

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH™

ISSUE 21 • JULY 2012



A DIGEST OF ARCANES LORE FOR CTHULHU MYTHOS ROLEPLAYING GAMES

TODD

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH™

ISSUE 21, JULY 2012

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THE DREAD PAGE OF AZATHOTH

By SHANE IVEY

What's a year?

It's a long wait, sure. *The Unspeakable Oath* 20 was new at GenCon 2011 and here's *Oath* 21, new at GenCon 2012. In between, the world keeps spinning and our friends around the world keep making great things for Lovecraftian gaming. We've heard details about the upcoming Seventh Edition of *Call of Cthulhu*—see theunspeakableoath.com for my notes on that. We've seen Pagan Publishing's classics *Delta Green* and *Delta Green: Countdown* reappear at long last and become available for the first time in PDF. We've kept playing and kept enjoying the exhilaration and humor and chills of horror gaming.

What's a year? It's an eyblink and an eternity. Especially for a small press like Arc Dream Publishing, where there's never enough money to call it a real job. A year's enough time to drive home the seriousness of health scares and the uncertainty of keeping good work. My wife suffered an at-home injury that made it iffy for months whether she'd be able to go back to work in law enforcement. I found out my day job (night job, really, but it's the one that helped pay the rent) was coming to an end as the state's largest newspaper fired more than half its newsroom. Looking down double barrels of unemployment makes time stretch and compress in weird ways.

We're lucky. She recovered and kept her job. I didn't keep mine, but I have freelance work and my little publishing company to absorb my energies and help keep the lights on. Compare that to humanity at large and we're far luckier than most.

Did I mention our dog got run over? He was so badly

hurt he couldn't even drink water for several days, but the vet said the injuries were recoverable. I spent a week or two—or ten, or a hundred; you know how time is in a crisis—caring for him nonstop, giving fluids from an IV bag and painkillers by injection. Then he came around. He has a giant scar on one side but he's as strong and happy as ever.

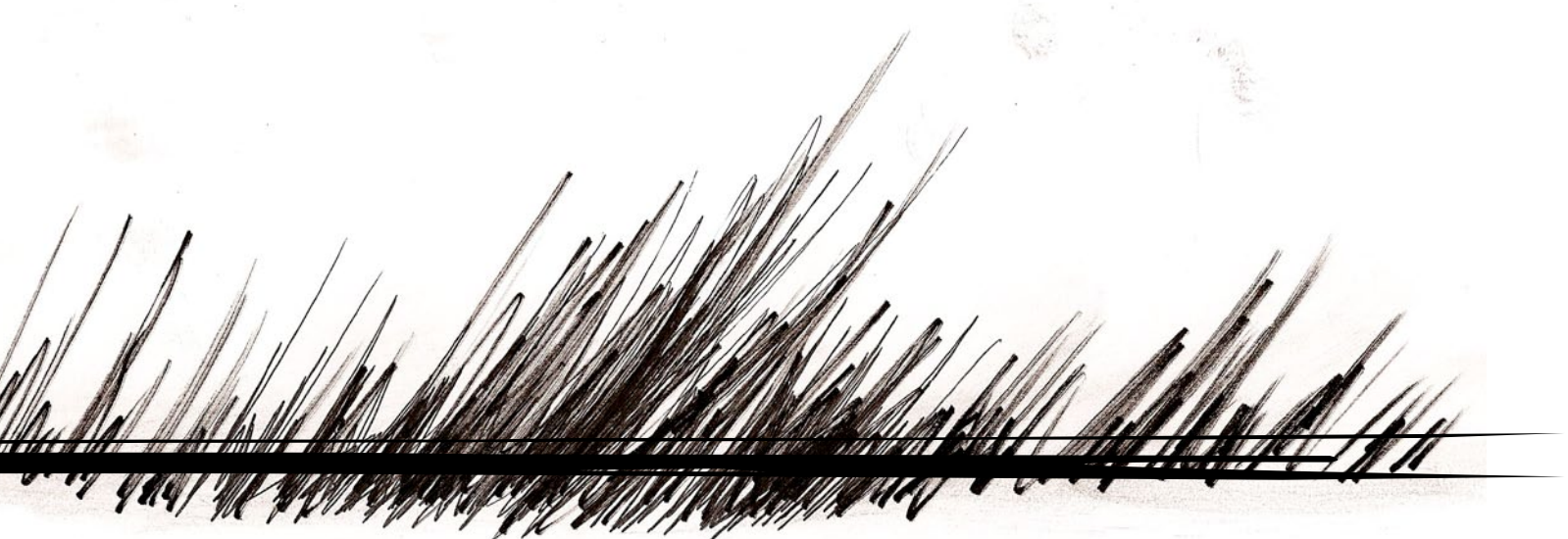
Like I said, we're lucky.

But in times like that it's not easy to work for the sheer love of it. You feel guilty. You feel like you're indulging in a luxury you can't afford. That's always been the case with Arc Dream and, since we took it over, the *Oath*. It's hard work, years of work, done purely for love.

That's why the *Oath* went quiet for a year. And that's what brought the *Oath* back.

Not long ago I read a book by Sebastian Junger called *War*, a tie-in to his documentary *Restrepo*. *War* was based on a year's work by Junger and photographer Tim Hetherington—who died in the field not long after it came out—a year they spent with a platoon of U.S. soldiers fighting in Afghanistan. These were men who faced death and dismemberment but were heartbroken and lost when they had to leave it behind and go home. In war, as Junger saw it, the thing that explains soldiers' impossible courage is devotion to their comrades. It's love—a kind of love you don't often find anywhere else.

I think *Call of Cthulhu's* Investigators would understand. Why else are they out there, putting life and sanity on the line to fight evil that can never really be defeated? Why else stand by companions who are surely doomed? Why else choose to confront threats that merely want to be left



alone to do their little evils? Why else chase the cult into the swamp and stand firm when the inhuman thing with pale, glowing eyes lifts itself into the night? What else moves any of us to do anything really worthwhile?

Not that many of us play Investigators so deeply. The point of the game is to put them into horrific situations and laugh like fiends as their Sanity and hit points drain away. We're not here to explore their motivations! We gloss over all that method-acting nonsense. In most *Call of Cthulhu* games, the characters act like sociopaths every time they can get away with it. They're always ready with torture or a tommygun, and no wonder. That kind of violent power is cathartic, and it makes the contrast even funnier when they have to drop all the firepower and go running in terror. Where's the love in that?

It's worth finding out. There's nothing quite like feeling a genuinely emotional connection, even for just a moment, with a character who's completely made-up. Let alone

one whose sole purpose is to go mad or die gruesomely for your friends' enjoyment. That connection doesn't happen often, at least in most games that I've seen. But when it does happen, that's the heart of the game. That's the stuff that makes a role-playing game deep.

A little more than a year ago, a couple of issues back, I wrote on this same theme. I can't help retreading the same ground. It's a theme that matters. It might be the *only* theme that *really* matters, even though it's one that rarely sullied Lovecraft's typewriter. I said back then that the key to making *Call of Cthulhu* frightening is to figure out why you care about your character. Well, this is a shortcut. Why is your character ready to die in madness and tears for the sake of friends or even strangers? Discover that and you'll almost certainly find something worth caring about.

Moments like that keep the *Oath* alive—even when another frightening year has gone by. 



BITS AND MORTAR

If you bought *The Unspeakable Oath* in print, anywhere, you can get the PDF free.
www.theunspeakableoath.com

MYSTEROUS MANUSCRIPT: SAUCER ATTACK 1928! THE DUNWICH 'HORROR'

BY BRET KRAMER

Saucer Attack 1928!: The Dunwich "Horror" was written by Heath Berger and published in 1960 by Vast Cosmos Books. It's an A-format paperback (4 1/3" x 7") in cheap newsprint, about 200 pages. The amateurish cover painting shows a glowing green flying saucer destroying a barn with a bolt of lightning; in the foreground a policeman is disintegrated by a similar bolt. Title and author are given on the cover and the spine. The work is poorly edited and contains frequent typographical errors and lacks source citations.

Saucer Attack 1928! can be found second-hand with a Luck roll and 1D4-1 days of searching, or immediately (perhaps at an online bookseller) if the Luck roll is a special success. Anyone with an exceptional interest in UFOlogy who makes a Luck roll may, at the Keeper's discretion, already own it.

SKIMMING

This work claims to reinterpret the events of the so-called "Dunwich Horror" of 1928, a series of deaths and accidents near the village of Dunwich, Massachusetts. The author, self-described "Leading Saucer Phenomena Expert" Heath Berger, claims that the "Horror" was actually a coordinated attack by alien beings in preparation for a future invasion—and that the U.S. government, in order to prevent panic, actively conspired to conceal the events of the "Horror." The work concludes by connecting the "Horror" to contemporary UFO encounters, suggesting the final invasion is drawing near.

////////////////////////////////////
"No remains were ever located save fragments of human teeth and bones. There are two possibilities here. Either the aliens used atomic disintegrator rays or they used a matter transmission beam, causing the annihilation of Elmer Frye and his clan on Earth only to reassemble them elsewhere!"
////////////////////////////////////

THOROUGH READING

According to Berger, the events of the "Dunwich Horror" were a series of calculated attacks by an unknown alien race (or races) against an isolated human settlement with the purpose of testing local, state, and federal government reaction.

Berger presents an eclectic body of anecdotal evidence for earlier alien visitors in the region, drawing on Penacook and Abenaki myths regarding "Winged Ones" (flying spirits), standing stones (modeled on Stonehenge, "a well-known saucer landing site") frequently adorned with unknown symbols, reports of weird lights and noises, and numerous missing persons.

The author then presents a chronological breakdown of the events of the "Horror," beginning in early September with a barn collapse and cattle mutilation reports, through to the destruction of the Frye family farm and the deaths of five Massachusetts State Police officers. Berger cites multiple interviews with unnamed "eye-witnesses" including Dunwich residents and a Professor Armitage connected to Miskatonic University.

Berger reports further mysterious disappearances, weird lights, and sounds from the hills after the "Horror," as well as an eerie "white humanoid" spotted near Cold Springs Glen, epicenter of the attacks. In the years afterwards the village, already in decline, was disincorporated and the area taken over by neighboring towns, much of it being purchased by the state in creating Bishop State Park. Berger regards this as proof of official collusion in the coverup.

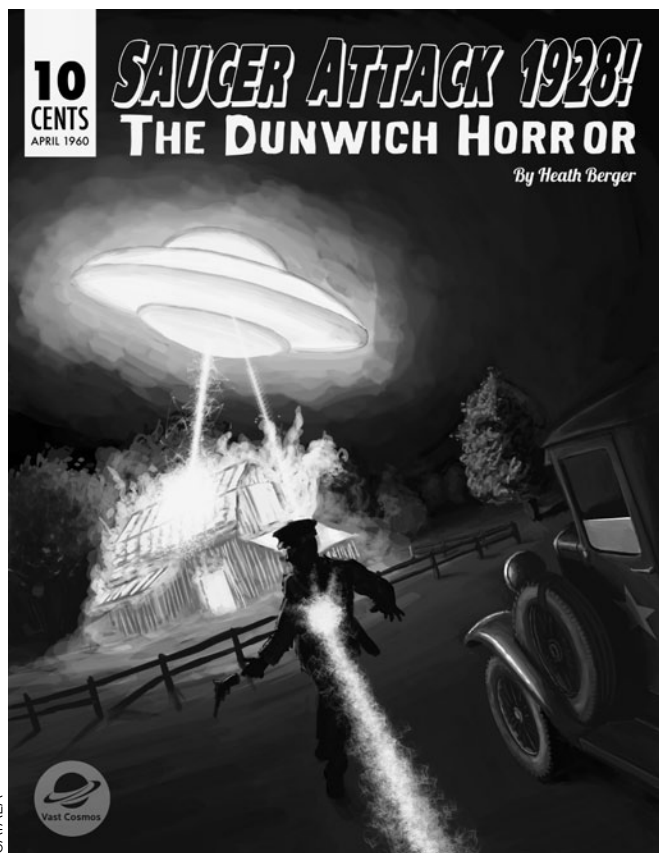
The final section of the book compares the events of the "Horror" to the Hopkinsville Goblins, the Flatwoods Monster, the Roswell crash, and a host of lesser known close encounters. He argues the increasing frequency of contact between humans and aliens is clear proof that the attacks begun in 1928 (if not earlier) are only increasing, suggesting that the time for invasion is close at hand.

RESEARCH

A single Library Use roll provides a short summary of the so-called “Dunwich Horror” of the summer and fall of 1928, a hoax perpetrated by an Aylesbury, Massachusetts newspaper man who alleged it was caused by an “invisible elephant.” A series of several moonshine still explosions, wild dog attacks on cattle, and the accidental deaths of several state patrol officers were misinterpreted by locals as a supernatural event. The reporter sold the story as a piece of “hillbilly humor” to the Associated Press, who distributed it more widely. It is viewed as a precursor to the panic associated with Orson Welles’ 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast.

The basic details of the “Horror” as presented by Berger can be confirmed with additional research. Curiously, while Berger’s conclusions about alien attack are clearly off-base, his underlying questioning of the official account of the “Horror” is much harder to dismiss. His basic research showing the Dunwich area to be unusual (to say the least), and the catalog of disappearances, weird phenomena, and the holes in Dr. Armitage’s account are very solid.

Some information on Berger himself can be uncovered with a separate Library Use roll. Heath Berger, born Hiram Berkowitz (1924-1971), was an American writer of pulp fiction. Forgotten by all but the most well-read aficionados of the genre, he is considered at best a prolific but ultimately derivative author.



CATALÁ

“It is clear then that what Reverend Hoadely observed was not the ‘voluble disturbances wrought by demonick forces’ but instead the sounds wrought by the mechanism of the alien outpost, perhaps excavating saucer hangars and laboratories. Note that Dunwich lacks the limestone karst traditionally associated with cave formation yet there are several caves noted on the 1919 Geological Survey. Might these not be of unnatural formation? Large subterranean structures would account for the magnetic anomalies reported in the region.”

