosion would do it, at your discretion.

Field of Minor Mouths

Athletics 3, Health 3, Scuffling 5

Hit Threshold: 4 (small)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: –1 (bite)

Stability Loss: +1

Field of Mouths: There are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of Mouths on the grounds and coastline here, each with 5 Scuffling points and 3 Health. Battling individual Mouths is only useful for the sake of getting free of a grapple. Each step brings a character potentially in reach of another Mouth. Driving over a field of Mouths shreds tires. Sprinting across a field of Mouths requires a Difficulty 5 **Athletics** or **Fleeing** test.

Perhaps worst of all, a field of Mouths does not stay silent if it detects an intruder.

Any Investigator that suffers damage from the field gets a psychic flash of the Major Mouth nearby and can *sense* through the earth that it is nearby, churning, gushing, gurgling — that a Major Mouth is *in the ground* somewhere near these Minor Mouths. This psychic flash costs the character 1 Stability the first time it's experienced and nauseating effects persist for an hour.

7. The Ship

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Approaching or even boarding the freighter, *Thyrsus*, docked at the warehouse pier (Malta 5, "Watching the Warehouse," p. 236, or Malta 17, "In the Warehouse," p. 252; Malta 6 "Field of Mouths," p.236).

Summary: When the Investigators approach or board the freighter, *Thyrsus*, docked at the warehouse pier, they have an opportunity to interact with a cagey, nervous crew on a Nectar high. If things go badly, the crew attempts to get away with the cargo already in their hold.

Core Clue: The cargo is, of course, Nectar. It is bound for France and, from there, distribution throughout Europe. There are other ships like this one. (Accounting on the logs.)

Core Clue: The crewmen are addicts but not cultists. (Oral History or Streetwise to talk to or listen in on crewmen.)



7. The Ship

This scene covers everything that happens aboard the freighter that comes to Valletta to retrieve the next shipment of Nectar. It arrives approximately three days after the Investigators do (though you can adjust that timeline to complicate or simplify your version of the Locale), around 8 p.m., and departs about 24 hours after that. This scene compresses a lot of potential investigating and skullduggery down into a single bit of action for simplicity's sake — as an optional complication to the events happening in Valletta, we chose not to include half a dozen scenes for the ship and her crew to distract from the main foe.

The freighter *Thyrsus* and her crew exist in this Locale to demonstrate what's at stake and provide a bit of a deadline for the Investigators. If they don't hurry, another shipment of Nectar may make its way out into the world. The crew of the freighter is not made up of devoted cultists, however, and they fight only to defend their own lives (and perhaps their lucrative cargo). Captain Aldavar has contacts all over the world. If he can, he'll make off with the last great supply of Nectar from Valletta and sell it to his contacts in Europe.

If the players become enamored with the ship or its crew, or make it a part of their vital plans to bring down the local cult, that's fine. The freighter is here to add another piece to the game board, too, should the players (or you, on behalf of the cultists) think of a clever way to put it to use.

The ship is completely composed of alternate and optional tasks. Getting information from the ship requires a Difficulty 6 test or a 1-point spend, depending on the approach taken. A bit of **Stealth** (climbing aboard the ship in secret), **Disguise** (posing as a harbor inspector, maybe), or **Oral History** or **Streetwise** (used on freighter crewmen in a nearby bar, perhaps) gets Investigators scuttlebutt from the crew, either overheard or coaxed out in conversation. Once aboard, an **Accounting** spend finds the ship's logs, which reveals the Credit Rating of the captain (5) and the crew (3) and reveals the fortune to be made from the cargo of Nectar they'll be taking on — enough to dial their Credit Ratings up by one for the year.

The ship's records make it clear that a half-dozen other ships like the *Thyrsus* are hauling Nectar from Malta, bound for Egypt, Tunisia, France, Greece, and Spain. (If the Investigators choose to chase down shipments of Nectar, see the scene **Malta 21, "Chasing Freighters,"** p. 259.)

Sabotaging the ship from the inside requires an additional **Stealth** test (Difficulty 5) to reach the engineering section and a **Mechanical Repair** test. The Difficulty met by the Mechanical Repair test determines the Difficulty for repair attempts, which the crew can make every 12 hours.

Here's some scuttlebutt to overhear from crewmen aboard the ship or in a nearby pub:

- *"The people who make the shit are getting richer than we are, even. So they protect the secret of the recipe carefully.What do you think all those guns are for?"*
- *"I'll be glad when we get out of here. I mean, I'm glad for the money and to be back in Nectar, but the blokes who run that factory creep me out. Nice to be in and out."*
- *"I'm going to trade some of my cut of the money for a nice, fat supply of the juice. My girl and I love the stuff, and it costs a fortune to get it in Roma."*
- *"You just watch. Sooner or later the police will identify and outlaw this stuff.We're just lucky they haven't already. Gray markets are great for business."*



Captain Aldavar

Three Things: Pencil-thin mustache. Brilliant blue eyes. Rough, calloused hands.

Athletics 5, Credit Rating 5, Driving 4, Electrical Repair 3, Firearms 4, Fleeing 4, Health 8, Mechanical Repair 7, Piloting 5, Scuffling 5, Weapons 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (bowie knife), +1 (pistol)

Freighter Crew (12)

Three Things: Foul mouthed. Itchy. Quick to mock each other.

Athletics 4, Credit Rating 3, Driving 2, Electrical Repair 4, Firearms 2, Fleeing 4, Health 4, Mechanical Repair 6, Piloting 5, Scuffling 5, Weapons 3

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (improvised club)

8. Hospital

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Reaching the hospital, either during investigations (Malta 4, "Pursuing Donovan," p. 232, or Malta 12, "The Knight," p. 243) or to recover from damage.

Summary: The Investigators discover Nectar in the halls of this beloved institution, either by skill or by chance.

Core Clue: Nectar is used as a medicine at the Hospital Superbissima. (Intimidation of a nurse.)

Core Clue: A young patient has been brought in with bites all over his legs and arms, and that patient is still in the hospital. There's a Montgomery Donovan in the hospital's intensive-care unit. (Simple search of intake forms.)



This scene describes what happens when the Investigators poke around the Hospital Superbissima quietly, trying to get information in general. This scene may unfold if they arrive at the hospital while tailing Donovan (in **"Pursuing Donovan"**) or if they arrive here as patients following injuries acquired in another scene.

The Hospital Superbissima is a younger institution in an older building. The hospital was constructed as a sprawling mansion in the 18th century, replacing a few 16th-century buildings, and then renovated into a modest hospital in 1901. It is six storeys tall, made of sturdy stone, and quite cramped and dark for a hospital. Though tall windows let a great deal of light into the outer rooms, the interior spaces, such as offices and records rooms, are shadowy and confining.

This is a difficult place to prowl around in search of information or clues because the close quarters make it hard to stay out of sight. However, the hospital is riddled with corrupt nurses and crooked orderlies used to taking bribes from Montgomery Donovan and willing to leak secrets to his people… or those posing as his people. (This vulnerability, detectable with **Assess Honesty** or **Streetwise**, is especially useful in the scene **"Escaping the Hospital."**) Staff members asked about Donovan regard interviewers with wary eyes. *"You mean Mr. Donovan? Of the Donovan Wing of the hospital?"*

Whether they are visitors or patients, the Investigators are sure to notice when a nurse goes by with what looks like a vial or bottle of Nectar. The hospital staff uses the drug — which they simply call "orange juice," since it has no official name yet — as a pharmaceutical, dosing patients with trace amounts to make them "lively" and "give them pep," according to nurses asked what they're administering. **Intimidation** gets a staff member to admit that these experimental treatments are done on behalf of "a donor to the hospital" who is "in the business." *"We just use small amounts, mixed with saline,"* the nurse says. An Intimidation spend pushes further, revealing that the donor is Montgomery Donovan, Sr., the "manufacturer" of the drug.

An Investigator who gains access to the hospital records room or a nurses' station can scan the intake forms to get a quick sense of who's admitted. There's a Montgomery Donovan in room #304, Intensive Care Ward. Next door, in #303, is a boy listed only as "Alexi," admitted almost three weeks ago for "bites over legs and arms." They share a doctor in common: Dr. Solazzio.

Asking around after Dr. Solazzio with **Disguise** (Difficulty 5) or **Bureaucracy** reveals that he is the doctor overseeing the "orange juice" program and treating Mr. Donovan's son. Dr. Solazzio has been at the hospital for about a year and "came in promising to really revitalize the place."

Dr. Solazzio

Three Things: A lot of pomade. Adjusts his collar often. Says, "I never!" when he's lying.

Athletics 2, Conceal 4, Credit Rating 5, First Aid 8, Fleeing 3, Health 6, Psychoanalysis 4, Stability 6

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (syringe of Nectar)

Dr. Solazzio is a Nectar addict and cultist on Donovan's payroll. He doses patients in an attempt to make more addicts and study the effects of Nectar at various dosages. He is also using a

Spell: Rite of the Liar's Blessing

Dr. Solazzio recites a mystic spell over Alexi and Monte as they sleep off their shallow Nectar dosages. Unknown to Solazzio (but suspected by Donovan), this spell is actually keeping Monte in the Major Mouth's power. That is, it is keeping Monte and Alexi from getting better. The spell takes two minutes to cast and costs Dr. Solazzio a point of Stability each time it is cast. Should the Investigators get their hands on the spell and choose to cast it, all they are doing is giving the local Major Mouth the option of making a target sick — if the Mouth's not interested, nothing happens.

A **Cthulhu Mythos** revelation can be made to realize how this spell works — subjecting the target to the whims and ills of the nearby Major Mouth — but that is probably a poor cost-to-benefit situation. Such a revelation costs 3 Stability and 1 Sanity pool points.



spell given to him by Donovan (which Donovan got from the Major Mouth) as part of his "treatments" on Monte and Alexi. If the question of Alexi is put to Dr. Solazzio, he is unlikely to admit what he is doing: attempting to recreate Monte's symptoms in another little boy to see if the treatment *is* the illness. (Because the sickness is simply the will of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths via the local Major Mouth, however, Monte remains sick while Alexi is merely drugged into a stupor.)

Dr. Solazzio has the spell memorized and won't recite it, or reveal any of his secrets, for anything less than a full-on **Interrogation**. See **Malta 9, "The Orphan Boy,"** below, and **Malta 10, "Monte, Jr.,"** p. 241, for more of Solazzio's secrets.

9. The Orphan Boy

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Discovering Alexi the orphan boy in the hospital (Malta 8, "Hospital," p. 239, or Malta 10, "Monte, Jr.," p. 241).

Summary: The Investigators find an orphan boy with telltale bite marks on his legs and arms.

Core Clue: Alexi is being treated with a combination of painkillers, Nectar, and a spell — one of his doctors works for Donovan. Alexi is a test case for things they intend to use on Monte. (Medicine on Alexi's chart, in combination with Medicine on Monte's chart (Malta 10); overhearing Dr. Solazzio.)

Core Clue: Alexi was bitten by many human-like mouths down by a pier where he used to fish. That was three weeks ago. (Oral History.)

Alexi the orphan boy is in Room #303 in the hospital. He may be just across the hall from a wounded Investigator, who may overhear Dr. Solazzio's whispered spell over the boy (in a dreadful, unearthly language). However the Investigators come to be aware of Alexi, this scene describes what clues can be gleaned from him.

Alexi's chart, discernible with **Medicine**, describes a mess of overlapping drugs and flailing treatments. He is clearly being mistreated, if only insofar as he is being treated for an illness he shows no symptoms of — not for the bites and scratches he came in with. Those have healed (and scarred) already.

If asked directly, Alexi answers as best he can in his drugged state. **Oral History** gets Alexi to recount what happened to him:

"I was fishing down near Newcastle Drive, around the warehouses there… and I moved to seek out the fishes… and the ground bit me. I tried to run, but there were teeth everywhere… mouths everywhere. I fell down, into them… Someone rescued me, dragged me clear… and I woke up here."

Reassurance makes Alexi cooperative enough to travel, should the Investigators decide to get him free of the building. (See **"Escaping the Hospital."**)

The truth is that Alexi is a simple bystander caught in the cult's web. He knows little and is guilty of even less. He is in a daze from the various drugs he is kept on and, as a result of Nectar-fueled nightmares, is all but out of Stability. He is an orphan, ten years old, missing from an orphanage in the greater Valletta area (around Hamrun). If returned to the orphanage, he gradually comes off the drugs and heals fully.



Alexi the Orphan Boy

Three Things: Wiry. Quick. Tilts his head sideways before he laughs.

Athletics 4, Conceal 2, Filch 2, Fleeing 5, Health 4/5, Stability 2/8, Stealth 4

HitThreshold: 2 (stupor), 3 (normal)

Weapon: −3 (fists)

10. Monte, Jr.

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Discovering a "Montgomery Donovan" in the hospital (Malta 8, "Hospital," p. 239, or Malta 9, "The Orphan Boy," p. 240).

Summary: The Investigators discover a Monte Donovan in the hospital's intensive-care ward — he's the son of Montgomery Donovan, Sr.

Core Clue: Monte is very sick with an unknown ailment. Donovan's people (including crooked doctors) are using everything from medicine to Nectar to sorcery to attempt to heal him. None of it is working. (Medicine on his chart.)

Monte Donovan, Jr., is the patient in room #304 of Hospital Superbissima. The Investigators may become aware of him by various means, described in previous scenes. This scene describes what happens when they gain access to Monte's room and chart.

Young Monte himself is no source of clues. He's befuddled, dazed, and drugged out of all sense and reason. The best he can do is mutter. *"Mummy,"* he says. *"I want my mum."*

Monte's chart, if studied with **Medicine**, reveals an overlapping mess of treatments, drugs, and flailing would-be remedies. The chart paints a picture of a mysterious illness and a doctor in over his head. Periodic doses simply labeled "N" aren't helping… but have never been abandoned. "Special treatment" (the spell Dr. Solazzio recites) is also doing nothing. Monte is not being helped here.

Monte's and Alexi's charts are virtually identical. **Medicine** leads to the realization that Alexi is being treated for Monte's symptoms as a test case.



Compassionate Investigators won't leave Monte in this situation, no matter who his father is. Subtle Investigators may try to forge new treatment orders for the boys (a 1-point **Medicine** spend) or get Dr. Solazzio to change his treatments for Alexi and Monte (a 1-point **Intimidation** spend ought to do it). This at least buys time so that the Investigators can come back and rescue the boys later.

Getting either of them out of the hospital, however, is a scene in its own right…

Monte Donovan, Jr.

Three Things: Reaches out with his hands for help. Has trouble breathing. Too trusting.

Athletics 2/5, Filch 1/2, Fleeing 3/5, Health 2/5, Scuffling 1/1, Stability 1/5, Stealth 2/3

Hit Threshold: 2 (dazed)

Weapon: −3 (fists)

Monte Donovan is drugged into a stupor when the Investigators find him. The stats above indicate his current abilities, with the values to the left of the slash representing his debilitated and narcotized state. As he heals, you should feel free to raise Monte's ability pools to something more robust, if the unfolding story calls for Monte to become a more important character. Otherwise, Monte depends on the PCs to protect him — his abilities simply describe his ability to help them to help him.

What exactly causes Monte to heal depends on how you want to motivate or reward your players for the Investigators' deeds. The destruction of the local Major Mouth can break the Thing's hold on Monte, starting him on the road to recovery, if you want a happy beat at the end of this Locale's tale. Alternatively, Monte might only stabilize when the Major Mouth is dealt with, giving the Investigators a specific example of why they must thwart the Thing With a Thousand Mouths itself — and soon, before poor Monte dies. Worst-case scenario: Monte may die before the Investigators are even out of Malta, underscoring the evil of their foe. You know your players better than we do; inspire them — toward relief or revenge — as you see fit.

11. Escaping the Hospital

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: Attempting to get Alexi (Malta 9, "The Orphan Boy," p. 240) and/or Monte (Malta 10 Monte, Jr., p. 241) out of the hospital .

Summary: The Investigators use guile or force to get Alexi or Monte (or both) out of the hospital and away from the Nectar. Their attempts, successful or not, earn the attention of Sir Godfrey Welles, a secret Knight Hospitaller in Malta.



This scene is a distraction of sorts — a chance for the Investigators to be heroic at the possible expense of their own freedom to move around afterward. The implicit question in this scene is this: Will the Investigators leave these children to suffer while they pursue the larger goal of bringing down the cult? This is a question for the players to discuss and roleplay through; it should reveal a bit about their characters. Some players may determine that these boys will be best saved by stopping the Major Mouth and ending its flow of Nectar, for example, while others are unwilling to leave these children in such dreadful hands. Let them weigh the consequences and decide what they will.

Leaving the Hospital Superbissima is not especially difficult if the PCs are just visitors or patients. An Investigator may use **Medicine** or **Disguise** (Difficulty 5) to pose as another Investigator's doctor and authorize the transport of the character to another hospital. (This probably requires the authorizing Investigator to sign a few forms.) A bit of **Reassurance** convinces hospital clerks that a patient feels fine and is ready to depart. A Reassurance spend convinces a clerk to the point that he or she doesn't even write a suspicious note in anyone's file or form much of a memory of the character — good for anonymity, if they need it.

The real challenge to escaping from the hospital appears under two other circumstances: when Donovan's guards are there, watching who comes and goes, and when the Investigators have patients with them that are under Dr. Solazzio's "special care."

(Note that Investigators in the hospital as patients can get dosed with Nectar or put under Dr. Solazzio's care for two broad reasons: either the cult recognizes them as enemies and decides to make use of the PCs' vulnerability, perhaps to draw out their comrades, *or* you as Keeper decide that Dr. Solazzio's attentions fall on them for purely dramatic reasons such as for pacing or exposition.)

If the Investigators attempt to slip out in pursuit of Donovan or while his guards are in the hospital, see the scene **Malta 4,"Pursuing Donovan,"** p. 232, for stats on those guards. They take immediate note of strange behavior in their vicinity.

If the Investigators try to get Alexi or Monte (or both) out of the hospital, they have to get around some nurses and orderlies and go through the security staff. (They may even have to get through Donovan's own guards, if they time their escape poorly.) This is not all that hard to do, really; it's just hard to do anonymously. Waving guns around or making a total of a 2-point **Intimidation** spend is brutish enough to clear a gap through the hospital staff.

Getting Alexi and/or Monte out of the hospital likely leads to a citywide manhunt for the boys and their "kidnappers," with both crooked and legit police on the search for the Investigators.

Thus the Investigators may want to wear surgical masks or **Disguises**, since even a simple disguise (Difficulty 4 or 5) at least renders a character unidentifiable to witnesses who might be called upon, in this era without security cameras, to assert that "yes, that's the one who carried that boy out of the hospital." A surgical mask gives any character a dedicated pool point of Disguise within the hospital. A doctor's white coast grants an additional pool point of Disguise. Either or both gives you a good reason for some NPCs to make lazy assumptions ("Just another surgeon, I guess") or obstructive assumptions ("Excuse me, doctor, can you help me?") about the character, depending on the success of the attempt. NPCs might challenge a disguise if the Investigators draw attention to themselves or interact with an NPC. Not all interactions call for the Difficulty 7 test befitting proper impersonation. In this context, it's easier (Difficulty 5 or 6) to impersonate "a doctor" than it is to impersonate a *particular* Doctor (Difficulty 7). A **Medicine** spend might count as a point toward a Disguise roll if, for example, an Investigator wants to portray a visiting specialist ("Didn't you get my telegram?").

All disguises are temporary affairs, anyway, buying just enough time to take action, stymie the opposition, or delay consequences for recklessness or failure.

Once the Investigators get out onto the street, they must have somewhere to take the rescued boys (though see **"The Knight"**). Thus the situation gets more complicated. You may want to call for a **Stealth** or **Shadowing** test (Difficulty 5 close to the hospital, Difficulty 4 after that) to describe the Investigators' attempted escape from the scene of their rescue. Alternately, they may try simply **Fleeing** the scene until they can make a single **Stealth** test to hide.

The Shadowing Knight

When Sir Godfrey Welles appears, he may act as if he's been tailing the Investigators during their movements around Malta. For some players, this sort of claim is spurious to the point of being fun-killing, especially if the PCs have been keeping a low profile. For those players, it's worth it to track Sir Godfrey's movements during the early parts of the Locale, in case the Investigators detect him.

In that case, Investigators should be entitled to a **Sense Trouble** roll in any scene where you determine Sir Godfrey to be watching them, especially those set around the warehouse or Donovan's townhouse. Remember Donovan's +1 Stealth modifier for such tests and don't be afraid to set the Difficulty higher than you might ordinarily, since Godfrey is a secretive sort, operating in his home turf.

A successful Sense Trouble test might simply reveal a shadowy figure at the end of the street or a shape on a nearby rooftop. Attempts to investigate merely give the Investigators the confident feeling that they're being watched by someone who knows Valletta well: by the time they reach the watching figure's position, there's no sign of him or her.

If the players make a dig deal out of being watched, and work hard to catch the figure watching them, have Sir Godfrey step out of the shadows as they approach. *"Well done,"* he says. *"I've been on Donovan's thugs for months and they never go out of their way to find me."*

Worst-case scenario? You introduce Sir Godfrey early. No big deal.



If the Investigators have devised a whole scheme for rescuing the boys and getting them free of the cult (perhaps involving fake papers and a ship out of Malta), let them explore it. If it proves to be too much of a distraction from the job at hand, gloss over details or assume that the characters succeed rather than testing for every damn task. Securing papers for the boys might just require a **Law** or **Streetwise** spend among the right contacts, for example, and getting the boys to safety might simply involve flying them out in the Winston-Rogers plane to Sicily and then sorting out the rest of it between Locales. If the logistics of a complicated rescue seem to be spoiling the players' good feeling for doing the right thing, make things easier on the players (even if things stay complicated for the characters between scenes).

Be ready to begin the scene **"The Knight"** whenever the Investigators risk getting in over their heads, especially around the hospital.

Hospital Security

Three Things: Crisp uniforms. Humorless. Proud.

Athletics 6, Health 4, Scuffling 5, Sense Trouble 5, Weapons 2

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (billy clubs)



12. The Knight

Scene Type: Core (Floating)

Lead-ins: Putting a dent in Donovan's plans or getting in over their heads (Malta 3, "Donovan's Domains," p. 227, Malta 4, "Pursuing Donovan," p. 232, Malta 5, "Watching the Warehouse," p. 236, Malta 6, "Field of Mouths," p. 236, or Malta 11, "Escaping the Hospital, p. 242).

Summary: Knight Hospitaller Sir Godfrey Welles approaches (or rescues) the Investigators in Malta and aids them in their "quest" against the fearsome "so-called god" they battle, which Sir Godfrey is sure is Nyarlathotep.

Core Clue: Donovan's warehouse is built over old catacombs. The Mouth of Malta is hidden away in those catacombs, where it gives up its gift of Nectar, which is shipped out across Europe and North Africa. Sir Godfrey knows another way into the catacombs, though, allowing the Investigators to reach the Mouth without going through all of Donovan's dosed-up goons.



Play this scene when it's time to introduce Sir Godfrey Welles, the lonely Knight Hospitaller who has taken it upon himself to oppose Donovan's cult in Malta. He comes to the Investigators when it is clear that they need his help or, more accurately, when you decide the story calls for Sir Godfrey's information to be shared with the Investigators.

These are some examples of when and how Sir Godfrey might appear:

- Just as the Investigators are finished staking out the warehouse — or just before they attempt to prowl around the edges of its territory — Sir Godfrey comes to them to warn them of the field of Mouths that guards the

warehouse. *"Careful, there. That's a den of evil, that is. Dangers abound."*

- As the Investigators exit Donovan's townhouse, or perhaps as one of them is watching another infiltrate it, Sir Godfrey walks up and loudly asks for a light for his pipe. Then, quietly, he says, *"Meet me at the fountain of Saint George in the garden on St. Christopher's Street, near St. Paul. Dawn. Bring your cohorts."* This leads almost directly to the scene, **"Hospitaller Shrine."**

- As the Investigators emerge from the hospital, perhaps with the rescued boys in tow, Sir Godfrey appears at an open door in a nearby (and very old) building, saying, *"Quick! In here!"* and *"Trust me!"* If they do, he bolts the door behind them and leads them through a secret door and down some stairs to the scene **"Hospitaller Shrine."**

- While being chased by Donovan's guards, Sir Godfrey either leaps from an alley to help the Investigators fight or pulls the trick above, helping them hide behind a locked door and a secret passage.

However he is introduced, Sir Godfrey should appear as a helpful agent of good — because he is. He's been watching the Investigators since they entered the orbit of Donovan and his warehouse, waiting for the right moment to reveal himself.

"First," he says, *"I had to know that you were here to do the right thing. To bring down that man and his cult."*

Sir Godfrey Welles, Knight of Malta

Sir Godfrey Welles is a lone Knight of Malta — part of a secret chapter of the order — operating on his own to thwart evil in Valletta.

"It's my duty to defend this city, as it was founded in our name and honor. We have always protected Valletta, through the centuries. Often unseen, often without reward. I'm the last of my secret chapter. Most of us work in the public realm, now, but I felt that secrecy had its… advantages. For example, Montgomery Donovan and his drug-dealing heathens don't know that I'm on to them and their foul god."

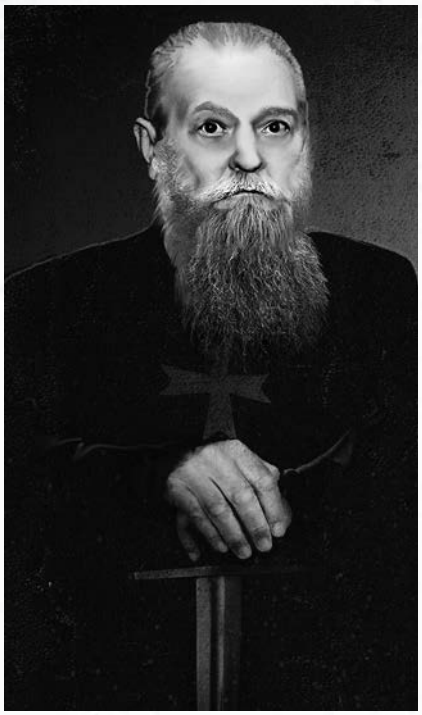
Sir Godfrey is not a young man anymore. Now in his 60th year, he makes big plans and then waits for the opportunity to carry them out. *"I know a way into the cult's heart — a secret passage that leads right to their foul centerpiece — but I figure I stand little chance on my own. Maybe now that you're here…?"*

Sir Godfrey is loveless and childless. He was born in Valletta in 1877. The love of his life died of pneumonia in 1899, and he never again pursued romance. He's dedicated his life to his order and been rewarded with a few secrets and, finally, a chapter of his own — a chapter consisting of him alone. He has contacts and friends all throughout Malta and the Mediterranean, which you are free to specify as needed to make Sir Godfrey suitably appealing to your players and their characters.

For example, Sir Godfrey is interested in ancient **Languages** and may have a contact in common with an Investigator if that helps them trust him. He is certainly connected in areas of **History** and **Theology**, and he definitely knows the **Archaeology** and **Architecture** of Malta as well as any expert. Perhaps he discusses **Geology** or **Physics** with a character who hasn't been able to spotlight those abilities. It's up to you.

Such conversations may take place en route to the Hospitaller shrine or in the scene set there, as you like.

Sir Godfrey can relay as much of the background information on the cult as



you deem necessary to clear things up for your players. He's been watching Donovan and the warehouse closely enough that he knows everything it's possible to know from the outside. Of course, some of it is wrong. The Investigators should have a chance to set Sir Godfrey right on a few things or doubt their own deductions in his presence. He represents a chance to stop and confer without falling out of character.

Some facts as Sir Godfrey Welles understands them are as follows:

- The cult worships these vanishing Mouths, which are embodiments of an evil god who has come to Earth to poison and enslave mankind.

- Donovan's wife was killed by the cult, as a show of force, to keep him in line. [False: Donovan sacrificed her to increase Nectar production.]

- Donovan's son is cursed by the evil god they worship. They're trying to use their foul drug to heal him, which is insane. [True.]

- The thing they worship is an ancient god of many forms. It has plagued humanity since ancient times. *"It's known by many names, including their Liar From Beyond, but I've always known it as Nyarlathotep."* [False: Sir Godfrey is mistaken.]

- The cult is shipping out "that foul stuff" to ports all over Europe and the Mediterranean. *"Who knows how many are addicted already."* [True.]

- Whatever monster it is that produces the stuff — the cult calls it "the Mouth of Malta" — it's underneath the warehouse. [True.]

Sir Godfrey Welles

Three Things: Gentle unless angry. Seeks approval from dead knights. Takes people by the shoulder when speaking from the heart.

Athletics 8, Conceal 2, Disguise 3, Driving 2, Firearms 2, First Aid 6, Fleeing 5, Health 11, Preparedness 4, Riding 5, Stability 7, Scuffling 7, Sense Trouble 10, Shadowing 8, Stealth 6, Weapons 8

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapons: −2 (fists), +0 (dagger), +1 (sword)

13. Hospitaller Shrine

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Malta 12, "The Knight," p. 243

Summary: The Investigators study Sir Godfrey's library before possibly setting out against the cult.

Core Clue: Sir Godfrey's predecessors battled Nyarlathotep when the Knights of Malta held Valletta… and Sir Godfrey is convinced that this Thing with a Thousand Mouths is "a mask of Nyarlathotep." Godfrey even has a spell, captured during the Crusades, which shall unravel the god's form if it is cast in his immediate presence — but the Mouths might not do. It may need to be cast at the heart (or "foul gut") of the Thing.

Floating Campaign Clue: If this Locale's floating core clue is discovered from Sir Godfrey (at the Keeper's discretion), it happens here.

This scene describes a moment of reflection, study, and orientation before the Investigators proceed ahead, one way or another, after conferring with Sir Godfrey. This scene represents a safe place where the Investigators cannot be reached by the cultists, where they may be able to hide Alexi and Monte for a time, where they can apply **First Aid** and examine Sir Godfrey's library. It's the deep breath before the dive.

Sir Godfrey leads the Investigators to his sanctuary once he believes he can trust them or once his need for their aid outweighs his uncertainty. The shrine is at the heart of a maze of tunnels beneath Valletta proper, and its location is not on any map. (It's not even on the map of Valletta in this book so that you can place it somewhere helpful to the Investigators, like near the hospital if they come here with Alexi or Monte in tow or near the townhouse if they come here while trying to escape Donovan's guards.)

Architecture or **Archaeology** dates the shrine to the 16th century (it was built in 1566) and recognizes the stonework as typical of Christian catacombs of the era. A four-foot cross stands at one end of the candlelit shrine, behind a modest altar. One alcove is filled with books on shelves and in stacks. Another alcove houses two cots and footlockers. One long wall is painted with a lovely fresco depicting Knights of Malta on a long spar of rock battling a dark and shapeless foe with many heads and black, grasping limbs. **Art History** dates the piece to the 16th century and understands the symbolism thusly: the spar of rock is the Xiberras Peninsula, on which Valletta was built, and the monster is some nebulous idea of evil. **Biology** notes that the sea surrounding the spar of rock is filled with imaginary sea-beasts.

If asked, Sir Godfrey clarifies the piece's meaning: *"It depicts my forebears doing battle against the dread god, Nyarlathotep, who wears many faces, many masks. We've been battling him for centuries and have found traces of him everywhere… all throughout the world."*

(In truth, Sir Godfrey and his cohorts in the secret chapter tended to mistake all manner of foes for minions or masks of Nyarlathotep. That has simply become the name they have given to all Mythos foes they cannot otherwise identify.)

Sir Godfrey proudly presents the Investigators with "a spell that hurts that foul god." The spell is written into a nameless illustrated text from 1498 — a book that describes various encounters with Nyarlathotep over the ages but is so scattered and vague that, aside from the spell, it has little actual Cthulhu Mythos value. According to Sir Godfrey, *"This spell unravels the god's physical manifestations and loosens its grip on the physical realm, undoing the body that it inhabits. Potent, but it takes time and focus to perform. I don't know what effect it would have on a part of the beast — it may have to be cast on the foul gut of the Thing."* (See the sidebar, "A Spell Against Nyarlathotep," for more.)

An Investigator who engages Sir Godfrey on matters of **History** or **Theology** to the point of making

13. Hospitaller Shrine

A Spell Against Nyarlathotep

The spell that Sir Godfrey gives the Investigators *may* be a perfectly viable weapon against Nyarlathotep — perhaps forcing avatars of that dread god to reveal their true nature as their physical forms disintegrate to deny that dead being their form — but it does the Investigators only one potential bit of good in this campaign: it proves either that they are not facing Nyarlathotep or that the spell does not work at all. The only way to discover that, of course, is to cast the spell on a Major Mouth (or on the body of the Thing itself) and discover that the spell is powerless in that situation. If an Investigator casts this spell against a Major Mouth or against the body of the Liar From Beyond in Act Three and cannot reach a conclusion, a **Cthulhu Mythos** realization may be in order, revealing that Nyarlathotep is not the Liar From Beyond, aka the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. It's a sorry use of the ability but it is at least conclusive. For some players, that's worth it.

To cast this requires several minutes of loud chanting and bold rebukes invoking the name of Nyarlathotep. (This spell cannot be cast quietly or stealthily.) See p. 368 for the full ritual.



a 1-point spend earns his respect enough that he draws another gift from a chest hidden under the floor of the shrine: *"This,"* he says, *"is Nectar that turned back into water when I mixed it with holy water blessed years ago by a priest I knew. I thought it might dissolve the drug but instead, like a miracle, it seems to have become an antidote to the drug. A single dram of this clears the head and wards the body."* That is, a dose of Sir Godfrey's antidote counteracts the narcotic effects of Nectar for about an hour, regardless of how much Nectar is consumed. He offers a number of drams equal to the number of PCs (up to a maximum of 5 drams).

"The priest who blessed the holy water used to make the antidote died last winter," Godfrey can say, *"and no other holy water seems to have the same effect."*

At some point, Sir Godfrey challenges the Investigators to explain how they intend to destroy "the beast at the heart of the cult — the source of their Nectar." (He knows things from interrogating captured cultists in the past.) If they don't yet have an answer, or if their plan is not yet complete, he offers to help — going so far as to put them in touch with a knight who can supply them with weapons or explosives, if need be. The Investigators must have the right know-how in **Explosives** and **Firearms** to know what they're looking for, and the **Credit Ratings** to pay for these things, but Sir Godfrey can help with local contacts if need be.

If Sir Godfrey has not yet revealed that he knows of another way into the ground beneath the cult's warehouse, he reveals it now. He offers, at least, to show the Investigators how to access the catacombs that lead to the warehouse tunnels and, at best, to accompany them. Alternately, Sir Godfrey may remain behind to watch over Alexi and Monte (if necessary) or to get them into safe hands among trustworthy members of the Knights of Malta's non-secret chapters.

Says Sir Godfrey:

"Old Christian catacombs run all throughout the grounds beneath the warehouses out there, but many of them have collapsed as a result of meddling by modern builders. Underneath those Christian catacombs are much older ruins, however. You must descend from the outer Christian catacombs into those lower, older ruins, go north as far as you can, and then climb back up into the inner Christian catacombs to reach the tunnels beneath Donovan's warehouse. I'll show you where to enter."

And:

"My brothers laid traps in those catacombs, years ago, to keep grave robbers and trespassers out. I know roughly where they are, but I don't know how to disarm them. You must be cautious, keep your eyes open for latches, metal wires, and loose stones. Don't touch anything you don't have to. You should come upon three devices, each linked to deadly blades, if you follow the right path through the outer catacombs. The inner catacombs have no such traps, but are dangerous in their own rights — they were unstable ten years ago; I can only imagine they remain so today. Within the inner catacombs, you must be as quiet as you can manage, for you'll be so close to the enemy that they may be able to hear you."

Sir Godfrey then writes out a list of simple directions for the Investigators to help them through the catacombs. If the PCs don't possess any *rating* points in **Archaeology**, this list of directions represents 2 dedicated pool points in the ability for use in the following three scenes only. Otherwise, the characters' existing ratings in **Archaeology** are presumed to already encompass what they learn here.



1. Go straight into the outer catacomb ignoring all side passages until you see the maltese cross at an intersection. Beware the first trap here. Turn L and proceed farther into catacombs.
2. Ignore side passages until you see the maltese cross in silver. Beware the second trap here. Turn R and proceed.
3. Count out side passages. At the fourth side passage (on your left), beware the third trap. Enter side passage and look for a well adorned with maltese crosses.
4. Descend the well into the ancient temple.
5. proceed north, through all chambers, to the hall of posts. Remove only those posts you must, replace all you can. proceed north.
6. where the ceiling has come down, climb up into the inner catacombs then proceed down the stairs into the flooded catacombs.
7. proceed west through the flooded catacombs, to the stairs. they end in a false wall, beyond which are the warehouse tunnels.

14. Outer Catacombs

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Being shown (Malta 13, "Hospitaller Shrine," p. 245) or finding (Malta 15, "Ancient Ruins," p. 250) the outer catacombs.

Summary: The Investigators must avoid getting lost and overcome a few traps to reach the well at the heart of the outer catacombs.



This scene covers the Investigators' journey through the outer Christian catacombs beneath the warehouse district of Valletta, as revealed by Sir Godfrey Welles or as discovered when the PCs flee the Nectar tunnels. It is most likely that the Investigators are here with the instructions given by Sir Godfrey in **"Hospitaller Shrine,"** but if they are entering blindly, or fleeing from the warehouse, see "Traveling Blind," p. 249.

Entering the catacombs is surprisingly easy. They are accessible through an open crack in a drainage tunnel south of Donovan's warehouse. (If Sir Godfrey is with the PCs, he remarks, *"There should be a metal grate blocking this crack…"*)

The catacombs are cramped and dark and wet. A low arched ceiling traps torch smoke, and uneven stones cause flashlights to throw off weird shadows. The place smells of mud and wet rat. Many of the grave beds carved into the walls are empty or haphazardly filled now with loose bones. Still, browned bones are everywhere. Skulls stare out from the walls.

Archaeology or **Anthropology** easily dates the catacombs to the mid-1300s, two hundred years before the founding of Valletta, with obvious additions or alterations made over the centuries afterward. (Says Sir Godfrey: *"We've hidden soldiers and secrets down here, now and again, since we took the island into our safekeeping."*)

Painted plaster adornments and inset stone decorations are everywhere, making it difficult to identify just the right crosses and symbols necessary to follow Sir Godfrey's directions sometimes.

If Sir Godfrey is along with the PCs, reduce the Sense Trouble Difficulty for all traps to 3 — he knows roughly where they are but not how they work. He is little help disarming traps as he was meant to keep people from entering these catacombs, not to help them overcome the perils within.

Crawling Through Catacombs

Rather than present a full map of sprawling catacombs and Neolithic temple chambers for the characters to get lost in, we've chosen to represent the space as an abstract collection of linked challenges. First, this makes it easy for the players to see their characters' abilities in action — **Archaeology** and **Architecture** shine that much brighter this way. Second, this saves us space and you time. For all that it might be fun to explore every inch of the old catacombs suggested here, it's not what the characters came to do. This way, only the most important decisions made down in the catacombs are actually given time in the spotlight.



Following Sir Godfrey's Directions

Sir Godfrey's directions show the Investigators just how to proceed through the outer catacombs… but there are a few potential distractions. If they are traveling with Sir Godfrey, he warns PCs away from such distractions (*"There are traps down here I may not recall, so don't wander off"*) but it's ultimately up to them whether they investigate distractions or not.

Encounters down here in the catacombs are numbered to coincide with Sir Godfrey's directions, for ease of reference. Note that distractions all contain letter codes in addition to numbers.

1A — The First Maltese Cross: About fifty feet inside the catacombs is a Maltese cross on the right-hand wall, between some grave beds. This is not an intersection, however, and so not the site of the first trap. Characters may attempt a Sense Trouble test here, if they wish, but there is no danger. Side passages run off to the left and right after this encounter, but none of them are decorated with a Maltese cross until…

1 — The First Trap: About a hundred feet inside, the lead character comes to an intersection decorated with a Maltese cross carved from stone. This is obviously the site of the first trap, because it's been sprung already. A rotten body (**Forensics** estimates it to be five or six years old) lies not-quite-beheaded on the ground, amid the much-older bones. A once-fine blade juts from the wall at the end of a rotted post, a snapped cord dangling from it — **Mechanical Repair** determines that the trap broke as it deployed.

From here Investigators should turn left and proceed farther into the catacombs.

2A — A Tarnished Cross: If they're following directions, the Investigators should be ignoring the even-more-narrow side passages that run off to the right and left, until a metal Maltese cross embedded at the end of one side passage catches the lead character's eye. Is it silver? It's too faded and tarnished to tell from down the passageway. (Sir Godfrey: *"That's not our cross. Let's keep moving."*)

A character that approaches the cross should **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 5). If successful, the Investigator sees that the cross is inset in the wall a bit with room to move — it may be a latch or button of some kind — and a hole in the ceiling above the cross is big enough to emit a dart or other weapon. Touching the cross with some force (either to wipe it clean or remove it from its setting) triggers a trap: an iron spike juts from the hole in the ceiling, striking all the way to the floor. It attacks the triggering character with a +1 to its roll and deals +0 damage. It does not retract.

A successful **Mechanical Repair** roll (Difficulty 4) disarms the trap; failure on the roll triggers the trap.

Geology determines that the cross is not silver but tin.

2 — A Silver Cross: The Investigators come upon a shining silver Maltese cross at a T-shaped intersection in the catacomb. (Sir Godfrey: *"Careful. We're here."*) A successful **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 4) spots the trap: stones on the floor trigger a blade, like the first trap's, that swings out through a gap in the mortar of the wall beneath the cross. Failure on the Sense Trouble roll means someone must trigger the trap by some means — when rolling a stone across the floor or probing for a tripwire, for example — which is enough to warrant an attack roll on the trap's behalf. The trap attacks with a +1 to its roll and deals +1 damage, like a sword.

Disarming the trap or triggering it safely requires a **Mechanical Repair** test (Difficulty 4). Failure means the trap attacks the character. Knowing the trap is present and carefully triggering it provides a +1 or +2 to the character's Hit Threshold, depending on how safely removed from the trap the character is. (Use your best judgment.) Once triggered, the trap does not reset.

Once finished with the trap, the Investigators should turn right and proceed.

3 — Counting Side Passages: Side passages run off, staggered, to the right and left ahead. The fourth side passage is on the left-hand side (Sir Godfrey: *"It's this one."*), and the passage continues into the darkness ahead. **Sense Trouble** (Difficulty 5) is immediately important as the third trap is just inside that side passage, where a fine metal cord runs across the floor just above ankle height. Failure on the **Sense Trouble** roll immediately trips that wire, bringing an axe-like blade down from the ceiling on a tight, aggressive swing capable of hitting a target in the side passage or the main catacomb. Success on the roll means characters can each attempt an **Athletics** test (Difficulty 2) to step around the trip wire or a single **Mechanical Repair** test (Difficulty 4) to disarm it. Failure on either test springs the trap.

The trap attacks in the confined space with a +1 to its roll and deals +1 damage. The trap does not reset.

Once past the trap, characters reach…

4 — The Well Room: A small circular chamber at the end of the side passage houses a narrow stone well with no rope or chain. It is just a hole in the floor decorated with Maltese crosses. Descending the well is possible even without rope, however; it's a ten-foot drop into the chamber below (**Athletics** Difficulty 3, failure deals 1 damage) without a rope to climb down.

Once through the well, characters enter the ancient ruins (p. 250).

Traveling Blind

Investigators traveling without Sir Godfrey's directions are likely looking for a way out of the catacombs, having entered from the warehouse side. This is what the **Archaeology** ability is for. A character with Archaeology can lead comrades through the catacombs, following signs and symbols back to the drainage tunnel. This takes three hours, minus one hour for each point of Archaeology spent, down to a minimum of one hour.

Traveling this way, however, does not protect the Investigators from traps. If they are not backtracking, they have a chance of running into a trap or two set by Sir Godfrey's brethren in years past. Use your judgment here. If the characters have just fled a battle at the warehouse and escaped the Major Mouth of Malta, they may not have the resources or patience left to put up with booby traps. More importantly, the climax of the Locale may be past and losing a character to booby traps may be a frustrating aftermath.

If traps seem like the right way to go, however, present one trap per hour spent wandering the catacombs. Choose from any of the following traps:

- **Scything Blade:** A stone, when stepped on, sends a sword scything out through a crumbling wall. Sense Trouble Difficulty: 4, Mechanical Repair Difficulty: 5, +0 attack, +1 damage.
- **Falling Spears:** A trip wire causes spears to fall from the ceiling of the passage. Sense Trouble Difficulty: 4, Mechanical Repair Difficulty: 4, +0 attack, +0 damage.

- **Pit Trap:** A section of loose flooring collapses, dropping characters onto rusty spikes. Sense Trouble Difficulty: 4, Mechanical Repair Difficulty: 5, Athletics Difficulty to avoid trap: 4. Failure on any roll causes a fall onto spikes, causing +0 damage.

The same is true for characters wandering from the drainage tunnel through to the ancient ruins without Sir Godfrey's directions (perhaps the directions were lost in an attack by Hantz's men?), except that the trap in encounter #3 cannot be skipped.

15. Ancient Ruins

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Coming from the outer (Malta 14, "Outer Catacombs," p. 248) or inner catacombs (Malta 16, "Inner Catacombs," p. 252).

Summary: The Investigators descend into the ancient ruins beneath the catacombs, where they must tread carefully to avoid bringing the place down on top of them.



This scene covers the Investigators' trip through the Neolithic ruins that run beneath — and connect — the outer and inner catacombs. This scene is largely the same whether the characters are going to or coming from the warehouse.

These ruins are a simple collection of chambers with walls of simple upright stones and floors made of loose gravel and detritus. The origin of these chambers is long forgotten, but **Archaeology** and **Anthropology** place the ruins at more than 5,000 years old, making them contemporaries of megalithic ruins like those at Ggantija ("The Giant's Tower") on the nearby isle of Gozo. That they are empty and accessible now suggests that they have been looted and reburied over the intervening millennia — indeed, the early catacomb diggers may have discovered them.

Away from the well that grants access to the ruins, the ceiling is a mere five feet high and the walls are angled stone. The place quickly gets claustrophobic. The shadows seem to swallow up light. Only the occasional etching in the stone walls hints at the place's ancient function, which **Theology** or **Occult** each suggest to have been religious or sorcerous, respectively. (See "The Etched Spell," below.)

It's weirdly cold in these ruins. Every step crunches and echoes on the uneven gravel. Sir Godfrey, if he's here, speaks only in hushed tones. (*"I've been here only once before, prior to the traps going in. Ancient magic was worked in this place. Don't touch anything."*)

Though chambers extend in virtually every direction, only the north allows passage of more than a dozen feet or so. (A character versed in **Outdoorsman** can verify which way is north, since keeping track of such things has probably become habit.)

The Etched Spell

If you want a way to inject a spell into play, the etched walls of these ruins are one way to do that. At your discretion, the walls here constitute a text to be captured with **Photography** or a rubbing (**Art** or **Archaeology**) and deciphered with an **Occult** or **Languages** spend. Perhaps A Spell to Open the Sky is etched here in ancient symbols understandable only after that spend is made, above in a well-lit library somewhere. (What a coincidence… or *is it?*)

Spells like Brew Space Mead might be found down here as well as vital spells like Create Hyperspace Gate, if the Investigators missed their chance to get such a spell earlier in the campaign. (Such spells become important in the final chapter of the campaign.) Any other spell from *Trail of Cthulhu* or *Rough Magicks* that you wish to include in the campaign can be had here with an appropriate spend, if you like. If you're running other scenarios mixed in with your adaptation of *Eternal Lies*, this place may be home to clues or artifacts important to them.

Otherwise, these ruins are simply an eerie stop on the journey through Malta.

The Hall of Posts

No traps, per se, await the Investigators down here. Still, the characters are not exactly safe. This much becomes clear as they approach the hall of posts. (Sir Godfrey: *"Careful, now. The ceiling here wants to come down on top of us."*)

This wide, low-ceilinged chamber is made up of many columnar stones set irregularly into the floor and ceiling and held in place by dozens of wooden posts, standing floor-to-ceiling, some at odd angles, throughout the room. It is all but impossible to traverse the space without moving or removing posts, intentionally or accidentally. Yet if the Investigators hope to reach the far side of this chamber, they must find a way.

(Sir Godfrey: *"This chamber was falling apart when I was here last. The catacombs above made it unstable. My brothers must have put these posts in place to keep the ceiling from coming down."*)

Once a light source is moved (whether it's carried by hand or tossed or slid across with a Difficulty 7 **Athletics** test) to the far side of the 30' x 30' chamber, the state of the room beyond is clear: the catacombs above have fallen down into the Neolithic ruins, linking the ancient ruins with the half-collapsed Christian catacombs above. That's the way out.

15. Ancient Ruins

Tackling this room is tricky. The **Athletics** Difficulty to move through the chamber starts off very high but can be made easier with a few spends. Once a character fails in an attempt to cross the chamber, thereby knocking free a vital support post, the Difficulty goes up again as columnar stones fall from the ceiling to the floor and block the way. Too many failures and the whole ceiling shifts, potentially crushing anyone in the immediate vicinity — even those characters who have already made it through the chamber.

The Athletics Difficulty begins at 8. Any failed Athletics test brings down a few stones, causing 1d6−3 points of damage to and halting the progress of the character. A new test must then be made at the same Difficulty to make it through the rest of the chamber.

A variety of abilities may be spent to lower the Athletics Difficulty, point-for-point, to a minimum Difficulty of 4 for all subsequent tests. These spends represent careful study of the chamber and the support posts, identifying which posts can be removed temporarily to allow a character passage. "Okay, now, remove that post in front of you," says the spending Investigator, "and slide it back into place before you move on."

Ability	Max. Spends
Archaeology	1
Architecture	2
Craft	1
Physics	1
Mechanical Repair	2

Keep track of failed Athletics tests across characters. For every three failures, a large collection of ceiling stones falls, splintering the posts that were supporting them and blocking off a route through the chamber. The Difficulty for Athletics tests then goes up by one. The Difficulty may be reduced again (to a minimum of 4) with additional spends, provided that no ability contributes more than its maximum spends on the table above.

If, at any time, the Investigators run out of abilities to spend to lower the Difficulty — or if they simply don't like the measured approach — they have one other option: *Run!*

In this option, all characters not yet across the chamber make a mad dash, all at once, hoping to outrun the collapsing ceiling. This forceful approach endangers all the characters involved in the sprint through the chamber. Have each Investigator attempt an **Athletics** or **Fleeing** test. The better they do, the less damage they take from falling stones and debris:

Result	Damage
1–3	2 dice
4–5	1 dice
6+	1 point

Once the sprinting method has been attempted, it takes a weeks-long archaeological excavation to get through the hall of posts, so characters who refuse to attempt the sprint with their comrades might have to approach the warehouse from the surface, perhaps arriving at the dramatically appropriate moment to pick up fellows or shoot enemies. (Sacrificing a few turns or minutes of participation to earn a dramatic entrance later on may be worth it.)

This tactic sends every running character careening directly into the next scene: **"Inner Catacombs."**

(**Note:** The sound of these stones collapsing only attracts slight attention from people in the Nectar tunnels beneath the warehouse. The underground passages between these two places eat up most of the sound and trembling that might alert workers in the warehouse tunnels.)

If the characters move more deliberately, they have a chance to scale the loose stones up into the inner catacombs and peer down the sloped passage beyond, getting a glimpse of what lies ahead:

The passage descends into dirty water with a weird oily, orange sheen — Nectar-laced water. **Geology** or **Chemistry** determines that Nectar must be oozing into the ground from somewhere up ahead.

Sprinting as a Zero-Sum Test

Alternatively, you can treat a dash across the hall of posts as a zero-sum test. Every character dashing through the chamber makes an **Athletics** or **Fleeing** test (Difficulty 4) and the character(s) who scores lowest is the last across the chamber and thus takes two dice of damage from falling stones. This means that *someone* is sure to take damage — perhaps quite a lot of damage — from this chamber. This also means that most characters *won't* take damage, so you don't risk bad rolls leaving a lot of the Investigators wounded during the following scenes.

Whether or not to use the zero-sum method is a matter of design and drama, not the physical (imaginary) makeup of the chamber. Do not use the zero-sum method, for example, if only one character attempts the sprint across the hall of posts.

16. Inner Catacombs

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: Exiting the hall of posts (Malta 15, "Ancient Ruins," p. 250) or fleeing the tunnels beneath the warehouse (Malta 18, "Nectar Tunnels," p. 254).

Summary: The Investigators must tread quietly through foul waters to avoid alerting the Major Mouth and Donovan's goons that they are coming.

This scene covers the innermost leg of the Investigators' crawl through the catacombs. If they are approaching the warehouse, they must be cautious. If they are fleeing the warehouse, then this scene is a short bit of color as they dash toward their escape.

If Sir Godfrey is with the Investigators at this point, he lays the stakes out for them: *"We must be cautious now,"* he whispers. *"Up ahead are the tunnels beneath the warehouse. If we are not quiet, they may hear us coming."*

The catacombs here are flooded to a depth of about four feet with dead, brackish seawater, filthy mud, and rotten bones. Weapons may need to be carried overhead to be kept dry. A 2-point non-Mythos Stability test must be made to keep from coughing and choking continuously while traveling through this area.

The water has a weird oily, orange sheen: it's laced with Nectar. **Geology** or **Chemistry** determines that Nectar must be oozing into the ground from somewhere up ahead. A mouthful of this foul brew counts as a dose of Nectar, beyond just being disgusting.

No traps or monsters wait in these passages, however. The challenge for the Investigators is simply to steel themselves for the coming battle and to get into the Nectar tunnels beneath the warehouse as quietly as possible.

This is easier than they may have feared: the catacombs adjoin the Nectar tunnels at a false wall at the eastern-most edge of the Nectar tunnels. No guards are stationed there. A failed **Stealth** test (Difficulty 3; Difficulty 4 if anyone is coughing and choking) means the Investigators have gotten unlucky and some wandering, unarmed worker (Health 5) has come to the end of the passage to smoke or steal a dose of Nectar. If so discovered, the PCs have one full round to subdue the warehouse worker. (He starts off by eyeballing the cracks in the false wall and putting his ear to the stone while saying outright, *"…the hell was that?"*) If he's still standing after every PC-friendly character has gone, he bolts into the Nectar tunnels, screaming for help.

Getting through the false wall requires a simple push to knock stones and plaster loose. Doing it quietly requires a new **Stealth** test (Difficulty 5). A 1-point **Archaeology** or **Geology** spend can lower the Difficulty to 4.

Once through the wall, the characters may enter either the Nectar tunnels (p. 254) or proceed directly to the Mouth of Malta (p. 255) (they might head for the Mouth's chamber by following the trail of oozing Nectar).

17. In the Warehouse

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: Setting foot inside Donovan's warehouse (Malta 6, "Field of Mouths," p. 236), Malta 7, "The Ship," p. 237, or Malta 18, "Nectar Tunnels," p. 254).

Summary: The Investigators infiltrate or storm Donovan's warehouse, overcoming or bypassing numerous thugs in the process.

This scene marks the place of the Investigators' assault on (or infiltration of) the warehouse. Most of what happens in this scene must be a reaction to the PCs' actions. If they choose to drive a truck through the front gates and storm the warehouse, they open themselves up to ten or so riflemen and two dozen men with makeshift clubs and knives.

It's up to you to determine how the warehouse guards respond to an attack, precisely, based on the information they have. Have they been told by Hantz that danger may be afoot after Donovan goes missing or turns up dead? Are they all busy putting out a fire on the freighter? Do they realize that the disguised Investigator in their midst is an enemy? The possibilities are many and varied.

Exactly how many warehouse guards and workers are around is up to you to decide based on the number of Investigators. If the players devise a cunning plan to count every warehouse worker or divert a lot of attention, you might want to reward them by cutting down on the number of guards and workers on the night they make their move. Also, take into account the satisfaction your group will derive from driving a truck into the warehouse and

17. In the Warehouse

jumping out with guns blazing. One group's challenging number of thugs is another group's overwhelming number of foes.

You want a direct attack or clever infiltration to seem risky — even foolhardy — but not outright impossible. If the catacombs are the only way in or out, the players have no choice but to use them. Give them the choice.

The warehouse employs about 50 cultist workers, and up to 30 of them might be on duty at one time on an ordinary night. If the Investigators attack on the night when the freighter is being loaded, it's possible that even more workers are around, though most of them are busy at first. Five cultists are busy bottling in the Nectar tunnels beneath the warehouse at any one time. Two riflemen are stationed on the roof at any one time. Everyone else is either patrolling the grounds, manning the gatehouse, or boxing up bottles of Nectar for export.

Not every worker is armed with a rifle (probably about 10 of them are), but all are ready to fight for the cult… or at least to call the police before they flee the building.

Climbing the fence around the warehouse requires an **Athletics** test (Difficulty 4).

On the warehouse grounds, **Stealth** is hard (Difficulty 5) to use effectively because the field of Mouths and gravel have no adornments or decorations to hide behind. PCs succeeding on that test, though, have reached the warehouse undiscovered.

A **Locksmith** spend is needed to open any outer warehouse door without a key. Brute force also works, since those doors have windows in them and locks workable from the inside, but leaves no question that there's an intruder about.

Stability Losses

Remember that shoot-outs with bloodthirsty, drug-addled cultists carry a Stability risk. See p. 71 of *Trail of Cthulhu* for the typical Stability loss risked by tests for likely incidents. Here are the most likely losses risked in this scene, for your reference:

- A human opponent attacks with evident intent to do serious harm: 2 pts
- In a car accident serious enough to pose a risk of injury: 2 pts
- A human opponent attacks with evident intent to kill: 3 pts
- You kill someone in a fight: 3 pts



Inside the warehouse, **Stealth** becomes easier (Difficulty 4) because there are mighty stacks of crates to hide behind and climb atop. Loud jazz music plays from an open window in the offices built up at the top of the two-storey-high warehouse interior. Exactly how many Stealth tests it takes to reach the stairwell down to the Nectar tunnels is up to you, but at least a half a dozen factory workers are wandering, standing, or packing crates between any entrance and those stairs.

A gunfight in the warehouse affords ample cover and lots of high-ground opportunities. If characters keep moving (that is, make a Difficulty 2 **Fleeing** test every turn), they may be able to avoid being cornered by goons. At your discretion, a failed Fleeing test means a character has become lost amid the crates and cornered by two or three thugs. (Perhaps it's time, then, to start climbing.)

Once the cult knows they're under attack, they station gunmen at the bottom of the stairs to the Nectar tunnels and shoot to kill anyone who tries to use those stairs without Diana Hantz or Victor Prescott.

Warehouse Guards

Three Things: Denim. Sweaty. Dirty from work.

Athletics 5, Firearms 5, Health 5, Scuffling 5, Weapons 4

Alertness Modifier: +1 (vigilant)

Weapon: +1 (rifle), −1 (improvised weapon or knife), −2 (fists)

Victor Prescott

Three Things: Smiles with only half his mouth. Aching for a fight. Loves to see people fear for their lives.

Athletics 8, Firearms 7, Health 10, Scuffling 10, Weapons 8

Alertness Modifier: +1 (cautious)

Weapon: +1 (pistol) +1 (fire axe), −2 (fists)

Victor Prescott gladly comes out to fight any Investigator who is cornered or without a gun. He pursues Investigators up onto the stacks, onto the roof, wherever. He's an eager brute.

Diana Hantz

Three Things: Annunciates like a movie star. Admires cleanliness. Loves to see people fear for their lives.

Athletics 8, Driving 6, Firearms 6, Fleeing 10, Health 10, Scuffling 7, Weapons 7

Alertness Modifier: +1 (wary)

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapons: +1 (pistol), +0 (hold-out pistol), −2 (fists), +0 (dagger)

Diana makes her way into the Nectar tunnels within three turns of hearing a cry of alarm and takes up a position in Donovan's office to defend cult secrets.

She hides in a crack in the stone wall and springs out to cut an Investigator's throat at the first opportunity.

Alternately, Diana Hantz attempts to escape the warehouse by any means necessary so she can live to get revenge some other day. Perhaps she turns up in another Locale or is the force behind a dreadful floating scene elsewhere in Act Two.

18. Nectar Tunnels

Scene Type: Core / Action

Lead-ins: Finding the tunnels beneath the warehouse (Malta 16, " Inner Catacombs," p. 252, Malta 17, "In the Warehouse," p. 252, or Malta 19, "The Mouth of Malta," p. 255).

Summary: The Investigators sneak or shoot their way into or out of the tunnels connecting the warehouse with the Mouth's chamber. Along the way, they may discover Donovan's office in a catacomb side chamber.

Floating Campaign Clue: The Locale's floating core clue can be discovered here, and Donovan's office contains his written copy of A Spell to Open the Sky as well. (Locksmith to get into Donovan's desk.)



The Nectar tunnels beneath the cult's warehouse are simple warrens of wide, low passages packed with supplies for the bottling of Nectar. Getting around in these passages is easy enough, but opportunities for cover and stealth abound.

The passages are made of tightly fitted stones with rubber mats on the floors for traction. Electric lamps hang from the ceiling every few feet on cabling hung from the mortar of the ceiling. Their bare bulbs bathe the place in light. Yet nooks and hiding places are all around, behind crates and barrels, in shadowy alcoves, and behind crumbling pillars and arches. Visibility here, despite all the light, is poor.

A gunfight here involves a lot of splintering wood, shattering glass, and spilled Nectar.

For the Investigators, this place is a kind of maze. For the workers who toil here, it's a kind of circuit, with people descending the stairs heading for the right, through the tunnels, and heading back to the stairs from the north. Nectar comes out of the Mouth's chamber in jugs and drums and gets pumped into bottles and vials at various little stations and tables throughout the tunnels. Bottled Nectar gets lugged up the stairs by hand or hand truck. It's not a glamorous operation, by any means, but it is fast and compact.

The vital features of the tunnels are clustered together at the east end. In the northeast corner is the once-beautiful arch-ceiling chamber where the Major Mouth now dwells (see **"The Mouth of Malta"**). Nectar oozes eastward from this chamber. At the far east end of the tunnels, a fragile wall is all that stands between these active tunnels and a forgotten network of Christian catacombs (see **"Inner Catacombs"**). Just southwest of the Mouth's chamber, in a ten-foot-wide recessed space, is Donovan's office on site.

With nothing but a thin wooden door for privacy, Donovan's office is a bit of art deco modernity in the midst of ancient stone. Here he keeps a small desk, a packed bookshelf, and a safe. A **Locksmith** spend or an **Explosives** test (Difficulty 5) opens the safe, revealing the official ledgers of the

A Spell to Open the Sky

This spell, known by many names across many cultures, parts the clouds and alters the visible phase of the moon and the (apparent?) arrangement of the stars overhead, artificially creating circumstances right for certain other mystical rites. With this spell, a sorcerer can make the moon appear full or dark, waxing or waning, and can reveal changed stars regardless of weather. The actual gaps in the clouds are minor and fleeting — if it's raining, it continues to rain — and the changed sky is only visible for a mile around the caster, but that is often enough to properly prime an altar, open a mystic doorway, or disturb the local populace. This artificial change to the sky is especially primed for key sites across the earth, including the site of the Liar's body (and any other sites the Keeper might want to include for an expanded campaign), but discounting any sites the Keeper likes. Also, this meddling stellar adjustment may well offend, rile, or alert sorcerers or other beings in the area who were counting on the stars to be where they are meant to be astrologically.

(**Note:** At the Keeper's discretion for purposes of dramatic pacing, only certain times of the year may be receptive to this spell, such that Investigators must hurry to be at a particular site on a particular day to enjoy its effects. "You must reach the casting site in the next 9 days," the Keeper might say, for example, "to change the moon into what you need without waiting another 30 days.")

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 with a Physics or Theology spend)

Cost: 2 Stability or 4 Health

Time: The clouds stay parted for as long as the sorcerer remains in place, chanting, and for one minute thereafter. A sorcerer, therefore, cannot cast this spell in a moving vehicle, for example.



19. The Mouth of Malta

J.B.-

I don't know why our Mouth in Malta would tell me anything - anything yours won't tell you. I don't know why it tells me any of the awful things it tells me, but what it has spoken to me of late coincides with what Trammel had told me some time ago: that wherever the body that goes with our Mouths may be, it is hidden by the earth, protected by stone, sealed away from air and eyes except for key moments when stone flexes itself like a mouth, and the body takes a breath. It does this when the moon is dark and the stars shine down... and I have found a means of making this happen when we might need it to happen, should we ever need to jam a gun in that crack in the earth.

I still don't know where to find that "Devouring Mountain" that hides the great belly our hungry Mouths feed. Perhaps you'll have more luck determining that than I have had. My mind is elsewhere.

Keep yours to the business at hand. Our grip on this thing grows weak.

-M.D.

cult's operations in Malta. A few hours of scrutiny from **Accounting** and **Cryptography** together reveals years of shipping accounts and transactions — and evidence that the Mouth recently began doubling its output of Nectar. (This ledger also leads to Nectar dealers throughout Europe and North Africa; see **Malta 21 "Chasing Freighters,"** p. 259)

Most of the books on the office shelves are dedicated to subjects like **Law** and **History** (those abilities recognize no books of great value here). One otherwise-blank book on the shelf, however, contains a handwritten copy of A Spell to Open the Sky, written in Donovan's own hand. (This is the copy he wrote down while the Mouth was reciting it to him.)

Donovan's desk contains a locked drawer, accessible with **Locksmith** (no spend required). Inside that drawer is a letter on Donovan's private stationary, unaddressed but made out to "J.B.," explaining what Donovan had heard from Trammel directly and in crazed oracular mutterings from the Mouth: how to locate the body of the Liar From Beyond.

This is the floating core clue for the Locale, accessible here, in one more spot, in case the Investigators have missed it elsewhere.

19. The Mouth of Malta

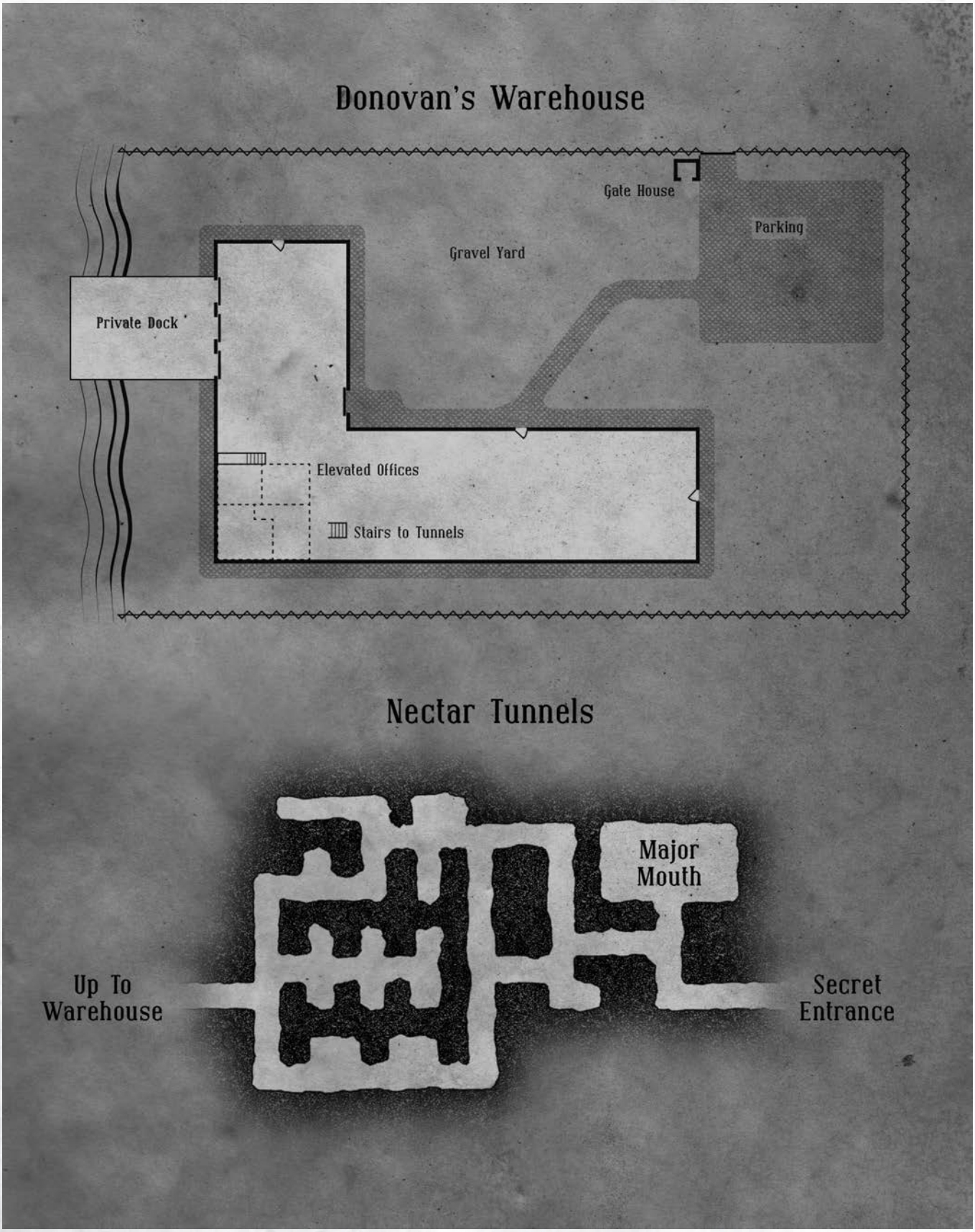
Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: Exploring the tunnels (Malta 18, "Nectar Tunnels," p. 254) or following the trail of Nectar (Malta 16, "Inner Catacombs," p. 252).

Summary: The Investigators battle against a Major Mouth, nestled in the top of a stone dome in old Christian catacombs beneath Valletta, while standing knee-deep in Nectar, raining down from the Mouth.

This chamber is where the Investigators face the Mouth of Malta and put an end to a vital source of Nectar.

The room was once some kind of shrine or sanctuary, constructed of the same sturdy brown stones as the passage outside. Here, however, the walls are adorned with flaking plaster painted with a stylized mural of the Knights of Malta battling the Ottoman fleet during the Great Siege. The sunken floor here is flooded knee deep in raw Nectar, and the Major Mouth — growing out of the center of the arched ceiling — dribbles, belches, or spews Nectar forth into the


Donovan's Warehouse
Gate House
Parking
Gravel Yard
Private Dock
Elevated Offices
Stairs to Tunnels
Nectar Tunnels
Major Mouth
Up To Warehouse
Secret Entrance

chamber. All this Nectar oozes through the mortar of the floor, spills over into the corridor outside, and runs out through the fragile wall at the east end of the tunnels (into the Christian catacombs; see **"Inner Catacombs"**). It also makes a foul, frothy soup in the chamber. Workers simply scoop it up and pour it into bottles so that Nectar users throughout the world can drink it down.

