

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

# THE LONG CON

BY ADAM GAUNTLETT



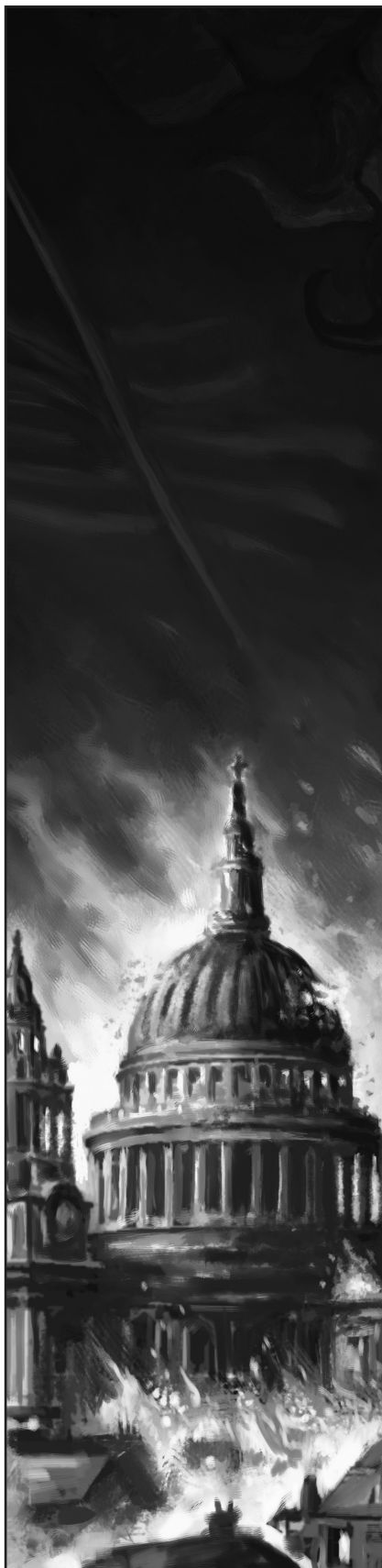
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**TRAIL OF CTHULHU**

**THE  
LONG  
CON**

**BY ADAM GAUNTLETT**



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(St. Paul's plan appears via the British Library Collection)



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# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

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## The Long Con

The Investigators assist in a confidence game — but are they being played?

### Hook

Sidney Pryce wants their help to set up a Big Store, to sucker a rich American into thinking he's buying into a Burnt Auction. The rewards, Pryce promises, are incalculable; but soon after Pryce enlists their help, strange bird-creatures haunt the protagonists. How, they wonder, does Japanese folklore figure into it?

### Awful Truth

Pryce is the one being played. His rich American doesn't exist, and never did. Dust Things are using him to arrange a Burnt Auction to free their fellows' books, long since trapped time-trapped in the cellars of St Paul's. If the Dust Things are successful, history will be rewritten and the Great Fire of 1666 won't destroy their priceless, dusty texts. However what everyone involved, including the Dust Things, fails to realize is that, if they reopen this portal to the past, the Great Fire will come along with it. The best hope the protagonists have is to frustrate Pryce's plans somehow, but will their natural cupidity — even if the Auction's fake, the grimoires aren't — betray them at the last?

Due to the nature of the scenario, much depends on the protagonists' willingness to get involved. It's their con game, and they have to organize it. For that reason the scenario structure is by necessity slightly loose; while most protagonist actions have been anticipated, it's always possible your group may come up with something to surprise you.

### Spine

Pryce approaches the protagonists, and tengu follow soon after. Pryce's scheme seems genuine, and the protagonists can start putting a con mob together as well as preparing the location. But yokai keep intruding, and the protagonists may start to investigate them, Pryce, and the real — or not — reclusive millionaire, Hubert Walton. Will they seek out the Inner Light, talk to photographers in Soho, follow Pryce and find out what he may or may not be up to? Occultist and criminal Jackie 'Gentleman Jack' Squires is an unwelcome partner, who knows what's really going on and chooses to make the protagonists his fall guys. Then the mark arrives, and Hubert Walton meets the protagonists for the first time, in some specially prepared casino rooms at the Ritz. The time has come to run the Big Store; but the Dust Things have been preparing the way, and the

Burnt Auction may not go exactly as the protagonists planned. There's a fire waiting to be ignited as soon as the Dust Things reopen the vault the books are hidden in. The protagonists will need to act quickly to save the cathedral, and perhaps snatch a book or two for themselves.

### FIRE HAZARD

The protagonists will know, on a **0 point History** spend or similar, that the Great Fire took place in 1666 and destroyed thousands of homes and businesses, razing the City of London almost to the Thames' edge. Fortunately few people were killed, but many were left homeless and destitute. After the fire the face of London changed, as old medieval wood-built buildings were replaced with solid, fire-resistant brick. Anything beyond that is a point spend, probably **The Knowledge** or **History**.

Old St Paul's was the fourth church on that spot, and was built by the Normans in the 11th century after another devastating fire ravaged London. It took over 200 years to complete, and stood on that spot for over 500 years. Henry V, after the Catholic Church had been thrown out in favour of divorce-friendly Protestantism, allowed church land to be used for secular purposes and rented



## Fire Hazard

out large portions of Old St Paul's churchyard to businesses, a practice that continued long after his death. When the 1666 fire began to spread, the booksellers whose stalls infested the crypts and shrines in Old St Paul's churchyard moved all of their stock into the crypts beneath the cathedral for safe keeping. Unfortunately for them, the fire proved no respecter of sanctity. Said John Evelyn, a witness to the disaster:

*At my returne I was infinitely concern'd to find that goodly Church St. Pauls now as adruine, and that beautiful portico ... now rent in pieces, flakes of vast stone split asunder, and nothing now remaining intire but the inscription in the architrave, shewing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defac'd. It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heate had in a manner calcin'd, so that all the ornaments, columns, freezes, capitals, and projectures of massie Portland-stone flew off, even to the very roofe, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no less than six akers by measure) was totally mealted; the ruines of the vaulted roofe falling broke into St. Faith's, which being fill'd with the magazines of bookes belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consum'd, burning for a weeke following. It is also observable that the lead over the altar at the East end was untouch'd, and among the divers monuments, the body of one Bishop remain'd intire. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable Church, one of the most antient pieces of early piety in the Christian world."*

Not a book was saved. In fact by opening the vault, hoping to recover their stock, the booksellers sealed their own fate; the sudden rush of oxygen caused a massive flare-up that consumed everything.

**Occult or the Knowledge** will also know that, ever since the fire, rumour has it that at certain times of year those who know the secret ways gather at St Paul's to hold what's known as a Burnt Auction, as the Devil sells off his surplus stock. So long as they're immediately sold, the buyer can take these books out of St Paul's crypts; otherwise there they stay, until the next auction. Many a rich man's library, it's said, treasures a tome or two *ex libris* St Paul's, or so the story goes. Nobody with sense believes stories like that, of course. The St Paul's treasure trove of books burnt to ashes long ago, and the Devil doesn't spend his time auctioning old grimoires. Occasionally you hear tell of someone forging a book out of the 'St Paul's collection' and selling it to soft-headed rubes, but that's the only real truth behind the Burnt Auction legend.

The following information about St Paul's is taken from the reprinted Historical 1938 edition of the original A-Z London Street Atlas:

*LUDGATE HILL EC4 (Stations: Blackfriars D, Mansion House D, St Paul's C). This is Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece built to replace the much larger Old Cathedral after its destruction on the same site by the Great Fire of 1666. The most prominent of London's buildings, it is an immense Renaissance structure, its exterior length being 515ft; its width across transepts 250ft and the height from pavement to the top of the cross 365ft.*

*Among the many famous people buried here are Sir Christopher Wren, Nelson, Wellington and Jellicoe; Florence Nightingale, Reynolds and Turner. OPEN Weekdays 9 am to 5 or 6 pm. ADMISSION FREE to Nave and Transept, but visitors must not walk about during services. ADMISSION to Crypt, 6d; Library, Whispering Gallery and Stone Gallery 6d; Golden Gallery 1/-; Ball 1/-*

Mention of the Library may pique the protagonist's interests. It is open to researchers, by appointment, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. **Credit Rating, Theology** or similar **1-point spend** to get in. It contains mostly ecclesiastical works; the original Library lost nearly all of its collection in the Great Fire, and since then it has rebuilt itself thanks to the generosity of church donors, most notably the Bishop of London who, in 1712, willed over 2,000 books to St Paul's. The Library offers the following **clues**:

- It can confirm all details about the Great Fire, including the loss of the Library and the bookseller's collection. It can even pinpoint the exact spot where the bookseller's collection would have been stored.
- (From a 1748 manuscript on the history of St Paul's:) *It is often said that, at certain times of year, an auction of old incunabula is held in the crypts. This rumour began life, as far as can be determined, in 1713, when one William Fitzhugh attempted to convince a visiting Dutch merchant that the item Fitzhugh was attempting to sell came from the collection of the Prince of Lies himself. The deception came to a head when, in mortal fear for his soul, the Dutchman confessed all to the Bishop of London. Fitzhugh went to Tyburn for his offences. Since that time the tale has proved impossible to extinguish, and even in my day it is reported that divers frivolous persons have approached servants of the Church, praying for admittance to the auction.*



## The Gaudier the Patter

There is also a **1-point clue, Library Use:**

- (From the secret confession of Jonathan Wild, Thief-Taker General, 1725:) *I stand before you condemned unjustly, and beg your intercession on these and other matters, not least for which I have been of great assistance to you before now. Is there none left who remember Fitzhugh? It was I who exposed his dealings to you all, and further prevented his schemes. It was also I who uncovered his secret, that of the blasphemous book that lent him strange dreams. For he was naught but a petty forger till he obtained it, and only after it put those dreams into his head did he enquire further into the Satanic auctions which even now, good sirs, are said to be held in your own cellars! But Fitzhugh was not the least of it; many's the cunning man who, inspired by wicked dreams, thinks to recover the lost store of knowledge. Your own canons, sirs, can swear the truth of this, for did I not expose to you at the time Fitzhugh was taken a conspiracy within your own walls, to recover those lost books? Take pity upon an honest man, unjustly accused, and save me from my persecutors!*

- Jonathan Wild: A notorious figure of the early 1700s, Wild promoted himself as a crime fighter while at the same time running one of the most audacious burglary and extortion rackets London has ever seen. His was an age without law enforcement of any significance, and crime was London's obsession. Wild's favourite trick was to commit a burglary, wait for the theft to be announced in the press, and then step forward claiming to have recovered the items. He would return the stolen goods, and collect a healthy commission. Robbery was illegal and harshly punished, but so long as Wild claimed to be returning stolen property, he stayed beyond the reach of the law. Wild kept his criminal gang in check by threatening to expose their misdeeds, and it's said that whenever he

tired of an associate, he turned him in to the hangman for the reward money. In February 1725 Wild was arrested for assisting in a jailbreak, and the truth behind his lies came out. He swung at Tyburn in May that same year.

## THE GAUDIER THE PATTERN

The protagonists are being asked to help in a con game, and while their characters may understand what that means, the players might not. This section is for their benefit, and should be considered a **0 point spend Streetwise** or similar.

The con game Pryce is proposing is a Big Store, one of the classic long cons, so called because it takes a lot of effort and time to arrange and play against a mark. In a Big Store, the participants set up a completely fake enterprise, and make it look as legitimate as humanly possible. That way, when the mark comes into the Store he or she has no idea that it's anything other than what it claims to be.