STATISTICS

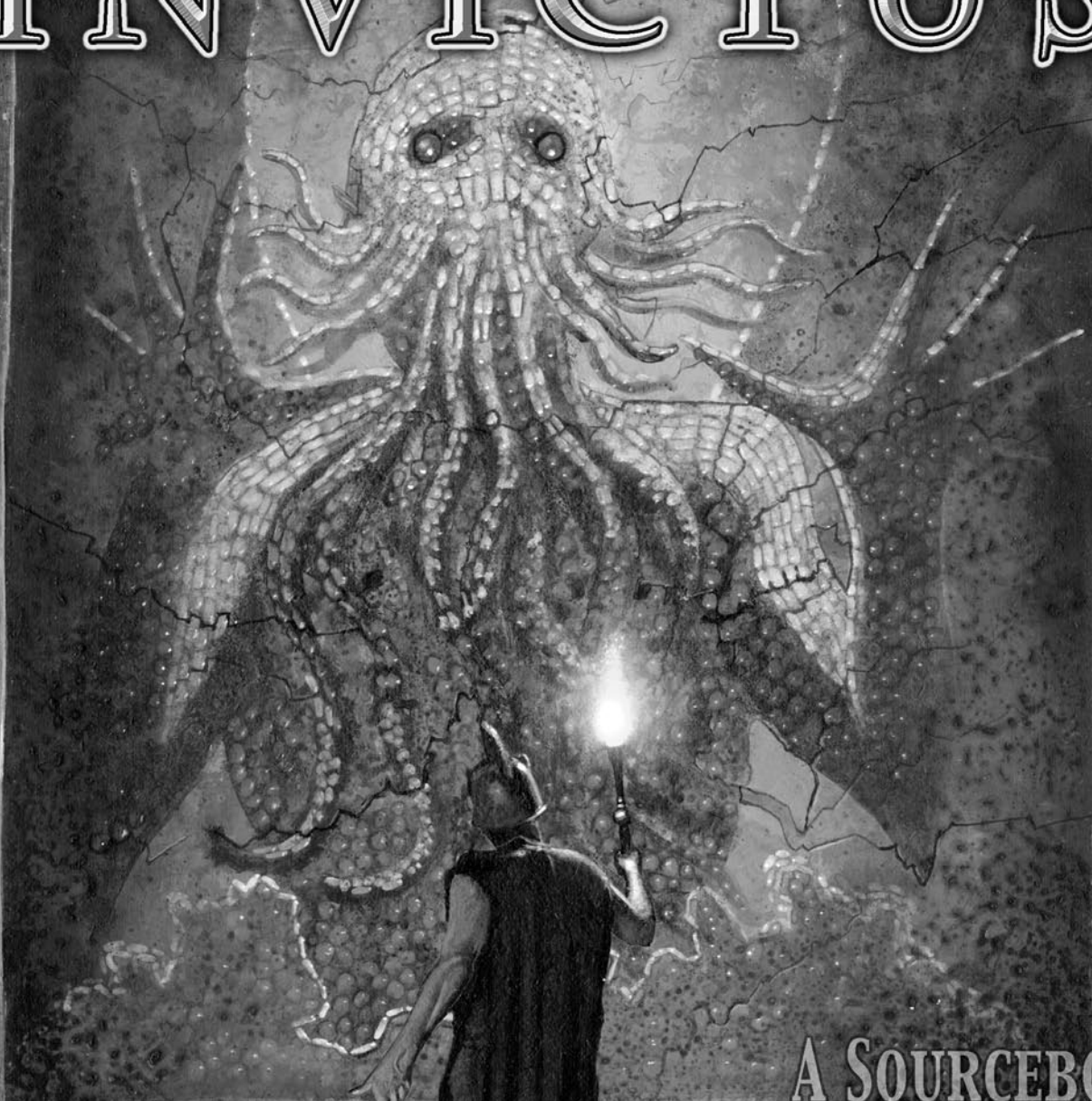
Saucer Attack 1928!: The Dunwich “Horror”—in English. Requires three days to read and study. No Sanity cost to read this work and no Cthulhu Mythos skill gained; however, if additional research validates Berger’s underlying claims they are worth +1 Cthulhu Mythos and 1/1D3 SAN loss; Occult +4. Spells: none.

USING ‘SAUCER ATTACK 1928!’ IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

In a modern game *Saucer Attack 1928!* could be the spur for an investigation into the events of the Dunwich Horror, either by the Investigators or by an NPC. Keepers might make use of this work as an imperfect source of information about the Dunwich Horror. Alternately it might be a curio uncovered among the effects of an NPC with an interest in UFOlogy or the paranormal. Finally, it might be used to torture players familiar with Lovecraft’s fiction, especially if the work is discovered and examined by one who is unfamiliar with the stories. ☸

“Armitage claims that the ‘Horror’ was noting but mass hysteria. Why then take a sabbatical afterwards? What of his government ties? Why had the late Wilbur Whately—known for his curious walk and his remarkable height; the same man whose own grandfather bought many head of cattle which were never seen again, and was said to haunt the very stone-topped mountains discussed previously—why had he called upon this ‘innocent’ academic just before the ‘Horror’ began? Was it to warn him? Was Armitage the government’s alien liaison?”

CTHULHU INVICTUS



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ROME

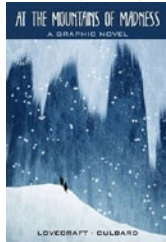


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2009

THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

BY VARIOUS CULTISTS



AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS

STORY BY H.P. LOVECRAFT, ADAPTATION AND
ILLUSTRATION BY I.N.J. CULBARD
PUBLISHED BY SELFMADEHERO
REVIEWED BY CHASE W. BECK

“At the Mountains of Madness” stands out among H.P. Lovecraft’s stories. It has that classic Lovecraftian feel, but it departs significantly from many of his standard practices. For instance, Lovecraft swaps New England for the harsh and forbidding ice continent of Antarctica. Lovecraft tied the isolation and frigid desolation deeply into the heart of his story. He fed upon personal experiences and fears that had little to do with the Antarctic to create a deep sense of penetrating coldness and cosmic horror. His attention to detail and use of then-modern tools and vehicles of scientific exploration make this story a delightful, if somewhat deliberate read. While not his last work, coming towards the end of his career it reflects the knowledge and talent acquired in years of writing. “At the Mountains of Madness” is a tremendous accomplishment and perhaps the culmination of Lovecraft’s work.

I.N.J. Culbard must have kept all of this in mind when he set out to create a comic book adaptation of this tale. The fact that Culbard manages to effectively honor Lovecraft’s work in this adaptation is similarly amazing. Unlike other, more popular, classic works, “Mountains” has no other illustrated adaptations. While readings and audio dramatizations exist, the many fantastic descriptions of horrific vistas, grisly autopsies and an alien megalopolis make a visual adaptation distressingly difficult.

For those unfamiliar with the story, “Mountains” relates the events surrounding the ill-fated Starkweather-Moore Expedition. The narrative draws upon then-widely publicized Antarctic expeditions, namely Scott’s Terra Nova Expedition and Shackleton’s hardships faced during the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition.

Reviewed items are rated on a scale of one to ten phobias:

1-3: Not worth purchasing.

4-6: An average item with notable flaws; at 6 it’s worth buying.

7-10: Degrees of excellence.

The artwork is enjoyable. Culbard’s representations of people are quite stylized, bringing to mind Hergé’s “The Adventures of Tintin” or Gray’s “Little Orphan Annie.” The character designs are simple but easily distinguished from one another. The style is appropriate and certainly brings to mind the 1930s era in which the story is set. Culbard sometimes uses texture to add another layer of depth to the illustrations. This serves many purposes, often relating a sense of blowing snow, gale-force wind, or towering oppressiveness. Spectacular architectural depictions evoke the other-worldly and cyclopean.

Culbard brings a fascinating visual style to Lovecraft’s story. He manages to bookend the story in a fascinating manner and I appreciated the artwork and his storytelling aesthetic as well.

At the Mountains of Madness, adapted by I.N.J. Culbard, gets 9 out of 10 phobias.



DIE FARBE

DIRECTED BY HUAN VU
REVIEWED BY BRIAN M. SAMMONS

Just in case you don’t “Sprechen sie Deutsche,” the title of this independent, feature-length film translates as *The Colour*. Can you guess what HPL story it is based on? That’s right, it’s “The Outsider.” Ha, just kidding, it’s Lovecraft’s own personal favorite of his stories, “The Colour Out of Space.” It’s the most filmed of any of H.P.

Lovecraft's tales. What, you don't believe that? There was 1965's *Die Monster Die* starring Boris "don't call me Frankenstein" Karloff. Then 1987 saw *The Curse* starring Wil "don't call me Wesley" Wheaton. Recently we got an Italian version called *Colour from the Dark*, which I reviewed in TUO 18. Now we get this German import. So how does it compare to all those other "Colour" flicks?

Simply put, it blows them all away.

To be sure, some of those other films had their bright spots. Even the pretty crappy Wil Wheaton one had a few good moments, and I enjoyed *Colour from the Dark* quite a lot. But this is easily the most faithful adaption of Lovecraft's "Colour" ever put to film. In fact, it's one of the best Lovecraftian films ever made.

Writer-director Huan Vu transferred the story almost scene for scene from HPL's original to the screen. For all the people who say Lovecraft doesn't translate well into film, they need to sit down, shut up, and watch how it can be done right.

Before we really get into it, a quick warning: About 75% of this movie is in German with subtitles. No surprise there, since it was made in Germany. The surprising thing was how much of the film was in English. Why was there English in a German flick?

Well, one of the few ways this movie deviates from the original story is setting and time. Here we get a young American named Jonathan who goes looking for his missing father, who was last seen in Germany as an army medic after World War Two. Traveling to the small, wooded farming community where his dad disappeared, Jonathan meets an old farmer who witnessed the slow destruction of his friends and neighbors, a family called the Gardners, or in this case the Gärteners. He also has a tale to tell about Jonathan's long-lost father.

What follows is pretty much a word-for-word retelling of HPL's tale of a cosmic entity coming to Earth inside a strange meteor. The extraterrestrial rock comes down near the Gärteners' farm and an alien life form, which only can be described as an indescribable color, permeates a farmstead causing untold weirdness over the course of a year. No quick, wham-bam scares here; this is creeping, inescapable dread at its finest. Vegetables grow huge but are rotten, trees sway when there is no wind, and one by one the Gärteners begin to feel the direct effects of the vile color. The family members go mad, they feel sick, and then . . . well, I won't tell you what happens next, but if you've read the story then you know. This movie does a great job of showing the final horrors that befall the blighted farmers.

The whole film is well-photographed in black and white. The special effects range from passable to very good, as

does the acting, and the direction is more than competent. That is not to say the movie is completely without foibles. Some of the German actors playing Americans don't hide their accent well, and there was one shot that baffled me. It had two characters talking in front of a painfully obvious green-screened background. The backdrop wasn't some strange alien vista that needed technical wizardry to pull it off. No, it was a library. After the World War Two, Germany was in short supply of old-timey-looking libraries, so I understand the need for the green-screening. I just wish it weren't so noticeable. Thankfully the rest of the movie is shot on real sets, or if they are not, the special effects are handled much better so as not to be so glaring.

Bad accents and bad CGI backdrops are minor complaints, really. If that's all I can point to as faults with this film then that says volumes for its overall quality.

Die Farbe is an exceptionally Lovecraftian film and a cinematic treat for Mythos fans and for those new to the cosmic horror of HPL. I cannot recommend it highly enough. I urge you to get this movie, not only because it's a great film, but also to support independent filmmakers who dare to bring Lovecraft's horror to the movie masses. You can order a copy from the cultists over at the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society (www.cthulhulives.org). This film gets nine phobias out of ten.



THE POISONER'S HANDBOOK

BY DEBORAH BLUM

PUBLISHED BY PENGUIN

REVIEWED BY GREG STOLZE

The Poisoner's Handbook concerns itself with an essential human question: "If I put this in my mouth, will I die in a froth of bloody spittle?" I got this book because I enjoy reading about the horrible ways people die, but it did not take long to realize its value for anyone with a Mythos game set in 1920s-30s America.

Blum tells the story of New York City's first medical examiner, a man named Charles Norris. (There's no evidence he ever went by "Chuck.") Appointed in 1918 after a scandal involving a drunken Tammany Hall coroner, Norris threw himself into the task of dealing with New York City's many dead folks scientifically. (Previously, the politically-appointed coroners mostly looked for ways to make a buck.)

At the risk of cross-genre hyperbole, Charles Norris is basically Batman. Though his parents didn't die in a squall of bullets (so far as we know) he was a wealthy



SUKAKPAK

THUS SAITH THE **LORD** OF HOSTS,
BEHOLD, EVIL SHALL GO FORTH FROM
NATION TO NATION, AND A GREAT
WHIRLWIND SHALL BE RAISED UP
FROM THE COASTS OF THE EARTH.

—**JEREMIAH 25:32**

U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES

BY **JASON MORNINGSTAR**
ILLUSTRATED BY **BRENNEN REECE**

SUKAKPAK

Spring, well north of the arctic circle. 1975. A small surveying camp sits just south of the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk and Bettles river confluence, among dense forests of spindly spruce trees. Above it, the ramplike prow of Sukakpak mountain dominates. It is a striking, curious and isolated peak south of the Brooks range.

Sukakpak mountain is in Pipeline Section Five, a piece of the massive trans-Alaskan pipeline project managed by a conglomerate known as Arctic Constructors. Arctic Constructors is a joint venture of industrial powerhouses Brown & Root, Ingram, Peter Kiewit Sons, Williams Brothers Alaska, and the H.B. Zachry. This stretch of wilderness that will eventually become Mile Marker 204 on the soon-to-be-built North Slope Haul Road. It will hug the eastern slope of Sukakpak mountain and cross the Bettles river, avoiding a difficult crossing of the wide, treacherous Koyukon. A survey team is re-flagging the original pipeline route that was flagged in '71. There is great urgency, as construction of the North Slope Haul Road has already begun and will reach Atigun pass in less than a month. The route must be clearly marked.

And now a man has died.

GM'S NOTE

Sukakpak is an atmospheric one-shot adventure created using the technique outlined in Graham Walmsley's book *Stealing Cthulhu*. It is designed to be as bleak and mysterious as Lovecraft's stories. The forces that will confront the Investigators cannot be understood or defeated, only—perhaps—accommodated. You have tremendous latitude in presentation and resolution, but keep these facts in mind.

OPENING SHOT

Before defining the situation or characters, offer this image, viewed through scratched plexiglass windows, over the roar of the Cessna 206 floatplane's engine one thousand feet up:

Endless, fucking *endless*, spruce forest in three directions, with the massive wall of the Brooks range abruptly stopping its progress to the north, like a sea wall against the brownish-green. Forest as far as the eye can see, from

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with Chaosium Inc.**
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thousands of feet in the air. It's dark, featureless, somehow implacable.

THE INVESTIGATORS

Since there has been a workplace fatality, officials are being flown in to collect the body and investigate. These are the player's characters; let them each choose a role and flesh it out a bit.