Here at last, the Investigators hopefully have a plan in mind for eradicating the thirty-foot-wide mouth. If they don't, they'll find that swords and guns are of minimal use. Once they start firing, the Mouth begins lashing out with its tongue, gobbling up Investigators and biting them in half as quickly as it can. Or spewing forth Nectar and crying for help in an awful, discordant voice. Meanwhile, guards from outside and upstairs come running.

Yes, the Investigators had definitely better have a plan.

If they've been to Bangkok, they may know how to use explosives to destroy a Mouth. A controlled explosion that takes out this Major Mouth without killing the Investigators requires an **Explosives** test (Difficulty 6). Or perhaps they intend to use mysticism or asceticism to combat the thing.

If they don't have the means with them to kill it, they may attempt to escape and return later.

If he's present, Sir Godfrey may sacrifice himself to buy the Investigators time to work (or escape). He may sacrifice himself to carry explosives into the Mouth, if that's what it takes and the Investigators don't talk him out of it. (This achieves the Explosives test.) He believes himself to be striking a worthy blow against Nyarlathotep for the sake of Malta and his secret chapter of brave knights.



The Mouth of Malta

Athletics 10, Health 30, Scuffling 25

Hit Threshold: 2 (very large)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: +4 (bite), −2 (tongue); in lieu of dealing damage with its tongue, this Major Mouth can hoist a struck foe to its hideous, enormous mouth, automatically dealing bite damage each round unless the grabbed target makes a successful Athletics test (Difficulty 4) to escape.

Spray Nectar: This Mouth can automatically spew Nectar at any one target in the room with it, requiring the target to make an Athletics or Fleeing test (Difficulty 4) to avoid ingesting mouthfuls of hot, new Nectar. (See p. 35 for the effects of ingesting Nectar.)

Armor: −3 vs. any (dry, thick flesh and solid, stone-like teeth)

Stability Loss: +2

20. The New Boss Strikes Back

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Capturing or killing Donovan early in the Locale's storyline.

Summary: The new boss, replacing Donovan, sends thugs on a Nectar high to kill the Investigators, either in their room at night or in the narrow alleyways of Valletta.

This scene is a simple marker granting you permission to have Donovan or Hantz dispatch cultist thugs, paid mercenaries, and cunning assassins to eliminate Investigators that they become aware of during the course of play. Such enemies seek Investigators out where they sleep or eat, striking when the Investigators are most vulnerable (even in the hospital).

Draw the game statistics for these would-be killers from this or other Locales, or use the following statistics, which describe stealthy, knife-wielding assassins hired by Hantz to eliminate those who eliminated her hated boss. Such assassins may be paid in coin, Nectar, or both.

Vary the number of assassins sent after the Investigators based on how angry, informed, and well staffed the local chapter of the cult is at the time of the scene. Without Nectar to motivate, fund, and persuade assassins, an attack on the Investigators might come down to one or two desperate, lingering cultists. On the other hand, if someone like Hantz has escaped and survived, she might convince another cult chapter to dispatch a veritable hit squad of assassins (who may carry clues leading to Bangkok or Mexico City) to ruin the Investigators. One assassin per Investigator who survived the Malta Locale is probably sufficient, though.

Alternatively, the Maltese cult may trigger a floating scene, elsewhere in Act Two, as a means of getting revenge on the Investigators. Or maybe a familiar cultist, like Hantz, who survives and flees a battle in Malta turns up in another Locale later on, adding one more peril to the proceedings.

Sample Hired Assassins

Athletics 8, Disguise 4, Firearms 5, Fleeing 8, Health 7, Scuffling 7, Weapons 7

Alertness Modifier: +1 (cunning)

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (dagger)

These assassins attempt to ambush characters, again and again, in situations when their Stealth modifier can add to excellent ambient conditions and win them the first attack of the fight. Then they flee, hide, and spring out again if pursued. They don't need to kill their targets in one sitting — they focus on a single, vulnerable foe until the job is done, then depart to strike again another night. When possible, they go after sleeping targets.

21. Chasing Freighters

Scene Type: Alternate / Action

Lead-ins: Pursuing the *Thyrsus* or other Nectar-shipping freighters toward their destinations in an attempt to shut down operations there (Malta 7, "The Ship," p. 237 or Malta 18, "Nectar Tunnels," p. 254).

Summary: The Investigators follow up on the evidence revealing the location of Nectar-selling operations in Europe and North Africa, perhaps trying to put a stop to dealers on the continent or attempting to halt the delivery of Nectar to France by the *Thyrsus*.

This scene is a placeholder for all those adventures the Investigators may have in pursuit of Nectar-selling operations throughout Europe and North Africa, if they decide such ancillary targets are important. Or if you cannot lure them back toward the heart of the cult at first. Or if the freighter, *Thyrsus*, gets away and they feel they must give chase. Such adventures are outside the scope of this book, but you could always devise a few short scenes to play out with your group as part of your adaptation of *Eternal Lies*.

Alternatively, you may simply cut ahead to the Investigators' return from an implied adventure, treating it as a side story without dedicated spotlight time. If you pursue that path, here's one way to handle it:

Treat the side adventure as a free-form montage created by the players. First, decide if the side adventure counts as part of the current Locale's investigation or if it will count against the next Locale. Refresh abilities or not, depending on whether the implied adventure counts toward the current remaining of points or takes place after a refresh. Then, ask each player to make one spend from an Investigative ability and describe how that spend helped the Investigators locate and thwart a Nectar-dealing operation in their adventure destination (e.g., France). Encourage the players to build on each other's spends. The spent point either comes out of whatever resources the characters have left after finishing the Malta investigation (which can be something of a storytelling challenge since they may not have points left in certain signature abilities) or it counts against their next investigation (which is more of a tactical question).

Examples of spends:

- "I used **Accounting** to realize that some financial records in the Maltese warehouse were converted from French francs and to recognize a freight receipt as coming from a warehouse in Marseille. Using that, we get there before the slow-moving freighter did."



21. Chasing Freighters

- "My character used **Intimidation** on a warehouse clerk in Marseille, getting him to give up a roster of train routes that revealed a half a dozen local distributors and dealers of Nectar, whose business would dry up without new shipments from Malta."

- "With **Cop Talk**, I convinced a high-ranking French officer to distribute information from the Marseille ledger throughout France, nabbing Nectar dealers throughout the country. Some of them rolled over on dealers in other countries."

- "Using **Bureaucracy**, I pulled some strings to get the *Thyrsus* marked as an outlaw ship smuggling contraband into France. French law enforcement boarded the ship, confiscated whatever cargo was aboard, and arrested most of the crew after a brief gun battle."

- "I used **Explosives** as an Investigative ability to destroy the Nectar shipment in a controlled fire so it couldn't fall into the wrong hands. The crew of the *Thyrsus* does time for shooting at the French police, even without the weird drugs in evidence."

Once everyone has made a spend, the characters receive a bonus build point for doing the right thing and bravely protecting the world from the freighter's scourge of Nectar.

Avoid using this kind of implied-adventure scene more than once or twice. As a single side mission, implying why the Investigators come home between Locales with bottles of French wine and handsome new scars, it can be amusing, but this game isn't about *implied* adventures, it's about the details of investigation and exploration. Don't gloss over too much.

Wrapping Up

With cult allies everywhere, Malta requires either a quick getaway or an extended clean up, both ideally handled via montage or summary. The scene, "Chasing Freighters," presents one way to provide that closure. A quick cut to the characters on Kearns's plane (or perhaps on Donovan's yacht) headed away from the island is another, faster way. Remember that the next Locale is what's really important, so on to the next Locale!



Mexico City

"There in the narrow hall, outside the bolted door with the covered keyhole, I often heard sounds which filled me with an indefinable dread — the dread of vague wonder and brooding mystery. It was not that the sounds were hideous, for they were not; but that they held vibrations suggesting nothing on this globe of earth..."

— "The Music of Erich Zann"

Eternal Lies is performed on the soundstage of your imagination. It is not played out on location in Mexico City, 1937. When conjuring an imaginary Mexico City for your adaptation of *Eternal Lies*, remember that your dramatic interpretation of Mexico City must, foremost, serve your story.

The Mexico City of *Eternal Lies* is a stylized, dramatized version of the city. We want it to be a distinctive and memorable character of its own, of course, but we don't have to have all the hotels in the right places to do that. You're adapting the city to your play as surely as you're adapting this text.

The Mexico City of *Eternal Lies* is not yet the super-vast urban sprawl of 21st-century Mexico City. It is already a large and diverse city in 1937, but what will be paved over and linked by asphalt is, for now, more like an urban center surrounded by green and varied boroughs. Instead of a single wide cityscape, Mexico City is a collection of different and distinct areas made up of plazas and boulevards, separated by fields and wetlands, all connected by a few main roads. Though Mexico City won't get its first skyscraper for twenty years, the city center has that city-center feel, but much of the rest of the burg feels like a collection of linked towns, each with their own attitude, from arty to bucolic.

The Investigators' adventure takes them from downtown Mexico City, and its modern but modest urban atmosphere, to the neighborhood of Coyoacán, home to artists like Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, revolutionaries like Leon Trotsky (whose exile to Mexico begins in 1937) and, in our twisted version of the place, the local Cult of the Thousand Mouths.

The horrible truth underlying the Mexico City investigation is that both doubt and obsession can corrode.

The local cult chapter is driven mad by an obsession with the voice of its lewd god, while, at the same time, it doubts the word of its superiors in the cult. Local leader Jonathan Brooks and his people are fanatically trusting of a god they know to be a liar, yet their distrust of Trammel causes them to break from their sanctioned mission for the cult. They are able to doubt the word of Trammel but not the song of the Liar From Beyond. Brooks and his wife have placed their trust in a power they can prove, even though it is destroying them.

People change themselves and their loyalties in the pursuit of power. How do the Investigators change in their pursuits? Are they becoming obsessed with their mission? Is their exposure to the Mythos causing them to doubt what they once trusted? Who will the Investigators leave changed — transformed, disfigured, or dead — in their wake?

The Mexico City Spine

Letters discovered in Trammel's *Testament* in Los Angeles reveal a cult presence in Mexico City. An audio recording found in Trammel's mansion implies what the cult is up to beyond the distribution of Nectar: the performance and production of music to be played during the cult's orgiastic celebrations and ceremonies. Who knows what plans the cult has for the future, drawing on the sounds of the hideous Mouths venerated by the cult?

Informed Investigators likely arrive in Mexico City with a post office box number (#1629) and the name of the record label (Luz Records) to go on, as well as the initials of the local cult leader: J.B. Investigators may have a sense of the Mexico City cult chapter's relationship with Trammel — it's deteriorating — derived from the letters kept by Trammel in Los Angeles, pasted into his *Testament*.

Beyond that, Investigators might arrive in Mexico City with scant leads and little reliable information beyond what they may have surmised (or been told outright) at cult operations in other Locales.

The spine of this investigation leads from the mundane to the macabre, plunging through the façade of a small-time recording-studio operation into the depths of obsession and distrust that characterize the local chapter of the Cult of the Thousand Mouths. A few dead ends and side stops surround the spine's main artery, which leads from a recording studio, through the session musicians hired by the local cult leader, and into the heart of the local cult chapter.

Along the way, the Investigators stand to meet artists, private investigators, gangsters, and Nectar addicts on the cult's periphery. They discover that Nectar production and distribution is not the real passion of the Mexico City cult… and that the local cultists no longer believe the "facts" they've been given by Trammel about the true identity of the Liar From Beyond. The local cult operations may be falling apart, but a terrible new threat is emerging from the wreckage. The Investigators even discover a whole other Locale to explore when they uncover evidence of a cult expedition into the Yucatán.

At the end, the Investigators confront not only the hideous Mouth that speaks and sings at the center of the local cult chapter, but also a transmogrified woman who may be a perverse new incarnation of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. Are they walking into a trap? Can they overcome the mystic power of the Mouth's gruesome song and control themselves long enough to thwart the local cult? Will they follow in the footsteps of the cult's expedition and tap into a horrifying mystic power to further their quest against the Liar From Beyond?

Floating Campaign Clue

In the larger story of the investigation into the whereabouts and identity of the Liar From Beyond, Mexico City serves a simple but important role: it's here that the Investigators learn the true name of the so-called Devouring Mountain. Although the Malta Locale reveals *when* and *how* to access the lair of the Liar beneath the Devouring Mountain and the Bangkok Locale contains a map that shows how to locate the Devouring Mountain (even if it doesn't use that name), all that information is difficult to make use of without the missing key of context. Just which mountain, where in the world, *is* this dreaded Devouring Mountain?

The answer — that Thibet's Mount Kailash is the Devouring Mountain — is revealed to the Investigators in Mexico City. It is the core clue of the Locale, discoverable in at least two places within this chapter (**Mexico City 8, "Shrine to the Thing,"** p. 280, and in the cult's lair (starting with **Mexico City 15, "The Hidden Studio,"** p. 297). The clue can be found in cult documents or wrenched directly from the mouth of local cult leader Jonathan Brooks, depending on the Investigators' approach to things.

Getting this clue into the players' hands is an important part of your job in this part of the adventure.

Key Cast

Jonathan Brooks: Leader of the Mexico City cult chapter. Brooks is a desperate man with big ideas and big fears. His vision for the cult may lead to his own destruction—and the ruination of those who get close to him.

Leticia de la Luz: Formerly Rosario Maria Lopez and the wife of Jonathan Brooks, the singer now known mysteriously as de la Luz ("of the light") is a twisted and deformed monster crafted from Nectar, magic, and the Tongue of the Liar.

Victor Cortez: Jonathan Brooks's record producer. His relationship with Brooks and the cult has deteriorated, along with Cortez's feelings of safety.

Javier Luna: Leader of the for-hire band that Brooks hired to play with de la Luz on her debut songs. His band-mates, Hector Juarez, Pedro de Leon, and Hernando Campos, are minor characters.

Elena Alcatruz: A poet, photographer, and mystic in Mexico City that the PCs may meet by chance… and who might have some power to resist the song of the Mouth.

Gonzalo "Gonchi" del Toro: A private investigator hired to keep tabs on people close to, but not fully inside, the local cult chapter in Mexico City. He is just one dangling thread in the unraveling fabric of the local operation. He may be trouble for the Investigators or he may be an asset, depending on how they treat him. (Perhaps their previous experience with private investigators influences how they choose to handle Gonchi?)

Detective Javier Gómez: Young and wary, Detective Gómez is the officer in charge of the arson case involving the death of record manufacturer Jorge Novo — he's also the officer Investigators get pointed at if they come around the Federal District Police looking for help.

Officer José Blanco: If the Investigators pull the right strings, Officer Blanco is assigned to protect them and escort them during part of their stay in Mexico City. Blanco is an unsubtle officer with something to prove. He hopes that doing this favor for Detective Gómez or the department will get him the promotion he's after.

Kirill Konovalov: Jonathan Brooks' Russian bodyguard, hired here in Mexico City.

Keeper's Background: The Mexico City Cult

The Mexico City chapter of the Cult of the Thousand Mouths was meant to be the centerpiece of a Nectar empire. From Mexico City, the cult would orchestrate Nectar shipments throughout North and South America. Under the guidance of Jonathan Brooks — a devotee honed in the debauched crucible of the Los Angeles cult (and the J.B. from Trammel's book) — the Mexico City branch of the burgeoning global operation promised to be a grand and terrible demonstration of the cult's power. Brooks was handpicked by Samson Trammel to spearhead a new cult chapter that would serve and please the Liar From Beyond while spreading the power of Nectar far and wide.

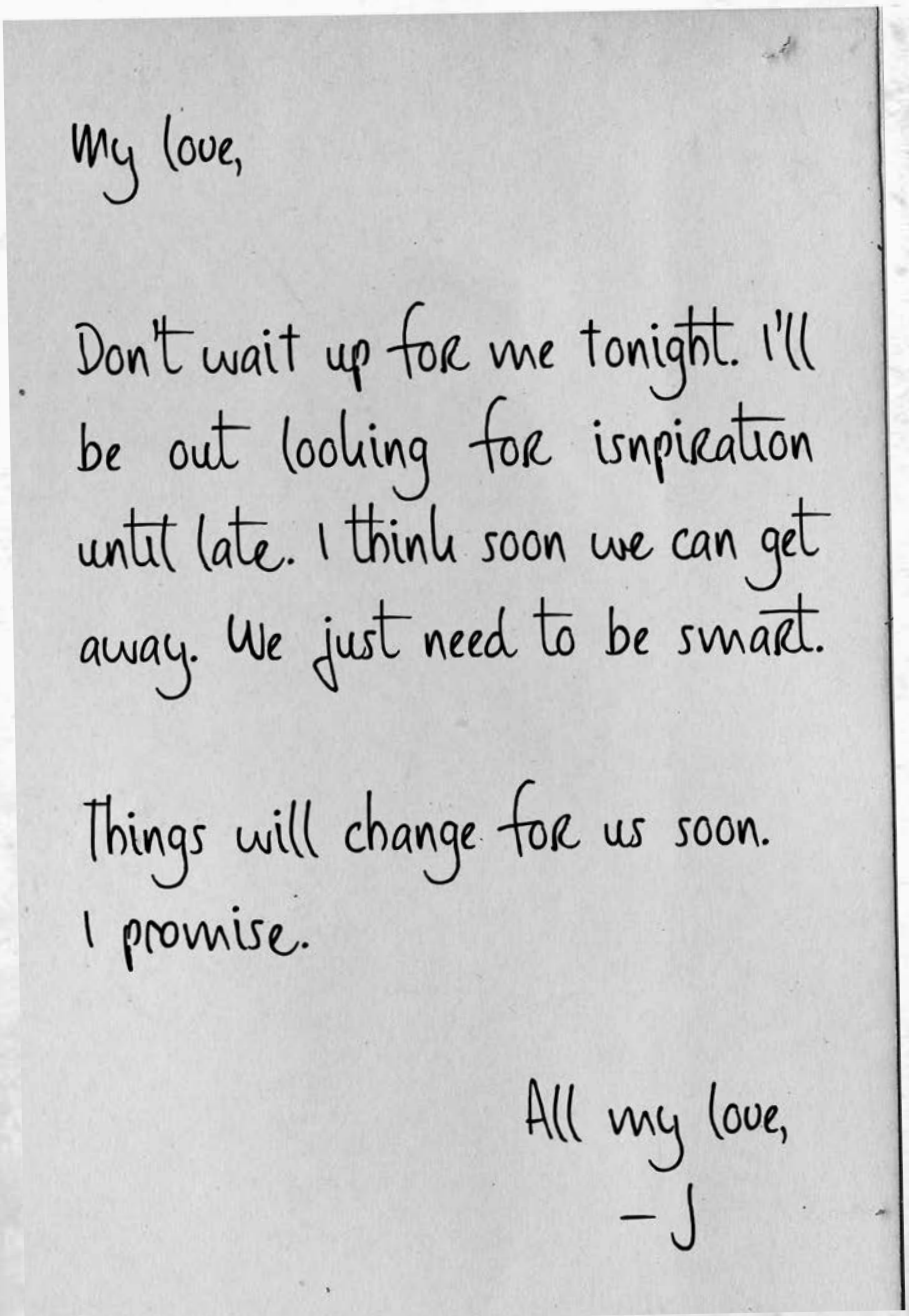
Brooks was not up to the task. Problems befell the Mexico City chapter early and often. Brooks was plagued by setbacks beyond his control and shortcomings of his own. The local cult, ever on the verge of taking off, is actually worse off now than it was a year before.

It all stems from Jonathan Brooks's obsession with the voice of the Major Mouth at the heart of the local cult. Where other cult chapters are devoted to debauchery, violence, and Nectar, Brooks and his people became enamored with the power of the Mouth's song. When Brooks should have been milking the Mouth for precious Nectar, he was kneeling before it, reveling in its sounds and basking in the visions brought about by its voice.

Brooks, still eager to please Trammel and the Liar From Beyond, developed an idea — an idea possibly thrust upon him by the Major Mouth. Brooks resolved to *share* the voice of the Mouth, to use it in addition to Nectar to influence the people of the world, to spread the Liar's word and increase the cult's power throughout the world. In addition to spreading the Mouth's sticky ooze, he would circulate recordings not only of the Mouth… but also his own bride.

Jonathan Brooks met his wife, Rosario Maria Lopez, not long after coming to Mexico City. He would say they had a lot in common — especially a passion for music — but Lopez was the real musician. She was a singer, talented, desperately poor, and largely undiscovered when Brooks came to town. Brooks fancied himself a businessman and a music aficionado.

In Lopez he saw not only beauty but a chance to make a discovery.


My love,

Don't wait up for me tonight. I'll be out looking for isnpiration until late. I think soon we can get away. We just need to be smart.

Things will change for us soon. I promise.

All my love,
-J

Keeper's Background: The Mexico City Cult

Was it Nectar or the Mouth of Mexico City that made Brooks stray from the plan he and Trammel had devised in Los Angeles? Was Brooks's obsession with Lopez and the Mouth the result of drug-addled fever dreams or the Mouth's eldritch babbling? Who can say for sure?

Brooks introduced Lopez to Nectar and, later on, the Mouth. She was mystified and ensorcelled by the Mouth's song. Together, high on Nectar and drunk on tequila, they declared their dedication: Lopez swore to master the Mouth's song and fuse it with music that would carry its power to the public. Thus they considered themselves married in a ceremony presided over by the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, and thus they found themselves devoted to a cause more personal and more profound than that of the cult. They had a mission.

Lopez devised a new show-biz identity for herself. She became Leticia de la Luz. And as she adopted this new identity so, too, did she begin to change physically, transformed by the power of the Mouth.

Meanwhile, Brooks set out and found a record producer and a band to play with de la Luz. He spent cult money on instruments and recording-studio time. He rented an office in downtown Mexico City. He helped de la Luz write songs incorporating the voice of the Mouth (mostly by encouraging de la Luz and then staying out of her way).

He reported back to Los Angeles that he had a new plan to expand the cult's operations, but he didn't say what it was.

Months later, after much writing and many promises, Brooks and de la Luz and their for-hire band recorded a handful of songs in the Estudio del Mañana. They had records pressed. Dozens were circulated — some for sale, many as gifts — throughout Mexico and the southwestern United States. Copies were sent to other cult chapters throughout the world. Brooks basked in his new role and his first record.

At the time, it seemed that Brooks had discovered a profound new use for the power of the Mouth of Mexico City. Trammel was cautiously pleased. Brooks was proud. Nectar flowed and throughout the land addicts went insane on the drug and backed their debauches with the songs of Leticia de la Luz.

But something else was happening. De la Luz continued to transform. First, her mouth. Then, her face. Eventually, her skull. She was being warped into some impossible monstrosity, a siren-voiced horror that lived only for food, for sex, and for song. She was mutated by her dedication to the Mouth.

She demanded to sing in further songs, to make more records, but she could no longer be seen by musicians, producers, or the public. Brooks recorded her voice alongside the Mouth's and played it back on speakers in the studio while live musicians played. But no recording was quite good enough. A dozen more songs were produced, but de la Luz was never satisfied. The songs were held back, and Brooks had nothing to release, nothing to show to Trammel, no progress to report.

Meanwhile, Brooks was going slowly mad — mad from Nectar, mad with grief over his transmogrified lover, mad with fear that new songs would never be finished or appreciated, mad with dread that he didn't truly understand the Liar From Beyond… or believe what Samson Trammel had told him about the god-thing.

Brooks gathered cult funds and put them into new recording sessions, but those have fallen away to endless rehearsals with de la Luz and the Mouth. Brooks spent cult money on an expedition to a site in the Yucatán, where answers about the true identity of the Liar From Beyond might be uncovered, but that expedition hasn't reported back. Brooks promised Trammel new shipments of Nectar and records… but the cult membership is coming apart in Mexico City.

Everything is unraveling when the Investigators arrive. Brooks and Luz and a few loyal followers are holed up in their hidden lair, dreading the inevitable arrival of cultists from Los Angeles dispatched to replace them

Wardrobe: Mexico City

Mexico City is a major city with a mix of traditional and modern cultures. The suits and hats of the era are commonplace here, as are the sorts of everyday dresses that might be found in many other American cities. Colorful traditional garb is common, too, though. From richly patterned shawls and handmade dresses to artful neckties and splashy handkerchiefs, the look of Mexico City in Eternal Lies should come with bold doses of color.

Look for opportunities to drop in details via NPC wardrobes. A clue-spouting character might be dressed in a gray suit with a bright yellow pocket square, or a musician might wear his guitar on a strap woven with decorative skulls. Does a gentleman's necktie feature some abstract art deco pattern or an array of vivid peasant stripes?

Turn this around by having an NPC comment on a PC's appearance if he or she doesn't adopt a bit of local style. "Aren't you a little warm in that dark suit?" an NPC might ask. Or: "Are you going to a funeral?"

— maybe even to kill them. Maybe they've caught wind already of the Investigators' interventions elsewhere and are waiting for them to arrive and destroy everything they've built.

Whatever the specific threats Brooks and Luz and their people are expecting, they have their backs to the wall now. They're practically in hiding. They're ready to fight for their lives, to defend what they have left: each other and the Mouth.

When the Investigators arrive in Mexico City, they're wading into the cult's wreckage. From the private investigator intended to detect danger and warn the cult to the bodyguard ready to bail, the cult is in trouble. The Investigators may just be the final instruments of fate, come to end the tale, or the Investigators may be the threat that unites a deranged and desperate cult into renewed solidarity and decisive action. Will the Investigators find this a sad but easy case or are they about to confront the conflagration of a couple ready to kill for each other?

Travel to Mexico City

Mexico City is an inland metropolis, easily accessible by road. Investigators might therefore drive from, say, Los Angeles to Mexico City if they have for some reason lost access to Mrs. Winston-Rogers's airplane. The drive takes the better part of two days and might require a **Driving** test (Difficulty 3) to avoid getting lost, if you decide that the risk of getting lost is important to track — or that some side adventure or alternate scenario might play out on the way to this Locale.

It is more likely, however, that the Investigators fly into Balbuena Airport. This ten-year-old airport was built as a military facility but also offers domestic and international flights through arrangements with various carriers. (The airport's first international flights were to and from Los Angeles in 1931.) Arranging for a runway and hangar for the Winston-Rogers aircraft is easy enough (Credit Rating 5+), especially if Winston-Rogers is still footing the bill for travel expenses.

From Balbuena, renting a car and driving around Mexico City is easy enough that it shouldn't warrant much more than a few lines of quick exposition.

Driving around Mexico City is only difficult if that difficulty is somehow interesting to your unfolding story. Maneuvering and parking the hefty autos of the era on some of the Federal District's cramped streets might require a **Driving** test (Difficulty 3) if characters want to avoid standing out, for example, but the era of ubiquitous traffic isn't here yet. Chases and escapes in Mexico City aren't any more difficult than such shenanigans would be in any other major city.

Environs: Mexico City

Mexico City, known locally as *el Distrito Federal* or *México, D.F.*, is the capital of Mexico yet is not technically a part of any of the country's states. Instead, like Washington, D.C., in the United States, the city and its many boroughs are their own distinct place within the nation — the Federal District.

Mexico City is a political, financial, and cultural nerve center for the country and occupies a vital and telling landmark in its landscape and history. Built on the site of the original Mexica (eventually Aztec) city of Tenochtitlán, which was itself built on the site of Lake Texcoco, the location was chosen as the foundation of a new city after the Mexica beheld an omen. There, on an island in the lake, the Mexica saw an eagle with a snake in its mouth, perched atop a cactus. It was a sign foretold by the gods.

Tenochtitlán was built literally on the lake, atop rafts and islands. Centuries later, the Spanish conquistadors spent more than a year attempting to capture the city for good. Finally, in 1521, under the leadership of Hernán Cortés, the Spanish succeeded. Under the Spanish, Tenochtitlán became Mexico City.

To make room for the growing colonial metropolis, Lake Texcoco was all but destroyed. The Spanish built over old Aztec sites with a new city, full of Catholic churches and new municipal palaces and monuments. Outside of the colonial center, European influences gradually mingled with traditional local styles to create distinctive new communities combining indigenous and colonial culture.

Much was forgotten. Much was buried.

By the 20th century, Mexico City is already a large city, albeit horizontally rather than vertically. Mexico City locals and tourists travel the many boroughs via trolleys, motorways, and canals that cut through the wetlands around the all-but-vanished lake. Myriad neighborhoods house diverse cultures throughout the boroughs. Some places are almost wholly modern, renovated by the expanding cityscape. Other places are almost wholly colonial (or even older), blending traditional Mexican architecture with European style.

Recent archaeological digs throughout the city reveal many Aztec and related sites underneath the modern Federal District. Tenochtitlán may be dead, but its bones are still there.

The Mexico City of 1937 is a big, vibrant city, but it is not yet the chaotic tangle it will be one day. It is not yet the kidnapping capital it will come to be known as. The Federal District

isn't free of corruption and graft, but the local police and powers that be aren't on the take from the local cult. (Not yet.) Nectar hasn't permeated the palaces of power far enough to give the cult that kind of local pull — a fact the local leadership is none too happy about. Thus, while Mexico City is a place where palms get greased and good guys and bad guys alike get killed, it is also a place where rampaging Investigators cannot quite hide against criminal background noise.

Atmosphere

The Federal District's boroughs each have their own distinctive atmospheres, and most span many distinctive neighborhoods. The atmosphere of Mexico City *as a Locale*, however, is narrower. The tale of *Eternal Lies* meddles with just a few specific atmospheres within Mexico City: the steely modern city center, the arty and colorful bohemianism of Coyoacán, and the ghost of Tenochtitlán below it all.

In the city center, the atmosphere of this tale is shadowy and noir-like — all fedoras and P.I.s — but that is almost a red herring. That atmosphere gives the players an easy context to slip into, against which we compare the second atmosphere of the Locale, from Coyoacán.

The atmosphere of Coyoacán is lively, sordid, and even jovial, but it's all painted on dark papers and seen through the shadows of night. It's a place of arty partiers and political discourse, of debauches and soirees, of music and dance and seduction. All of that is there to imply, to an extent, what it was that seduced Jonathan Brooks and Rosario Maria Lopez into the excesses of the cult and, further still, into failing the cult for the sake of their music. The Investigators are welcome to get involved in the bohemian adventures in Coyoacán, if they like, but it's not essential to the case. That atmosphere is either genuine (if the PCs get involved with it) or provided as contrast (if they don't) for the darker, starker danger ahead… beneath the city.

In the final leg of the Locale, the Investigators discover the local cult's new lair, which combines all three layers of Mexico City: modern construction, a colonial structure, and ancient foundations. The atmosphere here speaks to the very themes and atmosphere of *Trail of Cthulhu* as a whole, to the ways that ancient dread and modern horror can collide and combine.

These three layers of atmosphere each come with their own visual cues and architectural shorthand — keywords you can use to help evoke the right feeling in your descriptions.

For the city center, make everything art deco, cold stone, and glass. Buildings are square and taller (but aren't yet skyscrapers), with shiny new fire escapes on them. The white light of new streetlamps casts long shadows across asphalt, or the sun is high and bright and reflects off so many windows. Dark suits are everywhere.

For Coyoacán, make everything colonial or classically Mexican, with plaster and stucco walls, exposed brick, colorful shutters, and wrought-iron decorative rails and balconies. Buildings are squat

Emotional Modulation in Mexico City

These short setting details are meant to help you dial the mood of any scene or interstitial bit up or down, from hopeful to sinister, so that you can modulate the feeling of the story. Use these anywhere in the Locale, paraphrasing as you see fit.

Hopeful Mexico City Beats

- • A trio of roving musicians plays out a jovial tune for passersby, a few of whom hand coins to the lead singer. At the end of the song, people clap and smile, encouraging the mariachis to start anew.
- • A teenage boy with a backpack darts down the street, pursued by a uniformed policeman. "Stop!" yells the policeman. The boy does. "Here," says the officer, handing over a small hardcover, "you dropped this back there." The boy smiles and takes it. "Thanks, mister!"
- • A bundle of two dozen or so men and women mill through the street, waving banners and throwing candies and flower petals about. They carry a young woman on their shoulders, headed either to or from her quinceañera party.
- • In a small stone plaza off the street, two squads of happy young men kick a football about. Maybe the ball rolls out to the Investigators, who can use this moment for a quick bit of characterization.

Sinister Mexico City Beats

- • Four sullen-faced musicians sit or stand on the street corner, playing a woeful tune of lost love, defeat, and death. One line, sung in Spanish, translates to "She kisses and makes promises, but also she bites and tells lies."
- • A boy walks up to a pair of policemen on the street, smoking cigarillos. "Excuse me, mister, can you help me find my dog?" They wave him away, and the boy disappears back into the street life.
- • Two dozen weeping women and red-eyed men come carrying a casket up the street, all but silent, all save the jangling of little bells hung from shawls and scarves.

The P.I. and the Police

Throughout this Locale, the Investigators have a chance of coming into contact with particular NPCs belonging to two different factions: the private investigator and the police. These agents are fully detailed in their own scenes — **Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator"** and **Mexico City 11, "The Police"** — though it's quite possible they'll be in motion outside the Investigators' sight before the Investigators meet them directly.

(These scenes are located in the midst of this Locale because that's where they're most likely to come to a head, but guidelines for interactions with Gonchi and the police can be found in scenes throughout the Locale.)

The private investigator, Gonchi del Toro, follows the Investigators throughout the first half of the Locale (unless they discover and confront him first) before either siding with them or alerting the cult to their presence. Ultimately, it's your decision, but the scene **"The Counter-Investigator"** gives you some guidelines for thinking like Gonchi.

The local police, meanwhile, are unlikely to take the Investigators very seriously until they can bring meaningful (and not supernatural) evidence, from within Federal District jurisdiction, to their attention. At worst, the Investigators are officially warned to stop meddling in the Federal District and charged with harassment or unlicensed private investigating. At best, the Investigators get the attention of overworked and understaffed Detective Gómez, who does his best to help but is all but unwilling to bend rules for strangers. Just how helpful the Federal District police ultimately are is up to you, but the scene **"The Police"** offers guidelines on how to base your decision on the actions of the player characters.

and rounded, with plaster arches. The warm glow of gas lanterns creates regions of solace from the dark, or the sun comes languid across the rooftops, making everything a dusky orange. Colorful, frilly dresses and bright tunics are everywhere.

For the final, climactic stretch of action, everything is broken and jagged, with shards of glass and pottery sticking out of the mud, bricks piled near holes in the ground, and modern metal cranes standing in the hearts of smashed buildings. Buildings are half built or half demolished. Moonlight and feeble bulbs barely make a difference against the nighttime shadows and swallowing darkness. Danger is everywhere.

The Scenes

Play the following scenes as the Investigators move throughout the Locale, starting with their arrival and orientation in Mexico City. The investigation in Mexico City is fairly straightforward, with few deductive leaps to be made. The Investigators' big decisions center on the order in which they act on available clues, what tone to take in their investigations, and how they choose to treat informants like Gonchi del Toro and Victor Cortez. Consequences of those decisions manifest in later scenes through your roleplaying and the choices you have NPCs make in reaction to the PCs.

1. Arrival in Mexico City

Scene Type: Intro / Core

Lead-ins: Correspondence from "J.B." found in Trammel's *Testament* (Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion," p. 113).

Summary: The investigators get their bearings in Mexico City and locate the post office box from the letters found in Trammel's book in Los Angeles: PO Box 1629, Mexico City, D.F.

Core Clues: The Luz Records office is located at 33 Morelos Avenue, in one of Mexico City's artier neighborhoods. (Library Use, Flattery, Bureaucracy, or Bargain to locate the PO Box; Reassurance, Bargain, Disguise, or Intimidation to access the box's file card.)

Mexico City is a sprawling city with distractions and dangers aplenty, but the Investigators haven't come to relax. They've come to work. They've come to find the post office that contains PO Box 1629 and turn that clue into a new lead, or otherwise discover how to reach and ruin the Mexico City cult operation.

Perhaps logistics take precedence for the Investigators, though, and they seek out lodging or contacts first, to get a feel for the city before they dive into work. Fair enough. Mexico City has everything they need, from rooms to vehicles to weaponry. The question is simply whether the Investigators have the abilities necessary to get what they're after.

As a big, diverse city, the Federal District offers legal and illegal solutions to almost every logistical problem, provided the Investigators have the

1. Arrival in Mexico City

Credit Rating and the connections to make use of it. This is not an expensive city, exactly. Many goods and services can be acquired for 1 point of Credit Rating less than might be expected (based on p. 33 of *Trail of Cthulhu*), though exact costs are detailed elsewhere in this Locale or left to your judgment and discretion.

For a bit of simple guidance, though, consider this: a 1-point spend of **Streetwise** is probably enough to make the necessary introductions for other illegal dealings, from finding the right police officers to bribe or cajole to making under-the-table arrangements to purchase a Thompson submachine gun. Once the appropriate introductions are made, a combination of Streetwise and another appropriate skill (say **Cop Talk** or **Bargain**), spread across one or more Investigators, is enough to get supplies in hand within 1d6 hours in most cases.

Lodgings of every stripe for every Credit Rating are easily available.

Finding the PO Box

With **Library Use**, it's easy to locate the post office that contains PO Box 1629: the local library contains a listing of PO-Box ranges by office. Calling or visiting any post office allows the same information to be won via **Bureaucracy**, **Flattery**, or even **Bargain**. The PO Box is located at a downtown post office in central Mexico City.

The post office in question is a big art deco affair — new construction, with shining stone and metalwork — meant to glorify the post-office experience for big-business clientele and other downtown notables. Hundreds of people must go through this post office every day, many of them suit-and-tie types or their stalwart aides and secretaries.

Gonchi Watches

Brooks has a local P.I. on hire to watch for trouble from Los Angeles or, if Malta or Bangkok have sent word, from the Investigators. Knowing that the PO Box is one of the most exposed pieces of information about the Mexico City cult, Gonchi watches it several hours a day for stakeouts or interlopers. If the Investigators visit the PO Box during business hours, Gonchi just happens to be there, too, either on the steps outside the busy post office or inside, pretending to use a pay phone.

Gonchi is unlikely to act out in this scene, but it's possible the Investigators will catch on to him even here. Otherwise, it's enough to know that Gonchi is on the Investigators' trail after this, asking postal employees what questions the Investigators asked and so forth.

To spot Gonchi here, the Investigators' players must declare, on their own, that they're making a Sense Trouble test. If one of them beats a Difficulty of 6, instinct suggests that Gonchi is watching them. (See Gonchi's scene, **Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator,"** p. 287, if the Investigators act against Gonchi here.)



Staking out the box could take days to yield a clue (though, in practice, it probably doesn't), and the truth is that it won't yield the easy access to J.B. the Investigators are hoping for anyway, so it's likely they'll pursue other means of wringing information out of the PO Box.

Talking with postal employees (most of whom only speak Spanish, unless you decide otherwise) requires Investigators to convince kind-hearted staff that access to the file card associated with box 1629 won't hurt anybody (**Reassurance**). Alternately, the Investigators can just make it worth the attendant's while (**Bargain**), which requires as little as an American dollar's worth of pesos or even just an impressive business card and a promise of future favors. (The attendant can then sell that business card to Gonchi del Toro to make his buck.) **Intimidation** or a clever use of **Disguise** probably works here, too, though attempts that are *too* interesting get the attendant to threaten to call the police — and maybe to follow through with it.

The post-office file card for box 1629 reveals that it is rented by Jonathan Brooks of the Luz Recording Company, and it includes a forwarding address: 33 Morelos Avenue, Coyoacán, Mexico, D.F.

If asked, the attendant reveals that no one has come to collect mail from the box for some time, according to his recollection. *"The man who does is just a man in a suit."* (It's actually several men — Brooks sends cult members to collect the label's mail.) No one has come to collect mail from the box for weeks, though. (The specific date is about 12–14 days before the Investigators arrive.)

A 1-point **Locksmith** spend to get into the box can be made with or without a **Stealth** test (to avoid being caught in the act, perhaps by pretending to unlock the box with a key). If the Stealth test beats a Difficulty of 4, the Investigator gets the box open without plainly jimmying the lock, so no one alerts the staff, but Gonchi del Toro (who is watching everything go down here) makes a note of the character(s) loitering around box 1629. If the Stealth test beats a Difficulty of 6, even Gonchi doesn't notice that the character was interacting with box 1629. Failure on the Stealth test means some well-

Coyoacán Environs

Located near the heart of the Federal District, but miles south of Mexico City's central plaza, Coyoacán is both a modern borough and the name of a historic village that once stood on the edge of Tenochtitlán. The name is Nahuatl for something akin to "place of coyotes."

In 1937, Coyoacán is a lively, arty place, home to Frida Kahlo and, eventually, Leon Trotsky. The local culture is a mix of the traditional and the modern, centered on the historic Villa Coyoacán, the village that lends the borough its name. Old colonial buildings (including churches from the 1520s or so) stand alongside imitation colonial structures from the 19th and 20th centuries and more contemporary buildings. Parts of the neighborhood are in active redevelopment (including the site where the cult of the Mouth makes its lair here), while other parts stand much as they have for centuries.

Investigators fluent in Art History, Art, or Craft find it easy to talk shop here, to make friends, and to find delightful galleries and shows. Investigators looking to talk politics are also in the right place, provided they walk into the right café or bohemian party.

Much of the culture that Brooks and de la Luz drew on to create their music lives here in Coyoacán, yet information about them as individuals is scarce on the ground. The cultists didn't move very deeply in many local circles, and they were careful about who they let get close to them. A few former cultists or friends of the cult might yet be found and interviewed, however — see the scenes **Mexico City 9 "The Bar,"** p. 284, and **Mexico City 13 "The Party,"** p. 293, for more about what such people might know.

meaning citizen or unexpected postal worker notices what's happening and starts yelling. *"Hey! Get away from there!"* Smart characters then flee the scene to avoid a call to the police and a $25 fine.

Inside box 1629 are a few items:

- A power bill for the Luz Records office (which **Accounting** notes has not been using much electricity at all for the past month), citing the 33 Morelos Avenue address for the Luz Records office inside the letter.
- A postcard from Mérida, Mexico (in the Yucatán) sent by "Domínguez" that reads, simply: *"Departing today for the site. Will write again when back in Mérida."* (The postmark is from the week before.)
- An unopened letter from Samson Trammel, which reads: *"Anticipating another update soon. Where is our product? Where is the new record? Do tell. Hurry. Waiting."* (The postmark on this letter is from three days before the Investigators arrived in Los Angeles, so it may have been sitting here for some time if they handle the Mexico City Locale late in the game; Brooks has given instructions not to bring him mail from Trammel until the Mérida expedition returns.)

Following Gonchi

If the Investigators catch wind of Gonchi del Toro here but don't tip their hands, they can also follow Gonchi directly to the Luz Records office (and the next scene) by making a **Shadowing** test (Difficulty 5), because Gonchi's next stop after the post office is to make sure that all is well and quiet at the office, as usual.

2. The Luz Records Office

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The office's address from the PO Box (Mexico City 1, "Arrival in Mexico City," p. 267) or Detective Gómez (Mexico City 11, "The Police," p. 290).

Summary: The Investigators discover a disused office, cleaned out and shut down, but not entirely devoid of clues.

Core Clue: Luz Records recorded several hours of music, meant to be one or more albums, before they disappeared from their offices. (Locksmith to get inside; simple search of stray papers.) At least some of that music was recorded at Estudio del Mañana, just up the block at 1220 Morelos Avenue. (Accounting or Evidence Collection to find invoice.)

Once the Investigators reach the official offices of Luz Records, this short scene can unfold, hinting at the hard times that have befallen the Luz Records endeavor and its directors, de la Luz and Brooks. Use this scene to build the tension surrounding the ominous absence of de la Luz and Brooks, to get the players wondering just what's happened in the past few weeks and what menaces might be lurking in their future.

The Luz Records offices occupy the whole top floor of a two-storey stucco building with wrought-iron railings and colorful decorative tile work surrounding Spanish arches and small, barred windows. Access to the second storey is via an outdoor stairwell, rather like a motel, except only two doors access the whole of the second storey's

2. The Luz Records Office

indoor offices. The building stands in a row of four similar buildings, across from a mechanic's shop, a taquería, and a shoe-repair joint. Everything but the taquería closes down around 5 p.m. or so, making it easier to trespass but harder to interview neighbors (since none of these places are residences).

The offices are reasonably secure, with off-the-shelf deadbolts on each door. Access with **Locksmith** forces a way inside without attracting attention from next door, but leaves locks damaged or obviously tampered with. A 1-point **Locksmith** spend leaves locks functioning just fine, with no evidence of tampering.

Inside, the Luz Records offices are a single room with plaster-encased posts and wood-and-glass separator walls dividing the space into four distinct offices. The place has been all but cleaned out, though. Filing cabinets stand open and empty. A safe in the back office is ajar and clean. Desk drawers are open and empty save for stray staples. Little remains to give much of a lead to the next scene, except for a few stray papers, abandoned catalogs, a broken copy of the first Leticia de la Luz record, and a full garbage can.

A **simple search** of the stray papers and abandoned catalogs suggests that Jonathan Brooks had priced out booklets and holders for four-, five-, and six-record albums. He had big plans for lots of music.

Evidence Collection or **Accounting** spies a wadded up invoice in the trash, under greasy papers streaked with red, oily stains (**Chemistry** or **Anthropology** deduce it to be the remains of some meal's chorizo sausage). The invoice, in Spanish, charged Jonathan Brooks and Leticia de la Luz $15 for "last-minute production time" at Estudio del Mañana, located at 1220 Morelos Avenue, just up the block.

Record Albums

Here's why they're called albums: back when 78-rpm gramophone records held only one or two songs on a side, those small records were sometimes collected into albums of sleeved pages (not altogether unlike a photo album) of three or more records for 6 or more songs. Each side of each 10-inch record held about three minutes of music. An opera might be dozens of records long. Songs might be bought as singles (usually actually two songs, an A-side and a B-side on the same record) or as collected albums of songs. These were precursors to the LP records and compact discs of later years, when multiple songs were routinely sold together on single discs.

The songs of Leticia de la Luz (and the Major Mouth of Mexico City) are a little more than two minutes long, but de la Luz and Brooks plan an album of several records to create a complete listening experience.



If the Investigators question neighbors at nearby businesses or offices (all of which are unremarkable accountants, small-time law offices, or transcription services), they gain some information for their troubles:

- *"No one has been around the office since [a week before the Los Angeles Locale took place],"* says one sweaty, round office worker next door. *"They used to yell and play music until all hours. It was very distracting."*
- *"They moved boxes out back [a week before the Los Angeles Locale took place], and I haven't seen lights on since then,"* says the waiter at the taco joint. *"They used to come in here, talking about music and great parties here in Coyoacán, and promised to invite me once or twice, but never came through for me."* (**Intimidation** or **Streetwise** gets him to reveal the following: *"I tried their drug* — néctar — *with them one night, when they came over after a night at*

The First Luz Recording

The first record printed by Luz Records is a two-song disc made to convey Leticia de la Luz's voice with a bit of a backup band — just a simple delivery system for the subtle swaying power of her song. To the average listener, these nameless songs (called "Side A" and "Side B") are simple refrains in Spanish, rhythmically sung between wordless crooning. She sings things like "mi corazón," "mi amor," "mi nombre," and "mi boca." (That's "my heart," "my love," "my name," and "my mouth.") Those same words, over and over, sung through de la Luz's voice, drive people on a Nectar high into a trancelike state, susceptible to suggestions and easy to please. It essentially hypnotizes willing listeners, readying them for suggestions made by nearby cult leaders.

Investigators who end up high on Nectar and listening to the first Luz record must make a Difficulty 4 Stability test to avoid the song's trance. Failing that test doesn't drain Stability directly… but the acts undertaken while hypnotized might, when the Investigator remembers them. Because a hypnotic record is a lousy reason for player characters to do terrible things, allow even failing characters to quickly stop themselves and snap out of the trance before they take gross or dreadful actions — losing Stability for knowing full well what they might have done if not for their admirable willpower.



Estudio del Mañana. Nasty stuff. I felt all dirty and rowdy on that shit."

- The accountants downstairs — a pair of skinny, mustachioed men — have nothing nice to say: *"Noisy. Dirty. They would come to work after noon and stay into the evening, blaring music and laughing and carrying on. I'm glad they're gone."*

About Gonchi

This scene gives the Investigators another chance to spot Gonchi del Toro, if they haven't already. If the players call for a **Sense Trouble** test themselves, they have a chance to notice Gonchi waiting in his nearby automobile, watching the offices. The Difficulty is 5 by day and 6 by dusk or dark or if Gonchi arrives after the Investigators do, perhaps after following them here from the post office.

If the Investigators followed Gonchi here, all he does is park his car a short stretch up the block from the office building and wait. He doesn't even go and check the door unless he's been alerted that the Investigators are on the case (perhaps by spying them at the post office).

For the most part, Gonchi's tactics here are to snap a few photos of the Investigators, write down license plate numbers, and get a head count so he can report all of that back to Konovalov. Gonchi wants to lie low and see if selling out the Investigators gets him somewhere, unless he sees that they're capable and serious, in which case he might see them as his way out of this "cult business." See **Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator,"** p. 287, for more on Gonchi's approach in these scenes.

3. The Studio of Tomorrow

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The invoice from the Luz Records office (Mexico City 2, "The Luz Records Office," p. 269) or speaking with Gonchi (Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator," p. 287) or Detective Gómez (Mexico City 11, "The Police," p. 290).

Summary: The Investigators encounter a helpful record producer named Victor Cortez, who reveals a great deal about the Luz recordings and the people who made them.

Core Clue: The record manufacturer wanted little to do with the recording, but he was somehow persuaded to press the record anyway. (Reassurance, Flattery, Interrogation, Art, Art History, or Craft.)

Core Clue: The singer, Leticia de la Luz, keeps an apartment not far from the studio. (Reassurance, Flattery, Interrogation, Art, Art History, or Craft.)

Core Clue: Cortez still has the financier's address at his townhouse. (Reassurance, Flattery, Interrogation, Art, Art History, or Craft.)

Core Clue: The session players who recorded the music for the song are regulars at a bar, La Paz, on a nearby boulevard. (Reassurance, Flattery, Interrogation, Art, Art History, or Craft.)

This scene plays out when the Investigators finally arrive at Estudio del Mañana (1220 Morelos Avenue) in Coyoacán, Mexico City. This scene reveals a lot of information about Jonathan Brooks and Leticia de la Luz, helping the Investigators get up to speed on the nature and character of the local cult operation, such as it is. Here the Investigators get four solid leads, which they explore in any order. Some of those leads are dead ends, some lead to combinations of exploration and antagonist reactions.

Estudio del Mañana is a modestly sized but excellently appointed operation in an old single-storey office in a more modern part of Coyoacán. The building consists of little more than a pair of soundproof recording rooms, a single sound-engineering room, an office, a lobby, and a bathroom. It's all done up in sleek art deco–style wood and carpet, with traditional Mexican folk art on the walls.

This scene essentially depends on the presence of Victor Cortez, who must be persuaded to share what he knows.

No matter when the Investigators visit the studio, Victor Cortez is there. During the day, he keeps the door locked (to protect himself and his equipment). During the night, he's sleeping there (*"I feel safer here than I do at home."*), also under lock. Day or night, he answers only when he can be convinced that the Investigators aren't working for Konovalov or Brooks. (**Reassurance** or **Cop Talk** ought to handle that.) Cortez is cooperative once he knows Investigators aren't hostile. See the next section.

Breaking into the studio shouldn't be necessary, but if the Investigators take that approach, they can force a lock with **Locksmith** or get in with finesse (leaving the lock in working order) by making a 1-point **Locksmith** spend. Without a **Stealth** test (Difficulty 4), however, they don't get the drop on Victor Cortez.

As soon as he hears someone intruding (especially in the night), he yells, *"I have a gun! I* will *shoot!"* (He does and he will,

as **Assess Honesty** detects.) Honest **Reassurance** is all it takes to keep him from shooting, but Intimidation gets him to fire off a round or two immediately. (Whoops.)

Characters who get the drop on Cortez in the night find him asleep in his shirtsleeves on the couch in his office, with a gun under his pillow. He's no match for the Investigators if roused or agitated, though — he's basically a good citizen with a love of music and a desire never to see Jonathan Brooks or his people again.

In the Words of Victor Cortez

In a way, Cortez has been waiting for the Investigators. He's been hoping that someone will take care of Brooks and his people — bring them to justice or otherwise shut them down — though he always thought maybe some well-meaning police detective would do it. Cortez certainly didn't expect the Investigators (unless one of them really is a Mexico City police detective). Still, Cortez is happy to have people he can talk to frankly about de la Luz's music and the effects he's seen it have on people… and worse.

"Am I going crazy?" Cortez might ask.

This scene calls for a lot of **Reassurance** and **Flattery**. Cortez even responds well enough to **Interrogation** if the Investigators have some official weight behind them somehow. Investigators who employ **Art History**, **Art**, or **Craft** to make a personal connection with Cortez become his go-to people for eye contact.

Here's what Cortez reveals with a bit of questioning or prompting:

- Jorge Novo, the manufacturer who pressed the records for Jonathan Brooks and his wife, Leticia de la Luz, didn't want to be in business with them anymore. He thought the record was unwholesome. *"I think he even called it 'evil' once,"* says Cortez. A couple of days after Jorge told them that he wouldn't press records for them anymore… the record-pressing site burned down with Jorge Novo inside. The manufacturing facility was in east Mexico City — Cortez gives out the address if the Investigators want it.

- Leticia de la Luz kept a nice apartment in Coyoacán. *"I went there once, at Brooks's invitation, but that night devolved into drugs and fighting, and I got out of there. Leticia was furious at Brooks for something — I don't know what — and a lot of us slipped out when they went and fought in the bedroom."* The apartment is in a nice building just a couple of miles away. *"She may still live there, as far as I know."*

- *"I won't go home. Last time I did, men came pounding on the front door. Men with Konovalov, Brooks's bodyguard… or muscle, or something. I snuck out the back and haven't returned since. That was more than a week ago."* Cortez has Brooks's townhouse address written down there, though. *"It's somewhere downtown, near the Zócalo, but I don't remember where. I've never actually been there. I wrote it down in a matchbook for El Cochinillo* [The Suckling Pig]*, which is probably still in my kitchen."* Cortez gladly gives up the key to his house's back door if the Investigators are "crazy enough to go back there."

- The musicians hired by Brooks and de la Luz to play on her records are regular drinkers and performers at a Coyoacán club called La Paz (The Peace). They play there every few nights. The lead guitarist is a man named Javier Luna. *"They might still be spending money they got from Brooks. He paid them well. I don't know if they're still working with him or not."*

- The last time Cortez saw Brooks and de la Luz, they bought some recording equipment off of him. *"I think they're recording on their own, now. Where, I don't know. But they used to talk about how they had to restrain themselves here. And they came in and played those records of someone they called 'La Boca'* [the Mouth]*, because they couldn't bring him in to sing directly, I guess."*

- Cortez is nervous as hell. *"I imagine the only reason they haven't burned this place down is that they think they might need it. Or me. Oh, God!"*

If the characters use **Art History**, **Art**, or **Craft** as Interpersonal abilities to develop camaraderie with Cortez, or if they make a 1-point **Reassurance** or **Flattery** spend ("You're too smart and too important for them to hurt you, Victor"), Cortez offers up a little bit more:

- *"The last time I saw Leticia — this was just before the men came to my house, back before the fire at the manufacturer's — she wore a mask. Like, a veil. And sunglasses. I got just the slightest peek at her behind those glasses, 'cause they didn't fit right. Her eyes… were in the wrong place. They were too far apart. Swollen, or something. It was awful. I don't want to picture it anymore. Am I going crazy?"*

- *"Maybe Jorge was right. Maybe their music is cursed. Evil. What they first came here to record was strange. Made us all uncomfortable. But the money was good. I'd pay it all back, now, to never know Brooks and de la Luz. Please, don't let them kill me."*

Victor Cortez

Three Things: Talks with his hands. Touches his face when shocked or appalled. Has great teeth.

Athletics 5, Firearms 1, Health 5, Scuffling 3

Weapon: +0 (light revolver)

Keeping Cortez Alive

If the Investigators want to protect Cortez, but they don't want to leave him alone at the studio (where he may be vulnerable) or drag him along with them on their investigation, they can arrange a room for him somewhere out of the way with **Streetwise**. Gonchi may well find out about that place, though, unless the Investigators make a 1-point **Streetwise** spend and a successful **Stealth** test (Difficulty 5) en route to the site, in which case they shake Gonchi along the way.

Alternately, the Investigators may be able to arrange for protective custody for Cortez with the Federal District Police. This requires a 1-point spend of **Bureaucracy** or **Cop Talk** to pull the right strings with the local authorities (presumably during the scene **Mexico City 11, "The Police,"** p. 290) and requires Cortez to testify in the arson case involving Jorge Novo's record-pressing facility. (Convincing Cortez to testify might require a 1-point **Reassurance** spend, or just a finely roleplayed bit of dialogue, at your discretion.)

Although the Investigators have no way of knowing this for sure, Gonchi's contacts at the police department can easily get him the information that Victor Cortez is in protective custody related to the Jorge Novo case, but those same contacts can't or won't reveal *where* Cortez is kept and certainly won't let Gonchi see him. So, while Gonchi and thus, potentially, the cult might get wise to Cortez's testimony to the Federal District Police, Cortez should at least be safe for three or four days while Detective Gómez gets the case together and looks for Konovalov (see the scene **"The Police"**). After that, Gómez's funding runs out and Cortez might be right back in danger — *if* the cult is still a threat *and* has been told by Gonchi del Toro that Cortez is testifying.

The Timeline

The timeline of events in Mexico City is a little convoluted, because some things happen relative to the PC's investigation in Los Angeles, so the later they tackle the Mexico City Locale, the further they get from when certain things happened in Mexico City:

- About 3 weeks before Los Angeles: Brooks mails his last letter to Trammel.
- About 2 weeks before Los Angeles: Brooks gets up the nerve and dispatches an expedition to the Yucatán. Jorge Novo tells Brooks that he won't press any more Luz records.
- About 1 week before Los Angeles: Jorge Novo's record-pressing facility burns down. Brooks and de la Luz depart their offices and their homes to take up residence in their hidden lair under Coyoacán. Gonchi del Toro starts looking for a way out.

What Gonchi does with knowledge of Cortez's location is up to you, of course, but it should just be more fuel for whatever play Gonchi decides to make when the Investigators catch him watching them — or otherwise come into direct conflict. (See the scene **Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator,"** p. 287, for more on Gonchi's motives.)

4. The Manufacturer

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Getting the address of the facility from Cortez (Mexico City 3 "The Studio of Tomorrow," p. 271), Gonchi (Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator," p. 287), or Detective Gómez (Mexico City 11, "The Police," p. 290).

Summary: The Investigators' visit to the record manufacturer is most likely brief — the place has burned down.

Core Clue: The fire was almost certainly arson. (Evidence Collection, Forensics, or Chemistry.)

This short scene establishes the stakes of Brooks's villainy — he's willing to kill those who helped him make his record if they have the gall to turn on him — and ties off an avenue of investigation that might otherwise lead the Investigators in another direction. That is, while insightful, this scene is a dead end, meant to create a short spur off the main investigation and prevent the case from following a straight-line course.

Play this scene as short as you can, rather than wasting the players' valuable time (even though you might waste *their Investigators'* time here). Consider cutting straight to the site of the record-pressing building — which is now little more than three blackened walls and a stretch of rubble, all separated from the street by a simple red-and-yellow painted rope — and saying something like, "The place has plainly been gone over by the police, and after an hour of searching for clues, you think you know what conclusion they would have reached…"

You can then transition directly into the exploration of clues that surface with an hour's investigation. Otherwise, play along for a bit with the players as they conduct their investigation, while reminding them that when the place burned, it took a lot of clues with it.

Evidence Collection, **Forensics**, and **Chemistry** agree that the fire was almost certainly arson, started at the missing wall and then spreading rapidly throughout the building, perhaps following materials in the walls and ceiling. A chemical accelerant (gasoline) was used at the source point of the fire.

The building, judging the location of tables and machinery now, wasn't properly staged for a quick escape in case of fire. It's entirely possible that someone inside could be trapped and unable to escape. Perhaps the fire was never intended to kill.

A 1-point spend with **Evidence Collection** or **Occult** discovers traces of baked-on Nectar residue on the walls and ceiling, in patterns not unlike typical light water damage, as well as cracks and deformations — the burnt remains of Minor Mouths.

What Really Happened

The evidence hints at the truth. The police report on the crime has it almost exactly right. The fire was a simple late-night arson job.

Konovalov and his goons set the fire at Brooks's instruction. Gonchi del Toro knew about it and did nothing to stop it (for which he feels terribly guilty, now that he knows that people died). The idea was to hurt Jorge Novo financially and to scare him into silence. Nobody was supposed to die. But Jorge Novo was at the facility into the night, cleaning machinery, and didn't realize the building was on fire until it was too late. The ceiling gave way near both the front and rear exit and he was trapped.

The death of Jorge Novo was the last straw for Gonchi del Toro and a few other cultists. The police investigation into the fire is just one more reason why Brooks and de la Luz have gone into hiding, along with their fear of reprisal or replacement from Los Angeles, and possibly their fear of the Investigators.

Gonchi's Tail

At this point, it's likely that either the Investigators are aware of Gonchi or that he is aware of them. If Gonchi is on their trail, he keeps his distance here. The site of the fire makes him feel guilty and nervous and he knows there's not much for the Investigators to find here. **Sense Trouble** tests to detect Gonchi are at Difficulty 5. **Stealth** tests to shake him here are at Difficulty 4.

If Gonchi isn't yet on to the Investigators, he has no reason to come here. Maybe he catches up with them somewhere down the line.

5. De la Luz's Apartment

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Getting the address of the apartment of de la Luz, the singer on the record (Mexico City 3, "The Studio of Tomorrow," p. 271 or Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator," p. 287).

Summary: The investigation dead ends in an abandoned apartment, with scant clues left behind.

Core Clue: The apartment has been pretty well cleaned out of valuables, though personal items remain behind. It looks like someone left in a hurry. (Evidence Collection.)

Core Clue: Photographs of a young Latina woman have been defaced throughout the apartment. (Photography.)



5. De la Luz's Apartment

Core Clue: Leticia de la Luz's real name is Rosario Maria Lopez. The apartment is paid up for the next four months still. (Oral History or Disguise on the landlord.)



This short scene depicts another investigative dead end, meant to provide contrast for the heartier trails of investigation that exist alongside it. What this scene does is provide a bit of background information on Leticia de la Luz (formerly Rosario Maria Lopez) and her romance with Jonathan Brooks, while simultaneously hinting at the desperate mode they're currently in. This should be a sad, somewhat creepy scene, loaded with modest menace despite the almost utter lack of peril.

With so little to do here, get in and get out quick. Paint the picture of de la Luz's broken home and then move on with the story.

The apartment is on the third storey of a rather modest 21-unit building (7 flats per floor). It's a quaint, aging walk-up building with a quiet little courtyard garden and a lot of older couples living in the neighboring units. De la Luz's apartment is #18, a corner unit on the top floor. Getting into the apartment is easy: the door is unlocked.

A **simple search** makes it clear that the apartment has been gone through — not exactly ransacked, as plenty of things are left untouched — but dug through here and there. Drawers are empty, a picture is missing from an array of family photos hung on one wall, the contents of the bedroom closet are spread across the floor near a pile of empty hangers. **Evidence Collection** makes a character confident that what they're seeing is the aftermath of a hurried packing session, not a robbery. Valuables are missing, like jewelry and probably a record player (there's a stand for one and lots of records around, but no record player), but other valuables — from an expensive camera (worth $38, no film in it) to a fancy watch (worth $60) — have been left behind.

The only sign of damage to the apartment involves photographs hung on the walls and an album put neatly back on the shelf. Two photos hung on the walls have been smashed and gouged, right through the glass. In both cases, a young Latina woman is the subject of the photographic attacks: her face is gouged across the mouth, as if trying to behead her above the mandible. **Photography** notices similar damage done to photographs in an album placed neatly on the shelf, wherein a handful of photos of the same young woman have been slashed, torn, folded, or scarred across the mouth *and* eyes. These photos sit neatly in the album, right where they seem to belong. Handwritten notations on two defaced photos label them as *"Quinceañera, 1930"* and *"Oaxaca, 1935,"* but all other photos of the young woman are unlabeled. (This is unusual, both for the era and for the album — most other photos are labeled things like *"Abuelita* [Grandma]*, 1929"* and *"Papa, 1931."*)

Attempts to interview immediate neighbors reveal just a little bit of information with any combination of **Reassurance**, **Flattery**, and **Oral History**:

- A surly mustachioed man in an undershirt and slacks, next door: *"It's been nice and quiet since they left. No more loud music. No more moaning in the night. We all knew she was in love, but they didn't have to beat us over the head with it, did they? You see them, tell them to stay away."* [Regarding a defaced photograph:] *"That's her."*
- A middle-aged mother with a child off in college, across the hall: *"She was a nice-enough girl, I suppose. Too promiscuous, if you ask me. Too many parties. But she was that age. And artists, musicians, they're always like that, aren't they? She and her fiancé used to argue something fierce, though I don't know what about. They played music loud to cover it up, but I know the sound."* [Regarding a defaced photograph:] *"Oh my, that's her. That's Leticia."*

An **Oral History** or **Disguise**-based interview of the on-premises landlord (a round, suspicious woman in a simple floral dress, living in apartment #1), yields this:

- *"The apartment was rented out to Rosario Maria Lopez, but her fiancé paid for a year in advance some months ago. They have a little over four months left on the lease. A lot fewer complaints these past few weeks. I figured they went out of town. If you want me to let you in, bring a police officer."* [Regarding a defaced photograph:] *"Yes, that's Miss Lopez. What did she do?"*

A 1-point **Oral History** spend or an express statement that the Investigators are interviewing the occupants immediately downstairs from de la Luz's apartment yields this clue from the old woman (Magui) in apartment #11, whose husband interrupts her spiel:

Magui: *"Oh, yes, I know Rosie. Rosario Maria. Miss Lopez, she'd say. Is she all right? Haven't seen her in weeks."*

Manny: *"When's dinner?"*

Magui: *"(It's on the stove!) When she moved in, we spent some time talking. She was looking to be a singer, but she was on the last of her savings when she moved in, I think. Then she met that generous American, Jonathan. Mr. Brooks. He hired her to sing and even recorded a record. How about that!"*

Manny: "No rice?"

Magui: *"(I'll make rice! One minute!) She took on a stage name, after that. Isn't that glamorous? Leticia de la Luz. So fancy.*

Anyway, he became her greatest admirer. Bought her jewels and a fine watch. They had such interesting people over. They must have been doing quite well, with all the wine and chocolates and records they brought home."

MANNY: *"I'm making rice."*

MAGUI: *"(Thank you, dear!) I should go. Manny will burn the rice. If you catch up with Rosie, let her know we'd love to see her. Or hear her! She kept promising to give us one of her records, but she said we should wait for the album…"*

6. CORTEZ'S HOUSE

SCENE TYPE: Core / Alternate

LEAD-INS: Visiting the record producer's townhouse, with or without him (Mexico City 3, "The Studio of Tomorrow," p. 271) or getting the address from Gonchi (Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator," p. 287).

SUMMARY: The Investigators poke around Victor Cortez's townhouse, looking for clues as to the whereabouts of Jonathan Brooks and his star singer.

CORE CLUE: Jonathan Brooks wrote down the address of his penthouse on a matchbook for a restaurant called El Cochinillo. (Simple search.)

ALTERNATE CORE: Victor Cortez is being watched — the cult is ready to kill him if need be.



You have two main ways to play this scene: as a tense, brief step on the road of the investigation or as a major, messy action beat. The action beat comes in two varieties — one with a single shooter, one with a carload of thugs. As an investigative scene, this one's short. As an action sequence, it's likely to run a bit longer and jump-start the involvement of the Federal District Police (and dial up the notoriety of the Investigators in the neighborhood). See "The Shooter" and "The Thugs With Guns Clause," below, to play this scene as an action beat.

Decide before the scene unfolds how you intend to play it, because the Investigators may have a chance of discovering the kind of scene this is when they show up.

Cortez's house is a modest bungalow on a residential edge of Coyoacán — handsome street, small yard, lots of other bungalows nearby with chicken coops, languid dogs, gardens and green trees. Seems like a happy place. The house has one door, front and center, and another in the back, leading directly into the kitchen.

The information available in the house is the same regardless of how you play this scene. A **simple search** reveals only that the house has been ransacked and vandalized. It's pulled apart. Furniture is cut open, smashed, or toppled. Paintings are smashed, records have been stomped on. Someone trashed every room, from the living room to both bedrooms to the bathroom.

On the wall above the living-room fireplace, someone has written the following words in an orange smear: *See You*.

Chemistry or **Occult** concludes that the substance is Nectar. **Evidence Collection** or **Forensics** determines that it was painted on by hand, like finger painting.

The matchbook the Investigators are likely after is in a big glass jar (still intact) in the kitchen, along with fifty other matchbooks (**simple search**). When the Investigators interact with the glass jar, the nature of the scene reveals itself: either a character successfully digs out the El Cochinillo matchbook without further peril *or* one of two action beats unfolds…

The Shooter

This instance of the scene pits the Investigators against a single cultist with a rifle, positioned on the roof of a next-door house. When an Investigator reaches for the big glass jar of matchbooks, the jar explodes in jagged shards as a rifle round punches through a nearby window and it, dealing 2 points of damage to that Investigator. (This is a coincidence — the shooter doesn't know anything valuable is in that jar; he was aiming for the Investigator.)

To give the Investigators a fair chance to spot the shooter before he can fire, the Difficulty is 5 (daytime) or 6 (nighttime) for **Sense Trouble** tests as Investigators approach the house. Success means a character spots the gunman in an overgrown garden next door, where he's been watching the house all day and night. (When he sees the Investigators arrive, he climbs up on the roof of the bungalow next door and lays prone to prepare his first shot.)

Once the shooter has revealed himself, he does his best to pick off any Investigators he can see, whether they're in the house, the yard, or a nearby vehicle. If possible, he spares Cortez, because Brooks still has a use for him. If Gonchi is clearly helping the Investigators, the shooter tries to put a round into him, out of spite.