The ideal con game works something like this: a roper — in this case, Pryce — finds the mark and feeds him the story. This time, the story is the Burnt Auction. The roper then passes the mark off to the insideman — one of the player characters — who, by allowing the mark to get a taste of the cash that's to come, convinces the mark of the genuineness of the scheme. The insideman is so called because he passes himself off as an insider, someone in the know. In a Big Store focused on, say, stock trades, the insideman might pass himself off as an accountant or financial officer, trying to benefit from fraudulent trades in his company's stock. Of course, the insideman can't arrange the trades himself, because everyone's watching him, but if someone could

make the trades in his stead ... In this Big Store, the insideman will be passing himself off as an expert in books and an occultist.

In this Big Store the other characters will be passing themselves off either as staff, or customers. If staff, they'll be playing devils and the damned, which will want a lot of colourful makeup. Let the players arrange the details, though **Disguise** will undoubtedly be useful. As customers, they'll be portraying rich, decadent Londoners determined to make a deal with the Devil.

The Keeper should bear in mind that much of this must, by necessity, be left in the players' hands. Their scheme will be the one put in place, and it's up to them to figure out all the angles, set the scene, and play their roles. Were this an actual Big Store, this might all contribute towards a common ability pool — referred to here as the **Con Pool** - and then used as a contested roll against the mark. Think of this test, from a rules perspective, in the same way that a magician might have to overcome a target's Inertia in a ritual, since — mechanically speaking — that's more or less what's happening here. Since there is no con, no test will be needed, but the players won't know that. For the sake of verisimilitude, the Keeper ought to publicly make note of the players' actions and encourage them to think that they are building up a Con Pool to use against the mark.

Should the Keeper or the players wish to run a con game again, against an actual mark, the rule should be: each target is assigned a Resistance pool — broadly the same thing as Inertia, but it only applies to humans' natural resistance to being fooled — and it is the con artist's job to overcome that Resistance twice. The first time is the sting, in which the target is persuaded to hand over the cash. The second time is the blow-off, in which the target is convinced not to do anything rash,



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Dusty Masquerade

like call the cops, after the sting takes place. Resistance can be reduced, at the Keeper's discretion, by creating the right atmosphere or circumstances for the con to work. So a Big Store, for instance, might reduce Resistance by anything from 5 to 15 points, depending on how elaborate and well-organized it might be. Much of this is, by necessity, kept vague since it depends so much on circumstance bonuses that the players will come up with themselves. It's not as if they have to find a perfectly preserved mummy from the Middle Kingdom period to make this work; they just have to come up with a plausible reason, tailored to the individual mark, as to why this particular scheme ought to work.

The ideal Big Store persuades the mark to plunge deep, and invest a lot of cash. Then something goes wrong, and the mark is forced to leave without his money. In a mundane Big Store, this is often achieved by convincing the mark that the trade — or whatever it may have been — went awry somehow, and this disaster is often backed up by the threat of a police investigation. After all, insider trading is illegal. That's usually enough to convince a hot-headed mark it isn't worth his time trying to figure out what happened. In this instance it won't be the police the mark has to worry about; it will be His Satanic Majesty.

The two things the protagonists will have to arrange are the location, which must be St Paul's, and their own costumes and personas. Pryce will be bringing the rich American.



### Dust Things

*Abilities:* Athletics 6, Health 5, Scuffling 10

*Magic:* 5-8 points

*Hit Threshold:* 3

*Stealth:* +2

*Weapon:* Stinging blow (-2) plus special

*Armor:* Immune to physical weapons. Fire does +1 damage. A Dust Thing must spend 1 Athletics to stand against any wind or suction stronger than a stiff breeze, and 2 points to move against it.

*Stability:* +0

*Special:* Once a victim has inhaled any of the Dust Thing, the creature can appear in the guise of any creature related to the book, or books, that created it. Inhaling is often done covertly, as a test of Scuffling vs Sense Trouble, where success means the target has been overcome. Once a target has been overcome, the Dust Thing controls what that target sees, dreams and reads. It can cause nightmares, alter or create memories, and even drive the target to write things unaware. Each Dust Thing illusion costs **1 Magic per scene**.

*Appearance:* When not mimicking something else, the Dust Thing appears as a cloud of dust and grit, or a wrinkled, drab humanoid wearing dun-coloured clothing.

*Spells:* Various, but for the purpose of this scenario all Dust Things are familiar with Megapolisomancy and idiosyncratic magic (if used in the campaign).

## THE DUSTY MASQUERADE

This section is for the Keeper's benefit, and explains what the Dust Things want out of all this.

The bookseller's market at Old St. Paul's was the closest thing to paradise London's Dust Things ever had. When the Great Fire threatened to destroy it the Dust Things took action, and arranged for their books to be hidden safe from the flames. However they soon realized that, though the crypt

appeared a sure bet at first, it was very vulnerable. The creatures faced a mass cull, possibly extinction.

In order to prevent this, the creatures drew upon the knowledge contained in their grimoires and created a Gate, that led to a pocket dimension. They hid as many of their books as they could manage in that dimension, so that when the Fire reached the vault the most valuable texts remained safe. However when the fire died down, the surviving Dust Things left in London realized they had overlooked something. It had



## Grim Grimoires

only been thanks to a group effort that the Gate had been opened. Now, with most of the dust-impregnated books in the pocket dimension, they lacked the power to reopen it. Their fellows' books were trapped, apparently forever.

Ever since that time the Dust Things of London have tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade human occultists to reopen the Gate and rescue those books. Very few occultists have been willing to help. Most realize that the Dust Things aren't about to live up to their end of any bargain, and in any case may lack the ability to do so. The few who've tried ended up dead.

In desperation, the Dust Things have adopted a new strategy. Promises of occult knowledge don't seem to be getting them anywhere, but money is different. Pryce has been duped into thinking that there really is a rich American out there, willing to spend thousands at a Burnt Auction. He's perfectly sincere in this belief — **Assess Honesty** won't find anything untoward — and the Dust Things hope he'll be able to persuade others. The fake Burnt Auction has a very real purpose: it will reopen the Gate, allowing the Dust Things to rescue their lost brethren. The protagonists are, in effect, being conned.

The Dust Things in this scenario often take the form of yokai, creatures from Japanese folklore. This is because they take inspiration from Toriyama Sekien's *Illustrated Night Parade of One Hundred Demons* (1776), an 18th Century collection of woodcuts illustrating dozens of different yokai. Sidney Pryce has a copy, which is how he became possessed by Dust Things. Other works in this series include *The Illustrated One Hundred Demons from the Present and the Past* (1779), *Supplement to the Hundred Demons from the Present and the Past* (1780) and *The Illustrated Bag of One Hundred Random Demons* (1784).

Anyone who spends **Occult** or similar knows this about yokai:

Though in many ways they resemble what Westerners might refer to as nature spirits or poltergeists, yokai have no real Western equivalent. These monsters became very popular in Japan during the 19th century, when artists and writers began using them in mass media. It didn't just stop at books and woodcuts; yokai appeared in everything from tabloid newspapers to collectible game cards, which, incidentally, did exist in 19th century Japan. It was because they became so popular that debunkers like Doctor Yokai stepped up to disprove the yokai legends. Doctor Inoue worried that, at a time when modern thinking and progress ought to be taking hold, the Japanese people were firmly mired in backwards, superstitious ways. There are many different yokai variants, and it's impossible to categorize them all. Some are singular entities, while others go about in groups. Some were human once, and became yokai as a result of a curse, or an overdeveloped sense of revenge. Others are natural spirits, or something akin to demons. Though yokai have frightening aspects, many have never been known to harm a human.

The point spend also allows the investigator to identify particular kinds of yokai, which may help identify a natural weakness. Keepers wanting to know more about yokai are encouraged to seek out *Yokai Attack! The Japanese Monster Survival Guide* by Hiroko Yoda and Matt Alt.

Why yokai? The Dust Things know this plan relies on everyone cooperating towards one goal, and they also know that their lies could easily be exposed with a little effort. The yokai are their version of a red herring, to distract anyone who might look into the Hubert Walton story with something completely unrelated. It also helps that

their continued efforts will probably sap the target's **Stability**, making it that much easier to confuse and befuddle them. See further "Teapot Samurai and Other Tempestuous Demons" for a description of what happens when the target's **Stability** drops too low.

Sidney Pryce, if asked directly, will claim to know nothing about Japan or Japanese folklore. The Dust Things are carefully blocking out that part of his memory, and **Assess Honesty** will not be able to tell truth from falsehood here. If anything, on the subject of Japan Pryce gives off mixed signals; it's as though he's half-asleep.

See also the scene, "Trading In Terror," which describes what happens if the protagonists take their yokai investigation one step further.

## GRIM GRIMOIRES

There are several different texts that the protagonists may find useful. The Keeper is encouraged to send the protagonists looking for them, perhaps in a narrative auction or two, if the protagonists express interest in learning more about Japanese folklore. As a rule, the Keeper should insist that only **1 dedicated point** can be held at a time; reading three separate texts on **Occult** shouldn't get the reader a total of **3 dedicated points Occult**. However once a point is spent, then reading a new book on the subject should be worth another dedicated point.

*Illustrated Night Parade of One Hundred Demons* (1776), a collection of woodcuts by Toriyama Sekien, painter and printer. The Night Parade, in Japanese folklore, is a yearly event in which all the local demons take to the streets. It usually happens on a hot summer's night, and anyone who accidentally encounters the procession will die unless protected by handwritten anti-yokai spell scrolls. In game terms this is a book on **Demonology**, and confers



## The Scenes

**1 dedicated point Occult or Theology (Japanese folklore).** The version owned by Sidney Pryce also confers **1 point Magic potential.** For game purposes, assume that all the other woodcut collections in Sekien's *Hyakki Yagyo* — Night of One Hundred Demons - series also confers **1 dedicated point Occult or Theology (Japanese folklore).**

*Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things* (1904), by Lafcadio Hearn. This is a collection of Japanese ghost stories, transcribed by globetrotting journalist and author Hearn. He moved to Japan in 1890 and fell in love with the country and its people. He took the name Yakumo Koizumi, married Koizumi Setsu, and took up a teaching position in Tokyo, all the while writing books about his experiences in what was, at that time, a very unfamiliar country to Westerners. In game terms, this confers **1 dedicated point Occult (Japanese folklore).** This is published in English, unlike the other books mentioned here. It is easily found in London, and does not require a visit to a specialist library.

*Various Japanese language pamphlets, books and transcribed speeches* (1896-1919) by Enryo Inoue, also known as Doctor Yokai. Inoue, a former Buddhist priest, graduated with a doctorate from Tokyo Imperial University, and dedicated his life to yokaigaku, the study of folklore and the mysterious. His intent was to stamp out belief in the supernatural, but his research and encyclopaedic collections of local superstitions ensured that their tales would live on forever. In game terms, this confers **1 dedicated point Occult or History (Japan, and Japanese folklore).** These are relatively easy to find in London, though 'easy' in this instance means 'slightly less rare than an 18th Century woodcut collection.'

*Tales of Tono* (1912), by Kunio Yanagita. The father of Japanese folklore began

his career as a Ministry of Agriculture bureaucrat, travelling from village to village in the course of his job. He became interested in local traditions, and recorded many of them in his *Tales*. In game terms, this confers 1 dedicated point Occult or History (Japan, and Japanese folklore).

The British Museum and the Theosophical Society are the two London libraries most likely to have any book on this list.

## THE SCENES

The following scenes make up the main course of this scenario.

### The Mark

#### Opening Scene

Sidney Pryce approaches the protagonists at their home or place of business. He has an idea that will make them all rich, he says, provided they're willing to lend a hand to his deception.