REQUIRED ROLES

- ▶ A pilot (who may also be the state trooper).
- ▶ An Alaska state trooper, to investigate and recover the body.
- ▶ A representative of Arctic Constructors, to investigate and make sure the survey is completed on time.

POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL PASSENGERS

This adventure works great with only two or three Investigators, but if you have more, here are some roles for them.

- ▶ An aggressive new survey leader to replace Kennedy
- ▶ A clueless and unprepared federal OSHA safety inspector
- ▶ A doctor hastily enlisted as a medical examiner
- ▶ A second state trooper.

THREE QUESTIONS

Once they have chosen their roles, ask each player three questions.

- ▶ What is the Investigator's relationship to the wilderness. What do they want most in the world, and where do they see that in nature? What would make their life complete? Do they crave isolation, knowledge, resolution? What does the wilderness provide for their spirit?
- ▶ What is it about the wilderness that frightens, unnerves or intimidates the *player*? Wild animals? Helplessness? Unpredictable weather? A phobia or traumatic event?
- ▶ Who are your Investigator's family and close personal connections? Who do they love and care about? Do they have dependents? Of course they do.

Make a note of their answers and use them later.

FLYING IN

The Cessna has six seats. It has a shotgun aboard as a general precaution against bears. A state trooper will have both a personal sidearm and a shotgun. Everyone will have basic camping equipment in case they must spend the night.

The adventure begins as they land in the Koyukon river and tie up to the eastern bank. No one is there to greet them.

CAMP 204

The camp consists of a pair of battered waxed cotton tents and a rain tarp that covers their surveying equipment, clustered haphazardly around a fire ring. A dispirited

gloom is palpable in the air. Everything is falling down, dirty and taped together. Spruce trees crowd in on all sides. Mt. Sukakpak looms over everything, a dark grey hump rising to the east. The mosquitoes and biting flies are ferocious and maddening. Nights are bone-chillingly cold, days are wet and sloppy. A smoky fire burns at all times to keep them at bay.

The survey team has a pair of shotguns as protection against brown bears whenever they leave the campsite. *One of the weapons is currently missing*—it was with Scott when he died. They also have a battery-powered radio that can reach as far as Coldfoot, sometimes as far as Fairbanks. Sometimes nowhere.



They are making almost no progress—half a mile a day, way behind schedule. Even then, the surveying work is occasionally torn up behind them and must be redone.

DARK SYMBOLS

These symbols show how to use rules from *Cthulhu Dark* or other RPGs. They appear throughout the scenario and the text to which they refer is italicized. They are guides only: You can ignore symbols or call for rolls where there is none.

This is a clue.



You must investigate to discover it.

- ▶ In *Cthulhu Dark*, make a roll.
- ▶ In *Call of Cthulhu*, make a skill roll.
- ▶ In *Trail of Cthulhu*, spend an ability point.
- ▶ In *Nemesis*, make a skill roll.

Decide which skill is appropriate. Alternatively, the Keeper may reveal the clue without a roll.

You must talk to someone to reveal this clue.



- ▶ In *Cthulhu Dark*, make a roll.
- ▶ In *Call of Cthulhu*, make a skill roll.
- ▶ In *Trail of Cthulhu*, spend an ability point.
- ▶ In *Nemesis*, make a skill roll.

Again, decide which skill is appropriate: usually a social (e.g. Bargain) or academic (e.g. Architecture). one. The Keeper, again, may simply reveal the clue.

Check to see whether you notice this.



- ▶ In *Cthulhu Dark*, make a roll.
- ▶ In *Call of Cthulhu*, roll Spot Hidden.
- ▶ In *Trail of Cthulhu*, roll Sense Trouble.
- ▶ In *Nemesis*, make an appropriate Sense roll.

Use a skill to do this.



- ▶ In *Cthulhu Dark*, make a roll.
- ▶ In *Call of Cthulhu*, make a skill roll.
- ▶ In *Trail of Cthulhu*, spend a point.
- ▶ In *Nemesis*, make a skill roll.

This may damage your character's sanity.



Use the number of branches, on the symbol, as a guide to how bad the damage might be. (This symbol has six branches).

- ▶ In *Cthulhu Dark*, make an Insanity roll.
- ▶ In *Call of Cthulhu*, make a SAN roll. The number of branches shows the die size for SAN loss: This symbol indicates D6 SAN loss.
- ▶ In *Trail of Cthulhu*, make a Stability Check. The number of branches shows the potential Stability loss: this symbol indicates 6 points.
- ▶ In *Nemesis*, make a Sanity roll on an appropriate gauge. The number of branches indicates the Intensity.

You might fight this thing.



In *Cthulhu Dark*, run or die. In other systems, use the combat rules, making up stats if you need to.

THE SURVEY TEAM

A four-man team was sent by Arctic Constructors to re-mark the route of the pipeline. All the stakes, flags and markers have been torn out of the ground, either by animals or weather. The route is too remote and difficult for malicious persons to be responsible. It is, quite literally, in the middle of nowhere. The team consists of:

CHIEF SURVEYOR RAY KENNEDY

Kennedy is a man deeply unsuited for wilderness work. He is currently scared and miserable. Kennedy is quite prepared to pack it in and admit defeat. He is dispirited and knows he's failed. He's also deeply frightened by the death and his experiences around Sukakpak mountain. To play Kennedy:

- ▶ Be slow, indirect, and avoid eye contact.
- ▶ Sigh and rub your eyes.
- ▶ If Kennedy were an animal, he'd be a horse.

ASSISTANT SURVEYOR MIKE RAVELLO

Ravello has reluctantly adopted the leadership role. He is a competent surveyor, comfortable in the wilderness, and a little disgusted at the disappointing situation he's found himself in. Ravello's opinion is that Kennedy is incompetent and Antal is a worthless, lazy bastard. If given command and competent help, he promises to push the survey through in a few weeks. To play Ravello:

- ▶ Be very direct in voice and manner.
- ▶ Use your hands when you talk.
- ▶ If Ravello were an animal, he'd be a bear.

GENERAL LABORER ARTHUR ANTAL

Antal is a useless scrub in the best of circumstances and now a terrified useless scrub. His only goal is to get out of the wilderness. Antal immediately, privately, asks for a seat on the outbound flight. He's had enough. He knows Kennedy and Ravello "saw something" up on Sukakpak mountain, and whatever it was, it killed Scott. Maybe they are cursed. They are way behind schedule and now a man is dead. A malevolent force seems to haunt them and they are exhausted. To play Antal:

- ▶ Speak quickly, softly, and pleadingly.

- ▶ Radiate anxiety.
- ▶ If Antal were an animal, he'd be a rat.

THE BODY

William "Bill" Scott, a general laborer, was the team's unofficial tree-feller and pathfinder. Well liked and hard-working, he died under mysterious circumstances two days ago. Scott was found in the forest a quarter mile from camp near the Koyukon. He'd wandered away from camp during a storm and when they found him in the morning, after a night of terrified searching, he was *bent in half beneath a quaking aspen*, face up in a lowbush cranberry bog. 

Currently he is wrapped in a tarp at camp. They have posted a 24 hour guard—the alternative was to hang him in a tree to prevent a brown bear from eating his corpse.

His body is broken and mottled with peat bog dirt, his clothes discolored by tannin. Aspen leaves remain plastered to his skin, which bears the evidence of having fallen from a great height. Bones are snapped. He's missing a boot.

Medically speaking, Scott has thoracic and lumbar spine fractures, with the thoracolumbar junction essentially pulverized, allowing the body to bend unnaturally above the waist. Both lower limbs are broken, femur on right and tibia, fibula, os calcis and ankle joint on left. His left distal radius and elbow are fractured; severe laterally symmetrical bruising appears on both upper arms and shoulders. There is unpleasant evidence of catastrophic blunt abdominal trauma.

They are painful injuries, but they didn't kill him. He died of exposure. And through what must have been lingering agony, *his face is frozen in a mask of horror somehow tinged with ecstasy*. 

The body stinks, but not of decay; rather a cloying odor like burnt sugar. Perhaps it is campfire smoke. 

The extent of Scott's injuries would require a fall of at least seven meters, onto a hard surface. *But the trees of the Koyukon basin top out around three meters*, and he landed in a swamp. 

Antal's theory is that Ravello beat him to death. Maybe it was a lover's spat. He's grasping at straws. 

Kennedy's public theory is that Scott was picked up by a whirlwind and thrown—they have had hellish wind storms recently. Privately, if an Investigator gains his confidence (perhaps over alcohol), Kennedy can elaborate on his whirlwind hypothesis. *Both he and* 

Ravello have seen queer petroglyphs on the sheer western face of Sukakpak mountain. Ravello dismissed them but they certainly made an impression on Kennedy—they show, for one, a man being dropped from a height by an “air spirit” or vortex.

FLASHBACK

Use this as appropriate, maybe after an Investigator has a quiet conversation with Kennedy or sees the petroglyphs. The night before flying up to collect the body, somebody spoke to a young native Gwich’in (“KUTCH In”) welder named Charlie Mitchell in a Fairbanks bar, pretty well drunk. Mitchell described the People of the Air, Yo Xut’ane (“Yoe Roe TAH Nuh”) who brought nightmares and delights in equal measure, and manifested on Earth as whirlwinds. He said not to mess around near Sukakpak mountain.

THE FIRST NIGHT

Bad weather moves in—a cold drizzle and low, scudding clouds. The plane will need to be secured and the Investigators will be spending the night. Near the plane an animal cries. It is a fox kit, half crushed beneath a rotten spruce trunk that has fallen. The fox’s back is broken, it is half sunk in tannin-colored swampy water, it is near death. The forest has killed it.

Kennedy is very anxious. He builds a big bonfire, much larger than necessary. He’s scared someone else will be hurt. *Something is out there*, following them, destroying their work, taunting them, now killing. He doesn’t know what.

The thick, white smoke of wet spruce and alder wood is choking, makes the eyes water, offers blessed reprieve from the stinging insects. You can’t see much close to the fire. it hisses and spits and seeps into the pores. it provides no warmth and little light. A brisk, insistent cold wind moans, buffered by the trees, which sway and whistle. The fire shudders with each gust, as though being beaten down.

The edges of the tents are cloaked in grey-black, nearly dark. The silhouettes of countless thin trees are just beyond, alive with the discordant calls of widgeons and unidentified night birds. Insects hum. Unknown things crash through the undergrowth. Then *there’s that odor*—a stringent, offensive smell, like burnt sugar mixed with the deep primordial rot of the forest floor. It’s palpable, like someone standing behind you. The odor could be chased into the darkness.

Eventually the wind picks up until it is a gale, and then the scent is gone. Whoever is guarding the corpse will see *dark shapes in the forest moving*, man-sized, larger, watching, waiting, swimming through the trees like a fish through water.

KENNEDY’S BIBLE

Kennedy has a *waterlogged and worn out bible* that he often references. It contains his detailed notes on an alternate route for the North Slope Haul Road that crosses the Koyukon and avoids coming close to Sukakpak mountain. He’s also marked some noteworthy passages (see the Handouts section).

DREAMS

The Investigators will have *strange dreams*. Each dream should be specific and address the Investigator’s reason for being drawn to the wilderness. They may involve flying. These should be generally pleasant dreams in which the Investigator’s achieve their goals, resolve their problems, and embrace their essential wilderness natures. Family and friends should be prominently featured. They will awake refreshed, with the wind insistently rattling the flaps of their tents.



THE NEXT DAY

The plane is wrecked. It lies canted on its side in the middle of the Koyukon, flooded and bent in half. There's no way out. Another plane can be sent from Fairbanks as soon as possible. Given the low pressure system moving in, it might be a few days.

The wind continues. Being out of the trees by the river, or up on the slopes of Sukakpak, is unpleasant—wind-driven rain stinging the eyes and soaking the skin.

WHISPERS

The wind's sussuration speaks to an Investigator, privately of course. It is the sound of the storm, mixed with the death cry of a trapped animal. It comes from just beyond the circle of firelight, in the near trees.

The voice *offers the Investigator what they truly want*. It can show them visions. It can absolutely deliver, but there is something that must be done. It is an unpalatable thing, unacceptable. Blood and filth. Feel free to ask the Investigator what it is if you want, but a few suggestions to set the tone: Sexually violating the corpse, catching an animal and eating its liver while it still lives, blinding someone with a fish hook, building an altar out of human excrement.

The voice can be chased into the darkness.

PURSUIT

Anyone chasing an unnatural odor or noise will soon be chasing something living through the forest. Something huge is crashing through the undergrowth and leaving a trail of crushed undergrowth, alder and spruce pushed aside and snapped at head height.

They *may notice a lost boot*—clearly one that used to be Scott's. There are glimpses of a dark shape. The burnt sugar odor is strong. Finally, the scree-covered base of Sukakpak can be seen, where the trees end and the thing will be plainly visible at last!

But it isn't—there is instead *a whirlwind*, a tornado of lichen-covered pebbles, forest debris, and spruce boughs. Something alive and malevolent and beautiful. A power. It circulates twenty feet up. The air pressure beneath it is giddily low.

If an NPC is present they will try to interact with it. Antal or Kennedy may well snap and join the thing, plead with it, make a deal with it. Ravello may try to fight it. Regardless, any NPC witnessing this event will be taken up in the whirlwind and, *as the Investigator watches, be broken*

like Scott was broken, screaming in a mix of agony and pleasure. They will be hurled into the forest to be found later. They won't be quite dead but they won't last long. They will die smiling.

If, after this display, an Investigator want to do anything but run away, let the same fate befall them.

The wind then dissipates. The thing is gone.

THE MOUNTAIN

The Investigators might want to tramp up to Sukakpak mountain on their own, or the thing might lead them to it.

The western slope of the mountain is covered in pictographs—many of them quite ancient, but some obviously more recent.

The images crudely depict men and animals being *carried up into the sky and falling to their deaths*. Some of them are carried to what are obviously stars and planets outside the atmosphere. One chilling pictograph illustrates what can only be a mountain of bones. Scott's broken shotgun is here.

There is a cave at the base of the mountain that is inhabited by a *brown bear sow* and her two cubs. She will violently attack the Investigators with no provocation, as sows with cubs often do.

ANOTHER NIGHT

With no easy way out and bad weather socking them in, the Investigators will be forced to stay at Camp 206 another night.

NIGHTMARES

On the second night there will be *more dreams*, possibly waking dreams or hallucinations. These will be less pleasant.