The shooter has full cover against the Investigators unless they get onto Cortez's roof, onto the same roof as the shooter, or into a nearby tree. These are each Difficulty 4 **Athletics** tests. Use your judgment for adjudicating the cover-circumventing potential of other plans your players devise to get an angle on the shooter.

When each of the Investigators has gotten into cover, this may become a

standoff. Someone in the neighborhood calls the police after two or three shots are fired, and the shooter fires on the arriving police immediately. If the Investigators aren't up to it, the police take out the shooter… and then take the Investigators into custody. The coveted matchbook — unless **Concealed** (Difficulty 6) — is confiscated as evidence if it's in an Investigator's possession.

Due to both a dwindling Nectar high and a mortal fear of Konovalov, the shooter keeps shooting until every Investigator is incapacitated or until he himself is dead. The shooter speaks only slippery remains of Spanish — mostly he speaks the Tongue.

The Shooter

Three Things: Wide eyed. Has the sweats. Chews his lips.

Athletics 8, Firearms 10, Health 5, Scuffling 5, Weapons 4

Hit Threshold: 4 (5 with full cover)

Weapon: +1 (quality rifle)

The Thugs-With-Guns Clause

This version of the scene uses the proven and heavy-handed approach of tossing thugs with guns into the mix to add spice, urgency, and a new thread to the plot. Playing the scene this way is sure to have major consequences, including but not limited to Investigator injury or death, one or more scenes of fallout spent with Federal District police officers (see **Mexico City 11, "The Police,"** p. 290), and the possible involvement of the police throughout the rest of the Locale. Play this instance only if you really want to stir the pot. For more of a slow boil, skip this combat and proceed to **"Brooks's Penthouse,"** p. 278.

To give the Investigators a fair chance of spotting danger before it rears its head, offer a **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 4) to spot a carload (equal to 4 or the number of Investigators, whichever is lower) of thugs parked up the street, watching Cortez's townhouse. To spring the thugs on the Investigators by surprise, wait until the end of the scene and tell them this: *"When you pulled up, the thugs had driven off to get food and came back to find you on the scene, which is when they spring into action."*

(In which case, Investigators who remain outside Cortez's house get to see these thugs pull up and rush in. Are the Investigators ready for them?)

Each thug is a muscular thirty-something man in a dark suit with a colorful handkerchief. These men were selected for inclusion in the cult by Konovalov, along with a few other thugs still back at the lair. These thugs only speak and understand the Tongue now, so they are allowed to roam the city without fear that they'll reveal de la Luz's hiding place to non-cultists.

The thugs have heady doses of Nectar and simple instructions: scare Cortez by roughing him up and waving some guns around. When the thugs see other guns are in play (if they are), they open fire on anyone but Cortez and Gonchi. They're high on Nectar, they have the new de la Luz song in their heads like some kind of unforgiving, supernatural earworm, and they're itching for a fight.

As above, the police inevitably respond to reports of a shootout, but they might take several minutes to muster officers and arrive — use dramatic timing rather than realism to make that call.

The thugs, meanwhile, fight until half of them are down and then try to pull out of the fight if they can, possibly resulting in an automobile chase into the heart of Coyoacán.

Stability Losses

Remember that shoot-outs with bloodthirsty, drug-addled cultists carry a Stability risk. See p. 71 of *Trail of Cthulhu* for the typical Stability loss risked by tests for likely incidents. Here are the most likely losses risked in this scene, for your reference:

- A human opponent attacks with evident intent to do serious harm: 2 pts
- In a car accident serious enough to pose a risk of injury: 2 pts
- A human opponent attacks with evident intent to kill: 3 pts
- You kill someone in a fight: 3 pts



Such a chase ends either when the thugs are stopped or when they shake the Investigators — they don't go back to Brooks until their supply of Nectar runs out in two or three days, during which time they are all but certain to either shake or discover the Investigators. (In other words, trailing these thugs back to Brooks shouldn't be a way to short-circuit the Locale's trail unless you specifically want to shorten this Locale and jump to the scene **Mexico City 15, "The Hidden Studio,"** p. 297)

The Thugs

Three Things: Wear suits with no ties. Curse and yell during combat. Chew their lips.

Athletics 8, Driving 6, Firearms 6, Health 5, Scuffling 7, Weapons 6

Weapon: +1 (heavy pistol)

7. Brooks's Penthouse

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: The El Cochinillo matchbook (Mexico City 6, "Cortez's House," p. 276) or Gonchi (Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator," p. 287).

Summary: The Investigators visit Brooks' penthouse and go through his things.

Core Clue: Brooks hasn't been home in days. (Evidence Collection or Biology.)

Core Clue: He kept birds — great-tailed grackles and red-footed blackbirds — (Biology or Forensics on the coops and feathers) and fed them Nectar (Chemistry or Pharmacy on the bird feed), but they're gone now.

Core Clue: There is a secret room accessible from the patio. (Architecture or Craft.)



This simple scene is all about straight-up investigation and looming menace. The Investigators get into Jonathan Brooks's papers and possessions and, from them, learn a bit about him, his operations, and his relationships. Thus this scene humanizes Brooks, just as de la Luz's apartment humanizes her, so that these NPCs feel more real and substantive when they finally appear near the end of this Locale.

This scene is also the setup for the following scene, **"Shrine to the Thing,"** which contains vital information for the Locale and the campaign at large.

Getting In

Brooks's penthouse crouches at the top of a ten-storey brick building in downtown Mexico City, just a few blocks from the post office explored earlier in this Locale. Access to the penthouse is possible either via an elevator in the lobby or via a fire escape in the rear of the building.

Accessing the fire escape requires an **Athletics** test (Difficulty 4) to climb or jump to reach a pull-down ladder. Scaling the fire escape without being spotted by residents in the eight floors of flats between the second and tenth storeys requires a **Stealth** test (Difficulty 6) because the fire escape passes right by lit windows and is not sturdy enough to avoid rattling and creaking under the weight of a human. (Alerted residents call the police, and the police arrive in 1d6+10 minutes.) Characters who reach the top floor — Brooks's floor — exit the fire escape onto Brooks's roof-top patio, which is packed with bird coops.

A character inside the penthouse can pass as Brooks over the intercom to the lobby with a successful **Disguise** test (Difficulty 4).

Investigators entering the building via the lobby must deal with the bilingual (Spanish and English) concierge, named Oscar Garcia, whose job it is to ring up the residents on their floor (each floor is a different residence) and get permission to bring up the elevator. The concierge is loyal to most of the residents in the building… but strange folk have come to visit Jonathan Brooks before, so he doesn't think much of peculiar questions and suspicious-smelling half-truths. This doesn't mean he'll just drive the elevator up to the tenth storey for anyone, however. He must be smoothed over with **Bargain**, rattled with **Intimidation**, or fooled with **Disguise** (Difficulty 4, perhaps saying something like, "I'm Brooks's brother. He's died. We need to settle his estate."). Alternately, the concierge can be distracted by one character while others sneak through the marble lobby (a Difficulty 5 **Stealth** test) and access the stairwell (and, nine flights later, Brooks' penthouse) with **Locksmith**.

Remember, Gonchi del Toro and Victor Cortez are little help getting into Brooks's penthouse as he kept both men at a bit of a distance — Cortez never actually visited this place, and Gonchi was only here once or twice in the past and has no useful relationship with the concierge.

The elevator from the lobby is a manually driven lift in a shaft punctuated by locked doors — the front doors to each flat in the building. Even getting the concierge to drive characters up to the top floor in the elevator doesn't get him to unlock the door. That requires a 1-point spend of **Bargain**, **Intimidation**, or **Disguise**. (Investigators with **Locksmith** can pick the lock to the penthouse automatically but a 1-point spend is required to do so without being spotted by the concierge.)

If the characters manhandle the concierge, he becomes docile and cooperative unless he has reason to believe that he'll be killed, in which case he flees as soon as possible, perhaps dropping his keys to the floor as he does, in the hopes that'll keep him from being chased. Police arrive 1d6+15 minutes later.

The Investigators gain vital information in this scene, however, so they should not be confounded by the concierge — he's merely an opportunity for the Investigators to express themselves and demonstrate wit or cunning or guile. If necessary to keep the story moving and your players interested, a simple $20 bribe gets the concierge to drive them to the tenth storey and even let them in. (Maybe he says, "Don't break anything," or "Keep me out of it," or "I hope you fleece the bastard" — the concierge's relationship with Brooks can be anything you need it to be.)

7. Brooks's Penthouse

Inside the Penthouse

Brooks kept the penthouse simple. Laying eyes on his place suggests not a sleek, spartan lifestyle but a man who failed to decorate. The living room has just a pair of sofas, a cabinet radio, and a high-end record-player cabinet. The bedroom is furnished for two — lamps, side tables — and the closet is half full of clothes for a man and a woman, but the walls are bare. The kitchen has the minimum of necessary utensils and no appliances save for a stove, an icebox, and a blender.

Closer examination of these rooms reveals a bit more, however. **Evidence Collection** detects fine orange stains on the living room carpet. **Forensics** identifies the stain as something akin to Nectar spritzed into the air. The bathroom and bedroom garbage cans contain wax paper wads, stiff with old Nectar, and weeks-old used condoms. Likewise, **Evidence Collection** finds traces of crusted Nectar in the blender.

Biology determines that the mold growing on the bathroom towels and bread in the breadbox is probably about 12 to 14 days old.

Pharmacy identifies a clear liquid found bottled in the medicine cabinet as a powerful Mexican sleeping aid. One eyedropper's dose should put an adult to sleep within 30 minutes for up to eleven (1d6+5) hours. The bottle contains just about five doses left. An overdose of this liquid can kill: the dosage is the Difficulty of a straight-up roll made by a dosed subject; failure deals damage equal to 5 + the dosage as the victim sleeps.

The bulk of what's interesting in the penthouse is found in two other places: the rooftop patio (see next section) and the secret room accessed via that patio.

The Patio Coops

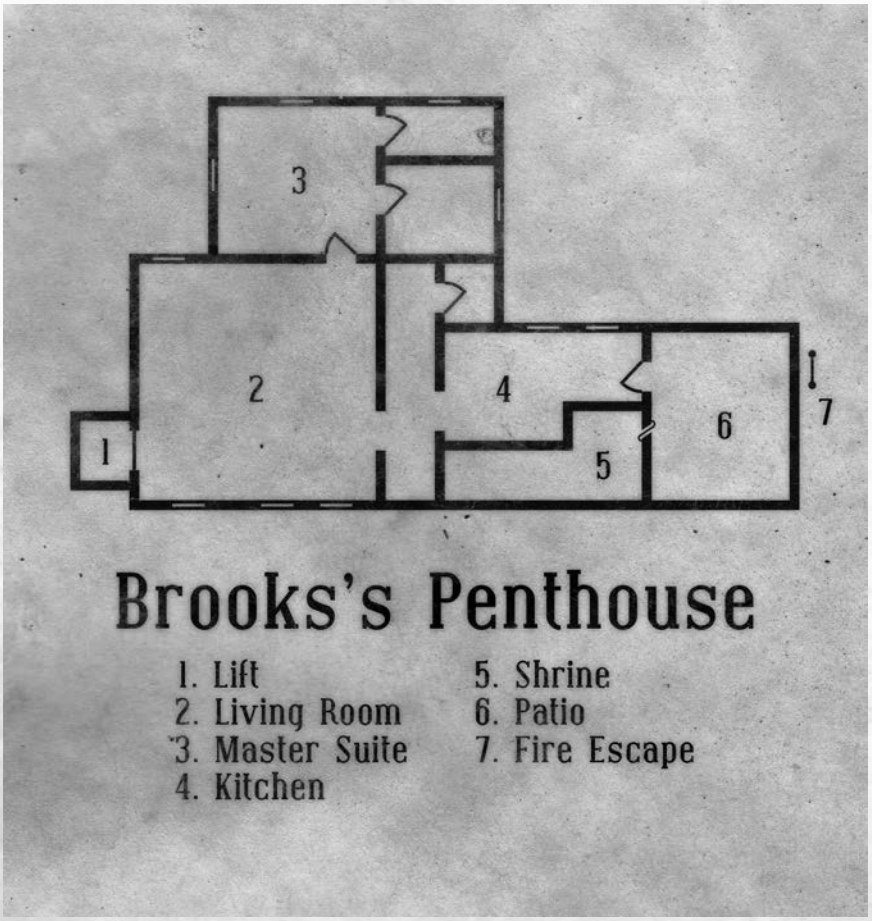
Your job out here on the patio is to make the players and their characters wonder what happened to Brooks's birds — to wonder where they are now. (The answer, of course, is that they are in the antagonist-reaction scene, **Mexico City 20, "Attack of the Birds,"** p. 304.)

Almost a quarter of Brooks's penthouse space is devoted to a rooftop patio. Almost the whole patio is devoted to a collection of coops and pens for birds. This patio is a dirty, bird shit–stained patch of wood-planked rooftop. At one end of the patio is a door off the penthouse's central corridor. The other end is marked by the iron fittings that anchor the fire escape to the low three-foot wall at the patio edge.

The bird coops are made of simple unfinished wood and chicken wire. Each contains a latched door that has been left open. **Forensics** or **Biology** surmises that the birds kept in the coops were roughly crow-sized.

Biology identifies abandoned feathers as belonging to two different types of birds:

- Some feathers belong to a species of grackle, probably the great-tailed grackle common to the area, often mistaken for a kind of crow, and typically regarded as a noisy pest bird. The males are iridescent black-feathered birds, up to 17 inches, with tails almost as long as their bodies. Females are brown and a bit smaller.



- Other feathers belong to something about half that size, probably the red-footed blackbird, a breed of sonorous blackbird, known for its pleasing song, which would be at the Southern edge of its habitat in Mexico City.

Neither of these species are typically kept as pets. Both are omnivorous seed and insect eaters that occasionally eat carrion. By the looks of their habitats, some 50 or so birds may have been kept here, and perhaps not happily — they've been pecking and scratching at their cages.

Worse than that, it appears that the birds have been fed fresh carrion: **Biology** finds uneaten fingernails and finger bones stripped of their flesh, lying amid the bird shit and broken seed shells at the bottom of the cages. At least twelve fingers turn up, harvested from three or more different people — two men and one woman — all within the last month.

(Brooks harvested fingers from disloyal or disappointing cultists — some of whom are still alive and in his employ. He cut off a few ears to feed to the birds, as well, but nothing of them remains. See **"The Hidden Studio"** and subsequent scenes for a few of the cultists so punished by Brooks.)

Occult recognizes symbols carved into the coops' wooden portions, underneath the stains and random markings. It's possible that someone was (or thought they were) casting spells upon the birds contained within.

Chemistry or **Pharmacy** detects traces of Nectar in the bird feed, which consists of tightly packed seeds and canvas sacks of dead, dried bugs.

Investigators who bring knowledge of **Architecture** or **Craft** to bear on the rooftop patio make note of something curious. Architecture recognizes that the building is missing space — the outer wall of the penthouse suggests a room may be hidden across the hall from the kitchen, adjacent to the outer wall by the patio. Architecture or Craft notices with certainty that someone bricked up a window or doorway there on the outer wall. Once spotted, it's easy to see that the fittings between bricks there are not tight enough. A bit of inspection even notices metal in three spots around the bricked-up portal — probably hinges and a latch.

The secret door can be forced open by two or more Investigators pushing together, thereby breaking the latch. The latch itself can be found with a 1-point **Mechanical Repair** spend: it's located under the coop directly opposite the door.

About the Birds

The patio foreshadows the attack of Brooks's birds later on… but how much later on is up to you. For an attack by Brooks's birds to make sense, they must either be sent somewhere that Brooks has existing knowledge of (that is, not the Investigators' hotel) or Brooks must have knowledge of who the Investigators are and where they are staying in Mexico City. The birds can therefore potentially attack in any scene including or after "The Studio of Tomorrow," especially if it's the birds' job to interfere with people at any of the locations those scenes hinge on.

(The red-footed blackbird is a fictional species invented to give Brooks access to local carrion-eating birds with a pleasing song. The great-tailed grackle is a real species.)

See p. 304 for the scene **Mexico City 20, "Attack of the Birds."**

Through the secret door is a small hidden space… and the next scene.

8. Shrine to the Thing

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding Brooks's secret room (Mexico City 7, "Brooks's Penthouse," p. 278).

Summary: The Investigators root through papers and notes that Brooks made based on Echavarria's texts.

Core Clue: Brooks's secret room contains notes and drafts of unsent letters, including papers that reveal the destination of an expedition he's funded into the Yucatán peninsula. Brooks doubts Trammel's claims that Nyarlathotep is the Liar From Beyond. (Simple search.)

Floating Campaign Clue: According to an unsent letter to Savitree Sirikhan, the Devouring Mountain's real name is Mount Kailash. (Simple search.)

This is a vital investigative scene containing clues that alter the shape of the whole campaign. In this scene, the Investigators stand to learn a vital clue about the earthly location of the main body of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, from which all of its Mouths mystically project. This scene also contains the clue that opens up the adventure Locale in the Yucatán, potentially revealing the true identity of the Thing, whether one calls it the Liar From Beyond or not.

Thus this scene is a treasure trove of information for the Investigators. Create an atmosphere of discovery here to help them feel like they've made a breakthrough in their case. Act with

excitement here — you're enthusiastic on the players' behalf. Where, just earlier, you were quiet and suggestive with the birdcages, here you might strive for guarded excitement. If you're the sort of Keeper to do it, you might even go so far as to say, "I'm excited to finally give you this handout! I've been looking forward to this," as you pass Brooks's letters over to the players.

Brooks's hidden room is both shrine and sanctuary. A finished room, with a wooden floor, two brick walls and two of plaster, **Architecture** realizes the space was meant to be a study or den inside the penthouse but was sealed in and redesigned by Brooks.

Along one wall is a simple altar made of polished marble set on a wooden sideboard. Set out on the altar, perhaps as offerings or perhaps for some kind of blessing, is a copy of the original de la Luz recording (identical to that found in Los Angeles and other Locales), a sheet of Spanish lyrics for a new song (full of hackneyed metaphors and loaded with a simplistic refrain about love flying like a bird), a single-dose vial of Nectar, and a few half-melted candles (unlit). Above the altar, on the plaster wall, is an orange stain that **Art History** or **Art** decides is a depiction of a fanged maw surrounded by eldritch symbols that **Anthropology** or **Occult** recognizes as symbolic of heads and mouths from various Mesoamerican cultures — jaguar mouths, bird mouths, serpent mouths. Other symbols painted in Nectar on the wall can be recognized by characters trained in **Anthropology** or **Archaeology** as Mayan writing, repeating the same five words over and over. If any of the Investigators know Mayan, they recognize words to these effects:

- mouth
- light
- song
- strength/might
- change/transformation/becoming



The rest of the room is furnished with an expensive wooden desk (**Craft** identifies it as a handmade piece of jungle hardwoods), rolling chair, and bookcase.

The bookcase is mostly empty, containing just about a dozen books on Mesoamerican art and culture, half a dozen blank books (still unused), three books on traditional Mexican folk songs, and one book stuffed with letters from Samson Trammel. Trammel's letters are written in simple code, but **Cryptography** determines they are all about the Nectar trade and monies being sent to Brooks and the Mexico City cult chapter… and never repaid. These are simply Trammel's half of correspondence already discovered in Los Angeles and offer no new information.

Library Use determines that these books have been rigorously read and handled, without much care, and recognizes respected authors and photographers in the mix. **Anthropology** and **Archaeology** can testify that the Mesoamerican texts are a range of classic and cutting-edge works in the field of Mayan and pre-Columbian studies. Any of the aforementioned three abilities spot highlighted passages in the books suggesting that Brooks was reading up on pre-Columbian religion and "fringe and forbidden gods" in the Mayan pantheon, especially one called Golxumal (*ghol-zhoo-mahl*), also known as "The Fisher From Outside." According to highlighted passages, the Fisher From Outside was worshipped at an ancient site in the heart of the Yucatán — a site intended for other worship but captured and repurposed by the cult of Golxumal. It was called Chichén Xoxul (*chee-chen zho-zool*).

More information can be found out about Golxumal and Chichén Xoxul in area libraries, as described in the Yucatán Locale (see "Research Done Prior to Mérida," p. 314).

8. Shrine to the Thing

The Fifth Locale

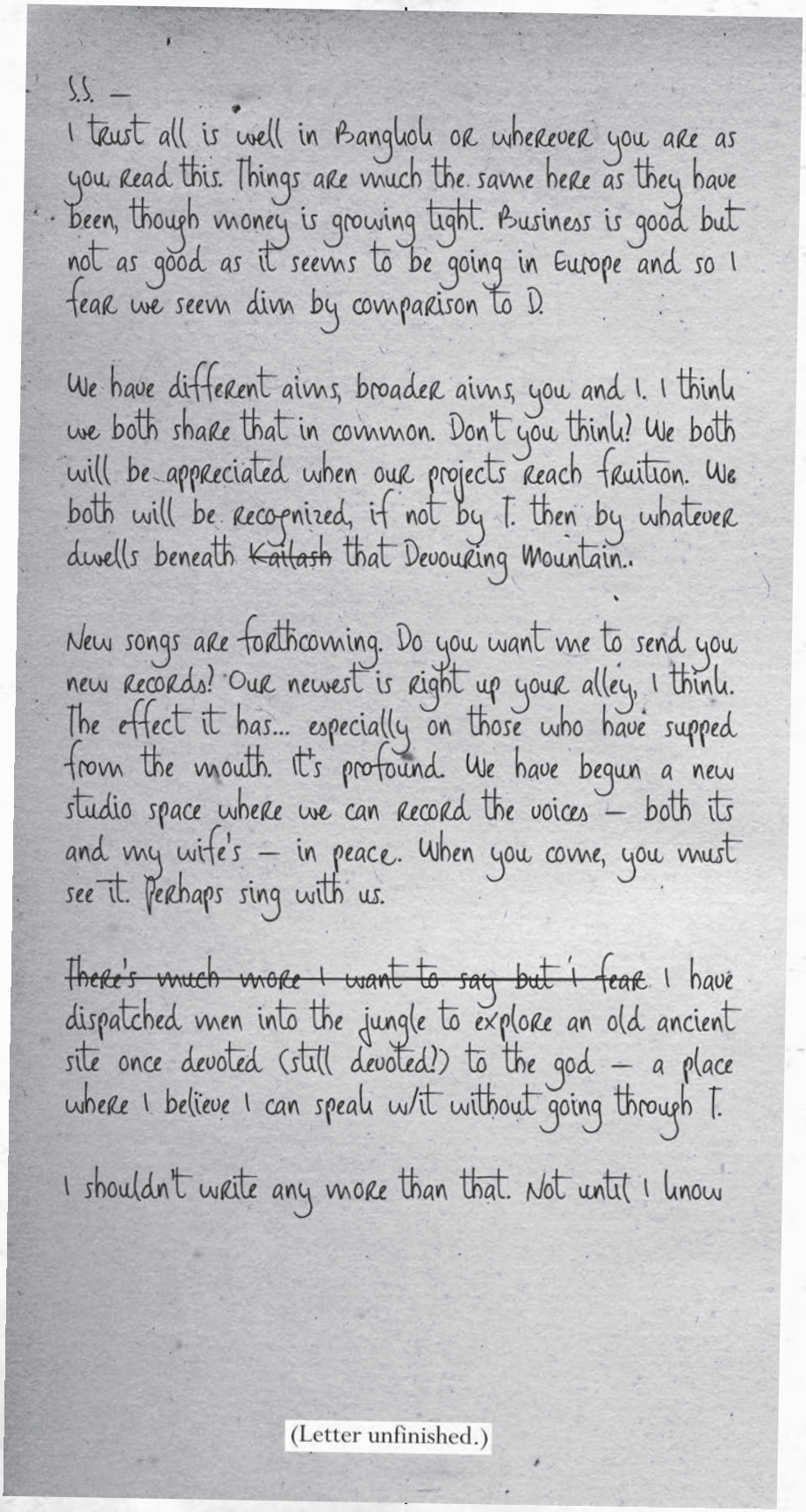
The Yucatán is the fifth Locale of Act Two. If necessary, you can even say it outright to your players: "You've just unlocked another Locale in the campaign: the Yucatán." While the Investigators may discover that the Yucatán is not an essential Locale, and you always have the option of letting them ignore it, there's a lot of adventure to be had there. Don't be shy.



Most of the desk's drawers are empty save for blank paper, fine unused pens, and other simple office supplies. The top drawer contains works in progress, including unsent letters and a small black notebook containing some of Brooks's notes to himself, with a fat chunk of pages torn out in the back. Many of these letters and notes are unremarkable, but a few stand out:

- An unfinished letter meant for Savitree Sirikhan, which identifies the "Devouring Mountain" as Mount Kailash and expresses some doubts about Samson Trammel's wisdom and insight.
- An unsent letter to Samson Trammel revealing the existence of — and details about — the expedition to the Yucatán.
- Notes on the expedition's methods, goals, and supplies. (See the handout on p. 284.)
- A photograph of ten men dressed for a wilderness trek, labeled *"Domínguez and his crew."*

As the Investigators leave Brooks's secret room, perhaps they are set upon by his birds — it's a fine time to play the scene **Mexico City 20, "Attack of the Birds,"** p. 304.



S.S. —

I trust all is well in Bangkok or wherever you are as you read this. Things are much the same here as they have been, though money is growing tight. Business is good but not as good as it seems to be going in Europe and so I fear we seem dim by comparison to D.

We have different aims, broader aims, you and I. I think we both share that in common. Don't you think? We both will be appreciated when our projects reach fruition. We both will be recognized, if not by T. then by whatever dwells beneath ~~Kailash~~ that Devouring Mountain.

New songs are forthcoming. Do you want me to send you new records? Our newest is right up your alley, I think. The effect it has... especially on those who have supped from the mouth. It's profound. We have begun a new studio space where we can record the voices — both its and my wife's — in peace. When you come, you must see it. Perhaps sing with us.

~~There's much more I want to say but I fear~~ I have dispatched men into the jungle to explore an old ancient site once devoted (still devoted!) to the god — a place where I believe I can speak w/it without going through T.

I shouldn't write any more than that. Not until I know

(Letter unfinished.)

T.—

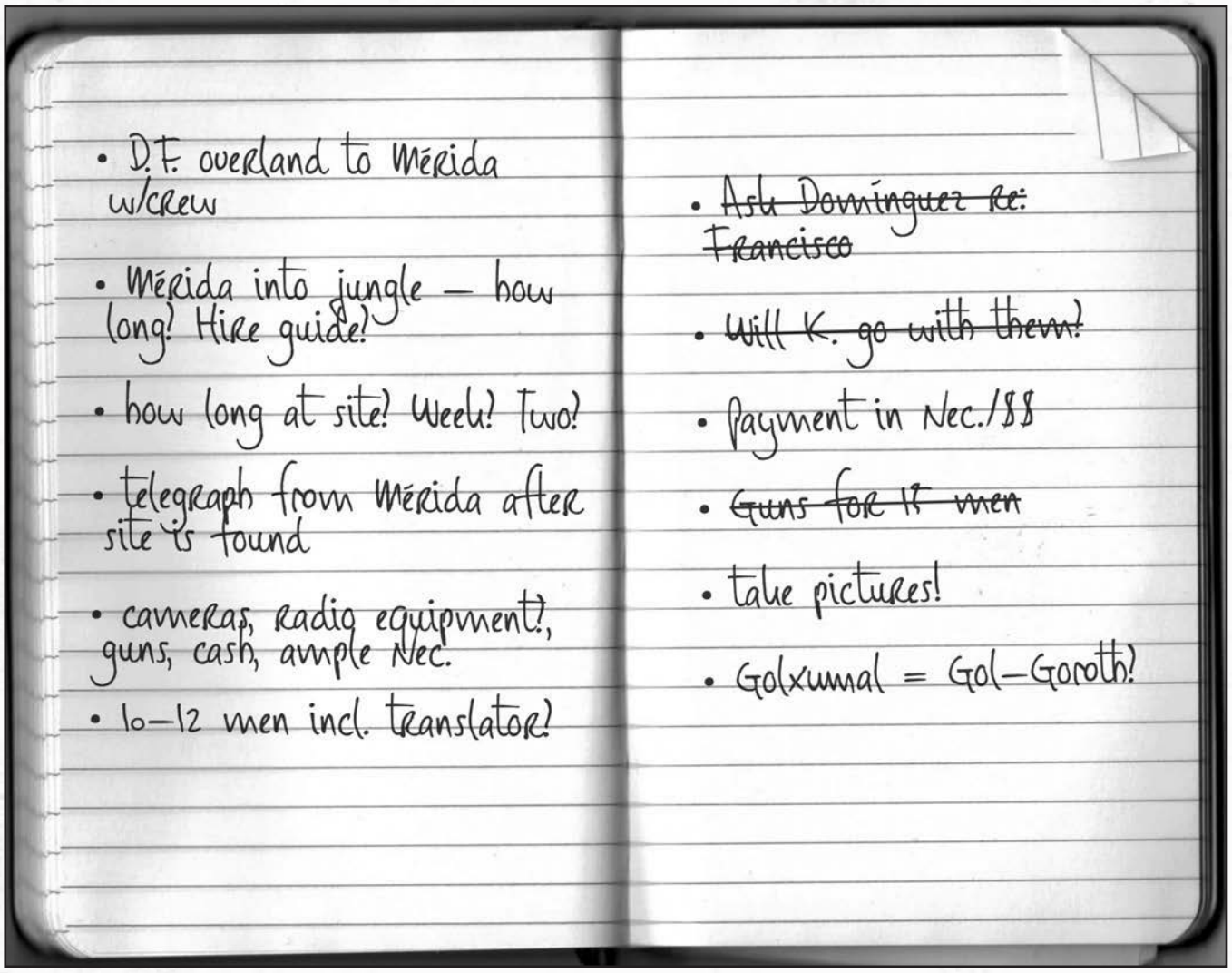
I know you've been waiting. I know you're unhappy with my performance. I am unhappy with our performance as well as yours. I see daily what your god can do... and what it can seemingly un-do. I hear nightly what it truly wants and it is not what you say. It is not the only liar among us and perhaps not the worst, in fact.

We trusted that you, in the name of this great liar, were telling us the truth but soon I'll know for certain what it wants and what it is and whether you were lying to us about who what it is and wants. I've found a way to hear it and soon I shall have a way ~~to speak to it~~ for it to hear me. I've already sent men in pursuit of one of the god's old sites, erected by people wiser and yet simpler than us. ~~Truer.~~

You told us that it was truly your many-faced god, your Black Man, but I believe you are lying to separate us from E's truths, from the truths that E told to his people. ~~You are but a shadow of the man he was. Does the name Golxumal mean anything to you? The Fisher From Outside? It is the Liar From Beyond! I shall prove it! You'll be sorry for hiding your secrets from us—us!~~

~~Once I have a true audience with your god we'll see, then~~

(Letter incomplete.)



9. The Bar

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding out that de la Luz's session musicians are regulars at La Paz from either Cortez (Mexico City 3, "The Studio of Tomorrow," p. 271) or Gonchi (Mexico City 10, "The Counter-Investigator," p. 287).

Summary: The Investigators visit a local bar to look into Leticia de la Luz's session musicians and learn a bit about the band's connections to de la Luz and her producers.

Core Clue: The band members are musicians for hire and, although they seem terrified of the producer and his mysterious singer, they won't say anything bad about them for fear of ending up like the record-presser, Jorge Novo.They will be at an upcoming party, not far from the bar. (Anthropology, Art History, History, Occult or Theology with the artist Elena Alcatruz.)

This short scene sets up the important follow-up scene **"The Party,"** which takes place anywhere from hours to a day after this scene, depending on the pacing you're after for the Locale. Here the Investigators get pointed at the lead that'll take them to the heart of the local cult. Here the Investigators meet a rare and mysterious ally with advice that, if trusted, could save their lives later on.

But they must wait. This scene just tells the Investigators where and when they'll get a chance to meet the musicians who perform with Leticia de la Luz — musicians who know how to find her and her husband.

The scene centers on a local Coyoacán cantina called La Paz (The Peace), where a nameless quartet sometimes plays. The bar's atmosphere varies depending on when the Investigators show up, but a few important details remain the same regardless of their timing: no matter

when the Investigators arrive, the band is not present, but Elena Alcatruz is.

La Paz is a simple place, a bit of a dive, located just outside Coyoacán's colonial heart, in a building as old as some cherished old churches. The front of the place is little more than a row of adobe and plaster columns holding up a sloped roof of clay tiles, interspersed with shutters of wrought iron and wood slats. Inside, it's a deep room with a colorful but mistreated tile floor beneath a high ceiling of wooden rafters and electric fans. A modest wooden stage is tucked into one back corner, across from a tiny kitchen. The walls sport paintings of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and El Cid, hung against frescos depicting the Mexican countryside at dusk.

As a traditional Mexico City cantina, food is complimentary for those who drink. The more you drink, the more and better the food provided, starting with dry tortilla chips and leading up through a variety of spicy salsas to a plate of simple but delicious *tacos al pastor*, served up by the place's lone waiter, a twenty-something wannabe intellectual named Benji.

Ubiquitous behind the bar is a middle-aged ex-sailor called Tonio, whose tattoos suggest a man with a history of piety and heartbreak. His body is a tapestry of women's names and bleeding hearts, punctuated by an ornate gold-colored cross, inked over the length of his sternum.

As the day grows dark, the character of La Paz changes.

By Day

La Paz opens around 2 p.m. for the afternoon crowd of lonely souls that come here to drink alone or commiserate with Tonio. By day, Tonio and a handful of quiet middle-aged drinkers talk about the sorry state of the world and watch the city go by through one or two open shutters; the rest they keep closed to keep out the sun and hold in the dark. The place is quiet except for the low voices and high-speed ceiling fans.

Elena Alcatruz, a poet, photographer, and mystic, sits by herself at a table near the shuttered portico, smoking cigarettes and reading an English-language edition of *She* by H. Rider Haggard.

No one in here speaks English except for Tonio and Elena and no one except for them feels like answering questions in any language. **Oral History** and **Assess Honesty** together leave Investigators feeling comfortable that these barflies are honestly disinterested. They're not holding out; they honestly don't know anything about Javier Luna and the band that plays here some nights except that they play here some nights.

Tonio responds to friendly abilities like **Oral History** with what little he knows: the band is made up of four young men — Javier Luna, Hector Juarez, Pedro de Leon, and Hernando Campos — who are paid nightly, mostly in free drinks and food, in exchange for bringing in a young crowd of hepcats who fancy La Paz's authentic character and lived-in feel. If pressed for more information, or imposed upon with abilities like **Intimidation** or **Interrogation**, Tonio gets confrontational and threatens to toss people out. *"Listen,* friend,*"* he says, *"I'm happy to help you out or I'm happy to help you* out *of* here,*"* or, *"Did you want to leave on your feet or on your ass?"*

A polite little apology, and Tonio turns semi-sweet again. *"You want to apologize, buy a[nother] drink or hit the bricks,"* he says with a wink.

Elena Alcatruz, meanwhile, perks up either when spoken to or when she hears the band talked about. (If it's clear the Investigators won't strike up a conversation, she wanders over herself.) She's happy to talk about the band (and knows all their names), but first she wants to know why the Investigators are interested in them. Whatever the response, she tests them a bit with highfalutin talk, tickling characters versed in **Anthropology**, **Art History**, **History**, **Occult**, or **Theology** with allusions and outright references. (You'll have to point her dialogue right at the Investigators' interests — aim her allusions at an intellectual character whose player hasn't had much time to shine lately.) She's not flirting, she's testing, and she's happy to test male and female Investigators alike.

Once she's got a bit of a rapport going, she says, *"I'll answer some of your questions if you'll answer some of mine. What are you drinking?"*

Play Elena so that she's fun to talk to, a little taxing (just a little), with a dose of mystery. She's bright and bored and quietly excited, for in the Investigators she's found new conversations and insights to dig up. Ask a lot of questions, then follow them up with insights or references to art, history, or something esoteric. It's okay to say things like, "She says something that draws a great connection between your answer and an underappreciated text on the topic" or "When you mention that, she mentions a painting by an artist who was inspired by the idea" — it's just fine for Elena to know more than you or the players on these subjects. Describe her strengths if you don't want to play them out.

If the Investigators (or their players) look forward to seeing her again in a future scene, you're playing her just right.

Here, in brief, is what Elena knows:

- The band members, Javier Luna, Hector Juarez, Pedro de Leon, and Hernando Campos, are musicians

for hire looking for their big break, and they thought they'd found it in Leticia de la Luz. *"I've heard her first record. Didn't care for it. It's sort of sullen, isn't it? Sort of crass. Whenever it's on, I sing something else to myself. You don't have to sing too loud to drown out bad music. There's an old Indian trick, an old Nahuatl folk song, that my mother taught me to sing when I was scared. Just a melody, really, but it works."* A 2-point spend from one or two of the following abilities, from one or two Investigators, convinces Elena to teach them the old folk song: **Anthropology**, **History**, **Flattery**, **Reassurance**, or **Art**. If a character has devoted a point of **Languages** to Nahuatl or some other Mesoamerican language, count it as 1 point's worth of expenditure, since it creates a bit of a common bond with Elena and her song. (This simple folk song may prove useful in the scene, **Mexico City 17, "Death Trap,"** p. 300.)

- *"Truth is, though, they're terrified of Leticia these days. I don't know what she and her husband have been doing to those poor boys, but they're afraid not to play for her these days. Afraid to turn her down. Afraid to say one bad thing about her, though I'm sure they want to."*

- *"The band — the whole band, I think — will be at a party I'm going to [tonight/tomorrow night/etc.] in an old building here in Coyoacán. If you want, we could all meet here and I'll walk you down there."*

The party is being held by architects and designers who recently purchased a rundown building in Coyoacán and are planning on tearing it down soon, but first they want to have some fun with the local hepcats and literati. Elena heard about the party here at the cantina, from Pedro de Leon (a member of Luna's band).

Elena's intent on going to the party (whenever it is), but if pressed with a 1-point **Intimidation** spend, she says she'll skip the shindig and just give the Investigators the address of the party (71 Viena Street). (Whether she actually avoids the party is up to you to decide, but a 2-point spend assures she stays safely away.)

When's the Party?

The timing on the party depends upon two things: how long the Investigators have been investigating in Mexico City and how much more time you want to give them to investigate. The party can be any evening that buys you the appropriate amount of time. If La Paz is one of the first places the PCs investigate, give them a day before the party, so they can play other scenes from the early part of the Locale before the party begins and things rapidly run downhill to the Locale's finale. If La Paz is the last place visited, and you want to keep things moving, maybe the party can be that very same night.

The people Elena Alcatruz and Javier Luna party with don't keep ordinary hours, so it's easy for them to party late on a Wednesday night (or whenever) and protect the schedule you need for pacing's sake.

By Night

By night, La Paz fills with hepcats and literati, just like Tonio said. They come to La Paz because it's unpretentious, it's just a little bit unwelcoming, and it's lovely and full of character. The place is loud but in a good mood by night, and the shuttered portico is open to the street. The night the Investigators come, a three-man band plays backing music for a female folk vocalist singing a mix of traditional songs and playful popular tunes.

Tonio knows everything he knows by day, and reacts much the same.

Elena Alcatruz is sitting at the bar, reading a first-edition American copy of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (not yet considered a classic in 1937). As in the daylight, she involves herself in the conversation if the Investigators don't involve her, except at night she has to lean in close to be heard over the band. To sing her song, she has to drag an Investigator (or all of them) out onto the street or wait until later. (If she puts it off, give the players a bit of a nudge to take it seriously: *"I promise I'll sing it for you at the party,"* she says, *"so remind me. I keep my promises."*

Elena Alcatruz

Elena Alcatruz was born and raised in Mexico City, on the verge between its urbanized heart and its bucolic fringe. She's 22 years old, now, and trying to decide exactly how to grow up. She idolizes free thinkers, artists, and adventurers, particularly Frida Kahlo and Amelia Earhart, and is looking for a way to turn her bookish ways into something more exciting. She's fashionable but not fussy, as comfortable in traditional dresses as she is in slacks and boots. If the Investigators meet her with plenty of time before the party, she undergoes a wardrobe change between encounters, going from slacks, boots, and blouse to an eye-catching dress the color of red wine. Whatever mode she's in, she can drink with the best of them.

Elena is Spanish on her father's side, Nahuatl on her mother's. She's well versed in academic topics like **Anthropology**, **Art History**, **Occult**, and **Theology**, the specifics of which are left to you to select as necessary to help her fit in with or entice the Investigators (be it romantically or intellectually or both).

Depending on how you choose to play her, Elena might be a welcome



roleplaying opportunity for players looking to engage in some in-character dialogue, a chance to inject friendship or romance into the story, or simply a means of adding levity and charm to the tale. Elena might also make a fine Investigator, should a PC be slain or driven mad in Mexico City and need to be replaced.

As a last resort, Elena can be imperiled as a means of demonstrating another character's villainy, but that old chestnut is unlikely to surprise anyone — you'll find that the following scenes offer other ways to demonstrate villainy without calling for a damsel in distress.

Consider the following statistic for Elena to be the most bare bones — give her Investigative abilities as necessary to get her to fit in with the Investigators, or override these stats with new numbers if she becomes a member of the investigation.

Art 1 (Poetry), Athletics 5, Driving 4, Filch 1, Fleeing 5, Health 6, Photography 2, Psychoanalysis 1, Sanity 5, Stability 8, Sense Trouble 4, Stealth 2

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: −2 (fist, kick)

10. The Counter-Investigator

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Getting wise to being tailed or being approached by their tail, especially during time they may be killing prior to Mexico City 13, "The Party."

Summary: The Investigators encounter and interact with Gonchi del Toro, the private investigator that's been following them (possibly since they turned up in Mexico City).

Core Clue: Gonchi works for Jonathan Brooks, but isn't sure how to get in touch with him (beyond leading the characters to Brooks's Penthouse and various other key locations). Money comes to Gonchi by courier or dead drop at Gonchi's apartment. He's not sure where Brooks or de la Luz are — they've gone underground — but he figures they're still in Coyoacán. (Intimidation, Bargain, or Reassurance.)

Part of Gonchi's role in this Locale is to act as a contrast to Jack Pizner from the Los Angeles Locale. Indeed, Brooks hired Gonchi precisely because Pizner was in play on behalf of the Los Angeles cult, and Brooks was doing his best to recreate in Mexico City what Trammel had created in Los Angeles. That Gonchi may be turning on Brooks is just another example of Brooks's power unraveling.

More than that, Gonchi is a chance for the Investigators to make different choices in a vaguely similar situation. It's a character study for them — how will they deal with *this* private investigator? How will it differ from the way they interacted with the last one, if at all? It provides a rare opportunity to compare the situations, either in the moment or in hindsight.

Keep all of that in mind while you're making choices for Gonchi, because when you're playing the role of Gonchi, you've also got to be playing the part of the Keeper still. Make decisions by comparing Gonchi's wits against your dramatic instincts and seeing what's revealed when you mix the two. Something compelling may emerge from play when you use Gonchi as a dramatic tool or when you play Gonchi as a motivated character — find that compelling thing and make use of it in the way that most entertains, provokes, or satisfies you and your players. One group may be most amused to see Gonchi betray Brooks, while another might only be satisfied when Gonchi betrays Brooks first, and then later the Investigators. Gonchi is a device you can use to customize your adaptation of the Locale and the campaign beyond, because whatever he does will compare meaningfully with the Investigators themselves and Pizner before.

It can be quite simple. Either make Gonchi be the kind of character that believably makes the choices that you find most satisfying dramatically or decide what kind of person your instance of Gonchi is and make whatever decisions come naturally for him. Either way you're playing fair, and either way something is bound to happen that interacts with the Investigators in a worthy way.

Gonchi's Scenes

Gonchi's potential role in scenes before this one is sketched out in each scene. What matters in the earlier scenes is that Gonchi picks up the Investigators' trail (probably at the post office) and then follows them around as he's able. Just when the Investigators get wise to Gonchi's presence depends on their luck and skill.

As a general rule, it's Difficulty 6 to spot Gonchi in the first scene, Difficulty 5 in the second scene, and Difficulty 4 from then on out. This represents the likelihood that the Investigators will recognize Gonchi's car (a dark green two-door) or person from some previous scene and grow suspicious.

This scene represents what Gonchi does when confronted, whenever that is, by the Investigators.

First, Gonchi doesn't fight unless the Investigators do. He knows better than to pull a gun on tough hombres like the Investigators may be. He tries to keep tensions and blood pressures low as long as possible. He's a bit of a smart ass (can't help it), but he's also quick to level with people about a situation (*"We both know you don't want* federales *investigating my murder come morning, right?"*) if he thinks it'll defuse things.

More importantly, Gonchi doesn't know that much about the cult. He can lead Investigators to **"The Manufacturer," "De la Luz's Apartment," "The Studio of Tomorrow," "Cortez's House"** (maybe as a trap), **"Brooks's Penthouse,"** or **"The Bar,"** but after that, Gonchi knows only that he gets letters and stacks of pesos from Brooks and instructions to keep two eyes out. (*"For what? Well, for hombres like you, right?"*)

Gonchi knows that Nectar's a drug (he's taken it a few times, but he'd rather spend his money on tequila and cigarettes) but not where it comes from. He doesn't know about occult things, but he knows Brooks "believes in that talk." He doesn't know where Brooks, de la Luz, or "la Boca" are, but he knows that they're probably in Coyoacán because "the missus loves it here and won't leave, no matter how crazed she gets."

After this scene, it's up to you to pay off what you setup with Gonchi. Maybe he gets gunned down by cultist thugs, disfigured by birds, or fed to la Boca. Maybe he shows up with his trusty pistol to rescue the Investigators in some later scene. Play it as you see fit.

Gonchi's Choices

In all the scenes prior to this one, Gonchi is in an interstitial state, not quite loyal to Brooks anymore and not quite ready to side with the mysterious Investigators from out of town. Gonchi makes choices based on what he believes will save his own skin in the short run and the long run, with the emphasis on the long run. Gonchi's not afraid to take a beating, but he is afraid of being killed ("or worse") by the cult.

It's the actions of the Investigators that push Gonchi one way or the other, toward or away from the cult.

Use the following guidelines to determine what Gonchi del Toro does in reaction to the Investigators. These notes might interact in peculiar ways with certain Investigator actions, creating edge cases in which you must simply get inside Gonchi del Toro's head and make a judgment call. Use the information you have about what Gonchi wants and how the Investigators have treated him, weigh it against your story's need for information or antagonism, and make the call. Gonchi's your character now.

Gonchi respects force. He's not a weakling himself, but Gonchi knows that he's not the biggest or toughest fish in the pond and he knows what keeps him alive: deference, distance, and dodging the worst troubles. If the Investigators go after Gonchi with **Intimidation** or outright violence, Gonchi takes them seriously and adds them to his list of people not to cross. (Interrogation hits a reflex with Gonchi, though. He knows better than to tell cops anything that could come back to bite him; he clams up when interrogated.) Once they're on that list, Gonchi takes them seriously as potential allies, believing they might stand a chance against Konovalov and the cult's thugs.

Gonchi hates being talked down to. Gonchi's a smart guy with a bad education. He's quick on his feet, sorts out problems well, and understands new information easily when it's given to him. He appreciates that well-schooled experts know things he does not, but he doesn't like it when people play keep-away with knowledge or dangle their upbringing over his head. It's not about bootstraps or privilege, though, but about the simple ways that people treat each other. He doesn't like dilettantes on the surface, but he comes around if they treat him square.

Gonchi doesn't think he needs a buddy, but he does. Gonchi responds to Streetwise with fake camaraderie (detectable with **Assess Honesty**) and practiced buddy-buddy dialogue (e.g., *"No hard feelings, chum, we're both just trying to make our way, right?"*) and sees that as just part of his job. He sees right through Flattery, can Cop Talk with the best of them, and has little to say to Oral History attempts (he doesn't think his life is very interesting). He's most comfortable with **Bargains**; he likes it when everybody gets something (*"So nobody gets no motives for trouble later."*). What gets to Gonchi — what gets him right in the heart — is honest **Reassurance**. He hasn't had many people tell him that things are going to be all right for him; quite the opposite. A 1-point Reassurance spend paired with matter-of-fact reason (e.g., "I don't *know* that everything's going to be all right, but I trust that you and I both know what's what and that we stand a good chance.") plants a seed of affection, be it brotherly or romantic, that may flower later if the reassuring character is in trouble.

10. The Counter-Investigator

Gonchi figures he can always make more money. Gonchi is confident that he can eke out a living in the long run if he can stay alive. *"Can't spend money when you're dead,"* he says. If he thinks the Investigators can't protect him, or will get him killed, he either goes crawling back to the cult or, more likely, uses the Investigators as a means of getting out of the current bad straits. He pits the Investigators against the cult as fiercely as he can — *"Lots more good people are going to die if you don't do something!"* — and makes ready to forge a new bond with whomever lives.

Gonchi sees police as coworkers. The cops, to Gonchi's mind, aren't the enemy; they're just in a parallel line of work. He's comfortable talking with them but clams up in their presence unless he believes he can play the room. If the Investigators draw a cop or two into their retinue in this Locale, Gonchi makes himself scarce — but doesn't go back to the cult unless he believes they'll come out on top.

Gonchi del Toro

Gonchi is a short, sort of squared-off guy with a physique that implies he's softer than he is — he's not an athlete, but he's tough like a game bird that's been through a few hunting seasons. Wears wide ties, a fedora that's just too small, and pit-stained dress shirts with suspenders buttoned onto dark pants — coat is optional, five-o'clock shadow is mandatory.

Three Things: Makes a lot of eye contact. Smiles, then thinks better of it. Smokes cigarettes so fast you'd think he was drinking them down like shots.

Athletics 3, Bureaucracy 1, Cop Talk 2, Disguise 2, Driving 4, Firearms 4, Fleeing 6, Health 6, Law 1, Locksmith 1, Scuffling 5, Sense Trouble 5, Shadowing 7, Stealth 5, Streetwise 2, Weapons 3



Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (beaten-up revolver)

Gonchi del Toro has Investigative abilities (and General abilities like Shadowing) in case he sides with the Investigators and you want to use his pools as bonus points to be spent on the investigation's behalf. If Gonchi is firmly in with the Investigators, even temporarily, his pools points are temporarily available to the Investigators to use, as a reward for getting him on their side.

Otherwise, treat Gonchi as an NPC — he doesn't roll to sneak; the players roll to have their characters spot him.

Gonchi del Toro and the Police

Keeping both Gonchi and the Federal District police on hand at the same time requires some juggling on the Investigators' part. These relationships are complicated.

Gonchi quickly and quietly excuses himself if the Investigators bring police into the situation — even if he helps them get the police on board — because he knows things he doesn't want to say in front of police. Gonchi makes an effort to pull an Investigator aside and explain this, if he can. Otherwise, he just drives off into the night at the first opportunity. (This doesn't mean he turns on the Investigators, though, if he still believes they're the safer bet in the long run.)

The police know Gonchi as a licensed P.I. in the city, though neither of the officers involved in this adventure have a rapport with him yet. Their instincts are to keep Gonchi out of the loop unless Gonchi is there when the Investigators bring the police on board. In that case, Gonchi is just part of the special circumstances that Detective Gómez is working under… to a point. The cops keep a close eye on Gonchi, eager to catch him in a lie about his time with Brooks.

And, of course, Gonchi lies. He claims to have been working for Brooks alone ("Cult? What cult?"), watching the post office, the Luz Records offices, and the apartments only. "Just in case, I guess. That Brooks fella seems almost like a paranoid!"

The officers give Gonchi enough rope to hang himself with, but they're prepared to arrest him if it helps them get Brooks.

11. The Police

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-ins: Going to the police for assistance or new leads, at any stage of the investigation.

Summary: The Investigators are barely let into the loop of a local police investigation, if they're allowed in at all. The Federal District Police isn't corrupted by Nectar use or the other schemes of the cult, but officers keep their cards close to their vests. They gladly absorb any information the Investigators choose to share but do not reciprocate.

Alternate Core: Varies. The police know as much as you need to feed the PCs to get them back on the trail of the cult. Even if they know more than the minimum to do that, they don't share it with anyone who's not local police.



This scene describes what the Investigators encounter if they make their case official police business by bringing clues or evidence to the Federal District Police Department or come looking for cooperation or support. Play this scene when the Investigators end up at a police precinct office somewhere in Mexico City, whether they come in voluntarily or under arrest. Either way, the Investigators stand to meet a few of the same characters and have a chance at gaining a smidgen of new information.

A Visit by Choice

If the Investigators come to the district police with evidence to hand over — perhaps it's Victor Cortez's testimony, in exchange for police protection — the watch sergeant, situated behind a high counter like in a classic movie, sends them to Detective Gómez. If the Investigators come looking for information to flow in the other direction, out to them, and they drop any cult-related names, like Jonathan Brooks, Konovalov, or Nectar, the watch sergeant sends them to Detective Gómez.

Detective Javier Gómez has a desk in a corner of the Major Case Squad Room, up on the fifth storey. He's the local dick that gets all the weirdoes and troublemakers… until he proves himself. Young and wary, Gómez is the detective in charge of the arson case surrounding the death of record manufacturer Jorge Novo. He's also overworked and well behind on his current caseload. Without **Bureaucracy** (to phrase a complaint in a way that'll get key attention), the Investigators are kept waiting by Gómez for an hour or more with the (erroneous) expectation that a uniformed officer will take their statements. Other detectives get that kind of help from the uniforms, but not Gómez — not yet.

Gómez can't let any Investigator see his files without authorization or jurisdiction, but a 1-point **Bureaucracy** spend convinces Gómez to share what he can by reading from the file: The fire was probably arson, accelerated by gasoline, and a statement given by the factory's neighbors states, *"A maroon four-door car pulled up around 10:30pm and the three men who got out had a gasoline can with them,"* and also, *"One of the men spoke Spanish with what sounded like a Russian accent."*

If Investigators ask about Nectar, Gómez's files also contain some notes on suspected Nectar dealers, but all he has right now are street-lingo nicknames and hearsay.

"We're looking into this 'néctar' drug," Gómez says, *"but it's not actually illegal — not yet — so there's only so much time and energy I can put into chasing it."*

(If the Bureaucracy spend is made on Gómez, it can be followed up with a 1-point **Streetwise** spend and six or eight hours of footwork to check out leads on Nectar dealers, thereby learning that Nectar dealers have been off the street for five or six days. No one's seen a Nectar dealer in almost a week. Just before that, though, they were out and selling hard, trying to get a fat new supply of the stuff into circulation. It seems to have worked. Nectar buyers are flush with the stuff, according to scuttlebutt on the streets.)

The only other help that Detective Gómez is likely to be, up front, comes with a **Cop Talk** spend and any leveraged clue, such as evidence that the Investigators are in mortal danger or know someone who is, which convinces Gómez to assign a uniformed officer to the Investigators for 48 hours per point spent in Cop Talk.

During that time, the Investigators are escorted and aided by an actual police officer in an actual squad car, which grants them a local venue for official-seeming Interrogation and 1 dedicated pool point in each of Bureaucracy, Cop Talk, and Interrogation to spend on anyone but other police officers. The real benefit, though, is that the Investigators have a cop to corroborate their stories should the police get called in to shootings or worse later on.

The uniformed officer they get is a José Blanco, an unsubtle young officer with something to prove. He hopes that doing this favor for Detective Gómez will get him the promotion he's after. He's quick to draw his gun, quick to give chase to suspects, and quick to report back to headquarters in person or over the phone. A 1-point **Cop Talk** or **Flattery** spend on Officer Blanco, however, convinces him to bend a few rules and keep the Investigators out of any official reports they don't want to be a part of, as long as they don't shoot anybody. Maybe, he figures, he can get his promotion by busting an important bad guy.

11. The Police

Investigators With Jurisdiction

This scene presumes that the Investigators are out of their jurisdiction here. If, by chance, one of them is or was a Federal District police officer or a Mexican federal, things go considerably differently. Detective Gómez admits that he doesn't know much yet about the Nectar trade or the fire at Novo's factory, and then gladly shares any information, like addresses, that leads to the scenes "The Luz Records Office," "The Manufacturer," or "The Studio of Tomorrow." Use these optionally surviving addresses only if the Investigators are at a loss and need another means of reaching those scenes.

Gómez, in this instance of the scene, has this information because Jorge Novo's file cabinet survived the fire, and the files inside contain addresses for the above scenes. Remember, Gómez only has the slightest of information to go on here — he doesn't know which of Novo's customers, if any, were involved for sure and he hasn't linked Brooks to the crime yet, so the right addresses in the files may only jump out to the Investigators when they know to look for Brooks and Leticia de la Luz's real name and so forth.

In game terms, having jurisdiction allows a character to get the benefits of Bureaucracy and Cop Talk spends in this scene without actually making the spends. Gómez shares his files directly and police-officer Investigators are allowed to — if not expected to! — liaise with local law enforcement as best they can. It's also likely that savvy Investigators will use access to surviving records to glean all sorts of clues, connecting dots in various ways we haven't anticipated. Such are the rewards for somehow having jurisdiction in this case.



Under Arrest

The Investigators might be brought down to a precinct house for any number of reasons, in which case they must post bail and possibly pull strings (by spending 1 point of **Law**, **Bureaucracy**, or **Cop Talk**) to be let back on the street. Firearms and other weapons may be confiscated as evidence if the Investigators are brought in on shooting or other violent charges, however.

If they mention Nectar, Jorge Novo, or the record-pressing fire, they get passed on to Detective Gómez and things proceed much as they do above, with one change: Officer Blanco *cannot* be persuaded with Flattery or Cop Talk to leave them out of reports or bend rules on their behalf. Instead, Blanco takes rigorous notes of the Investigators' actions and reports everything back to Gómez. Maybe he can get his promotion by being a straight shooter.

Detective Javier Gómez

Three Things: Precisely maintained mustache. Taps his lip when he thinks. Squints when he thinks he's being lied to.

Athletics 5, Driving 4, Firearms 5, Fleeing 5, Health 4, Scuffling 4, Weapons 2

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (light revolver), +1 (shotgun)

Officer José Blanco

Three Things: Baby faced. Bad teeth. Bushy eyebrows.

Athletics 6, Driving 4, Firearms 4, Fleeing 3, Health 4, Scuffling 5, Weapons 3

Weapon: +0 (light revolver), +0 (baton)

12. A Song in the City

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Wandering or traveling the city, perhaps on the way to another scene. Play this scene to foreshadow what happens if de la Luz's record gets out into the world.

Summary: The Investigators discover someone playing de la Luz's record loud enough to hear through an open window and somehow react.

Core Clue: The people in the apartment playing the record are both dead — they've slain each other — and can offer no explanation for where they got the record or why they were playing it so loud. (Forensics to examine bodies, Pharmacy or Chemistry to examine empty bottles, and Craft and Art or Art History to examine record.)



This short scene slips between other scenes but is especially good for adding an ominous narrative beat after the characters have begun their investigation but before they reach **"The Party."** Careful with this scene, however, since it's a dead end that might distract characters more than they would like. Play this scene to foreshadow what happens if the Luz records get out into the world.

While the characters are walking or driving around Coyoacán, they hear the telltale sound of Leticia de la Luz's singing wafting from a nearby window. It's a new song, though, not the one from Los Angeles or other Locales. Just as they stop the car or react on foot, a gunshot rings out and the record skips, then continues. The music is definitely coming from a second-storey window just off the street. If they reach the room with the music — which might require a Difficulty 3 **Athletics** roll to climb some vines or kick in a flimsy door, if you like — they find two dead men inside. One man's throat is slashed, yet he holds a warm gun. The other man has a bloody knife in his hand, has been shot once in the chest, and lies against an end table topped with a shiny new record player. Leticia de la Luz's new song is still playing on the turntable if the characters reach the room inside of two minutes; otherwise the needle has run it course.

Forensics places the time of death at mere moments ago and makes an Investigator quite confident that one man cut the other's throat and was then shot in response. Both men are covered in bruises spanning the last two weeks or so, as if they've been in drag-out fights. (They have, with each other.)

Both of the dead men have empty bottles on them that, according to **Pharmacy** or **Chemistry**, contained up to three doses of Nectar each until not long ago.

The record on the player has no label, but **Art** or **Art History** makes quite sure that's Leticia de la Luz's voice (if the character has heard it before), though the record is a poor, warped reproduction of the original source. **Craft** suspects the record was produced on a high-quality home-recording device, rather than in any professional studio environment (see **Mexico City 15, "The Hidden Studio,"** p. 297).

A quick **Oral History** interview of the Spanish-speaking neighbors in this low-rent flophouse turns up irritated accounts from surly single men: *"Those fellas played that song, over and over again, for the last half hour. I was ready to kill them, too,"* says one neighbor. *"Always playing that music and fighting, those two. No surprise one of them finally had it,"* says the other.

An interview with the landlord, downstairs, meets with stubborn silence, though a $10 bribe or 1-point **Intimidation** or **Flattery** spend gets him to admit that *"those fellas upstairs were off the books, in here to drink their drugs now and again and hide out from their boss, I guess."* Also: *"They paid me twice the going rate for the room every week or so for a month."*

Aside from an opportunity to contact the Federal District Police and maybe work with Detective Gómez, this crime scene offers no further leads or connections beyond the immediate crime.

The purpose here is to plant the idea that this new song inspires violence, rather than debauchery, and could be dangerous if heard more clearly than this warped record allows.

These dead men — cultists in Brooks's organization — were already highly susceptible to the effects of the record. Investigators who take Nectar and listen to this record may still find themselves moved to violence, however. Listening closely to the song via this sorry recording requires a 2-point Mythos Stability test. See the scene **Mexico City 17 "Death Trap,"** p. 300, for detailed effects of Leticia de la Luz's newest song on Investigators who are rendered **shaken** or **blasted** by it.



13. The Party

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding out from Elena Alcatruz that Javier Luna and his band will be attending a party (Mexico City 9, "The Bar," p. 284).

Summary: The Investigators get a chance to interact with a variety of bohemians, literati, and artists while learning a bit about the scene that de la Luz came from and that Brooks penetrated with his cult.

Core Clue: The musicians are afraid for their lives. They're unwilling to say much to outsiders for fear of reprisal from Brooks and his cult — and they use that word: *cult*. (Art, Art History, or Craft plus any Interpersonal ability except Assess Honesty, Bureaucracy, and Credit Rating.)



This scene consists, at its heart, of a core clue and a spend possibility leading up to a scripted event that reacts to the choices of the Investigators, but these simple components can be blended into a much larger social encounter if your players enjoy a chance to roleplay their characters and improvise dialogue. This party that gets the Investigators close to Javier Luna and his band is just a background detail unless it captivates the players' attention, in which case you should give them some time to enjoy themselves before they have to get to work — it's a party, after all.

After the band has been questioned, members of the cult show up to sell Nectar and party… and keep an eye on Luna and his boys. This potentially puts the Investigators up against these cultists, leading to the next scene, **"Pursuit Through The Night."**

If Officer Blanco is with the Investigators in this scene, he waits out in the car — "to keep eyes on the place" — rather than tamper with the party's atmosphere by bringing his uniform into it. Even if he's not on duty, he won't drink "while I'm working, and I'm working tonight."

The Venue

The party is held on the second and third storeys of a run-down apartment house in the midst of major renovations. Holes in the plaster walls expose brick, wooden slats, and pipes within. Beaten-up wooden floors are covered here and there with layers of ratty old rugs. A few scattered lamps offer scant light in room after room of half-dead sofas and creaky wooden chairs arranged just for the party. Curtains billow in lazy breezes through half-boarded windows. The place heats up as people fill it up.

Each floor of the building is a complete single-family home, with a living room, kitchen, bathroom, dining room, sunroom, and back porch. The ground floor is the current home of the architect couple renovating the building — José and Catalina — and is locked up for the night. (Note that home renovation isn't the popular endeavor in 1937 that it will be later on; this kind of expensive job is itself an arty and uncommon undertaking in a time that would rather build new.)

Investigators can enter the building through the front door, which leads up a narrow stairway to the second and third storeys, or go around to the lush back yard and its sturdy wooden porches.

Walking in the Door

First, decide whether the Investigators beat Javier Luna and his band to the party. The band most likely shows up around 11:30 p.m. (they're not here to play music), while the Investigators show up either as they please or roughly 30 minutes after meeting Elena Alcatruz at La Paz if they join her. If the Investigators get here first, Elena can ask a friend or two if Luna and the band have shown up yet; otherwise the Investigators may have to ask around on their own, which makes them seem nosy and may cause someone to warn the band as they come up the stairs that someone's there asking about them.

The Investigators might choose to work the party, staking out the exits and watching everyone who comes and goes. As the party fills up, this proves more difficult: the **Sense Trouble** test Difficulty is 3 before 11 p.m., 4 from 11 p.m. to midnight, 5 from midnight to 2 a.m., then drops rapidly back to 3

Drinking and Investigating

Keep track of what the Investigators partake of. A few potent but delicious drinks may be enough to affect their judgment or prowess. A 1 point increase in Difficulty for actions like Sense Trouble or Athletics is probably enough to represent that, but use your judgment — dial the Difficulty up higher if a character gets good and messy.

As for impaired judgment, that's a roleplaying challenge. Remind players when their characters are a little tipsy or drunk that they should be portraying their characters in an altered manner — this is a chance to show a different side of a familiar character. Maybe the quiet, bookish antiquarian becomes a hilarious and enthralling storyteller, or maybe the boorish veteran reveals unspoken respect for another Investigator as he gets drunk. Encourage the players to explore their characters here, but don't force unwanted changes on any character. The players still call the shots for their characters here.



until the last people are asked to leave around 4 a.m. Success on this Sense Trouble test lets a character sense when the atmosphere of the party shifts due to the arrival of dangerous or unwanted persons (i.e., the cultists); failure leaves the characters oblivious of this until you choose to give the cultists away.

Watching the exits doesn't help with spotting troublemakers, as everyone at this party plays things cool until they get inside, but it may grant the Investigators an edge when the cultists flee into the night, thereby triggering the following scene, **"Pursuit Through The Night."**

Elena encourages the Investigators to enjoy themselves. She offers sangria or margaritas to anyone willing to partake. She flips open a handsome silver cigarette case (her father's) and offers to share. She introduces Investigators to anyone she thinks they might enjoy talking to, unless they ask her not to — she's eager, but she's relaxed and comfortable. She's sort of showing off these new friends of hers, but she's not looking for validation. Her reward is seeing new people talk to each other.

Questioning the Band

Once the band shows up, it's up to the Investigators to approach them however they like. The exact tactics and methods do not change the information the Investigators get, but they may change how the action in the next scene unfolds.

Ask the players questions to clarify exactly what their characters are doing: "Where do you want to talk to the band?" and "Do you walk up with a swagger, or do you sort of fake bumping into Luna, or do you try something else?" and "Where are your hands while you're talking?" This provokes a more detailed performance from some players, while potentially making some nervous, and sets the stage for the action to come (if it comes).

Javier Luna and his band are young men, all handsome in one way or another, some rounder and some taller, and Javier and Pedro brought their guitars to the party. Javier Luna is the spokesperson but Hector Juarez, Pedro de Leon, and Hernando Campos aren't exactly shy. They all give up the same information in more or less the same ways — their stories match — so separating them only gives more Investigators a chance to shine.

Each member of the band has one dose of Nectar on him, for recreational use.

Except for the spend possibility below, the exact abilities used to get information out of the band don't really matter; just let the approach influence the band's attitudes as they reply. **Any Interpersonal ability** save for Bureaucracy, Credit Rating, and Assess Honesty is appropriate, as well as abilities like **Art**, **Art History**, or **Craft** ("Say, that's a lovely guitar, señor…") The band is wary of talking about the cult but eager to vent and be told that things will be all right for them.

Here's what they say, in way or another, when asked about the cult:

• *"Brooks is obsessed with this next album, keeps saying it's going to change everything when they send it back to the States. He's paying us top dollar but… we're looking for a way to get out of our deal. We're, you know… we're a little afraid of him. More than a little. He's beating his men, and I think he may have killed some of them. More violent all the time. And with how unhappy he is with the music, these days… If Konovalov wasn't there to protect us — 'the investment,' he says — Brooks might've killed us, too."*

• *"Brooks's people are like a cult around him. Well, around de la Luz, really. They love her. And Nectar. Have you seen that stuff? They're big into it. Maybe they invented it, whatever it is. Yeah, we've done it — done Nectar. I'd gladly stop doing it to get away from Brooks and his people, though. But they give it to us for free, and so…"*

• *"They're big into jazz right now, so they just have us play backing for Leticia de la Luz as she sings. It's not words. It's not any language I know. I don't know what she's singing. Sometimes they just have us in and we play for hours without her. But they're preparing for some new song they're really excited about — and I'm sort of terrified of what happens when they're done with us…"*

• *"Leticia's calling a lot of the shots now, but she's never happy with any of the songs. Nothing's ever perfect enough. Something's wrong with her, too. They wouldn't let us see her. She sings from another room, and they pipe it into the studio, and we play along. I don't think she's well."*

With a 2-point spend from one ability (**Flattery**, **Interrogation**, **Intimidation**, or **Reassurance**), made by a single character on a single band member, another precious bit of information is revealed — the location of Jonathan Brooks's hidden studio:

• *"Konovalov, the Russian, made it very clear to us that he'd kill us if we said where we play. They took us in blindfolded at first, but we've put it together by now. It's under the old colonial villa not far from here on the corner of Moctezuma and San Pedro, all run into the ground. I guess they bought the lot and the house next door and dug out the cellars, which are all this really old stone, like Aztec old. I don't know how far down it all goes, but they keep Nectar down there. A lot of it. They… will kill me if they find out I told you that."*

Cultists Join the Party

After Luna and the band have said their bit — maybe some time after, depending on how entertained your players and their characters are by the party — rank-and-file members of the cult show up. What happens next can play out any number of ways, depending

on the state of the Investigators, what Brooks knows about them (from Gonchi del Toro or other cult chapters), and how aggressive you choose to make the cultists.

What's important is this: a chase breaks out. Either the cultists break and run (to get away from the Investigators) or the band runs out (to get away from the cultists), and the cultists give chase. Either way, this triggers the next scene, **"Pursuit Through the Night,"** though just who is in pursuit of whom depends on how this scene plays out.

Play the lead-up to the chase with a bit of tension by having one of the band members see a Nectar-dealing cultist and try to hide. *"Oh, shit,"* he says, *"that's one of Brooks's men. Talk about something else."* Then maybe an Investigator sees the cultist talking with someone else at the party… who points out Luna or an Investigator from across the crowd.