*"There's a Yank on his way here on the Queen Mary, with loot the like of which you and I can only dream of. He used to be a noise in newspapers, and now he backs films. Hubert Walton is his name. Anyhow, I tied into him the last time he was over here and found out his weakness. He's a sucker for the strange, the odd, the macabre. His mansion's got a torture chamber of its very own, would you believe it? Bought the lot in Italy and had it shipped over, rebuilt just like something out of Poe. He hosts dinner parties in it. But that's neither here nor there. What matters is, he knows about the Burnt Auction, and he wants in. And that, my friend, is where you enter the picture. What say you to a little honest thievery?"*

**Assess Honesty** on Pryce shows that he's telling the truth. This is a perfectly valid result since, as far as he's aware, he is telling the truth. The Dust Things have so clouded his mind that, where Hubert Walton and the Burnt Auction

### Sidney Pryce

*Abilities:* Auction 6, Athletics 3, Disguise 6, Filch 3, Fleeing 4, Health 6, Scuffling 4

*Magic:* 4

*Hit Threshold:* 3

*Alertness:* +0

*Stealth:* +0

*Weapon:* Fist (-2)

*Special:* Is familiar with idiosyncratic magic (if used in the campaign).

*Physical:* Reedy, with a thin moustache. He's a clever mimic, and often affects the guise of an upper class Englishman, a former military officer. His left leg is badly smashed and never healed properly, the result of a car crash.

*Notes:* Pryce is a former bookseller turned catalogue agent, and the protagonists may have met him before in either profession. They have certainly done business with him before and he was reliable then, though a little greedy. He's known to have closed two major deals in the past three years, both of which ought to have earned him enough money to reopen his shop. Cash just seems to slip through his fingers, and he's always after just a little more capital. Forgers and anyone with **Streetwise** knows that Pryce was involved in a forgery scandal a year ago, but escaped prosecution. The Keeper should feel free to replace Pryce with another NPC, if there is one more suitable already in the campaign.



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Scenes

### Hubert Walton

*Stats:* Dust Thing

*Physical:* In all photographs and similar he greatly resembles actor Vincent Price, whose theatre career begins in 1935 and whose first film is in 1938. If your campaign is set earlier than 1935, you may need to replace Price with another performer. This is deliberate on the Dust Things part; they reason that an obscure actor is a better bet than someone more famous. For Walton's background, the Dust Things have borrowed some of the characteristics of William Randolph Hearst.

*Special:* If the protagonists attempt to do background research on Walton, much will depend on whether or not they have been infected by Dust Things. If they have, then **Library Use** and similar reveals that Walton is a self-made man who made his first fortune in the Chicago newspaper trade, before selling up and investing his capital in Hollywood films. He's sometimes referred to as 'the reclusive Mr Walton' and 'the mystery man behind the curtain,' as he doesn't like being photographed or giving interviews. Nobody knows how much he's worth now; conservative estimates put it at anything between \$10 to \$50 million. He's an avid collector of art and books, and makes at least one trip to Europe every year to add to his collection.

Anyone not infected gets none of this information. It's as if Walton doesn't exist. The same applies if the protagonists try to use interpersonal skills, like **Oral History** or similar, since the Dust Things' illusions only work with printed material. Nobody apart from the protagonists and Pryce have ever heard of Walton, so asking questions gets the protagonists nowhere.

See also "Stars of the Silver Screen."

are concerned, he believes every word of his spiel. He describes his plan, as outlined in "The Gaudier the Patter," and asks the protagonists for their help. In essence, he needs from them:

- Forged books and prints to sell, as part of the auction.
- Character actors to play the Big Store's staff and customers.
- A reliable insideman, to play Walton against the Big Store.

The protagonists will never have heard of Hubert Walton at this point, but that's hardly surprising. Hollywood millionaires aren't something most of them are likely to know anything about.

## Reclusive Millionaire Takes Ship To London

Hollywood mogul Hubert Walton, the famous 'man behind the curtain' responsible for so many starlets' careers, is to travel to London aboard the *Queen Mary*. Walton intends to spend several months in Europe, and if our Louella is to be believed, is on the lookout for more new talent. Will the pulchritudinous London girls flock to his auditions? You bet your boots!



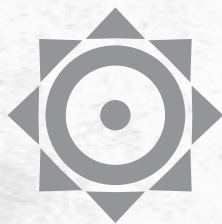


## The Scenes

Pryce is infested with Dust Things. Two of them have come into the room with him, their dust impregnated on his coat and hat. While this conversation is going on, they'll be silently attacking the protagonists, using **Scuffling** to overwhelm **Sense Trouble**. They'll target the most unwary first, before going after harder targets, and will spend **Scuffling** in attacks worth **3 points each** unless they hit a hard target, in which case they try to **cooperate** for a **5-point attack**.

From the protagonists' point of view, this is an invisible assault. At most, they might notice people sneezing and sniffing a bit in the dusty atmosphere. Pryce passes this off as an early cold, and hopes he hasn't given it to any of the protagonists. After Pryce leaves, the Dust Things will stay behind.

The Keeper needs to keep track of characters who are affected, and those who are not. Only those who are will be able to see yokai, for example, and will be fooled by Dust Thing illusions. The others will not.



### The Con Mob

*Core Scene*

At this point the characters have several things they can do. They can start preparing for the Burnt Auction, which will mean hunting up squizzes and forgery materials as well as preparing their own personas. They can investigate St Paul's further, or they can look into Pryce and his mark, Walton.

The Keeper should let the players organize their own con mob. If they seem a little unsure of what to do, remind them that the Big Store is essentially a small play, with them as the actors and the insideman as the lead role. The Burnt Auction that Walton is expecting is the actual, Satanic version, with the Devil auctioning off books from the Great Fire. That means some of them will be playing supernatural beings, while others will be occultists and the like trying to buy those books.

Unless the group is particularly large, the protagonists are probably going to want help. A good auction doesn't just have three or four people in the room; there ought to be a dozen or more. That means they need to use **Streetwise** or similar to recruit other helpers. There may already be suitable NPCs in your campaign to fill these roles, but if not use some or all of the following:

- Emmaline "Ebby" Roakes, bright young thing. Always up for a lark, and in desperate need of cash to pay off some gambling debts she doesn't want Daddy to know about.  
*Disguise 4, Health 3*
- Bertie Baines, gambler. Likes his money up front, but doesn't ask questions and keeps his mouth shut.  
*Fleeing 5, Health 3*
- George Sims, radical. The only thing he needs money for is to fund his

printing press, but he always needs cash for that. Nothing would please him more than to fleece a rich Yank.  
*Scuffling 3, Health 3*

- Magdalena "Lady Mary" Biddowes, stall keeper. Affects a grave and stern manner, hence "Lady Mary," but can really let her hair down after she's had a skinful.  
*First Aid 3, Health 2*
- Francis Petty, artist. Prefers the down-at-heels bohemian look, but comes from a very good family. His upper class accent is faultless.  
*Athletics 6, Health 5*
- Lucy Dalloway, prostitute. Butter wouldn't melt in her mouth; an expert in chains and restraints.  
*Athletics 6, Scuffling 4, Health 4*

St Paul's is the significant problem. It has to be St Paul's; the mark will expect no less, but getting in at night will be tricky. St Paul's Cathedral is one of the most recognizable London landmarks, with its great dome framed by the spires of Sir Christopher Wren's city churches. It's very busy during the day, with services going on all the time, and a small army of churchmen organize and maintain the premises. It's easy enough to get in and take a look around, either during a service or as part of a group of tourists, but staying inside to hold the auction will be much more difficult.

The two most likely methods are break-in, and bribery. A break-in is relatively difficult, but not impossible; it's a church, not a bank vault. **Difficulty** for a reasonably clever scheme should be set at 5 — possibly reduced by 1 if the protagonists visit the cathedral beforehand and scope it out - with the penalty for failure being that they're caught in the act by a nosy churchman, probably one of the minor canons. Assume **Athletics**



## The Scenes

### Ghoul

*Abilities:* Athletics 9, Health 7, Scuffling 9

*Hit Threshold:* 5 (underground)

*Alertness:* +2

*Stealth:* +1

*Weapon:* Claw +1, Bite +0, also can tear at victim if two bite attacks in a row succeed, and does double damage on the second attack.

*Armor:* Firearms and projectiles do half damage, rounded up.

*Stability Loss:* +0

**2, Fleeing 4, Scuffling 2, Health 2,** with the proviso that, if the churchman isn't dealt with quietly, the police will be called.

Bribery will probably also involve one of the minor canons, and will need to be delicately managed. If the churchman thinks the object is to rob St Paul's, he probably won't agree, but if he can be persuaded otherwise and a suitable enticement is offered — perhaps a rare book, perhaps cash — then the right doors will be left open at the appropriate moment. For authenticity, the auction scene will need to be set in the crypts of St Paul's; for further information, see "Down in the Depths."

Investigating Pryce and Walton will first discover the information detailed in "The Mark," but see also the scenes "Trailing the Roper," "Trading in Terror," "Stars of the Silver Screen" and "Seeking the Inner Light," which discuss what happens if the protagonists investigate further. Pryce believes implicitly in his scheme, is always on the lookout for ways to raise cash, and is known to have

been involved in forgery before. Walton does not exist, but anyone looking into his background may think he does, if they've been infested by Dust Things. The Dust Things will make sure their **Library Use** and similar spends turn up all kinds of useful information about the reclusive Hubert Walton, Hollywood millionaire.

### Lonnegan's Best

*Alternate, Antagonist Reaction*

One of the traditions of the heist caper is the trusted traitor, the inside man who seems legit but who turns out to be in someone else's pay all along. This scene is intended as an alternate, only for use if the Keeper sees fit, and should begin only after the protagonists have met Gentleman Jack ("A Modern Thief Taker").

Pick one of the con mob. That grifter is the double agent, working for an outside agency. The Keeper should keep the nature of this outside agency fluid; if the police are definitely not on the protagonists' side, D.I. Howard ("The Long Arm of the Law") is an obvious choice, but otherwise assume that an individual or group — perhaps a rival bookseller, an occultist, or a supernatural entity — is behind it. Whoever the backer is, they want to know more about what's going on, but — unless it's Howard — they don't want to take direct action, and will fade into the background if challenged. This would be a good use for a recurring NPC adversary in a campaign, who might not appear directly in this scenario but is sufficiently close to the action to remind the protagonists that the adversary's out there.

The first sign of trouble comes when the informant tries to gather information. The informant will try to follow the protagonists or, if this is not feasible, listen in on their private conversations. The protagonists need to make a **Sense**

**Trouble test, Difficulty 5.** Failure in this instance means that the protagonists know that they are being followed or listened to, but not by whom. Success means that they gather one clue as to the identity of the person acting against them. For example:

- The protagonists get a whiff of Ebby's distinctive perfume.
- Bertie Bains drops his lucky rabbit's foot.
- George Sims is unreasonably nervous when the protagonists meet him next (**Assess Honesty 0 point spend**)
- Lady Mary spills rum right where she's been standing, and it leaves a distinctive stain or odour.
- Francis Petty leaves some paint-spattered finger marks behind.
- Lucy Dalloway injures herself while escaping, and the bruise or cut is still there, but hidden by makeup, when the protagonists meet her again. (**Evidence Collection 0 point spend**).

After this event, the next time the informant becomes a problem is when Gentleman Jack enters the picture. He immediately spots what's going on, and takes aggressive action. He insists the protagonists meet him at his favourite pub, the Moor's Head out on the Isle of Dogs. There he has the informant chained up in the coal cellar which, he says, is connected to the sewer network via tunnels dug by smugglers long ago. Eventually, if anyone cares to explore, they go out to the Thames, but it's easy to get lost down there in the dark.

*"I just wanted you to know," says he, "That I'm in this just as deep as you, and I don't like a grass. This one was about to give us all up, you know that? But I have something special*



## The Scenes

### Karasu-Tengu

(KAH-rh-soo TEN-goo)

**Stats:** Dust Thing

**Physical:** The same size as a human, or slightly larger. Their faces resemble that of a bird or dog, and huge raven wings sprout from their backs. They chatter amongst themselves in Japanese all the time, and seem to understand, but not speak, English.