Use feverish imagery—climbing trees stretching upward into space; watching smooth-polished river stones forming letters and spelling messages just beyond the cusp of understanding; Sukakpak mountain shaking off the weight of ages and rising to reveal its monstrous self—and introduce a loved one. The loved ones should either die by falling, or the Investigators should have transgressive sex with them.

Feel free to guide Investigators gently, then ask for input—“what terrible thing is happening to your sister?” or “what impossible thing are the rock ptarmigan doing in the sky?”

VOICES IN THE FOREST

The most susceptible or least stable Investigators will be spoken to again. *The voices from the edge of the forest return.* They want an Investigator to join them, and they will lure them into the black spruce with whispers, promises, and the voices of the Investigator's loved ones. A wife or child will plead from the darkness.



This is also a good time for an NPC to do the bidding of the voices, which will be *something obscene, violent, or otherwise awful* to behold. Some examples—they might mutilate or destroy themselves, or try to eat someone's liver while they still live, or perform some act of horrific sexual depravity.



Anyone following will be chased and probably caught by a *ravaging whirlwind of unimaginable power*. If caught, an Investigator will be tightly confined in a maelstrom of whipping branches and stones high above the forest, in an ecstatic trance that combines pleasure with pain. They are given a message for the group, a message of despair. They can do as it wishes or they can die suffering. *What it wants is unspeakable, unimaginable* (ask the players what acts it requires).



It will not allow a road near Sukakpak mountain.

The abductee will be put down near the camp, badly injured, their clothes in rags.



RESOLUTION

A much more difficult pipeline route, crossing the Koyukon river far away from Sukakpak mountain, can eventually be pushed through. The easy route isn't so easy.

HANDOUTS

KENNEDY'S BIBLE

Jeremiah 25:32 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

Isaiah 44:14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. ... **44:17** And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

John 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth.



MYSTEROUS MANUSCRIPT: ENGINES UNDERGROUND

BY GREG STOLZE

The rain sounded like applause, but no one had clapped for Harry Hastur since his piano recital as a spot-speckled high school senior. Harry paused as he entered the train station, shaking his umbrella and feigning interest in his cell phone as he considered that thought. He'd been, what, eighteen?

Released in 2005, *Engines Underground* was Elias Matherson Stokes' debut novel. It made the midlist on the strength of a Philip Roth blurb, then sank without a trace. It's a middling piece of kitchen-sink realism, focusing on shy Harry Hastur and a nearly-albino tunnel engineer named Constance Sleight. The backdrop for their neurotic, stammering romance is the tunnels under Chicago, which Constance is vaguely tasked with "inventorying for the new mayor." The story either ends with "a masterwork of understated irony and ambiguity" if you're Allan Stebbs (see *Delta Green: Targets of Opportunity*, page 233) or "pointlessly stops, like the writer ran out of money to pay his electric bill. Or, more likely, ideas" if you're "JuteCrab," the Amazon top 1000 reviewer whose one-star rating was helpful to 30 of 33 readers.

What readers remember is the subplot between Elise and Jake, a pair as prickly as Constance is timid and assertive as Harry is shy. Roth enjoyed the scene of Jake and Elise coupling while simultaneously picking apart structural issues in *Law & Order: SVU*. Stebbs found himself setting the book aside after reading of their failed suicide pact. To "JuteCrab" their cynical discussion of sexual mores in North Africa was the book's only redeeming feature.

Thing is, "JuteCrab" never read the SVU sex scene, and Stebbs never read the North African scene and Roth never read about the suicide pact. Anyone who reads *Engines Underground* gets the same tepid main plot, but different readers remember the subplot differently. If you read the book alone, its effect is unique to you, solely.

No one has noticed yet. Elias Matherson Stokes is not popular. But do more than cursory research on the word

"Hastur," and you come across *Engines Underground*, especially if you also look for "the Yellow Sign." (One of Stokes' overused motifs is yellow traffic signs.) Ill-exposed as it is, its profile is still higher than *The King in Yellow*.

But individual readers aren't going to find Mythos content, unless they're so crazy that they're seeing the *G'harne Fragments* in crossword puzzles. It's only when reader experiences are compared that the differences appear—if then. *Engines Underground* is forgettable. If one does recall the Jake and Elise scenes, it's vague. Compared to another reader, it's vague on vague. You might not *think* you remember that other fellow's description of Elise in ill-fitting lingerie, but it could have been one of the many paragraphs that one's eyes slipped over in the sea of verbal mediocrity.

There are no other paranormal effects to reading the book. Or if there are, they aren't obvious. Or if they *are* obvious maybe they just haven't gone off . . . yet. Because a book that can adapt its meaning, drastically, in response to the consciousness that beholds it makes mincemeat out of standard notions of what language means and how it functions. A literary chameleon that blends imperceptibly with every other so-so *Bildungsroman* raises scary questions about how permeable consciousness is and how readily we might miss something that uses feedback to create a stronger impression. Or an impression that is as powerful as it is unnoticed, perhaps *exactly* as deep as it is unremarked.

HIS ONLY DEMOGRAPHIC

The unfortunate slice of the population that's exposed to the occult seems drawn to Stokes' book. Anyone with any Cthulhu Mythos score is implausibly likely to have "Engines Underground" sitting next to the toilet or lying on a bedside table. No one consults it as a 'Mythos text' (unless they're already within Hastur's reach)—they just liked the cover or got it as a present. This correlation lets you put it in the background of other adventures, available for Investigators to pick up (idly or deliberately).

Stokes' customers include . . .

YUMIKO SCHÜLLER, who had nightmares about 'formless darkneses of meaning' her whole life. She curated a Pickman retrospective before slitting her wrists in front of a piece entitled "Curious Garb." She liked Jake's story about his bar mitzvah.

ANDREW CRATES, imprisoned for killing five men who, according to his testimony, "were sorcerers pursuing an Eric Drexler-like Singularity by reconfiguring their DNA into deeper dimensions." He remembers Jake and Elise ineptly pet-sitting a Yorkie.

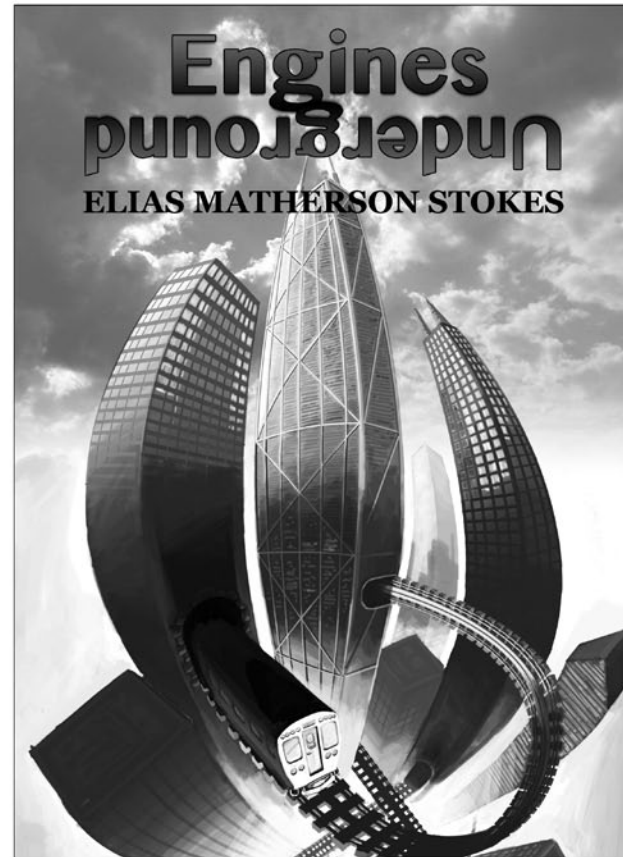
VERONICA IMBLICK, whose 'Ebola virus' death is considered a covered-up case of spontaneous combustion. (She was, in fact, killed by thousands of gnawing insects who acted in concert, as if directed by a greater intelligence). She told her husband about Jake and Elise taking a bus to get gas when Jake's car runs out.

////////////////////////////////////

Finding Elias Matherson Stokes takes some work. He has no web page or other aggressive online presence. (He used to, but it's been in GoDaddy limbo since 2008 and his Facebook status hasn't been updated since 2009.)

Random House has his last address as an apartment in Darlington, Ohio, as does his former agent Kitty Shihiaya. (His Random House editor, Frank Fawkes, enjoyed a scene where Elise throws a surprise party for Jake on the wrong date and tries to pass it off as intentional. Kitty Shihiaya remembers the harrowing part where Elise confronts her dying father while Jake struggles, fruitlessly, to get to her side.) Stokes doesn't live in Ohio any more, but he had his mail forwarded to his parents' home in Wisconsin. Anyone who contacts them there can finally get his current address in Arizona, where he's teaching at a community college.

There is absolutely nothing special about him. Stokes is a bitter, sarcastic man in his thirties—in personality somewhere between Jake's causticity and Harry's self-effacement. He reacts to fannish appreciation with hollow astonishment. If threatened, he cringes. If interrogated, he is flatly honest about knowing nothing, nothing at all, unusual about his book. If asked about the main



character's last name, he says he made it up. Presented with testimonials from readers who recall different Jake/Elise subplots, he falls back on skeptical empiricism. "Which is more likely? That my book has weird mystical properties, or that people are negligent readers? Hardly anyone liked it. Why would you expect them to get minor details right?"

He's happy to assure them that he has written no follow-up and has no intention of writing another novel, *ever*. He likens it to asking a one-legged man to cut the other off for balance.

There's nothing else to learn from Stokes, and obsessed Investigators are likely to pointlessly torment a crabby young man if they fail to accept that. His only observation of value would arise as a parting shot when they leave. "My book is decisively, *aggressively* nothing special. Whatever you think is going on with it, it could happen with any book. Any book at all." 

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MYSTERIOUS MANUSCRIPT

EIN KONTO DER HEXERASEREI IM LINDHEIM

By ADAM GAUNTLETT

For Trail of Cthulhu.

This octavo was printed in 1670 by a German bookbinder, Glaubrecht of Hesse, whose maker's mark is a small tower and raven with the Latin motto *Memoria*. It is rare to find a copy in good condition. The print run was limited to five hundred volumes, and some can still be found in German libraries and university archives. It is of interest primarily to collectors of witchcraft incunabula, and has been known to sell for as much as £25 at auction.

Ein Konto describes the witch-trials in the village of Lindheim, Wetterau, in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, defunct as of 1918. Geographically, it is in the Upper Hesse province. *Ein Konto* is particularly concerned with the years 1660 through to 1663, when the most notorious trials took place.

George Ludwig Geiss, a veteran of the Thirty Years War and mayor (as well as judge) for Lindheim, conducted the campaign. It began with the arrest, conviction and execution of eleven persons, among them the "King of the Sabbat" and the "Queen of the Witches." *Ich stehe nicht still, bis der vollstandige Stamm gerbrannt ist*, swore Geiss, but it soon became clear that the trials were cover for Geiss' own misdeeds. Forty-six other people, including several children, were arrested, but most were people whose property Geiss wanted to acquire, or against whom Geiss had a personal grudge. Of the unfortunate victims, twenty were burnt to death. The trials were brought to a halt by the Supreme Imperial Court, which was petitioned by a merchant of Lindheim, but not before a small riot freed the remaining prisoners and put Geiss' cronies to ignominious flight. Geiss himself died of a broken neck, the result of falling from a horse, soon after, and the place where he died became known as the Devil's Ditch.

The text has two illustrated plates, one of which shows the round tower where the witches were imprisoned and burnt. The other purports to show the Devil's Heart, *das Teufelherz*, a trophy of the Queen of the Witches which she supposedly kept in a box made of wood from the mythical Thor's Tree.

Skimming the text gets 2 dedicated pool points for any one Investigative ability relating to Germany or occult studies. Poring over it gets 1 potential Magic point.

In addition, the following Clues can be had concerning the Devil's Heart:

► **Core.** *Ein Konto* claims that the Heart was taken by Geiss but not destroyed. *'In his impiety he sought to gain from his prize,'* claims the author, but Geiss died before he could do anything with it. *'Those most concerned with it laid it to rest.'* If **Cthulhu Mythos** is used, the description of the Heart and its box is reminiscent of Shub-Niggurath cult activity.

► **Languages, Occult, Archaeology, History.** Lindheim's Witch Tower still stands and is owned by the novelist Emma Pichler, a distant relative of the barons who once owned the village.

In a Bookhounds campaign, **Ein Konto** is sought by Elliot (or Elanor) Warrington. Warrington is a plausible rogue with a poor credit history. Warrington's striking looks are beginning to fade with the passage of years.

Arabesque: Warrington claims to be a Herle King, inheritor of the Wild Hunt. In horned mask and green robes, Warrington leads a cult.

Sordid: Warrington is a confidence trickster working on behalf of an unnamed patron. Warrington hopes to have youth restored, if this patron is given **Ein Konto*.

Technicolor: Warrington is a descendant of Geiss who feels driven to carry on his ancestor's work. ☸



DAS TEUFELHERZ

By ADAM GAUNTLETT

For Trail of Cthulhu.

This item is buried at the base of a late medieval round tower in the village of Lindheim, Wetterau, in the Upper Hesse, and has lain there ever since the witch trials of 1662-1663. The trials claimed the lives of over thirty people, among them the “Queen of the Witches,” one of the leading figures in a coven dedicated to Shub-Niggurath. Most of the victims were not connected with the cult, and the persecution came to an end with the death of the chief persecutor, George Ludwig Geiss.

The tower is crumbling, held upright by jury-rigged wooden supports. Its owner, the novelist Emma Pichler, has been trying to sell it and the land it’s on for years, but local interests and historical societies have prevented this.

The tower was where the witch executions were carried out; *das Teufelherz* is buried among the burnt bones of its former owners.

The artifact is found as box; the *Teufelherz* itself is inside. The box, allegedly made from the wood of Thor’s Tree, is carved from a dark, spongy biological material, damp and rotten, similar in some ways to musculature. The box is rounded, perhaps three feet in diameter, and is both hinged and tied shut with straps of a strange leather or ligament. Symbols of unknown (possibly alchemical) significance are carved on the outside. There is a faint odour of putrescence, similar to the smell given off by gangrene.

The heart inside is withered, the size of an orange, and has two separate pumps, similar to crocodilians, birds and mammals. **Medicine** or **Biology** might be fooled into thinking it a crocodile’s heart, but significant differences in

the ventricle system indicate a completely different species.

In fact, **Cthulhu Mythos** identifies the symbol as an Elder Sign. The Sign is a late addition, put there by those who opposed the cult and who wanted *das Teufelherz* lost forever. The box is not wood but the flesh of one of the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, as is the heart.