Depending on the level of violence you need to get a chase going with your players, maybe the cultist draws a pistol and takes a shot at an Investigator, even in the crowded party, before running out the door and leaping off the patio into the yard and heading toward Moctezuma and San Pedro… Alternately, a trio of cultists might try to quietly make their way out of the party after making uncomfortable eye contact with a PC, beginning a chase of Shadowing and Stealth versus Sense Trouble rather than an Athletics contest.

Exactly what happens to get the chase going may seem confused or convoluted at first, but you can explain it with a bit of exposition in the next scene, if necessary. What's important is that cultists show up and then leave the scene, possibly with Investigators in tow — this is the Investigators' chance to locate Brooks's lair without paying the spend price.

Menace and Maths

Depending on how much Brooks's local chapter knows about the Investigators' operations in Mexico City, things may get ugly fast. Remember, Officer Blanco works for you, the Keeper, not the PCs. He can change the tenor of a scene by giving hard chase to a shadowy figure when the PCs want to play it cool. He can stay on a suspect's tail, shouting all the way ("This way, toward Moctezuma!"), to keep the PCs from losing the trail. He can be found shot dead in his car to add menace to a cult chapter that might otherwise look scattered and feeble.

When NPCs battle NPCs, you don't have to follow the whims of the dice; NPCs exist only to set up or contextualize player choices, after all. Use your NPCs, whether they're good guys or bad guys, to lure players into making compelling decisions for their characters: Do they follow Officer Blanco into the night or try another trail? Do they fire their guns in the nighttime streets and risk the consequences of stray bullets? Do they let the cultists run off, secure in the knowledge that they can find the cult's lair later on, even though they've killed Officer Blanco?

And so on. The vital choices and victories in Eternal Lies are those of the Investigators and, thus, the players. Remember this throughout the climax of the Locale as NPCs potentially get caught in other NPCs' crossfire.

Once you have one or more Investigators on the trail of one or more cultists, move on to the next scene.

14. Pursuit Through the Night

Scene Type: Action / Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Leaving the party to pursue shadowy figures or to escape pursuit (Mexico City 13, "The Party," p. 293).

Summary: The Investigators embark on a foot chase or a battle in the streets of Mexico City, either pursuing the attackers of Javier Luna or being pursued into the night.

Core Clue: The shadowy figures lead the Investigators right to the doorstep of Jonathan Brooks's hidden studio, either directly or via confession (Interrogation or Intimidation).

Whether it's waged with Shadowing or Athletics, this is a chase scene. Play it as a classic action or thriller sequence, full of long shadows stretching up the walls and streets of a sleeping city, fedora-wearing thugs dashing across broken cobblestones, and maybe the occasional gunshot echoing in the night.

At the end of this scene, the Investigators learn of the cult's hidden studio, either because they've followed a cultist there or because they've gotten the information from a captured cultist. (If the Investigators paid ability points for this information in **"The Party,"** then they have the luxury of skipping this scene and letting the cultists go home to inform Brooks and Konovalov that someone's sniffing around their trail.)

This chase covers about eight blocks of Coyoacán at night. The number of tests required for the cultists to get home must vary depending on the strengths of the Investigators — you want them to be able to keep up. If the Investigators are all but out of Athletics for some reason but still have lots of Shadowing, play the scene to highlight

that ability instead. Even if the cultists want to get away (and maybe they don't exactly), you don't want to make it a sure thing that they win.

Do the cultists have a car at the party? If you want a car chase, they do.

Keep this in mind: the chase doesn't have to stay a contest of just one ability. A cultist might jump out of a stuck or slow-moving car and take off on foot. An Investigator who blows his subtle attempt at Shadowing might start his quarry running. And, of course, a chase can turn into a gunfight at any time.

Coyoacán, between the party and **"The Hidden Studio"** (p. 297), is a place of low, colorful buildings hugging the sidewalk, walled yards, and light-dampening trees. It's dark, punctuated by gaslights and electric lamps. Footsteps echo in the streets. Gunshots rattle windows and every bullet goes somewhere.

Some example Difficulties for this chase:

- The quiet nighttime streets of Coyoacán: **Athletics/Fleeing:** 3, **Driving:** 3, **Shadowing:** 4
- An intersection choked with cars: **Athletics/Fleeing:** 4, **Driving** 5, **Shadowing:** 4
- The low, darkened rooftops: **Athletics/Fleeing:** 4, **Shadowing:** 5

What the Fleeing Cultists Want

Even if the cultists start off chasing band members, they eventually break off and run toward home (at Moctezuma and San Pedro), for several reasons. Maybe they want to report to their boss that the band may be meeting with Gonchi del Toro (if he was at the party) or other snooping troublemakers… or maybe they want to lure the Investigators back where Konovalov can take care of them.

If Brooks and Konovalov are onto the Investigators, they've used the band as bait to attract the Investigators. Now they just wait for the Investigators to come calling (or running in). If Brooks and Konovalov don't know anything about the Investigators, then the fleeing cultists are just going where they feel safe, trusting that Konovalov will take care of trespassers.

Remember, too, that the fleeing cultists are high on Nectar and may not be thinking strategically.

What the Cultists Know

If caught, a cultist spills the location of the cult's hidden studio in response to **Interrogation** or **Intimidation**. Cultists reduced to 0 Health linger on long enough to talk before dying; their wounds are typically too grievous to respond to First Aid or Medicine.

All the following information is revealed only with 1-point spends from **Interrogation**, **Intimidation**, or **Reassurance:**

• Jonathan Brooks [is/is not] expecting the Investigators back at the hidden studio.

• Kirill Konovalov is Brooks's security head and bodyguard. He keeps everyone in line. "Everyone" is about half a dozen cultists back at the hidden studio. (**Assess Honesty** sniffs out that lie — the cultist is lying about the number of cultists at the hidden studio and cannot be cajoled into telling the true number. He just laughs.)

• *"There's a huge, incredible mouth, deep in the cellars below the studio. It's where we get the Nectar from. It sings to us, along with Miss de la Luz. We can hear her all throughout the cellars."*

Going to the Police

Detective Gómez can't get a warrant for the colonial ruins at Moctezuma and San Pedro just because the Investigators claim to have chased someone there, but if the Investigators chased a gunman or suspected killer there, that might be different. The exact scale of police operations in response to the chase scene depends on how much damage the Investigators and their chase caused. Remind the players that the Investigators may need to get to the cult lair before they get arrested (again?) for gunplay or reckless driving or something else.

The most likely form of police assistance is that Gómez and Blanco go down to check out the old colonial site themselves… and don't find anything but the studio inside. It's still up to the PCs to make things happen.

The most extreme form of police assistance, perhaps in response to Blanco or Gómez suffering harm at the cult's hands, is a complete raid, which results in serious gunplay (with or without the PCs), deaths on both sides, the discovery of the Nectar operation, a cover-up of the Major Mouth, and the escape of Leticia de la Luz, at least. Brooks and Konovalov probably die in the raid, but that's up to you — by handing the investigation over to the police, the players are asking you how it ends.

After all of that, the PCs may have to sneak in (via Stealth or using Cop Talk to call in favors, if they have any left) to blow up the Major Mouth. Leticia de la Luz only turns up (maybe in Malta or Bangkok) if you want her to — you may even have to involve her in a floating Act Two scene or side-investigation into her whereabouts, just to tie up that loose thread — but that's fine. Let the Investigators worry about the untied thread they didn't tie off. Maybe she never resurfaces. They'll have more to worry about by Act Three, anyway.

• *"Go back home, and maybe we won't have to kill you."*

Party-Going Cultists

Three Things: Stylish, tailored shirts. Dirty shoes. Great athletic form.

Athletics 8, Driving 5, Firearms 5, Health 4, Scuffling 5, Sense Trouble 7, Shadowing 5, Stealth 6

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +0

Weapon: +0 (revolver)

15. The Hidden Studio

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding the Mexico City cult's hidden lair (Mexico City 14, "Pursuit Through the Night," p. 295 or Mexico City 13, "The Party," p. 293).

Summary: The Investigators explore the ruined colonial villa and modest house that hides Brooks's sinister cult.

Core Clue: A secret door leads from the hidden studio itself to the cellars that house the Nectar operation below. (Simple search or Electrical Repair.)

This scene covers a lot of physical ground, potentially a lot of physical activity, but just a small number of clues. See the accompanying map, "Hidden Studio and Environs," for details on how all of the sections of this and the following scenes fit together.

Play this scene when the Investigators reach and explore Jonathan Brooks's hidden studio and its surrounding spaces. How exactly this scene plays out depends on the approach the Investigators take, be it stealthy and discreet or bold and raucous. This scene, in short, describes the spaces of and enemies that inhabit Brooks's colonial hacienda, neighboring house, and foundations below. Few clues actually await the Investigators here. Rather, this scene is what they must pass through to reach either the heart of the cult operation… or the trap that's been set for them.

The Ruined Hacienda

At street level, at the T-shaped intersection of Moctezuma and San Pedro, a crumbling colonial hacienda stands behind a simple plank fence. Next door, a more modern two-storey flat-roofed house stands, blue and yellow, just a few yards from San Pedro Avenue, separated by gravel and uncut grass. By day, this whole place is sunny and bright, and the ground crunches underfoot with a wholesome solidity. By night, the place is dark and shadowy, withdrawn from the street and lit only by lamps inside the blue-and-yellow house.

The old hacienda is apparently unguarded but the house next door has men posted, sitting on lawn chairs at all hours of the day and night. By night, though, the hacienda is so dark that the men at the house cannot be expected to see what goes on there. Sneaking onto the hacienda grounds should be easy (**Stealth** Difficulty 3).

Once on the hacienda grounds, it's easy to find access to the cellars below from the hacienda courtyard: the cellar stairs are covered by shiny metal doors, heavy and new, laid down at an angle, as if protecting a storm cellar. A padlock holds the doors shut, but that lock can be undone with **Locksmith** or a single serious blow (dealing 4 or more damage) from a heavy instrument like an axe or the butt of a gun. (Quietly breaking the lock requires a Difficulty 5 **Stealth** test — but if they're expected, no one responds to the sound of the breaking lock anyway.)

A 1-point **Evidence Collection** or **Outdoorsman** spend in the hacienda notices lots of cigarette butts and lots of footprints walking in circles around the metal doors. Outdoorsman additionally surmises that these are the tracks of posted guards who are, for some reason, no longer posted. (This is true whether the Investigators are expected or not,

The Campaign Clue of Mexico City

The floating campaign clue for Mexico City — the true name or location of the Devouring Mountain — was promised to be here in the hidden studio (and in related scenes). So it is. Any of the cult-chapter leaders in the hidden studio environment that you like can reveal the true name of the Devouring Mountain to the Investigators. Brooks knows it, and other key operatives in his organization may have overheard it or skimmed his mail. We leave it flexible so that, should Brooks be slain before he can talk, you have options. Whoever you need to know the clue to keep things moving can say something like:

• "I heard Brooks talking about a place, a mountain, called… Kailash? Someplace far away. I'd never heard of it."

• "Don't kill me! Brooks said to keep this name secret: Kailash. It's a mountain somewhere! It's all I know! Don't kill me!"

• "I'll tell you where to find the body the Mouths feed. It's beneath Mount Kailash. You'll never get under there. Can't be done. If you do, you'll be devoured. So go get killed. You've earned it."

but if they *are* expected, a Difficulty 4 **Sense Trouble** test deduces that they are being *allowed* to walk right in.)

Inside the Blue-and-Yellow House

Inside, the blue-and-yellow house is a normal house inhabited by Nectar fiends and cultists of the Mouth. It's a sty, with trash all over and a foul body-odor smell. Mattresses lay scattered on floors all over the house. One kitchen cabinet is full of boxes of .38 and .45 bullets.

For all the pulp novels, magazines, newspapers, record players, and cigarette boxes lying around, there are no other meaningful clues. You can gloss right over any search of any room and let the Investigators know that they are confident in this assessment of the house: It is the dormitory for a rotating collection of Nectar addicts, probably muscle for the cult, numbering somewhere around 25 to 50 men.

(In truth, the house is home to fewer than 20 men these days, since some are on expedition in the Yucatán and others have recently died or fled the cult.)

At any one time, the blue-and-yellow house typically has two guards posted (one out front, one in back) and five men inside sleeping or relaxing. (Use the stats for general cult thugs given on the next page.)

A padlocked door off the kitchen leads down to the house's concrete cellar and, through a rough tunnel of cinderblock walls, to the hidden studio spaces.

The Hidden Studio

Whether the Investigators arrive via the old hacienda or the blue-and-yellow house, their descent reaches the choke point of the hidden studio, a suite of chambers two storeys underground. Loaded with recording equipment — mostly high-quality microphones, control boards, and expensive home-use record-making machines — and established so that de la Luz and her husband could record music without moving her to and fro throughout Mexico City, the hidden studio consists of three soundproofed rooms separated by sturdy tinted glass. The engineering room sits between two recording rooms (Studio 1 and Studio 2), one of which would house Luna and his band, the other, Leticia de la Luz, singing in darkness. One enters through the engineer's room to access either recording room. Both the hacienda stairs and the house's tunnel let out in an old-stone foyer outside the engineer's room.

Architecture recognizes the structure down here as a mix of old colonial stonework — probably a wine cellar or even a dungeon — with modern concrete, recently installed. Brooks had this place finished just a month or so ago. This ability also notes that not all of the soundproofing material on the walls is affixed with the same degree of precision; some of it is loose.

Electrical Repair notes that cables running from the engineering booth to Studio 1 (Leticia's room) are high-end, high-powered cables carrying electricity either to or from the recording room, behind the soundproofing material. That shouldn't be necessary unless something is making or using a lot of power in that room… or beyond.

Either inspecting the loose soundproofing (**simple search**) or following the cables reveals a hidden door in Studio 1's wall behind the soundproofing material. Beyond that door is a new wooden staircase descending through — **Architecture** or **Archaeology** reveal — crumbled colonial stonework into older Aztec foundations. Electrical cables run down against the stone in a gap through the stairs.

(Cutting the electricity here plunges the "cellar" and sections beyond into darkness until the gas-powered generator in the "cellar" can be turned on. That takes about five minutes.)

The "Cellar"

Below the hidden studio is a wide, six-foot-tall stone chamber with a colonial-stone ceiling, altogether as wide as the hacienda's grounds. **Archaeology** identifies the place as an Aztec plaza built over by the colonials. **Archaeology** or **Theology** recognizes Aztec deity carvings suggesting this was a marketplace. The place is now plainly used for storage. Wooden boxes hold blank phonographic records and bottles of Nectar ranging in size from single-dose vials to hefty growlers.

If the Investigators have visited Malta already, they note that this operation runs at less than a third of the output of the sister operation in Valletta.

Behind some crates, near the stairwell, is a gas-powered generator that can keep these subterranean reaches lit all night.

Architecture or **Archaeology** notes that narrow airshafts are cut into the walls, floor, and ceiling throughout this place. Sound travels far down here. (**Stealth** Difficulties increase by 1 down here.)

Passageways of Aztec stone lead out of this storage space in opposite directions (north and south). One leads to the **"Death Trap,"** p. 300, the other to **"De la Luz's Lair,"** p. 302.

Note that Investigators may well be moved forcibly through this room (in **"Into the Trap"**) or fighting their way through here, if they've been detected. The room, loaded with crates, offers

plenty of cover for a firefight. Cultists aggressively defend the passageway leading to de la Luz's chamber and attempt to drive enemies toward the death trap chamber, if they can.

Typical Cult Thugs

Three Things: Suspicious. Tend towards humming. Fiddle with their guns.

Athletics 5, Firearms 5, Health 3, Scuffling 6, Weapons 5

Weapon: +1 (.45 Colt M1911A1 pistol or Thompson M1921 submachine gun w/20-round clip; the cult has four Thompsons to spread around to thugs.)

The cult has 16 total thugs spread around as guards, Nectar harvesters, etc. This number includes all the guards up in the blue-and-yellow house.

16. Into the Trap

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: The Investigators enter the cult lair… and are expected (Mexico City 15, "The Hidden Studio," p. 297).

Summary: The Investigators walk into a trap set for them by Brooks's man, Konovalov. They are potentially overwhelmed.

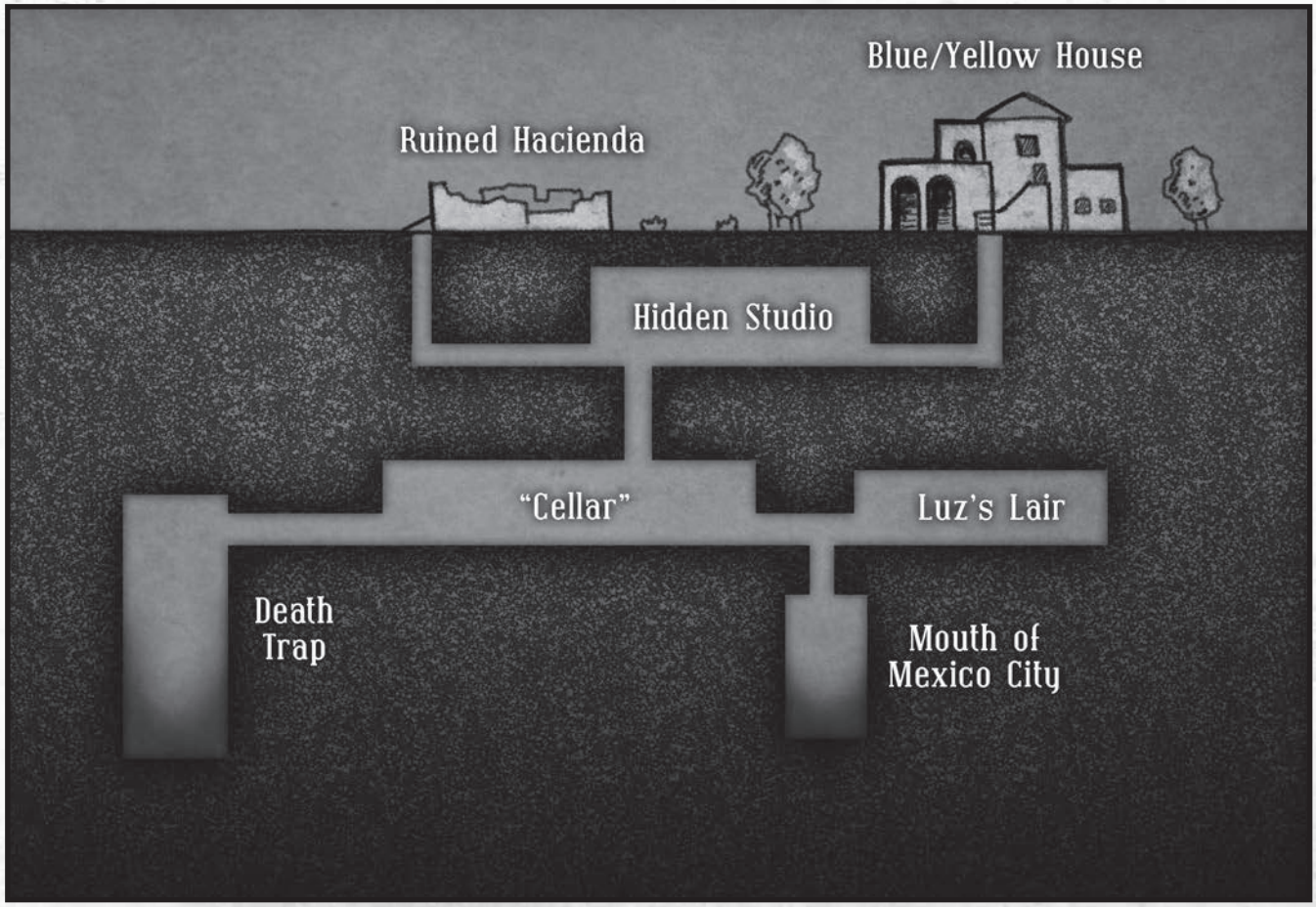
This scene describes what happens if the Investigators are anticipated at the cult's operation, even with only a few minutes' warning.

This scene takes place when the Investigators reach the hidden studio. As soon as they begin their investigation, armed thugs storm in from the hacienda, the blue-and-yellow house, and through Studio 1's secret door, with guns drawn. They're led by Konovalov, who enters from Studio 1.

If the Investigators are outnumbered or otherwise yield, the cultists disarm them and take them to the "cellar" to meet with Jonathan Brooks (see below). If the Investigators choose to fight it out here, so be it — the cultists fight to the last man.

Meeting Konovalov or Brooks

When the Investigators are escorted to the Aztec plaza, they have a chance to talk with Brooks, who wants to know their story a bit. This is an opportunity for the Investigators to get some



information out of Brooks, if they're curious. **Flattery** gets Brooks to answer one question per Investigator who flatters him, though Brooks exaggerates his success and worth however he can. (**Assess Honesty** notices that both Brooks and Konovalov see through Brooks's boasting.) Use what you know of Brooks to answer Investigator questions and make up any other details you need.

Brooks can also arrogantly reveal anything you know of his history that might help clarify the story for the Investigators in response to other abilities that amuse you.

If you choose to play this scene as a response to the Investigators' actions instead of playing **"The Hidden Studio"** straight up, be ready to have Brooks explain how the Investigators were anticipated. You might use any of the following explanations:

- *"We've been waiting for you ever since we heard what happened in [other Locale]."*
- *"Gonchi told us someone was on our trail. We've been on alert ever since."*
- *"My birds, at least, are still loyal to me."*
- *"We've been expecting you. I presume you were sent by Trammel to take over this operation?"* (Playing along requires leveraged clues and/or **Disguise** (as an Investigative ability), but doesn't do much except compel Brooks to reveal how *"you'll be sorry when my expedition returns"* and how *"I've seen through Trammel's lies and I'm not fool enough to be his follower anymore!"* Brooks might answer questions about the Yucatán expedition, if that's useful for enticing the PCs.)

Konovalov has nothing to say in this scene — he knows better than to give information away, even to people he presumes will be dead soon. A 2-point **Bargain** spend (made by one or two characters) made with Konovalov in this scene, however, pays itself back in **"Death Trap,"** provided the characters convincingly promise Konovalov $1,000 (US) or more. Here, Konovalov remains silent, yet the points are successfully spent from Bargain… the idea has been planted. See **"Death Trap"** for Konovalov's response.

Kirill Konovalov

Three Things: Laconic. Yellow teeth. Cracks his neck a lot.

Athletics 10, Driving 5, Firearms 8, Health 10, Scuffling 12, Weapons 7

Weapon: +1 (Thompson submachine gun), +1 (.45 pistol), −1 (fists, kick)

Kirill Konovalov was in this for money and free drugs. Things have gotten out of control. Sooner or later, Konovalov figures, he's going to have to kill Jonathan Brooks and be free of this messy cult. For $1,000 or more, he's willing to kick his Nectar habit and kill Brooks right now. Otherwise, as long as Brooks is manageable (and Konovalov is quite sure he can handle Brooks — it's the fearful, loyal cultists he worries about), Konovalov figures he has time to wait for the right opportunity.

Konovalov is a big guy — a brute, really. His hands hit like blackjacks. His feet are like iron. But he's not an ugly mug; he could be a charmer, if he wasn't so miserable and angry.

17. Death Trap

Scene Type: Trap / Challenge

Lead-ins: Being overwhelmed or captured by cult members (Mexico City 16, "Into the Trap," p. 299).

Summary: The Investigators are locked in a room below the hacienda while Luz's voice drifts in, live, mystically compelling them to kill each other.

This potentially climactic scene pits the Investigators in a life-and-death struggle against the voice of Leticia de la Luz and the Mouth of Mexico City. This is also when previous threads in the story are likely to pay off — when allies come to the rescue or betray the PCs, when enemies turn on each other, when the Investigators escalate old conflicts to new violence. Play this scene to the hilt as both a roleplaying challenge and a deadly puzzle.

This scene begins after one or more Investigators are captured and dropped into the death-trap chamber beneath the hacienda. The death-trap chamber is simply a three-storey-deep shaft of Aztec stone, uneven with age and slick with Nectar and mud. It's about ten feet wide. The place reeks of Nectar and piss. A naked human corpse, some weeks old, lies alone at the bottom of the pit, half-eaten by the Minor Mouths that grow throughout the floor and walls, ready to rend Investigators limb from limb. The voices of de la Luz and the Major Mouth echo in from another subterranean chamber, chanting in an unearthly tongue, mystically compelling the Investigators to kill each other.

To escape this death trap, the characters must be some combination of strong, clever, and lucky… or have set things in motion before they arrive in these circumstances.

The Investigators are stripped of weapons and tools of all sorts (**Conceal** Difficulty 5 to hide something small from the cultists' search), and then pushed without ceremony into the shaft. The fall from the top of the shaft into the muddy, Mouthy bottom deals +0 damage (some characters get lucky, others don't). The top of the shaft is then closed off with a metal grill and padlocked tight.

Almost immediately, a pair of voices — one a lilting woman's voice and another a droning inhuman tone — echo loudly in through many nickel-sized holes in the stone. This is de la Luz's newest song and it drives the Investigators to violence — against each other. Every round, Investigators who can hear the song must make a 3-point Mythos Stability test. Investigators who are **shaken** by the song suffer the usual effects of being shaken and must make a threat of violence against another Investigator, selected by the shaken character's player either at random or based on past arguments or conflicts *between the characters*. Investigators who are eventually **blasted** by the song do not flee but instead turn on each other, violently. Every round, blasted characters who fail that round's Stability test must attack another Investigator. Characters are not required to spend points on these attacks. (Note that this attack is more difficult, due to being shaken, as well.)

Blocking out the song is difficult. Covering one's ears reduces the Difficulty of Stability tests to 3, but such characters cannot communicate or climb. Putting mud in one's ears also puts Nectar in one's ears. Singing a counter-song is possible, as described under "Some Hits of the Day."

Scaling the wall to reach the top of the shaft requires two successful Difficulty 4 **Athletics** tests, during which time Investigators are subject to sharp bites by dribbling, dollar-wide Mouths throughout the walls. (They make decent-enough footholds, though.) A failed Athletics test just means a character makes no further progress. At the top of the shaft, a 1-point **Locksmith** spend is required to open the padlock at the top, unless the Investigator has a suitable tool (concealed or improvised) to do the job without a spend. The lock must be opened by touch, which requires some time — just how much is up to you, but somewhere around 2 to 3 tense rounds is probably about right. Characters who successfully scale the walls can pull up other characters using rope found in the room at the top.

A guard near the top of the shaft waits, with earplugs in, for Brooks to tell him he can go. This guard is not especially attentive (Alertness Modifier: −1); use him to stomp a character away from the grill's padlock if things are going too easily. A character stomped by the guard must either drop down the shaft, taking +0 damage, or lose the lock pick (player's choice). Then the Investigators hear the guard laugh and wander away. (His remaining purpose in the scene is to be struck dead by rescuers or to give the Investigators a gun or two when they escape.)

Upstairs, the "cellar" has been cleared of people except for the guard, so that no one will turn on each other when she sings her maddening song. This also means that characters who have found a way to overcome the song have little standing in their way as they head toward **"De la Luz's Lair."**

Some Hits of the Day

The Investigators may get the idea to sing back against Leticia de la Luz, as a means of disrupting her sound. Good for them. Ask the players to identify what their characters are singing all together to drown out de la Luz, keeping in mind that it must be a song that all the characters would know, regardless of background or Credit Rating.

If the song is Elena Alcatruz's Nahuatl folk tune, every character who sings it immediately refreshes 2 points in any one or two abilities (including Stability, but not Health or Sanity), as a property of the song being sung *this one time*. A character can "carry" another character in the song, helping as they go, by spending 1 point of **Art** per character carried, thereby allowing that character to refresh a third ability point.

A few of the current hits the Investigators might have easily in their memory, other than Elena's tune, are new *instrumental* numbers like Count Basie's "One O'Clock Jump" or Benny Goodman's version of Louis Prima's "Sing, Sing, Sing," and so are little help here.

For some play groups, it may be enough for the song they sing to be historically accurate. For other groups, it's more important for the song to be dramatically resonant. Here are a few songs that are recently popular in 1936–1937 (some harder to sing than others); decide for yourself if one of these resonates with your characters or players:

- Cole Porter, "It's De-Lovely," performed by Ethel Merman and Bob Hope
- Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields, "The Way You Look Tonight," performed by Fred Astaire
- George and Ira Gershwin, "Summertime," performed by Billie Holiday
- George and Ira Gershwin, "They Can't Take That Away From Me," performed by Fred Astaire
- Billy Mayhew, "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie," performed by Fats Waller



- Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg, "I Love to Sing-a," performed by Al Jolson and Cab Calloway
- Mack Gordon and Harry Revel, "Afraid to Dream," performed by Don Ameche
- Robert Johnson, "Sweet Home Chicago"
- Robert Johnson, "Hellhound on My Trail"

(The *players* need not sing any of these songs, of course, but maybe you'll have a copy of one or two on hand to play as surreal backing for their escape from the death trap.)

While the characters are singing, they cannot otherwise communicate vocally or sneak up on NPCs without earplugs. Any Investigator who stops singing must immediately make a Stability test to resist the Mouth's song. The Investigators aren't free of the song until they reach Leticia de la Luz — without her accompaniment, the Major Mouth has no power.

The Rescue

If things look dire for the Investigators, and it seems that they all might perish, you're allowed a deus ex machina rescue provided it stems believably (even if barely) from the Investigators' previous relationships. Maybe Detective Gómez arrives with a squad of uniformed cops to take down the cult even though he said he couldn't act on the Investigators' information *("I had a change of heart after hearing from Elena Alcatruz,"* perhaps he says). Maybe Gonchi del Toro or Kirill Konovalov comes to free the Investigators "now that the coast is clear." If the Investigators have created opportunities for you to take advantage of, now's the time.

Such rescues don't have to end the scenario. When Gómez's officers reach de la Luz or the Mouth, perhaps they all gun each other down, leaving the PCs to finish the job. This should still be the PCs' story.

Biting, Dribbling Minor Mouths

Health 2, Scuffling 3

Hit Threshold: 4 (small)

Weapon: −2 (bite)

Armor: none

Stability Loss: +1

The tiny Mouths of the death trap shaft don't "die" when defeated, they go slack, dribbling Nectar and making helpful footholds in the wall. There's no defeating every Mouth down here — the Major Mouth is so close that it can revive Mouths almost as fast as the Investigators can punch them out.

18. De la Luz's Lair

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: Reaching Luz's subterranean lair (Mexico City 15, "The Hidden Studio," p. 297, Mexico 16, "Into the Trap," p. 299, or Mexico City 17, "Death Trap," p. 300).

Summary: The Investigators confront Brooks and his bride, the deformed singer, as she sings out a dirge.

This scene plays out roughly the same regardless of how the Investigators get here, though the tenor and stakes of the scene may be quite different for characters who have been through the death trap and arrive here singing a song to distract from Leticia de la Luz's.

De la Luz's lair is a simple square chamber of Aztec stone, situated just off the shaft that contains the Mouth of Mexico City. It's decorated with fine curtains, landscape paintings, a black-and-white photo of Billie Holiday, a lush four-poster bed, and an expensive record player. Records are stacked all around the room.

De la Luz begins to sing as soon as she's in danger, meaning she might well sing if she hears a gun battle happening in the "cellars" in the scene **"The Hidden Studio."** Every turn Investigators without earplugs hear her song, they must make 2-point Mythos Stability tests (see **Mexico City 17, "Death Trap,"** p. 300, for details of the song).

When characters arrive at her lair, it's likely that just Brooks and Leticia are here. (The cultist thugs should all be dead or elsewhere by now.) Brooks talks only as much as it's necessary to add some closure to the Locale here. Otherwise he stands between the doorway and his bride with a gun, ready to shoot whoever enters.

Leticia de la Luz sings right through injury or damage, crooning until the moment of her death.

Leticia de la Luz

Athletics 6, Driving 2, Health 7, Scuffling 8

Hit Threshold: 3

Weapon: −1 (gruesome bite)

Armor: none

Stability Loss: +1

Leticia de la Luz is hardly human anymore. Her old name, Rosario Maria Lopez, has no sway over her anymore. Her face — her whole head — is deformed by Nectar and the Mouth. She exists only to see other people dance to her bidding, fighting or screwing as she commands. She is a monster now.

An inhuman mouth has gashed Leticia's face in two directions. Her original mouth is torn wide open and the unhealed wound has grown articulated. Her nose has fallen away to allow a



vertical mouth that connects to her original mouth. Her sinuses have grown sharp teeth. This three-sided mouth flutters and wavers and drools as it sings. Her hair has all fallen away. Her limbs move spastically, thoughtlessly at her side. As she sings, the outside world falls away and there is only her glorious, hideous song.

Yet, still, she has a shadow of love for Jonathan Brooks. If Brooks dies, her singing turns to a screeching, maddening wail — a song that disrupts all other songs and requires a one-time 4-point Mythos Stability test to hear in person. Then she lashes out with her deformed mouth, biting and snarling, hoping for death.

Jonathan Brooks

Three Things: Angular features. Purses his lips, shakes his head. Overly dramatic.

Athletics 4, Driving 4, Firearms 3, Health 5, Scuffling 4, Weapons 2

Weapon: +1 (.45 pistol)

Jonathan Brooks is no fighter, and battling him is no climactic act in the Locale. At your discretion, he may be taken out by a single dramatically appropriate attack.

If Leticia is slain in his presence, Brooks rushes to her, cradling her corpse and becoming an immediate noncombatant. If not restrained, he then feeds himself to the Major Mouth so that he can be with her in whatever hell their god presides over.

19. The Mouth of Mexico City

Scene Type: Action

Lead-ins: Reaching the tunnel that houses the Mouth that is Brooks's master (Mexico City 19, "Hidden Studio," p. 297, or Mexico City 18, "De la Luz's Lair," p. 302.

Summary: The Investigators confront the Major Mouth of Mexico City.

The Major Mouth of Mexico City dwells at the bottom of a shaft like that in the scene **"Death Trap,"** but shallower. It bulges forth on a swollen mound of vulgar flesh above a shallow pool of Nectar, which is soaked up by buckets and sponges and wrung out into bottles in the "cellar" and chambers above.

Without Leticia, the Mouth's song loses its mystical harmonics and so has no power over humankind. Aside from its bite and lashing tongue (with which it can reach Investigators peering over the lip of the shaft), the Mouth can only await whatever awful fate the Investigators have planned for it.

Major Mouth of Mexico City

Abilities: Health 55, Scuffling 18

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: −2

Hit Threshold: 3 (large)

Weapon: +4 (bite), +0 (grappling and constricting tongue)

Armor: −1 vs. any (tough hide)

Stability Loss: +2

Tongue and Bite: The Major Mouth immediately attempts to grab with its tongue any intruder that peers over the edge of the shaft to witness its hideous maw. On the subsequent round, a grabbed target is dropped into the Mouth and chewed for automatic damage every turn until dead or a new target is grabbed. The Mouth can hold only one target at a time, but can fatally swallow any unconscious or incapacitated creature. (The Mouth can be distracted by feeding it cultists, at your discretion.)

Pulling a grabbed or bitten character free requires a Difficulty 4 Scuffling test.

When this Mouth is finally slain, it lets out a terrible whimper and an echoing tone that sticks in witnesses' ears for three days afterward…

20. Attack of the Birds

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Treading on ground patrolled by Brooks's birds (or having the birds sent after them specifically).

Summary: The Investigators (and possibly others) are attacked by Brooks's birds, which are afflicted with Minor Mouths.

This scene takes place virtually anywhere in the Locale that you see fit, though a few considerations may be necessary to ensure it makes sense. This scene builds on the information presented in the scene **"Brooks's Penthouse,"** wherein the Investigators discover the birdcages where Jonathan Brooks trained, drugged, and possibly ensorcelled this scene's birds. If this scene precedes that one, the vicious, mutated birds herein may be part of a shocking and strange non sequitur, while the coops at the penthouse become grim reminders and good occasion to get nervous. If this scene is played after **"Brooks's Penthouse,"** then that scene foreshadows this one.

Perhaps the ideal place for this scene is immediately after the Investigators emerge from **"Shrine to the Thing,"** holding new clues *and* already aware that these birds are out there, somewhere.

Strictly speaking, you could play this scene more than once, reducing the number of birds in each scene or having part of the flock flee into the sky midway through the action. How exactly you employ this scene is up to you.

All this scene *requires* for setup is for the birds to have good reason to be in the scene and for the Investigators to be outdoors, so the birds can reach them. Perhaps the Investigators are leaving de la Luz's apartment, poking around the site of Jorge Novo's demise in **"The Manufacturer,"** or even just going from their hotel to their car. Brooks can send the birds after the Investigators specifically if he's aware of their presence and intentions (perhaps from Gonchi del Toro). Otherwise, the birds may be mystically tied to a given location, such as the record-pressing facility's ruins or Brooks's penthouse, as a means of driving people away.

The scene can open with a low dose of menace — the attack of a single strange bird — or it can open directly with full-fledged chaos as the flock descends en masse.

If, for example, you want a bit of tension, and you're playing the scene outside of Brooks's secret room (just after the scene **"Shrine to the Thing"**), put a single bird on top of the coop when an Investigator emerges from the hidden shrine:

Perched above you atop the dirty coops is a single grackle, shiny and black, tilting its head this way and that. It opens its mouth to let out an eerie caw and reveals, at the base of its beak, a glistening and grisly mouth ringed with tiny, hooked teeth. Its caw is wet and brief, like a crow gagging on pus.

Then you hear the caw answered by the flock descending upon you…

On the other hand, you could have the flock attack all at once, with little warning except a **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 4 by day, 6 by night):

The sky is suddenly alive with screeching, fluttering birds! Red and yellow feet scramble for purchase on your limbs and head while needle-like beaks jab for soft tissues, aiming to shred your flesh and pluck out your eyes!

Once the flock is in play, this scene may be a combat or it may be a chase — the Investigators would do well to flee indoors.

20. Attack of the Birds



The Flock

Each bird in the flock has been transmogrified by Nectar. At the base of each beak, where an ordinary bird's mouth would be an empty hole, these birds are afflicted with Minor Mouths. Each Minor Mouth is ringed with tiny barbed teeth surrounding a sucking sphincter-like maw. Each bird has a long, string-like prehensile tongue, about six inches long, which it uses to grope for soft tissue, slipping it into mouths, noses, ears, and eyes. The birds are all vaguely sticky and their feathers cause fine, nasty cuts like paper.

Brooks' flock is up to 50 birds strong, with about 30 grackles and 20 sonorous blackbirds. They are Nectar-crazed and quite mad, but they cannot tolerate much pain. Their instinct is to flee once the flock is scattered. Whether they ever return or simply scatter and die off is up to you. If the fight against these birds is simply a chaotic hassle, they should never return. If, however, it is a harrowing fright, they should be back before long.

What, exactly, scatters the flock is up to you to decide as well, using the guidelines presented with the statistics below. Reward clever players who devise plans to deal damage (even slight damage) over a wide area; these birds cannot take much harm individually and they are easily startled. A splash of scalding water or a wave of flame goes a long way to dispelling the flock, while noisy gunfire might only disrupt them for a moment or two. Reward good ideas by granting damage bonuses. Attacks that deal damage over a wide area hit more birds and should therefore deal more damage. Even players who specify that they are swinging their machetes (or what have they) in wide arcs through the air might warrant a +1 bonus to damage.

When a bird in the flock dies, its mouth and tongue shrivel away to nothing, its teeth turn to grit, and the bird itself shrinks and decays as if it had been dead for days, all in moments. **Biology** or **Forensics** determines that the creatures were sick but cannot find any trace of tongues or teeth amid the putrefied flesh.

Nectar-Mad Flock

Athletics 15, Health 50*, Scuffling 15

Hit Threshold: 4 (30–50 Health), 5 (10–29 Health), 6 (1–9 health) (tiny)

Stealth Modifier: +2

Weapon: −3 (beak and talons)

Armor: none

Stability Loss: +1

Harrowing Flock: Every point of damage kills one bird in the flock. As the flock dwindles, the Hit Threshold of the remaining birds increases. The flock can attack a number of targets equal to the number of birds in the flock, but cannot deal more damage to a single target in a single turn than there are birds attacking that target. (I.e., one bird cannot deal more than 1 point of damage, while four or more can deal up to 3 points of damage in a single attack.) The flock always deals a minimum of 1 point of damage on a successful hit; treat any damage result lower than 1 as a 1.

20. Attack of the Birds

Individual birds do not make attack rolls or spend pool points — make attack rolls for each target once per round.

If you want a mechanical means of determining when the flock disperses, roll a die every time the flock's Hit Threshold increases; if the roll is equal to or greater than the flock's *old* Hit Threshold, the flock maintains its cohesion and continues to attack.

Wrapping Up

Wrapping up in Mexico City may involve filing police reports, escaping charges leveled by local authorities, or — perhaps especially — skipping town before real heat can be brought to bear on the Investigators. Remember the scope and subject matter of the campaign, though. This isn't meant to be an adventure series about Investigators caught up in a legal battle, it's meant to be a globe-spanning investigation into and battle against wicked foes. To keep things moving, perhaps the Investigators call in personal favors, pay substantial bribes, or otherwise use costly but quick methods to go on with their exciting lives. Or perhaps they are simply thrown out of town and told never to come back again.

What may matter most, depending on your adaptation, is the extent to which the Investigators can wrap up their ties with other characters in this Locale. Do they have time to say goodbyes? Or do you cut straight from an exploding Major Mouth (for example) to Kearns's plane in the air, fleeing the city? It's a matter of the tone your players want to pursue, the momentum of your campaign, and whether or not you wrap up this Locale in the middle of a session of play.

On to the next Locale!



Yucatán

"That part of them was human, seemed quite clear; but men of science could never decide whether they were actually the descendants of the bygone entities who had lived and reigned in the strange ruins."

— "The Mound"

This Locale plunges the Investigators into rain-drenched jungles, muddy caverns, ancient tombs, and maddening rifts across space. It pits them against ruthless ambushes, anguished ghosts, monstrous beasts, and the campaign's most dangerous interrogation. In this chapter, the Investigators must come ready to sacrifice everything from blood to Sanity if they want to reach what might be — if they can trust it — some bit of the truth about the Liar From Beyond.

All of this happens on the Yucatán Peninsula. Yet while some of this chapter's adventurous tale is based on actual history, this is not the Yucatán of actual history. The Yucatán of *Eternal Lies* twists some truths to create unexpected perils and surprising revelations. Everything here exists to put the Investigators into shocking and dangerous situations, to test their mettle and their motivations as they approach the horrible truth.

This Locale depicts a woeful journey into a risky place, but no matter how much this chapter seems concerned with ancient ruins, mystical powers, and dreadful monsters, the story must continue to be about the Investigators and their struggle for truth. It is not just the jungle that is rain drenched and muddy; it is the players' characters. The crumbling ruins of Chichén Xoxul are not there to reveal only their own secrets, but those of the Investigators, too.

Keep the Investigators in the foreground here. Even while they are plunging into ancient mysteries and pursuing the trail of a doomed expedition, you should be highlighting the Investigators and exploring them. How do they interact when they're in the jungle? How do they help each other in difficult times? Whom do they trust?

Or you can just play this Locale as a rip-roaring adventure yarn full of opportunities for characters to go mad and die.

The horrible truth at the heart of this Locale is an actual truth — a piece of information that can help the Investigators prepare for their final confrontation with the Liar From Beyond and cut through so many layers of lies and appreciate the facts behind it all. The truth at the heart of this Locale is the name — the true name — of the being that calls itself the Liar From Beyond, the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, and so many other sobriquets. The name is Y'golonac. It wields every other identity as a shield of lies to protect itself from scrutiny and sorcery, detection and revenge. But at Chichén Xoxul, the Investigators may learn the truth.

Another layer of truth runs through this Locale, though, including this old chestnut: the truth hurts. The truth hurts so much that everyone lies. Some people lie to protect themselves, like NPCs in this chapter do, and some lie to protect others, like perhaps the Investigators (or their Sources of Stability) do. Some lie to themselves and even come to believe those lies.

After this expedition, the Investigators may come to doubt so many of the facts they once understood about themselves and their world — they may doubt their abilities, their Sources of Stability, or their Pillars of Sanity — but at least they'll have glimpsed some larger truth about the universe and their place in it.

Is the truth worth the suffering? That's the question. It's up to each Investigator (and player) to answer that question.

The Yucatán Spine

Clues discovered in the Mexico City Locale reveal that a band of cultists was dispatched into the Yucatán jungle to seek out ancient ruins and discover the true identity of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, aka the Liar From Beyond. The cult's expedition has not yet returned. The Investigators, being brave souls, venture off on the trail of the cult's expedition in the hopes of learning whatever the cult stands to uncover in the Yucatán — or to stop the cult expedition from uncovering anything at all.

Even if they have uncovered every possible clue in Mexico City, the Investigators have little to go on in the Yucatán. They know where the cult expedition was headed — a site

called Chichén Xoxul, which may or may not actually exist — and that the cult presumed to confirm or dismiss, once and for all, the theory that Gol-Goroth is the Liar From Beyond. The Investigators also know that the cult's expedition planned to set out from Mérida, the capital of the state of Yucatán, perhaps as long as a week ago.

It's up to the Investigators to locate and thwart the cult expedition — and perhaps discover what *they* sought to discover in the jungle — with just those few leads to go on.

The spine of this Locale runs from a peaceful city of commerce and culture to an ancient temple with a history stained by violence and sorcery. Along the way, the Investigators will face sinister treachery, lying land barons, a whole new wicked cult, brutal monsters, and a Sanity-rattling confrontation with a dreadful — but honest — demigod. It's a rough course through difficult terrain toward the threat of madness.

Yet, at the end of it all, a heavy treasure awaits: the truth.

This Locale begins with a few broad investigative scenes in Mérida, Mexico, depicting the Investigators' preparations to enter the jungle. The path to the site of Chichén Xoxul consists of a few short scenes (which scenes, exactly, depends on what local guides the Investigators have hired) that dramatize the jungle trek. The trek itself ends at the ruins of Chichén Xoxul, which the Investigators can explore as they see fit (when they're not coming under attack by spatially warped "ghosts" or man-eating monsters). The exploration of Chichén Xoxul takes up quite a few scenes, likely culminating in the climactic interrogation of the godlike creature, Gol-Goroth.

Key Cast

Francisco de la Vega: A wealthy henequen farmer (and secret cult leader) in Mérida, Mexico. Named for his ancestor, a conquistador, Francisco de la Vega appears to be a guarded but generous man with a passion for antiquities and a vested interest in making Mérida a gem of a city. In truth, he is a greedy, wary man torn between his personal avarice and his fearful devotion to the god-thing at the center of his cult: Golxumal, aka the Fisher From Outside, aka Gol-Goroth.

Guillermo Castillo: One potential guide into the Yucatán jungle. Guillermo Castillo is a highly experienced traveler of the lands surrounding the "supposed" location of Chichén Xoxul, but he is also loyal to Francisco de la Vega and the Golxumal cult. He doesn't intend to allow the Investigators to reach Chichén Xoxul.

Pablo Garza: One potential guide into the Yucatán jungle. Pablo Garza knows the jungles the Investigators seek to cross; in fact, he knows them well enough to think the journey to Chichén Xoxul is "a bad idea." Pablo's torn between his superstition and his desire to prove himself unafraid (and earn good money for his family).

Rick Luke: One potential guide into the Yucatán jungle. Rick Luke is an American adventurer with limited ties to the surrounding community but a lot of experience in other jungles throughout Central and South America. He's as eager to "rediscover" Chichén Xoxul as the Investigators are, though he's in it for fortune and glory.

Francisco de Belalcázar: A conquistador who vanished with a small group of soldiers and explorers in the Yucatán in 1518. Francisco de Belalcázar was constantly torn between his fanatical devotion to his beloved España, for which he sought treasures, and his own desire for the truth about the New World, for which he suffered and died. Belalcázar believed his purpose was not just to win lands and wealth for Spain but to unlock greater secrets of the New World.

Golxumal, the Xoxul, and Belalcázar for Real

In reality, the Xoxul (*zho-zool*) are, of course, made up. Likewise, Golxumal (*gol-zhoo-mahl*) is an alternate mythology for Gol-Goroth invented for this campaign. Both names lack any real-world meaning (except for a sideways reference to *Ghostbusters*). Francisco de Belalcázar is a fictional conquistador, concocted for this scenario.



Gol-Goroth (aka Golxumal): Old One, great and terrible.

Keeper's Background: The Yucatán Expedition

The expedition the characters are pursuing into the jungle was no band of experts. Rather, it was an expedition of desperation, launched by Jonathan Brooks, the leader of the Mexico City chapter of the Cult of the Thousand Mouths, out of a need to find a separate truth, a well of knowledge that was untainted by the schemes and rhetoric of the Los Angeles chapter of the cult. Jonathan Brooks *had* to believe that he was right about Gol-Goroth and Golxumal being the true beings at the heart of the cult because that was the information he had at hand — Brooks was drowning in a sea of lies and he felt he'd found something that would maybe support his weight.

Keeper's Background: The Yucatán Expedition

So he put his weight on it, poured his money into it, and sent almost a dozen cultists into the Yucatán to chase down a dream.

Jonathan Brooks's limited experience with the Mythos set him up to believe that he had discovered some essential truth behind the whole mystery of the cult when he discovered that Gol-Goroth was supposedly *really* worshipped in the Yucatán once, long ago. That became, if not true, then true *enough* for Jonathan Brooks and his Nectar-addled followers. He ordered followers into the jungle, and they obeyed.

The head of the expedition was a Mexican man named Sancho Domínguez. He was a good friend and trusted lieutenant of Jonathan Brooks. He drove down to Mérida from Mexico City with two carloads of men — a total of ten cultists — posing as archaeologists and photographers. These were the sharpest and toughest of the Mexico City cult's dedicated membership, men smart enough to puzzle out the truth of the ruins and hardy enough to endure the jungle trek on foot. If he hadn't been afraid to leave the cult to its own devices in Mexico City, Brooks would have gone with them.

When Domínguez and his men got to Mérida, they sought out Francisco de la Vega to persuade him to let them traverse and explore his lands. De la Vega had the men over for dinner and listened to them lie for hours about archaeology and photography for the public good. De la Vega, who knew full well what was waiting in the jungle, judged these men troublemakers and liars. "Let's get you a proper guide into the jungle, then," he said before arranging for a guide and porters to escort the expedition to Chichén Xoxul. That guide and those porters, of course, were cultists loyal to de la Vega and their old god, Golxumal.

Francisco de la Vega is the proud yet secretive inheritor of a hidden cult once peopled by outcasts from the Maya — a cult that later absorbed 19th-century occultists like Francisco's parents. It is Francisco's job, by his reckoning, to keep the Chichén Xoxul site secret and safe until such time as the Xoxul return from Golxumal in the flesh. (He doesn't realize that the Xoxul are probably never coming back, at least not in the way he expects them.) Aside from a few simple human and animal sacrifices, though, Francisco de la Vega does little other than keep people away from Chichén Xoxul… until now.

Once the two bands of cultists — Francisco's and Brooks's — were alone in the deepest jungle, de la Vega's men turned on Domínguez and his expedition. Unfortunately, Domínguez and his surviving men fled *to* Chichén Xoxul rather than dying in the jungle. Bleeding and furious, Domínguez and his men wandered the long grasses of Chichén Xoxul, their blood attracting the attention of the beast of Golxumal, which in turn attracted the "ghosts" of the Xoxul themselves. The expedition fled and fought until every last member of Domínguez's team was slain or scattered.

When de la Vega's men returned to Mérida, he sent them away to hide in jungle villages for a few weeks until stories of the expedition died down. Eventually, de la Vega would spread the word that the expedition had been scattered and broken by bandits, who no doubt slew Domínguez and his men in the jungle.

But then the Investigators arrive, potentially bringing even more attention on Chichén Xoxul and the previous expedition. This puts Francisco de la Vega in the tough spot of having to protect Chichén Xoxul from *more* attention, especially when the site is still full of dead bodies from the previous expedition. If the Investigators can't be stymied politely by Francisco de la Vega's reasoning, only one other option exists: kill the Investigators and clean up the mess afterward with a story of more bandits. Perhaps legends of vanishing, murderous bandits will dissuade others from seeking Chichén Xoxul, he hopes. Beyond that, the Investigators are welcome to die *at* Chichén Xoxul, as additional sacrifices to Golxumal.

The Cult of Golxumal

"Cult" may be too strong a word. The cult of Golxumal is a loose collection of Golxumal-fearing folk in Mérida who secretly offer up foodstuffs and treasures when hurricanes and storms come to the peninsula. Most of the cultists recognize Francisco de la Vega as their leader, as he inherited the title from his father, but few of the cultists have ever laid eyes on Chichén Xoxul. This is for two good reasons: First, de la Vega believes it's his duty to protect Chichén Xoxul from too much meddling or trespassing until Golxumal returns to restore the site. Second, most of the modern cultists regard the Xoxul as the previous make and model of cultists, not as revered ancestors. Today's cult hardly identifies itself as Xoxul — it's too cosmopolitan and casual for that. The cult is pretty relaxed and secretive, except when de la Vega tries to protect Chichén Xoxul.

Putting an end to the cult is probably as simple as putting an end to Francisco de la Vega.

Travel to Mérida and the Yucatán

Mérida is the capital of the Yucatán state and a hub of the thriving henequen trade. It's a prosperous place, frequented by travelers on business and tourists alike. Getting to Mérida is simple enough.

If the Investigators choose to fly, they land at Mérida-Rejón Airport, a busy multipurpose airfield very near downtown Mérida. Mérida-Rejón is the area's premier air-travel hub, servicing commercial and charter flights from throughout Mexico and abroad. If the Investigators are traveling in Winston-Rogers's plane, arranging for a runway and a modest rental hangar is simple enough (with a Credit Rating of 4 or higher).

If the Investigators don't fly, they'll have to come in on the roads. Mérida is 22 miles from the gulf, and no passenger rail service reaches the city. Buses from Mexico City make the trip to Mérida most days of the week, however, and cars are available for rent, as well. The **Anthropology**, **Archaeology**, and **Outdoorsman** abilities know that rental cars won't make the journey into the jungle, however — there are no roads where the Investigators are headed.

Once in Mérida, planning for and actual travel into the Yucatán jungle is part of the actual adventure of play. Investigators must take up machetes and packs and venture into the forest on foot…

Wardrobe: The Yucatán

While this Locale begins in the prosperous and lovely town of Mérida, the bulk of the adventure takes place in the Yucatán Peninsula's humid jungles. Investigators should dress accordingly.

For their trek, the Investigators want comfortable but sturdy tear-proof gabardine clothing that won't shred as brambles and branches claw at it. They should seek out clothing that breathes and won't stifle them in the heat. They need tough boots and sturdy packs. This is also a place where weapons can be worn and carried openly — whether it's a shoulder holster worn without a jacket, a shotgun slung over the shoulder, or a machete in a sheath.

Of course, they might also want for a bit of style. This is the players' chance to outfit their characters as proper jungle explorers, so a bit of visual fantasy should be welcome. A leather jacket might be right, despite the heat, and a jaunty scarf or signature hat can help mark a character as someone heroic. Suspend some disbelief.

That said, Investigators who venture into the jungle without proper attire (whether it's proper for the climate or the genre) may be subject to greater Difficulty along their trip. You should increase the Difficulty by 1 for certain tests and contests that characters are not properly outfitted for — especially those of **Athletics**, **Fleeing**, **Preparedness**, **Riding**, **Scuffling**, **Shadowing**, and **Stealth**. Players can negate the Difficulty adjustment by describing ways in which their characters adapt their wardrobe to suit the environment ("I'll don the corpse's boots…") or ways in which the environment alters the wardrobe ("I come out of that tumble with one sleeve torn off and mud smeared handsomely across my suit jacket"). Either the character is impressive enough to traverse the jungle in unsuitable wear or the jungle changes the character's look for the Locale.



Environs: Mérida and the Yucatán

The colonial burg of Mérida stands on the site of an old Mayan city whose ruins reminded visiting conquistadors of Roman ruins back in the Spanish town of Mérida. The Spanish laid down a street grid, erected arches at the city entrances (many of which still stand, though the city has outgrown the borders they mark), and built their new Mérida around a central plaza — Plaza Grande — as was the fashion at the time.

Several great buildings stand around the Plaza Grande. The cathedral of Mérida, started in the early 1560s, is thought to be the oldest in the Americas (as characters with **Architecture** might recall). The Casa de Montejo was built even earlier, to house Spanish governors in palatial comfort. Though it'll eventually become a bank, Investigators who pass the building notice both the coat of arms of the early Montejo family and statues of two conquistadors standing on the heads of Mayans. The Municipal Palace (Palacio Municipal) is a wide, many-arched building, rendered in a variety of styles and capped with a clock tower added in the 1920s.

At the turn of the 20th century, Mérida and its environs were producing huge amounts of henequen and sisal, fibrous plants used for making rope and twine. This was a stunningly lucrative trade. For a time, early in the 1900s, Mérida was said to house more millionaires per capita than any other city in the world.

Evidence of the city's considerable wealth is plain to see, 30 years later. The Paseo de Montejo, which runs north-and-south at the northern edge of the old city, is lined with mansions from the city's sisal and henequen age. **Architecture** recognizes a mix of neoclassical influences in many of the mansions' designs.

Mérida, the governmental capital of the state, prides itself on also being the cultural capital of the Yucatán Peninsula. Its Museum of Anthropology contains Mayan artifacts from Uxmal to the south, Chichén Itzá to the southeast, and many other sites throughout the peninsula. Mérida is not always the face that tourists and travelers see, however, as the so-called Mayan Riviera stretches

Emotional Modulation in Mérida

These short descriptive beats are offered to help you modulate the atmosphere during play. Read or paraphrase these details as you see fit, remembering that these are not leads to new adventures, just bits of colorful detail meant to bring the setting to life:

Hopeful Beats in Mérida

- Children run and laugh through the street and plaza, chasing each other for fun. One has a dark rubber ball that he's trying to keep away from his cohort.
- The smell of fresh flowers drifts down from window boxes along the street ahead. A young woman, tending some flowers, smiles a casual "hello."
- An old man pushes a *salbutes* cart up the uneven street. The smell of cooking, spicy turkey, and fresh tomato tickles your nose. A row of taco-like salbutes in simple paper wrappers tops the cart, the bright avocados catching your eyes.

Sinister Beats in Mérida

- A black bird picks at a cat left dead in the road. The bird looks at you with its yellow eyes, a bit of raw meat dangling from its mouth, then flies away.
- You notice a mural depicting conquistadors in the jungle, pointing toward a Mayan pyramid. The mural is riddled with bullet holes.



across the peninsula's far coast. Mérida's primary concerns, during the era of the Investigators' visit, are government and manufacturing — and the majority of tourists to the city are from elsewhere in Mexico.

Outside Mérida

The Yucatán Peninsula's interior is a lush jungle, inhabited by the modern descendants of the ancient Maya. These contemporary Maya Indians often live in modest villages of simple huts, with palm or tin roofs. There they maintain their old culture and language as best they can. Some Maya travel back and forth from the jungle to the colonial cities to work, bringing back supplies and foodstuffs to their more traditional villages.

After Mexico at large had gained its independence, the Maya of the Yucatán sought theirs. In 1847, the Maya began their revolution against European settlers, sometimes called *Yucatecos*, in the Yucatán. The legal caste system in Mexico placed native *indios* at the bottom of the social hierarchy despite their considerable numbers, especially in the Yucatán Peninsula, where the Maya were being exploited. Thus the fifty-year revolt by the Maya came to be called the Caste War. It burned throughout the Yucatán until 1901, when the Mexican army occupied the Maya capital of Chan Santa Cruz, though bloody reprisals continued for more than a decade after. Until 1915, it was sometimes dangerous for European travelers to enter the Yucatán interior.

Yucatán, the Mexican state, has been an independent republic a few short times in its history, before being reabsorbed back into greater Mexico. The division of the Yucatán Peninsula into the three states of Yucatán, Campeche, and Quintana Roo has shrunk the territory governed by Mérida to less than a third of its original size.

All of this is well known to Investigators who have studied **History**.

The Yucatán jungle is a largely flat expanse of land covered in both short and tall rainforest growth. Roads throughout the area are often well maintained but sparsely laid, so that travel across the peninsula is easy but travel to sites between the roads — be they ancient sites or modern villages — is often impossible except on foot. It is easy to travel the Yucatán except where it isn't.

Water in the Yucatán can be tricky to come by, as the northern expanse of the jungle is almost devoid of rivers. The porous nature of the peninsula means that most palatable water runs underground and is accessible only through wells, sinkholes, and caverns. Natural sinkholes and wells, called cenotes, are not uncommon throughout the peninsula and are often prized as water sources and ritual centers. The Maya saw some cenotes as entryways to Xibalba, the underworld, which was thought to have an atmosphere of water. Sacred cenotes were places of prophecy and sacrifice; less revered cenotes are sometimes used as swimming holes and wells.

Atmosphere

In a word: perilous.

In Mérida, everything should be rich with potential energy — the Investigators are on the verge of an adventure.

In the Yucatán jungle, the atmosphere should be increasingly perilous — the Investigators are on the verge of a fatal drop.

The trajectory from Mérida to Chichén Xoxul's final scenes follows a course from suspicion and lies to revelations and truth… but the way is bloody and grim and dangerous. The adventure turns to horror as the stakes change and the discoveries to be made gradually materialize. The truth is in that jungle, but its face and teeth are stained with

blood, and it waits on the other end of a warped path.

The trip into the jungle reveals the truth about whatever guide the Investigators have hired to take them to Chichén Xoxul, but it is likely to be an unhappy revelation. The exploration of Chichén Xoxul itself reveals myriad kinds of pain and suffering experienced as a result of truth seeking.

Yet Chichén Xoxul contains actual answers for those willing to get them. So the hope at the heart of the expedition — the mystery that draws the characters into the jungle — is not altogether folly. The journey is not in vain. Whether the price is too steep, though, is for the players and their characters to decide.

As play progresses through this Locale, things should get progressively tighter and closer in, before exploding into the wide, impossible vistas of the final scenes. They cannot see far in the jungle. The grasses and vines hide much of Chichén Xoxul. Tombs and caverns channel the Investigators toward new dangers. To get the truth, they must insert themselves into the cramped insides of the ruins, and then let their own insides spill out into the open. Everything turns inside out and suddenly the characters are given the capacity to see far and wide — and the question becomes if they can trust what they are told.

The Scenes

Play the following scenes as the Investigators move throughout Mérida and the jungle. Many scenes are triggered by encounters between the Investigators and specific individuals or places within the Locale. The major decisions awaiting the players center on the order in which they choose to engage key scenes (like the various locations within Chichén Xoxul) and, especially, which (if any) guides they hire to take them into the jungle. Many other tactical decisions await the players within each scene, from choices to be made in the thick of fighting to how to phrase questions posed to an alien god.

You have a few important decisions to make yourself about how to connect early scenes like **"Dining With Francisco,"** when to deploy antagonist-reaction scenes like **"The Beast of Golxumal,"** and how to dramatize the visions delivered by Gol-Goroth in **"An Audience With Gol-Goroth."** Each scene is written to get you oriented, but some choices you must make yourself based on your knowledge of your players and what they enjoy.

1. Arrival in Mérida

Scene Type: Intro

Lead-ins: Details on the cult's expedition (Mexico City 8, "Shrine to the Thing," p. 280).

Summary: The Investigators explore a bit of Mérida, learn about its history, and discover a bit of its jungle-expedition culture.

This short scene exists just to establish the Investigators in Mérida. Give them a chance to get oriented, ask the necessary questions, do a little poking around, and then get on with **"The Previous Expedition"** or **"Dining With Francisco."**

First things first, if they fly into Mérida, have someone at the airport ask the Investigators what brings them to town. If an Investigator says the words "Chichén Xoxul" out loud, word gets back to Francisco de la Vega.

Exactly what information you choose to share with the Investigators about Mérida itself depends on what might distract your players. Just driving into the heart of the city from the airport reveals to characters with **Architecture** or **History** that Mérida is a Spanish colonial city with a history of great wealth. Further details about Mayan roots and booming crops can be dug up easily enough with **Oral History** or **Library Use**.

Streetwise, **Cop Talk**, or **Bureaucracy** reveals that Nectar is not something the local underground or police department are aware of. Streetwise contacts paint a picture of a largely clean police force that's too heavily funded to be easily bought, while Cop Talk contacts make it clear that the police in Mérida take pride in the safety of their city — and don't look kindly on troublemaking tourists and travelers. Bureaucracy contacts freely admit that the city is coming down off a years-long financial highpoint and that money isn't coming in like it used to; but everyone insists that Mérida's coffers are doing fine and the city is healthily staffed and running smoothly.

The trick is in conveying all that in a way that doesn't pique the suspicions of the players or their characters. Don't make a big deal out of it. If you have to, you might even have a contact say to an Investigator, "What brings you here, anyway? Mérida isn't exactly where the adventure is."

If you need to get things moving, and the Investigators haven't been quiet about their purpose in Mérida, you might even initiate the scene **"Dining With Francisco"** on your own by having a man in a gray suit approach the characters on behalf of Señor de la Vega. *"Word spreads quickly when people come to Mérida looking for Chichén Xoxul,"* the man says. *"Especially since the last expedition went missing."*

This only works if the Investigators have told anyone (perhaps at the airport) why



they're in Mérida. Of course, Francisco de la Vega's real purpose is to prevent the Investigators from doing too much investigating around town. He'd rather get them into the jungle where they can disappear like Domínguez and his men.

2. The Previous Expedition

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Searching for clues surrounding the Mexico City cult's expedition into the jungle (Yucatán 1, "Arrival in Mérida," p. 312).

Summary: The Investigators canvas Mérida in search of the trail of the expedition Brooks dispatched into the Yucatán and find the expedition did little to cover its tracks.

Core Clue: The previous expedition hired a locally renowned guide. The expedition numbered about twenty men, including the newly hired porters from Mérida. (Outdoorsman with local experts.)

Core Clue: The expedition set out about a week ago, looking to cross about 40 miles of jungle, much of it on foot. No word has come back from the expedition yet. (Outdoorsman with local experts.)

Core Clue: The head of the expedition met with Francisco de la Vega before the expedition departed, perhaps to gain permission to cross the de la Vega familial land. (Outdoorsman with local experts.)

Core Clue: Francisco de la Vega is a rich man, having inherited great wealth from his father, a henequen-farm owner, in addition to considerable existing wealth in his family. (Law or Bureaucracy.)

This simple scene finds the Investigators looking into both Sancho Domínguez's expedition and its destination. What could be handled through a series of specific interviews and focused scenes is instead covered by this one scene, which encompasses the necessary investigations, gets information to the Investigators, and then gets the Investigators moving again.

What this scene assumes, however, is that the Investigators are already in Mérida, where a bit of asking around can dig up information on the Domínguez expedition but, strangely, even expert researches find little info about Chichén Xoxul. (Francisco de la Vega's father and his cult have done their best to minimize the amount of information available in town about their sacred site, so the Mérida library is something of a bust.) The following abilities garner the following clues about the expedition and the destination…

2. The Previous Expedition

Research Done Prior to Mérida

Research into Chichén Xoxul and Golxumal prior to arriving in Mérida (e.g., in Mexico City) turns up considerably more information. Francisco de la Vega and the cult of Golxumal have sanitized the library and museums in Mérida, but they don't have the pull necessary to erase everything they would like, all the world over. Investigators discover the following clues while researching in Mexico City or another major city.

Library Use (at your discretion) turns up a copy of Dr. Arthur Cartwright's slim 1850 book, *Into The Yucatán Peninsula*, which includes a chapter on Chichén Xoxul, which Cartwright stumbled on in 1846 and named after the Xoxul, which was a word for "outcast" or "pariah" used among the local Maya at the time of Cartwright's accidental discovery. Cartwright reported a number of "sizeable and remarkable ruins" at the site, including "a small pyramid dedicated to sorcery and the stars," all of which were jammed together in the jungle, with hardly any space between them. *"This was a religious site usurped by the Xoxul, not a city or proper settlement,"* Cartwright wrote. *"It was probably secretive and remote even when in use."*

It's worth noting that Dr. Cartwright was more of an explorer and less of an archaeologist.

The following clues may be turned up with **Library Use** or known by characters with the appropriate abilities, as you see fit:

Characters with **Archaeology** or **Anthropology** may know that *chichén* means "at the mouth of the well" and likely means there is a cenote at the site. Likewise, Xoxul does not literally mean "outcast" or "pariah" in Maya; it's a proper noun that's been loaded up with a new definition by years of ill association. The Xoxul were probably a cultural group made up of various local ethnicities that together worshipped a god or gods outside of the popular religion. Almost nothing is known of the Xoxul, however, beyond their name (which was clarified as a proper noun after a new translation of Cartwright's temple rubbings in 1900, years after his death) and their status as "secret outsiders."

History adds another clue to the mix: Chichén Xoxul appears in the diary of a conquistador called Francisco de Belalcázar, who vanished with dozens of soldiers and explorers in the Yucatán in 1518. It was the name of a site near the heart of the peninsula even then, which one of Belalcázar's native guides mentioned as a warning, saying, *"I am no Xoxul and will not go to their place."*

Occult turns up evidence of Golxumal in a text by a Spanish monk from 1528, which says Golxumal was "a god of outcasts" and also "the place where he ruled and dwelt." Seen by locals as "both bird and toad," it was known as "the Fisher From Without/Outside" and was said to have come to the Yucatán near the end of the Maya reign there. Mayan doomsayers foretold its return.

The Expedition

Oral History, used to interview people at proper supply shops, reveals only that shopkeepers and customers at one shop recall seeing roughly ten men from Mexico City planning an expedition into the jungle. When the shopkeeper asked where they were headed, the men responded cryptically: *"We're archaeologists, looking for ruins."* When the shopkeeper asked which ruins, the men changed the subject.

Outdoorsman, used to locate proper expedition-mounting contacts in Mérida, discovers that Domínguez hired a locally renowned half-Maya guide named Jacinto Expósito, who hasn't been seen since he left with the expedition about a week ago. Local outdoors-types consider Expósito one of the best — and word is that he was paid handsomely by the Mexico City expedition to lead them out onto de la Vega's lands in the jungle, where there are supposedly some old Mayan ruins about 40 miles in, most of it on foot. Francisco de la Vega himself apparently introduced the expedition leader to Expósito. The expedition head probably met with de la Vega in the first place to get permission to cross his lands. The expedition also hired around ten porters.

Locals aren't surprised to hear the expedition needs rescue. *"Those were city folk who went out there, unprepared, and there are still bandits out there in the jungles. And maybe worse,"* says one old man.