**Special:** They are armed with swords, and seem expert in their use.

**Stability:** 4 (seeing a supernatural creature up close)

*down here for scum. I thought, being as we're partners, you ought to know what's what, and besides, you might like to watch...."*

Jack intends to feed the informant to one of his ghoul friends, who he talks with in the tunnels. If the protagonists don't intervene that's exactly what happens, and Jack's more than willing to let them watch. **Stability 4 test** to know what's happening but walk away, or **Stability 5** to watch it happen. If the protagonists make a strong case for letting the informant go, Jack pretends to be upset about it but is willing to play along, which negates the **Stability** test. Or so he says; the informant will turn up a few days later in the Thames with a slit throat and chains wrapped round the corpse, but Jack swears that's none of his doing.

Theoretically the protagonists could get involved in a fight with the ghoul, but that will probably also mean fighting Jack too. He can't afford to let an ally get seriously hurt; it would damage his relationship with the ghoul community.

### Tengu Tempest

*Antagonist Reaction*

The Dust Things make their first move.

The intent of these yokai incidents is to draw attention away from their scheme, so as to prevent the protagonists from asking awkward questions. As the Dust Things should, by this point, have infected at least some of the protagonists and be well established in their place of business, they can create yokai manifestations at any time. They also, thanks to the infestation, have eyes and ears on the protagonists at all times, and will intervene whenever it looks as if the protagonists might be about to put two and two together.

Their first manifestation uses karasu-tengu, or raven men. These appear as humanoids with bird or dog-like faces, human hands, and wings on their backs. If they wear clothes, the wings remain hidden, which may make paranoid protagonists think they're actually ghouls. They can fly and walk. They're renowned troublemakers, shape-shifters, and experts in weaponry. The creatures that will appear this time favour kenjutsu, or swordsmanship, but the expertise of the tengu embraces all forms of weaponry. Anyone with knowledge of Japanese folklore will know all this, and also know that a tengu on the warpath is a thing to be feared. No man can hope to stand against them in combat and live.

The protagonists will discover two of these creatures in their shop. The tengu appear to be looking for something, and are searching through the shop records. They seem startled by the protagonists, and will threaten them at first while backing hastily towards the exit. As soon as the creatures get a chance, they will dive out a window or door and fly away. Though their swords seem impressive, it's all image without substance; the Dust Things

won't risk attacking, since that could spoil the illusion.

The Dust Things' objective here is to spread confusion, and also seed some information about Hubert Walton. If the protagonists take a look at what the Tengu were searching through, they discover that all the information they've gathered so far about Walton has been examined. What's more, in their haste to get away the Tengu dropped a newspaper clipping from a Los Angeles paper.

The clipping accompanies a clipped-out "photograph" of Walton, which is actually a picture of Vincent Price. See also "Stars of the Silver Screen."

Naturally this entire display is a put-up job. The Dust Things weren't looking for information, nor was it an accident that they were caught in the act. Anyone who tries to work out what these creatures are should be tipped off by the language they speak and the weapons they use; refer to "Grim Grimoires" and "The Dusty Masquerade" for clues and useful texts.





## The Scenes

### Trading in Terror

*Alternate Scene / Narrative Auction*

By this point the protagonists may be wondering what their con game has to do with Japanese folklore. This section describes what happens should they decide to enquire further.

First, the protagonists should be allowed to discover the information covered in “Grim Grimoires” and “The Dusty Masquerade.” That covers the basics, and will give them just enough information to work out what yokai are, but won’t tell them why these creatures might be interested in them, or in American millionaires. If they don’t press the issue, then the trail ends there.

If they do press it, hoping for more information, then — through their usual sources — they discover that there is to be an auction of Orientalist art and books at Phillips, Son & Neale. Several books on the “Grim Grimoires” list shall be on sale, including two of Toriyama Sekien’s woodcut collections — the 1780 and 1784 editions — and many experts in the field will be there. This is the best chance they have of learning more about yokai.

Phillips, Son & Neal, established 1796 by Harry Phillips, formerly senior clerk to James Christie of Christie’s auction house, deals in almost anything from fine art to furniture. It has acted for Napoleon Bonaparte, in its day, and is the only auction house to ever have held a sale in Buckingham Palace. Its rooms are on 101 New Bond Street, the premier shopping district in London. Protagonists who can’t at least fake a personal or shop **Credit Rating of 2 or better** will have difficulty getting in.

Once in, the auction rooms are comfortable and the crowd both enthusiastic and knowledgeable.

Academics and artists are particularly well represented, though the protagonists will also notice several of their own profession in the crowd. Should they wish to get involved in the bidding, assume a general pool of **8 Auction points** in the crowd. There are no items of Mythos significance in the auction, though there may be other items that catch their interest.

Should the protagonists go looking for people who might be able to help them, a great deal depends on the abilities they choose to spend. Characters who rely on **Streetwise** or similar disreputable abilities should talk to catalogue agent Desmond Frye. Characters who prefer more academic inquiries, **History** or similar, will talk to academic Matsuo Goto.

Frye is a dapper man in his early 40s, light hair, brown eyes, who has mastered the ‘innocent’ look. Women want to mother him, men feel they ought to kick his backside for him. However those who know him best are aware he’s not to be trusted when it comes to money, or position. He’d happily drown his own mother if it put him one more rung up the social ladder, or earned him enough money. He knows the following:

- The basic information about yokai, as revealed in “The Dusty Masquerade.”
- The basic information about a Burnt Auction, as discussed in “Fire Hazard.”
- “Items like that Sekien woodcut collection don’t come up very often. As it happens my client isn’t interested, but I do know of one or two that are. One of the rarer pieces, the 1776, was up for auction just a few months ago. I meant to snag it, but was beaten out in the end.” He can identify the person who beat him as Sidney Pryce.

- If Frye becomes an ally, he acts as a dedicated **1 point pool Streetwise** (or anything else to do with forged or stolen books).

Professor Goto is a student of folklore, currently working with the British Museum on secondment. He’s only been in London six months. He’s remarkably tall, especially for a Japanese, and compensates for this by stooping. His solemn face cracks into a grin when discussing his favourite topic, yokai, or when telling an outrageous pun. He can tell the protagonists:

- The basic information about yokai, as discussed in “The Dusty Masquerade.”
- “The Sekien illustrations show a popular theme in Japanese folklore, the hyakki yakō, or night parade. It was supposed to be death to witness one of these marches, and the woodcuts show you what each demon looks like.” He can help identify any yokai the protagonists may have encountered.
- “I have only seen one other auction of these Sekien woodcuts. That was several months ago, and though I tried to buy them, I was unlucky. The gentleman who purchased them seemed determined to have them at almost any price.” He does not know the buyer, but can describe him; the protagonists will recognize Sidney Pryce from the description.
- If Goto becomes an ally, he acts as a dedicated **1 point pool History or Library Use (Japan and Japanese folklore)**.

The Dust Things, who are constantly watching the protagonists, will intervene soon after the Pryce clue is discovered. This time a Dust Thing takes the form of a Nopperabo, or faceless person, and allows itself to be seen in the crowd. It will vanish as quickly as it appeared, as if it melted into the crowd.

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Scenes

### Nopperabo

(NOH-per-ra-BOW)

*Stats:* Dust Thing

*Physical:* Looks exactly like a normal human, except that its face is perfectly smooth and featureless. In this scene it will try to blend in with the crowd, so the clothes it wears (for example) will not be traditional Japanese. Despite lacking a mouth, the Nopperabo can speak.

*Special:* The Nopperabo are mischievous spirits that enjoy tormenting and frightening people. They have a special affinity to water, and are often found near riverbanks or similar spots. A Nopperabo can maintain the illusion of a normal face, only to rip it away and terrify its target. **Cthulhu Mythos** might confuse tales of the Nopperabo with the Nightgaunt, another faceless terror.

*Stability:* 4 (a supernatural creature up close, only applicable after its blank face has been revealed)

Its objective here is to reinforce the idea that yokai are somehow involved in all this, and also drain the protagonist's **Stability**. Naturally nobody, apart from the protagonists, will see the Nopperabo, though someone like Goto will be able to identify it if it is described to him.

### Trailing the Roper

*Alternate Scene*

The protagonists may, in addition to making their own enquiries, try to follow Pryce around, if they're suspicious of his motives. This section describes what happens if they do.

Pryce's **Alertness** is +0, so a reasonably stealthy surveillance should succeed. His days are usually spent as follows:

- Sometime between 10 to 12 am: wake up, get breakfast at a chop house.
- Sometime from 11am to 2pm: check the trade papers, or pay a call on an auction house / bookseller that he thinks has something for his catalogue.
- Sometime from 1pm to 4pm: do the rounds of the coffee houses / pubs where (**Streetwise**) forgers and other disreputable types are found. He spends his time there catching up on gossip, or making connections with useful criminals.
- Sometime from 3pm to 9pm: he thinks he's going to more booksellers, hunting for items to fill out his catalogue. What he's actually doing is going back to his flat and poring over his copy of Toriyama Sekien's 1776 woodcuts. Anyone witnessing this need not be too stealthy, as at this time **his Alertness** is -2. This is also the most likely time for someone watching him to encounter a yokai — see below.

### Tsukumo-gami

(TSU-koo-moh GAH-mee)

*Stats:* Dust Thing

*Physical:* These have many different forms. A tsukumo-gami is a spirit that animates an item or tool that was once useful, and has now been thrown away. It might be a telephone, a phonograph, the pots and pans in the kitchen, or any one of a dozen other things. The creatures grow legs, eyes and mouths, and prance about threatening anyone who comes near.

*Special:* An individual tsukumo-gami is relatively harmless, but the problem is you seldom encounter just one. As a mob they can be very dangerous, not unlike the swarms of rats and insects described in the main rulebook. They resent being cast aside, which is why they threaten so angrily, but usually they don't initiate an attack. They attack if threatened.

*Stability:* 5 (beholding a multitude of supernatural beings up close)

- Sometime from 8pm to well past midnight: doing the rounds of the clubs in Soho. Some of these visits (**Streetwise**) are to meet with more criminal contacts, particularly forgers. Others are for his own amusement, the exact nature of which will depend on the campaign. A Sordid Pryce is visiting prostitutes, while an Arabesque one is going to strange and outré Soho nightspots, and so on.
- Sometime after midnight: Pryce returns to his flat, and the process begins again.



## The Scenes

Pryce's flat is in Shoreditch, not far from the old National Standard Theatre, now the New Olympia Picturedrome cinema. His flat is on the first floor of this Victorian building. His neighbours, chiefly the extended O'Hayon family, know him as 'a quiet little fellow who minds his own business,' but **Oral History, Reassurance or similar** can get matronly Leah to open up.

*He's a peculiar man, or at least, he has become one. I don't know what to think any more. Until perhaps a month ago gone, he was as normal as you or I, and then! Then he comes back with that ill-favoured thing, he says will make him rich. I knew as soon as he brought it into the house it was no good. But he wouldn't hear anything from me, no, not from old Leah who only wishes him well, and now he lets nobody in his rooms and keeps the door tight shut, like that! For fear of someone seeing what he's up to, I suppose. But who would want to see what he's doing in there, I ask you?*

**Occult, Theology or similar** notices that some mystic symbols, meant to repel evil spirits, have been carved in the door frame above the O'Hayon flat. Leah admits to getting this done, soon after Pryce brought back *that horrible book, with pictures in it would frighten the hair clean off your head!*

If Toriyama Sekien's 1776 woodcuts are stolen from Pryce's flat, the Keeper should bear in mind that they're worth **1 point Magic potential** in addition to the other benefits, and are impregnated with Dust Things. If this happens, the Dust Things do their best to keep Pryce content by pretending that another book in his collection is actually the Sekien woodcuts.