In the early days of the Christian faith the saints came to pagan Germany to stamp out diabolic practices, among them worship of the god Thor. Saint Boniface is supposed to have proved the power of God by cutting down the ancient oak, sacred to the Thunder God, in the 8th century. In fact the destruction of the cult and its sacred protector is the source of this dimly remembered story.

Survivors of the cult crafted the heart and box and carried them off for safekeeping. When Geiss executed the Queen of the Witches, the box and its contents were captured, but those who possessed *das Teufelherz* feared what might happen if they tried to destroy it. Instead they hid it with the corpses of the cultists.

Examining the box and heart calls for **Stability 3**.

Meditated over and studied, *das Teufelherz* is worth +2 potential Magic and +1 **Cthulhu Mythos**. It also reduces the Inertia (–4) of any Dark Young summoned or bound by someone holding *das Teufelherz*.

On two ritual days of the year (Keeper’s choice as to when) it secretes a black, milky liquid that can be collected and used as a poison. When handling this liquid care must be taken to avoid direct contact with skin. It’s a hallucinogen that induces muscular contractions, vomiting and death; +0 damage/round, 4 rounds duration. ☸

TALE OF TERROR

THE MOCK AUCTION

By ADAM GAUNTLETT

This Victorian Tale of Terror is based on an entry from *Dickens's Dictionary of London 1888*. The following is a direct quote from the *Dictionary*:

The MOCK AUCTION is a swindle, pure and simple. It is commonly carried on in a small shop, carefully darkened by filling in the window with all kinds of ostensible merchandise, and tenanted chiefly by the proprietor and his confederates, who keep up a lively bidding till some unwary passer-by is seduced into entering, and speedily 'stuck' with some worthless article at a fabulous price. Should the victim find he is called upon to pay too dearly for his folly, he may, by stoutly denying having made any bid, calling for the police, and, if necessary, showing fight, make his way out again scot free. But he will possibly be roughly handled, probably have his pocket picked, and certainly pass a mauvais quart d'heure.



CATALÁ

The protagonists are the suckers in this Tale. They are stuck with a small statuette that doesn't look valuable. The others in the room are all rough-looking types; in the gloom, they may appear sub-human. The proprietor is a very burly man, nearly a giant, whose leer is far from friendly. There are no constables in sight. There is, however, an odd-looking ikon balanced precariously on the piles of tat that may be really valuable. It is in an eastern European style and may have Mythos significance -- but there is no guarantee it is for sale.

OPTION 1: CURSED

The protagonists have been stuck with a worthless item, and the ikon is no more valuable than the statue they already have. The proprietor is a wizard with some small power and hexes the protagonists with the evil eye or infests their dreams with nightmares. He may remove this curse for a small fee. Protagonists who want to fight back will have to find out exactly how he cursed them; there may be a way to turn his magic back on him.

OPTION 2: A LA CARTE

The protagonists' statue and the ikon are both worthless. Several ghouls are in the crowd of confederates, while the others are humans on their way to ghoulish transformation. Any weakness on the protagonists' part may provoke a bloody reaction. Showing fight, on the other hand, piques their interest. They may follow the protagonists to their homes, thinking to ambush them later and carve up their tender meats for a banquet. The proprietor is their leader.

OPTION 3: THE CONDUIT

The ikon is something really interesting. It was created by a devotee of Shub-Niggurath and offers a means of directly contacting the Old One in her Great God Pan avatar form. The ritual needed isn't known to the protagonists but could be researched, and study of the ikon grants +1 Cthulhu Mythos as well as a 1D4+1 SAN loss. The proprietor is unwilling to sell but can be persuaded. However, soon afterward he is made aware of the true value of the item, and will go to any lengths to get it back. 

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OTHER S/W 24/5 SOCKETS
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BOBBLE PETITE SH
RED DIAMOND WINE
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Graham Sdwalingey

UNAUSSPRECHLICHEN KLUTZEN

A *Fiasco* Playset

WRITTEN BY GRAHAM WALMSLEY

EDITED BY STEVE SEGEDY

COVER ART BY JASON MORNINGSTAR

Thank you to Jennifer Wong, Giulia Barbano and Scott Dorward. Thanks to Ryan Shelton for the name.

BOILERPLATE

This playset is an accessory for the *Fiasco* role-playing game by Bully Pulpit Games.

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For more information about *Fiasco* or to download other playsets and materials, visit www.bullypulpitgames.com.

If you'd like to create your own playset or other *Fiasco*-related content, we'd like to help. Write us at info@bullypulpitgames.com.

THE SCORE

ARE YOU INSANE?

All you wanted to do was impress the cute redhead from the coffee shop. Several ancient texts later, there's a mile-high squid striding across the landscape, devastating everything in its path. And you're pretty sure it just stepped on the redhead.

Unaussprechlichen Klutzen takes H.P. Lovecraft's stories and repeats them as farce. It smashes together worldly ambitions with world-destroying horror.

BOOK CLUB

The Atrocity Archives, Charles Stross. *A Study In Emerald*, Neil Gaiman. Everything by H.P. Lovecraft and Ramsey Campbell.

But don't worry about being faithful to anything that Lovecraft wrote. Make it up. You want Mi-Go to look like reindeer? Or Cthulhu to resemble the Marshmallow Man? Go ahead.

In fact, you needn't know anything about Lovecraft to play this playset. Simply read any unusual name (Cthulhu, Cthonian, Mi-Go) as "Big Bad Thing". You'll be right.

OPTIONAL RULE: MADNESS AND INSIGHT

This optional rule uses the Stunt Dice: Golden Panda Style hack from the *Fiasco Companion*.

Replace one black die with a green Madness Die and one white die with a clear Insight Die.

When the Madness Die is chosen, the scene ends badly, as if the die were black. However, the player whose scene it is must narrate their character's mind breaking. That character goes irretrievably mad.

When the Insight Die is chosen, the scene ends well, as if the die was white. And the player whose scene it is must narrate their character suddenly understanding the horror of the cosmos. This also means they go irretrievably mad, of course. But in a happy, gleeful way.

If you get Madness or Insight, you don't leave the game. You keep playing. Madly.

RELATIONSHIPS . . .

1 WORK

- ☐ Librarian and borrower
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Vendor and customer
- ☐ Artists
- ☐ Therapist and patient
- ☐ Drifters

2 FRIENDSHIP

- ☐ Friends since childhood
- ☐ Fellow thrillseekers
- ☐ Correspondents who, until now, have never met
- ☐ Bully and follower
- ☐ Barflies
- ☐ Best friends forever

3 FAMILY

- ☐ Newlyweds
- ☐ Parent and child
- ☐ Distant cousins
- ☐ Uncle/aunt and nephew/niece
- ☐ Sick relative and caretaker
- ☐ Siblings

4 ROMANCE

- ☐ Service worker and customer with inappropriate crush
- ☐ Star-crossed lovers
- ☐ Flirtatious co-workers
- ☐ A blind date
- ☐ Boss and subordinate
- ☐ Lovers too shy to tell

5 CRIME

- ☐ Frustrated hitmen
- ☐ Fence / Supplier
- ☐ Gambler / Bookie
- ☐ Con man / mark
- ☐ Crime boss / Second-in-command
- ☐ Lackeys

6 MYSTERIOUS

- ☐ "I am writing to invite you to witness a peculiar event"
- ☐ "I have news of your family"
- ☐ "I have certain evidence that you may wish to see"
- ☐ "I am unsure what drew me here"
- ☐ "I have an offer for you, which you may find surprising"
- ☐ "I had a dream"

. . . IN OUR DOOMED WORLD

NEEDS . . .

1 TO GET LAID

- ☐ ... for the first time
- ☐ ... with the love of your life
- ☐ ... to have kids
- ☐ ... with someone dark and dangerous
- ☐ ... with that person you cannot bring yourself to talk to
- ☐ ... for research purposes

2 TO FIGURE OUT

- ☐ ... why that thing is at that angle
- ☐ ... what the letters mean
- ☐ ... who your parents really are
- ☐ ... the truth behind the stories you heard as a child
- ☐ ... the strangely-shaped pattern you keep seeing
- ☐ ... everything

3 TO GET REVENGE

- ☐ ... for a prank that was not funny
- ☐ ... for a relationship that went wrong
- ☐ ... for years of thankless hard work
- ☐ ... on everyone who doubted your dreams
- ☐ ... on the thief of your family's heirloom
- ☐ ... on the whole damn town. No, world. No, maybe just town.

4 TO GET POWER

- ☐ ... over people's minds
- ☐ ... over the person you love
- ☐ ... to give moral guidance
- ☐ ... before T K Sedgewick does
- ☐ ... to protect the city you love
- ☐ ... to live forever

5 TO GET THE JOB DONE

- ☐ ... by finishing the construction
- ☐ ... by opening the best damn fish restaurant in town
- ☐ ... by getting everyone to see the show
- ☐ ... by beating Wilson at his own game
- ☐ ... by winning the game
- ☐ ... by Friday at 7.30pm

6 TO BE HAPPY

- ☐ ... with the best cup of light-roast coffee in the city
- ☐ ... with a nice, normal family
- ☐ ... by chemical means
- ☐ ... by getting the hell out of here
- ☐ ... through the power of art
- ☐ ... by living like there's no tomorrow

. . . IN OUR DOOMED WORLD

LOCATIONS . . .

1 THE CITY

- A rented room, with blackened walls
- ◻ A shadowed, cobbled street
- ◻ A courtyard of strange dimensions
- ◻ A maze of alleyways
- ◻ A district of ill-repute
- ◻ Lost

2 THE TOWN

- The Ellingboe Museum
- ◻ A restaurant, smelling of damp and bile
- ◻ A shop of blasphemous trinkets
- ◻ The creaking, stinking docks
- ◻ A bookshop with no customers
- ◻ A flowery, hillside suburb

3 THE UNIVERSITY

- An old laboratory bench, partly burned
- ◻ A locked room, filled with annotated charts
- ◻ The furthest corner of the library
- ◻ Professor Parkhurst's former office
- ◻ The specimen room
- ◻ The room that makes you want to run

4 OLD

- The clifftop house, whispered about but rarely visited
- ◻ A dark church of twisted architecture
- ◻ Squat, uninhabited stone huts
- ◻ Stone circles on remote hillsides
- ◻ A farm, where the animals are strangely quiet
- ◻ The Whitmore House

5 UNDERGROUND

- The blocked entrance to long-forgotten catacombs
- ◻ Passageways between cellars
- ◻ Mining tunnels, where strange voices echo
- ◻ Caves whose existence was rumoured, but never proved
- ◻ An eerily beautiful ancient city
- ◻ A dark and oppressive ancient city

6 LONELY PLACES

- An ever-shifting, icy plain
- ◻ A windy, dreamlike desert
- ◻ A vast, timeless and uncaring forest
- ◻ A twisting wood of folktales
- ◻ A foggy, howling moor
- ◻ The *Jennifer*, a ship

. . . IN OUR DOOMED WORLD

THINGS . . .

1 ARTISTIC

- ◻ A painting of blood and flesh
- ◻◻ Purposeful, mocking music
- ◻◻◻ A monstrous carving in unknown stone
- ◻◻◻◻ Whirling, reminiscent dancing
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Daemonic piping
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ “Let us never speak of the thing in the box”

2 LITERARY

- ◻ Darkly significant scribbles
- ◻◻ A warning, nonsensical yet worrisome
- ◻◻◻ An invitation, unusual yet compelling
- ◻◻◻◻ A letter, regarding events, folktales and conjecture
- ◻◻◻◻◻ An unspeakable oath
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ A surprising translation of the Necronomicon,

3 MUNDANE

- ◻ An unscrewed doorknob, carefully hidden
- ◻◻ A blackened key
- ◻◻◻ A gun with two shots fired
- ◻◻◻◻ A flask of coffee, smelling faintly of juniper
- ◻◻◻◻◻ A previously-unnoticed door
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ Thick, velvet curtains, smelling of dust

4 ANCIENT

- ◻ An inscribed stone of disturbing colour
- ◻◻ A constellation of stars
- ◻◻◻ Carvings depicting the history of a race
- ◻◻◻◻ Mathematical etchings
- ◻◻◻◻◻ Jewellery, glowing, eerie and beautiful
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ A technological device of unknown purpose

5 SCIENTIFIC

- ◻ A meteorite, embedded in the wet earth
- ◻◻ A crackling radio
- ◻◻◻ Dissection equipment, not yet cleaned
- ◻◻◻◻ A device for boring through rock
- ◻◻◻◻◻ A darkly stained map
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ A wax cylinder, on which voices are recorded

6 INEXPLICABLE

- ◻ A mechanical cylinder
- ◻◻ A Shining Trapezohedron of strange insights
- ◻◻◻ A pearlescent sphere in a carved box
- ◻◻◻◻ A corpse, slowly dissolving
- ◻◻◻◻◻ An amulet, inscribed with a picture
- ◻◻◻◻◻◻ A bloodstained opening

. . . IN OUR DOOMED WORLD

BAD IDEAS

Here are bad ways to solve your characters' problems. Try them out!

RAISE CTHULHU

Cthulhu is a big squid-like thing who sleeps under the Pacific ocean. He sends dreams to people and grants immortality. With your help, he can rise from his watery grave and take over the world.

ACCEPT A MI-GO'S OFFER

The Winged Ones have buzzing voices and build mines in remote areas. They offer to show you the universe. This means removing your brain and putting it in a space-travelling container. Omelettes, eggs.

MAKE A DEAL WITH THE DEEP ONES

They live under the sea and make deals with humans. Most often, the deal is: you give them sacrifices, they give you gold and fish. They might also mate with you, producing hybrid offspring. Go with it.

SUMMON A SHOGGOTH

Shoggoths are huge, bubbly, amorphous and multi-talented. They rush towards people and eat their heads. They also imitate voices, making them popular at parties.

STEAL A MYSTICAL OBJECT

Try stealing a Shining Trapezedron, a Cthonian egg or a Hound's amulet. What have you got to lose?

FIND A SPELL

For any other problem, there's a spell to fix it. Whether you want immortality, resurrection or simply a source of food, there's an incantation to fit your needs. Ask your local occultist. 

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

You'll like Graham Walmsley's *Stealing Cthulhu*. As he puts it, "Many Cthulhu games feel the same. You shoot cultists. You do rituals. You unearth a buried god that's like every other god you've dug up. This book shows you how to make your games new and horrifying: by stealing from H.P. Lovecraft."