Anyone interviewed above can identify Domínguez from Brooks's photo, if the Investigators have it.

Streetwise reveals that Domínguez's men didn't make any attempts to contact the local criminal scene in Mérida. Tomb robbers and antiquities thieves in Mérida don't go onto de la Vega's lands out in the jungle because *"it's supposed to be an easy way to get shot or stabbed. You go without permission, you get killed."*

The Destination: Chichén Xoxul

Oral History in the **Outdoorsman** or **Archaeology** communities, centered on the Museum of Anthropology, reveals suspicions and legends surrounding Chichén Xoxul but few actual facts. Only a few local guides know that part of the jungle where Chichén Xoxul is supposed to be: Jacinto Expósito (who's gone now), Guillermo Castillo, and Pablo Garza. Rick Luke speaks the right languages and has the enthusiasm, but he's never been out there.

The same abilities reveal that Chichén Xoxul was supposedly discovered by archaeologist Dr. Arthur Cartwright in 1846, right before the Caste War broke out. He wrote a book about the place but died without telling anyone exactly where it was. *"It's possible that the place doesn't exist,"* says the curator at the Museum of Anthropology.

Oral History use in the **Occult** community — meaning, mostly, local folklorists and superstitious elders — gets knowing smiles and chilled glares. The locals don't go to Chichén Xoxul because Xoxul is an ominous word. To the local Maya versed in the occult it means "outcast," "deviant," or "pariah." Chichén Xoxul means, in Mayan, "at the mouth of the well of the Xoxul." If Chichén Xoxul exists, it must be named for good reason, "perhaps as a warning."

(Taking things a step further and asking about Golxumal gets hushed whispers. Golxumal is a Xoxul word, they say, indicating a place "below or above Chichén Xoxul" as well as the god or demon that dwells in that place "below or above Chichén Xoxul." Golxumal is "a fisher from outside the world." The name Gol-Goroth, however, means nothing to the local occultists, who do not traffic in Cthulhu Mythos, for that is the stuff of the Xoxul.)

Law or **Bureaucracy**, used either on paper or to find contacts in Mérida, discovers that the lands where Chichén Xoxul supposedly stands are owned by Francisco de la Vega, a land baron and former henequen-farm owner here in Mérida. Legally, it's trespassing to go on that ground without his permission. He's filed numerous reports of bandits and shootings on his property out there, but nothing ever comes of them because no one local exactly claims jurisdiction out there.

Investigators with **Library Use** who research Chichén Xoxul and Golxumal in Mérida after researching the topics elsewhere detect the noticeable lack of information available in Mérida, considering it was the basis of Arthur Cartwright's expedition in 1846. That's the clue: it's as if the site's been scrubbed from local archives.

3. Dining With Francisco

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: An invitation (Yucatán 1, "Arrival in Mérida," p. 312) or information gained from local experts (Yucatán 2 "The Previous Expedition," p. 313).

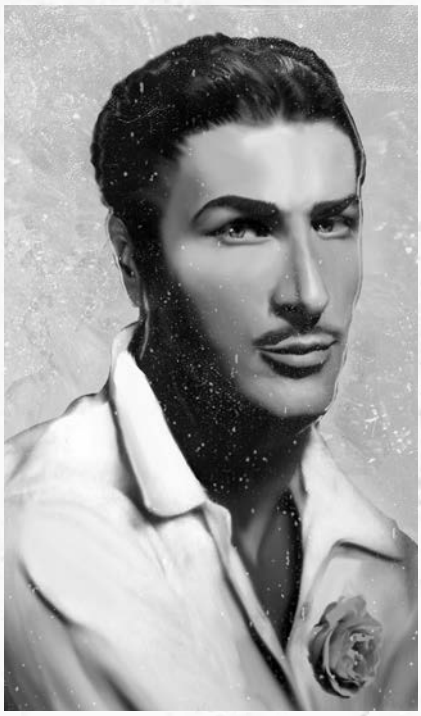
Summary: The Investigators seek permission to cross de la Vega's lands and study the ruins. (Presumably they get that permission.) As part of their meeting with Francisco de la Vega, they learn a bit about Mérida and the history of Chichén Xoxul.

Core Clue: The previous expedition got permission to cross the de la Vega land because they asked nicely. De la Vega is not too surprised to discover people looking for the first expedition: "The jungle swallows up people more often than you might think."

Core Clue: Francisco de la Vega is a rich man, having inherited great wealth from his father, a henequen-farm owner, in addition to considerable existing wealth in his family.

Core Clue: Francisco recommends either Guillermo Castillo or Pablo Garza as guides, but not Rick Luke, because "he doesn't know these jungles as well as he thinks he does."

Core Clue: Francisco de la Vega is descended from conquistadors and is happy to show off a helmet belonging to Juan de Grijalva and a sword that belonged to Francisco de Belalcázar, "an ancestor of mine." (Archaeology or Art History to notice the artifacts, followed by Oral History.)



This scene occurs if the Investigators seek out Francisco de la Vega (probably to ask permission to cross his lands or interview him about the Domínguez expedition) or if de la Vega seeks out the Investigators (to warn them off their journey). However they come to meet him, the Investigators are invited to dine with Francisco de la Vega, head of a wealthy family of henequen farmers and jungle explorers, in his palatial neoclassical mansion in northern Mérida.

Francisco de la Vega is a middle-aged plutocrat and land baron (and cultist), proud of his heritage and station in life, accustomed to getting his own way. He's charming, erudite, and witty in a practiced and polished way. He dresses in handsome tailored suits over blue shirts, and sports a slender mustache. He's generous with food (grilled chicken and vegetables) and

3. Dining With Francisco

drink (beers and tequila), but he's no debauchee. He's eager to hear stories of adventure from the Investigators but quick to politely halt tales of gore or violence. (*"How dreadful! I'm glad you're still with us, friend."*) At least during this meal with the Investigators, Francisco de la Vega should seem almost too good to be true.

Francisco de la Vega is eager to talk about the artifacts and treasures in his home when characters with **Archaeology** or **Art History** notice Mayan stone fragments, a rusty helmet in the fashion of a Spanish conquistador, or a handsome decorative sword. **Oral History** gets him talking. The Mayan fragments are gathered from sites throughout the Yucatán "where they are often found laying on the ground, broken off the walls they once adorned by years of harsh weather," he says. *"These are willed to the Museum of Anthropology, but I hold on to them for now."* The helmet belonged to the conquistador Juan de Grijalva or one of his lieutenants, while the fine, decorative sword "was prized by an ancestor of mine, the conquistador Francisco de Belalcázar, for whom I am named" de la Vega says with a smile. Francisco de la Vega is happy to explain that his Spanish side of the family lived in Cuba for many years before settling in Mérida and intermarrying with the locals. *"I am proud to have both Spanish and Mayan blood in my history."*

This meal with Francisco may also be awkward, because it's unclear whether he knows *why* the previous expedition was bound for Chichén Xoxul or whether he knows anything about the Mouths. (He doesn't.) And, of course, it's quite possible that everyone at the lunch or dinner table is lying to someone else. Francisco misrepresents the truth about Chichén Xoxul (*"It's just a few crumbled walls and an old well, I'm afraid."*) with such aplomb that **Assess Honesty** reads only that Francisco is withholding information. He says he gave the previous expedition permission to cross the de la Vega land because they asked politely.

Meanwhile, the Investigators might not tell Francisco the truth about why they're headed for Chichén Xoxul. If they do lie, ask the players what Investigative abilities they're using to build their lies. This is partly to color in the details, but they also have an opportunity to alter the force with which Francisco opposes them later on (in the scene **"Ambush!"** on p. 324). The actual Investigative ability or abilities used is practically irrelevant; what matters are how many points they're willing to spend from the abilities to make their lies sound real. (The exceptions are **Occult** and Cthulhu Mythos: Occult makes Francisco wary that the Investigators may know too much, while Cthulhu Mythos cannot be used in this situation at all.) Use the following guidelines, increasing the point costs by 1 if the Investigators are obviously hardened, gun-toting troublemakers.

- **No spend:** The Investigators hardly back up their lies at all. Francisco, quietly insulted that they think him a fool, assumes they're dangerous or reckless and deploys maximum force to eliminate them later on.

- **1-point spend:** The Investigators put forth a pretty good story about why they seek Chichén Xoxul (or the previous expedition), but Francisco knows it's just a story. Still, he thinks the Investigators can be dealt with the same way as Domínguez's expedition and acts accordingly.

- **2-point spend:** The Investigators paint a picture so convincing that Francisco thinks the Investigators might be telling the truth about why they seek the ruins or the previous expedition. He sends a smaller force after them in the jungle, believing them to be less of a threat.

All of this assumes that the Investigators attempt to make themselves seem innocuous to Francisco. If they portray themselves instead as heroes on a quest or troubleshooters out to help Francisco, their point spends may have similar effects (insofar as Francisco believes they are not out to tap the mystical power of Chichén Xoxul), but you'll have to adapt Francisco's behavior to suit their approach.

Francisco is quick to encourage the Investigators to quit their quest. *"It is too dangerous in those woods. The jungle swallows up people more often than you might think,"* he says. Then: *"Already your [friends/rivals/enemies] have been captured or killed by bandits,"* or, *"Officially, the war has been over for 20 years, yet still theYucatán is home to squads of bandits."* He ends with this question: *"Why take such a risk?"* Let the Investigators answer that question for dramatic effect. (It goes toward the theme of the scenario.)

Once it's clear that the Investigators are going into the jungle, Francisco attempts to help them find a proper guide. If the characters represent themselves as being allies of the previous expedition, Francisco sees them as victims-in-waiting and plans to have them undone in the jungle — he recommends they travel with Pablo Garza (see **Yucatán 4, "Recruiting Pablo Garza,"** p. 317), so they can all be gunned down in the jungle. If the characters represent themselves as competitors, rivals, or enemies of the previous expedition, Francisco is a little more cautious — he recommends they travel with Guillermo Castillo (see **Yucatán 5, "Recruiting Guillermo Castillo,"** p. 318), so that Francisco has a man inside their expedition.

In neither case does Francisco recommend the Investigators hire Rick Luke. If asked about Rick Luke, de la Vega says, *"He's an eager and, I suppose, capable-enough fellow, but he doesn't know these jungles as well as he thinks he does."*

If asked about the Domínguez guide, Jacinto Expósito, Francisco looks sad and says, *"A good man. He's knows those lands better than anyone in Mérida. I hope he's all right."* **Assess Honesty** suggests that Francisco is holding back somehow.

Francisco stays polite, even if he's disappointed when the Investigators insist on finding Chichén Xoxul or the previous expedition. Though Investigators may presume that they convince Francisco with Flattery, he grants permission to cross his lands just as long as the Investigators aren't plainly there to steal. Francisco the cult leader seeks to maintain the image of Francisco the generous but naive plutocrat, after all, and Francisco the businessman doesn't believe there is any danger in the jungle except for bandits.

Still, he says: *"I mean no offense, but I hope that no one comes looking for your expedition in the future."* (Of course, **Assess Honesty** detects that as the truth.)

Francisco de la Vega

Three Things: Movie-star handsome. Old-fashioned haircut. Relaxed and languid.

Abilities: Athletics 7, Firearms 4, Health 6, Riding 5, Scuffling 5, Weapons 7

Weapon: +1 (long, delicate sword)

Sussing Out Abilities

For a longer interview process, have the Investigators use abilities to quiz their potential hires, asking them questions to gauge their knack for key skills. For example, a character can ask a question about **Outdoorsman** or **Theology** to see how well a potential hire is trained in those abilities. In response, you can tell the player something like, "Guillermo offers a laconic but reasonable answer," or "Rick sounds more than capable in that area."

Alternately, you can just give the players the statistical abilities that each potential guide has (maybe written out on a note card) and leave the interview to determining a guide's personality and style. It depends on how you want to spend your time and how confident you want the players to feel in their choice. For greater confidence and simplicity, show the stats. For greater suspense and immersion, allude to the stats.

Note that these guides have Investigative abilities just to express their strengths, not to steal the spotlight from the Investigators.

4. Recruiting Pablo Garza

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Finding out about Garza either from local experts (Yucatán 2, "The Previous Expedition," p. 313) or de la Vega (Yucatán 3, "Dining With Francisco," p. 315).

Summary: The Investigators interview Pablo Garza and perhaps offer him a role in their expedition.

Core Clue: Pablo is uneasy with the jungle immediately surrounding Chichén Xoxul. He jokes about it being haunted… but he's only sort of joking.

This short scene covers an interview with Pablo Garza, a potential hire for the job of guide into the Yucatán jungle. This scene presents the truth about Pablo Garza and sketches out how he acts. Playing him is ultimately your job, so make decisions and provide additional dialogue for him as you see fit, given his background and statistics.

Pablo Garza is a jungle guide with a little experience in the area surrounding Chichén Xoxul, but with excellent instincts and many months logged in the jungle overall. He's cheaper to hire than the other options but also the most wary about visiting Chichén Xoxul himself. He knows the local jungles, knows the language and the folklore, and he's not directly affiliated with the previous expedition. He speaks only Spanish and Mayan (not English).

Pablo, 33, is an honest man covering up a bit of fear borne of wisdom. He's a superstitious sort (which maybe the Investigators can appreciate) in a profession that doesn't necessarily reward superstition. Pablo's torn between his superstition and his desire to prove himself unafraid (and earn good money for his family). *"They say Chichén Xoxul is haunted,"* he might say, *"if you believe that sort of thing."* Does Pablo believe it? *"I know the jungle well, but there's plenty in it I can't explain yet."* (That's a yes.)

Pablo doesn't know quite what to do if subject to Flattery himself. He smiles, showing off a couple of missing teeth, and shrugs. He responds to **Oral History** with stories about his

nieces and nephews or a bit about the Caste War and how dangerous it was for his Mayan father. **Intimidation** bullies Pablo into taking action but also encourages him to leave the Investigators to their fates when things get ugly later on. **Reassurance** restores his nerve for a while and might repair the damage done by another Investigator's Intimidation attempt.

Credit Rating 1+ is required to hire Pablo. If hired alone, he brings one porter per Investigator along with him to carry supplies. He figures that's enough for such a short expedition, presuming the Investigators won't stay too long at Chichén Xoxul (or are coming back once they find Domínguez's people).

Pablo's purpose as a character is to provide a sensible, wary voice that can deliver warnings to the Investigators as you see fit. He grows ever more anxious as he draws closer to Chichén Xoxul. The good news is he's not a turncoat.

Pablo Garza

Three Things: Missing his left little finger. Often looks around before he speaks. Squints when he smiles.

Investigative Abilities: Architecture 1, Bargain 1, Biology 1, Craft 1, Credit Rating 1, Flattery 1, History 1, Languages 1 (Mayan), Outdoorsman 3, Streetwise 1

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Driving 4, Firearms 4, First Aid 4, Fleeing 6, Health 4, Mechanical Repair 2, Riding 5, Stability 4, Scuffling 3, Sense Trouble 6, Stealth 5, Weapons 3

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +0 (light revolver), +1 (machete)

The Recruitment Montage

Want to run scenes #4, #5, and #6 as a montage? It's easy. Even though all three scenes don't actually happen simultaneously, you can play them simultaneously. Just let the Investigators ask questions of each potential guide in any order, so if they think of a good question for Pablo Garza, they can ask it of Rick Luke, even if they technically questioned Luke first. This is the RPG version of cross-cutting between different conversations for comedic or dramatic effect.

One tip for making this feel like a proper montage: Allow only one question per potential guide before moving on to the next guide. (You can always cut back to an earlier interview.) This keeps things moving and feeling like a cinematic trick. It might even be as simple as having the Investigators ask a question and then showing the contrasting answers that each of the guides offers up.

For example, the Investigators might ask how the guide handles himself in a fight. You reply with each guide's answer in turn: *"I try to avoid them, señor,"* says Pablo. *"I don't get into fights in the jungle,"* says Guillermo, *"that's what bars are for."* And Rick: *"I do all right,"* he says with a smile.

5. Recruiting Guillermo Castillo

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Finding out about Castillo either from local experts (Yucatán 2, "The Previous Expedition," p. 313) or de la Vega (Yucatán 3, "Dining With Francisco," p. 315).

Summary: The Investigators interview Guillermo Castillo and perhaps offer him a role in their expedition.

Core Clue: "Of course the jungle is dangerous. Jaguars live around those old ruins. But I've been through that jungle a dozen times, and nothing bad has ever happened to me."

This short scene covers an interview with Guillermo Castillo, a potential hire for the job of guide into the Yucatán jungle. This scene presents the truth about Guillermo and sketches out how he acts. Playing him is ultimately your job, so make decisions and provide additional dialogue for him as you see fit, given his background and statistics.

Guillermo Castillo is a woodsman and professional guide with years of experience working with Francisco de la Vega and his lands. Guillermo's a member of de la Vega's cult and knows enough to make offerings to Golxumal when in the right parts of the jungle and to stay clear of creepy ancient ruins… unless the money is good. He knows exactly where the investigators are headed, he knows local living languages (but isn't interested in folklore), and he has friends who were porters on the original expedition.

At 41 years old, Guillermo is the most experienced of the three available guides. He doesn't think very much of the competition, particularly Rick Luke *("Never trust a gringo with two first names,"* he says), and he's not above badmouthing them to get the job going into the jungle. Whatever the Investigators are paying for the trip, Francisco de la Vega is offering more in cash and luxuries to make things go the way *he* wants them to.

Guillermo reads as a bit of a liar to **Assess Honesty**, but maybe he just talks a big game? (Give the Investigators a fair chance to distrust and not hire Guillermo, but don't just label him







an outright liar — he's too good a liar for that.) Bargain has no effect on Guillermo: *"Things cost what they cost."* Flattery amuses him but wins little favor: *"Yes, and I'm also very handsome,"* he might say with the slightest grin. Intimidation causes him to shake his head and go on with his business: *"When we're on the other side of this trip you wanted to take, then maybe you can try scaring me."* **Oral History** gets him to idly tell horror stories about broken bones, poison berries, and venomous snakes: *"The jungle is a dangerous place, I guess my point is."* Reassurance makes Guillermo suspicious: *"Don't let your guard down."*

Credit Rating 2+ is required to hire Guillermo. He brings six porters with him, carrying a lean amount of gear. (Investigators can make an **Outdoorsman** spend to see that Guillermo has actually packed light — he doesn't expect this trip to last more than three or four days.) Guillermo's porters are all low-ranking cultists of Golxumal.

Guillermo's purpose as a character is to generate peril and sow seeds of distrust in the expedition before he ultimately turns on the Investigators. Play him like a villain and the jig will be up. Play him like a good guy and the Investigators may not have fair warning. You have to walk Guillermo down the middle ground — a funny hard-ass that isn't exactly trustworthy but is entertaining and comforting to have around. The players should say, "I want him on *our* side," and maybe their characters will follow.

Guillermo Castillo

Three Things: Arches one eyebrow. Shrugs casually. Isn't afraid of pain.

Investigative Abilities: Archaeology 1, Astronomy 1, Bargain 1, Biology 1, Credit Rating 2, Intimidation 2, Languages 2 (English, Mayan), Occult 1, Outdoorsman 3, Reassurance 1, Streetwise 2

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Conceal 3, Driving 4, Filch 2, Firearms 6, First Aid 3, Fleeing 4, Health 5, Mechanical Repair 3, Riding 3, Stability 6, Scuffling 8, Sense Trouble 4, Stealth 4, Weapons 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +1 (shotgun), +1 (machete)

6. Recruiting Rick Luke

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Finding out about Luke from local experts (Yucatán 2, "The Previous Expedition," p. 313).

Summary: The Investigators interview Rick Luke and perhaps offer him a role in their expedition.

Core Clue: Rick has survived jungle treks all throughout the Americas. "This is just a new challenge, as it was for the conquistadors and as it was for Doctor Cartwright in 1846. It may not be easy, but it'll be good fun!"

This short scene covers an interview with Rick Luke, a potential hire for the job of guide into the Yucatán jungle. This scene presents the truth about Rick Luke and sketches out how he acts. Playing him is ultimately your job, so make decisions and provide additional dialogue for him as you see fit, given his background and statistics.

Rick Luke is an American explorer and adventurer looking for a breakthrough. He's in Mérida by coincidence, having just come back from taking pictures at Uxmal. He's never been to Chichén Xoxul, of course, but he's eager to see it — he's got explorer Arthur Cartwright's book that mentions it, back home in Pennsylvania — and he knows jungle travel and survival quite well. He's capable, he's trained in archaeology and the local languages, and he's ready for adventure.

Just 30 years old, Rick Luke is a pistol with a shiny smile. He sees himself less as a guide and more as a tagalong comrade with valuable skills: the Mayan language and a clear notion of just where Chichén Xoxul is, just from asking the locals. Rick's hope isn't only to get good photos of Chichén Xoxul but to rewrite the book on the place.

Assess Honesty easily detects Rick's occasional exaggerations for what they are; he's otherwise an honest guy. A 1-point **Bargain** spend can talk Rick Luke into tagging along with the expedition as a cohort, rather than a guide, and paying his own way for the privilege. **Flattery** works wonders with Rick; it's a good way to get him to take a risk no one else wants to take. Intimidation, however, just puts Rick into offensive mode; he goes nose to nose with anyone who thinks they can boss him around. **Oral History** coaxes out tales of college shenanigans and previous trips throughout Mexico: *"She's my one true love, Mexico, and I want to spend the rest of my life with her."* **Reassurance** goes quietly appreciated but loudly brushed off: *"Thanks all the same, sport, but I'm fine."*

Credit Rating 3+ is required to hire Rick, though **Bargain** can lower that to Credit Rating 2+ (Rick's not coming along for the money). He hires more porters than necessary — two more than there are Investigators — unless the Investigators tell him not to. His porters are all well paid Mérida-area mestizos who aren't afraid of the folklore surrounding the place. Rick packs for a good week in the jungle, figuring, *"Whether we find friends out there or not, we are* going *to find Chichen Xoxul, and there'll be lots to look at."*

Rick Luke's purpose as a character is to be confident despite the peril, marching ahead into danger with delight. After that, his purpose is to either break from the stress or suffer a sad fate that warns the Investigators of danger. Poor Rick Luke exists not to generate peril but to demonstrate its dangers.

Rick Luke

Three Things: Loves a challenge. Shakes everyone's hand. Picks his teeth.

Investigative Abilities: Anthropology 1, Archaeology 1, Art History 1, Bargain 1, Biology 1, Credit Rating 5, History 1, Languages 3 (French, Mayan, Spanish), Library Use 1, Oral History 1, Outdoorsman 3, Reassurance 2, Streetwise 1

General Abilities: Athletics 8, Driving 5, Firearms 5, Filch 4, First Aid 3, Fleeing 4, Health 5, Mechanical Repair 4, Piloting 3, Riding 3, Stability 5, Scuffling 5, Sense Trouble 4, Stealth 4, Weapons 4

Alertness Modifier: +1

Weapon: +1 (M1911 pistol), +1 (machete)

The Porters

No matter who hires them or how many they are, the porters are background characters with identical game statistics:

Abilities: Athletics 5, Firearms 2, Fleeing 6, Health 2, Scuffling 4, Weapons 2

Weapon: −1 (improvised club or walking stick), +1 (machete)



7. Into the Jungle

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Setting out into the jungle in search of Chichén Xoxul (Yucatán 4, "Recruiting Pablo Garza," p. 317, Yucatán 5, "Recruiting Guillermo Castillo," p. 318, or Yucatán 6, "Recruiting Rick Luke," p. 319).

Summary: The Investigators experience a bit of their trek and get a glimpse of what to expect from their guide(s).



This short scene's simple purpose is to traverse the time between Mérida and the jungle, and to give you and the players a chance to interact with the guides and assembled porters a bit. Use this scene to share some exposition from the guides, about the jungle, about Chichén Xoxul, about Francisco de Belalcázar, or any other topic you want to foreshadow or underline. This is the calm before the storm.

Presumably the Investigators set out in the early morning, as their guides surely recommend. After the drive, they should expect two days of hiking to reach Chichén Xoxul, covering about 18 miles per day, which will get them to Chichén Xoxul late on the second day.

The guides drive the Investigators out into the jungle in a yellow pickup truck, down a simple, muddy road before turning right down a narrow path that ends in a rocky ten-foot drop-off. There, at the top of the drop-off, a light-green pickup truck sits silently with its doors open. *"That's probably one of the trucks the previous expedition came in,"* the guide says. *"Looks like it's been looted."*

Evidence Collection discovers nothing of interest around the truck save for layers of shallow boot prints damaged by rain. The lack of other evidence is probably a result of looting and weather. Another set of tire tracks reveals another vehicle was on site, but the trail has been washed away by rain since then.

Mechanical Repair or **Electrical Repair** notes dangling wires that suggest someone tried to hotwire the truck but didn't know how to — or maybe just wasn't trying very hard.

(In truth, Expósito and his men came back and cleaned out the trucks before driving off in the other truck. They messed with the ignition to make it look like someone without the keys had tried to take the truck.)

"We'd better get moving," the guide eventually says. *"Put some miles behind us before it gets dark."* The guides then lead the Investigators into the jungle on what looks like a narrow, irregular path. **Outdoorsman** recognizes it as something other than a game trail; it might be a path used by humans now and again, but not with any great regularity.

8. The Stone

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: After traveling about half a day (Yucatán 7, "Into the Jungle," p. 320).

Summary: The characters discover an ominous stone marker on their path into the jungle, which helps to reveal a bit about their guides (and maybe themselves).

Core Clue: This reveals a hint about the personality of each guide.

Core Clue: The stone is a sign that they're entering the dominion of the Xoxul. These are not Mayan carvings — the Xoxul are a distinct cultural group working in stone so as to be understood by the Maya but are not truly Mayan themselves. (Archaeology, Anthropology, or Art History.)

About halfway into the first day of the expedition, the Investigators discover a stone marker in the jungle. Almost nine feet tall, the marker is intricately carved but badly weathered by rain and deeply settled in the mud. **Archaeology**, **Anthropology**, or **Art History** recognizes the carvings as Mayan-like, depicting warriors in cotton armor standing on the backs of decapitated Mayan bodies, snakes slithering forth from their open necks. The snakes depict blood. The warriors are holding a severed head up toward the top of the marker, with pride. The marker itself is a warning to Mayans — the Investigators are about to enter lands once claimed by the Xoxul.

Archaeology or **Craft** notices that the marker was once taller; some stone has been broken off the top of it. Perhaps it was whatever the warriors were offering the severed head to?

Each guide reacts differently to the marker:

- Pablo gets nervous. *"Be careful. Be quiet. We don't want to be caught by Xoxul — er, I mean bandits — past this point."* (If pressed, he clarifies: *"Ghosts of the Xoxul haunt these woods, they say."*)
- Guillermo brushes right by it saying, *"This way. It just means we're on the right path."*
- Rick stops to take a rubbing of it and discuss its origins and meanings. He smiles and says, *"It's a warning for the Maya! Fantastic find."*



9. The Storm

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: After traveling until the late afternoon of the first day (Yucatán 8, "The Stone," p. 321).

Summary: A storm creates difficulties for overland travel and reveals still more about the guides the characters have chosen.



Late in the afternoon of the first day, a storm blows in unexpectedly. Characters with the **Outdoorsman** ability are baffled by it — no storm was supposed to be in the area for days. Whatever the storm is, it can't last long.

Yet the jungle trembles with falling rain. The trail turns to a muddy rivulet. Clothes soak up the weirdly cold water. It becomes all but impossible to see more than ten or twenty feet ahead in the downpour.

The Investigators may either make camp or press on. If they press on, have each Investigator make a Difficulty 4 **Athletics** test, rolling one at a time according to marching order. If two characters are side by side, they roll at the same time. The first character(s) to fail slip off the trail and slide down a shallow slope, banging into tree trunks and huge boulders along the way. This fall deals −1 damage and ends with a slam into another nine-foot-tall stone marker at the bottom of the hill.

The marker, thick with mud and vines, seems almost identical to the previous marker, but this one contains a portion of the top segment that was broken off the first: **Archaeology**, **Anthropology**, or **Art History** makes out a wide, frog-like mouth reaching down with a grasping tongue to devour the offered head. The main body the mouth belongs to has been worn away or broken off, however.

If characters fall down the hill, the guides respond:

• Pablo is cautious and helpful. *"Wait here!"* he says, spending 3 points of Athletics to make it safely down the hill to check on injured characters.

• Guillermo is coldly indifferent. *"Get them out of there,"* he says to another Investigator. *"Tell them we can meet up together up ahead."*

• Rick is reckless and helpful. *"Hold on!"* he yells down the hill and then leaps into action, spending 3 points of Athletic to rush down the hill. *"They're all right!"* he yells back up. *"And, hey, we've found something!"*

The hill path meets up with the main path a few hundred feet ahead, so characters don't have to scale the hill in the rain to regroup.

10. The Interloper

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Making camp in the jungle (Yucatán 9, "The Storm," p. 322). Play this scene to foreshadow the follow-up scenes and dramatize the Investigators' night in the jungle.

Summary: The Investigators discover a shadowy figure speaking with their guide, but the figure vanishes before it can be investigated properly. Each guide reacts differently to the encounter.

Core Clue: Pablo is *this close* to leaving the expedition and going back to Mérida. (Assess Honesty.)

Core Clue: Guillermo is lying when he says he doesn't know what the interloper wanted. (Assess Honesty.)

Core Clue: Rick is telling the truth when he says the interloper tried to buy him off — but he wants more money to keep going now. (Assess Honesty.)



This optional scene can be tricky to deploy. Use it only if your players are comfortable letting a mystery go for a bit; if they obsess, this scene could trigger an unnecessary tangent or distract from the mission to Chichén Xoxul. Play this scene to foreshadow later dangers and dramatize a night in the jungle. Skip it in favor of a leaner adventure.

After the Investigators have made camp in the jungle, and the woods have shrunk in around them to the aura of the firelight, one of them notices that their guide is missing. (Make it the Investigator who needs the most spotlight time right now or the one who rolls best on a **Sense Trouble** test.) Calling out for him summons him out of the gloom beyond the fire's glow. Searching for him more quietly (and overcoming a Difficulty 4 **Stealth** test) reveals something else: the guide is speaking with someone out in the nighttime jungle. Investigators can identify the language spoken as Mayan if they are trained in **Anthropology** or have been in a scene with a Mayan-speaking character previously.

No matter how good the Investigator's **Stealth** test result is, the person speaking to the guide disappears into the jungle just as the Investigator gets close enough to make out details or specific words.

If more than one guide is present, Guillermo is the only one who speaks with the shadowy figure. When a guide is questioned, either about wandering off or about whom he was speaking with, each reacts differently:

- Pablo comes back worried. *"We shouldn't be out here.We're not welcome here,"* he says. *"Come morning, you can find Chichén Xoxul to the southeast, most of a day's hike away. But I'm going back to the trucks with the porters.We'll wait there for you for two days."* A 2-point spend of **Intimidation** or **Reassurance** (or some combination of them between one or two Investigators) convinces Pablo and the porters to stay. Who was Pablo speaking with? *"I don't know,"* he says. *"Maybe a ghost."* **Assess Honesty** suggests that even Pablo isn't sure if he's telling the truth or not.

- Guillermo comes back like everything's fine, but **Assess Honesty** reveals more. *"I went out to pee. So what?"* (That's true.) Who was Guillermo speaking with? *"No one. I don't know what you think you saw."* (That's a lie.) Nothing short of a 3-point **Interrogation** or **Intimidation** spend (any combination of points from those two abilities, from one or more Investigators, will do) gets Guillermo to talk. Even then, the best he'll say is this: *"It was Expósito, the guide from the previous expedition. He wanted us to turn back."* (That's true, but it's not all of it: Expósito and Guillermo agreed to an ambush outside Chichén Xoxul the next day.) Guillermo knows that Francisco might have him killed if he leads the Investigators to Chichén Xoxul, so even if the Investigators threaten to kill Guillermo, he doesn't budge. Expósito may be watching to save him, anyway. (Though he isn't.) This should give the Investigators ample reasons to watch Guillermo, preventing him from killing the Investigators in their sleep (see **Yucatán 11, "It's a Trap!"**).

- Rick Luke comes back with a conflicted look on his face. *"I was just threatened when I went out to take a leak,"* he says frankly. *"Bandits, I think. They want us to turn back. If you want me to lead us any farther,"* he says, *"I'm going to need more money."* **Assess Honesty** shows he's truthful. Obviously, the Investigators probably don't have cash with them, but Rick wants the promise of a 3-point **Credit Rating** spend when they get back to Mérida or else he's going back in the morning. To convince him that the Credit Rating spend will be made requires a 1-point **Reassurance** spend on the spot. Alternately, a 2-point **Flattery** spend keeps him and his porters on the case for the next day, regardless of the money.

11. It's a Trap!

Scene Type: Core / Trap / Challenge

Lead-ins: Guillermo's clandestine meeting (Yucatán 10, "The Interloper," p. 322).

Summary: The Investigators are lured into a trap! They're attacked and left for dead in the jungle.

Core Clue: Guillermo Castillo has turned on the Investigators. (Interrogation or Intimidation.)

This scene only occurs if the Investigators are traveling with Guillermo on or after the first night of the expedition. In this scene, Guillermo turns on the Investigators in one of two ways:

Assassination in the Night

If the Investigators leave Guillermo alone to watch over the camp during the first night of the expedition, or if no one stays awake at all, Guillermo takes a machete to the Investigators as they sleep on the ground or in their hammocks, and then flees into the jungle when they strike back. Guillermo's first target is whichever Investigator was meanest or least cooperative with him. If no one stands out, Guillermo goes after whomever he thinks is most likely to kill him in a stand-up fight. Allow the targeted Investigator a Difficulty 6 **Sense Trouble** test to wake up as Guillermo stands over him or her, whispering a quiet prayer to Golxumal. If the character wakes, Guillermo immediately makes a Weapons attack against the character (whose Hit Threshold is reduced by 1 for being virtually helpless) and rolls damage as normal. If the character doesn't wake, Guillermo automatically hits and deals 7 points of damage, at which point the Investigator doubtlessly starts screaming and fighting back. Other Investigators then wake without needing tests of their own.

On Guillermo's next turn (if he lives that long), he flees south, into the jungle, to lead the Investigators to…

The Pit Traps

If Guillermo doesn't attack during the night, or if he must flee into the jungle for any reason, he attempts to lead the Investigators toward a field of pit traps laid out for just such an occasion.

If the Investigators are following Guillermo as a guide at this point, let them know that they seem to be heading south, not southeast, despite the original plan. A 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend makes a character certain that the ground to the east and southeast is easy to travel and that they're off any sort of trail — they're headed in the wrong direction. Then Guillermo takes off, suddenly running into the jungle (hoping to lead the Investigators into a pit trap). The smart play is to let him go and resume course toward Chichén Xoxul.

The pit traps don't come into play until the *second* round of any chase involving Guillermo. Thus it's possible to lose him or catch him without dealing with the traps. The **Athletics** and **Fleeing**

Difficulty for all characters involved in the chase is 5 by day, 6 by night.

Investigators pursuing a fleeing Guillermo, day or night, can make a 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend to notice that Guillermo is zigging and zagging through the woods, hopping up on rocks and fallen limbs like he's trying to avoid patches of ground. Characters so informed can give chase without falling into pit traps.

Characters who chase Guillermo without following him carefully can make a Difficulty 4 **Sense Trouble** test to notice pit traps before they fall into them (telltale patches of palm leaves give them away). Otherwise, Investigators pursuing Guillermo must make a Difficult 6 **Athletics** test to grab the edge of a pit or fall to the sharpened wooden spikes six feet below. Falling Investigators get pierced by one or two spikes (on a die, 1–4 = 1 spike, 5–6 = 2 spikes), each of which deals +0 damage.

There are only three pit traps along Guillermo's path.

Interrogating Guillermo

Guillermo fights to kill and to the death unless the Investigators specifically say they are restraining him. If captured, he goes quiet and looks for the first chance to escape. **Interrogation** or **Intimidation** only gets him to reveal this: *"No one who does not revere or impress Golxumal makes it out of Chichén Xoxul alive. I don't think he'll find* you *too impressive."*

12. Ambush!

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Nearing Chichén Xoxul (Yucatán 10, "The Interloper," p. 322, or Yucatán 11, "It's a Trap!" p. 323).

Summary: The Investigators are ambushed by bandits or assassins in the midst of the jungle. Which way do they choose to flee?

Core Clue: Pablo or Rick are as surprised as they are. (Assess Honesty.)



This scene only occurs if the Investigators are not traveling with Guillermo Castillo (or if Guillermo is their prisoner). In this scene, Expósito and other men loyal to de la Vega and Golxumal ambush the Investigators just outside of Chichén Xoxul in an attempt to shoot them dead or drive them off.

The Investigators are outgunned in this scene, and their NPC companions tell them as much. It's up to the Investigators whether they scatter into the jungle or flee toward Chichén Xoxul. Note this:

The jungle opens up just ahead and you can make out, in the sunlight falling through the broken canopy, high stone walls and the top of a pyramid of dark gray stone, all choked with vines.

Be careful with this scene, though. It may be a fine bit of added action or it may turn the Investigators back completely. *Your* goal isn't to turn the Investigators around (that's de la Vega's goal). Your goal is either to show the Investigators that the bandits won't follow them into Chichén Xoxul or to get the Investigators to express their desire to reach Chichén Xoxul even though it is dangerous and they are unwanted.

To that end, it is up to you exactly how dangerous the men in the jungle are. They may scatter if met with serious resistance (like, say, tommy guns), or they may take prisoners, only to strip the Investigators of weapons and throw them into Chichén Xoxul as sacrifices. Be ready for anything.

Investigators that succeed on a **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 5) hear the familiar sound of bolt-action rifles being readied in the jungle just before the ambushers start firing. Those Investigators can shout warnings, run, or take cover before the ambushers (as the aggressors) get their first actions. Characters who succeed on the Sense Trouble test or spend one point of **Firearms** after the shooting starts can count the total number of shooters in the jungle.

The ambushers have at least twice as many men as there are Investigators (not including porters and guides), arranged with half to the north and half to the south of the path through the jungle. They probably shoot at whoever is in front first, though you might have them target guides or porters first (as nameless characters are usually the first victims in these kinds of scenes).

Pablo and his porters flee back away from Chichén Xoxul in this scene. *"Get out of here!"* he yells.

Rick Luke and one die roll's worth of porters flee toward Chichén Xoxul. *"Run!"* Rick yells. *"Into the ruins! Take cover!"*

Assess Honesty reveals that either guide's surprise is genuine.

The Investigators may flee in whichever direction they like. Once the Investigators reach Chichén Xoxul proper, the ambushers stop firing and do not give chase. They figure the beast of Golxumal or the Xoxul themselves will take care of them now. (And that, of course, is the purpose of the ambush, anyway.)

Ambushers

Athletics 6, Firearms 5, Health 4, Scuffling 5, Weapons 5

Hit Threshold: 3 (4 from cover in the jungle)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +1 (rifle), +1 (machete)

The "bandits" doing the ambushing in this scene are all from the same nearby village and worked as porters for the Domínguez expedition. They fight to the death and don't know much beyond the typical Golxumal cultist line: *"Stay out of Chichén Xoxul. Only those who revere or impress Golxumal make it out alive. One day Golxumal will return."*

They all know that Francisco de la Vega is the leader of the Golxumal cult, but no one says so unless they think their life depends on it. Even then, you might keep it a secret: *"If you don't kill me now, the god or our leader will have me killed for speaking to you. There is no running from Golxumal in Yucatán."* At your discretion, a 1-point spend in **Interrogation** or **Intimidation**, coupled with a mortal threat, gets the name Francisco de la Vega spoken or confirmed by a living bandit.

13. The Plaza

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Reaching Chichén Xoxul (Yucatán 11, "It's a Trap," p. 323, or Yucatán 12, "Ambush!" p. 324).

Summary: The characters explore the modest plaza of Chichén Xoxul.

Core Clue: The bandits from the jungle do not enter the grounds of Chichén Xoxul.

Core Clue: This site was probably built by Mayans and later captured or usurped by the Xoxul (Archaeology or Anthropology)

Core Clue: Some kind of creature, with jaws like a gigantic jaguar and some kind of caustic venom, stalks the grounds of Chichén Xoxul. (Evidence Collection to find a victim; Forensics to examine remains.)

This scene begins when the Investigators reach Chichén Xoxul, whether they're fleeing from a bloody ambush or marching in after a day spent hiking through the jungle. Given the distance through the jungle, it's likely that they reach Chichén Xoxul late in the day, around 3–4 p.m., giving them a few hours of sunlight yet to work with. If they've dawdled or hurried, adjust accordingly.

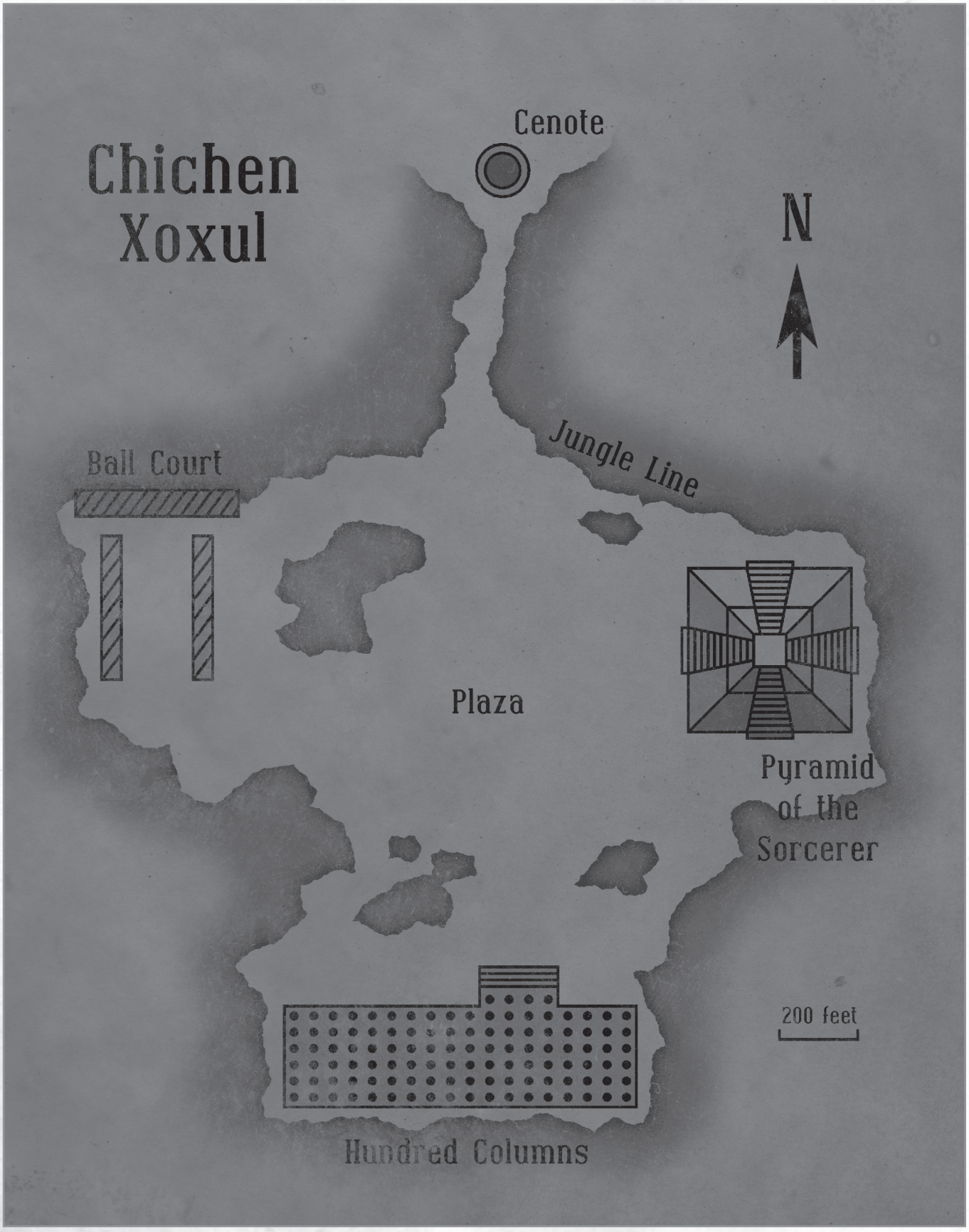
This scene gives the overview of the Chichén Xoxul site. The remaining scenes of this Locale are triggered as the Investigators move throughout the ruins. These scenes all branch off this central hub: the plaza at the heart of the ruins, which is surrounded by four main landmarks. To the northwest is the ball court. To the south are the Hundred Columns. To the east is the Pyramid of the Sorcerer. To the north is the sacred cenote. Many of these areas have sub-areas and scenes branching further off of them, but the plaza is where characters can congregate, orient themselves, and possibly encounter floating antagonist reaction scenes.

This is no manicured ruin prepared for visiting tourists. The grass is waist high in places and vines grip many of the ruins tight. The sky is visible through a gap in the jungle canopy above the plaza and the front of the low pyramid, which is just five or six storeys high.

Archaeology or **Anthropology** concludes that this was no city. This was a religious site, a place of ritual, intended for a select few to inhabit and possess. **Archaeology** and



13. The Plaza


Chichen Xoxul
Cenote
N
Jungle Line
Ball Court
Plaza
Pyramid of the Sorcerer
200 feet
Hundred Columns

14. The Ball Court

It's in the Subtext

At no point during the investigation of Chichén Xoxul is there a clue that says: "The Xoxul worship totally differently than the Cult of the Thousand Mouths does." Yet it's true — these are distinct cults with almost no ideological overlap. Let the players and their characters draw that conclusion at their own pace. It's part of the picture they're piecing together, after all.



Architecture agree that the spaces here are too small to house more than a few hundred people, either full time or for times of ritual. The whole site is like a miniaturized version of better-known Mayan locations.

Even from afar, it's easy to see that the nearby ruins sport elaborate Mayan stonework and façades, suggesting that the site was originally built by Mayan peoples before being bequeathed to — or more likely captured by — the Xoxul.

Outdoorsman determines easily that people have come through the plaza in recent days. Broken grasses and trampled weeds attest to that. **Biology** or **Outdoorsman** notices that, even though the sounds of the surrounding jungle are plain to hear, even birds do not dare enter the grounds of Chichén Xoxul. The only traces of an animal are dried stools suggesting a lizard-like animal the size of a lion, or larger still.

Evidence Collection uncovers the partial remains of a human man, from about the waist down, festering deep in the weeds near the heart of the plaza. Around his body are three spent rifle shells and a functional rifle with a broken stock and a half-full magazine of three more rounds. **Forensics** suggests the man was bitten once by something the size of a shark with jaguar-like teeth; a caustic fluid around the bite area seared the flesh, causing it to slide right off the bone. Blood stains suggest the other half of the human carcass wasn't dragged off but, rather, swallowed outright. **Biology** cannot conjure up any notion of an earthly creature that could make this bite — this realization, coupled with the remains, requires a 2-point non-Mythos Stability test from any Investigator who makes the realization or hears the realization made.

Other areas of Chichén Xoxul offer up additional clues.

14. The Ball Court

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Exploring the ball court site to the northwest (Yucatán 13, "The Plaza," p. 325).

Summary: The Investigators discover remains from the previous expedition and learn a bit about Xoxul sports and rituals.

Core Clue: The Xoxul were bloodier than their Mayan cousins, judging from the images carved into the ball-court walls. (Archaeology.)

Core Clue: The previous expedition's battle here was fierce; some folk were slain by arrows, others by powerful animal-like jaws. Some heads were torn free, but most were cut or chopped off. (Evidence Collection or Forensics.)



The ball court is a flat expanse of short grasses between two fifteen-foot-high walls of expertly laid stone, all sheathed in vines and moss. The stone hoops which the ball players would have aimed for still hang in the center of each wall. **Archaeology** recognizes this as a smaller ball court, compared to other sites, but more highly decorated than many others. Carvings along the walls of the ball court depict gruesome human sacrifices made to a sphere in the sky that **Theology** can say with confidence is not the sun or the moon, as both those stellar bodies would be immediately recognizable; whatever that is in the sky above the ball court is unknown in the Mayan religion.

Evidence Collection or **Forensics** suggests this may have been the last stand of the previous expedition — or simply the site of their slaughter. They plainly set up a modest camp here, and that camp was destroyed in a bloody battle. Empty shell casings lie in sticky pools of congealed blood, speckled with stuck flies. Headless bodies lie scattered throughout the area, in some cases shredded and torn apart by powerful jaws; most, however, had their heads cut or chopped off. Arrows jut from corpses, pinning khaki clothes to bloated bodies. A broken spear — still deadly — angles out from one sunken belly.

At least ten men died here and, judging from their clothing and gear, they were mostly members of the Cult of the Thousand Mouths. (Eight of them were, leaving two unaccounted for.) Each cultist has a canteen for water and a flask for sticky Nectar (verified by **Pharmacy** or **Chemistry**).

This is where the bulk of the previous expedition was waylaid by the Xoxul and the beast of Golxumal. It was ugly. After the beast came through and shredded a couple of expedition members, the Xoxul swarmed in and slew the rest. Then the Xoxul took the heads and placed them at the Hundred Columns part of the site, where they can be viewed both in Chichén Xoxul and in Golxumal.

15. The Hundred Columns

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Exploring the columns to the south (Yucatán 13, "The Plaza," p. 325).

Summary: The heads lost in the ball court are discovered here.

Core Clue: This place may have been a marketplace once, but now it is a gallery for skulls, old and new. (Architecture.)

Core Clue: The columns are carved with spells of victory and protection, but these are not really magical. (Theology or Occult.)

Core Clue: The display of enemy heads is both a warning and a statement of proud victory for Golxumal to see. (Theology.)

This huge, raised stone platform, decorated with stone (and real) human skulls, supports dozens and dozens of stone columns, perhaps marking a market area or gallery (according to **Architecture**). **Theology** or **Occult** recognizes scenes from Mayan folklore depicted on the floor here in addition to a procession of honored warriors carved life-size into the sides of the pillars. Spells of victory and protection — powerless now, if not always — are etched above the warriors' heads.

This is also where the Xoxul display the heads of the previous expedition's slaughtered porters and gunmen as a warning across time and space. A dozen rotting human heads are balanced on stone beams jutting from the columns here, often above figures who seem to hold them aloft (just like the figures on the stone marker in the jungle). **Theology** might associate these with the carvings in the ball court and note that these would be offered up to whatever globe or stellar body that was depicted over there; except in this case the globe isn't depicted — it's implied. Clearly severed heads are a major part of the Xoxul belief system, prized as trophies or sacrificial items for Golxumal.

If the characters have the photograph of Domínguez's expedition, from Mexico City, they can recognize several of the heads, including Domínguez himself.

(This is a fine place for the Xoxul or the beast of Golxumal to attack, if it hasn't yet.)

16. The Cenote

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Exploring the sacred cenote to the north (Yucatán 13, "The Plaza," p. 325).

Summary: The cenote was a sight of offerings and sacrifice to Golxumal.

Core Clue: Sacrifices would have been made here in ancient times. The caves at the bottom were used for worship and memorials. (Archaeology.)

Core Clue: Some cenotes are said to grant those who survive jumping into their waters prophetic visions or restoration. (Theology or Anthropology.)

To the north, a sacred cenote awaits new offerings. It is a deep natural well shaft, about 35 feet deep, with green waters at its bottom, where multiple cave mouths lead to a single massive natural cavern beyond. **Geology** tells a character that cenotes like this one are common throughout the Yucatán and usually connect to broader underground (or underwater) cave systems. **Archaeology** or another suitable ability notes that this cenote was regarded as a gateway for making offerings into Xibalba, the underworld, before the site was occupied by the Xoxul. Two bodies from the previous expedition lie at the cave mouths below, stuck with arrows. (**Forensics** determines, from above, that the dead were probably *not* shot from above, from the mouth of the cenote, but were shot before they leapt into the waters.) The bodies appear to be a Thousand-Mouth cultist and a porter.

Theology or **Anthropology** recalls that cenotes were sometimes said to grant prophetic visions to those who leapt in and did not drown. Others supposedly had healing powers or other restorative effects. Still others were simply water supplies for the surrounding site.

In this case, leaping into the water has a peculiar restorative effect: once per person per day, leaping into the cenote (not just climbing down into it) restores all the points in a single General ability other than Health, Sanity, or Stability.

The distance from jungle to the surface of the water below is about 20 feet. No ladder or rope leads down into the waters or the caves below. (Presumably the Investigators have some with them?) Climbing the walls of the cenote is possible, due to layers of cracks and years of handholds worn into the stone; that requires a Difficulty 5 **Athletics** test. Climbing a knotted rope requires a Difficulty 4 Athletics test. Climbing a ladder-like object out of the cenote (if one is somehow made or found) requires a Difficulty 2 Athletics test.

17. The Caves

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Reaching the caves off the cenote (Yucatán 16, "The Cenote," p. 328), through whatever means (Yucatán 21, "The Tombs," p. 333).

Summary: A survivor of the previous expedition may have taken refuge in these caves.

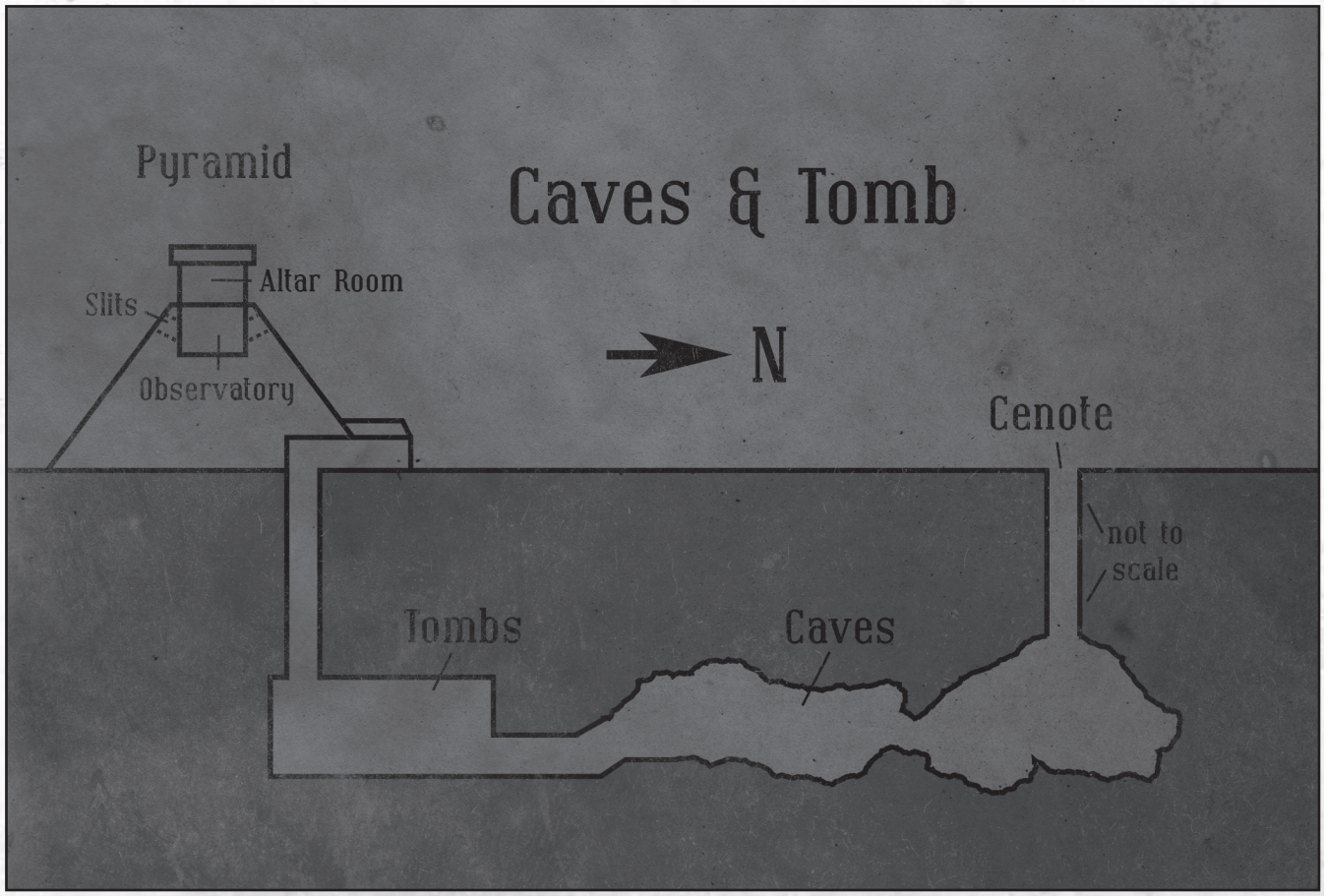
Core Clue: Many of the censers down here are made from unearthly stones, perhaps found in meteorites. (Geology.)

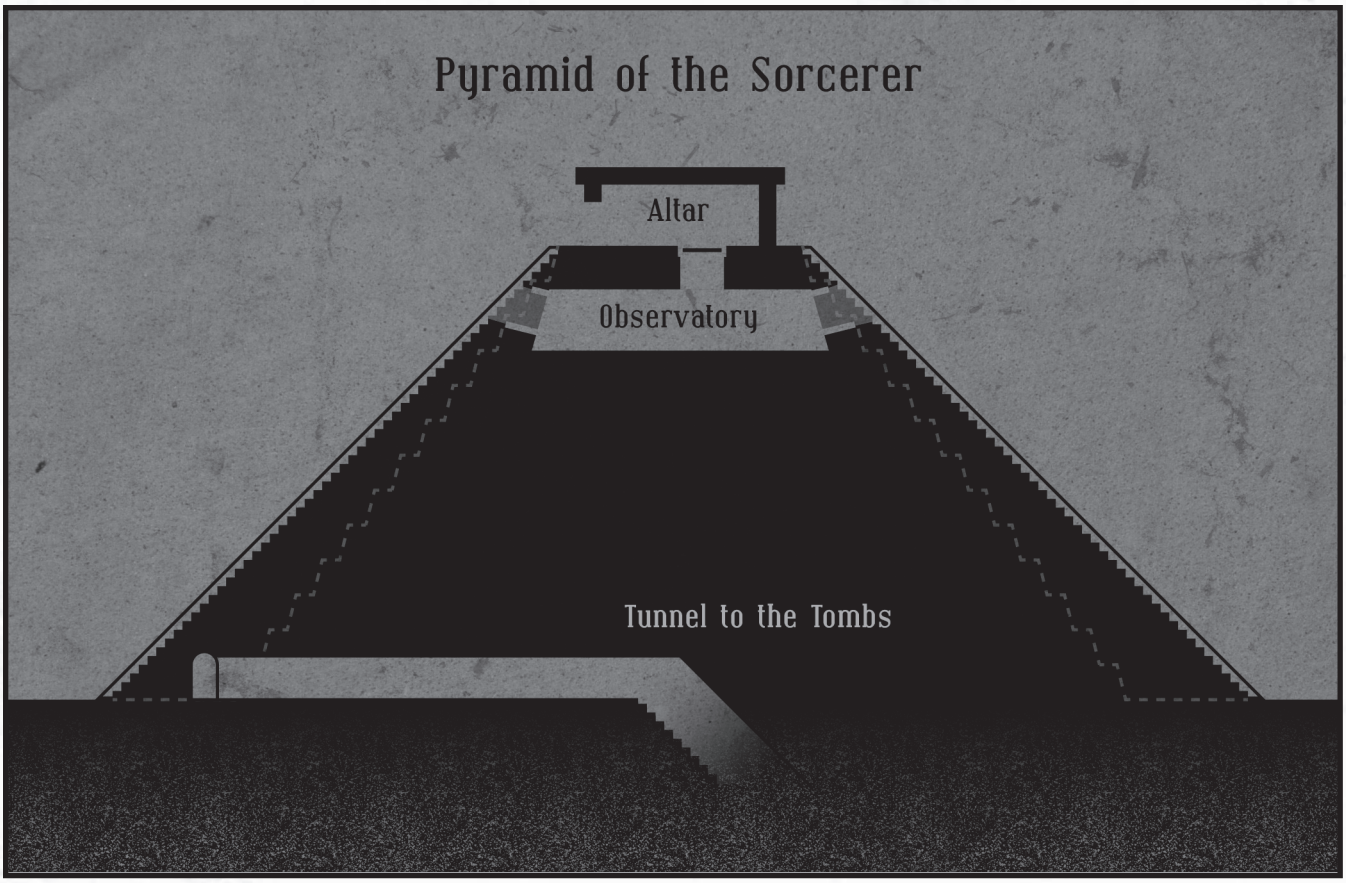
Play this scene when the Investigators reach the bottom of the cenote and enter the caves beyond, which lead back southeast to connect with the tombs beneath the pyramid. These caves exist to give off a few clues and offer another means to connect to the pyramid without being subject to attacks on the surface.

Optionally, these caves are home to a survivor from the previous expedition, who has dwelt down here living off of trail rations and fresh water. This Mayan porter, called Litos, exists just to give the Investigators any necessary exposition about the beast, the Xoxul, or the Domínguez expedition that you want to share but that hasn't gotten across to the PCs yet. This survivor can also meet a sad end in a later scene to demonstrate some other peril, such as the Xoxul themselves or the trap leading toward the tombs.

Within the cenote's damp caves are piles of ancient stone censers and human bones, many of them very old. (**Forensics** suspects they are three hundred years old at least; specifically, in truth, they're from 1524 and earlier.) **Theology** or **Archaeology** notes that these are in keeping with certain Mayan practices meant to honor the dead — further evidence that the Xoxul still incorporated some Maya traditions, at least for a time. Several of the censers kept down here in the caves are studded with strange stones, which **Geology** determines are unearthly metals, presumably fallen to earth in meteorites.

If the porter survivor is here, he says that the beast doesn't come down here because of the censers. (That's **Occult** folklore… but it happens to be true.) Five such censers are down here, painted with geometric patterns and inlaid with the space metals, amid other less remarkable pieces. Only **Archaeology**, **Craft**, or **Geology**





can spot the five special censers amid the dozens down here, and only after Geology has identified the weird metals in the porter's censer. Characters bearing the space-metal censers may be approached or followed by the beast of Golxumal, but it does not attack censer-bearers. (If incense or fragrant leaves are actually burned in the censers, it drives the beast temporarily back to Golxumal.)

The southeastern-most edge of the caves ends in a wall of fine stonework, punctuated by a narrow doorway. Beyond that, the tombs (p. 333) await.

18. The Pyramid of the Sorcerer

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Scaling the pyramid to the east (Yucatán 13, "The Plaza," p. 325).

Summary: The Investigators examine the Pyramid of the Sorcerer's base and stairs, leading up to its higher reaches.

Core Clue: The pyramid may have begun as a Mayan structure, usurped and appropriated by the Xoxul, implying that this territory went back and forth in ownership a few times. (Archaeology or Architecture, as well as Theology.)

Core Clue: The structure's carvings tells of a sorcerer who built the pyramid in just a day (along with a twin pyramid that night), then aligned it with the stars and, from his "nest" or "cage," made it so that Golxumal could see the pyramid. "The pyramid is both young and old." (Languages: Mayan)

This scene covers just the base and steps of the pyramid, which should properly be called the Pyramid of the Sorcerer (according to Dr. Arthur Cartwright's book and the Mayan glyphs all over the structure). This pyramid scene itself is another hub location, a fine spot for antagonist reactions to be made more perilous by fighting on the steep steps, and is generally a moody red herring.

The bulk of this pyramid is made up of solid stonework, steep steps, and empty chambers. The art style and condition of the building reveals to **Archaeology** some clues about

the age and origin of the structure, however, and help place the Xoxul in the Mayan timeline (maybe; it's pretty confusing, since the Xoxul as a people dwell on Earth only *sometimes*). **Archaeology** or **Architecture** suspects that much of the stonework was redone following the capture and recapture of the pyramid. Glyphs suggest that possession of the pyramid went back and forth between the Maya and the Xoxul a few times between 1450 and 1500, after which it was in Xoxul hands up until it was abandoned shortly after the Spanish (or, specifically, "the Spaniard") arrived.

The structure's Mayan-language glyph carvings tell of a Xoxul sorcerer who built the pyramid in just one day (along with a twin pyramid that night), then aligned it with the stars and, from his "nest" or "cage," made it so that Golxumal could see the pyramid. *"The pyramid is both young and old,"* say the glyphs.

Theology recognizes a similar blend of Mayan and Xoxul iconography all over the pyramid implying, possibly, an attempt to reconcile Xoxul beliefs with Mayan cosmology.

19. The Slits

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Examining the slits left open in the sides of the pyramid, on three faces, near the top of the structure. (Yucatán 18, "The Pyramid of the Sorcerer," p. 330.)

Summary: The Investigators get a peek at the observatory within the pyramid — and maybe get shot for their trouble.

Core Clue: The pyramid is built as an observatory of sorts, but with the jungle canopy as it is, the slits don't allow a very good view of the night sky. (Astronomy.)

Core Clue: Someone is inside the pyramid — with a gun. (Simple search.)



This scene covers what happens when the Investigators attempt to interact, from the outside, with the slits left open near the top of the north, west, and south faces of the pyramid. If they proceed past these windows to the altar room (p. 332), skip this scene.

First, using **Astronomy**, the Investigators are able to glean that the slits are *not* aligned with the night sky. This should raise some questions among both **Occult-** and Astronomy-minded characters. ("Who builds an observatory beneath the peak of a pyramid when you could put it at the highest point and leave it open to all three sides?")

(In truth, it's because the observatory is meant to safely view the night sky on the moon of Gol-Goroth, and also to observe Gol-Goroth himself. It needs to be within a shell of protective spells to keep viewers alive.)

Second, there's a chance that Alvár Vasquez, a survivor of the previous expedition, attempts to blow a meddlesome Investigator's brains out through one of these slits. Investigators trying to get a good look inside the pyramid must get right into a slit and lean in, making themselves easy targets (Hit Threshold is reduced by 1).

Alvár, a minor sorcerer brought along on the journey from Mexico City, is trapped inside the pyramid, where he is meandering through space and time. He is quite mad by now. And he has a gun.

If Alvár shoots, there's a 50/50 chance the shot passes harmlessly through the target Investigator because Alvár is not quite in synch with the Investigators, spatially, when he fires. (The inside of the observatory is not always where the outside of it is.) Otherwise, Alvár shoots to kill.

Besides Alvár, the inside of the observatory is also roughly visible within. Its walls are made of red stone, ornately carved with Mayan-language glyphs that are difficult to see from outside, but **Occult** or **Cthulhu Mythos** immediately gleans that these are not narrative glyphs but spells. As the Investigators watch, the shadows inside of the room shift as if the light on them is moving, and then Alvár disappears. (He can reappear almost immediately, if you want to let the Investigators speak with him — or shoot him.)

Squeezing through a slit is a Difficulty 6 **Athletics** test. Anyone attempting to squeeze through a slit runs the risk of passing through just as the observatory's insides shift through space-time. This happens on a roll of 1 or 2 on the Athletics test and causes 8 points of damage to the subject character, as the character is either forcibly ejected from the slit (in or out, depending on whether the roll was a success) or cleaved in two when the inside travels away with part of the character's body. (Generous Keepers, make it just a limb unless the character is slain outright by the damage.) To give a character an informed choice, read this before the roll:

As you get a limb through the slit, you can feel it tingle and then ache, as if from an electrical jolt. You hear what sounds like a loud wind and can see the shadows shifting within the pyramid. Everything inside begins to blur out of focus, as if viewed from a speeding train. Do you want to try to get in there quick, or do you want out?

The smarter choice is to come in through the trapdoor, up in the altar room.

Alvár can be spoken with, but he can't be reasoned with. He's afraid to come out (*"You'll kill me! Or* it *will!"*), and he's afraid to stay inside *("Who are you? Where are you from? When is this happening? Is this right now?"*). To him, within the pyramid, it's been just a day since the expedition below was wiped out and he fled from the beast, shutting the observatory door above him. Still, he thinks now might be the right time to put his pistol in his mouth, assuming the Investigators don't take a shot at him first.

Alternately, Alvár asks for help getting out, and, just as he's about halfway through the slit, being pulled out by the Investigators, the observatory shifts through space-time again and cleaves him in half. (That's a 4-point Mythos Stability test, as half of Alvár disappears before the Investigators' eyes.)

Of course, Alvár doesn't have to be dealt with now; the Investigators may meet him again when they open the trapdoor from the altar room.

20. Altar Room

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Reaching the altar chamber at the peak of the pyramid (Yucatán 18, "The Pyramid of the Sorcerer," p. 330, or Yucatán 21, "The Tombs" p. 333).

Summary: The Investigators puzzle through a doorway that seals and protects the chamber below (inside the slits), or come or go from the tombs.

Core Clue: The altar was a site of human sacrifice for the Xoxul, as evidenced by channels in the ground meant to funnel blood from the altar. (Craft.)

Core Clue: The door in the floor is linked to the altar's bloodletting channels. Weight needs to be applied under the floor, in the form of a liquid through the channels, to unlock the door to the observatory below. (Locksmith, simple search, or Craft.)

Play this scene when the Investigators reach the altar room at the top of the pyramid. This chamber has three exits: First, in the west wall, is the open-air doorway off the pyramid's outer stairs. Second, at the east end of the door, is a doorway that leads to a stairwell down to the tombs. Third, in the floor, is the door that leads to the observatory.

The altar room serves two purposes: it is a hub for the scenes mentioned above and it contains the puzzle lock that keeps the observatory sealed up. (This door was open when Alvár Vasquez arrived, but he shut it behind him to hide from the beast.)

The altar room is dominated by a stone altar and a large red stone disk in the floor at the altar's base. The rest of the chamber is undecorated stone. The only light is that which comes through the doorway, unless the Investigators bring light with them.

First, the altar: it depicts a large man in warrior garb on his hands and knees, grimacing in pain, with a bowl set upon his back. (This bowl is part of the carving, not a separate item.) **Art History**, **Archaeology**, **Anthropology**, or **Theology** recognizes this as a kind of inversion of a *Chac Mool* figure, in which a reclining figure holds a bowl or tray on its belly. The altar may well have been used for bloodletting or human sacrifices, based not just on stains still in place after all these years (**Evidence Collection** or **Forensics**), but on the nature of the altar (**Theology** or **Anthropology**) and the fine grooves cut into the floor to catch and funnel blood that overflows from the altar's bowl (**Craft**).