In this scene, the Dust Things take on the appearance of Tsukumo-gami, and only inhabit Pryce's flat. They'll attempt to frighten off anyone who sneaks in there.

### A Modern Thief-Taker

Core

Sidney Pryce's scheme has not gone unnoticed. This section describes a new antagonist, with an interest in making sure that the Burnt Auction goes ahead as planned.

Jackie 'Gentleman Jack' Squires is a notorious cunning man and criminal, who lives in Limehouse. He has something in common with Pryce, as Squires has also been visited by Dust Things. It was he who wanted Sekien's 1776 woodcuts for its **Magic potential**, only to discover it was infested with the dusty horrors. However Squires was uninterested in the Dust Things' schemes, and his magic was strong enough to throw the creatures off. He uses Pryce as a catalogue agent, and was amused to see the creatures transfer their attentions from himself to Pryce. Squires was more than happy to give the woodcuts back to Pryce, after he extracted what he wanted from it.

At first, he thought little of it. Then, after Pryce made contact with the protagonists, Squires began to reconsider. Yes, cooperating with the Dust Things was ridiculous — they could never be trusted — but what if someone else took all the risk, and Squires came in at the last minute to reap the rewards? The temptation was irresistible. All those books, just waiting to be rediscovered!

Squires' plan is this: he'll muscle in on the Burnt Auction, demanding that the protagonists let him join the scheme.

He'll threaten to tell everything to the authorities if they don't let him join, and he has some bent coppers on his payroll to back up the threat. He keeps his cash demands very modest, claiming that he just wants "what's fair for everyone." In fact, he knows full well that there's no money on the table; his interest is in the books, but he'll make a show of demanding some of the money, just for the sake of playing along. After all, if he didn't the protagonists might get suspicious.

This also means Squires will play along with any mention of Hubert Walton, reclusive Hollywood millionaire. ("Of course I've heard of him. Who hasn't?") The way Squires sees it, if the protagonists are willing to buy into that story, why stop them? It makes things much easier, for him at least, if the protagonists are willing participants, and if Walton's part of the deal, then Squires will do what he can to keep the Walton story going.

Squires will also intervene if it looks as if the protagonists are catching on, and disbelieve in Walton's Hollywood millions. If the protagonists start backing out, Squires will bring in some of his criminal muscle and insist that the auction goes ahead as planned. "You wouldn't want to disappoint old Jackie now, would you, lads?"

If the Keeper wishes, Squires can suborn one of the NPC members of the con mob. This spy will report back to Squires, telling him everything the protagonists have planned. Whoever it is, Squires has enough information on them to make their lives a living hell





# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Scenes

### Jackie 'Gentleman Jack' Squires

*Abilities:* Athletics 8, Filch 5, Fleeing 6, Health 9, Scuffling 9, Weapons 12

*Magic:* 10

*Hit Threshold:* 4

*Alertness:* +1 (street-hardened reflexes)

*Stealth:* +2 (experienced footpad)

*Weapon:* Fist (-2), knife, razor (-1)

*Special:* He is familiar with Idiosyncratic Magic (if used in the campaign) and has his own technique for Weapons. He can increase Damage by 1 point for every 2 points Magic he spends in a round. He can spend no more than 6 points Magic on a single attack. Spells known is up to the Keeper, but should include some Contact magic.

*Physical:* Short, but broad in the chest. He always wears the best clothes he can afford, and is fiercely proud of his outfit. He has three knife scars on his face, one of which nearly took his eye out.

*Notes:* Gentleman Jack has friends in all kinds of odd places. He doesn't just know thugs and policemen; he's also on speaking terms with Ghouls and other odd folk. He doesn't like to bring them in too often. It's not healthy owing favours to that kind of creature.

if they refuse him. Ebby Roakes, for example, might have compromising photos or letters that Squires threatens to send to her father. George Sims' precious printing press might be threatened, and so on.

Whichever NPC is chosen, they're not willingly working with Squires, and betray him if given the opportunity.

### Typical Thug

*Abilities:* Athletics 4, Health 5, Firearms 3, Scuffling 6, Weapons 5

*Weapons:* Kick with metal-studded boots, Knife, Razor hidden in cap, Knuckleduster (all -1), Light Firearm (+0)

### Typical Crooked Policeman

*Abilities:* Athletics 5, Health 6, Scuffling 7, Weapons 6

*Weapons:* Fist (-2), kick (-2), truncheon (-1)





# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Scenes

If the protagonists make inquiries about Squires, they can uncover the following **0 point clues**:

- He's a notorious thief and criminal, with some occult connections. It's said he was behind the Fawney Rig burglary four years ago, when one of the four known Coptic editions of the *Book of Iod* was stolen. During the robbery a servant, who may or may not have been one of the thieves' accomplices, had his throat cut from ear to ear. His corpse was left sitting in his master's chair; a photograph of the grisly discovery did the rounds of all the scandal sheets and red-tops for weeks after.
- He's got a violent temper, and a vicious streak. He likes to use knives and razors, and is a pretty savage combatant. People call him "Gentleman Jack" for his soft way of talking, but woe betide anyone who takes his mildness at face value. In addition to his occult pursuits he also runs protection rackets, and has some crooked policemen in his pay.

Note the following **1-point clue (Streetwise, Occult or similar)**:

- Madeline Montalban, the astrologer behind London Life's "The Stars in the Heavens" column, claims that she helped Squires solve a problem a few months ago. *"He complained that he was being pestered by spirits from the Other Side, dark forces that were trying to influence him. Naturally he sought me out, and asked for my aid. Crowley and I conferred, and decided that the malevolent creatures which beset him were best dealt with by Carnacki's dream treatment. Starve them of attention for a week, and all would right itself; and so it proved. Squires said at the time that fire would also serve, but he was reluctant to pursue such a course as it would deprive him of something valuable."*

If the protagonists try to track Jackie to his lair, **Streetwise** knows he can usually be found in one of two places:

- The Moor's Head, a pub in the Isle of Dogs. A notorious hang-out for thieves and housebreakers, the Moor's Head is where Jackie conducts most of his business and meets with his allies and hangers-on. He's well known there, and asking too many questions about Jackie at the Moor's Head is begging for trouble. If ever there was a moment for a brawl with thugs, this is that moment.
- His end-of-terrace in Limehouse. He lives there with his current mistress, whoever that may be — he seldom keeps a woman long - and his dog Terror (Athletics 6, Health 4, Scuffling 6, damage -2). He has strengthened his house against attack using Idiosyncratic Magic; any attempt at burglary or similar has its **Difficulty increased by 2**. Jackie keeps his collection of incunabula here — Keeper's choice as to the extent of his library — as well as a ritual room in the cellar. He'll be livid if anyone tries to get in here, and he can track anyone who tries using Idiosyncratic Magic.



### Teapot Samurai and Other Tempestuous Demons

*Alternate / Antagonist Reaction*

Throughout all this, the Dust Things will be trying to distract the protagonists with yokai. Whichever yokai they appear as, the pattern is broadly the same: appear, threaten, then vanish again. They know they can't afford to actually attack anyone, since that will spoil the illusion. However they reason that, if they terrify their targets often enough, they won't have to worry that their secret will be exposed.

One thing the yokai will want to do is foster the Hubert Walton link. Just as the Tengu who appeared early on seemed to be looking for Walton, so too will the other yokai. Sometimes this will mean that they're caught in the act searching through the protagonists' notes, house or place of business. Sometimes this means that they show up whenever Walton's name is mentioned, and sometimes this means they show up when it looks as if the protagonists might be following other leads that could send them in a direction the Dust Things don't want them to go. Since they have already infected some or all of the protagonists, they can appear at a time of their choosing.

The Dust Things have two agendas here: distraction, and also softening up. Each appearance will cost a protagonist some **Stability**. When the target is reduced to **2 Stability or less**, the Dust Thing can move on to the next part of the scheme: preparing the target.

Once the protagonist has been softened up, the Dust Things will start manipulating his or her dreams. The whole point of the exercise is to get the target to complete a ritual inside St Paul's in order to open a gate, but

they won't be able to do that if they don't know the ritual. The dreams are intended to teach them this ritual, and since their **Stability** is so low, they won't be able to remember the dreams when they wake the next morning. It will just be a jumble of nightmarish images and Japanese demons, right up to the point when the target is in the crypts of St Paul's participating in the Burnt Auction. Once that starts, the target needs to make a final **Stability difficulty 5 check**. Failure means that the target is rooted to the spot and, in a helpless daze, begins the ritual, just as the target has been taught. The target will be unable to do anything else. The only way to snap someone out of this daze is to do them physical harm. Even a punch or kick will do, so long as the

harm is enough to draw blood; that is, at least **1 point of damage**.

The NPC members of the con mob may also be affected by these dreams, if they have become infested with Dust Things. It's up to the Keeper whether this happens, and if so to whom. The Keeper should assume that an NPC is already at **2 Stability** when first infected, so the dreams start straight away. Jackie Squires, naturally, is protected, and he'll make sure his thug friends are safe too.

The Keeper should use these examples of yokai as often as necessary, bearing in mind that, whatever they may look like, the yokai have the same statistics as Dust Things.





# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## The Scenes

### Seto Taisho

(SEH-toh TIE-show,  
Teapot Samurai)

*Stats:* Dust Thing

*Physical:* Also known as Teapot General, the literal translation of its name. This yokai is made entirely of crockery. Traditionally its head is a sake bottle, its body a teapot and its waist an inverted soup bowl, but the Teapot General can make do with whatever's found in the protagonist's sink. It is usually armed with a wooden spear.

*Special:* Teapot General is a belligerent little soul, and will attack anything and anyone without regard for its own safety. That is a pity, since its chinaware body breaks very easily. The traditional method of dealing with the Teapot General is just to get out of its way and let it destroy itself accidentally, often by running off the edge of a table in a misguided charge.

*Stability:* 4 (seeing a supernatural being up close)

### Futakuchi Onna

(FOO-tah KOO-chee OHN-nah,  
Woman with Two Mouths)

*Stats:* Dust Thing

*Physical:* The Woman appears completely normal in every way. Perhaps her hair is a little greasy, with one or two crumbs of food stuck in it, but that's the only giveaway. In fact there is a mouth at the back of her head, and her prehensile hair can reach out and snatch food for the mouth to eat, or do other things. Often created by a curse, this demon suffers from a peculiar condition: its second mouth is said to tell the truth, and nothing but. If the protagonists know this, they may try to reason with her, thinking that the second mouth will tell them what they want to know.

The Dust Thing isn't bound by the truth condition, and is quite capable of lying from either mouth.

*Special:* The Woman often comes to be as a result of someone repressing emotion or desires, and the second mouth is this person's way of saying what she truly thinks. In a London setting, the Woman could be a quiet, mousy shop girl, or a demure lady who never speaks her mind. The second mouth will demand that Walton be "brought here immediately" and won't be satisfied until he is. This is the Dust Thing's way of reinforcing the Walton story; if Walton didn't exist, why is this creature demanding Walton be brought to it? The Woman is voraciously hungry at all times — two mouths means it needs twice the amount of food — and can (**Filch 4**) snatch it right off someone's plate if need be.

*Stability:* 3 (a supernatural being, but looks normal enough that a reduced test is sufficient)

### Te-no-me

(THE-no-meh,  
Eyes for Hands)

*Stats:* Dust Thing

*Physical:* Eyes appears just like an ordinary blind man. The chilling difference here is, the creature has its eyes in its hands. It enjoys fooling its victims into a false sense of security, getting up close and then springing its surprise. It hopes the victim will get scared enough to run away, so it can give chase.