***Stealing Cthulhu* also contains *Cthulhu Dark*, a complete, rules-light roleplaying game.**

You can find out more at Graham's site, Thieves of Time: www.thievesoftime.com.

THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND FACES

A 1920s Scenario for *Call of Cthulhu*

By RICHARD A. BECKER

Malcolm Bainbridge, world-famous star of the silent screen, has retired into the life of a recluse in his sprawling mansion of Dellfaire in the Hollywood Hills. But his life is far from quiet.

INTRODUCTION

The Investigators—we assume they are private investigators with contacts in southern California; adjust to suit your campaign—are contacted by an old acquaintance, Hollywood acting agent Elliot Cline. Cline is a tall, good-looking man in his early 40s, with good taste in clothing and automobiles and a very conservative home life. He cut his teeth as a junior agent on Broadway and he's made a real name for himself out west in the frontier of movieland.

Cline meets them for coffee and a late lunch at the chic industry restaurant Musso and Frank's Grill on Hollywood Boulevard. He explains that his partner, Robert Berkham, has gone missing from work for about a week. He would like to discuss the matter with the Investigators further at his office, in privacy. He will make it well worth their while, but he needs to be sure he count on their absolute discretion and secrecy. If they agree, the scenario can proceed from there.

SMALLER IS BETTER

Call of Cthulhu typically works best with investigating parties no larger than four or five people. This scenario is not intended to accommodate larger groups than this, and fewer would be better. It should begin with the investigators already united as a group and ready to begin. You may find four pregenerated Investigators on page 55.



MEETING ELLIOT CLINE

The Investigators go with Cline to the offices of Berkham & Cline on Vine Street. After a few moments of pleasantries, Cline gets to business. He explains that Berkham, who represents world-famous movie star Malcolm Bainbridge, hasn't been home or at the office for about a week, not since he went to visit Bainbridge at his estate (called "Dellfaire") in the Hollywood Hills, only half a mile away. Cline worries that something has happened to his friend and business associate, but it's imperative that an investigation be conducted quietly.

Berkham has a few vices, it's true, but nothing that would necessitate his disappearing, as far as Cline knows. Moreover, the two men had no secrets from one another, and while Cline may be a straight arrow nowadays, he and Berkham raised plenty of hell back in New York in their early years working together. So he's certain that it isn't a case of Berkham fleeing a scandal that he couldn't tell his partner about. The agency's books are completely on the up and up.

What really worries Cline is that he thinks Bainbridge may be responsible for whatever has happened. Several months ago, Bainbridge dropped out of public view after a series of strange, violent seizures and refused to communicate with most of the outside world, retaining only his "taciturn oriental manservant," a "mysterious foreigner" named Han. (Cline has never visited Dellfaire and has never met Bainbridge's servant. He's only met Bainbridge and his wife a few times, always on business.) Bainbridge is clearly not well.

Berkham had confided in Cline that the actor didn't have any addictions he knew about, but had been acting very strangely for the past couple of years. Apparently, Malcolm Bainbridge had been behaving erratically both on the set and toward his wife and small son. He had also made increasingly strange requests of the studios, particularly a demand that there be no mirrors in his dressing room and that no one visit him there between takes without his express prior permission—not even producers or directors.

Shortly before he dropped out of view, Bainbridge sent his wife Paulette away with their child, Malcolm Jr. Only his sole remaining servant, Han, was left with him at Dellfaire, and then even Han stopped appearing in public. About two months ago, Bainbridge ripped out his telephone and could only be reached in person. Rumors abound. Bainbridge's career is faltering. Cline's partner Berkham went to see Bainbridge, and now Berkham is missing. Cline is certain that the trail leads directly to Dellfaire.

These are matters of great urgency, but Mr. Cline is crystal-clear: It is imperative that no one involve the police or the press. The studio is still deeply staked in Bainbridge's career, Bainbridge is worth a lot of money both in his personal fortune and to the studio, police and city officials are extremely corrupt and unreliable, and there is a lot of money in blackmailing movie stars over indiscretions. No matter what, this must be kept quiet as the tomb.

Cline is deadly earnest that the police are not to be trusted. If they smell blood money, they will bite into Bainbridge's estate and life like a bulldog and never let go. He warns the investigators that if they ignore his words, it could mean incredibly serious trouble for them.

Cline wants the investigators to go to Dellfaire as his trusted representatives and find out what happened to Robert Berkham. He will pay them well for this, and for information about Malcolm Bainbridge's current condition and likelihood to return to work for the studio. Cline has been in contact with Bainbridge's wife, Paulette, and he agrees with her that Malcolm Bainbridge may need to be committed to a mental hospital until he's well enough to function again.

Assuming investigators agree, Cline gives them the address of Dellfaire and a letter of introduction that shows they work for him. He directs them to visit Mrs. Bainbridge at her hotel so that they can speak with her and collect the necessary keys to get into Dellfaire (though he points out that they had better knock and announce themselves to Malcolm in any case).

Photoplay Magazine, March 192

MALCOLM MEDITATES ON MOVIE MAGIC

by Miss Sylvia Sackett

MR. MALCOLM BAINBRIDGE, the miraculous Man of Many Roles, has elected to seclude himself for "an indeterminate period to meditate on his art," according to a statement from Mr. Bainbridge's agent Robert Berkham of the firm of Berkham and Cline. Citing a need for "clarity of mind" for his acting, Bainbridge has disappointed his millions of fans, who remember his uncanny performances in "The Sideshow Man" and the chilling "Wolf of Paris." But we're certain they'll be queueing up in droves for the next Bainbridge masterpiece.



Malcolm Bainbridge, star of the silent screen

Investigators may wish to check out Berkham more thoroughly than Cline suggests. Cline isn't very keen on this, but permits them to examine Berkham's appointment book. Cline tells them that he's already spoken with both of the people Berkham met before going to Dellfaire (a casting director and a studio executive) and that they're completely above suspicion. Investigating Berkham yields nothing but red herrings.

MEETING MRS. BAINBRIDGE

Paulette and little Malcolm Jr. live at the plush, newly opened Hollywood Knickerbocker Hotel, located at 1714 Ivar Avenue, half a block north of Hollywood Boulevard and one block west of Vine Street. She is a pretty, good-natured woman in her late 20s, with short red hair and cool green eyes. Mrs. Bainbridge is quite petite for a woman who had a strapping baby boy only a few years ago. The adorable little boy, who is now four years old, is napping in the other room.

She has been expecting the investigators (Cline phoned after they left his office) and offers them coffee and coffee cake. They sit down together in the living room of the comfortable hotel suite and talk.

Paulette sincerely and emotionally insists that none of this is Malcolm's fault, he's a good man, a good husband and a good father. Something strange and very frightening has happened to him, and she wants him to be helped.

Malcolm is one of the great character actors in Hollywood. He's the only screen rival to Lon Chaney, and is famous in his own right as "Bainbridge the Astounding," an actor whose skills in disguise and mimicry are so formidable that he seems to disappear into the weird and fantastic roles he plays. This quality has rendered him a box-office competitor with Fairbanks, Lloyd, and Pickford. But at the height of his career, he has withdrawn from all contact with humanity beyond handwritten messages in a nerve-strained scrawl. And although it has been kept (barely) from the gossip columnists, Bainbridge has sent away his wife and son.

Bainbridge had always been a very secretive, withdrawn actor while on the job, and didn't like to share in his performing process until he was actually on the set with the rest of the cast. But he had always treated everyone well. It wasn't until the last year that things had gone terribly wrong.

At around the same time that he became strangely withdrawn, Malcolm Bainbridge began to wake in the night screaming. He slowly became more and more violent and unstable—never toward Paulette or their son, but toward himself and his surroundings. He expressed a great hatred and dread of mirrors.

One day he smashed every mirror in his opulent mansion. Paulette and Malcolm Jr. could no longer bear the strain of his increasing violence and they fled the great house in the dark of night as Bainbridge screamed.

Paulette is deeply distraught and emotionally as fragile as thin glass. It's nothing to do with money; Bainbridge's riches are fully accessible to her and Malcolm Jr. They want for nothing—nothing but the man she loves, the father of her son.

Whatever's wrong, Paulette is certain that modern medicine can help. In addition to what Mr. Cline has asked of them, Mrs. Bainbridge wants the Investigators to enter the mansion and collect evidence needed to commit her husband to the insane asylum so that he can be given the help he needs. If it's at all possible, she wants them to convince Malcolm to surrender himself to psychiatric care so that he doesn't have to wait out a lengthy commitment procedure. She will be glad to add her own fee to whatever Cline is paying. Like Cline, Paulette insists that this be kept as quiet as possible. Malcolm's reputation and their son's future are at stake.

She will not permit the Investigators to talk to the little boy, who she insists understands none of this. (He does

not.) If asked about the “oriental manservant,” Han, she has very little to say. He was just the help. Careful questioning could pry out of her that Jack Han is merely an ordinary, older Chinese-American, rather than some stereotypical “oriental archfiend,” but she wouldn’t even think to volunteer that information. Han is the last thing on her mind.

HOLLYWOOD IN THE 1920s

It is impossible to fully flesh out the details of Hollywood in the 1920s in this scenario, but it can be summarized as a movie boomtown—a sleepy suburb of a growing agricultural city that has suddenly been flooded with vast mountains of cash by the movie business.

The sign overlooking the city is only two years old and still reads “HOLLYWOODLAND.” There are no freeways, but there are many fruit orchards and housing developments linked by long, efficient public transit trolley lines. There isn’t even any real smog yet.

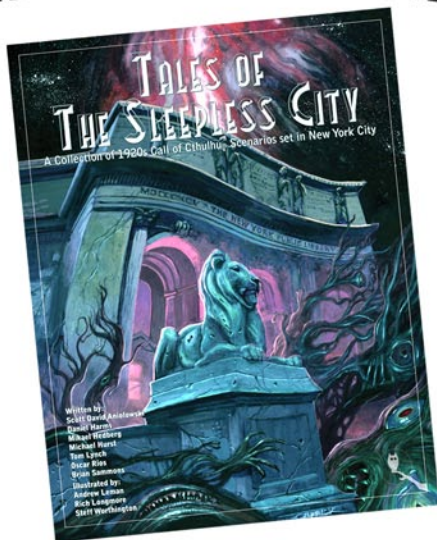
There are already a few very impressive structures, including opulent movie palaces, the stylish upscale restaurant Musso & Frank’s Grill (opened in 1919) and the gleaming white spire of Los Angeles City Hall that

is under construction and due to open in just another couple of years. Though the city is dotted with many small airfields, it has no major airport or commercial air traffic yet, and interstate visitors either struggle to Los Angeles across gravel highways full of potholes or, more likely, by means of sleek diesel trains that disembark in the little borough of Pasadena. They then either book a room in a local hotel in Pasadena or take the trolley (or hire a car to drive) into the heart of Los Angeles. From there, Hollywood is a short jaunt westward, down long streets lined by palm trees, small businesses, orchards and little farms.

The movie studios are the city’s new empire, cheek by jowl with the old money of Los Angeles agriculture and oil, and fortunes are made and lost in the wink of an eye. The government and police department are dirty from top to bottom, and they keep a finger in every pie, especially the motion picture industry. The richest people in Los Angeles live in enclaves such as Beverly Hills and San Marino, but the nouveau riche cluster together in seaside colonies like Malibu and Santa Monica or up in the hills and mountains. Many movie stars and studio executives have large and expensive estates in the Hollywood Hills overlooking the town of Hollywood itself. One such estate is Dellfaire, home of Malcolm Bainbridge.

Coming Soon from Miskatonic River Press

CTHULHU TAKES THE BIG APPLE!



Scenarios by Scott David Aniolowski,
Dan Harms, Oscar Rios,
Brian Sammons, and more!
With Handouts by the HPLHS!



Edited by Joseph S. Pulver, Sr, this anthology contains deluded visions of Dim Carcosa with new fiction from Barron, Lupoff, Strantzias, Gavin, Goodfellow, Pulver, and more.

The King in Yellow is calling;
spend A Season in Carcosa.

The Strange Dark One is
W. H. Pugmire's tribute to
none other than Nyarlathotep.
Worship at the altar with the
Queen of Eldritch Horror!



KEEPER INFORMATION

In the days before the magic of silent films, Bainbridge had already had spent years on the stage in both theater and magic, with his mentor, escape artist/illusionist the Amazing Kolzow. (Karl Kolzow, 1860-1922.) While touring, Kolzow introduced Bainbridge to an old friend, the fantastically gifted actor Guillaume Willette, who told Malcolm Bainbridge about the whispered magicks of faraway Tibet, which were said to enable a man to take on any appearance.

Bainbridge traveled Asia to discover the truth about what Willette had said. In Tibet, on the lamentable Plateau of Tsang, he met a sinister group of asiatic-looking men led by a shaman called the Lesser Lama. This tribe of Tcho-Tchos taught Bainbridge the magical skill to become any role he chose, at a certain price. At the time he thought the price would be worth paying.

Slowly, Bainbridge began to see tiny, distorted pustules appearing in his reflection in the mirror. They were invisible and undetectable otherwise, but eventually they became distinct in his looking-glass as tiny, abhorrent faces.

The discovery began to drive him mad. But far worse was that in the back of his mind he began to hear their voices, which whispered incessantly of unspeakable, primordial secrets.

Bainbridge began to wake in the night, overcome with alien urges too horrible to contemplate. One day he smashed every mirror in his opulent mansion to end the sight of the obscenely mewling faces. His wife and son fled the great house in the dark of night as Bainbridge screamed at himself to be silent.

Soon after his wife's flight, Bainbridge had his servant Mr. Han barricade him inside a guest bedroom to keep him from doing anyone harm, but Bainbridge soon escaped the self-imposed prison. Bainbridge's delusions deepened. He quarreled with Han at length, accusing him of being a member of the Tcho-Tcho tribe of Tibet and finally imploring the "sorcerer" to remove the curse of his power. Han tried to flee, insisting he knew no such secrets or mysteries, and Bainbridge walled the old man up alive in the wine cellar. (One of Mr. Bainbridge's most famous roles was in a 1923 adaptation of Poe's "Cask of Amontillado.")

Bainbridge has torn out his telephone, and passes notes and money for supplies to delivery boys from the markets in town. Neighbors receive no reply to complaints that his garden and lawns are overgrown, fire-hazardous jungles. The strange noises that might often be heard faintly across the manor grounds are drowned out by his neighbors' loud parties.

His lawyer and agent have been at cross-purposes all along in this matter. His lawyer has faithfully executed Bainbridge's wishes, in spite of his own opinions. Bainbridge's agent, Robert Berkham, fearing the end of a paying prospect, has not been so amenable to the actor's need for privacy.