Theology knows that the red disk in the floor depicts neither the sun nor the moon but an orb filled with wavy lines giving off rays of light, not unlike the sun. This disk matches that seen in the ball court. **Craft** detects a fine seam running down the center of the disk, suggesting that it can fall open like a trapdoor. **Locksmith** determines that the trapdoor is barred from the other side… but that the lock mechanism may be accessible from this side since people would want to get back in. Further investigation with Locksmith or by a **simple search** concludes that holes in the floor beneath the altar are connected to the disk's lock. Locksmith or **Craft** makes certain that the channels run under the floor toward the disk.

The solution to the lock is straightforward: about three liters of fluid need to be poured into the channels under the altar to weigh down the tumblers beneath the floor and trip the locking mechanism, thereby causing the trapdoor to fall open and reveal the observatory. Water, Nectar, any fluid will do — the mechanical lock doesn't care whether it's been tripped with blood or not and, frankly, neither does Gol-Goroth at this point.

Once the trap door is open, it's a short drop (about six feet) into the observatory below.

If Alvár Vasquez is still alive down there, now might be when he uses the last of his bullets to try to take out an Investigator (or himself). Otherwise, he can stay alive long enough to meet a sorry end in a later scene, if necessary.

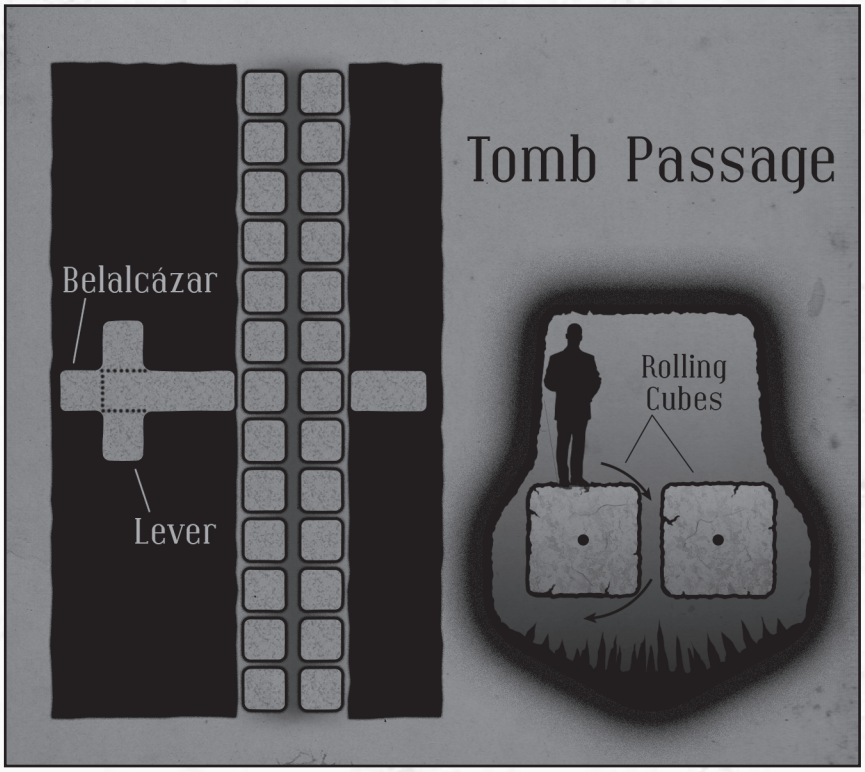
21. The Tombs

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Entering the tombs beneath the pyramid (Yucatán 17, "The Caves," p. 329, or Yucatán 20, "Altar Room," p. 332).

Summary: The Investigators face a trapped corridor leading through tombs to a dungeon that holds the "ghost" of 16th-century Spanish conquistador, Francisco de Belalcázar.

Core Clue: The Xoxul were conducting an elaborate ceremony in 1518 when de Belalcázar found them, and they took him prisoner. He's been captive for "years" but doesn't know exactly how long. (Languages: Spanish)



Play this scene when Investigators enter the tombs beneath the pyramid, either from the direction of the caves beneath the cenote or from the pyramid itself.

Beneath the pyramid are tombs, also used as a dungeon by the Xoxul, who stash troublesome people here for use in other times. The path to the dungeon is trapped, whether one approaches from the pyramid or the caves.

Here the PCs discover plenty of bones and potential treasures (whether for education or profit), as well as the "ghost" of Francisco de Belalcázar, the lead conquistador of a lost expedition in 1518. It's not truly his ghost, of course, but his actual person, echoing across space-time from the cell where he is trapped on both Earth and Golxumal. He can also offer up some information on the metaphysics involved in the pyramid and the Xoxul, but mostly he is ominous and weird. (He's also a clue to the fate of characters that leave the pyramid during the scenes **"Visions of Gol-Goroth"** and **"An Audience with Gol-Goroth."**)

First, getting to the dungeon requires navigating a trapped floor. A **simple search** of the main corridor, leading from the pyramid to the caves, notices a single wide seam (about 4 inches) running down the middle of the floor and numerous wide seams running perpendicular to those, as if the floor was made of two rows of stone cubes, each about four-feet long, suspended without mortar. (It is.) Walking down the center of the corridor causes the stone cubes to rotate on the rods that hold them up, dropping the traveler between then and crushing them before dropping them farther into a pit of spikes and yellowed bones. The trick is to creep along the edges of the corridor, as the cubes only rotate one direction: towards the center of the room. (**Craft** or **Mechanical Repair** makes a character confident that the floor rotates in only one direction.)

Characters must make a Difficulty 2 **Athletics** test to stay away from the center of the corridor, once they understand how the trap works. Crossing from one side of the corridor to the other is a Difficulty 3 Athletics test. Characters who slip or fall into the center of the trap suffer +2 damage from the crushing stones but can halt their fall by dropping everything in their hands and making a Difficulty 4 Athletics or **Fleeing** test to scramble out of the pinning stones. Otherwise, the character is further crushed for another +2 damage, thereby jamming up that one cube until pulled free or pushed down to the spikes below (where 1–3 spikes spear the victim for an additional +1 damage each).

At the center of the corridor are two branching passages: one is an immediate dead end, the other leads to a small collection of barred-off alcoves — makeshift prison cells. This is where Francisco de Belalcázar waits, wild-eyed and half-real. His expedition happened upon the Xoxul during one of their ceremonies. Most of the expedition was slaughtered but Belalcázar was taken prisoner. He wears shreds of his Cuban-made Spanish-style finery and a years-long beard. He's into his forties now.

He's been here, tucked into a cell in Golxumal for six years, his time.

On Earth, a metal lever for locking the cubic floor in place (rendering it harmless) stands in one of the cells next to de Belalcázar's. On Golxumal, where his keepers dwell, the corridor outside is not trapped.

To Francisco de Belalcázar, the Investigators appear as ghosts, just as he does to them: vaguely alight, flickering in and out like a stuttering film image. He has put some things together over the years, however, having been on the surface of Golxumal a few times for ritual ceremonies "to watch them feed my men to their monster, up above." He can share his findings in whatever tone best suits your dramatic needs — is he a raving madman or an eerily calm lunatic now? — to prepare characters for what's coming. Remember, the conquistador speaks Spanish:

- *"This place, where I am, is not where you are. They touch, but they are far apart. The sky here is always night and filled with some enormous and strange orb. Do you know where I am? Can I ever come back?"*
- *"You are not a proper Spaniard, are you?"*
- *"My men… all gone. They are the lucky ones, off to Heaven now, through ugly means. I'll never be free of this place. Never. There does not seem to be a way to go back to terra firma from here. I think even the Xoxul are stuck here."*
- *"The Xoxul god is real. Real! But it is not god, I think, for it hungers for flesh and petty attentions and flattery in a way that nothing divine should hunger. Yes, I think it is petty.* [To the ceiling:] *Do you hear me, you damnable monster? You are a whelp!"*
- *"If I am very lucky, they will kill me soon."*

It's worth noting here that Francisco de Belalcázar cannot be rescued. Attempts to leave the observatory during its travels may not allow reentry to the time that was departed.

22. The Observatory

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Getting inside the hidden observatory within the pyramid of the sorcerer (Yucatán 20, "Altar Room," p. 332, or Yucatán 19, "The Slits," p. 331).

Summary: The Investigators deal with the ramifications of a room that is careening throughout space and time, while perhaps trying to stop a madman with a gun.

Core Clue: The walls here are carved with actual spells that can be used immediately. (Occult or Theology.)

Core Clue: The red stone walls of the observatory create a safe "shell" that moves throughout space and time to a fixed set of destinations. The shell can be departed at any time but only reentered through the pyramid. (Languages (Spanish) on Alvár's notes.)

Play this scene once the Investigators get inside the observatory. This scene simply describes the mundane interior of the observatory, which might not hold the Investigators attention for long. It's possible that the Investigators will make short work of this scene (especially if Alvár is already dead) and move right on to **"Visions of Golxumal,"** especially if the characters can't read the Mayan language. The observatory moves through space-time, seemingly at random, unless the characters can use the spells written on the walls of the place to gain some measure of control over its careening course. This scene covers the time within the observatory before they gain control of the thing while they may be battling with Alvár.

The inside of the observatory is lined with an unearthly red stone that **Geology** cannot identify. The walls, floor, and ceiling are carved with Mayan glyphs that **Theology** or **Occult** recognizes not as a narrative but as spells of protection (with a lot of astronomical terminology mixed in) and perhaps other incantations. (If the Investigators fail to get the spell Create Hyperspace Gate from Gol-Goroth on p. 337, they can piece it together here with a 1-point spend of your choosing.)

The trapdoor can be easily closed and opened from this side, since a manual lever that works the lock sticks plainly out of the ceiling here. With that door shut, the whole room is red stone or open windows, and the spells engraved on the ceiling are complete. Once the door is shut, go on to **"Visions of Golxumal."**

Alvár's Notes

Alvár spent some of his day trapped in the observatory translating and transcribing the Mayan on the walls and ceiling, creating a haphazard (and brief) Cthulhu Mythos text. Skimming Alvár's handwritten Spanish-language pages takes thirty minutes (ten minutes with a 1-point **Library Use** spend) and adds +1 to a character's Cthulhu Mythos rating. It also explains roughly how to cause the observatory to move through space-time along its preset course (see the spell "Control Xoxul Observatory," p. 337). Once understood, this spell can be taught to anyone, though a 2-point **Stability** spend is required to *understand* the lesson and internalize the ability to control the observatory.

The Magic Ability

If you are using *Rough Magicks*, Alvár's text and the Mayan glyphs bestow 2 dedicated Magic pool points for Investigators to use while within the Observatory. Poring over Alvár's notes grants up to 1 Magic point, while poring over the spells in the original Mayan (say, via a rubbing) grants 2 Magic points (*Rough Magicks,* p. 8).

The observatory is also a magical site (*Rough Magicks*, p. 10) that bestows 1 Magic point on its own and a second Magic point when it delivers a character to Golxumal the first time.

Thus, after skimming the text or the glyphs, inhabiting the observatory, and traveling to Golxumal, Investigators may have a temporary pool of 4 Magic points to work with — a pool that could become not-so-temporary if they choose to study Alvár's notes or the Mayan spells carefully.

If you're not using the Magic rules from *Rough Magicks*, the Investigators gain no additional benefits from being in the observatory and must control its travels using just their intuition and Stability.



These notes also indicate that the "red stone" is a protective shell which "travelers" can leave at any time but "only enter through the sacred pyramids."

Alvár shook himself to pieces attempting to control the observatory on his own, unable to keep it in one place and unwilling to leave it at any stop along its "route."

Alvár Vasquez

Three Things: Spits when he talks. Points and accuses. Reeks of body odor.

Firearms 4, Health 3, Magic 3, Scuffling 4, Stability 0/6, Weapons 2

Weapon: +1 (heavy pistol), +1 (machete)

23. Visions of Golxumal

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Getting some measure of control over the careening observatory (Yucatán 22, "The Observatory," p. 334).

Summary: The Investigators travel throughout space and time within the observatory, perhaps piecing together a bit of history and learning how to make contact with Gol-Goroth.

Core Clue: The "observatory" travels through space and time, occupying more than one place in more than one time, on both Earth and an alien moon. Gol-Goroth (as Golxumal) is worshipped in both places, throughout multiple periods, though his future looks bleak.



This scene is a monster. In this scene, the Investigators witness (and possibly experience) the various spaces where and times when the observatory manifests throughout the universe.

The observatory travels through a circuit of distinct and recurring times and places. Each has its own qualities and consequences, described below. If you want to randomly careen through space and time, roll a die to determine where the observatory travels until the Investigators get a grip on how to control the thing… or until they get Gol-Goroth's attention (as described in **"An Audience with Gol-Goroth,"** p. 337). Alternatively, you can move the observatory from station to station as you like, according to your own whims or sense of drama. After the Investigators have control of the observatory, this scene continues until they get Gol-Goroth's attention (on purpose or according to your own dramatic timing — Gol-Goroth becomes interested by the smell or heartbeats of the Investigators when you decide).

A note here on Stability tests for this scene: The Investigators are sure to see not only a supernatural creature up close, but that creature is Gol-Goroth itself. As this is all a result of a singular, ongoing sequence of events, only the largest Stability loss for the scene is considered. That loss is probably a 5-point Stability test for experiencing a threatening, unnatural event, modified by +3 for the presence of Gol-Goroth (*Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 86) to become an 8-point Stability test. If an Investigator is, say, eaten by Gol-Goroth on Golxumal in the second station of the observatory's circuit, that raises the *base* test to an 8-point stability test, modified up by Gol-Goroth's presence to an 11-point Stability test. And because Gol-Goroth is physically present for some of this, the Difficulty for that Stability test is 5. (Note, also, that Gol-Goroth increases the Sanity loss from such a Mythos shock by +2, according to *Trail of Cthulhu,* p. 86.)

To put it another way, be careful how badly you choose to shake up the Investigators during this sequence. You might well rattle them into uselessness and end up destroying the Investigators' will to go on. You can always rule that Gol-Goroth withholds some of his terrifying might or shields himself behind shadowy wings, thereby sparing the Investigators from his full horror. Or perhaps it's as simple as having Gol-Goroth refrain from devouring anyone. Play this hand carefully.

Here are the observatory's six stations in space-time:

1. Chichén Xoxul, 1524 AD

(When the early Xoxul worship Golxumal as a god.)

The Investigators see the nighttime jungle around Chichén Xoxul alive with dancing, singing, slaying Xoxul. Screams and songs echo down from the altar room above. Torches flare in the gloom. Shouts and cheers carry across from the ball court. Mayan men are carried across the crowd and up the pyramid steps, where fresh screams emit from the altar room.

Anthropology estimates this time to be early 16th-century Chichén Xoxul. **Theology** recognizes traces of Mayan religious practices, but with the gore and the noise elevated to feverish levels.

If the trapdoor is opened in this time (say, by the ritual slaying described above), the Investigators appear as ghosts to the Xoxul and their victims, and the Xoxul see them as interlopers. They summon up warriors to fire arrows and throw spears through the slits into the observatory. Each spatially-out-of-synch Investigator has a Hit Threshold of 5 for purposes of attacks by the numerous Xoxul (characters who take cover have a Hit Threshold of 6); roll one attack per Investigator per round (do not add pool points for the Xoxul; if it matters, they have Weapons 5). These Xoxul weapons deal +0 damage.

If a Xoxul sorcerer successfully grabs an Investigator through the trap door (that is, if the Investigators do not shut the door and hold the lever locked), the sorcerer and her minions may drag that Investigator screaming out of the observatory. (This is a **Scuffling** contest between the Investigator's allies and the Xoxul sorcerer's minions, who have Scuffling 6.)

Exactly how long the observatory stays here is up to you. If the Investigators have had an easy time of it so far, you can press harder here with multiple rounds of attacks and a protracted contest against the sorcerer's minions. Otherwise, one or two rounds of attacks are probably enough. Move on.

2. The Moon of Golxumal, 1524 AD

(When Gol-Goroth lords over the Xoxul as a god.)

Here the Investigators are given a glimpse of the moon of Golxumal at its height, where a sister site to Chichén Xoxul, from ball court to pyramid, lies in the midst of red alien foliage beneath a clear night sky dominated by a vast and cloudy brown planet. Xoxul priests, warriors, and common folk mill about in the dust, play games on the court, and pray in the hall of columns — all seemingly unmoved by the fact that they are on a sphere that is not Earth. A thin cloud of atmosphere seems to cling to the surface of the moon; it billows off in swirls like dry ice. All the sounds of life below are muffled and distant.

Physics cannot explain the atmosphere or gravity. **Astronomy** recognizes nothing in the sky, except to say that the planet is an unknown gas giant.

Peering up through the slits reveals not the altar room above, but a huge froglike body sucking on the pyramid's peak with a gargantuan mouth. With numerous jaguar-like eyes it scouts the night sky beyond. Long-toed feet drape down the sides of pyramid. A dozen enormous serpents seem to dangle from the froglike mouth, as if trying to escape.

Attempts to breach the slits in this place meet with minimal response from the Xoxul as long as they are quiet. The observatory is currently ensconced in a counterpart pyramid on Golxumal, and as long as characters do not make much noise *outside of the observatory*, they go undetected. (This is merely meant to be a strange, eerie experience.) Opening the trapdoor reveals the inside of an enormous, sucking mouth, filled with catlike teeth and writhing serpent-headed tongues of all sizes. At its center is a dreadful blackened beak. If the door is immediately shut, no one is attacked. Any hesitation, though, and the closest character (an NPC, perhaps?) is automatically snatched by snake-headed tongues and speared to death on yellow teeth. Blood rains down, except where snake-headed tongues lap it out of the air.

If it matters, this is where and when Francisco de Belalcázar is being held beneath the pyramid.

Getting Gol-Goroth's attention here is as simple as calling for him or feeding him. Once he's paying attention, go to **"An Audience With Gol-Goroth."**

3. Golxumal, Present Day

(When Gol-Goroth waits for worship or ruin.)

Here and now, Golxumal and its buildings are in ruins. Craters and ash replace the blood-red foliage. The sky is dominated by the cloudy brown planet, but that planet roils with storms. In the plaza of Golxumal, an aspect of Gol-Goroth lays half-buried in the ashes, its mouth giving off steam in the cold — it is a fatty, frog-like body with too many tails, gathered under tattered black wings. It slurps up ashes and bones with its serpent-headed tongues. Smaller versions of the same creature cling to its body like suckling bats.

A glimpse out the slits shows that the observatory is part of a half-smashed pyramid here and now. Pushing past the seals of the red-stone shell creates a howling vortex of wind and cold, freezing the appendage that breaches the barrier (+1 damage). There's no atmosphere out there anymore.

No need to get Gol-Goroth's attention here — the Investigators have it already. Down in the plaza, six or eight jaguar-like eyes in toad-like sockets scan the sky… and immediately detect the observatory. Go to **"An Audience With Gol-Goroth."**

4. Deep Space, Distant Future

(When Golxumal is a blasted nothingness.)

This bizarre experience puts the Investigators floating in the midst of thick gases and weightless rocks and dust in deep space. The Observatory is just a floating remnant of mystical power now, and the Investigators can see that beyond the red stone… there's no pyramid and no moon and no colossal gas planet. An **Astronomy** spend determines that this is the same place, based on the stars, but that the planet and the moon are no more — just debris.

No sign of Gol-Goroth or the Xoxul here.

This experience calls for a 4-point non-Mythos Stability test.

5. Earth, Near Future

(When Earth is experiencing a near-apocalyptic rain of fire and blood.)

The observatory returns to Chichén Xoxul some time in the future, when the sky is raining fire and blood and strange sounds — is it music? — echo out of nowhere. Chichén Xoxul is on fire and the jungle smolders. The earth shakes. The moon is a black shadow. Thunderstorms roil through and tear the sky with green lightning. Ash blankets all.

Spell: Control Xoxul Observatory (Incantation)

Through sheer force of will, harnessed and transmitted by the observatory's red stones, the caster shuttles the observatory back and forth along its predefined circuit through space-time or holds it steady at a fixed point for as long as the caster likes. New destinations cannot be willed into being this way and, if another caster wishes the observatory to move somewhere else, it is a contest between casters to determine who controls the observatory. (Gol-Goroth automatically wins contests to control the Observatory's position.)

Stability Test Difficulty: 4 (3 with a Physics or Astronomy spend)

Cost: 2 Stability or 4 Health

Time: Instantaneous. The caster does not actually need to speak but merely visualizes the destination.

This scene calls for a 4-point Mythos Stability test.

Anyone venturing out of the observatory in this time period is scalded and burnt by falling fire (+0 damage) and driven back inside by the heat. Even better, don't give the Investigators time to get out — the observatory rattles and shifts right out of this time as soon as it arrives. The whole purpose here is just to put this image into the players' heads early. (This is, of course, foreshadowing Act Three.)

6. Chichen Xoxul, 1937

Here the observatory returns to roughly the time and place wherein it was entered. (It usually delivers people a few hours or days after they departed, at your discretion.)

24. An Audience With Gol-Goroth

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Doing something to get Gol-Goroth's attention (Yucatán 23, "Visions of Golxumal," p. 335).

Summary: The Investigators participate in an interlocution with Gol-Goroth, the Fisher From Outside, through a series of visions and psychic messages.

Core Clue: The Liar From Beyond, also known as the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, is actually Y'golonac. Gol-Goroth knows that the Liar From Beyond uses other beings' names to protect itself from sorcery and detection.

Core Clue: Gol-Goroth is willing to battle and destroy Y'golonac if summoned to the Liar's true location.

This climactic scene occurs if the characters specifically call out to Gol-Goroth during their time in the observatory. It's their chance to interrogate a titanic, godlike monster and learn the true identity of the Liar From Beyond. It's kind of a big deal.

This is no *conversation*. Gol-Goroth communicates through visions and appropriated bodies… and he does not take part in a dialogue without *understanding* the beings that would address him. Once the Investigators have his attention — which they might

24. An Audience With Gol-Goroth



Golxumal and Earth

Golxumal is the moon where a part of Gol-Goroth dwells. It orbits a gaseous planet in some distant galaxy. The fabric that binds Golxumal to Earth is Gol-Goroth's being itself, as part of Gol-Goroth is imprisoned on Earth, deep in some polar valley, perhaps. The Xoxul are not the only group of Earthly cultists Gol-Goroth has had over the eons, but they are one of a select few to have been transported mystically to the moon of Golxumal to worship (and feed) a fragment of his body directly. They are favorites of his.

The observatory connects Chichén Xoxul and the Golxumal pyramid across space and time, but the observatory is not the physical shell it appears to be constructed from. In key times and places, the observatory exists (for some value of "exist") despite its physical properties, without being attached to either pyramid. Thus the Investigators can not just *see* distant realms but are *actually there* when they are within the observatory.

In truth, however, the observatory only works when Gol-Goroth wants it to, so it's entirely possible that Investigators who attempt to recreate the observatory's effects in later days, months, or years… simply fail. Perhaps Gol-Goroth doesn't want to see them. Perhaps Gol-Goroth has lost his power. Perhaps Gol-Goroth is somehow elsewhere. Without his curious appendage to spin the observatory and send it careening around the mystic track it travels through the cosmos, the place has no real power.

get just by being present, if you fear the Investigators might choose not to speak with Gol-Goroth — the Fisher From Outside mystically anchors the observatory in the blasted wasteland of Golxumal in the present and psychically contacts each Investigator to learn a bit about them.

Gol-Goroth communicates through arcs of white lightning that strike the observatory from the titan's head. With each strike, a new concept or message is delivered. Some ideas come on a single arc, others come through a storm of lithe bolts that play across the surface of the observatory. Investigators tremble and twitch with each delivered thought.

"Truth? Let us see your truths," it projects. For a hideous moment, then, all of the Investigators' psyches are intermixed and tangled as Gol-Goroth paws through them with his own mind…

Go around the table and ask the players to share the worst thing their Investigator has ever done. It might be something that happened earlier in the campaign, or it might be a secret that the Investigator has been keeping all this time (even if the player is actually inventing this dreadful act on the spot). Every Investigator is instantly aware of each others' secret and shameful act. This is Gol-Goroth's equivalent to holding each Investigator up to the light for an inspection.

Gol-Goroth responds to questioning as you see fit to awe and rattle your players and their Investigators. Interpersonal abilities do not function here as Gol-Goroth is not a person. The players must simply phrase their Investigators' questions with care, lest Gol-Goroth grow bored or irritated. It's up to you exactly how to play Gol-Goroth, put consider this: He's in the characters' heads. He knows why they're there. He *can* simply deliver the following items of information, psychically, and then send the Investigators back to Chichén Xoxul, if he wants to:

- The Liar From Beyond is hated throughout the cosmos for stealing

24. An Audience With Gol-Goroth

Spell: Summon Aspect of Gol-Goroth

Gol-Goroth bestows, in each of the Investigators who want it, knowledge of an incantation to summon him to do battle against Y'golonac, the Liar From Beyond, once that god's body is reached. This spell does not *only* work at the body of the Liar, but if used prior to that, Gol-Goroth is likely to arrive furious and ready to do battle anyway — where "do battle" probably means "eat spell casters." Investigators seriously considering summoning Gol-Goroth to slay Y'golonac's physical body should consider first using **Cthulhu Mythos** to determine if the spell can be reversed to bind Gol-Goroth to a single command. (It can.)

The aspect of Gol-Goroth resists being bound with an Inertia of 12, but Gol-Goroth has promised not to resist binding until after Y'golonac is dealt with. (Gol-Goroth's honesty is left to you to judge.)

This spell requires a caster to devour a snake, bones and all, at the site where Gol-Goroth's aspect is to appear. To bind Gol-Goroth to a foe, a piece of Chichén Xoxul's pyramid (or the caster's body) must make contact with the body of that foe (and thus the Investigators must have access to Y'golonac's *body*, not just his *Mouths*). Dropping a piece of the pyramid onto the flesh of Y'golonac's body, from any height, meets the criterion, for example. The aspect of Gol-Goroth then materializes out of mist and shadow in the form of a colossal beast of Golxumal, with a mouth full of myriad serpents, ash sloughing off its body, ready to tear the foe apart.

To reverse the spell requires a piece of Chichén Xoxul's pyramid (or the caster's body) to make contact with the aspect of Gol-Goroth as the incantation is completed.

Note: This spell makes it possible for an Investigator to banish the Liar, as well, by using the power of the pyramid. A 2-point spend of **Occult** and **Cthulhu Mythos** (1 from each) reverses and reconfigures the spell and, with suitable access to the Liar's *body* (not just its mouths), allows pieces of the pyramid to work against the Liar as well — when its true name is known. The ritual to banish the Liar (using its true name) appears on p. 368.

(Note, also, that sending Gol-Goroth away isn't actually necessary, as it leaves on its own as described in Act Three.)

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 if performed in Mayan)

Cost: 6 Stability and 2 Health

Time: Summoning takes 30 minutes of chanting and ritual bloodletting, culminating in contact with the target's body (by the caster or a piece of the Pyramid of the Sorcerer). This also binds the aspect to a particular act — the slaying of the target — at the end of which the aspect of Gol-Goroth must be bound again to some new task or banished.

We offer no game statistics for the aspect of Gol-Goroth. If it is not banished, battling it is the subject not of a fight scene but of a whole new adventure or campaign. Perhaps it flees its summoners (to destroy them later), or perhaps a new group of Investigators must be mustered to thwart Gol-Goroth.



the names of gods and hiding behind their legends.

- The true name of the Liar From Beyond, the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, is Y'golonac.
- If the Investigators summon an aspect of Gol-Goroth at the site of the body of Y'golonac, Gol-Goroth will slay the liar. Thus Gol-Goroth mentally delivers the spell Summon Aspect of Gol-Goroth to each Investigator.
- Gol-Goroth also delivers knowledge of the spell Create Hyperspace Gate (*Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 114) directly into the minds of any or all Investigators, perhaps along with this warning: "*Things must be their worst for this bridge to lead to betterment.*"
- *"If any of you ever come to Chichén Xoxul again, it is to die."*

After that, the Investigators and the observatory are hurtled back to Chichén Xoxul and allowed to flee unmolested by Xoxul or the beast of Golxumal.

The scenario may well end with the Investigators, bloody and shaken, vanishing into the jungle with the last shreds of their Sanity.





25. The Beast of Golxumal

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Yucatán 13, "The Plaza," p. 325. Play this scene when the Investigators are wasting time while out of doors at Chichén Xoxul and you decide it's time to deploy the monster haunting the ruins.

Summary: A terrible monster, occupying multiple spaces and times simultaneously, attacks one or more trespassing Investigators.

Clue: The beast of Golxumal exists in multiple places and times simultaneously and is only sort of in any place that it appears to be.

Clue: The beast of Golxumal will not enter the sacred cenote or the pyramid.

It's sort of like a toad-skinned jaguar with a tongue like a poisonous snake, and it only exists partially in our space-time. It can attack virtually anywhere outdoors around Chichén Xoxul, but not indoors or within the caves.

This scene can also be played to show that the beast of Golxumal wants either to punish the intruding Investigators when they leave the ruins or to watch them depart — depending on how they leave things with Gol-Goroth.

The beast of Golxumal's purpose, as a creature, is to ceremonially feed Gol-Goroth by eating creatures both in Chichén Xoxul and in Golxumal. The beast's purpose in the adventure is to terrify and maul characters, to make them fear the ruins, and to drive them indoors. To that end, it's important to depict the beast as *unable* to penetrate physical barriers, even though it flickers in and out of existence on this Earthly plane. Give the players the idea that they might be safe if they hide.

The beast resembles a blackened green toad the size of a small car, with crumpled bat wings on its back and a mouthful of jaguar teeth. It sports a long serpentine tongue that ends in a sticky, steaming proboscis. Its foremost eyes are yellow like a jaguar's, while its second set scans and stares like a toad's eyes. It has three short tails and huge long-fingered feet.

It attacks by getting as much of a creature in its mouth as possible and biting off whatever it can — often this means the top or bottom half of a creature — to swallow it up and supernaturally deliver the meat to Gol-Goroth through its own gullet.

How many beasts of Golxumal are there? That's up to you, but assume they hunt one at a time.

The Beast of Golxumal

Three Things: Rippling muscles beneath a sheen of flesh. Whipping tongue. Wild, backlit eyes.

Athletics 14, Health 30, Scuffling 20

Hit Threshold: 5 (large but sometimes insubstantial)

Alertness Modifier: +1

Stealth Modifier: +1

Weapon: +5 (bite), +1 (caustic tongue)

Armor: −2 vs. any (tough hide and spatial anomaly)

Stability Loss: +3

Investigation

Biology: The tongue secretes a kind of caustic contact venom that burns hair and melts flesh. The creature is clearly unearthly, with tracks unlike those of any terrestrial creature — when it leaves tracks.

Forensics: The bite mark suggests a single, gigantic maw clamped down and worried the body until half of it broke free. The ragged remains have been seared with a kind of acidic gel. The creature, when wounded, leaves behind a thick, bluish mucus.

Sense Trouble: First, it's the burning chemical stink of its breath, then the wet inhalation of its mouth working nearby, then it appears in mid-leap, arcing right toward you!

26. Attack of the Xoxul

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Yucatán 13, "The Plaza," p. 325. Play this scene when the Investigators spend too long dillydallying during their investigation of Chichén Xoxul and to set up the look and danger of the Xoxul, as well as to hint at their unstable relationship with the physical world.

Summary: The Investigators are attacked by spears and arrows launched by Xoxul warriors across a gulf of years and space.

Clue: The Xoxul "apparitions" are only partially substantial from the perspective of the Investigators. (They are not exactly in the same space or time as the Investigators.)



The Xoxul appear as ghostly men in Mayan-like armor made from bundled cotton and draped jaguar hides. They wield long spears, tall bows, and woven garrotes. They carry shields adorned with flayed human faces. Many of them are tattooed or painted with red or black stripes.

They don't walk; they *stalk* or *sprint* toward their prey. They have no fear; in fact they seem to be furious at the sight of trespassers.

The "ghosts" of the Xoxul can attack Investigators in the jungle or in Chichén Xoxul. This involves a dozen spectral warriors shooting arrows across a gulf of years — arrows that may or may not actually manifest in the Investigators' time. It's just another tool in your arsenal for adding action to the jungle and the ruins of Chichén Xoxul.

The Xoxul warriors exist simultaneously in distant Golxumal and in Chichén Xoxul. They visually strobe in and out of existence, as a group, appearing and disappearing unpredictably. Investigators can always hear them coming before they appear: hollering and threatening in Mayan. They never move through physical structures or barriers in Chichén Xoxul; they move around them, just as the Investigators must.

The goal of the Xoxul warriors is to capture or slay the Investigators, but their purpose in the game is to drive the Investigators to move elsewhere in Chichén Xoxul — to keep them moving or dial up the peril of any particular spot. It should be clear that the Xoxul are trying to drive the characters away, since when the characters flee a spot where the Xoxul warriors appear, the warriors don't immediately pursue them.

The Xoxul travel in a group three or four dozen strong but only attack each Investigator once per turn. Roll against the Hit Threshold of the Investigator as normal. On a miss, arrows or spears pass *through* the Investigator as if the Investigator wasn't there; it feels like a static electrical shock. On a hit, one arrow or spear makes physical contact, dealing +0 damage. Arrows and spears might stick in the surrounding terrain, too, proving that they are sometimes quite solid. **Forensics** determines that the weapons are new, not ancient. **Archaeology** or **Anthropology** confirms that they are contemporary in style to Mayan weapons circa 1500.

A 1-point **Physics** spend can be made to surmise that the Xoxul are not ghosts at all but, rather, out of spatial and temporal synch with the Investigators. This realization calls for a 2-point Mythos Stability test.

26. Attack of the Xoxul

Viewing the Xoxul appear and disappear requires a 3-point Mythos Stability test.

Battling the Xoxul is not really an option. Even if the Investigators hit one (Hit Threshold 5, Health 3), there don't seem to be any fewer of them when they reappear next time.

Wrapping Up

Getting back out of Chichén Xoxul and the Yucátan is easier than getting in, thanks especially to dramatic timing. Unless the Investigators want to stop and harass or defeat their enemies in Mérida, they can move on to the next floating scene or Locale as they like, perhaps describing what they look like as they emerge from the jungle along the way, just for context. Even if they want to take down Francisco de la Vega, that can be as simple a matter as describing their vengeance. How is he exposed? What sort of crime scene do they leave behind? Or do they plan to come back for him after they've mopped up the cult of the Liar?

Collaborate with the players to describe the right sort of closure here. The cult of Golxumal isn't their primary enemy — and if they want Gol-Goroth's help later, they'd best leave his cult alone for now — and the Investigators might want to keep their eye on their own prize. As a collaborator, remind them of that, if you like.

What's important, after all they've been through, is what they will do with the knowledge they gained (or left behind) at Chichén Xoxul. On with the campaign.



Playing Act Three

"The Thing of the idols...had awaked to claim his own. The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident."

— "The Call of Cthulhu"

Unlocking the Third Act

As the second-Act Locales unfold, it should slowly become clear to the Investigators that the only way to permanently staunch the flow of the Eternal Liar's Nectar and debauchery into the world is to destroy or banish its corporeal body.

If the Investigators seem slow to reach this conclusion, you can point out — through some NPC mouthpiece or via an Investigator's realization — that stamping out local cults individually is no permanent method. The cult of the Agony on the Wind in Dallol village arose without outside help, for example, and those newly minted cultists are likely to be successful in creating a new Major Mouth in Ethiopia. Other cults could repeat this, elsewhere. And even though the seeds of the Agony's rise were literally sown in the Dallol volcano's eruption, Echavarria learned of the Liar by Mythos research and formed a cult on his own from nothing. Other power-mad sorcerers could do likewise unless it is destroyed or banished.

Once the Investigators reach this realization, for their efforts to bear fruit, they (a) must have enough information to find their enemy and (b) should have a method in mind for dispatching the Great Old One.

Finding the slumbering body of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths requires two pieces of information: the location of the Devouring Mountain (that is, where the Thing sleeps) and the astrological points in time when the Devouring Ravine by which Thing's viscera can be accessed opens (that is, when they can go there). The former campaign clue, in the form of a map, is found in Savitree Sirikhan's library (**Bangkok 20, "Savitree's Library,"** p. 180), and an explanation for the map, linking "the Devouring Mountain" to Mount Kailash in Thibet, is found in Mexico City (most likely in **Mexico City 8, "Shrine to the Thing,"** p. 280, and **Mexico City 15, "The Hidden Studio,"** p. 297). The latter campaign clue, either in the form of a letter or the testimony of an NPC, is found in Malta ("Floating Campaign Clue," page 220).

Past knowing where to go and when, the Investigators essentially have two options for combating the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. The first is to banish it and the second is to destroy it — either blowing it up or using another cosmic terror to battle it.

The banishment route is accomplished by performing the ritual to dismiss Y'golonac, which is found in the temple at Chichén Xoxul in the Yucatán.

A potentially confusing (and probably deadly) option open to the Investigators is to attempt a ritual to dismiss Nyarlathotep, if they (wrongly) believe that being to be their ultimate foe in this campaign. That ritual is available to them in Malta (Malta 13, "Hospitaller Shrine," page 245). Another option is to summon Gol-Goroth to battle the Liar directly. Since the Investigators will hear conflicting reports of the true identity of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths over the course of Act One and Act Two, their decision about which ritual to perform may not be completely straightforward.

The route of pure violence is most likely suggested to Investigators who don't think of it themselves by their encounter with the Bangkok Mouth and with its keeper, Xuc Pramoj (Bangkok 11, "Xuc Pramoj," page 166). It is, in fact, possible — not easy, or particularly sane, but *possible* — to deal enough gross physical trauma to the corporeal body of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths to destroy it.

The Investigators may use their own contacts and resources to acquire explosives and related gear in appropriate quantities. It may occur to them to retain the services of Xuc Pramoj, either on their way out of Bangkok, or via a return trip to that Locale. If any of the Investigators come from military or industrial backgrounds, they may have personal expertise. The latter case is ideal, a strong organic bond between the Investigators' backgrounds and their mission. But if the Investigators'

Troubleshooting: Summoning the Thing

What if the Investigators want to summon their enemy to where they are, so they can dispatch it on more convenient — and safe — ground?

There's one significant block to the otherwise clever strategy of bringing the mountain to Mohammed: resources. Although the ritual of summoning was performed (well, begun) by Echavarria in Los Angeles in 1924, and so details about it can be found in Samson Trammel's library in the present day, the summoning ritual's execution requires the participation of a whole cult of devoted worshippers who are practiced in debauchery pleasing to the Thing. It took Echavarria the better part of two years to assemble and train such a cult, and to do that would turn the Investigators into the very sort of malefactors they are trying so hard to oppose.

It's even theoretically possible to perform the banishment ritual at a remove from the Thing's corpulent body, but performing the ritual at such a remove is so difficult as to be impossible when the Liar has so fully entrenched itself on this planet. See the sidebar "Ritual to Dismiss Y'golonac" on page 368.

networks and skills aren't appropriate, an NPC in the Thibet Locale is provided who has both the relevant expertise, access to appropriate equipment, and — perhaps most importantly — psychological issues sufficient to allow him to accompany the Investigators on their dangerous errand. See **Thibet 2, "The Mad Scot,"** and **Thibet 3, "MacEwan,"** p. 350.

One facet of the demolition of the Bangkok Mouth given great weight by Xuc Pramoj is a preparatory demolition to bury the Mouth in rubble, so that when the charges intended to devastate the Mouth itself are detonated, its



Troubleshooting: How About a Cargo Plane?

What if the Investigators try to airlift explosives to Mount Kailash?

Airlifting explosives to the vicinity of Mount Kailash is a nonstarter for the simple reason that there are no suitable places to land an airplane in the mountains. Investigators who don't intend to land — who instead plan to simply fly explosive-laden airplanes into the Devouring Ravine — have two additional problems. First, the ravine only opens at certain points in time, which are difficult if not impossible to predict given astrological complexities that must be observed from the mountain itself or its close vicinity. Second, Mount Kailash's summit soars to more than 21,778 feet, while the most powerful commercial aircraft in the 1930s had practical flight ceilings of less than 14,000 feet.

Bringing It All Home

The third Act of *Eternal Lies* is not simply one more mission in the fight against the Cult of the Thousand Mouths. It is not only the revelation of a mad and terrible plan. It is the climax of the Investigators' own stories.

It's quite possible the players think they're embarking on the final leg of the campaign, now, and their characters may believe they're undertaking a fateful (and perhaps suicidal) trek to save the world — and maybe reaching the end of their journeys. At this point, the story might come to feel highly externalized. Things might seem to be all about the Investigators versus the Liar From Beyond or the environment on Mount Kailash or the cold cosmos. That's fine. But it's not your only option.

Focus on the Investigators for a bit before they begin their mission. Do they still have homes and families to visit? Are they still friends with each other or have they become tense, uneasy allies hardened by terror and witness to each others' worst moments? How are the characters different now than they were when they set out on Janet Winston-Rogers' case, so long ago?

Dramatizing these questions can be as easy as putting words into the mouths of NPCs. "Aren't you going to say goodbye?" asks the husband left behind. "You never would've done something like this when I met you," suggests the old business partner. "I'm proud of you," says the old ally from her hospital room.

You can also ask the players directly: How do their characters feel now compared to when they set out? How do they prepare for this journey? What's the atmosphere like on their journey to Thibet? Are they boldly setting forth on a grand adventure? Or are they beyond talking about it? Let them decide.

raw stuff will be contained rather than spread dangerously across the greater landscape to fester and perhaps regenerate. The Investigators may give weight to this concern in preparing to demolish the Thing itself. Or, they may leave the Old One's potential regeneration as a problem to be dealt with if and when it arises. You can definitely encourage the Investigators to worry about this issue in order to increase the tension of their planning, but in the end it doesn't matter, since Liar's destruction will trigger a much more devastating eventuality — the turning of the gaze of Azathoth upon the earth — immediately.

The Hook

With the culmination of the second act, the Investigators should now have enough information to locate Y'golonac's body and be motivated to dispatch it from this earthly realm. If they do not seem appropriately driven to do so, you may wish to use one or more of the floating scenes from Act Two to press upon them just how dangerous — globally as well as personally — the Thing With a Thousand Mouths is, especially if left unchecked.

Once the Investigators are good and motivated, drive that momentum straight to Thibet. The time for slowly building plot and carefully revealing clues is over. There are no floating scenes in Act Three, and you should not give the Investigators the chance to rest or regroup. Build a sense of urgency. Now is the opportunity to take everything learned and experienced so far and push towards the final crescendo.

The Spine

Act Three comprises two parts: Thibet and the resulting Apocalypse. In Thibet the Investigators climb Mount Kailash to the hidden layer of the Liar From Beyond and determine how to best rid the world of its horrible form. If the Investigators

are successful at this, immediately continue to the last chapter of the campaign. They need to travel back to the Act One Locales of Los Angeles and Savannah to deal with the aftermath that occurs when the Thing With a Thousand Mouths is banished.

The Horrible Truth

What the Investigators do not know at this point is that by vanquishing the Liar From Beyond, they are not thwarting Echavarria's original machinations but are instead posthumously completing his designs. Echavarria intended to perform two rituals — one within the other. The inner ritual was to call forth the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, but only in order to kill it. The sacrifice would then finish the outer ritual: to draw Azathoth's horrible gaze to Earth and, in doing so, destroy the world.

Upon realizing this, the Investigators have one last chance to save their perishing planet before it is left to ash and ruin. If they can find the designated focus of Azathoth's attention and remove it, the mindless god will turn its destructive gaze elsewhere.



Thibet

"Finally the air grew thin, and the sky changed color, and the climbers found it hard to breathe; but still they toiled up and up, marveling at the strangeness of the scene and thrilling at the thought of what would happen on the summit when the moon was out and the pale vapours spread around. For three days they climbed higher and higher toward the roof of the world; then they camped to wait for the clouding of the moon."

— "The Other Gods"

Keeper's Background: The Slumbering Liar

Y'golonac, the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, the true Eternal Liar, came to earth millennia ago. It was worshipped in pockets across the planet's history, including as the Liar From Beyond in the 4th century BC by Ethiopians. Their ancient temple was discovered by Bartolo Acuna and excavated with George Ayers's help. Y'golonac's venerations have ever involved mouths and debauchery.

The Liar's physical body lies beneath the earth and stone at Mount Kailash, a great peak of the Himalayan mountain range, in Thibet. Like other Great Old Ones on Earth, it has slumbered since ancient times, manifesting not literally in its form as a headless creature of mouthing appendages but in the acts of those attuned to its perversity and in the visitations of its hideous orifices upon both the land and its worshippers.

Y'golonac was agitated into a state of unusual wakefulness in 1924 when Ramon Echavarria and his followers in Los Angeles began a ritual to summon it. When that ritual was interrupted by the 1924 Investigators led by Walter Winston, the Old One remained in a restive state rather than falling back into its deep slumber. Echavarria's successor cults were able to entice the Liar's tendrils across the breadth of the world to manifest as Major Mouths that they milked for the god's perverse Nectar.

Y'golonac's corpulent body lies buried by geologic forces, but the unnatural character of its living carcass warps the time and space such that a ravine in the mountain opens to expose the Old One's anatomy to the light of far-off stars at certain times, for reasons unknowable by human minds. It is this character of the Eternal Liar's place of slumber that will allow the Investigators the opportunity to bring the fight to their enemy.

Thibet Spine

In the Thibet portion of Act Three — which actually begins with the Investigators' arrival in India — the Investigators must travel across India and into the Himalayas on an adventurous journey to Mount Kailash, the Devouring Mountain, where the Thing With a Thousand Mouths slumbers beneath the rock. There, they must attempt to either banish the Thing with ritual magic or use explosives (or Gol-Goroth) to destroy its earthly body. Success has unexpected consequences.

The Investigators arrive in India by whatever way seems best and then make their way across the British colony, asking around after whatever resources they feel they need to make their ascent of Mount Kailash and strike at the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. The most likely allies they might seek are a guide, but on learning that Mount Kailash is a holy mountain, they also have the opportunity to join a group of pilgrims traveling there. If the Investigators have settled on trying to defeat the Thing by blowing it up but lack relevant expertise and hardware, they track down an expatriate Scots demolitions expert who joins their party.

The Investigators pass into the Himalayas, traveling higher and higher into the mountains, passing through the Lipulekh Pass into Thibet on the way to Burang town. They may take a short side trip to a sacred body of water called Lake Manasarovar, which is said to have the ability to cleanse the sins of up to 100 lifetimes from those who bathe in or drink its waters.

The Investigators finally arrive in Darchen, a village on the pilgrim route around Mount Kailash. Because it is forbidden by the adherents of four different religions to climb the holy peak, the Investigators must scout their own route to the top and then make their way by stealth up the first leg to avoid being spotted. If seen, they are

Wardrobe: Thibet

The people of Thibet typically wear clothing made from the yaks herded throughout the Himalayas. Wool tunics and loose pants form the basic layer for nomads and town dwellers alike. During the colder months and high in the mountains, a heavy wool coat is worn — often lined with thick yak fur. Boots of yak skin keep feet dry, while cylindrical fur hats hold the snow and harsh wind at bay.

Depending on social status, the costumes become more colorful. Monks wear robes of orange and red. The wealthy adorn their garb with multicolored coats, beads, and aprons.

pursued and must deal — one way or another — with their pursuers.

On their way up the mountain, the Investigators must balance speed with safety, since they must achieve the summit by the time certain astrological correspondences reveal themselves. Either just after or just before the Investigators complete their ascent, the Devouring Ravine opens.

The Investigators must descend into the ravine, penetrating the mountain in spite of biting Mouths and plumes of Nectar, in order to perform a ritual, plant explosives, or both. With their success at dismissing or destroying the Thing With a Thousand Mounts comes an unexpected disaster: the Investigators have brought about the apocalypse.

Campaign Clues

There are no critical campaign clues that the Investigators must discover in Thibet in order to advance to "The Apocalypse," the final chapter of Act Three. If they are successful in destroying Y'golonac, Armageddon simply falls upon them — and the rest of the world — no matter what else they do.

Emotional Modulation in the Thibet Locale

The following lists provide quick-and-dirty hopeful and sinister setting details you can paraphrase, adapt, or simply read aloud as written to push the emotional tenor of play either up or down as needed while the Thibet Locale unfolds.

Hopeful Thibet Beats

- A colorful bird you don't recognize — a lark of some kind? — alights on a [branch/street sign] near you. It sits still for a brief moment, looking at you, then chirps out a short — well, you'd swear it was an encouragement — and then flaps away.
- The smell of sizzling meat and vegetables wafts through the air, and then you hear them cooking as well.
- A brisk motion at the edge of your vision makes you look up, and a colorful string of prayer flags whips in the wind — blue, white, red, green, yellow — reminders of the five pure lights.
- In a small alcove you spy a single burning candle and a small golden statue of Ganesha, Remover of Obstacles and Lord of Beginnings. With any luck, the small Hindu shrine augurs well for the success of your endeavors.

Sinister Thibet Beats

- You look up at the solid ceiling of grey clouds above, and it suddenly occurs to you that you haven't seen the sun in days. You wonder for a moment, bitterly, whether it's still there at all.
- On the road, you pass the remains of what was once a shed where a shepherd's animals could take shelter. Now it is fallen, part of the rubble gone, probably dragged away to be burned. Everything erected by mankind comes to naught, it occurs to you.
- You hear gunshots in the distance. Soldiers, it turns out, firing their rifles at nothing in particular, joking and probably drunk.
- You see something red in the mud and bend over to pick it up. A wood-block print on red cloth, a torn scrap of a prayer flag tied out in some better place, on some happier occasion, now torn and trodden upon.

Travel to India and Thibet

As with travel to Ethiopia and Bangkok, the trunk lines maintained by British Imperial Airways are the fastest way for the Investigators to cross the world. Given India's British colonial status, and given where Mount Kailash is situated, an approach to that peak via India — rather than China — makes the most sense to any Investigator with even a modest amount of travel sense.

A map of Imperial Airways' trunk lines demonstrates the routes from either Ethiopia or Bangkok; Investigators can get as close to the Himalayas as Delhi on regular commercial routes. They can also charter their own flights or boats, of course.

Investigators traveling from Central America can achieve India by way of California and transpacific ships bound for Chinese ports like Hong Kong. Even so, the Investigators still judge that the approach to Mount Kailash will take less time from the south, and so flying or sailing to Calcutta makes more sense than trekking across the

breadth of China and then crossing the heights of the north and eastern Himalayas.

Travel across India is easy and speedy. English is spoken widely, roads between the major cities are of high quality, and lodging is relatively easy to come by along those routes.

1. Arrival in India

Scene Type: Travel / Core

Lead-ins: Learning the campaign clues that point toward Mount Kailash as the Devouring Mountain, where the Thing With a Thousand Mouths slumbers (Mexico City 8, "Shrine to the Thing," p. 280, or another Mexico City scene, and Bangkok 20, "Savitree's Library," p. 180).

Summary: The Investigators arrive in India and scout their best route to Mount Kailash.

Core Clue: Mount Kailash is sacred to all four of the region's significant religions, and it is consequently forbidden to climb it. (Theology.)

Core Clue: The likeliest passage to Mount Kailash will take the Investigators through the United Provinces, into the foothills, through Lipulekh Pass, and eventually to Darchen, a village at the base of the mountain. (Preparedness, Library Use, or Oral History.)



The details of the Investigators' arrival in India will vary depending on where they're coming from, but are not particularly important in any case. The pair of most likely options sees them arriving in either Karachi (if by plane) or Calcutta (if by sea), and then traveling by car or bus in the general direction of Delhi in India's northern regions.

As the Investigators cross India, keep them focused on their goal of achieving Mount Kailash; allow the details of travel to fall away from their attention. Whereas in the Act Two Locales, you might have asked the players to specify the types of lodging the Investigators were seeking, for example, or the types of neighborhoods they avoided, here simply wave your hands and move quickly across the country, giving the impression that mundane concerns have receded to the point that they can nearly be ignored. For example:

You stay at a series of inns that blend together, riding buses and cars past fields of cotton, wheat, and rice, eating meals of convenience in places whose names you forget, your attentions ever consumed by the monumental task that stands before you.

As the Investigators make the way farther and farther north, they can see the Himalayas on the horizon, jagged peaks they know to be the tallest mountain range in the world. The mountains grow larger and larger until they come to dominate the landscape not only ahead of them, but behind them as well.

Investigators with **Theology** either soon learn or perhaps are already aware that Mount Kailash is sacred to Hindus, Buddhists, Bönpos, and Jains. It is believed by Hindus to be the abode of Shiva himself. In deference to the beliefs of these groups, it is forbidden to climb the mountain.

The mountain is, however, a site of pilgrimage, with those who visit it typically going in order to circumambulate the base of the mountain. The devout often attempt to make the 32 mile journey on foot in a day. The exceptionally devout travel not by walking but in an endless series of full prostrations in which they kneel, then lie flat, then kneel again, recite a prayer, and finally crawl forward to the furthest point reached by their hands during the prostration, before beginning the process again.

In the course of their travels northward, Investigators with **Preparedness**, **Library Use**, or **Oral History** are able to learn — with their own books and maps, through public resources, or by asking around, respectively —

Environs: India

India in the 1930s is a British colony — the "British Raj" — with much of its land administered directly by the crown through the Governor-General of India, and other areas under its indirect rule via native rulers.

India is home to syncretic religious systems that predominantly incorporate Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. A hereditary caste system restricts living and working options and social activity. In a vast simplification, the caste system divides the Indian people into Brahmins (priests, scholars, and teachers), Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors), Vaishyas (merchants, businessmen, and herdsmen), and Shudras (craftsmen and laborers). Outside this structure fall the lowest individuals, the non-casted Dalits, or "untouchables."

The staple food is rice, save that wheat replaces it in the northern portions of the country. Regional cooking styles vary widely. A complex variety of spices are employed throughout the nation.

Climate varies widely from south to north, with monsoons driven by both the proximity of the Himalayas and the Thar Desert. India is warmer than most lands at similar latitudes, although the Investigators will spend most of their time in the snow-capped Himalayas and their cold foothills.



that the route to Mount Kailash is relatively well known, even though the mountain itself is located in a remote and inhospitable portion of the Himalayas. The only sensible route begins in the United Provinces in India's far north, follows the river Sharda along the boundary between India and Nepal, and crosses into Thibet at an ancient pass called Lipulekh. The route brings travelers to Burang town, some 13,200 feet above sea level, where a trail continues to the village of Darchen, which is on the pilgrim route around the base of the mountain. Once the base of the mountain is achieved, the Investigators will be on their own in determining a route of ascent, for obvious reasons. The route around the mountain is well known and well marked, at least.

Past learning the best routes, Investigators with **Oral History** learn that their best options for making the trip are to either hire a guide or join a group of pilgrims. If the Investigators look for a guide, they are eventually introduced to Pannu Singh (see **Thibet 4, "Pannu Singh,"** p. 353). If they try to find a group of pilgrims to join, they are ultimately successful (see **Thibet 5, "The Pilgrims,"** p. 354).

2. The Mad Scot

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Looking for someone with the skills and equipment necessary to accomplish destroying the body of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths with explosives (Thibet 1, "Arrival in India," p. 349).

Summary: The Investigators hear that there is a Scotsman of dubious rationality who works for a mining concern in the northern provinces, who may be their man.

Core Clue: A bombastic Scotsman named Niall MacEwan has a reputation as an explosives enthusiast and can be found at an iron mine near Nagina. (Oral History.)



Investigators with **Oral History** who ask around, in their travels, about materials for or experts in significant demolitions follow up a few local dead ends before hearing — probably from an Indian national who judges himself far too inexperienced or sane to do the kinds of things they're asking — of a Scotsman named Niall MacEwan, legendary in local circles for his bombast. As a young miner recently arrived in the British Raj in the 1900s, MacEwan famously threatened to blow up the committee that established the first set of safety regulations for Indian mining in the early years of the twentieth century, because — in his judgment — they were behaving in a generally timorous and womanly fashion. His reputation has only grown more outsized in the decades since.

The Investigators learn that MacEwan currently works for a private mining company working a granite mine near the village of Nagina, which — happily — is not far off their route to Mount Kailash.

Investigators who make their queries without a well-considered cover story, or without making a 1-point **Streetwise** spend, discover that the local colonial authorities wherever they are — Delhi, in the absence of any more specific location — are interested in talking to the inquiring Investigators about what, exactly, it is that they want to blow up so badly.

Embody these questions in the polite but firm investigations of an officious inspector named Arunkumar Dharnipragada. He asks pointed questions, requests leave to search the Investigators' belongings, and suggests that he will check up on them in the future. This last does not turn out to be the case; this short encounter serves only to suggest to the Investigators that they shouldn't imagine they can run completely roughshod over the local government in pursuit of their greater goals or that, if they do, there are likely to be consequences.

3. MacEwan

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Learning that Niall MacEwan may be able to help them with their demolitions needs (Thibet 2, "The Mad Scot," on this page).

Summary: The Investigators detour to a mining village near the foothills town of Nagina.

Core Clue: The Investigators hire or convince explosives expert Niall MacEwan to help them. (Streetwise or Oral History to find him; Reassurance to get him to speak with them.)

Core Clue: MacEwan is motivated primarily by technical challenges and has an expansive personal cosmology broad enough to accommodate just about anything the Investigators tell him (especially if it's backed up by what the Investigators can *show* him). (Assess History.)



The foothill village of Nagina is small and remote, requiring the Investigators to ride in a hired car up unpaved and narrow switchback tracks. The Himalayas are now close on all sides: endless mountain peak to the north, high foothills to the south.

Nagina is home largely to the families of those employed by the imaginatively named British Empire Granite Mining Company, with shepherds and their families scattered throughout the high

pastures of the area. Minor services are available as well.

The main mining camp is even farther up a steep dirt track traversed regularly by hard-used trucks and beasts of burden.

Streetwise or **Oral History** is entirely sufficient to learn that Niall MacEwan lives at the camp. Those without these abilities who ask also learn this information, but wind up paying an unnecessary fee to an opportunistic truck driver for a ride to the mining camp.

The mining camp is entirely as expected: massive holes in the earth from which granite is quarried in great sheets by heavy-laboring Indian miners.

At 55, Niall MacEwan is older than the Investigators probably expected, although they've had half a clue as to his age if they heard the rumor about his threats against the mining safety commission in the 1900s. His hair is shoulder length and grey throughout, his skin tanned, lined, and leathery. He's also smaller than expected, at just a shade over five and a half feet tall.

MacEwan is at first wary but, with **Reassurance**, is happy to receive the Investigators once it becomes clear that they haven't come to hassle him about permits, regulations, or one of his many half-Scots bastards. He lives up to his reputation for bombast, although Investigators with **Assess Honesty** get the sense — now that they meet him in person — that it now covers (if it didn't in his younger years) for an unease with his advancing age and an apprehension about what the rest of his life will bring.

If the Investigators bullshit MacEwan about what they want to hire him to do (inventing, perhaps, some mundane cover story about wanting to mine rare minerals at the top of Mount Kailash), he figures it out, eventually catching them in a lie or delving deeply enough into their backgrounds to expose the story they've told as nonsense. He sends them packing. At that point, an admission and round of **Reassurance** are necessary to recapture his attention. (The Investigators may be heartened, though, that the Scotsman is sharp minded.)

If the Investigators level with MacEwan about the broad reasons they want to employ his services ("There's a supernatural threat there"), even if they downplay the specifics (i.e., they don't mention that they intend to blow up a horrific deity), his bravado eases back to sensible levels and he becomes interested in the technical challenge, asking specific questions that the Investigators will be completely incapable of answering given how little they know about the lay of the land at the top of Mount Kailash.

MacEwan has an eclectic personal theology that's a mishmash of his native Anglicanism, the Hindu beliefs of the Indians he's worked with his entire life, and the intellectually adrift philosophy of a Methodist missionary who lived in the camp for a few years in the '20s, of whom MacEwan was quite fond. In short, it's expansive enough to fit just about anything the Investigators tell him into some philosophical cubbyhole or doctrinal pigeonhole, although his ultimate belief in a Christian-style God at the center of it all is more or less unshakable.

Flattery is welcome, and cements a friendship with the flatterer, but not necessary to secure MacEwan's services. With even a modest offer of cash money split between advance and completion payments, the challenge of the job on top of MacEwan's rising world-weariness makes the Investigators' offer one he can't possibly resist.

Over the course of the Investigators' relationship with MacEwan, any of them with **Assess Honesty** continue to solidify their sense that the Scotsman is most easily manipulated by presenting him with interesting technical challenges and that he's blasé about pretty much anything else he learns or is told. It's entirely possible that this psychological profile would make it possible for the Investigators to convince MacEwan to suicidally detonate by hand the mass of explosives charges they'll eventually set at the bottom of the Devouring Ravine (see **Thibet 15, "The Explosives,"** p. 369).

Once conclusively hired, MacEwan offers to take the explosives they need from his current employer without need for the Investigators to so much as ask; he thinks of the company's stores of TNT as what amounts to his personal property. *("Well I went down to the lowlands and bought it, didn't I?")*

He tells the Investigators that he'll meet them on the road outside Nagina in the morning, sends them to stay in the village, and — true to his word — shows up with a string of a dozen shady-looking native porters carrying several hundred pounds of TNT in the still-dark hours of the next morning. (**Assess Honesty** alerts any Investigator who has it that these guys look less than trustworthy.) Niall counsels that speedy departure might be wise, before the camp director shakes off his regrettable drunkenness and realizes that every single stick of explosive in the entire camp is gone.

In mechanically specific terms, MacEwan's impulse to steal all of the TNT on the mine site nets him three dozen charges, which are split three charges apiece among the twelve porters. See the sidebar "Packing Fire" for more information.



The porters, of course, are a problem, which Pannu Singh points out now (if he's present) or later (when the Investigators hire him — see **Thibet 4, "Pannu Singh,"** p. 353). As Hindus — disreputable or no — there's no way they'll be convinced to climb the forbidden holy mountain. Although their muscle power can be replaced for the first part of the Investigators' journey by a truck or string of beasts of burden, the porters won't be sent away easily, because MacEwan's promised them work for a month. It takes a 1-point **Bargain**, **Credit Rating**, or **Intimidation** spend to get rid of them without significant grumbling. If sent away without such a spend, the porters turn to banditry and show up at the Investigators' hotel or camp the following night to steal whatever of value they can in general retaliation. Alternately, a 2-point **Bargain** or **Reassurance** spend can be used to actually convince the porters to attempt the climb of Mount Kailash, in spite of Singh's protestations that such attempts are foolishness.

Niall MacEwan

Three Things: Speaks and laughs at inappropriate volumes. Ends declarative statements with questions ("Well I'm standing here, aren't I?""It fits the pattern, doesn't it?""That one's a real jerk, isn't he?"). Always carries a screwdriver, often fiddling with it.

Athletics 3, Electrical Repair 4, Explosives 12, Mechanical Repair 4, Health 8, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 5, Stability 8

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (screwdriver)

Unsavory Native Porters

Health 12, Scuffling 4

Weapon: −2 (fists), −1 (small improvised weapon), +0 (large improvised weapon)

Packing Fire

Given that the Investigators may decide to send away MacEwan's porters, or may have come to India with significant quantities of explosives that they begged, bought, or stole from elsewhere, and given that the Investigators are eventually going to have to carry those explosives over rough ground where trucks can't go, you're going to need some rules for how much TNT an Investigator or NPC can carry.

In the abstract for these purposes, TNT (or other explosives) is measured in charges. Carrying more than one charge of TNT for more than an hour or so causes damage (at the end of each day) and increases the Difficulty Numbers of all tests and contests (while the burden is being carried) as summarized in the table below.

Damage arising from carrying a large pack is obviously not representative of gross physical trauma. Rather, it represents increasing fatigue whose accumulation eventually prevents the character from continuing to travel until resting and recovering Health.

Difficulty Number increases can be neutralized by simply putting down the packs in question, so, with warning, Investigators can prepare for tests and contests by stowing their packs. If Investigators dump their packs in a hurry — as they might when ambushed, say — you may want to inject some worry into the proceedings by mumbling to yourself about "checking for an explosion" and rolling some dice in secret.

The specific, practical worth of a single charge is described in **Thibet 15, "The Explosives,"** p. 369, which is the scene that describes what the Investigators must do to destroy the Thing With a Thousand Mouths by blowing it up. In general terms, a

Packing Fire Table

Charges Carried	Damage	Difficulty Increase
1–3	1 point (no roll) per day	+1
4–5	−2 damage per day	+2
6	+0 damage per day	+3

character with Explosives can ballpark one charge as sufficient to blow open a door, two charges as sufficient to blow up a car, four charges as sufficient to blow up a house, and twelve charges as a good start at bringing down a whole mountain face in a massive avalanche.

4. Pannu Singh

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Seeking a guide willing to take them to — and up — Mount Kailash. (Thibet 1, "Arrival in India," p. 349)

Summary: The Investigators find a guide willing to violate the sanctity of Mount Kailash.

Core Clue: The Investigators secure Singh's assistance. (Streetwise to locate him; Bargain to hire him.)

Core Clue: Singh's alcoholism is likely to prove troublesome as the group travels to Mount Kailash. (Assess Honesty or Medicine to realize he's an alcoholic; Pharmacy or Streetwise to understand the problem.)

Once the Investigators become aware that climbing Mount Kailash is forbidden out of deference to the beliefs of every significant religion in both India and Thibet, their travel plans become more complicated. Unless any of the Investigators are expert mountaineers, the services of an experienced but unprincipled — or at least disaffected — guide become necessary.

Streetwise is necessary to locate such a guide, and initial queries are disheartening, leading only to a growing collection of guides who inform even Investigators bearing massive bankrolls that to attempt to ascend Mount Kailash is to violate the natural order and invite death.

Eventually, however, a savvy Investigator follows up some potential guide's, *"Only a madman would agree to lead such an expedition,"* with a rejoinder to the effect of, "Well, do you know any madmen?" which leads the man to suggest one Pannu Singh, "…but keep my name out of it." Singh, the man suggests, can be found at the bar where he has essentially taken up residence in a nearby town. (This encounter can happen at any point in the Investigators' travel across the breadth of India; the specifics are not important.)

Tracking down the bar in question requires the better part of a day.

When the Investigators find him, Pannu Singh is unconscious in a back alley, sleeping off the effects of his daily heavy drinking.

First Aid or simple patience is required to arouse him or wait out his sleep. Once he awakens, **Reassurance** or **Intimidation** is sufficient to capture his attention. It's clear to an Investigator with **Assess Honesty** or **Medicine** that Singh is an alcoholic.

Pannu attempts to cut off any attempt to hire his services by informing the Investigators that he wishes simply to be left alone, but **Flattery**, **Reassurance**, or simple persistence can cut through his reluctance, given a few hours of persuasion. The fact that Singh initially blows them off not because Mouth Kailash is sacred but because he's an irritable drunk should be enough to make the Investigators hopeful that they've finally found their man, which does, in fact, turn out to be the case. The truth of the matter is that Singh is nearly out of money and hiring on with a group of foreign travelers with some stupid plan or another — he's not really interested in the specifics — is the best route he's got to accumulating enough cash to spend another year or two drinking himself into unconsciousness. (And even death, if he's lucky.) Thus, at the end of the day, persistent Investigators are successful at hiring him.

An Investigator with **Bargain** can get the Investigators a good deal for Singh's services. If none have Bargain, it takes a 1-point **Credit Rating** spend to secure his services for the trip to, and up, Mount Kailash.

Investigators who try to suss out a bit of information about Pannu's background using **Reassurance** learn that he once had a family and a good job leading wealthy foreign tourists into the mountains, but that he returned from an expedition several years ago to find that his wife and children had been struck down by disease, and that attempts to reach him in the high mountains so he could return home before their deaths had been unsuccessful. Singh's despair consumed him; he turned away employment and turned to drink. He abandoned the Anglican faith to which he had converted from his native Hinduism; he's essentially an atheist, now. When his extended family sent him out of the village where he had lived for his shameful behavior, which had persisted over a period of years, he sold his possessions and began simply wandering from village to village, drinking to excess day by day, until forced to move on. His long-term plan, such as it is, is to eventually return to the mountains and die there.

Investigators who try to understand Singh by means other than Reassurance are met with hostility, and learn only that the drunken guide feels that his history is none of their business.

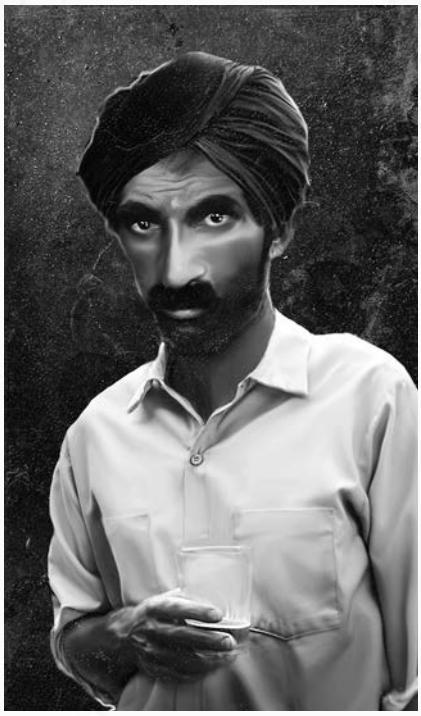
An Investigator with **Pharmacy** or **Streetwise** can see clear difficulties arising from Singh's alcoholism on the horizon for the party, and sure enough, as they travel, their guide's addiction poses a constant stream of problems.

Singh expects his employers to provide the necessary equipment for their travels, and disappears with their wallets (or, grudgingly, allows them to accompany him) for a day of provisioning in a regional center: buying climbing gear, pack animals, and the like. Investigators who lack **Bargain** discover that Singh has made a 1-point **Credit Rating** spend on their behalf. Perhaps more alarmingly, Investigators who come along on these shopping trips, or who search the resulting provisions, and who make a Difficulty 4 **Sense Trouble** test, discover that Singh has purchased — in and among more legitimate gear — enough small lots of moonshine to keep him in liquor for a month or more.

At any given time, unless physical steps are taken to keep him separate from alcohol, Singh is either drunk or hung over, both of which are the mechanical equivalent of being **hurt**: he can make no Investigative spends and suffers +1 Difficulty to all tests and contests.

While the Investigators remain in relatively civilized areas, they must keep a close watch on Singh in order to prevent him from drinking. This requires the Investigators, as a group, to succeed in a Difficulty 5 **Sense Trouble** test once per day. If they fail, Singh somehow manages to get drunk behind their backs. Since many eyes looking out are especially appropriate for this daily test, there is no penalty for cooperation (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, page 58). That is, an assisting Investigator applies all spent pool points to the roll and does not suffer the typical one-point cooperation tax. After the Investigators leave civilization behind, the Difficulty decreases by one each day until it falls to zero, at which point there is nothing left for Singh to drink, and his detoxification process begins.