*Special:* Nobody's entirely sure how Eyes came to be. Some stories hold that it's actually a different form of the Nopperabo, others that it's all that's left of a blind man murdered on some lonely highway for whatever he had on him. Eyes isn't a very complex psychology; it just wants to scare people and make

them run away. This version will be very keen to "see" whatever evidence the protagonists have collected so far, and if possible leave behind a Walton-specific newspaper clipping, just as the Tengu did earlier.

*Stability:* 3 (a supernatural being, but looks normal enough that a reduced test is sufficient)

### Tesso

(THE-so, Iron Rat, the Rat Monk)

*Stats:* Dust Thing

*Physical:* Iron Rat is one of a kind. This creature is dressed like a monk, but has the body and characteristics of a human-sized rat. It likes nothing better than to chow down on a book or three, and is a very messy eater.

*Special:* Iron Rat was a human once, a monk who was asked to pray for the birth of a male heir but was refused reward when the heir was born. Enraged, the monk went on hunger strike and eventually died, only to return to life as the Iron Rat. This creature exists to destroy libraries, particularly those libraries which belong to monasteries other than the Iron Rat's own. It was destroyed, legend says, by being lured into a pit and buried alive. Books can be used to bait it; the rarer and more precious, the better. Iron Rat, being a Dust Thing, doesn't really eat books — that would be a peculiar form of cannibalism — and this could give away the illusion. Though it appears to be devouring pages and manuscripts, inspection clearly shows no damage of any kind. Iron Rat, on a diet? The protagonists might be able to work out that something's wrong with this picture, perhaps on a **1-point Occult spend** or similar.

*Stability:* 4 (seeing a supernatural being, up close)

## The Scenes

### The Long Arm of the Law

*Alternate / Antagonist Reaction*

It's possible the protagonists might do something to bring themselves to the attention of the police. It's also possible they might go to the police, particularly after Gentleman Jack enters the picture. This is particularly likely if they have **CopTalk** or an established ally on the force.

If that's what happens, then they come up against Detective Inspector Howard.

Howard doesn't like loose ends, and he especially dislikes people who make disorder in his tidy little world. That most definitely includes the protagonists. He's been after Gentleman Jack for some time, and he knows that Squires is involved in something dodgy, some kind of con game. He just doesn't know what. He'll be suspicious of the protagonists to begin with, unless they already have established allies on the force. Surely, he thinks, people like them must be up to no good. How can you trust some money-grubbing bookseller, after all?

A great deal depends on how cooperative or honest the protagonists are, and the Keeper should assume for this purpose that Howard has **Assess Honesty**. He can work out the obvious lies easily enough, but at the same time he won't trust anyone who seems too eager to cooperate. Someone like that, he thinks, must be trying to pull the wool over his eyes.

If the protagonists are uncooperative, then they spend an uncomfortable couple of hours in the coldest, most overcrowded cell Howard can find, before being dragged down to the coal

#### Detective Inspector Howard

*Abilities:* Athletics 9, Fleeing 8, Firearms 7, Scuffling 9, Weapon 6, Health 10

*Hit Threshold:* 4

*Alertness Modifier:* +1

*Stealth Modifier:* +1

*Weapons:* Truncheon -1, Light Firearm +0

*Special:* If Howard becomes an ally, he acts as a free **CopTalk 2** pool.

#### Typical Policeman

*Abilities:* Athletics 5, Health 6, Scuffling 7, Weapons 6

*Weapons:* Fist (-2), kick (-2), truncheon (-1)

cellar for a vigorous interrogation, with Howard and two of his burliest coppers on hand to persuade the protagonist to talk. After this is over, he throws them out of the station house.

If the protagonists are cooperative, or if Howard has any reason to be on their side, then he's willing to work with them. He'll be wary — he doesn't like the sound of this con game, and talk of rich Americans worries him — but he's willing to offer whatever help he can, provided there's promise of hard evidence against Squires on offer. If this should happen, then think of Howard as a last-ditch cavalry, to be used when needed. Particularly in the final scene, the protagonists may need a rescuer; Howard, and a few coppers, is it.

### Stars of the Silver Screen

*Alternate / Investigation*

The protagonists may check on Hubert Walton's background. At first, they should be allowed to find basic information, covered in "The Mark." If they're satisfied with this, then the trail stops at that point. This section covers what happens if they dig deeper.

The basic information has been manipulated by Dust Things, so every written fact has been doctored to create a Hubert Walton persona that borrows from Hearst's background and uses Vincent Price's image. However Hubert Walton is a Hollywood millionaire, so it may occur to someone to start talking to film experts. This is something the Dust Things did not anticipate, and it's a real threat to them; after all, Hubert Walton may not exist but Vincent Price most definitely does, and a film expert will recognize his photograph. The newspaper clipping from "Tengu Tempest" includes Price's picture, a fact which could ruin the Dust Things' scheme.

The best place for the protagonists to ask about Hollywood celebrities is Soho, in central London. It's the beating heart of the British film industry; even the British Board of Film Censors has its home on Oxford Street within a mile of Soho Square, and there are countless small film production houses, studios, theatres and other places devoted to the silver screen. It's a very tempestuous business, with people taking on new jobs and leaving old ones at the drop of a hat. There are more than a few pubs in Soho where deals and job offers are done on a nod and a handshake, and plenty of would-be actors hanging around in the hope of getting noticed.



## The Scenes

Wardour Street in particular is where the protagonists — **the Knowledge** — want to be, since that's where all the biggest film distributors have their offices.

Asking around in Soho will eventually turn up Maddie Hayes, a photographer — Health 5, Fleeing 6, speciality: Art — whose knowledge of American cinema is unparalleled. The following **one point clue, Reassurance, Flattery or similar**, can be had:

*"Him? No, that's not your mister Walton, whoever he may be. That's a new face on the scene, a youngster called, now, what was it ... Price! That's his name. Vincent Price. He's a character actor, and a real charmer too. I met him, oh, it must have been two or three years ago now, when he was living here and supposed to be studying. As if! He spent more time in the theatre than in the library! He got some very good notices, and decided to make a go of it. The last I heard of him, he'd landed a role in Robert Wade's next picture. Good luck to him!"*



### Seeking the Inner Light

*Alternate / Investigation*

A great deal depends on whether or not the protagonists start to suspect that the yokai are not all that they seem. If the protagonists start wondering if there is more to these yokai manifestations than appears at first glance, those using **Occult, the Knowledge or similar** will, through their usual contacts, be directed to Dion Fortune, of the Society of the Inner Light.

The Society is born from Alpha et Omega, the surviving branch of what was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. When the original Order broke down in the early 1900s, founder Samuel MacGregor Mathers took charge of the remnants that were loyal to him and renamed the group the Rosicrucian Order of Alpha et Omega, shortened to Alpha et Omega or A.O., which operated several Temples in Great Britain and abroad. Fortune was a member, but fell out with Moina Mathers, wife of MacGregor Mathers, in the early 1920s. The resulting feud ended when Fortune left A.O. to found her own magical group. She is a prominent novelist, teacher, artist and spiritualist, well known in occult circles, but from the protagonist's point of view her chief virtue is as author of a very useful book, *Psychic Self Defence*.

*The Threshold of the Unseen is a treacherous coast on which to bathe. There are potholes and currents and quicksands. The strong swimmer, who knows the coast, may venture in comparative safety. The non-swimmer, who takes counsel of nothing but his own impulses, may pay for his temerity with his life. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that these invisible forces are unnecessarily evil and inimical to humanity. They are no more inimical in themselves than are water or fire, but they are potent ...*

### Dion Fortune

*Abilities:* Athletics 3, Fleeing 7, Magic 10, Scuffling 3, Health 7

*Hit Threshold:* 3

*Alertness Modifier:* +0

*Stealth Modifier:* +0

*Weapons:* None.

*Special:* Fortune is familiar with Idiosyncratic Magic, if used in the campaign. If she becomes an ally, she acts as a free Occult or Theology 1 pool. At the Keeper's discretion, and only if the group does not have any Cthulhu Mythos rating, she also acts as a free **1 point Cthulhu Mythos**.

*Physical:* Dark hair, often slightly untidy. Thick bodied. Her demeanour is usually nonsense, and sometimes brusque. Often wears shirt and tie, and dark clothing.

It's up to the Keeper whether or not the protagonists meet with Fortune herself, or get what they need from her book. Fortune, if approached politely by someone with **Occult (1-point spend)**, is happy to discuss the protagonists' problem, and recommend several possible solutions. If approached directly, the Keeper should set the scene at an occult bookstore — perhaps the Atlantis on Museum Street - where Fortune is giving a talk on magical practice. Even if not approached directly, Fortune's books recommend several practices which the protagonists will find useful.

## The Scenes

From a mechanical perspective, if the protagonists take Fortune's advice and carry out her ritual faithfully, spending **1 point Magic or Stability**, then the **Difficulty of further Dust Thing attacks is reduced by 3**. If these rituals are carried out for a full week, the protagonist will throw off his or her Dust Thing infestation. The point spend need happen only once, but the ritual needs to be carried out faithfully each day. Failure to do so means it has no effect.

At the Keeper's discretion, Fortune's ritual could be the Saaamaaa ritual (*Trail of Cthulhu*, p. 124), which would also be useful against other Mythos entities.

If the protagonists talk to Fortune and describe their symptoms, she calls the creatures vampiric entities, and says she has met with them before.

*"A Kabbalist would say that pursuit of the Divine ought not to be solitary, and one of the reasons for this is that a student can lose his way in books. There are things hidden away between the leaves that can be very dangerous, if you don't take care to protect yourself against them. These creatures can appear in almost any shape; tricksters, and worse, but they can be interesting to talk to. So long as you take care!"*

Needless to say, the Dust Things will not be happy if the protagonists seek out Fortune, or her books. They do have one advantage; if the protagonists get Fortune's wisdom from her books

alone, they can manipulate what a protagonist sees and reads. That means the Dust Things can spoil the ritual by deliberately misleading the reader. A reader who is uninfected doesn't have this problem, and can easily spot any problems in the ritual. It can then be performed correctly, under the uninfected character's direction.

The Keeper should bear in mind that Fortune's psychic self defence rituals work only on the Dust Things' illusions and mind control. They aren't an Elder Sign substitute. *Psychic Self Defence* grants **1 dedicated point Occult or Theology, demonic possession or similar** if skimmed. Certain copies — those owned and annotated by prominent occultists, like Fortune — also grant **1 point Magic potential**.

Dion Fortune, born Violet Mary Firth in 1890, claimed visions of Atlantis from the age of four, and by her twenties was a psychic. She studied psychology and psychoanalysis at the University of London, and worked for a time as a psychotherapist. She wrote many books, fiction and non-fiction; the best-remembered are *The Cosmic Doctrine*, *The Mystic Qabalah*, and *Psychic Self Defence*. During the War, she will participate in what she later describes as the Magical Battle of Britain, an attempt by occultists to defend against German invasion. Involvement in this enterprise is said to have contributed to her ill health, and early death in 1946.

## Meet the Savage

Core

This is all being done for Hubert Walton's benefit, currently enjoying a pleasant cruise in the Queen Mary. It's at the Keeper's discretion as to when exactly he arrives; this section describes what happens when he does.

Pryce tells the protagonists that Walton is due to arrive, and suggests that they meet him at his hotel, the Ritz. Walton, he says, is an inveterate gambler; no doubt he'll be enjoying the hospitality at the Ritz Club, the private casino in the basement.