Only a week ago, the agent came to visit Bainbridge and convince him to return to his career. During a heated discussion, Bainbridge struck him in the head with a heavy blunt object, in a fashion not unlike Bainbridge's role in the 1922 film, *The Unholy*. Mr. Berkham's corpse is now decaying slowly in the pantry of Dellfaire.

Bainbridge now wanders his house, sometimes reenacting strangely distorted performances of scenes from his most successful movies, and sometimes merely weeping and looking for the life and loved ones he can no longer find. The police have not yet been informed of Berkham's disappearance.



RESEARCHING BAINBRIDGE

Most of the information available about Bainbridge through Library Use rolls is nothing but P.R. fluff (though it does give investigators access to his filmography; see page 52). Inquiries into his travels reveal his journey to Tibet and his claims to have learned mystic secrets in the far east. Nowadays, with chintzy Orientalia and Egyptian fever running amok, that usually seeks like hype and hokum. But in this case, the hints that Bainbridge gives in interviews ring strangely true: His descriptions of the places and culture of Tibet are easily discovered to be accurate, and his metaphysics sound more like the actual Tibetan Book of the Dead than warmed-over theosophy. He is not clear about exactly what he learned, but he says cryptically that "It opened new vistas in my acting ability that I never imagined possible before."

Reading up on the situation in newspapers and magazines yields nothing of any real value. The yellow journalists haven't gotten anything concrete, and the scandal columnists have all been paid off. They've all gotten the idea in their heads that Malcolm Bainbridge is suffering the hell of alcoholic detoxification, and that right now he's in a nice private sanitarium near Santa Barbara screaming at the pink elephants on the ceiling.

Should Investigators let members of the press know what they're doing (or worse, what triggered the investigation), they have betrayed their employer and will cause the deaths of 1D4+2 NPC reporters who try to "scoop" them by getting into Dellfaire before the Investigators. All of these NPCs will be tricked and killed by Bainbridge, and the Keeper should describe the scenes of their deaths as desired.

If the Investigators' employer ever learns of their betrayal, they will be fired immediately.

BAINBRIDGE'S LAWYER

If investigators visit Bainbridge's attorney, Oliver Cuttle of the law firm of Torinsky, Cuttle and Tate, they get no answers. Bainbridge is his client and he does not work for anyone else in the scenario. Cuttle is sympathetic to Mrs. Bainbridge and little Malcolm Jr. and sees it as his duty to protect their interests according to his client's instructions, but he does not answer to Mrs. Bainbridge or Mr. Cline and has no reason to believe his client is incapable of making responsible decisions for himself. In fact, Cuttle is very wary of anyone attempting to have Bainbridge committed, or even to investigate Bainbridge, and he may very well warn the Investigators to keep away from Dellfaire.

If he is convinced that they intend to bother Malcolm Bainbridge, Cuttle may call the police himself to go after the Investigators. Cuttle also speaks with Cline and Mrs. Bainbridge if this happens, which leads them to confide their worries in him. Cuttle then, in 1D4 days, goes to Dellfaire alone to speak with Malcolm Bainbridge. An hour or two later Cuttle's dead body is dumped in the middle of the unused swimming pool at the estate.

INTERVIEWING THE POLICE

Mr. Cline said not to involve the police before the Investigators set out on their case. If they disobey him and go to ask the police what they know, they will be in for a little education about life in the early 20th century. If any of the Investigators are police officers from out of town, they will be given grudging courtesy from their brother officers but will be told they are out of their jurisdiction and that they need to have a beer and go home. Hell, the

boys will go with them and they can have a few laughs. The police know nothing useful about Bainbridge or his situation. If none of the Investigators is a police officer (or a similar public official, such as a federal agent), things will go much worse for them.

As it turns out, the Los Angeles Police Department's Hollywood Division is not in the habit of answering questions about possible crimes. Instead, they quickly turn the situation around and begin questioning the Investigators. Who are they? How do they know something is wrong? Did a criminal tip them off? A fellow criminal, that is? Why are they investigating this? Why did they think they could question the police? Mr. Bainbridge's address is not publicly known, so where did they get it? Will they be so kind as to empty their pockets? This last is not a request, and if it is refused, they are met with armed force. If they do not resist, they will be held for a few hours of questioning. If they resist without violence, they will be held for 24 hours while they are investigated. If they resist with non-lethal force, they will be beaten severely. If they resist with lethal force, they will be killed.

The Investigators might sit tight and say nothing about who hired them or why they are looking into things. That will work once, and after a short questioning they will be sent away with a warning. If they are taken in again and refuse to answer questions, they will be given very rough treatment and the police will check on Bainbridge's estate. Bainbridge will fool them into going away, though they will have ideas of a juicy insanity scandal in their heads.

If the Investigators blab about their employer, or if the police go to the estate while the Investigators cool their heels in a holding cell, they are embroiled briefly in a nasty spat of extortion. The cops smell the Bainbridge fortune and the studios' desire to keep things quiet, and they go after Paulette Bainbridge and Elliot Cline for a truckload of hush money. Paulette and Cline have no choice but to give fat bribes to the police, and then quietly and angrily pay off the Investigators, furiously asking them to go away and never come back.

If the Investigators choose to proceed to investigate Dellfaire and Malcolm Bainbridge's condition at that point, they are burglars and are dealt with in that fashion.

CALLING THE EMPLOYERS

Over the course of the scenario, investigators may wish to contact Mr. Cline or Mrs. Bainbridge and discuss the best course of action. Since there is no working telephone service at Dellfaire, they will need to leave the estate and either go bother the neighbors for the use of their phone or go down from the Hollywood Hills into the main streets of town to use a public payphone. Either course of action could work, depending on the hour of night (they would

need to go to a bar or nightclub to use a phone after 9 p.m.). If the investigators choose this highly 21st century course of action (the long-distance “tether to the home office”), they receive one of two general responses:

CALLING MR. CLINE

Cline is angry and troubled that the investigators are calling him to find out what he wants them to do. Do they need someone to come wipe their noses for them? He hired them to do a job. Malcolm’s killed someone?! Oh my God, that’s impossible. Are they sure? “Please, for God’s sake, don’t tell anyone. I’ll make sure it’s worth your while. Don’t go back there to Dellfaire, just stay by a phone and I’ll call you tomorrow.”

Cline goes to Dellfaire alone the next day to see if what the investigators said was true. They never hear from him again. Bainbridge hides Cline’s body at Dellfaire. Cline’s lawyer understands the confidential nature of the Bainbridge situation and closes all of the books on his late client’s business as he executes Elliot Cline’s estate. The Investigators are paid nothing, are not acknowledged and are asked very politely to go away.

CALLING MRS. BAINBRIDGE

Mrs. Bainbridge is frightened and anxious, particularly because she thought she was hiring professionals (the Investigators), and now these amateurs have come to a housewife to ask what she thinks they should do. If the Investigators haven’t found anything too horrible, she nervously says that they should go back and finish the investigation, since that’s what she brought them in to do. If they tell her about the murders, she flies into a panicked hysteria. That’s impossible! How can they be sure? Maybe there’s someone in the house holding Malcolm hostage and killing anyone who might free him. She absolutely refuses to involve the police and begs the Investigators to tell no one. She asks them to stay near a phone and she will call them tomorrow to arrange their payment.

Paulette tearfully goes alone to Dellfaire the next day. The investigators never hear from her again. Unlike Cline, she is captured and held hostage by her deranged husband, who ties her to a bed. Within a few days her SAN is 0 and she is a catatonic shell. Malcolm lovingly feeds her random garbage and pieces of whatever he can find. She dies within a few months. Their son, Malcolm Jr., has been left with Paulette’s sister in Santa Monica, and when the estate is eventually settled the orphan boy will be rich but lonely.

DELLFAIRE

Visible across the overgrown jungle of the great lawn and gardens, Dellfaire clearly once was a palace in the grand style. The homes of Chaplin, Keaton, Pickford, and Lloyd, all are rivaled by the magnificence of Malcolm Bainbridge’s dream-house.

The opulence has become decayed and withered. Weather stains the fading paint, which seems older than it should. The hinges of the gates bleed tiny trickles of rust to the ground. Inside the house piles of clothing and scattered makeup jars lie everywhere; the house itself is a veritable museum of props and pieces of sets.

Somewhere inside lives the crazed Bainbridge, waiting to play his final roles. He might appear before the Investigators with any of his faces, in any of the rooms. He will observe them for a time before revealing himself; how he interacts with them depends greatly on how they conduct their investigation. Those who behave like burglars could meet an angry police inspector, a twisted freak intent on frightening them away, or even a like-minded hoodlum. Those who comport themselves like scientists may be met with a dignified lawyer and orator from a courtroom drama, declaiming their actions and threatening them with the fullest legal action. Undisciplined parties may be met with random chaos: visitations from princes and fiends, cleaning women and killers. Malcolm Bainbridge has become a funhouse mirror.

STAKING OUT DELLFAIRE

Given the surrounding wall and months of neglect to the landscaping, as well as the poor lighting at night, it is a waste of time to stake out Dellfaire. Investigators can see nothing from the street except the occasional glimpse of someone moving on the grounds, viewed obscurely through the wrought iron front gate. That person will be Bainbridge disguised as his wife Paulette (75% of the time) or as the fictional groundskeeper Bowman (25%). In addition there is a substantial chance that the neighbors will see the Investigators, assume that they are harassing the Bainbridges and call the police.

QUESTIONING THE NEIGHBORS

Dellfaire’s neighbors are all wealthy and influential, many of them also silent-film actors. It takes a successful Persuade, Credit Rating, or Fast Talk skill roll to simply get to see these people, and a successful Luck roll for them to be at home when the investigators come calling. If Investigators do manage to get past these barriers, they must still make a Persuade roll to get any more

information, with a modifier of -20% if the average of their POW and APP scores is less than 14.

Everyone in Hollywood knows how hard it is to grab stardom, how ephemeral it can be, and most of all how many skeletons dance in everyone's closets. Secret abortions, gay affairs, addictions to heroin, cocaine and alcohol, murders, suicides, interracial affairs, adultery, betrayals and much more haunt the homes of the new movie legends. No one is in a hurry to talk to outsiders, and this chic, snobbish in-crowd of glamour-folk have very little of importance to tell the Investigators. All they really know is that Bainbridge has probably suffered a nervous breakdown and has dismissed his servants and forced his poor wife out to stay in a Hollywood hotel down the hill. The amateur Freudians insist it's a sex problem, while others claim it's got to be alcohol. Everyone agrees it's a shame Bainbridge doesn't come round to parties anymore. He was always a really swell guy, and his wife was a peach.

The neighbors' servants are not much help, but can offer up strange, misleading tidbits of things they've seen and heard at a distance in the next-door estate.

It may be entertaining to have the investigators meet neighbors at a Hollywood party of the 1920s, complete with bathtub gin, live jazz musicians, flappers, the Fox Trot and Charleston, and even a few Mah-Jongg fanatics at a tile-covered board in a nook somewhere. Feel free to introduce red herrings in interviews with directors, stars and producers. Perhaps Bainbridge will disguise himself and infiltrate the party, feeding the Investigators false information and setting them up for later.

With a successful Luck roll or enough diligence, the Investigators run into Sybil Maybower, a siren of the silver screen, who insists that she once saw Bainbridge from the balcony of a neighboring mansion at night. The moon was full, and she saw him struggling with a smaller man near his cellar door. Before she got any of the other guests' attention, he had disappeared into the cellar.

FOOD DELIVERIES

If investigators gain access to Bainbridge's grocery bills, they discover that he receives weekly deliveries from Ralphs grocery store at Hollywood Boulevard and Western Avenue. The goods are delivered by different men who operate the truck and make their drop-offs every Sunday afternoon. They usually just leave a cardboard box full of Bainbridge's purchases at the service entrance to the main house (accessible from the side gate) and collect the signed check which is waiting there pinned to the door jamb. It's just a bunch of food and drink each week: water, milk, bourbon, coffee, butter, bread, canned food. It would be very easy to bribe a delivery man to let an Investigator take his place.