While in acute withdrawal, Singh suffers the mechanical effects of being **hurt**. A 1-point **First Aid** spend can



ameliorate these for a day. Whether the mechanical effects are eliminated or not, Singh is miserable during this period and suffers blinding headaches, extreme irritability, profound sweating, and even — when and if you judge it dramatically appropriate — hallucinations and delirium.

At the end of each day of acute withdrawal, Singh makes a Difficulty 7 Health test. When he finally succeeds, his symptoms stabilize; he suffers no further mechanical penalties from withdrawal, and his headaches and irritability taper off over the remainder of the Investigators' travel. Unless it took a long time for Singh to make his test, or the Investigators failed serially to cut off his sources of drink, he is very nearly human by the time they arrive in Darchen.

Pannu Singh

Three Things: Eyes perpetually bloodshot; cheeks perpetually reddened. Scoffs at discussion of gods and religion — "Futile and absurd business." Seeks drink.

Firearms 4, First Aid 5, Fleeing 3, Health 7/9*, Outdoorsman 4, Preparedness 4, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 2/5*, Stability 4/7*

Weapon: −2 (fists)

*Singh's scores increase to the higher levels after he's been sober for a week.

5. The Pilgrims

Scene Type: Alternate / Core

Lead-ins: Seeking a group of pilgrims to accompany to Mount Kailash (Thibet 1, "Arrival in India," p. 349, or Thibet 4, "Paddu Singh," p. 353).

Summary: The Investigators find a suitable group of pilgrims who are en route to Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash.

Core Clue: The Investigators join the group. (Oral History to find it.)

On realizing that Mount Kailash is a common destination for pilgrims, the Investigators may hit on the idea of joining a group of such travelers.

Oral History is sufficient to find such a group in Delhi or by inquiring at Hindu shrines or monasteries of any significant size. The Investigators may have to wait a few days before the group is ready to leave, but no longer than that.

In keeping with the descriptive strategy of glossing over the details of travel and keeping the players focused on the object of their journey, it's recommended that you communicate a broad facelessness when talking about and describing the pilgrims to the players. The Investigators should feel as though they stand apart from the pilgrims; the pilgrims are literally but also figuratively foreign, with

unusual customs and strange concerns that it frankly doesn't pay to try to understand, given the magnitude of the Investigators central concerns.

The Investigators do face two specific difficulties when traveling with Hindu pilgrims. The first is that the group of a dozen or more of the faithful travels with excruciatingly slow speed, stopping at innumerable roadside shrines to pray, meditate, hang prayer flags, and make other observances. Take these opportunities to make the players nervous by reminding them that the Devouring Ravine only opens at certain times, and that delay may see them miss their next window and be stuck on the mountaintop for weeks, awaiting the next chance. (An Investigator with **Astronomy** suggests, in collaboration with an Investigator with **Outdoorsman**, that they must pick up the pace if they're going to make it in time. These are highly speculative estimates, however, and in point of fact, the Investigators have a good chance of arriving at more or less the correct time regardless of what they do — see Thibet 11, "Heaven's Ticking Clock," p. 361.)

The second difficulty faced by Investigators traveling with pilgrims is that it is hard for the Investigators to conceal their ultimate purposes from their devout companions over the long term. While the Investigators can probably avoid talking about horrific truths and plans best kept private most of the time, it's likely that they'll be carrying — or need to at some point acquire — the kind of mountain-climbing gear that will arouse suspicion. At some point, **Reassurance** and a reasonable cover story ("Oh, we'll be traveling on past Mount Kailash, scaling peaks farther into the mountains…") are required to calm the pilgrims' suspicions.

Pose additional complications — or, conversely, moments of hope — as warranted by the Locale's unfolding dramatic needs. A pilgrim might catch a glimpse of an Investigator studying a Mythos tome and begin asking troubling questions or spreading dangerous rumors, for example. Conversely, a deeply troubled Investigator might find a moment of rare tranquility, perhaps to the extent of recovering a point or two of Stability while meditating, on a lark, with the pilgrims at a shrine or monastery.

If, at some point, the pilgrims learn of the Investigators' true intentions, the Investigators are immediately turned out of the group and sternly warned that they must not attempt to scale Mount Kailash's summit. At that point, a 2-point **Reassurance** spend is necessary to prevent the pilgrims from warning those they will encounter at Burang and Darchen about the Investigators' inappropriate intentions, which could be highly troublesome if the Investigators arrive in those places after the pilgrims do.

Pilgrim Names

Combine these given and family names if names for individual pilgrims are required in the course of the Investigators' travels with the group.

Family Names: Agarwal, Pandey, Ramachandrah, Verma, Zutshi

Male Given Names: Bihari, Mohapatral, Naresh, Qutubbin, Ramlal

Female Given Names: Ajeet, Indrani, Mira, Ravi, Sreerama

6. Into the Himalayas

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Hiring a guide (Thibet 4, "Pannu Singh," p. 353) or joining a group of pilgrims (Thibet 5, "The Pilgrims," p. 354) and traveling into the mountains.

Summary: A panorama of panoramas slide by as the Investigators press through the mountains toward the top of the world.

The Investigators will cover a great deal of difficult ground in their journey to Mount Kailash, but as with their travels across India, this should have the effect, almost, of a filmstrip that plays in the background while they remain focused on other things.

The background details that follow shouldn't require the Investigators' tactical engagement with the travel (How will we cross this gorge? How can we climb this slope?), so much as they should serve to communicate to the players that their characters have traveled to the boundaries of civilization, and beyond.

As they travel northward, and farther above sea level, they leave the tropical lowland climate of central India and climb through forests that become colder, drier, and more sparse the farther they go. Whether led by Pannu Singh or accompanying the band of pilgrims (and whether they've enlisted the help of Niall MacEwan or not), the Investigators must eventually leave behind trucks, cars, and buses as the roads become increasingly narrow and steep in the United Provinces, the region of north India through which the Investigators must travel. If the Investigators are traveling with

6. Into the Himalayas

Niall MacEwan and his pallet-load of explosives, they must sell their truck and transfer the load to beasts of burden at some point. MacEwan takes a bath in selling the truck but is in such high spirits about the adventure ahead that he scarcely thinks about it.

Eventually, the Investigators realize that they have left the foothills behind and are deep in the mountains, the mighty Himalayas. The panoramas are nothing short of spectacular.

The Investigators travel through the Sharda River Valley, which is the boundary between India and Nepal. They spend days walking or riding beasts of burden on switchback mountain trails along ravines that drop steeply away. From time to time, there's evidence of British attempts to pave proper roads in sections of the trail.

The scattered trees are hardy shrubs or evergreens — pine, cypress, fir. The perceptive among the group occasionally see bharal (Himalayan blue sheep with curving horns and sure feet), tahr (wild goats), musk deer, and mainland serow (goat-antelopes) grazing. These animals are occasionally accompanied by shepherds from the small indigenous villages through which the Investigators' route occasionally passes. Birds and small ground mammals are common. The land is completely wild.

Eventually the route leaves the river and cuts into the mountains, and the hard frost on the ground in the mornings heralds the Investigators' arrival in the snowy high altitudes. On the day they enter the Lipulekh Pass, which marks their transition from India to Thibet, it begins to snow, the new fall joining drifts from previous snowfalls that haven't melted. Singh, if present, is disgusted. The pilgrims, conversely, welcome the fresh fall.

Eventually, the travelers arrive in Burang, a Thibetan town in a river valley that amounts to the staging point for travels to both Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar. An ancient fort called Tegla Kar ("Lying Tiger Fort"), where the Thibetan regional administrator dwells, and Simbiling Monastery, where hundreds of monks live, are both carved into the cliffs above the town. Someone, perhaps, mentions to an Investigator that an incarnation of the Buddha once lived in Burang.

Burang is populous enough that the Investigators can purchase supplies that are not too outlandish, if they need them, sleep in warm beds, if they wish, or at least have a hot meal in the company of friendly Thibetans.

Pannu Singh, if he is with them, warns the Investigators against telling anyone about their intention to scale the holy mountain. Although normally he would hire porters for the gear of wealthy mountain-climbing foreigners either here or at Darchen, the Investigators will have to carry their own things.

If the Investigators are traveling with the group of pilgrims, they intend to travel, next, to Lake Manasarovar to bathe in its waters, which are said to cleanse the sin of up to one hundred lifetimes. The lake isn't precisely on the way to the mountain. The Investigators are told that the way to Darchen is relatively straightforward from here, and in any case, they are now within sight of Mount



Kailash, so they only need remain with the pilgrims if they wish to go to Lake Manasarovar. The pilgrims, unsurprisingly, encourage it, especially if any of the Investigators are obviously burdened with sin or melancholy, but it's up to the players.

If the Investigators are traveling with Pannu Singh, he is surprisingly taken with the idea of traveling to Lake Manasarovar, struck with the idea that drinking its water may cleanse him of the final traces of what he knows has been a miserable and degenerate descent of his soul into alcohol abuse. (This assumes that he's at least on the way to recovery by this point. If not, he's quite happy to replenish his secret stores of moonshine in Burang and press on half-drunkenly to the mountain.)

Lake Manasarovar is described in the next scene (**Thibet 7, "Lake Manasarovar,"** on this page). If the Investigators bypass it, their journey continues to Darchen (**Thibet 8, "Darchen,"** p. 358), unless they deliberately choose to bypass that village, in which case they can skip directly to ascending Mount Kailash (**Thibet 9, "Ascent,"** p. 359).

If the players ask about recovering their General ability pools in Burang, they may do so, but if they don't think to ask, you can assume that the Investigators are too caught up in the stresses of their journey to make any significant recovery here. (Investigators who go to Lake Manasarovar recover there automatically, whether the players inquire or not.)

7. Lake Manasarovar

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Deciding to undergo the pilgrimage to Lake Manasarovar instead of heading directly from Burang to Darchen and Mount Kailash (Thibet 6, "Into the Himalayas," p. 355).

Summary: The Investigators have the experience they expect — whatever that is — at Lake Manasarovar.

Lake Manasarovar is the highest freshwater lake in the world. It's just past 15,000 feet above sea level, with a 55 mile circumference and surface area of 120 square miles. Pilgrims from India, Thibet, Nepal, and farther come to drink or bathe in its waters and circumambulate Mount Kailash. The lake's shore where the trail comes from Burang is dotted with small shrines where long strings of colored prayer flags whip in the wind.

If the Investigators come with a group of pilgrims, they are left to their own devices once the group arrives. The pilgrims proceed to pray, drink, and bathe individually, taking in the experience each in their own way.

Even if the Investigators come on their own, there are other pilgrims present at the lake both when they arrive and after they leave. Even so, the Investigators don't have any trouble finding solitude, if they seek it.

If the Investigators are with Pannu Singh, he moves off to experience the lake on his own. If things have been going well for the Investigators and you think a significant setback would be appropriate — dramatically, mechanically, or both — then when Singh returns, he announces that his eyes have been opened to the depths of his turpitude. If you'd rather not simply decide whether this happens, make a Stability test for Singh, Difficulty 6; if he succeeds, his eyes are opened. Otherwise, he continues on his present course. (You'll still have to decide if Singh spends any points from his pool, of course. You should base that decision in large part on how the Investigators have been presenting their task. If they see themselves as heroes, saving the world, that's something Singh might want to be involved in even if he does come up out of the depth of his darkness, and so he spends less. If the heroes seem like antiheroes, though, Singh spends more pool points. It is perhaps ironic that the Investigators will be better off, in the case of this particular test, if Singh's Stability pool is still suppressed due to his alcoholism.)

If Singh has an eye-opening experience, he informs the Investigators that he is no longer willing to help them and that he intends to return to Delhi to reconcile with his extended family. An Investigator with **Reassurance** can convince him to keep their intention to scale the holy mountain secret from the devout in the area, and a 1-point **Reassurance**, **Flattery**, or **Intimidation** spend gets him to agree to remain at Burang to wait for the Investigators' return, to help guide them back to civilization after their presumed success on the mountain.

If Niall MacEwan is with the Investigators, he waits impatiently with the beasts of burden carrying the party's explosives, fiddling with his screwdriver and checking his equipment. If both Niall and Pannu are with the Investigators and Singh has a change of heart, MacEwan's succinct response to Singh is, *"The hell with you, then."*

Each Investigator who makes an effort to experience the lake as a site of pilgrimage has an appropriate

experience, which is to say, the experience that the Investigator most expects: Hindus drinking or bathing in the lake experience a cleansing of their souls. Those expecting nothing experience nothing. Those seeking clarity about their purpose gain insight. Those wracked with guilt or shame who hope to gain some measure of absolution experience it, unless they secretly believe they are unworthy, in which case they are disappointed. You should have a sense of each Investigator's psyche by this point in the campaign, and should have little difficulty describing each character's mental state at the holy lake to their players.

Dramatically speaking, Lake Manasarovar represents a last opportunity for the Investigators — and players, for that matter — to reflect on the struggle to come and project their hopes and fears forward. Past this point, they'll be busy facing the *actual* struggles of the final battle against the Thing, and what comes after.

Mechanically speaking, this is the last opportunity *for the whole of the campaign* for the Investigators to have a temporary haven in which to recover three of their General ability pools, and every Investigator makes such a recovery here, whatever baggage they bring to the place as a site of pilgrimage. The demands of the ascent will prevent them from doing so once they set out for the summit of Mount Kailash, and the stresses of the apocalypse will prevent this form of recovery once it becomes clear that Armageddon is at hand.

8. Darchen

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Arriving at the base of Mount Kailash after passing through Burang (Thibet 6, "Into the Himalayas," p. 355) or visiting the lake (Thibet 7, "Lake Manasarovar," p. 357).

Summary: The Investigators pass through the small village of Darchen, the first stop on the pilgrimage track around Mount Kailash.

Apart from being the last stop for pilgrims before they begin their circumambulation of Mount Kailash, Darchen is a significant way station for Thibetan shepherds and their flocks. It has only two permanent buildings, both of which serve as housing for pilgrims. The entire place is festooned with prayer flags, which will be a common sight for the Investigators for as long as they remain on the pilgrim trail around the mountain.

The Investigators, presumably of predominantly Western descent, are an unusual but not unheard-of group here. Out of deference to their presumed pilgrimage, the Investigators are left to their own devices. The Thibetans here do not speak English, but if the Investigators wish to speak with them, there are enough English-speaking Indian pilgrims present that interpreters can be found.

There are no clues in Darchen about the Thing With a Thousand Mouths. Mount Kailash is not known, by any of the Thibetans, by the name "Devouring Mountain." The various religious significances of the mountain in the Hindu, Buddhist, Bön, and Jain traditions are well known among the community of pilgrims and the local shepherds, and Investigators with **Theology**, **Occult**, and even **Cthulhu Mythos** can spend many days listening to stories, precepts, and doctrine about the mountain… without learning anything remotely useful to their purpose here past what they already know. It would appear — and it is the truth — that the Thing slumbers beneath Mount Kailash without the inhabitants being the wiser. The human debauchery pleasing to Y'golonac is entirely foreign to the constant struggle of life in the Himalayas and to the core of most Eastern belief.

As at earlier junctures in their travels, Pannu Singh (if present) advises the Investigators that they should tell no one of their intention to ascend the mountain. In the event that one of them slips up, or they are especially careless as to where and when they prepare their climbing gear, there is a short period of complete incredulity before the entire village erupts into an uproar, with word of the Investigators' heathen intent spreading around the entire circuit of the mountain in a day or less. Test Difficulties for making the ascent unseen increase, as described in **Thibet 9, "Ascent,"** p. 359. The Investigators may even be run out of the village, sent back toward Burang under an unspoken but nevertheless completely clear threat of violence. Word makes its way back to the Thibetan administrator in Burang of the Investigators' abhorrent disrespect; he dispatches what amounts to a posse of strong local men to escort the Investigators back through the pass into India with a stern warning that they are not welcome to come back to the area.

Most pilgrims who leave Darchen to circumambulate the mountain set off at or near dawn. If the Investigators wish to avoid being observed, they may want to leave the village at some other time. This is far from a foolproof method of avoiding observation, though, as many groups do not make the trip in a day. Pilgrims, that is, are scattered around the trail's length all the time.

Investigators who make a special effort to talk to those in Darchen in order to get a good grasp on the various groups and individuals who have passed through on pilgrimage recently can make a 1-point **Oral History** spend. If they do, they are rewarded with a 3-point dedicated Stealth pool that they can use in attempts to avoid being spotted when they leave the trail and make the critical first leg of their ascent (see "Ascending Unobserved," p. 360).

9. Ascent

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Attempting the ascent of Mount Kailash (Thibet 6, "Into the Himalayas," p. 355, Thibet 7, "Lake Manarasovar," p. 357, or Thibet 8, "Darchen," p. 358).

Summary: The Investigators elude the perception of the devout on the holy mountain's pilgrimage trail.



The Investigators have two significant, and separate, challenges to beginning their ascent of Mount Kailash. The first challenge is that even if the Investigators have Pannu Singh's expertise at their disposal, there is no known or commonly accepted best route to the summit of Mount Kailash — it has simply never been climbed. The second challenge is making the first, lower leg of their ascent without being spied. Although the Investigators will have a modest advantage in the fact that no one is expecting to look up the mountain's slopes and see mountaineers, that fact won't render them invisible. If they climb in plain sight, they could easily be seen.

Choosing a Route

Planning a good route requires traveling most of the way around the mountain in order to see all of the options. However, since the Investigators are also under time pressure, they may be resistant to spending that much time looking over each rock face and hidden ravine in detail.

In the end, the group will have to nominate a leader for its mountaineering efforts. As long as this individual has **Outdoorsman**, the character will eventually find a suitable route. There are three aspects of the route that are open to question, however: how safe it is, how fast it is, and how stealthy it is. Each of these characteristics (safe, fast, stealthy) has a base rating of zero. Each 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend the leader makes can increase any given rating by +1. For example, if Pannu Singh is the leader, he can make a 2-point Outdoorsman spend to increase "safe" and "fast" to +1 each, leaving stealthy at zero. (As a side note, if Pannu is the leader, he categorizes his spends in whatever way the players propose. He has no agenda of his own, deferring to their general strategic wishes.) The mountaineering leader can also accept negative modifiers to one category in order to increase any other category by a corresponding amount. For example, for no cost in Outdoorsman spends, the leader could accept a −2 to "fast" in order to achieve a +2 in "safe," or a −2 to "fast" in exchange for a +1 in each of "safe" and "stealthy." No single modifier may be reduced below −3, in any case.

Other Investigators can contribute to the effort to find a good route, but each contributor is limited to contributing to one category only. There is no reduction in the numerical effectiveness of these spends, though, as there is when Investigators cooperate when using General abilities (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 58). Contributors can suggest inter-category substitutions as described above as well, but the ultimate authority to make those adjustments lies with the leader.

Spending additional time traveling around the base of the mountain in order to scout different options doesn't help the Investigators. Spending time doing that amounts to accepting a penalty in "fast" in order to increase some other category.

Since the Investigators know that they must be on the summit when the moon is dark and the stars shine down (as described in Malta's floating campaign clue — see "Floating Campaign Clue" on page 220), they may want to use that information to determine whether they need to make a particularly fast ascent or not. Any Investigator with **Astronomy** can use the current positions of the constellations (from the night before) to estimate that the group has about two days to reach the summit, but this estimate is complicated by the fact that the figures found in Malta were drawn from the top of the mountain, which makes estimates made from other, farther positions increasingly less accurate. Furthermore, since the mountain has never been climbed, it's nearly impossible for anyone to make a guess as to how long the ascent will take. An Investigator with **Outdoorsman** (or Pannu Singh) can take a wild guess that the ascent will take two days with the fast bonus set at +1 or three days with the fast bonus set at −1, but any sensible estimator is forced to admit that these guesses could be wildly inaccurate depending on the actual conditions encountered on the mountainside.

If the Investigators have recovered and intend to use A Spell to Open the Sky to make the moon and stars right, they may be unconcerned with the actual motions of the heavens. They must still allocate safe, fast, and stealthy ratings anyway (although presumably they'll have no problem with dropping "fast" to −3 in order to be safer and sneakier).

Once the Investigators have made their category decisions, note them down.

You'll use the "stealthy" number when adjudicating a group Stealth test (see "Ascending Unobserved," immediately below) and the "safe" and "fast" numbers in **Thibet 11, "Heaven's Ticking Clock,"** p. 361.

Eventually, planning is exhausted and it's time to leave the trail. The Investigators' ascent begins!

Ascending Unobserved

The first leg of the Investigators' ascent is the portion of the journey when they're in danger of being spotted. Later on, even if they're spotted, those who see them won't be in a position to do anything to stop the Investigators from completing their ascent.

To remain unseen, the group makes a standard **Stealth** test using the standard piggybacking rules (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 57). The test's base Difficulty is 7, plus or minus the "stealthy" category modifier the players decided on when choosing their route. Remember that a group test's Difficulty increases by 2 for each member of the group unable or unwilling to pay the piggybacking cost. Remember to consider the non-Investigator members of the mountaineering party when figuring the final Difficulty. Niall MacEwan, for example, does not have the Stealth skill at all. (*"Explain t' me again why sneakin' around would be valuable to someone in my line o' work?"*) If the Investigators have a dedicated Stealth pool from making the Oral History spend in Darchen, those points can be spent by any members of the group.

If the test is successful, the Investigators manage their first leg without being noticed. (You should still narrate their progress in such a way as to wring maximum tension from it. Perhaps a group of prostrating pilgrims passes literally beneath the Investigators' feet, but their focus on their devotions consumes their attention to the extent that they remain oblivious to the ascent.)

If the test is not successful, the party is seen by a relatively large party of the devout close enough to the Investigators' point of departure from the trail that they can be easily caught up to. This pursuit is described in the next scene, **"Pursued."**

10. Pursued

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-ins: Being spotted by pilgrims while making the first leg of their ascent of Mount Kailash (Thibet 9, "Ascent," p. 359).

Summary: Pilgrims pursue the Investigators up the mountain in order to stop their ascent.



This scene of antagonist reaction begins if the Investigators fail their group Stealth test on the first leg of their ascent.

This failure manifests as the appearance of a group of Thibetan pilgrims, numbering about a dozen, who come into sight around a bend in the path after the Investigators have been climbing for a solid 15 minutes. One of the pilgrims looks up, stops in place, and points his arm at the Investigators. With a Difficulty 3 **Sense Trouble** test, an Investigator notices the group at this point and may potentially set the tone for the Investigators' response by reacting first. Either way, a split second later, the rest of the group snaps their heads around. After they all gape in disbelief for a few seconds, they erupt into shouts. Any Investigators who didn't see the group before are aware of their presence now.

The Thibetans' first shouts are accompanied by vigorous hand waving meant to indicate to the Investigators that they must come down. If the Investigators do not descend in response, the group confers, and then sends a party of six up the rocks after the Investigators.

If the Investigators try to out-climb this group, resolve a group **Athletics** contest between the Investigators and the pilgrims. Each group must nominate a leader, the non-leaders must pay piggybacking costs, and so on. In each test after their first the pursuers suffer a cumulative −1 penalty to their tests (i.e., −1 to the second test, −2 to the third test, −3 to the fourth, etc.) for their lack of climbing equipment.

If the Investigators win the contest, their pursuers give up and climb back down to the trail. They spread word of the Investigators violation of the sacred mountain among those at Darchen, which may or may not haunt the Investigators on their descent from the mountain.

If the Investigators are caught, their encounter with their pursuers plays out as if they had come down (see below), save that an extra point worth of Reassurance spend is necessary to convince the pilgrims of their ignorance, if they go that route.

If the Investigators come down in response to the pilgrims' indications, the Investigators are informed, in no uncertain terms, that what they were attempting is forbidden. **Reassurance** is necessary to feign ignorance of the impermissibility of climbing the holy mountain and get the pilgrims to go away. (Unless the Investigators have followed the exactly same tactic with a previous group of pilgrims, in which case a Reassurance spend is necessary, with the spend cost increasing by one each time the Investigators try to convince yet another group of the devout that they're just silly Westerners without

any idea about the local customs). Other Interpersonal strategies result in disaster. The pilgrims absolutely can't be bribed with Credit Rating or run off with Intimidation, for example.

If the Investigators take a route of physical confrontation, either on the mountain face or after descending to talk to the pilgrims who waved them back, the Thibetans are frightened and appalled. If the Investigators try to kill the pilgrims, they make it clear that they have no interest in a fight. Any Investigators who persist must make 4-point non-Mythos Stability tests to cut down these human beings in cold blood. (This substitutes for the regular 3-point test for killing a human opponent; it's not an *additional* Stability test.) If the Investigators try to imprison the pilgrims — tie them up and then climb for it, or other variations on that theme — then play the confrontation as a melee, with the pilgrims striking to subdue rather than harm. A subgroup of pilgrims outnumbering a single Investigator by three to one can, on regular successful attack tests by two of them in the same round, makes a two-point Scuffling spend in order to hogtie an Investigator. (Any of the three pilgrims can make the spend.) You can also allow this option to the Investigators for use during this scene, but should not introduce it into your GUMSHOE games as a regular tactical option — it makes it too easy to dispatch one's foes via imprisonment and then deliver a simple coup de grâce.

Pilgrims

Athletics 6, Fleeing 2, Health 6, Scuffling 2

Weapon: –2 (fists)

11. Heaven's Ticking Clock

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Making the second leg of the ascent (Thibet 9, "Ascent," p. 359), having dealt with any pursuers (Thibet 10, "Pursued," p. 360).

Summary: The Investigators must balance speed and safety in achieving the summit of Mount Kailash by the time the Devouring Ravine opens.



It takes the Investigators a base two days to achieve the summit of Mount Kailash, which places them on the summit just before nightfall on the second day, a few hours before the stars and moon come right and the Devouring Ravine opens. Their ascent can go faster or slower, depending on a series of General ability tests that will be modified by the category options they chose for "fast" and "safe" when they planned their route. Ultimately, though, GUMSHOE's fundamental premise — that its heroes cannot fail to advance the spine of a scenario — will rule the day and the Investigators achieve the summit in time to descend into the Devouring Ravine before it closes again. The question of speed that's central to this encounter ultimately comes down to what kind of shape the Investigators are in when they reach the summit, and how much they have to rush their chosen method of combating the Thing With a Thousand Mouths when they get there.

On each of the base two days of ascent, each Investigator must make an **Athletics** test to avoid damage. The test has Difficulty 5. Investigators may spend their own pool points on their own tests. In addition, each Investigator may add the group's "safe" bonus. (Or must subtract its "safe" penalty, if they decided to go that way.) An Investigator who succeeds sustains no damage. An Investigator who fails takes +0 damage in the form of general exhaustion, cuts and bruises, a twisted ankle, or the like. There is no mechanical variation among these various injuries, but be descriptive with individual Investigators in order to make the grueling nature of their ascent seem more real. Any Investigator may make a 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend in order to negate the damage from any Investigator's failed test. (To be clear, Investigators may make spends to prevent damage to themselves or to each other. Any given spend must be made before the damage roll in question, though.)

An Investigator who becomes **seriously wounded** and loses consciousness due to this climbing damage takes a tragic misstep and plummets off the mountainside, dying in the fall. Any Investigator can make a 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend to save the Investigator, who either falls unconscious (in place) without a fatal slip or is caught by the spending Investigator.

On the second day of the ascent, the mountaineering leader must make an additional group **Athletics** test, Difficulty 7. This roll is modified by the group's "fast" modifier. Any Investigator who does not pay a piggybacking pool point increases the Difficulty as normal for group tests (*Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 57), but the leader can negate this penalty by leaving that (or those) members of the group behind and pushing for the summit without them.

If this test is successful, the group makes it to the summit before night falls on the second day. The mountain begins to quake (see T**hibet 13, "The Devouring Ravine,"** p. 363) only after they arrive.

If the test fails, they begin to feel the tremors of the Devouring Ravine's

opening, and experience the other horrors that accompany its manifestation while they are still climbing, before they achieve the summit. These travails are described in **Thibet 12, "The Summit,"** p. 362. Furthermore, once those effects subside, everyone must make an *additional* **Athletics** test to avoid injury (as described above) to finally achieve the summit, where the gaping Devouring Ravine stands open.

12. The Summit

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Completing the ascent to the summit of Mount Kailash (Thibet 11, "Heaven's Ticking Clock," p. 361).

Summary: The ground shakes; the Investigators have visions, and a great gash opens in the earth itself as the moon goes dark and the stars come right.

The summit of Mount Kailash is spectacular.

If the Investigators make it to the top before dusk on the second day of their climb, they're rewarded with a breathtaking sunset across 8,000-meter peaks that stretch into the west as far as the eye can see. This dramatic moment of success counts as the functional equivalent of a 1-point success at psychological triage for any Investigator whose Stability pool is underwater. That is, each Investigator regains up to 2 points of Stability or recovers temporarily from the erratic effects of manifest mental illness (player's choice). See *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 79. For completely stable Investigators, the vista is its own reward.

In the hours before the Devouring Ravine opens, the mountain undergoes a series of increasingly violent earthquakes, and those on its summit or slopes experience perverse and horrifying visions. If the Investigators were quick about their ascent, these occur after they have safely achieved the top of Mount Kailash. Otherwise, they must survive these perils during the last stage of their climb (as part of **Thibet 11, "Heaven's Ticking Clock,"** p. 361).

The quaking of the ground is difficult to perceive at first. An Investigator who makes a **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 5) notices it early enough to suggest that finding stable ground away from overhangs might be wise. If the Investigators follow this course of action, they receive a dedicated 3-point pool that they can divide among themselves in any way they wish for Athletics and Sense Trouble tests during physical challenges for the remainder of this scene. Although sensing the tremors early on is tactically helpful, it's also a terrifying moment — the solid rock of the earth itself is shaking! Any Investigators who were successful at the Sense Trouble test must follow their success with a 1-point non-Mythos Stability test.

After the tremors begin — and as they continue to grow in strength — the Investigators begin to experience unexpected and unwelcome sensations and visions. Address the Investigators in order of increasing Stability (that is, the Investigators with the lowest Stability begin to have these experiences first). There are three separate effects than can occur to each. The three are



nonexclusive; a given Investigator could easily experience all three of them in roiling and overlapping waves of horror and insanity. You may wish to move back and forth from Investigator to Investigator in describing these effects, mixing up their implementation in any way that helps you convey a sense of madness, chaos, and horror.

Investigators who've been subjected to the effects of Nectar earlier in the campaign flash back to those experiences, reliving their emotional highs — whether sensual or violent (or both!) — in stuttering flashes of pure orgasm and/or rage. In the case of the latter, an affected Investigator must make a **Stability** test against Difficulty 4 to avoid attacking an ally at arm's length. (This is a General ability test using Stability rather than a test where losing Stability is the key thing that's at risk.)

Investigators who've hosted Mouths experience an explosive flavor and pervasive smell of wet flesh, of gory rotting, and of depraved sex across their entire bodies all at once, as though every inch of their skin has suddenly achieved the capacity for taste and smell. Many of them immediately throw up, and then continue to retch and dry heave as waves of taste continue to surge and wane. Such Investigators suffer a −1 penalty to General abilities while their state of sickness persists.

All Investigators experience chaotic visions of wheeling stars, gnashing mouths, wrinkled flesh, and horrific violations of loved ones. These require a 4-point Mythos Stability test.

As this horror rolls over the Investigators, the shaking of the ground becomes a significant physical challenge. Each Investigator must make a Difficulty 6 **Athletics** or **Sense Trouble** test (player's choice). Remember that the Investigators may have a dedicated 3-point pool to split among themselves if any of them sensed the tremors at their very beginning and prepared for the quakes as best they were able. Investigators failing their chosen tests suffer +1 damage as they fall to the ground, are crushed by falling rock, are pitched into crevasses or ravines, and so forth. Investigators who have not yet achieved the summit (**Thibet 11, "Heaven's Ticking Clock,"** p. 361) and fall unconscious as a result of being **seriously wounded** are thrown off the mountain to their deaths as described in that scene.

Remember to make tests for Pannu Singh and Niall MacEwan, if either or both are present. Neither has presumably taken Nectar or been afflicted with a Mouth, but both are subject to the Stability-destroying visions and physical challenges of the quaking earth.

Eventually, the sensations, visions, and shaking subside and the Investigators — whose attentions were elsewhere — realize that a vast chasm that wasn't there before has opened in the mountaintop: the Devouring Ravine.

13. The Devouring Ravine

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Attaining the summit of Mount Kailash and surviving the tremors and visions that herald the Devouring Ravine's opening (Thibet 12, "The Summit," p. 362).

Summary: The Investigators descend into the Devouring Ravine, the heart of the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

To stand at the edge of the Devouring Ravine is to stand in a billowing pillar of mossy Nectar-stink. The Investigators discover that they must keep their purpose firmly in mind at all times to avoid becoming distracted by their own emotions and staring off into space, reflecting on the past, wandering away, or the like. Simply describe this; there is no mechanical effect.

It's clear to anyone with **Outdoorsman** that rappelling down into the ravine is the most sensible way to approach the descent. There are plenty of places to set up and affix climbing gear at the summit.

As the Investigators descend, persistent sounds of hissing become audible and grow in volume, resolving from a steady background mumble into distinct syllables that can eventually be identified by any Investigators who've heard it as the Tongue of Lies. Hearing this speech has the usual effect of a 1-point Mythos Stability test. (See "The Tongue of Lies" on page 38. All Investigators in the Devouring Ravine can be considered "forewarned" that horrible and perverse things are likely to happen. As always, knowing the Rituals of Self-Denial reduces the loss.)

Investigators who descend into the Ravine are faced with up to three cycles of tests. Each cycle consists of an Athletics test, a Stability test, a Sense Trouble test, and some other test or series of tests depending on specific circumstances. These tests are described below under "The Test Cycles." Refer to either **Thibet 14, "The Ritual,"** p. 366, or **Thibet 15, "The Explosives,"** p. 369, for information on how these cycles interact with what the Investigators must do to banish or kill Y'golonac by the method they're attempting.

The Descent Described

As the Investigators climb down into the ravine, they experience a strange and horrible descent into a foreign landscape. At first, the rock faces seem natural and the air clear. But as

the hissing resolves into the Tongue of Lies, Minor Mouths are spotted on the walls of the ravine, both close by and far away, hissing and spitting, biting and lashing out with their tongues. Other orifices are seen as well: strange sphincters, open wounds that run with pus and Nectar, and anything else you care to imagine and describe.

Eventually, to descend farther, the Investigators must rappel into a mist of Nectar, where the walls of the ravine transition into foul surfaces alternately slick and tacky, in a rainbow of alien hues that run with Nectar leaking and spewing from pores that range in size from pinpricks to dinner plates.

The Test Cycles

As mentioned above, each test cycle has four basic tests: Athletics, Stability, Sense Trouble, and a fourth test that varies depending on specific circumstances.

The **Athletics** test has Difficulty 4 in the first cycle, Difficulty 5 in the second cycle, and Difficulty 6 in the third cycle. (It becomes more difficult to find purchase and manage their gear the farther the Investigators descend.) On a success, the Investigator rappels down into the ravine without getting hurt or falling. On a failure, the Investigator suffers +0 damage and must make a second Athletics test, whose Difficulty number is the amount of damage taken, in order to avoid falling into the ravine and in all likelihood dying (but see "Falling into the Ravine," below). A 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend can negate the effects of a failure on this life-or-death follow-up test.

The Stability tests are all Mythos shocks, and so all have Difficulty 5. They are a 2-point test, 3-point test, and 5-point test respectively.

The **Sense Trouble** test has Difficulty 5 in the first cycle, Difficulty 4 in the second cycle, and Difficulty 3 in the third cycle. (It becomes easier and easier to identify the increasingly in-your-face dangers the farther the Investigators descend.) On a success, the Investigator receives warning about some danger that's about to afflict the character. On a failure, the Investigator is affected by surprise.

The Rituals of Self-Denial in the Devouring Ravine

Investigators who learned the Rituals of Self-Denial ability from George Ayers in the Ethiopia Locale can put those practices to use as they descend the ravine. Collectively, the rituals represent the most broadly useful tactic in combating the wide variety of shocking and dangerous manifestations of Y'golonac's power at this horrific site.

Mechanically speaking, an Investigator who turns his focus inward and makes a 1-point **Rituals of Self-Denial** spend receives a 1d6-point dedicated General ability pool that can be used on any tests (including Stability) while in the Devouring Ravine.



The circumstance that affects each Investigator in each cycle is either chosen or rolled randomly on a d6 among the options below. As a general rule, the magnitude of danger increases from the bottom of the list to the top. You should absolutely invent additional circumstances to include as and if you have good ideas, especially where they tie to things that have happened to the Investigators earlier in the campaign. A Mouth might appear and hiss out something a Source of Stability said to the Investigator back in Act Two, for example, or an Investigator afflicted with a particular phobia or obsession might be confronted with either visions or instantiations of those things.

Dead Investigators

Especially once they descend into the Devouring Ravine, the probability of Investigator death or insanity approaches infinity — they're climbing *into the physical manifestation* of a Great Old One! There's obviously no sensible opportunity to introduce new Investigators while the party's on Mount Kailash, but if Pannu Singh or Niall MacEwan are present, you should considering turning those NPCs over to the players of deceased Investigators, to keep those players active during the climactic encounter with the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.



Each option below describes what happens for a Sense Trouble success as well as a Sense Trouble failure for that case. For options of your own invention, you will have to invent the mechanical specifics, although you can use those described below as guidelines.

If the players announce their intention to stay particularly close to each other, you can introduce or roll circumstances for pairs, clumps, or the entire group of Investigators as a unit.

The circumstances may obviously give rise to additional Stability tests in each test cycle.

1. Nothing

Mercifully, no grave or immediate peril to the Investigator's life manifests in this cycle.

Sense Trouble Success: The Investigator receives a +2 bonus to the next cycle's Athletics or Sense Trouble test (player's choice).

Sense Trouble Failure: No effect.

13. The Devouring Ravine

2. Reality and Perception Shift

The Investigator climbs into an area where the pull of gravity suddenly shifts, or reality turns inside out, or the sky crashes down around the character, either in actuality or due to some interruption or confusion with the ability to perceive what's real and what's not.

Sense Trouble Success: The Investigator must make an **Athletics** test, Difficulty 4, to avoid being raked against the rock wall of the ravine for −1 damage.

Sense Trouble Failure: The Investigator must make an **Athletics** test, Difficulty 4, to avoid falling into the ravine (see "Falling into the Ravine," below).

3. Severed Lifeline

Somewhere above the Investigator, a Mouth's razor-sharp teeth — or perhaps even a mundane but sharp ledge of rock — bite into the Investigator's rappelling line and sever it.

Sense Trouble Success: The Investigator leaps onto a ledge before the line goes slack, and the rope's frayed end plummets into the ravine. The Investigator is safe, but further Athletics tests to climb in either direction — up or down — suffer a −2 penalty unless the character manages to get hooked up to another line.

Sense Trouble Failure: The Investigator must make an **Athletics** test, Difficulty 6, in order to achieve the effect above. On a failure, the Investigator falls into the ravine (see "Falling Into the Ravine," below).

4. Minor Mouth Manifestation

The Investigator is confronted by a Minor Mouth, which manifests on the wall of the ravine, on a ledge, or even spontaneously on climbing gear or other equipment. Manifestations on artifacts charged with the power of the Thing specifically or the Cthulhu Mythos generally are especially appropriate foci for such manifestations — Henslowe's sketchbook, a copy of the Luz recording, and so forth. (For statistics, see "Minor Mouths" on page 36. Roll their capabilities randomly on the tables in that section, or select them.)

Sense Trouble Success: The Investigator can make an **Athletics** test, Difficulty 4, to avoid the area of the Mouth's biting reach by rappelling around it, quickly discarding the afflicted equipment, or the like. Even so, the Mouth manages to use its Exhort power before the Investigator can fully get away.

Sense Trouble Failure: The Investigator suffers a surprise biting attack, and then must combat the Mouth in whatever way possible. Failing to get away (or dispatch the Mouth by violence), the Investigator suffers continued attacks and/or uses of the Mouth's Exhort power.

5. Nectar Plume

The Investigator is sprayed by a massive disgorgement of Nectar from below or from some strange and surprising orifice that appears in the ravine wall.

Sense Trouble Success: The Investigator can make an **Athletics** test, Difficulty 4, to avoid being sprayed with the lion's share of the Nectar that comes flying at the character. Success at the Athletics test allows the Investigator to avoid the effects of Nectar in the immediate term. Failure results in the same effects as Sense Trouble failure, below. An Investigator who's taken Nectar before must first make the sort of simple Stability test specified in **Los Angeles 20, "Debauchery"** (under "Getting High"), p. 111, in order to attempt this Athletics test in the first place. Otherwise, the character's subconscious *welcomes* the debauched euphoria of the Nectar spray.

Major Mouth

Health 84, Scuffling 18
Hit Threshold: 3 (large)
Alertness Modifier: +0
Stealth Modifier: −2
Weapon: +6 (bite), +4 (tongue lash; just one tongue)
Armor: none
Stability Loss: +2

Sense Trouble Failure: The Investigator is swallowed whole by a massive, dumpster-size Mouth — or less-pleasant orifice — that appears out of nowhere with a subsonic yawning noise. The character's rappelling line falls away, slack. The Investigator is gone. (But with the same long-shot possibility for return as described under "Falling Into the Ravine," below.) The Mouth may or may not remain to harass other Investigators.



Sense Trouble Failure: The Investigator is completely soaked with Nectar; it fills the character's mouth and nose, making the skin tingle and prick over the whole of the Investigator's body. Within moments, the Investigator descends into the 1d3-hour Nectar high described in **Los Angeles 20, "Debauchery"** (under "Getting High"), p. 111.

6. Consumed

The Investigator is consumed bodily by a massive Major Mouth that opens up immediately below, before, or behind the character.

Sense Trouble Success: The Investigator realizes what's happening in time to scrabble partway free before the Mouth's jaws close around the character's waist. The Investigator

suffers +6 damage and can then fight the creature, with the help of allies if they're nearby, according to the typical rules.

Falling Into the Ravine

There are many ways that Investigators can wind up plummeting to their deaths in the Devouring Ravine. Specific dangers that can lead to fatal falls are described above; others will come up in your party's specific situation.

Investigators falling into the ravine have one last chance to save themselves by making a 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend, which allows them to catch one last desperate handhold, to grab a fellow Investigator's rappelling rope at the last second, to land on a jutting rock ledge before tumbling too far (and perhaps sustain damage from the fall, at your nefarious whim), or succeed at some other last-second act of desperation or luck.

An Investigator who can't (or won't) make such a spend falls into the ravine. Companions lose sight of the character's body in the dark and swirling Nectar-mist below them. The Investigator falls into a rising chaos of impossibly intense sensation, both physical and emotional. *"You are lost,"* should be the last words you speak to the player in question.

Don't say that the Investigator is dead, and if specifically asked, avoid the question by turning that player's attention to taking over one of the NPCs (Singh or MacEwan, for example) for a bit.

The reason you're avoiding an answer is that the Investigator is probably dead, unless…

…unless all of the remaining Investigators also die, but only do so after successfully enacting the ritual of banishment, summoning the aspect of Gol-Goroth, or setting off their explosives. In that case, you will choose exactly one of the Investigators lost into the Devouring Ravine. You may choose in any way you wish; if one Investigator's survival would be more dramatically appropriate than another's, then by all means choose that one. In absence of any other criteria, choose the Investigator with the highest remaining sum of Sanity, Stability, and Health.

That Investigator survives and is excreted — horked up, barely living — from some far-off orifice of the Thing in its death throes. The Investigator comes to in crushing pain, Health pool standing at between −6 and −11 (roll a die), with impossible and contradictory recollections about what happened after falling.

This could be any of the Major Mouths that the Investigators left intact behind them. If the Investigators left none behind, this could be a newly manifested Mouth in Dallol village (in the Ethiopia Locale) or a heretofore unknown Mouth in some previously unconsidered corner of Earth like the frigid plains of Siberia, an ancient castle in Poland, the slums of Rio de Janeiro… use your imagination.

The point of this miraculous survival is to give you one small point of continuity for a new group of Investigators to pick up where the deceased group left off and forestall the apocalypse that they unwittingly brought down up on the world.

14. The Ritual

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Descending into the Devouring Ravine (Thibet 13, "The Devouring Ravine," p. 363) with the intention of banishing the Thing With a Thousand Mouths by using a Cthulhu Mythos ritual.

Summary: The Investigators perform the ritual on a rocky ledge that protrudes from the ravine wall deep within the Devouring Ravine, over the roiling and undulating stomach of Y'golonac.



If the Investigators intend to banish the Thing With a Thousand Mouths from the earth by using ritual magic, this scene describes what they must do, and what happens. If they are attempting to blow the creature up, that option is described in **Thibet 15, "The Explosives,"** p. 369. They may also summon an aspect of Gol-Goroth, as described on p. 339. If the Investigators are hedging their bets by trying multiple options, or by trying one with the other as a backup in case the first doesn't seem to be working, the two methods are not mutually exclusive; you'll just have to flip back and forth between this scene and the next to adjudicate the action as it unfolds.

The most important decision the Investigators must make if they intend to dispatch the Thing with Mythos magic is which ritual they're going to attempt. If the Investigators have done well in assembling the campaign clues, they know that Y'golonac is the Thing With a Thousand Mouths, the Eternal Liar. If the Investigators haven't been thorough or have been misled, it's possible that they'll attempt to banish Nyarlathotep instead, since they are able to find instructions for performing these spells among the various Act Two Locales.

14. The Ritual

The rules for learning and casting spells are found in *Trail of Cthulhu*, pages 109–110. However, for convenience's sake, and because they don't see frequent use, the general rules as outlined in *Trail of Cthulhu* are repeated here as they pertain to the situation at hand. The three rituals — Banish Y'golonac, Banish Nyarlathotep, and Banish Gol-Goroth — are found in sidebars here (rather than where they were discovered in the Act Two Locales), since now is when you'll be using them. The full rituals for Nyarlathotep (who's not present) and Gol-Goroth (who needs no banishing) will never effectively operate in *Eternal Lies*, of course, but full statistics are provided so you can avoid accidentally giving away that they are wrong by failing to have mechanics at hand if the players ask about them.

Before the Investigators can attempt any of these spells, they must learn them. They should have done that before the point of descending into the Devouring Ravine, of course. Learning a spell simply requires an Investigator to have access to the spell in question and spend a dramatically appropriate amount of time in study. If the Investigators foolishly neglected to learn in advance a spell they want to cast (if, for example, they misidentified the Things With a Thousand Mouths and intended to claim victory by casting a spell that they now discover won't help them), then you may allow any given Investigator who has access to the spell to make either a 2-point spend of **Cryptography** or **Occult** or a 1-point spend of **Cthulhu Mythos** to learn enough of the ritual to give it a try in as little as a few minutes. You'll have to decide where, exactly, "dramatically appropriate" intersects "suspension of disbelief" for the climactic events as they're unspooling at your game table.

There is one half-exception to the need to learn a spell in order to cast it: An Investigator who doesn't know a spell can still *help* cast it at a particularly bad rate of cooperation pool-point exchange. The specifics for doing that are described below. An Investigator who actually knows the spell is still required to lead it, of course.

Investigators who've learned any of the three banishments know that they all but require direct proximity to the entity in question in order to be used successfully (because the target's Inertia pool is massively larger otherwise).

The Investigators are likely to hope that the proximity requirement can be satisfied by standing at the lip of the Devouring Ravine. Any Investigator with **Cthulhu Mythos** can dismiss this false hope with certainty. An Investigator who makes a 1-point **Occult** spend is likewise certain that descent into the ravine will be necessary. (See the specific rituals' Opposition characteristic for details, and simply expose the Inertia pool requirements to any players whose Investigators have Cthulhu Mythos or who make the Occult spend.)

Casting any of the three rituals requires a contest pitting the caster's Stability against the target's Inertia pool. For each of these three rituals, Health can be substituted for Stability at a two-for-one ratio.

The Investigators act first in the contest. They will almost certainly want to cooperate with each other in order to cobble together enough Stability to win the contest, which is accomplished using the normal rules for cooperation when making tests as long as the helper also knows the spell. That is, a helper who knows the spell can contribute Stability points to the lead caster's die roll by spending one point for the opportunity. Contributing three Stability points to the roll, for example, costs the contributor four Stability points in total. Helpers who don't know the spell contribute their Stability at a cost of three Stability points *per point contributed*. For example, a helper who doesn't know the spell and wants to contribute two points to a test must spend six Stability points.

As a question of general tactics, Y'golonac spends enough points necessary to guarantee its success in opposing its banishment until its Inertia pool has been run down to about 25% of its starting total, at which point it begins to allow smaller, but increasing, elements of chance on each of its tests in order to hold out longer. You may, of course, alter this strategy as you wish.

If the Investigators embark on the wrong spell (that is, if they try to banish Nyarlathotep), it becomes clear that they're barking up the wrong tree only after they attempt (*and* succeed on) their first roll of the contest. Any points spent on the first roll are wasted. If they fail their first contest roll against an entity who isn't there, it's not clear that their failure arose from a misapplied spell.

As in any contest, the first party to fail a test loses. If the Investigators lose, they do not banish Y'golonac. For their trouble they suffer an immediate and additional random (roll a d6) horrific circumstance from among the six described in **Thibet 13, "The Devouring Ravine,"** p. 363. If Y'golonac loses, it is banished from Earth, and the Devouring Ravine begins to collapse. See "The Collapsing Ravine," below.

If the Investigators try to banish Y'golonac and fail, they can try again if they wish, although serial attempts are highly likely to drive them completely mad in short order.

The Collapsing Ravine

If the Investigators banish Y'golonac, the Devouring Ravine begins to collapse. Work the following action in

Ritual to Dismiss Y'golonac

Performing the ritual to dismiss Y'golonac requires the sorcerers casting it to chant phrases in an alien language that inverts the Tongue of Lies, as well as to envision hyper-logical constructs while embodying restraint and moderation of action.

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 with Rituals of Self-Denial, 3 with a 1-point Rituals of Self-Denial spend)

Opposition: The ritual to dismiss Y'golonac pits the caster's Stability against the restive Eternal Liar's Inertia pool of between 18 and 24 if the caster is in proximity with the Old One's body (as when within the Devouring Ravine), or an Inertia pool of 65 (when anywhere else).

The Investigators essentially choose the Inertia they'll oppose themselves to by deciding how many cycles of descent into the Devouring Ravine to endure (see **Thibet 13, "The Devouring Ravine,"** p. 363). One cycle equates to 24, two cycles to 21, and three cycles to 18.

Cost: Dismissing Y'golonac causes 5 Stability or 10 Health damage to the caster or casters. Casters who know the Rituals of Self-Denial reduce their own damage by 1 Stability or 2 Health points per Rituals of Self-Denial pool point possessed.

Time: Casting the ritual takes 12 minutes.



with the events of **Thibet 16, "The Liar's Terrible Truth,"** p. 371.

To get clear of the ravine, Investigators must make a number of successful **Athletics** or **Fleeing** tests equal to the number of cycles of descent they made on the way down. At the bottommost depth, the Difficulty of the test is 8. At the middle depth, it's 5. At the uppermost depth, it's 4. After each test, Investigators sustain damage depending on the depth they're at, which is +2 damage at the lowest level, +0 damage at the middle level, and −1 damage at the upper level. Finally, if the test was successful, the Investigator achieves either the summit of the mountain or the next higher level, as appropriate. (If the test was unsuccessful, the Investigator must simply test again and again, continuing to make tests and suffer damage until dying or making it back onto the summit.)

Ritual to Dismiss Gol-Goroth

Casting the ritual to dismiss Gol-Goroth requires the casters to symbolically link themselves to the Old One and commit acts of purity of thought and action which are repugnant to this deity of blood, violence, and orgasm.

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 with a 1-point Rituals of Self-Denial spend)

Opposition: The ritual to dismiss Gol-Goroth pits the caster's Stability against Gol-Goroth's Inertia pool of 14 when those casting the ritual stand in physical contact with one of Gol-Goroth's physical manifestations, or 36 otherwise. This pool is reduced by four if the full moon is visible to the caster at the time of casting.

Cost: Dismissing Gol-Goroth costs 5 Stability or 10 Health damage to the caster or casters.

Time: Casting the ritual takes a number of minutes equal to the operative Inertia pool.



Ritual to Dismiss Nyarlathotep

Casting the ritual to dismiss Nyarlathotep involves beseeching a string of the Outer Gods whom Nyarlathotep serves to bid him travel elsewhere on their unknowable errands, carrying their unpronounceable messages for unknowable purposes.

Stability Test Difficulty: 5 (4 with a voluntary 1-point reduction in Sanity *rating*)

Opposition: The ritual to dismiss Nyarlathotep pits the caster's Stability against the Black Man's Inertia pool of 33, or 18 if the messenger's manifestation is physically present.

Cost: Dismissing Nyarlathotep costs 5 Stability or 10 Health damage to the caster or casters.

Time: Casting the ritual takes one minute per Outer God that must be beseeched (one per contest roll the Investigators make).



An Investigator can make a 1-point **Outdoorsman** spend to automatically succeed at an Athletics or Fleeing test or to negate the damage of a single roll after seeing the result.

Investigators already at the summit — who were either left behind or who achieve the summit first — can assist climbing Investigators whose rappelling lines are still intact. Each assisting Investigator grants a +1 bonus to the Investigator being assisted. A given Investigator at the summit may only help one of ally at a time.

15. The Explosives

Scene Type: Alternate / Challenge

Lead-ins: Descending into the Devouring Ravine (Thibet 13, "The Devouring Ravine," p. 363) with the intention of blowing up the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

Summary: The Investigators plant explosives in the Devouring Ravine and set them off in hopes of killing an Old One.



Investigators who hope to destroy the Liar From Beyond's earthly manifestation with explosives must have a strategy.

It seems clear to any Investigator with **Explosives** who spends more than a few moments thinking about it that the charges they've brought along will need to be planted, by hand, deep in the Devouring Ravine in order to have the desired effect of destroying the Thing With a Thousand Mouths.

Planting them at the top of the ravine in hopes of starting an avalanche to crush the Thing's organs seems, at first blush, like a good idea, but it occurs to any Investigator with **Biology** or **Geology** that the body they're hoping to destroy is routinely buried under thousands of tons of rock (when the Devouring Ravine is closed), and that sending more rock crashing down isn't likely to dispatch it. At least, it's not obviously likely to dispatch it.

It may seem to Investigators who lack Explosives as though lighting the fuse on a pallet-load of TNT and simply shoving it over the edge of the ravine would be a good plan, but again, any Investigators with **Explosives** can tell them that effective demolitions requires careful planting and orienting of the charges so that their energy is directed at the desired target rather than dispersing into the air or at other useless targets.

To demolish Y'golonac requires the Investigators to deal 12 charges worth of damage to its body. To be effective, a charge must be set by a character with **Explosives**, who must make a Difficulty 4 test to get the job done. (Each charge set requires a separate test.) On a failed roll, a character who has Explosives sets the charge nonetheless, but when it detonates, it only deals half a charge worth of damage. Disastrously, a failed roll from an Investigator whose pool is depleted sets off the charge while working on it, which deals +7 damage to that character and +4 damage to any others in Close range. Investigators who lack the Explosives ability are allowed to set charges here, even though they can't normally make Explosives rolls at all. Of course, their failed rolls prematurely set off the charges as above.

After setting a charge, roll 1d6 for that character. On a 1 or 2, the character must make a **Sense Trouble** test (Difficulty 4) and suffer the effects of a random (roll a d6) Devouring Ravine circumstance (see **Thibet 13, "The Devouring Ravine,"** p. 363) before beginning to set another or to climb back up.

To deliver its full payload of damage, the charge must be placed at the lowest level of the Devouring Ravine, after three full cycles of descent into the rock. A charge planted higher up the rock walls deal half damage (if planted after two cycles of descent), quarter damage (if planted after one cycle), or eighth damage (if planted at the ravine's edge).

Divisors are multiplicative. For example, if a given charge does half damage because of a failed Explosives roll and does half damage because it's been set at the second level of descent, it only does a quarter-charge worth of damage when it explodes.

If the Investigators believe they've set enough charges and intend to blow them, but you know they're not even close, offer a 1-point **Geology** spend or 3-point **Sense Trouble** or **Explosives** spend to any Investigators down in the ravine. Those who make the spend don't believe that the explosives set so far are going to be sufficient given the scale of the ravine and what they've seen of the horrific organs below.

The only remotely sensible way to trigger the explosives, once they've been planted, is to wire them together and detonate them all at once, preferably from the summit of the mountain. However, this strategy is not without risk. Since the ravine is lousy with Mouths, it's possible that one of them will appear and bite off the trigger, rendering the whole mass of charges useless until someone climbs back down to reconnect the fuse. Defeating this danger requires an Investigator to remain at the bottom of the ravine to detonate the explosives. Needless to say, this plan of action will prove fatal for whoever draws the duty or volunteers for it.

There is not a particular roll or chance that an ascending fuse will be severed by accident. Rather, you should simply decide whether such a setback takes placed based on whether it would be dramatic, as opposed to disastrous. If the Investigators manage to set all of their charges without too much difficulty and have plenty of Stability and Health left to their names, another descent into the ravine may make the climax more exciting. Likewise, if you have the sense that one of the players is looking for an opportunity to make a heroic sacrifice, giving that player the option to send that Investigator down to trigger the explosives from the depths may give the moment a massive drama. On the other hand, if the

15. The Explosives

The Enemy of My Enemy

The Investigators can learn, in the Yucatán Locale, a spell that will let them summon and dismiss an aspect of (the real) Gol-Goroth (see **Yucatán 24, "An Audience With Gol-Goroth,"** p. 337). If they understand the depth of Gol-Goroth's indignation over Y'golonac's impersonations, the Investigators may decide to try to summon Gol-Goroth's aspect and suggest that it point its wrath down into the Devouring Ravine, hoping that the two gods will fight it out with ultimately positive results for the earth.

The ritual to summon and dismiss Gol-Goroth's aspect is described on page 339. The spell is cast according to the normal rules for rituals (see *Trail of Cthulhu*, page 110).

Although summoning one Old One to deal with another one is — frankly — crazy, the situation is dire. One of the upsides is that it can be attempted at the summit of the mountain as fruitfully as within the Ravine.

If the Investigators successfully summon the aspect of Gol-Goroth, the scaly and tentacled toad-like Fisher From Outside manifests inside a pillar of blackness and descends into the Devouring Ravine. The Investigators must make 7-point Mythos Stability tests as they behold it. Those who suffer a Mythos shock also lose an additional 2 Sanity points.

The confrontation causes the ground to buck, and pillars of rock to tumble into the chasm. Lightning flashes and a downpour falls. Waves of emotion — hate, lust, pain, euphoria — wash over the Investigators. They feel their bodies turn inside out; they feel as though they are blasting through space and time.

Then — suddenly — Gol-Goroth is floating above the ravine, above the Investigators. Booming inside their minds:

"The pretender is vanquished. The gaze of Azathoth falls upon this rock."

Gol-Goroth then contracts to nothing and is gone. It has, in fact, dispatched Y'golonac from the earth.

Although this outcome effectively destroys the Liar, consider skipping **Thibet 16, "The Liar's Terrible Truth"** (page 371) and going directly to **Thibet 17, "Success Turns to Ash"** (page 372). Gol-Goroth has revealed the clue that the Investigators would otherwise learn from Y'golonac.

If Everyone Dies

If all of the Investigators die but manage to destroy Y'golonac in the process, you have three options.

The first is that an Investigator consumed in the Devouring Ravine is excreted from a Major Mouth as part of the Thing's death throes. See Thibet 13, **"The Devouring Ravine"** (under "Falling Into the Ravine") on page 366 for more information.

The second is that the Investigators have triggered the end of the world, which subsequently comes to pass. Describe this for the players' horror. It's a harsh ending, but we do play *Trail of Cthulhu* to delight in our failure, to a certain extent.

The third is that the players pick up with new Investigators in the midst of the end of the world. This is a good point for one player to take up the role of Janet Winston-Rogers. Their big inciting clue from which to continue (assuming that the deceased Investigators didn't leave any information about their intentions behind) is Edgar Job's evolution into the luminous, immortal focus of Azathoth's gaze. It will require them to do some research in order to figure out what, exactly, that *means*, but it's a starting point nonetheless.

Investigators only barely managed to plant the explosives, with one or more Investigators already dead and barely an ounce of Stability or Health left to go around, cutting the fuse would be more mean than dramatic. Use your judgment; think of this option as one last arrow in your dramatic quiver.

When the explosives go off, dust and rocks shoot up into the air out of the ravine and a fine mist of Nectar follows, blanketing Mount Kailash's summit in a pungent fog (which only has a mechanical effect if you want it to). Assuming enough damage has been done (twelve full charges worth) the sides of the ravine collapse, and the Investigators — if they have not taken steps to move off — must make Athletics or Fleeing tests of Difficulty 5 to avoid taking +2 damage from the shifting earth, flying rocks, and other hazards of the explosion. If the Investigators do take steps to move to a safe place, the detonating Investigator can make a Difficulty 4 **Explosives** test which, if successful, prevents anyone from taking damage at all.

Upon Y'golonac's destruction, the events of **Thibet 16, "The Liar's Terrible Truth"** (page 371) unfold. You may need to interweave them with the physical aftermath of the explosion.

If the Investigators do less than five or fewer charges of damage, there is lots of noise but no appreciable effect on either the ravine or the Thing's foul organs and no potential for damage to the Investigators.

If the Investigators do between six and eleven charges of damage, the ravine collapses and the Investigators

are in physical danger as described above, but Y'golonac's body is not demolished. This is probably the worst possibility, since the rubble insulates the Thing from further damage and makes ritual dismissals more difficult. The Investigators may not even realize that they haven't been successful until they return to the United States and discover that the Mouths are still producing Nectar and their cults remain vibrant. In the long term, the Investigators will probably have to return and try the banishment or aspect of Gol-Goroth route on the Devouring Ravine's next opening. In that case, you'll want to do a lot of fast-forwarding through international travel, conferences with Janet Winston-Rogers, and perhaps other occult or Mythos experts she enlists to try to unravel the situation and solve the problem.

16. The Liar's Terrible Truth

Scene Type: Core (Event)

Lead-ins: Banishing or destroying Y'golonac (Thibet 14, "The Ritual," p. 366, or Thibet 15, "The Explosives," p. 369).

Summary: Y'golonac's death throes reveal the first bread crumbs that point to the reason for the nascent global apocalypse.

Core Clue: The Investigators' destruction of Y'golonac has become the root of an even greater horror related to the gaze of Azathoth falling up on the earth. (Astronomy or Cryptography to realize the significance of Echavarria's painting.)

When the Investigators banish or destroy Y'golonac's body, they are the recipients of a terrible vision and pronouncement.

Time stops.

Flying pebbles hang in midair; your mouth freezes in mid-shout; a fine mist of Nectar hovers as if on nothing.

Then there is a voice, hissing and vowel-ridden but perfectly and horrifically intelligible, more massive than your mind's power to contain it.

"Turn your empty visage upon this rock, then. The human thing's sacrifice is complete."

Suddenly you can see that every pebble in the air, every droplet of Nectar suspended, every dappling of light on the rocks around you has taken on the same arrangement. They fall into a unity with a field of stars that wheels simultaneously around you and disappears into the limitless and ever-expanding distance.

You are thrown across space and time for an infinity as the pattern recurs but are simultaneously thrown in the same split second back into the crashing of the living Himalayan rock.

This experience calls, first and foremost, for a 5-point Mythos Stability test.

For your information and in explicit terms, the voice the Investigators hear is (probably) Y'golonac calling out across the cosmos, in the moment of its death or banishment, to Azathoth. The sacrifice to which the Liar refers is Echavarria's ritual sacrifice of Y'golonac's body, now complete in Y'golonac's death. See "Keeper's Background: The Interrupted Ritual" on page 373 for the full details. The recurring pattern the Investigators glimpse corresponds to Azathoth's cosmic viewpoint of the earth and its galactic environs.

Any Investigator who has seen Echavarria's painting, *The Gazer's Perspective*, in Trammel's mansion (see **Los Angeles 22, "Trammel's Mansion,"** p. 113) and has **Astronomy** or **Cryptography** recognizes that the galactic vision corresponds with what is depicted in that painting. A 1-point **Occult** or **Sense Trouble** spend can stand in for these abilities, if necessary. This should point them back to Los Angeles to have another look at the painting, which clearly has greater significance than they could have originally suspected. Seeing the painting allows Investigators to cast the spell Create Hyperspace Gate (*Trail of Cthulhu* p. 114) if they need to later as it qualifies as a "guiding vision."

Investigators who saw or handled *The Gaze of Azathoth* may be drawn back to that book with similar abilities and spends.

If none of the Investigators have seen the painting they will have to pony up a Cthulhu Mythos spend to put these pieces together, as described in **Apocalypse 2, "What Have We Done?"** p. 377.

After the Liar From Beyond's final pronouncement, the circumstances upon the mountain resume or the Investigators finally have a moment to breathe, as appropriate.

17. Success Turns to Ash

Scene Type: Core (Event)

Lead-ins: Hearing the final pronouncement of either Y'golonac (Thibet 16, "The Liar's Terrible Truth," p. 371) or Gol-Goroth.

Summary: The Investigators' celebration of their success is cut short by the realization that they've unleashed a horrible disaster upon the earth.

Core Clue: The weather turns inexplicably strange in ways that suggest the end of the world. (Occult or Theology.)



They've done it — the Investigators have ritually banished or explosively destroyed a Great Old One. The good news is that in a Pulp game, the Investigators all immediately recover 2 Sanity pool points. On balance, though, Y'golonac's defeat is very bad news, because it brings about the beginning of the end of the world, the literal earthly apocalypse.

The full details are spelled out in the next chapter, "Apocalypse," but broadly speaking, the Investigators have unwittingly completed the ritual Ramon Echavarria was performing in 1924 when the '24 Investigators led by Walter Winston interrupted it. Y'golonac was to be a galactic sacrifice on the altar of the world to bring about the apocalypse… and now he has fulfilled that role.

Give the Investigators a drawn-out moment to savor their victory. Allow them an hour or so of what — as far as they know — is safety, to fully recover their Investigative and General ability pools as usual for completing a chapter. Dispense build points as well.

If there are living Investigators who've been retired from play so they can exercise the Rituals of Self-Denial in order to neutralize Minor Mouths on their bodies, you may wish to cut momentarily to those Investigators as those Mouths shrivel and die, leaving behind stretched scars, due to Y'golonac's passing from the earth.

But then, tell the Investigators that they've started to notice a strange, faint green light in the sky, undulating slowly across the heavens like foul auroras manifesting outside the polar regions. Relatively soon thereafter, they start to see lightning flashing across the sky, jumping from cloud to cloud and striking the ground, both far off and close by. A bit later, tell them that they notice a fine layer of ash on some of their gear that they haven't moved in a while. It's not clear where it came from. Let them begin to freak out. Then one of the Investigators realizes that the ash is falling from the sky like snow, a very fine powder.

No Investigator who turns to Biology, Geology, Physics, Astronomy, or Chemistry has any explanation.

Investigators drawing on their knowledge of **Occult** or **Theology** draw connections between what they're observing and a wide variety of accounts and prophecies about the end of the world.

As yet, the Investigators don't have the foggiest idea that what they're observing is global, but the same things are happening across the world in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Shanghai, London…



Apocalypse

Keeper's Background: The Interrupted Ritual

In 1924, what Ramon Echavarria really, secretly wanted to do was destroy the world. His overarching plan was to draw Azathoth's gaze upon the earth. That incomprehensible being's existential magnitude is so profound that its very attention — according to what Echavarria had pieced together in his researches — would inevitably reduce the globe to dust. Or worse.

Echavarria's aims (which, given his death, are no longer particularly relevant, but which nevertheless complete the backstory and help the whole *Eternal Lies* campaign make sense) in shaking the world to pieces were to demonstrate his might and in so doing ascend to godhood. Even if an Outer Being declined to place a mantle of divinity about his shoulders, even if Echavarria's very being was demolished along with the rest of humanity, how could it be denied — if he ended the earth — that he was not the most powerful and important human in the history of all such creatures? How could it be denied that he was not like unto the Divine?

The ritual to bring about Azathoth's attention has two essential requirements: a potent sacrifice and a point of focus. Y'golonac was to be the sacrifice. Edgar Job, a human of particular qualities of mathematical obsession and strength of psyche, was to be the point of focus, the center of the crosshairs that Azathoth would train on the world. Job, of course, was never aware of this. Echavarria took pains to make sure that Job's critical nature never became known to anyone.

The Potency of Sacrifices

There's a bit of a clue for players — a nugget of verisimilitude, really — about the potency of sacrifices in using magic in the backstory of the Malta Locale. The Maltese Mouth's incessant demands that Montgomery Donovan provide not just any sacrifice, but one that means something to him, presage the sacrifice of a deity as a meaningful offering in a ritual to destroy the world. The connection between the sacrifice of Portia Donovan and the sacrifice of Y'golonac isn't so direct that the players or their Investigators are expected to follow the Malta backstory like a trail of clues to the top of the Himalayas. Rather, the thematic connection is offered as a little present for players who might think about the campaign after its completion. A small bow on top of the whole of *Eternal Lies*.

To summon Y'golonac required a willing cult devoted to debauchery. Echavarria built the Los Angeles cult of the early 1920s entirely for this purpose. However, Echavarria, a paranoid megalomaniac, didn't trust those he had recruited to serve his master scheme, so he lied to them about the identity of the deity they venerated, claiming that the "Thing With a Thousand Mouths" — a sobriquet of his own invention — was an ancient name of Gol-Goroth. Gol-Goroth's ends of debauchery were close enough to the modus operandi of Y'golonac to prevent any of them from easily gainsaying him. The fact that Savitree Sirikhan has done a decade of research into these lies and not come to a definitive answer to the question, "Who is the Thing With a Thousand Mouths?" is a testament to this.

George Ayers and Samson Trammel both figured out that Echavarria was lying to them about the nature of the Thing, but they weren't able to figure out the truth. So Echavarria "revealed" the "Eternal Liar" to them as a sop. Even for that revelation, neither ever learned all the details of Echavarria's ultimate plan to destroy the world and ascend to godhood. In fact, Trammel would later take a wrong turn in his Mythos researches and come to believe that the "Eternal Liar" was a name for Nyarlathotep, a misapprehension that arose in large part because Trammel's library — largely bought from Echavarria's estate — is awash with texts about Azathoth (and, by extension, Nyarlathotep, its messenger and soul), for reasons that didn't make sense to Trammel otherwise.