The Ritz London, an opulent neoclassical building built to resemble a block of Parisian flats, is a gorgeous, 5 star cuckoo in Piccadilly. Utterly unlike its surroundings, the Ritz stands out both as a building and as an institution. It is the byword in luxury, and its staff very keen to uphold its reputation. Protagonists with **less than 3 Credit Rating** are unlikely to get very far through the doors before polite but firm doormen usher them out again. **Disguise** may help here, and if the con mob includes Ebby Roakes or Francis Petty, either one can get the protagonists in as their guest. Assume that any staff member has **Health 5, Scuffling 5** if it comes to a brawl, though if it does then the police will be on the scene very quickly.

The Ritz Club is so deep underground that the rumble of trains sometimes interrupts play, but that doesn't seem to bother the patrons or slow down the gamblers. Stakes at these tables are very high, and all kinds of people can be found at the tables, from Russian aristocrats and former generals to newly minted munitions millionaires, the landed gentry, important politicians, dilettantes, and many more. Eccentric Hollywood millionaires are just part of the scenery at the Ritz.





## The Scenes

However if the protagonists inquire about Hubert Walton, much will depend on whether they look at written documents, like the hotel guest ledger, or whether they talk to people. The hotel guest ledger does have Walton on the list — assuming the protagonist has been infected — but the staff don't know him. This does mean that Walton has no hotel room, so if the protagonists think of breaking in to Walton's room then feel free to have them break into another guest's apartments. Perhaps a titled aristocrat is entertaining his mistress, or some rich foreigners with a poor grasp of the language mistake the would-be burglars for staff. The Dust Things won't have considered the break-in possibility, and have no plan for what happens if the protagonists decide to do it.

However if none of this happens Pryce knows where to go, and he guides the protagonists to the Salle Prive rooms, private gambling for the very rich.

Though the protagonists won't realize this, the Salle Prive is the Dust Things' version of a Big Store. In a private room, they can control what the protagonists see and hear. All they need to do is ensure that no hotel staff are in the room, and then replace the staff with 'staff' of their own creation. These dealers and waiters, and Walton, are all Dust Things, and the point of meeting at the Ritz is to impress upon the protagonists that Walton is the real deal. After all, would a fake millionaire have a room in one of the most expensive hotels in London, and rate so highly as to get a private gambling room in its casino?

In order to do this the Dust Things have infected one of the hotel's senior staff. It's thanks to him that this particular private room is off limits to other guests, for one night only. The other staff don't know why this is so, and haven't bothered to enquire.

Potential **1-point clues** that this situation is not as it seems may include:

- spotting the tell-tale dreamlike inattention of the senior staff member who the Dust Things have suborned (**Assess Honesty or similar**),
- detecting that the 'staff' are all a little out of date (and borrowed from a Victorian novel, **Art or similar**),
- discovering from talking with the real staff that no such person as Hubert Walton is staying at the Ritz (Oral History or similar),
- realizing that Walton neither eats nor drinks, even though food and alcohol are available — though Walton seems to consume it, the level of liquid in the glass never goes down, and the food remains untouched — (**Evidence Collection or similar**),
- noticing that Walton gives off no human 'tells' whatsoever — it's like talking to a mirror — and realizing that any attempt to **Assess Honesty** gets nowhere.

Pryce introduces the protagonists as whatever aliases the group has decided to adopt, and then they discuss business. Walton is very eager to attend a Burnt Auction, and willingly agrees to any terms — or price — the protagonists dictate. Any money he seems to pay, if asked to pay in advance, seems perfectly genuine, but is in fact newspaper cut up to be the same size as a banknote. Those infested by Dust Things won't notice this, but if the protagonist tries to spend it there will be problems.

If asked about yokai, Walton becomes very solemn. "A man in my position, he says, makes many enemies, some stranger than others. I wouldn't be at all surprised if this hasn't something to do with an old antagonist of mine. I'm sorry you got caught up in all this,

but I can make it right." He's willing to offer even more money, but won't be drawn on the nature of his mysterious antagonist. Of course, there's no such thing; Walton and the yokai are all Dust Things, working to a common purpose.

If the protagonists don't catch on to Walton's unearthly nature, then the next step is to arrange the Auction itself. The time is the protagonists' choosing, but the location isn't; hopefully they've used their preparation time wisely and already have a way of getting in at night.

If the protagonists do catch on and seem to be about to back out, Gentleman Jack will intervene. He wants the Auction to go ahead come Hell or high water, and if he has to twist the protagonists' arms a little to get that done, then so be it. He'll only back off in the face of strong, determined resistance.

Pryce will also do his best to keep the protagonists involved, if they seem wary but haven't yet realized what's going on, promising them anything they like. Money is no object, when fake banknotes can be clipped out of newspapers.





### DOWN IN THE DEPTHS

The con game must be held in the crypt of St Paul's. This section describes it.

The crypt is the nation's foremost burial place. Nelson is here, in a monument made of black marble originally built for Cardinal Wolsey, only to stand unused at Windsor for decades after Wolsey fell out of favour. Nelson occupies the place of honour, directly beneath the dome. Wellington is not far away, entombed in Cornish granite. Many other heroes of the Empire are interred here, as well as artists, scientists and musicians. Over 200 monuments and many burials can be found in the crypt. It is the repository of the nation's history.

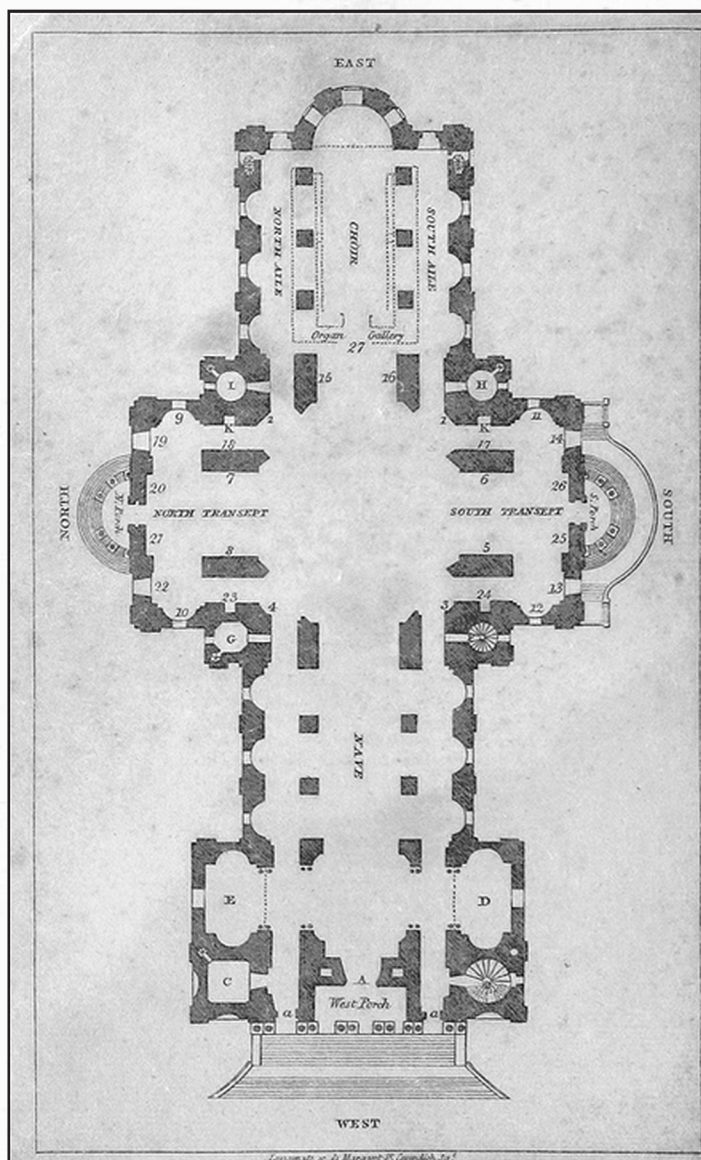
It's also where St Paul's does its business. This is a working cathedral, and some of its stores and treasury rooms are in the crypt. The treasury has long since been stripped almost bare; the temptation to thievery, over the centuries, has been too great, and few of the church's relics remain. The most atmospheric space, from the protagonists' point of view, is where the Chapel of the Faith resides in current day St Paul's. This chapel was built at the far eastern end of the crypt to house the parishioners of the former chapel of St Faith's, dispossessed when the Great Fire destroyed it. At time of writing it is the Chapel of the Order of the British Empire, but that won't happen until 1960.

Depending on how the protagonists chose to sneak in, they may or may not have the run of the place. Those who bribed their way past the gates might be able to do as they please, but everyone else needs to keep their wits about them. Making too much noise, or otherwise drawing attention to what's going on, could attract a nosy churchman — **Athletics 2, Fleeing 4, Scuffling 2, Health 2** — who must be dealt with quietly. If this is not done,

or is done too noisily, then the police may arrive soon afterward.

St Paul's is the spiritual heart of London, and the most important place of worship in the Anglican religion. Were it to be significantly damaged, the result could be devastating not only to London but the entire British Empire. The potential **Anagnorisis** is **Stability 3, Sanity 1** (significant danger to innocents). Should the cathedral be damaged, **all Stability tests in the next scenario, Mythos or otherwise, increase in Difficulty by 1.** This penalty

represents the spiritual despair the city falls into, as a result of the incident. This penalty accrues to the next scenario, not to this one, as it represents the period of time in which the cathedral is repaired. At the Keeper's discretion, and only if something truly dreadful happens — St Paul's burning to the ground, for example — **all Stability tests in the next scenario increase Difficulty by 2, and all Stability tests in the scenario after that increase by 1.**





# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Down in the Depths

### Dust Things

*Abilities:* Athletics 6, Health 5, Scuffling 10

*Magic:* 5-8 points

*Hit Threshold:* 3

*Stealth:* +2

*Weapon:* Stinging blow (-2) plus special

*Armor:* Immune to physical weapons. Fire does +1 damage. A Dust Thing must spend 1 Athletics to stand against any wind or suction stronger than a stiff breeze, and 2 points to move against it.

*Stability:* +0

*Special:* Once a victim has inhaled any of the Dust Thing, the creature can appear in the guise of any creature related to the book, or books, that created it. Inhaling is often done covertly, as a test of Scuffling vs Sense Trouble, where success means the target has been overcome. Once a target has been overcome, the Dust Thing controls what that target sees, dreams and reads. It can cause nightmares, alter or create memories, and even drive the target to write things unaware. Each Dust Thing illusion costs **1 Magic per scene**.

*Appearance:* When not mimicking something else, the Dust Thing appears as a cloud of dust and grit, or a wrinkled, drab humanoid wearing dun-coloured clothing.

*Spells:* Various, but for the purpose of this scenario all Dust Things are familiar with Megapolisomancy and idiosyncratic magic (if used in the campaign).

### Sidney Pryce

*Abilities:* Auction 6, Athletics 3, Disguise 6, Filch 3, Fleeing 4, Health 6, Scuffling 4

*Magic:* 4

*Hit Threshold:* 3

*Alertness:* +0

*Stealth:* +0

*Weapon:* Fist (-2)

*Special:* Is familiar with idiosyncratic magic (if used in the campaign).

*Physical:* Reedy, with a thin moustache. He's a clever mimic, and often affects the guise of an upper class Englishman, a former military officer. His left leg is badly smashed and never healed properly, the result of a car crash.

### Jackie "Gentleman Jack" Squires

*Abilities:* Athletics 8, Filch 5, Fleeing 6, Health 9, Scuffling 9, Weapons 12

*Magic:* 10

*Hit Threshold:* 4

*Alertness:* +1 (street-hardened reflexes)

*Stealth:* +2 (experienced footpad)

*Weapon:* Fist (-2), knife, razor (-1)

*Special:* Is familiar with Idiosyncratic Magic (if used in the campaign) and has his own technique for Weapons. He can increase Damage by 1 point for every 2 points Magic he spends in a round. He can spend no more than 6 points Magic on a single attack. Spells known is up to the Keeper, but should include some Contact magic.