The '24 ritual that Walter Winston and his cohorts stumbled onto, then, was actually a ritual within a ritual. The "outer" ritual's aim was the one to draw Azathoth's attention on the world. It involved nominating Edgar Job as the focus of Azathoth's attention and consuming Y'golonac to power it. The "inner" ritual was intended to call Y'golonac to Los Angeles and bind him in place long enough for the outer ritual to claim it as the sacrifice.

Keeper's Background: The Interrupted Ritual

It all went wrong when the '24 Investigators killed Echavarria, which interrupted the inner ritual. Y'golonac's summoning wasn't completed, and so that entity simply settled back into its terrestrial resting place in the Himalayas. But by that point in the paired rituals, Edgar Job had already been nominated as the focal point of the outer ritual. The outer ritual's sacrifice — and therefore the rest of the outer ritual — fell into a state of suspension and, cosmically speaking, an interruption of a decade reduces to meaninglessness. So, when the contemporary Investigators succeed in banishing or destroying Y'golonac's earthly body, the outer ritual's sacrifice is completed and Azathoth's attention immediately falls on Edgar Job, with disastrous consequences for the whole of the earth.

The Apocalypse Spine

In this final segment of *Eternal Lies*, the gaze of Azathoth is upon the world and the apocalypse is underway. The Investigators, upon figuring out what they've done, must convince a single unlikely human — Edgar Job — to take pity on the earth and sacrifice the rest of his apparently immortal life to draw Azathoth's attention elsewhere.

In the immediate aftermath of their success on Mount Kailash, the Investigators realize that something related to their triumph has gone horribly wrong as they descend from the mountain and see that apocalyptic events are transpiring across the region, and the world.

The Investigators — who have by now amassed not-insignificant knowledge of the Mythos — come to the suspicion that that earth is being destroyed due to the attention of Azathoth, the blind idiot god at the center of the universe. They recall a book they saw earlier but which didn't seem relevant, *The Gaze of Azathoth*, which they surmise might contain crucial information. They travel around the world to Los Angeles to recover it from Samson Trammel's mansion.

On reading *The Gaze of Azathoth*, the Investigators finally learn the horrible scope of Echavarria's plan in 1924: to destroy the world by sacrificing Y'golonac to attract Azathoth's destructive gaze. Although this plot was interrupted by the '24 Investigators, who prevented Y'golonac's summoning (much less its sacrifice), it was resumed by their own actions in banishing or destroying Y'golonac in Thibet.

However, while revealing the disaster they have unwittingly brought about, *The Gaze of Azathoth* also provides hope. It describes how a human focus for Azathoth's attention was also part of Echavarria's ritual. The Investigators either figure out or find out that Edgar Job — whom they met in Savannah in Act One — was the focus identified by Echavarria back in 1924.

In traveling to Savannah in order to see whether this information will help them reverse the apocalypse, the Investigators learn — and then experience — the hurricane eye of global destruction at Joy Grove sanitarium, where Edgar Job is simultaneously wracked with unimaginable pain at Azathoth's scrutiny, but also rendered immortal by it. The Investigators must brave lightning storms and the radioactive breakdown of reality itself in order to learn that Job doesn't want anything more than to be left alone to his miserably agony. Attempts to kill Job meet with complete failure.

There is one tool at the Investigators' disposal, though: a spell they may have learned in Chichén Xoxul that allows them to create a hyperspace gate, through which Edgar Job can travel in order to avert Azathoth's literally earth-shattering gaze from the terrestrial sphere. But even after casting this spell, the Investigators must convince Edgar to pass through, damning himself to eternal torment on some horrible alien world. Stories and knowledge borne from the Investigators' own experiences since they were first contacted by Janet Winston-Rogers become their most potent arguments, laid before Job for his judgment.

Ultimately, he exiles himself from humanity, stepping through the gate, averting the gaze of Azathoth, and saving the world.

Learning Hyperspace Gate Elsewhere

The spell, Create Hyperspace Gate, if not learned in the Yucátan Locale, may be found in other Mythos texts as you require, possibly sending the players back somewhere they went before you began *Eternal Lies* or into a scene of your own devising. Perhaps it's in one of Trammel's texts, stored with Janet Winston-Rogers somewhere? Perhaps it remains etched in the stone of Chichén Xoxul? Perhaps it is handwritten under the endpapers of *The Gaze of Azathoth*.

What's important here is that the players either be rewarded for a choice they made earlier or that they be taken back to someplace or something from earlier in the campaign, to remind them of how far they've come, what all they've been through, and why. The point isn't to say that they missed something, remember, but to draw in threads woven earlier into the work.

Campaign Clues

This chapter ends the *Eternal Lies* campaign, so there are no critical

campaign clues here that unlock later story segments.

There is a half-exception to the lack of campaign clues here, in that the Investigators must realize, at the beginning of this segment of the campaign, that something global and horrible has happened and that it's their fault. Although this is a realization of significant magnitude — it may be the single most massive core clue in all published adventures for *Trail of Cthulhu*! — it nevertheless amounts to a core clue whose scope is limited to the advancement of this segment of the overall campaign. See **Apocalypse 2, "What Have We Done?"** (page 377) for more details.

Across the World in the Blink of an Eye

Even though *Eternal Lies* has thus far involved a great deal of international globe-trotting, this final segment takes this global character of the campaign to a whole new level. Whereas before, many scenes took place at each stop in the Investigators' worldwide travels, here the players find their Investigators traversing continents and oceans from scene to scene.

There are two things you should be aware of when setting the pace and scenes of the encounters during the apocalypse.

First, the players may unconsciously resist making decisions that require them to go to far-off cities. It's critical that you implicitly encourage them to make whatever dramatic decisions they see fit, without regard for travel time, by skipping near-instantaneously between sequential scenes even in far-distant cities, crossing oceans and continents in the blink of the story's eye.

Emotional Modulation During the Apocalypse

The following lists provide quick-and-dirty hopeful and sinister setting details you can paraphrase, adapt, or simply read aloud as written to push the emotional tenor of play either up or down as needed while the global apocalypse unfolds.

Hopeful Apocalypse Beats

- You catch sight of a mother nursing a newborn, clearly born since the apocalypse began.
- You find an apple in your [pack/briefcase/pocket/etc.] that you remember putting there only now that you see it again. It's still good, crisp and sweet.
- A young woman passing in the other direction looks up into your eyes and must see the depth of the despair that haunts you, because she reaches out suddenly, takes your hand, and says simply, *"It's going to be OK,"* before smiling ever so briefly and moving on before you can say anything.
- You see a chicken cross the road. You look again: yes. A chicken, a road. You laugh out loud.

Sinister Apocalypse Beats

- You run your hands through your hair, and they come away dusted with the infernal ash that blankets the whole world, an inescapable reminder of everything horrible, your whole universe crashing down around you.
- You come around a corner, and a desperate man, unshaven for a month, hair unkempt, points a trembling knife at your chest and demands any food you have on you. But then his knife falls out of his hand, and he runs away from you, sobbing.
- You walk through a stinking cloud, the smell of sulfur catching in your throat and making you gag.
- You're jarred from slumber into terrified wakefulness by a crack of thunder. Your heart pounds. It will probably be an hour before you can find the realm of sleep again.

Gloss over such travel with as little verbiage as you possibly can — a sentence at most: *"You manage to hire an ocean-worthy ship whose captain is more happy to be at sea than around the rioting of the port in Calcutta."* Then, jump into setting the new scene as close to the critical action as possible, all mundane logistics of travel assumed.

Second, there is one notable class of exception to the "all mundane logistics assumed" guideline. Each time the players move from one scene to the next, even if it doesn't require any significant travel, you should inject a short reminder of some kind that while the Investigators are trying to figure out what to do, the world is ending in the background. Insert these reminders as narration, though, rather than as dilemmas that require player input before they can move on. *"You remember the drive from the airfield in Glendale to downtown Los Angeles as packed with traffic, but now the highway is all but deserted. Your passing car sends eddies of the fine ash that's been falling from the sky for weeks swirling away."* If the Investigators *want* to respond to these brief insights into the global situation in some way, you don't need to cut them off, but keep it brief by applying a rubber stamp of success to any even remotely reasonable response or course of action that they propose. If, for example, an Investigator responds to news of rioting on the eastern seaboard by sending a telegram to his family that they should abandon the city and head for the cabin in the woods, inform the

players that the telegram is dispatched, the family has moved, and then get on with the next scene.

You will be tempted to invoke the "dotted line across the world map" imagery of the Indiana Jones movies as shorthand for these speedy travels, and, while it may have been used to good effect in the course of movement between the Act Two Locales, we encourage you to avoid that imagery here for two reasons: First, it draws attention to the travel itself, in contradiction to the focus that this segment of the game wants to place on the scenes themselves, which should seem monumental. Second, wink-nudge pop culture references can really jerk the players out of a mood of focus and horror that you should otherwise be doing your best to maintain as the apocalypse unfolds.

1. The World Is Ending

Scene Type: Core (Event)

Lead-ins: The apocalypse begins (Thibet 17, "Success Turns to Ash," p. 372).

Summary: Everywhere across the world, humanity is in panic as the gaze of Azathoth upon the earth brings about apocalyptic events.

Core Clue: As they travel, the Investigators come to the realization that the world is ending.



It first becomes clear to the Investigators that something is wrong when, in the midst of probable celebrations at the summit of Mount Kailash, they begin to see strange lights in the sky, and then to see lightning storms, and then to notice that a fine grey ash is accumulating on the ground and on their gear.

Across the world, the situation is much the same. Green lights flicker in the upper atmosphere; clouds bearing drastic electrical charges send lighting spikes to the ground and each other — and everywhere, fine grey ash. The world begins to go mad.

In the days and weeks that follow, the physical barriers between the plane of reality normally visible to human beings and the other planes that exist at acute angles to our own begin to break down, allowing more and more anti-natural phenomena and beings to manifest on the heretofore human earth.

In some places, architectural angles become "soft," allowing people to fall through to other dimensions, disappearing permanently from this reality. Such soft places also admit Mythos creatures from beyond, which typically proceed to rampage among a frightened humanity before winking back to the places from whence they came as the vagaries of their appearance re-resolve.

Such manifestations are interpreted most often along biblical or other theological lines. The devout gather at churches, temples, mosques, and shrines. The less devout gather with their families. As the manifestations become more and more dramatic, people tend more and more to abandon the major cities, where rioting becomes more and more common, in favor of small towns and rural areas. Demagogues of every stripe gather flocks seeking comfort or explanation, even though none of them are able to do more than provide the frightened with false spiritual comfort in the form of reassurance that the Rapture will eventually resolve with the coming of Christ, or that in the new world the strong will rule, or the like.

Hundreds of thousands simply go mad, their numbers swelling as the apocalypse continues. They bark at the sky, gather pointless objects into monuments to their insanity, and eat the flesh of the fallen.

Governments and the apostles of science lack anything remotely resembling a consensus as to what's happening. If the Investigators try to bring their truth before such bodies, they can't possibly succeed in raising their voices above the mass of howls and babbles vying for the attention of those who previously — and sometimes still — command tanks and soldiers.

There is rioting and looting in every major city. No one knows what to do.

It is the apocalypse.

Darchen and Beyond

The Investigators begin to get a sense of how broadly the world has been affected after descending Mount Kailash and interacting with the devout on the pilgrim route and in Darchen.

Reports from Burang town have it that the lights, lightning, and ash are widespread across the Himalayas. Some pilgrims who know that the Investigators ascended the forbidden mountain (which has become common knowledge in Darchen if the Investigators were witnessed on the first leg of their climb, in **Thibet 9, "Ascent,"** p. 359) are likely to want to kill the Investigators in hopes that fatal retaliation will satisfy the gods' apparent outrage at their act of heresy. Others among the Hindu and Buddhist devout will simply ignore them, turning inward in what appear to be the earth's final days.

The Investigators should have a relatively easy time avoiding the locals' attempts at reprisal, more to keep the climax of the campaign moving swiftly than because it would logically be easy for the Investigators to avoid them. Do some narrative hand waving, call for a **Reassurance** or **Intimidation** spend

to deal with a crowd of the bewildered and anxious in Darchen, and then cut to the Investigators coming down into the foothills of India's United Provinces, where they slowly — and, hopefully, with a great deal or horror — begin learning that the manifestations of the apocalypse are truly global.

If either remains with the Investigators to this point, Niall MacEwan and Pannu Singh take their leave of the Investigators. If you judge that it would be dramatically appropriate, either one might be found in his tent one morning, having taken his own life.

At some point during these travels, whether on the mountain, on the pilgrim route, or in the foothills, the Investigators will try to come to some kind of conclusion about what's happened, and how — perhaps — they can set things right. The core clues that arise from this thinking, these discussions, and the resulting investigations, are described in **Apocalypse 2, "What Have We Done?"** this page.

Howling at the Stars

Having brought about the apocalypse brings with it a high potential for madness.

When the Investigators on the summit of Mount Kailash first notice the strange effects in the sky and someone suggests that what they're seeing may be related to what they've just accomplished in the Devouring Ravine, each Investigator must make a 4-point non-Mythos Stability test.

When the Investigators get to Darchen and it becomes clear that the effects in the sky are regional, and aren't going away, a 5-point non-Mythos Stability test is in order.

Finally, at whatever point in the foothills or central India the Investigators realize that the effects are global, and are spreading bedlam across the world, a 7-point non-Mythos Stability test is required.

2. What Have We Done?

Scene Type: Core / Alternate

Lead-ins: Realizing that the world is in peril (Apocalypse 1, "The World Is Ending," p, 376).

Summary: The Investigators try to figure out what's happening to the world.

Alternate Core: The attention of an Outer God has turned upon the world, which will — given time — literally and utterly destroy the world. (Cthulhu Mythos, upon witnessing the global effects of the apocalypse and understanding the breadth of their spread across the world.)

Alternate Core: Ramon Echavarria's library contained a book entitled *The Gaze of Azathoth,* which might contain instructions or information that could help the Investigators save the world. (Library Use, upon grasping the force behind the apocalypse.)

Once it's clear that the Investigators have been hurled into the midst of the apocalypse, they'll begin trying to figure out what happened. Y'golonac's dying shout may have provided them with the core clue that Azathoth's destructive gaze is upon earth. If they lacked the appropriate abilities or declined or could not make the spends described in **Thibet 16, "The Liar's Terrible Truth,"** (page 371), then **Cthulhu Mythos** is necessary to put together the pieces. Specifically, given a few hours to think about it — while descending Mount Kailash, for example, or traveling back into civilization from the snow-capped Himalayas) — an Investigator with Cthulhu Mythos slowly perceives that the direct attention of any of the Outer Gods of the Mythos could cause the apocalyptic effects being observed. Such a being's presence on Earth would not be required; the simple weight of any such entity "looking" at the earth, from whatever cosmic distance, would theoretically be enough to rip human-observable reality apart at the seams. (By contrast, the beings that *Trail of Cthulhu* calls the "titans" of the Mythos — the Great Old Ones, of which Y'golonac and Gol-Goroth are two — do not have the kind of cosmic weight to cause such effects. For a basic primer on the difference, have another look at *Trail of Cthulhu*, pages 84 and 87.) Debate among multiple Investigators having Cthulhu Mythos brings them more quickly, and more conclusively, to the same theory.

A 1-point Cthulhu Mythos spend (which could come from a dedicated pool arising from research books the Investigators may have at their disposal) suggests a "short list" of entities that might bear further research. It includes Azathoth, the blind idiot god who dwells beyond space-time and around whom the universe slowly rotates; Nodens, the Elder God associated with the Dreamlands, who might perhaps be casting a destructive gaze on the waking world from beyond the veil of sleep; and Nyarlathotep, who, as messenger of the Outer Gods and a being who delights in madness and chaos, might somehow be responsible for the destruction even if the attention directly causing it is not his own.

No obvious strategy for averting the attentions of an Outer God occurs to any of the Investigators, and none are present in any of the books that might be at their disposal as they descend from the mountain.

Troubleshooting: *The Gaze of Azathoth*

The Investigators saw Echavarria's library (purchased by Samson Trammel) way back in Act One. Why didn't the Investigators realize that The Gaze of Azathoth *was important then?*

There are two answers, a logical one and a dramatic one.

The logical answer is that the collection of books in question contains hundreds of books, and nothing that was happening at the time suggested that *The Gaze of Azathoth* was any more important than *Geheimes Mysterium von Asien* or the second volume of *Collected Sermons of the Float'd Tongue*. The Investigators looked for volumes related to the matter at hand, found the key tome in Samson Trammel's *Testament of the Dripping Mouthes Emanates*, and moved on from there.

The dramatic reason is that interleaving travel, clues, and action in this part of Act Three is a desirable end that's served by the Investigators traveling back to Los Angeles briefly to recover *The Gaze of Azathoth*.

What if the Investigators destroyed Trammel's library, and with it, the only copy of The Gaze of Azathoth *that they know about?*

In that case the Investigators will have to find another copy of the book. They could tap their own contacts and resources, turn to Janet's network, or discover a second copy in either Savitree Sirikhan's library in Bangkok or Godfrey Welles's library in Malta. The latter option might be the most appropriate given Welles's obsession with Nyarlathotep and Nyarlathotep's function as Azathoth's messenger.

What if the Investigators try to send Janet, or other allies, after the book, rather than going to Los Angeles on their own?

Janet and the Investigators' other allies are busy coping with the end of the world. They either can't be reached, have perished, or try to rope the Investigators into helping them with more immediate problems of greater pressing concern to them.

That is, make it clear to players who're looking to pass the buck that the salvation of the world has fallen to them.

However, any Investigator with **Library Use** who worked with the catalog of Echavarria's library recalls that there was a book in Samson Trammel's Los Angeles library, purchased from Echavarria's collection at auction, called *The Gaze of Azathoth*. That book seems like a good option for further research. (If the Investigators never made it into Trammel's mansion to review the books there, recall that there was also a list of the contents of Echavarria's library as they were auctioned in Los Angeles. See **Los Angeles 15, "Public Auction,"** p. 102.)

The Investigators are bound for Los Angeles.

3. Journey Under the Falling Sky

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Traveling to Los Angeles (Thibet 16, "The Liar's Terrible Truth," p. 371, or Apocalypse 2, "What Have We Done?" p. 377).

Summary: The Investigators must travel to Los Angeles while the world ends around them.

As described under "Across the World in the Blink of an Eye" (page 375), the Investigators' travel to Los Angeles should be speedily dispatched, once they have decided that's where they intend to go. No ability use or tests are required to relocate them.

You may find it useful to have a few short travel vignettes up your sleeve that you can use to communicate what's happening to the world and bring the horror home. A helpful list of options is provided below.

The roads are choked with travelers, but you manage to wrangle passage on a riverboat headed south to the ocean, figuring that no amount of overload can stop the Ganges from flowing southward.

It's impossible to find a hotel room in Calcutta, but one of your number notices a home that's apparently been abandoned, and you move in for the night, figuring there's no reason not to put the place to use.

Down at the docks, you find few who're willing to set out to sea given the upheaval, and even fewer who care even remotely about the money in your hands. At the end of an afternoon of frustration, though, you finally find a tramp steamer captain who intends to head out to sea for no reason other than to avoid the riots that are just starting to break out. Although he's initially resistant, he eventually admits that he might as well steam for Los Angeles as float around the Indian Ocean until the seas boil.

The airport is all but abandoned, no one willing to fly anywhere with the incessant lightning strikes. You ask around a bit, to no avail. As you've all but given up, an excited young national runs after you, shouting for your attention. Turns out that he's dying to make a challenging trip; he just hasn't been able to find anyone willing to go up in the air with him…

The Gazer and the Gaze

Investigators who recall the painting, *The Gazer's Perspective*, should be led to the book, *The Gaze of Azathoth*, and vice versa, by their memories of earlier scenes even if the *players* have forgotten. The painting reminds one of the book, the book reminds one of the painting, and they both relate to the apocalypse at hand.

4. The Outer Ritual

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Realizing that Trammel's mansion held *The Gaze of Azathoth* (Apocalypse 2, "What Have We Done?" p. 377).

Summary: The Investigators find the book in question and delve into its leaves.

Core Clue: Echavarria's original plan for the destruction of the world becomes clear. The Investigators understand the paired rituals—"outer" and "inner"—that he intended to use and that the outer ritual involved the sacrifice of an immensely powerful being, Y'golonac, and the nomination of a focus. (A simple search and subsequent poring over of the Mythos tome *The Gaze of Azathoth*.)

Core Clue: The focus nominated by Echavarria when he cast the outer ritual in 1924 was Edgar Job. (Figured out by the players based on their Act One experiences.)

The Investigators return to Samson Trammel's mansion in Pasadena to discover that it's the site of a bloodbath. When the apocalypse began, Captain Walker and his distribution apparatus decided that they had better things to do at the end of the world than peddle drugs and left the city behind. The remains of Trammel's cult on the debauchery side of the equation brought their venerations of the Mouth to new heights in the wake of their responsible overseer's departure, but when the Mouth shriveled as a result of Y'golonac's banishment or destruction, they fell into despair and committed suicide en masse. Their bodies are piled nearly atop each other in all of the basement rooms of Trammel's mansion, bloated and reeking. Trammel himself blew out the back of his head with a revolver while sitting in an overstuffed chair in the ballroom that looks out over the rear gardens. Entering the mansion amid all this gore requires a 3-point non-Mythos Stability test.

Trammel's library, fortunately, is as the Investigators left it. After a **simple search** and a moment's panic — *is the book gone?* — the Investigators find *The Gaze of Azathoth* where it was left.

Any Investigator can read *The Gaze of Azathoth*, an anonymous treatise on the idiot god and all of its earthly manifestations, covering the historically observed, the ingeniously theoretical, and the completely invented. Skimming the book takes an hour and suggests that the answers the Investigators seek are indeed contained within. Poring over it takes a bit longer than a day, grants the reader +1 point in the Cthulhu Mythos ability, and contains the spell Dread Name of Azathoth.

Most importantly, the book contains the aborted ritual to call down the attentions of Azathoth that was begun by Echavarria in 1924. An Investigator reading the book who's also familiar with the basic events that unfolded at Echavarria's farm on that fateful night understands immediately what happened: Echavarria was trying to destroy the world with Azathoth's gaze and was summoning Y'golonac in a ritual-within-a-ritual so he could sacrifice the Old One to power the outer spell, the '24 Investigators interrupted the sacrifice by killing Echavarria, and destroying or banishing Y'golonac completed the outer ritual and brought the gaze of Azathoth upon the earth.

The question that this understanding raises is simple. *The Investigators will want to know how they can avert Azathoth's gaze and save the earth!* The answer lies in the second major component of the ritual: its focus. The ritual clearly describes the need for both a sacrifice and a focus.

The focus, according to the ritual, must be a human being who is unusually immersed in the hyper-mathematical and also has an uncommon strength of the psyche. The ritual goes on at great, specific, and arcane length about these criteria. However, an Investigator with **Occult** can reduce the arcane criteria to the general description provided above: unusual immersion and uncommon strength.

That Edgar Job was selected by Echavarria as the focus of the ritual may or may not be immediately clear to the Investigators, depending on how they can reinterpret some of the obscure — and apparently meaningless, at the time — clues they learned about Edgar Job during Act One. Edgar Job's unusual immersion manifested in his obsessive idea that he was destined, in some way, to make a career of studying mathematics. His uncommon strength of psyche was demonstrated in the frequent and compulsive all-nighters he spent studying and working toward this goal, to only modest — at best — success.

If the players themselves think back and put the puzzle together to identify Edgar as the focus, that's fantastic. If they don't, the next scene — **Apocalypse 5, "Savannah: The Center of the**

Storm," below — sees Janet Winston-Rogers bring the clue to them.

5. Savannah: The Center of the Storm

Scene Type: Core (Event) / Alternate

Lead-ins: Learning about the "outer" and "inner" rituals from 1924 and being unable to identify the human focus (Apocalypse 4, "The Outer Ritual," p. 379).

Summary: The Investigators learn that Savannah is a focal point for extremely intense manifestations of the apocalypse and that Edgar Job has achieved apparent immortality.

Alternate Core: Edgar Job is the focus of the gaze of Azathoth.



If the Investigators do not realize that Edgar Job is the focus of the gaze of Azathoth on their own, they receive word from Janet Winston-Rogers or another of their contacts (perhaps Dr. Keaton or one of the other staff from Joy Grove with whom the Investigators worked well or to whom they were especially kind) that something very strange has happened to Edgar Job, and to all of Savannah. This clue essentially falls into the Investigators' laps (no ability required) as they try to work out their next steps. A messenger, telegram — or perhaps Winston-Rogers herself — simply shows up on their doorstep to convey the information.

Savannah now glows, twenty-four hours a day, bathed in a strange blue-tinged daylight that seems to emanate from everywhere and nowhere simultaneously, casting impossibly refractive shadows from light sources that don't seem to exist in the plane of mundane reality. The lightning storms that have plagued the whole world since the beginning of the end have been even worse in Savannah, starting fires and blasting the landscape. The ash stands feet thick on the ground. The reasons Savannah and the surrounding area have been singled out are unknown, and many citizens have chosen to simply abandon the city. The state and federal government are barely functional as it is; they have no resources whatsoever that they can dedicate to solving this mystery.

Joy Grove has been closed in the wake of Dr. Teake's death in a lightning strike; the sanitarium's administrators didn't know what else to do. All of the patients who could be sent to families or friends are gone, and the remaining patients have been turned out into the streets. Many of these patients have simply remained on the grounds, and their number includes Edgar Job.

But among the patients who've remained, Edgar Job is a singular case. He's been seen to be struck by lightning more than a dozen times and survived them all, incredibly sustaining no obvious wounds in the process. The staff and remaining patients believe that he's become immortal. The Investigators may learn (depending on the source of their news about Job) that several of the other patients tried to bludgeon him to death but that their attacks — which should have been deadly many times over — did not so much as wound their victim.

It should be obvious to the Investigators that Savannah is their next stop, even if they don't yet fully appreciate that Edgar Job is the focus of Azathoth's gaze.

6. Into the Eye of the Storm

Scene Type: Travel

Lead-ins: Realizing that Edgar Job is the focal point (Apocalypse 4, "The Outer Ritual," p. 379, or Apocalypse 5, "Savannah: The Center of the Storm," on this page).

Summary: The Investigators travel upstream against a river of refugees fleeing the very city to which they're traveling.

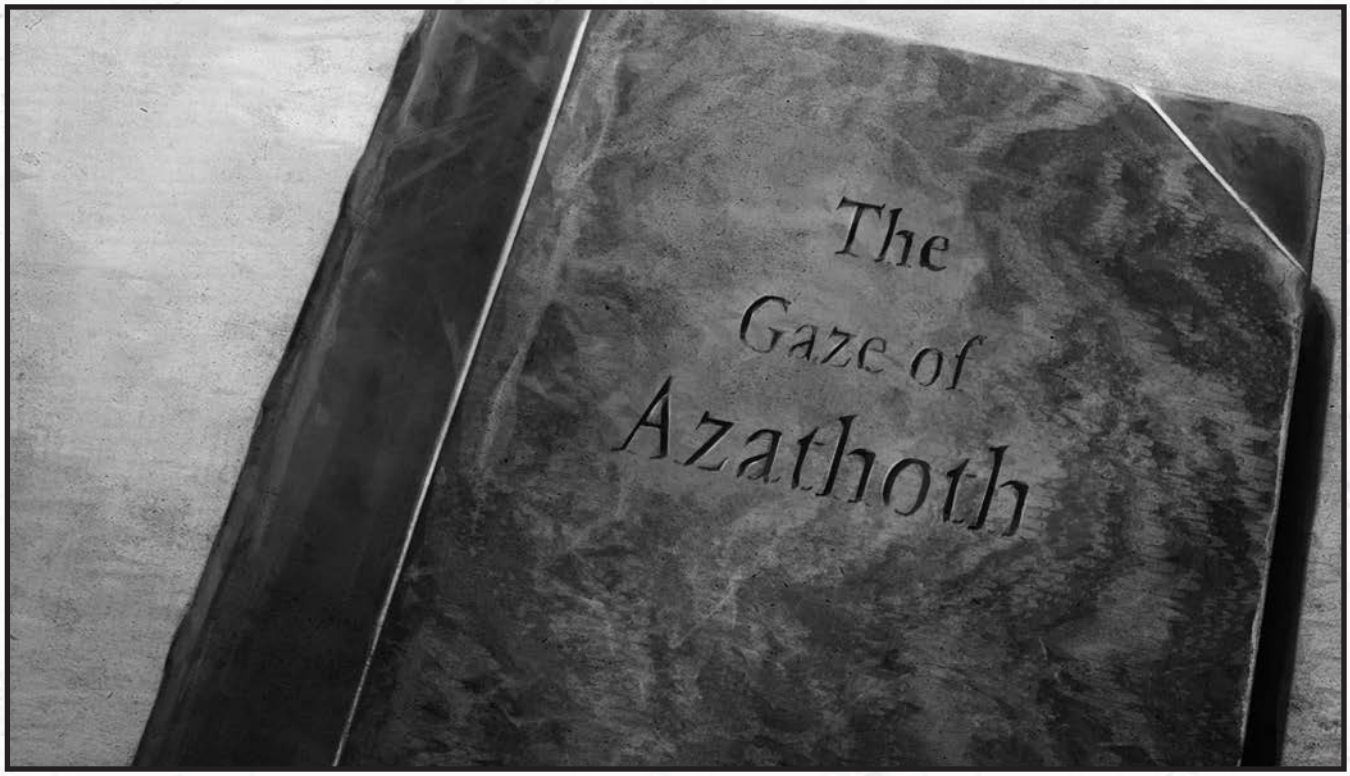


As in previous travel since the end of the world, you should dispense with the journey from California to Georgia in a sentence or two. You should slow down briefly, though, as the Investigators make the final leg of their trip to Savannah and to Joy Grove, to plant firmly the dramatic seeds of anticipation.

As the Investigators make the final leg of their trip, they become aware that as they approach Savannah they're traveling upstream into a mass exodus from a land that — to hear the fleeing refugees tell it — is surely the center of hell itself. They tell more stories of the eternal blue-tinged daylight that emanates from no source and casts impossible shadows, of lightning that falls like rain, and of the ash that's choked the entire city, drifting as high as the roofs of houses. Nearly every party of refugees is traveling with at least one family member whose mind — if not body — has been shattered.

If the Investigators want to stop and interview refugees, allow it, even though it seems to violate this chapter's dictum of fast travel. In this case, it serves as a drama-intensifying lead-in to the next scene rather than a speed bump on the way to the good stuff.

7. The Asylum Transformed



For an Investigator who makes a 1-point **Oral History** spend on the road into town, this is the first time that the Investigators hear of a newer, and mounting, manifestation of the apocalypse in Savannah: Acute angles have become physically dangerous. Walls that come together at angles greater than 90 degrees, large common objects with sharp points and apexes, and even (according to one wild-eyed man whose sanity is admittedly dubious) chalk drawings with those characteristics all emit an invisible burning power that, in some cases, has reduced living human beings to charred flesh lumps before the eyes of onlookers.

An Investigator who has both **Cthulhu Mythos** and **Physics** (and who knows about the gaze of Azathoth from the Investigators' earlier researches) suggests that this represents an intensification of the mad god's attention, which now seems to be breaking down the barriers between dimensions, spilling the corrosive effects of its scrutiny in other dimensions into this one as well, at the weak points between them. Such an Investigator guesses that this radiation-like force will, over time, leak from less and less acute angles, and spread more and more broadly across the world, until every living thing on Earth is incinerated.

7. The Asylum Transformed

Scene Type: Challenge

Lead-ins: Traveling to Savannah (Apocalypse 6, "Into the Eye of the Storm," p. 380).

Summary: The Investigators enter the blasted grounds of Joy Grove and find Edgar Job, who, if they had any doubts, seems clearly to be the focus of the Azathoth's horrible scrutiny.

The grounds of the Joy Grove asylum are, if anything, worse than the Investigators have heard. Every tree of any significant height has been struck with lightning at least once, one wing of the sanitarium building has burned to the ground, and bodies of former inmates litter the place. The ash is feet thick and blasting winds scour the place, collecting the ash into perverse caricatures of snowdrifts ten and twelve feet high.

Lightning continues to rain down on the place, striking something the Investigators can see — whether alarmingly close or off in the distance — every minute or two.

The constant blue-tinged light is as the Investigators have heard: it emanates from everywhere and nowhere, everything that it illuminates casting impossible shadows that themselves cast shadows which themselves seem to give off light… Any Investigator with **Physics** who tries to understand the way this light functions must make a 3-point Mythos Stability test.

The burning radiation of acute angles is also in evidence, either discovered on purpose by any Investigator who looks for it (and who also sustains a nasty burn — a single point of damage — from holding his or her hand too close) or by accident by the Investigator who fails a **Sense Trouble** test with the worst net roll (who suffers a considerably nastier burn across a wider area of his or her body, for +0 damage).

The bare fact of survival in this landscape is not a given, by any stretch of the imagination, and this is the Investigators' challenge here: to find Edgar Job before being destroyed by this landscape of hell.

By this time, the players know what the gravest sources of danger are — lightning, radiation, and perhaps mad survivors — and will probably begin to suggest their own countermeasures. ("We stay on the lookout for acute angles!" "We crouch down, staying away from tall trees!")

Mechanically speaking, Investigators who enact clever plans to avoid or reduce damage from one of these sources can create an ad hoc pool to ablate damage from themselves, going forward. Each point in one of these pools soaks up a point of damage that would otherwise harm that Investigator. For example, an Investigator struck by lightning for 9 points of damage, but who was protected by a 5-point ad hoc pool, would only lose 4 points of Health (although this would also exhaust that ad hoc pool).

Investigative ability spends from any relevant abilities add 1d6 pool points each to these ad hoc pools. Multiple spends add multiple d6s. "Relevant abilities" include Architecture, Biology, Chemistry, Cthulhu Mythos, Geology, Medicine, Occult, Outdoorsman, Pharmacy, and Physics. In each case, require the player to explain the chosen ability's relevance to the Investigator's plan for avoiding harm. Using Physics to create a protective ground for nearby lightning strikes makes sense, for example, as does simply gulping down a massive dose of painkillers by way of Pharmacy. Be generous with even bizarre ideas, as long as they don't teeter into the ridiculous or (worse) humorous. In each case, you must decide — based on the player's description — which Investigators the points in question are able to protect. You will likely wind up with a series of overlapping pools into and out of which individual Investigators may move. That's fine; it will give you space to fudge die rolls and damage assignments as the climax unfolds, in order to help dramatically deserving Investigators stay alive, if you wish.

General abilities can also be used to stock these ad hoc protective pools. Relevant abilities include Electrical Repair, First Aid, Mechanical Repair, Preparedness, and even Sense Trouble. Pool points in these abilities can simply be transferred to a protective ad hoc pool on a one-to-one basis, as many as the player wishes. As above, the player must explain how the ability in question is being deployed for the protection of some specific Investigators.

Health is not useful to stock these ad hoc pools because it's the pool of last resort by default; sources of harm that exhaust an ad hoc pool spill over and deal damage directly.

The Rituals of Self-Denial are of no use here, although that's a clever idea.

A **simple search** is, ultimately, the only hurdle to finding Edgar Job. This requires nearly an hour of scouring the grounds, though — pushing through ash-drifts, pulling down the doors of locked asylum rooms, scouring the woods, and so forth.

In the course of the search, roll two attacks by the environment at large against each Investigator. The environment has a 12-point lightning pool and a 15-point radiation pool, which you may spend as you wish among these attacks. Roll these various attacks among the Investigators in whatever order their method of searching suggests. Hitting an Investigator requires a Difficulty Number based not on Athletics but that is instead equal to the Investigator's highest remaining Investigative pool total, whatever it is. If hit, an Investigator suffers +6 damage from lightning or +2 damage from radiation.

Finally, one last danger: spending this hour in this landscape requires each Investigator to make a 4-point Mythos Stability test.

Ultimately, the Investigators find… Edgar Job.

8. Gazing Upon Edgar Job

Scene Type: Core

Lead-ins: Finding Edgar Job (Apocalypse 7, "The Asylum Transformed," p. 381).

Summary: The Investigators interact with Edgar Job, perhaps trying to kill him, perhaps trying to convince him to help them.

Core Clue: Edgar Job can't be killed. (Interrogation and perhaps Reassurance of Job, or the Investigators' frustrated attempts to kill him themselves.)

The Investigators who survive the search of Joy Grove find Edgar Job — wracked and writhing in pain — in the basement operating theater of the asylum, a circular room without acute angles. It's an area they find extremely difficult to access because the stairwells

leading down into the basement are choked with rubble from the fire that brought down the west wing of the main building.

Upon entering this chamber, the Investigators are no longer subject to the environmental damage that afflicted them while they searched the grounds (see **Apocalypse 7, "The Asylum Transformed,"** p. 381), at least until they go back outside.

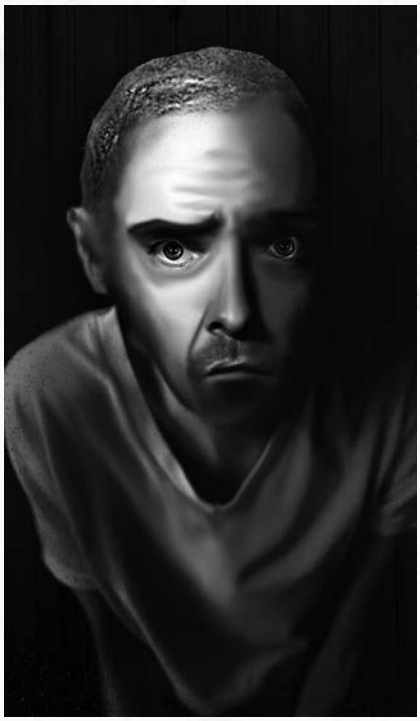
Job's body simultaneously seems to be a source of the maddening blue-tinged light and a source of endlessly refracting shadow, an unnerving visual contradiction that calls for a 2-point Mythos Stability test.

Job, also, is clearly wracked with pain. Tears have left tracks in the ash that clings to his face and body. He writhes constantly, crying out intermittently.

Although it seems clear that Job must be aware of the Investigators' arrival in his presence — he looks at them — Job ignores them, which will eventually prove frustrating.

Initially, the Investigators may not even try to interact with Job, hoping instead that killing him will avert Azathoth's gaze. Job, all too aware of his own invulnerability to physical trauma by this point in time, simply ignores Investigators who shoot him, stab him, or begin to lay in explosives around the room. After they're done firing their guns, wielding their weapons, or trying to blow him up, they observe that his body is completely unchanged. (They may well succeed in leveling an additional portion of the sanitarium building and subjecting themselves to lightning storms again, though.)

Interrogation (or other forceful approaches) compels Job to interact with the Investigators. His first



interaction is the very simple demand that they go away and leave him alone.

Once they've managed to get him talking, further Interrogation results in Job's blunt admission that he cannot die, that there's nothing the Investigators can do about it, and *won't they please just leave him be*.

Following up with **Reassurance** — the lighter touch — yields a longer narrative beginning with the strange colors in the sky, the lightning storms, panic among the staff, the broadening glow that turned to eternal daylight over the course of a week, and Job's growing sense that the entire universe was focused on him… but it ends on the same note, with Job admitting that he has tried to kill himself dozens of times to avert the universe's terrible attention (which is the best way he can describe the source of his constant and unspeakable agony), to no avail.

Having learned that Edgar can't be killed to save the world, the Investigators are forced to reconsider their options.

9. A Cosmic Banishment

Scene Type: Core / Challenge

Lead-ins: Learning that Edgar Job can't be killed in order to avert Azathoth's gaze (Apocalypse 8, "Gazing Upon Edgar Job," p. 382).

Summary: The Investigators revisit options for averting Azathoth's gaze.

Core Clue: Azathoth's scrutiny will follow Edgar Job wherever he goes, so sending him away from Earth will save the planet. (Cthulhu Mythos.)

Faced with Edgar Job's immortality but possessed of the simultaneous knowledge that Job is the focus of the gaze of Azathoth that is slowly destroying the earth, the Investigators must do something else.

As they cast about for solutions to this problem, clever players are likely to recall, on their own, that in the course of Act Two they received a spell — Create Hyperspace Gate — that can send Job across the galaxy, away from the earth. (See **Yucatán 24, "An Audience With Gol-Goroth,"** p. 337.) Doing so would consequently turn the destructive attention of Azathoth elsewhere. If the players don't think of this strategy on their own, Investigators with **Cthulhu Mythos** realize that it would work.

Investigators who didn't learn the spell earlier will have to do so now. If the Investigators didn't bring the appropriate materials to Savannah, they must travel in order to get them from wherever it is that they left them. As with all travel in this segment of the campaign, this should be described and dispensed in the speediest of terms, in the course of a few moments of

game time. Although it passes quickly at the game table, there is plenty of time in transit for one — or more — Investigators to learn the spell while returning to Savannah. (If the Investigators try to bring Edgar Job with them on the road, they must physically force him to do it, and are then continually battered with worsening lightning and radiation until they realize that being in Job's presence for an extended period of time under the open sky or in a room with any significant angles is a recipe for suicide.)

If the Investigators did bring some appropriate reference, learning the spell is a matter of poring over the lore for a day. Or, to learn it more quickly, an Investigator can make a 1-point **Archaeology** or **Cthulhu Mythos** spend to shorten that time to a half-hour.

The chief drawback of the daylong reading is that the lightning storm intensifies in that time, and the asylum building begins to burn again, forcing the Investigators back out into the open and refreshing the environment's lightning and radiation pools to 12 and 15 points, respectively. Each Investigator must again undergo a single attack from each of these pools, as in **Apocalypse 7, "The Asylum Transformed,"** p. 381. The only good news is that any ad hoc protective pool points that remain from that earlier encounter are still operative in protecting the Investigators now. The Investigators can even make fresh spends from the relevant abilities in order to restock those ad hoc pools, if they wish. This all functions, mechanically, in exactly the same way it did in **"The Asylum Transformed."**

Create Hyperspace Gate is described in *Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 114. As an incantation, casting it requires a straightforward Stability test with Difficulty 5 (or 4 with Physics, or 3 with a Physics spend).

Its cost is 16 Stability or 32 Health, given an interstellar destination. This is highly likely to drive its caster mad or kill the caster (or both), but this is a fitting point in the campaign for an Investigator's self-sacrifice to save the earth.

In this version of the spell, the caster must have seen — whether by vision or dream — the destination for the gate the caster's seeking to create.

Any Investigators who were present for the interstellar vision at Y'golonac's banishment or earthly demise have seen such a destination (see **Thibet 16, "The Liar's Terrible Truth,"** p. 371). Likewise, an Investigator who communed with Gol-Goroth at Chichén Xoxul has seen such a place. Finally, Investigators may recall a painting found in Trammel's home — a painting of stars, seen from elsewhere in the cosmos. If any such Investigators still live, they are the obvious candidates to cast this spell.

If no such Investigator is alive, some other spell must be used to provide a suitable glimpse or vision of a far-off galactic destination. Brew Space Mead is one such spell, to which the Investigators may have had access in Malta or in Bangkok (or in any other library you used for the purpose). Perhaps the Investigators have left evidence of it behind for their replacements? If the Investigators must travel to collect these components, again, this transpires in just a few moments of game time. Casting these spells is accomplished according to the normal rules for spell casting.

(If the Investigators must travel to collect resources from which they can learn Create Hyperspace Gate, an Investigator who makes a 1-point **Cthulhu Mythos** spend at that time knows that a vision of the destination will be a requisite of casting that spell, and so the Investigators will be able to split up and conduct travel to track down the sources of both spells at the same time.)

Once Create Hyperspace Gate has been learned, a suitable destination has been envisioned by its caster, and the spell has been successfully cast (including the payment of its 16-point Stability or 32-point Health cost), there is one final hiccup. Edgar can't be forced to step through the hyperspace gate; the spell requires that he must go willingly. Throwing him bodily through the portal, which floats in midair like a doorway anchored to nothing, results in his body interacting with normal space rather than with the portal. That is, he lands on the floor or ground on the other side, still on earth.

An Investigator who knows the spell is aware of this condition from the get-go; it does not arise as a surprise only once the spell has been cast. Thus, the Investigators' ultimate task is to convince Edgar Job that he should exile himself from the earth in order to save it.

There are two routes to convincing Edgar. The "guaranteed" route is for an Investigator to volunteer to travel through the gate with Edgar. Obviously, this requires the ultimate sacrifice from that Investigator. See "The Ultimate Argument," below. To avoid this, the Investigators can try to convince Edgar to go on his own.

To convince Edgar to go on his own is a process that requires the Investigators to make three convincing arguments without suffering too many setbacks. Making a convincing argument requires a spend. Suffering a setback eliminates the effects of one argument's successful prosecution. A setback is simply any argument that doesn't effectively persuade Edgar or, worse, actually dissuades him according to your understanding of the character and reflecting how Edgar

might feel about the Investigators or the human race depending on how he was treated earlier in the campaign. You're playing Edgar Job; you get to decide what's persuasive to him. You're also a player at the table — the Keeper, no less — so you get a say as to what's dramatically satisfying.

The bullet points below (under "Convincing Arguments") describe arguments the Investigators might make that, when delivered by an Investigator who roleplays with suitable fervency and makes a spend in one of the listed abilities, counts as one of the three. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, so you will have to adjudicate unforeseen arguments or events as you see fit, especially as they pertain to the specific strengths or backgrounds of the Investigators in your campaign or unusual ways that your telling of *Eternal Lies* has unfolded to this point.

If the Investigators go to Ethiopia and bring George Ayers to Savannah (which requires them to make the trip and a 1-point **Bargain** or **Flattery** spend) to use his personal relationship as a lever to help convince Edgar, that's worth two successful arguments by itself. Edgar is deeply affected to see his old friend again.

The Investigators can also try to trick Edgar into going through the gate by persuading him that he's doing something other than exiling himself to a far-off part of the galaxy from which there will be no return. This requires 1-point spends in a pair of Interpersonal abilities among **Bargain**, **Flattery**, **Intimidation**, and **Reassurance**. Performing a pair of spends in this way to trick Edgar counts as one of the three required arguments and can only be done once.

In order to keep the attempt to convince Edgar exciting — to keep the players in a state of escalating hope and fear — you should make sure to roleplay Edgar's hesitation, and even his push back, in the face of the Investigators' arguments, until eventually the weight of the Investigators' persuasion, or someone's ultimate self-sacrifice, pushes him into acquiescing.

Indeed, if it comes to this, the Investigators may well get themselves into a situation where they fail to persuade Edgar in time to save the whole world. Their choices earlier in the campaign — how they treated Edgar, for example — may cost thousands or millions of lives as Edgar doubts and dreads. The world erodes as he hesitates.

Convincing Arguments

Allowing the world to be destroyed makes Edgar like Echavarria — profane and terrible — while saving the world makes Edgar someone better and more grand than Echavarria ever was. (Flattery)

Relating a specific and compelling tale of the evils for which Echavarria was ultimately responsible, and which were witnessed by the Investigators in the course of the campaign, can elevate this argument to count as two of the three required.

The Investigators are profoundly potent and effective, having killed or dispatched the Great Old One Y'golonac, an act requiring considerable might and intellect. If Edgar doesn't do as the Investigators instruct him, it's only a matter of time before they figure out how to force him to accede, which may wind up being much less pleasant than just stepping through the gate now. (Intimidation)

An Investigator has already sacrificed his life or sanity to create the hyperspace gate, and Edgar can't let his sacrifice go to waste. (Bargain)

By remaining on Earth, Edgar is allowing the whole of humanity to perish horribly by his inaction, the act of ultimate self-absorption. (Intimidation)

An Investigator with positive Stability who speaks passionately about the inevitable demise of one of the character's still-living Sources of Stability, relating compelling and specific stories about their relationship, can elevate this argument to count as two of the three required.

Edgar is a human, humans must ultimately act with humanity, and the only humane act in this situation is to spare the human race. (Reassurance)

Relating a specific and compelling tale of some act of charity, goodness, or humanity that the Investigators witnessed or took part in over the course of the campaign can elevate this argument to count as two of the three required.

The Investigators agree to spend significant time and resources after Edgar's departure seeing that those few people he cares about — George Ayers, for example — live and prosper in the world that survives. (Bargain)

Edgar's agreement is somehow mathematically inevitable according to the hyper-mathematical laws that govern the universe (or some similar baffle-him-with-bullshit line of "scientific" reasoning). (At least 3 points between Astronomy, Cthulhu Mythos, Cryptography, Occult, Physics, or Theology)

There is a loving Christian God who dwells over and above everything in the cosmos, and Edgar is a Christ-like messiah figure by whose sacrifice the universe will be saved. (Both Theology and Flattery)

9. A Cosmic Banishment

The Ultimate Argument

If an Investigator volunteers to pass through the gate with Edgar and join him in eternal interstellar exile — with no tricks, no sleight of hand — then that alone is sufficient to persuade Edgar to go. No spend is required, and no other arguments are needed.

This is not an option that Edgar should suggest; the offer should come from the player.

Such an Investigator's sacrifice should be a massively dramatic moment. Allow plenty of game time for the Investigator to say goodbye to his or her comrades. Then, as the Investigator passes through the gate along with Edgar, narrate a montage of key moments in the campaign where that Investigator's contributions were critical or dramatic, as the other Investigators remember those moments.

Through the Gate

Finally, Edgar is persuaded. He meets each Investigator's gaze for a moment before turning away from them, toward the gate. He steps through and disappears, along — perhaps — with a sacrificial Investigator.

Requiring the Ultimate Sacrifice

There is a sensible dramatic argument to be made that the Investigators ought to be forced — not just given the opportunity — to make their own heroic sacrifice to save the world. As this campaign's publisher pointed out in an email, "A hero is a person who makes a difficult moral choice, not someone who persuades someone to make a difficult choice."

You, then, are more than free to impose that requirement, ruling that no quantity or manner of convincing arguments and their corresponding spends can be deployed to make Edgar step through the gate on his own, and saying instead that one or more Investigators *must* volunteer to move him bodily through the portal in order to seal the deal.

If that's what you decide, it simply falls to you to make the Investigators aware — in the spirit of GUMSHOE, where they can't fail to advance the story due to a failure of perception — that their sacrifice is what's required. It can be as simple as Edgar finally saying to them, *"I'll go if you'll go with me."*

You don't have to rush to that ultimatum, of course. If the Investigators mount every argument they can think of only to wind up at a dead end of Edgar's final refusal, and only then is the opportunity for their self-sacrifice offered, that should provide an entirely suitable dramatic resolution to the question.

Each Investigator present must make a 3-point non-Mythos Stability test in that moment, knowing that Edgar Job has just been doomed for all time.

The earth, however, has been saved, the god Azathoth's gaze turned away from it. Within a few moments, the horrible bluish light begins to fade, and with it, the maddening and refractive shadows that have been tugging at the Investigators' sanity.

By the time the Investigators are back outside, the lightning storms have abated and the unearthly color has faded from the sky.

Within twenty-four hours, the ash stops raining from the sky.

It is a year or more before any nation of earth returns to any state that could be thought of as normal, but the day comes.

The Investigators have saved the world.



Campaign Wrap-Up

Once Edgar steps through the gate and you've made it clear by describing the beginnings of a return to earthly normalcy that the Investigators have been successful, narrate a gentle fade-out.

Then, by way of epilogue, ask each player with a surviving Investigator to narrate a scene of how the Investigator's life looks a month from the end of the campaign. Ideally, these will involve known Sources of Stability, but leave it up to each player. Offer your own ideas to players who're stuck, but unless they are, give each player the complete freedom to imagine their characters' future lives in any way they wish.

If an Investigator accompanied Edgar through the hyperspace gate, ask that player to narrate a scene that somehow relates to the latter-day effects of that sacrifice on the other Investigators, on the Investigator's Sources of Stability, or on the world. That Investigator should go last.

Then, do the same thing again for each of these characters a year in the future, and then a decade in the future.

At the year and decade horizons, you may also wish to interleave the future lives of Investigators retired from the campaign by reason of insanity, and on the decade horizon, the future lives of the descendants or loved ones of deceased Investigators.

If it won't ruin the moment, convey our thanks—our designers' and publisher's thanks — to the players for helping breathe a unique spark of life into this shared work of imagination.

You, Keeper, have our special thanks. Thank you for bringing *Eternal Lies* to life.

Thank You for Your Discretion

Eternal Lies is a campaign that could be potentially spoiled in a few ways. Divulging its secrets across the Internet, or your local gaming club, has the potential to ruin lots of fun for lots of people who'd probably prefer to uncover those secrets for themselves, in the course of play.

So, again, while we'd love it if you and your players told everyone you know how much fun you had with *Eternal Lies*, we'd also love it if you were discreet and marked spoilers when you talk or write about the twists and turns among the campaign's Locales and Acts.

Thank you again.




THE
END

Appendix: About The Music

The Eternal Lies Suite: A Musical Analysis

Eternal Lies is an epic, world-spanning campaign and writing a suite of music to accompany it was a major undertaking. Not only did the music have to be representative of the various aspects of the story, it had to be usable as an aid to playing the game. From the beginning of development we understood the need for each piece of music to have a usage within the context of the campaign. The decision was made to split the music into three types: ambient music, action music and stings. (These are discussed in more depth in the section entitled *Using the Eternal Lies Suite in Play*).

When writing this music it was important for it to tie to the campaign thematically. In addition to helping set the mood, the music had to have a certain logic to it. Early on we settled on using a leitmotif approach where key characters and concepts are given their own unique themes. Working with such an extensive suite of music gave us a wonderful opportunity to develop and explore themes in all manner of interesting variations. Although each theme is stated fully at some points, they are also played in small fragments, re-harmonised and altered rhythmically and melodically whilst remaining recognisable. Often they are hidden in unusual places within the score.

The influences on this score are almost innumerable however we would like to thank Jeff, Will and Simon for their generous assistance throughout. The unique scenes and story of *Eternal Lies* were an amazing inspiration.

The Sound of Eternal Lies

Due to the time period of the campaign, a traditional approach has been used with orchestra backed by choirs. Inevitably, some influences of 21st Century scoring have crept in, particularly the sound design elements. Nevertheless the biggest inspiration remains an older sound from early 20th Century classical composers such as Holst, Grieg, Dvorak and Debussy as well as film composers such as Bernard Herrmann and Max Steiner. Folk instruments from around the world were used to help suggest local colour and a jazz combo was also included. For some of the more epic moments percussion elements such as Japanese taiko drums, Punjab dhols and heavily processed hits were added to the traditional timpani and bass drums.

Primary Themes

There are four primary themes within the Eternal Lies Suite supported by various secondary themes.

Mystery Theme

This short but distinctive motif represents the mystery of the *Eternal Lies* campaign as a whole. The decidedly angular melody plays across the jarring chord change of E minor to C# dominant seventh. This is the first theme heard in the suite and is usually played in the woodwinds or brass.

Humanity Theme

This melancholy theme has the longest and most complete melody in *Eternal Lies*. It is strongly associated with Roger Henslowe and by extension it comes to represent the noble spirit of humanity, their struggle and even their failings. The music is strongly tonal and normally played in the key of F minor. The first half of the melody consists of reflective minor tonic to dominant movements of F minor to C dominant seventh. The second half of the melody moves to mostly major harmonies and a more optimistic sound: hope springs eternal. The theme is most frequently played on piano.

Fate Theme

This slippery chromatic theme is used to signify the ultimate destiny of the story. It is played out at significant moments when the story moves towards its ultimate destiny. Edgar Job and his central purpose within the plot of *Eternal Lies* ties him to the theme (although often with embellishment of a secondary mystical theme). This theme has an elusive, chameleonic nature – much like fate itself – and it twists and turns through many, many variations throughout the suite. It is unstable and deceptive, moving from

E minor to an Italian sixth formed on the C and then down to the dominant seventh on B. The heavy use of variation means that it is rarely heard in its unaltered form and is frequently re-harmonised. Often a brief suggestion of the theme is heard in the form of three chromatic descending tones. This 'reduced Fate theme' is outlined below. In all of its forms, the falling quality of the Fate theme depicts a sense of inevitability as events play out towards an unseen goal.

Corruption Theme

Admittedly this is far more of a sound effect than a musical theme but it is used repeatedly throughout the suite. This has a direct relationship to a Great Old One and its influence on Earth. Statements of this theme occur in places where the 'mouth' effect has manifested strongly. The actual theme was created by layering many sound design elements including wind sounds and various vocal effects.

Secondary Thematic Elements

The secondary thematic elements are far simpler or less defined than the primary themes. Often they are a choice of instrumentation, use of a specific scale or even a single chord.

The Big Reveal

This distinctive, open-voiced chord is used for many of the 'Big Reveal' moments in *Eternal Lies* when stability and sanity are severely threatened. It creates a dissonant harmony with a tritone placed above a minor chord, adding the notes of b6th and the 9th. Most often it is played in a full orchestral tutti with trumpets and flutes sounding out the dissonant upper tones.

Mysticism

An Impressionist whole-tone scale is used in the suite to signify magical places or people. This also extends to a reliance on harp, woodwinds and boys choir. Sometimes this includes a harmonic upper structure of a tritone with an added minor seventh played on muted violins.

Gate

This sound occurs whenever a supernatural portal known as a gate is created. The fabric of reality tears open revealing a rushing vortex of instability and disturbing visions of other worlds.

Investigation

A repeating theme of four minor chords is used to signify the process of investigation within the story. The harmony moves through A minor, Eb minor, D minor and Bb minor.

Outer Gods

The threat of a genuine apocalypse hangs over the entire story of *Eternal Lies*. Mind-shattering horrors not of this Earth are potentially drawing near. The threat of the Outer Gods and their dark attention is represented by loud mixed choirs singing minor harmonies over huge pounding drums.

The Score Itself

Let's look at the individual pieces within the score itself.

The Eternal Lies Main Title

The crackle of a vintage radio opens the suite in 1930s mono sound as the Mystery theme is introduced, first on Cor Anglais and then oboe. As the music swells, huge timpani introduce the full stereo and modern production.

The Hangar

This heavily ambient cue opens moving softly around the orchestra with elements of metallic percussion. Woodwind, harp and boys choir suggest a Mystical subtext and the Corruption theme quietly hints at what is to come. Almost inevitably the Fate theme plays out on the piano but with a subtle twist of re-harmonisation. Perhaps destiny can still be changed?

Savannah

Low strings, piano, flute and the occasional splash of colour from other woodwind suggest a period mystery feel, juxtaposed by the use of processed harpsichord, ambient metallic sounds, atmospheric samples and a live harmonica. The cue is ambiguous and unsettling, appropriate for the opening chapter. A fragment of the Humanity theme on piano foreshadows the meeting with Henslowe however an alternative harmony ends with a pair of triads a tritone apart (the "Petrouchka chord").

Henslowe's Story

Primarily focused on the tragic state of Roger Henslowe, this cue clearly states the entire Humanity theme, initially on piano and then in a full string arrangement with a yearning counterpoint in the cellos. The music is fundamentally stable and strongly tonal. While melancholy and reflective, the theme is also warm and human. Importantly it contains a sense of optimism. This meeting has now inspired hope.

Edgar Job

A re-harmonised, reduced Fate theme overlaps with Mysticism here in an Impressionist cue depicting the mercurial nature of Edgar Job. Where Henslowe's Story relied mostly on warm and familiar sounds of strings and piano, here the primary colours are woodwind and harps and an overall colder and more distant sound. Strings harmonics and unsettling deep tones add to the sense of something being quite wrong here. Harmonies shift quickly and while sense of a traditional key is established for long, eventually the music settles onto a primarily whole-tone harmonic basis representing Edgar's mystical qualities. The Corruption theme hides in the music for Edgar has indeed been damaged by his past.

Los Angeles

The Investigation theme features strongly here, supported by tuned percussion ostinato. Tension is highlighted with restraint and pauses. The city is cold and unfriendly but for the moment the threats are mostly mundane. Both the Humanity and Corruption themes are referenced here.

Malta

This cue embodies the humid, asphyxiating and dangerous atmosphere of a catacomb. Pizzicato strings hint at tentative movements within this closed space, whilst the bass line lurks beneath them. A Mediterranean Santour plays the Mystery theme answered by the creepy bass; an echo of the evil in the catacombs. The Corruption theme is particularly notable due to the presence of the Nectar factory in Malta.

Mexico

The music suggests the influence of Film Noir. A jazz-influenced ensemble of piano, brushes and muted trumpet perform over dark and brooding sounds before eventually giving way to a rendition of the Humanity theme on Spanish guitar.

Yucatan

In Yucatan much of the action takes place in the ancient temple of Chichen Xoxul deep in the jungle. The music imparts a menacing feeling of a dense and wild jungle still resonant with ancient blood massacres. The Fate theme is strongly referenced here as destiny is played out. South American native flutes play the Humanity theme adding a dark, primal quality.

Bangkok

An exotic atmosphere is conjured by the use of zither, xylophone, Asian percussion and flute over low strings. Solo violin and erhu play out a tragic lament for the terrible suffering here. The Corruption theme infests the music as the Humanity theme speaks of the chance for release from the torment.

Ethiopia

In the story this area is heavily corrupted by the influence of evil cults and the Corruption Theme features strongly. African instruments Kora and Balafon have also been added to bring a new colour to this dry and acrid environment. The heavy involvement of both Henslowe and Edgar Job in this area brings about a merging the opening of the Humanity theme on the piano with the descending semitones of the reduced Fate theme in the woodwind. The effects of their presence here can still be felt.

Tibet

A markedly modern approach is used in this cue, with plenty of ethnic elements and sound design. The overall objective is to create a dreamlike atmosphere and to highlight the presence of Y'golonac's stomach under Mount Kailash. Soft choirs, Asian flute and stringed instruments produce a dreamlike framework, on which are hung various more unusual sounds: the Corruption theme mixes with ethereal ghostliness, chanting monks, strange female vocals, temple gong and horn. There is even the sound of ice crumbling as the ascent up the mountain continues.

In The Mountain

This oppressive cue is used for the unique environment of Y'golonac's stomach within Mount Kailash. The traditional, orchestral scoring is here replaced by an unsettling wash of disturbing and alien sound.

Los Angeles Revisited

As the players return to Los Angeles we hear this cue, linked musically to the original Los Angeles music by an alternating two-chord motif and slow semitone trills on the piano. Now the location is far less mundane, and a sinister feel is created by the Corruption theme, dark low piano runs, bowed circle bells and the Fate theme on bassoon over choral harmonies. Percussion hits and tremolo strings (with a hint of the Humanity theme played on the bells) add tension around the halfway mark. A dark low piano

and woodwind gives way to rhythmic woodwind and pizzicato basses with a mood of weary hopelessness, featuring lyrical cello lines and the return of the chromatic piano devices.

Eye of the Storm

Huge thunder and crashing rain introduce this cue running rapidly into a crescendo as the Fate theme is heard through the apocalyptic choirs of the Outer Gods. The theme is twisted, replacing the C Italian sixth and B dominant seventh chords with a single B minor/major seventh chord. Fate has brought the story to this specific juncture. The focus of Azathoth can be felt here in the 'maddening beating of vile drums and the thin monotonous whine of accursed flutes'.

Retired

A sad rendition of the Humanity theme played on solo piano as a character leaves the story.

Travelling 1

A sprightly, energetic rendering of the complete Fate theme in the strings leads into a murky climax with a slight hint of the Corruption theme. Each journey brings us close to the ultimate destiny and possible darkness.

Travelling 2

A sombre yet purposeful feeling pervades through this cue as the story progresses ever deeper to a new location and greater danger.

Minor Mouth

A clear and direct statement of the Corruption theme as a minor mouth is encountered.

Island Approach

Soft orchestra and boys choir hint at nervous anticipation until the orchestra jolts to life with a dissonant crescendo at the appearance of the island.

Meanwhile

A robust statement of the Mystery theme on the French horns leads into a descending line on the violins.

Mount Kailash

Dark orchestral tones build into a crescendo and orchestral tutti for a Big Reveal at the first sighting of Mount Kailash.

Major Mouth

A particularly grandiose statement of the Corruption theme depicting the moment a major mouth is discovered.

Jungle Ruins

Mystical whole tone structures in divisi violins signify an area of great magic while maintaining an atmosphere of suspense.

Apocalypse

The huge and terrible sound of the Outer Gods is realised upon Earth. Choirs and thundering percussion give way to a solo soprano voice.

Death of the Mouth

The Corruption theme comes to its despairing and ruinous end with a mixture of alien despair and orchestral effect.

Opening the Darkness

This cue opens with the distinctive sound of the Gate and a rush of images across space. Rhythmic movement in the violas is supported by sustained chords in the low brass and boys' choir. The music briefly settles as a majestic interstellar vista unfolds and flurries of triplets in the woodwinds and violins dance across the harmony of a major triad with an added b6. Trumpets herald a marked change of mood with an almost imperceptible quote of the reduced Fate theme as the choirs and pounding percussion of the Outer Gods depict visions of temples on alien worlds. Finally the music drops into a Big Reveal chord as the brooding rising menace of Gol-Goroth is perceived and low basses rumble with tremolo bowing below dark sound design.

Farewell

The familiar sound of a Gate opening returns here. Edgar Job makes the ultimate sacrifice and in doing so he twists the normally minor-key Fate theme into a major key complete with heroic refrain from the trumpets. The influence of the Outer Gods is heard in the choir and percussion but the music is now triumphant as disaster is averted. As the Gate closes and Edgar is lost forever, the music suddenly drops into a quiet G minor chord and a reflective soft sound

Run!

Unpredictable, racing music signals a desperate retreat from some terrible threat. The tone is almost adventurous and daring in the face of tremendous peril. Changes of tempo, rhythm, dynamics and orchestral colour all continue to confound expectations as the pursuit takes on new twists and turns. The presence of both the Fate and Corruption themes only underline the serious tone.

Danger

This action cue is dominated by chasing staccato strings playing repetitive phrases. The violas set the pace hurried along by trombones and low cello. Although seemingly more friendly, the woodwinds and harp add a rhythmic component to emphasise the urgency of danger. The slower tempo at the close of the cue indicates a moment of safety but soon after the Corruption theme is a reminder that all is not well.

Tension

A relentless string ostinato underpins shocking brass hits. Instruments pass brief motifs from one to another as if part of some fearful search. Strings play Humanity theme harmonised in diminished chords suggesting the nearby presence of evil. As the stalking music resumes, a sense of anxiety appears in a flattened 9th from the trombones.

Hunted

This action cue represents the tension of a desperate chase as though being stalked by great evil. Primary themes are briefly hinted at rather than stated in entirety. Heavy fortissimo staccato strings and brass create heavy impacts. Brief respites between rhythmic sections only underline the anxiety before the chase resumes once more.

Darkness

Different facets of darkness are explored in this cue, from the introduction of heavy percussion, brass, strings, harp and santoor to the transition of spatial elements and the texture and sounds of the individual instruments. Rhythmic hit points are highlighted with timpani. Low piano and Celesta weave the phrases together at the end. To contrast with the darkness, the lightest section of the cue is in the beginning together with heavier chords and the Corruption theme into a pitch black, dark world of mystery and heightened fear.

Terror

The main purpose of this particular action cue was to simply convey pure nightmarish terror. The entire orchestra has been used to create dark, sustained drones in eerie pauses for those moments of surety that something horrible is going to happen. These contrast with sudden blasts of pounding momentum when the whole orchestra plays at its highest dynamic. The Humanity theme is suggested by the flute in the pauses, as is the Decadence theme: a constant reminder of the imminent evil.

Malevolence

Urgent, brutal chords bludgeon forward with dramatic suspense and paranoia. Ever building, the entire orchestra is used in combination with dramatic choir. Something horrific has been let loose. At this point we are no longer afraid of the unknown, instead we are witnesses to a revelation of true evil. Nothing is held back! As cascading chord clusters push through the sadistic evil moment there is no escape!

Disturbance

Unconventional usage of familiar instruments enhances the sense of anxious drama. A metallic timbre, comprising tubular bells and powerful brass attacks is bolstered by fortissimo gran cassa, howling mad woodwind and a percussive use of harp and cimbalom. The Corruption theme in the background aims to remind the nature of the ever-present lurking danger.

Frenzy

This track reflects the feeling of fighting not only enemies but also struggling against insanity. The heavy burden of knowing is represented here by dissonance, fast string arpeggios and unpredictable brass staccato. The Corruption, Humanity and Fate themes blend into the rhythmic support summarizing all that has gone before. At this point, sanity is compromised.

Failure

The Fate theme plays through to completion on piano as an awful destiny is fulfilled and the story plays out to ultimate doom and devastation.

End Credits

This is an earnest and poignant statement of the Humanity theme performed on solo piano. It represents a successful outcome of the game.

How to use the Eternal Lies Suite

This music has been written to accompany the *Eternal Lies* campaign. If you wish to listen to it for inspiration, while reading this book or in conjunction with other products then we hope it provides great enjoyment. For *Eternal Lies*, we did include a specific manner in which the suite may be used for optimal immersion and integration with the storyline.

Ambient Music

The ambient music has been written to assist in creating an immersive atmosphere during the game. Overall it maintains a constant dynamic and can be left to loop endlessly in the background. Usually these tracks are designed to be run throughout most of a chapter however *Henslowe's Story*, *Edgar Job* and *Eye of the Storm* are used in specific scenes.

Action Music

The action music is designed to be played during periods of stress, largely based around physical contests such as fights or chases. Each track has its own flavour and Keepers may wish to select specific tracks for each action scene. Another option is to place all the action tracks into a playlist and 'shuffle' them into a random order. The tracks have been written in such a way that they may seamlessly follow each other in any sequence.

Stings

The stings are to be played in certain circumstances:



Track Name	Played...
Main Title	At the start of each game session
Retired	When a character leaves the game
Traveling 1	During a traveling montage
Traveling 2	As an alternative for traveling montages
Minor Mouth	When a minor mouth is discovered or grows upon a PC
Island Approach	Upon first seeing the island near Bangkok
Meanwhile	When resuming gaming after a break, for scene transitions
Major Mouth	When discovering a Major Mouth
Mount Kailash	On first sighting Mount Kailash
Jungle Ruins	Upon discovering Chichen Xoxul
Opening the Darkness	When the PCs open the gate spell in Chichen Xoxul
Death of the Mouth	As the Liar From Beyond is destroyed
Apocalypse	At shocking moments throughout the third Act
Farewell	As Edgar steps through the gate
Failure	If the PCs fail completely in their quest
End Credits	Upon successful completion of *Eternal Lies*

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