*Physical:* Short of stature, but broad in the chest. He always wears the best clothes he can afford, and is fiercely proud of his outfit. He has three knife scars on his face, one of which nearly took his eye out.

*Notes:* Gentleman Jack has friends in all kinds of odd places. He doesn't just know thugs and policemen; he's also on speaking terms with Ghouls and other odd folk. He doesn't like to bring them in too often. It's not healthy owing favours to that kind of creature.

### Typical Thug

*Abilities:* Athletics 4, Health 5, Firearms 3, Scuffling 6, Weapons 5

*Weapons:* Kick with metal-studded boots, Knife, Razor hidden in cap, Knuckleduster (all -1), Light Firearm (+0)

### Detective Inspector Howard

*Abilities:* Athletics 9, Fleeing 8, Firearms 7, Scuffling 9, Weapon 6, Health 10

*Hit Threshold:* 4

*Alertness Modifier:* +1

*Stealth Modifier:* +1

*Weapons:* Truncheon -1, Firearm +0

*Special:* If Howard becomes an ally, he acts as a free **Cop Talk 2 pool**.

### Typical Policeman

*Abilities:* Athletics 5, Health 6, Scuffling 7, Weapons 6

*Weapons:* Fist, kick (-2), truncheon (-1)

# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Down in the Depths

### The Hurrah

#### Endgame

By this point, all preparations should be complete. The protagonists will either have an idea of what's really going on, or they're being fooled by Pryce and the Dust Things, but whichever it may be the time has come to hold the Burnt Auction.

Much of this section is, by necessity, dependent on actions taken by the protagonists. They're the ones who put together the con mob, designed the scheme, and are supposed to be running the Burnt Auction. However the Dust Things have their own agenda, and if all goes according to their plan then the action ought to go something like this:

The Burnt Auction starts. Gentleman Jack and two thugs he brought with him are happy to help, but prefer to stay in the background. Hubert Walton

is very keen to go ahead, and obviously has a very large billfold. He's primed and ready to spend money like water. The Keeper should let a few moments pass while the protagonists still believe they are in control, and running the con. But midway through the scene, as the Burnt Auction gets underway, every person in the room whose **Stability dropped to 2** thanks to yokai attack (see also "Teapot Samurai and Other Tempestuous Demons") and who therefore know the Dust Thing ritual begins that ritual, unless they're successful in a final **Stability difficulty 5 check**. At the Keeper's discretion, and only if the protagonists have been able to piece together most of what's going on — they know Walton's a fake, for instance — **difficulty drops by 1 or 2 points, to a minimum of 3**. The amount of this bonus will depend on how much the protagonists have put together. Anyone who fails the test enters into the ritual, and cannot be stopped unless physical violence

is used. However any attack that does some kind of damage, even a punch, is enough to stop a person participating in the ritual.

As this is going on, the yokai that the protagonists previously encountered begin crawling out of the darkness. They too have a stake in this and will participate in the ritual, as will Walton and Pryce. Gentleman Jack and his friends stay out of it. Jack doesn't trust the Dust Things; he's just waiting for the moment when he can step in and grab as many grimoires as he and his cronies can carry.

If the Keeper enjoys dramatic monologues, either Jack or the Dust Thing masquerading as Hubert Walton are perfect candidates. "Finally, after so many centuries," Walton leers, "we have done it! Thank you for providing your warm flesh, your voices, and your weak and feeble wills to our cause. Now our books will be free!"





# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Down in the Depths

Anyone who participates in the ritual needs to contribute points to it. If that person has the **Magic** ability then the points can come from that pool, but if not then the points have to come from **Stability or Health**. Each participant needs to contribute **5 Stability, or Health at a rate of 2 points per point of Stability replaced**. So the spend could be 2 Stability, 6 Health, for example. This spend will be more than enough to knock out anyone in the con mob who happens to be participating. It's why Gentleman Jack is being very careful to sit on the sidelines; he wants to stay healthy.

Anyone with **Cthulhu Mythos** can identify the ritual as an appeal to Yog-Sothoth, the Gate, the Key, and the Guardian of the Gate, He to whom Time is inconsequential. As this appeal continues, the shape of a great, glowing door takes form, and as it does so the Dust Things become more and more excited. Gentleman Jack is beside himself with anticipation. Everything seems to be going their way.

However anyone who makes a **1-point spend of Evidence Collection, Chemistry, or similar** notices an odd yellowish smoke coming from the other side of the door. It comes in small puffs, as if something on the other side was breathing it out, or something in the crypt was pulling it in. The door itself has a brownish-black tinge around its edge.

There is a phenomenon known to fire-fighters as backdraft. There's insufficient oxygen on the other side of the door to permit combustion, but the heat is still intense. All the fire needs to reignite in an explosive backlash is more oxygen, which the Dust Things are helpfully about to

supply by opening the door. They don't realize the danger, and neither does anyone else in the room except for the protagonists. Should it explode, the resulting fireball will be both dramatic and extremely dangerous.

Once the protagonists notice this, they have **1 round to do something about it**. The best thing to do is to stop the ritual, which means putting **at least 3 participants out of action**. Without their contribution, there's insufficient power to keep the door viable, and it will fade into nothingness.

If the ritual goes ahead and the door is opened, the fireball instantly destroys all the Dust Things in the room. Anyone else is affected depending on how close they are to the epicentre of the blast: **+6 damage point blank, +4 close, +1 near, -1 long**. There's also a **Difficulty 4 Stability test** when the blast goes off. The fireball will ignite St Paul's, and the cathedral will start to burn. Unless something is done about this immediately, the consequences could be catastrophic. **At least 5 people** need to immediately start fighting the fire to prevent this, and those people can be members of the con mob as well as protagonists. Jackie Squires will be more interested in recovering books, while his two friends are too badly burnt to be of any help. Pryce will be stunned into immobility.

It's just possible, if someone acts immediately, to recover a book or two from the other side of the door in the aftermath of the explosion. The interruption of the ritual means that the door will fade away after 1 round, but in that round a tome or two could be snatched from the flames. It's up to the Keeper whether anything very potent — perhaps a Mythos text — is

recovered by someone willing to take this risk, but whether magical or not the book must be valuable. Perhaps it's a translation of the *Livre d'Ivon*, a 15th century treatise on the Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan, or some other potent text. If the Keeper does want to introduce a Mythos tome but has nothing in particular in mind, then assume the book has **+1 Cthulhu Mythos** and provides **1 potential Magic pool**. Anyone attempting to rescue a book needs to make a **Difficulty 5 Athletics test** or suffer **+1 damage** from the flames. This can only happen in the round after the fireball; after that the door closes for good.

If some people, but not enough, start fighting the fire then it will damage the cathedral, but not too badly; enough to merit the minor penalty mentioned in "Down in the Depths." If everyone just abandons the place then the cathedral could suffer major damage.

If the protagonists act quickly and prevent the ritual, the Dust Things will be very unhappy. They will threaten and cajole, but they lack physical form, and can do very little to force people to do what they want. Gentleman Jack is a different proposition. If it looks as if the protagonists are about to back out, he and his thugs will step in to bully them back into line. He will back down in the face of strong opposition, and if the protagonists have D.I. Howard on their side, Gentleman Jack might even get arrested. It's worth remembering that if, as described in "The Long Arm of the Law," D.I. Howard and his men are waiting outside to catch Squires, then any fire which breaks out will be extinguished by the police, and the cathedral will suffer no serious damage.

### The Blow-Off

#### Epilogue

At the scenario's conclusion, the protagonists may or may not have participated in the longest con ever known; it's been running for several centuries, and will be running for many years yet unless St Paul's burnt down. The Dust Things have no real memory, or intellect. They're creatures made out of fictions, their only motivating force coming from words and pictures other people created. Even if the Burnt Auction scam didn't work this time, the Dust Things believe it will work eventually, and when it does they'll get their siblings' books back. Until that happens, they'll keep trying.

Gentleman Jack, assuming he survives and remains out of police custody, won't be too happy with the outcome. He was expecting a bonanza of books, and ended up with nothing. He may hold the

protagonists responsible for that, and that could lead to him becoming a long-term adversary in a campaign.

Sidney Pryce, assuming he survived, is now free of Dust Thing control. His memories of the last few weeks are hazy at best, and he claims to have no idea what was going on. He's almost broke — the only cash he's seen has been clipped from newspapers — and desperate to make a score. The nature of this new score is up to the Keeper, but Pryce is willing to take more risks than usual thanks to his financial situation. Remember that, if he gets arrested, he knows about St. Paul's and the protagonists' part in the Burnt Auction; he may try to bargain with prosecutors, lying if necessary to make his part in events seem minor compared to the protagonists.

Meanwhile the protagonists have unwittingly become infamous among occultists and those with Mythos

connections: they attended a Burnt Auction, and lived to tell the tale. Some months after the events of the scenario, a well-heeled bibliophile will come looking for them. In Bookhounds terms this collector is a big spender — **Credit Rating 4** — and the kind of patron that could easily represent a windfall for the shop. It's up to the Keeper exactly who this patron is; the NPC should be designed or selected from the Trail of Cthulhu rulebook according to the needs of the campaign.

There's just one problem. The patron wants in on the next Burnt Auction. "Name your price. Whatever it is, I'll pay it." The patron's real enough — **Assess Honesty** can tell that much, and his money isn't made out of newspaper clippings — so what the protagonists do next is up to them.





# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Player Handouts

*At my returne I was infinitely concern'd to find that goodly Church St. Pauls now a sad ruine, and that beautiful portico ... now rent in pieces, flakes of vast stone split asunder, and nothing now remaining intire but the inscription in the architrave, shewing by whom it was built, which had not one letter of it defac'd. It was astonishing to see what immense stones the heate had in a manner calcin'd, so that all the ornaments, columns, freezes, capitals, and projectures of massie Portland-stone flew off, even to the very roofe, where a sheet of lead covering a great space (no less than six akers by measure) was totally mealt; the ruines of the vaulted roofe falling broke into St. Faith's, which being fill'd with the magazines of bookes belonging to the Stationers, and carried thither for safety, they were all consum'd, burning for a weeke following. It is also observable that the lead over the altar at the East end was untouch'd, and among the divers monuments, the body of one Bishop remain'd intire. Thus lay in ashes that most venerable Church, one of the most antient pieces of early piety in the Christian world."*

*LUDGATE HILL EC4 (Stations: Blackfriars D, Mansion House D, St Paul's C). This is Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece built to replace the much larger Old Cathedral after its destruction on the same site by the Great Fire of 1666. The most prominent of London's buildings, it is an immense Renaissance structure, its exterior length being 515ft; its width across transepts 250ft and the height from pavement to the top of the cross 365ft.*

*Among the many famous people buried here are Sir Christopher Wren, Nelson, Wellington and Jellicoe; Florence Nightingale, Reynolds and Turner. OPEN Weekdays 9 am to 5 or 6 pm. ADMISSION FREE to Nave and Transept, but visitors must not walk about during services. ADMISSION to Crypt, 6d; Library, Whispering Gallery and Stone Gallery 6d; Golden Gallery 1 /-; Ball 1 /-*



# TRAIL OF CTHULHU

## Player Handouts



### Reclusive Millionaire Takes Ship To London

Hollywood mogul Hubert Walton, the famous 'man behind the curtain' responsible for so many starlets' careers, is to travel to London aboard the *Queen Mary*. Walton intends to spend several months in Europe, and if our Louella is to be believed, is on the lookout for more new talent. Will the pulchritudinous London girls flock to his auditions? You bet your boots!