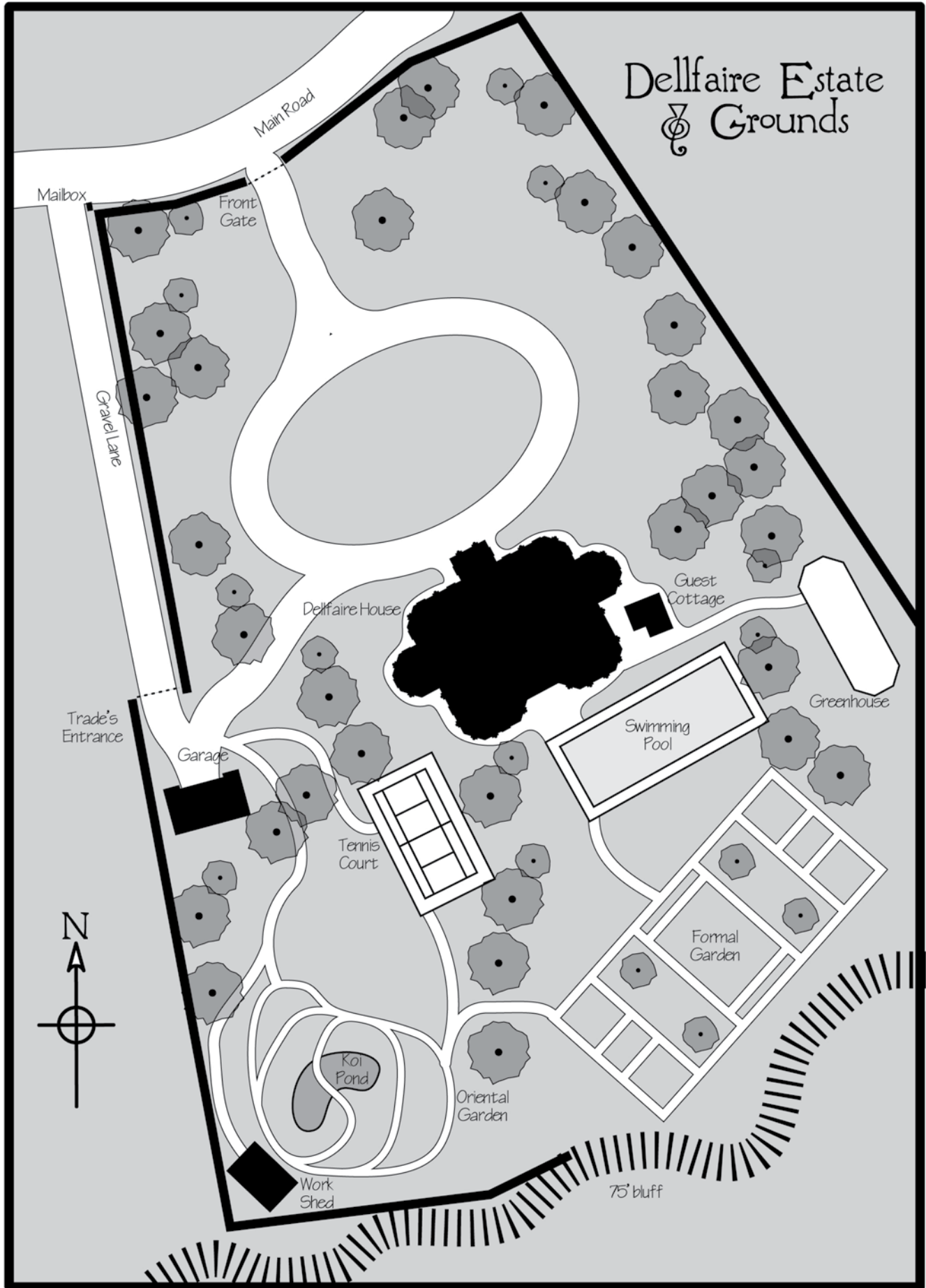
Sybil Maybower, screen siren

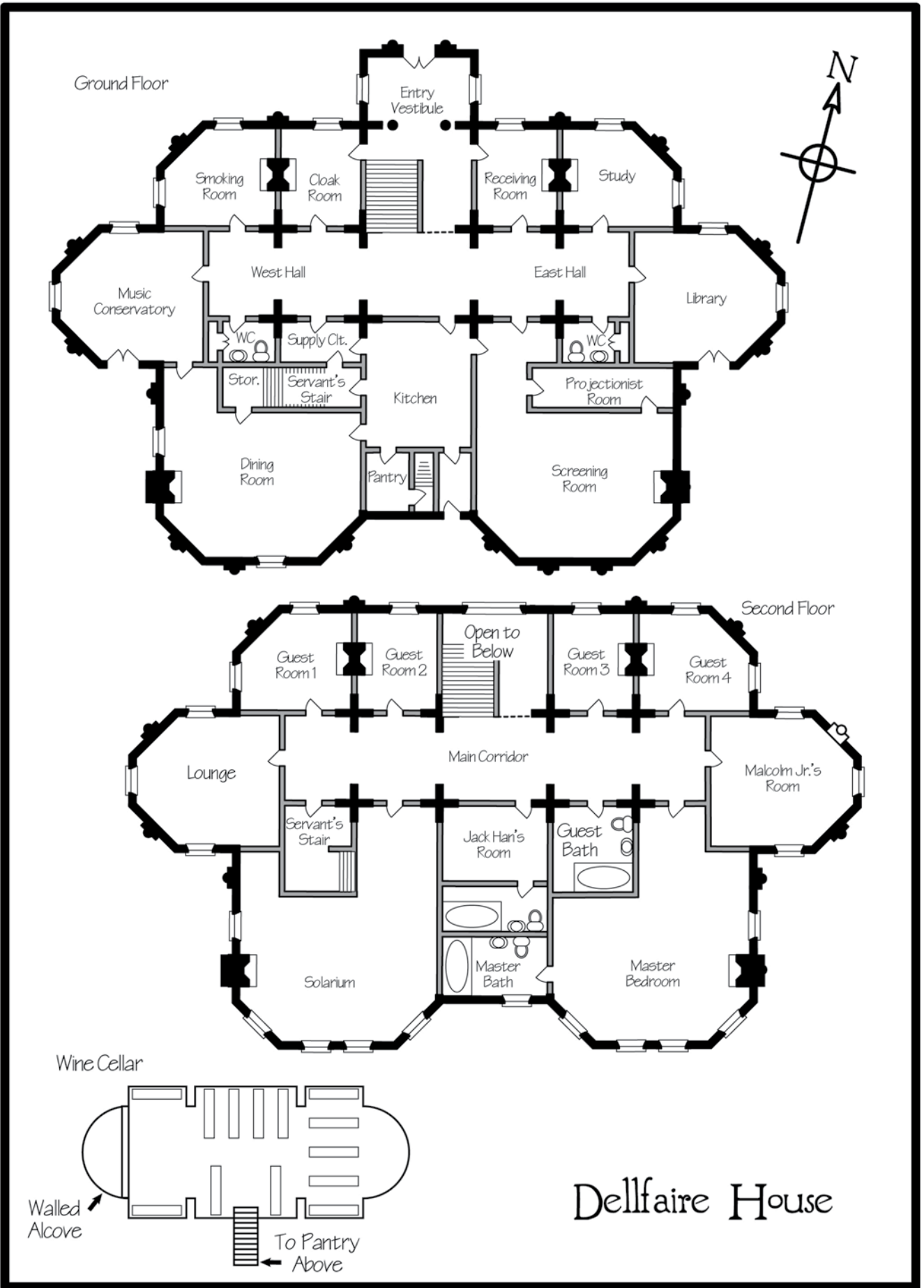
GETTING INTO DELLFAIRE

If the Investigators respectfully ask to be admitted to Dellfaire, Bainbridge, disguised as his own (nonexistent) butler or maid, will let them in. The door is locked otherwise. If the Investigators ask their employer to give them keys to the house, they will be given, but are still expected to knock before just barging in.

If they ignore all these niceties and simply break into Dellfaire, there is a 50% chance that a neighbor will see or hear them and call the police. If they are not noticed by neighbors, there is still a 50% chance that they will make enough noise on entering the gloomy, cluttered darkness of Dellfaire that Bainbridge will hear them.

In any case, no matter how they enter the house, Bainbridge will already be in disguise and "playing a role" by himself. Only during the hours of 6:00 and 9:00 a.m. can the tortured actor be found in his "natural" form, in fitful and too-brief sleep.





There are no underground utility pipes leading into or out of Dellfaire that are sufficiently large for any human being to crawl through them. There is no room to land an airplane on the estate's grounds, helicopters have not yet been invented, and everyone would see a landing via hot air balloon. The estate is landlocked. The estate is surrounded by a high wall that has one front gate and one side gate, both visible from the street. It would be extremely easy to cut the electricity to the estate from the outside, although it is difficult to imagine how that would help the Investigators.

THE ESTATE GROUNDS

The estate faces onto a quiet hillside street on one side; on the opposite side, it faces out onto a small bluff overlooking an estate about 75 feet further down the hill, and winding residential streets leading into Hollywood proper below that. The estate grounds are surrounded by a 10-foot concrete block wall topped with ornamental wrought iron spikes. Neighbors have large, multi-story houses and can see into the grounds, but it is impossible to see into them from the street except through the wrought iron front gate and a smaller side gate that's accessible by a small gravel path. An electric intercom speaker system and an old-fashioned pull-chain bell are installed at the front gate, but the side gate has only an intercom. The overgrown grounds within the walls are poorly lit by a few floodlights and path lamps that still have working lightbulbs.

LOST FACES

On several occasions, Bainbridge has become so frenzied with derangement and horror at his condition that he has torn away parts of his skin where the faces manifested in his reflection. Separated from his body, these bits of flesh have grown and continued in an awful sort of life, inspired by his madness. Unable to die until Bainbridge dies (see "The Man With a Thousand Deaths," page 45), they are mentally linked with the faces still buried in Bainbridge's flesh.

They work together like the component organisms that comprise a Portuguese man o' war; when a "scene" requires a "thrown" voice offstage to call out the right dialogue at the right moment, these discarded faces whisper, speak or shout as needed. They achieve this despite being sliced free from Bainbridge's trembling form and then desperately buried behind shelving, walls, floorboards or anywhere else he can keep them out of sight.

Investigators who find these "lost faces" lose 0/1D3 SAN for each one. At the Keeper's option, the "Getting Used to Awfulness" rules may apply.

The mailbox is stuffed with old mail for Bainbridge and his driver and servant, Jack Han. There are utility bills, a few royalty checks, notices from the company that handles Bainbridge's fan mail, several issues of *Silver Screen* magazine for Bainbridge and several issues of *American Fisherman* and *Today's Mechanics* for Jack Han.

BERKHAM'S CAR

The car is parked on the parking circle in front of the main house, untouched by anyone since the late Mr. Berkham got out of it. It's a black 1922 Gardner Roadster R with California license plates. The gas tank is two thirds full. Like all newer cars in the United States in the 1920s, it does not require an ignition key but starts at the push of a button. (The doors are locked with a key, however, and the windows are rolled up.)

GARAGE

A midnight-blue 1923 Duesenberg Model A dual-windshield Phaeton is parked in the garage. The gas tank is three quarters full. It has not been started in a long time and is covered in a thin film of gritty dust. The garage has a full selection of auto repair tools, a jerry can full of gasoline, several cans of oil, four spare tires and other replacement parts (spark plugs, fan belts, etc.).



GARDENS

There are extensive gardens on the grounds but they are all ruined now. Most of the garden landscaping was modeled on the French palace of Versailles, but one corner is “oriental” themed and features a fish pond stocked with a few surviving koi and a rock garden that has strange symbols raked into its gravel. (A Cthulhu Mythos roll reveals that it is the name of Shub-Niggurath, Black Goat of the Woods, and the name of the unholy Plateau of Tsang.)

Many small animals wander the gardens now: coyotes, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, rats, feral cats and dogs, lizards, even the occasional deer. Any of these could provide a surprise for Investigators as they hear a grunt or the sound of something running into the underbrush. Owls sometimes roost in the trees; their glowing eyes may glint in the darkness and spook the unwary.

A “Lost Face” is hidden under a thicket of yellow-bloomed rosebushes in the gardens. It occasionally whispers promises of mystic power and worldly wealth in the “Arabic” accent and otherworldly tones used by Bainbridge in the role of The Giaour in his film *Vathek, a Tale of Arabia*. The monstrous little bit of flesh is difficult to find; if investigators find it, they lose 0/1D3 SAN.

GREENHOUSE

There is a greenhouse choked with plant growth; its narrow pathways permit only single-file investigation, and vines scratch and caress the investigators’ faces and the backs of their necks.

GUEST COTTAGE

This is a lovely one-bedroom house with a sitting room, a small but complete bathroom, a small kitchen and a dining nook. It has some overturned furniture and is dusty but is more habitable than the main house. The door is unlocked.

A “Lost Face” hidden under an overturned armoire occasionally shouts threats of violence and exquisite torture in the rough baritone that Bainbridge used in his film *South of the Sudan*. The ghastly chunk of oozing tissue making these outsized noises is difficult to find; if Investigators discover it they lose 0/1D3 SAN.

SWIMMING POOL

Dry and empty as an eye socket, the competition-sized pool has leaves and trash at the bottom and scattered outdoor furniture around it. The little cabana beside it, where guests would change into swimsuits or get a fresh towel, is locked. The poolside bar is empty. All the liquor bottles and glassware are now smashed fragments at the bottom of the pool.

TENNIS COURT

The court is just a flat expanse of empty pavement with a net and one working light that casts a dreary pall over it... very ominous.

WORK SHED

A workshop located inside a large, locked shed includes tools for woodworking, metalwork, glass cutting, leather working and heavy-duty sewing. The tools, fasteners, materials and pigments stacked on the shelves are mostly unused, many of them still sealed. A thin layer of dust covers everything.

A “Lost Face” hidden under a stack of lumber pleads movingly for help in the rich, plummy voice that Bainbridge used for the dastardly caped villain The Wolf in his film *The Wolf of Paris*, when that character was caught in his own deathtrap. It is difficult to find, but if Investigators do, they lose 0/1D3 SAN.



THE MAIN HOUSE

Most rooms have hardwood floors with rich area carpets. Walls and ceilings are hand-crafted plaster over wooden lath, with beautiful mouldings along the baseboards and the edges of the high ceilings.

It is very dark inside. Thick drapes on both floors are mostly drawn shut both day and night. Most of the lightbulbs in the fixtures are either burned out or broken.

In nearly every room the air is still and stale, with the unclean smell of someone living amid trash and without hygiene. Any Investigator who has visited an asylum or a homeless flophouse recognizes this depressing odor.

Most of the rooms are cluttered with masks, makeup containers, mannequins, prosthetic limbs and wigs—myriad distractions for Investigators. Hundreds of photographs, paintings and etchings cover the walls in most rooms; it’s as if there were eyes watching, everywhere.

On the ground floor and the upper floor, Bainbridge’s meandering footprints in the dust betray his occupation of the house—but not his location. Bainbridge has wandered through much of the house on a daily basis, and there is no way to discern where he last walked. Alert Investigators

may notice that the footprints reflect a bewildering variety of shoe styles, both male and female, all basically the same size. This could be revealed through a skill roll, but it might be better to grant the players the obvious knowledge of footprints in general and then see if they ask the right questions.

THE GROUND FLOOR

A faint sound of music drifts from upstairs.

The rooms and side corridors of the ground floor, as well as stairs linking it to the upstairs level, are all linked by one main corridor. A broken Tibetan Buddhist prayer wheel (inscribed with a prayer for healing from disease) lay in a corner of the corridor.

DINING ROOM

Opulent as a ballroom, the dining room features a large teakwood-inlaid dining table and an overhead lead-crystal chandelier which chimes with bell-like tones in any breeze. The table itself is covered with grimy dishes and open tin cans of food. A cockroach crawls across a waterstained film magazine with the headline, “DON’T STEP ON IT! IT MIGHT BE LON CHANEY!”

There is a broken chair in a corner; if examined, the broken woodwork reveals long-dried brown bloodstains and a few bits of grey hair embedded in the splinters. The chair was smashed over Jack Han’s head while he was unaware, permitting Bainbridge to drag him downstairs and wall him up alive.

A “Lost Face” hidden in a small pile of trash in this room occasionally laughs loudly and hysterically, in the voice of the Shedim (Bainbridge’s character in the film *The Shedim*). It is difficult to find, but if Investigators find it they lose 0/1D3 SAN.

ENTRY VESTIBULE

Gilded French lions herald the entryway to Dellfaire, which is illumined by a beautiful antique stained-glass window. Rich oriental carpeting muted with dust covers the hardwood flooring. It is obvious that someone has walked through these halls many times, leaving paths worn into the dust. There are stacks and bundles of letters and postcards, most of them from Bainbridge’s adoring public, fading with time.

A framed poster for Malcolm Bainbridge’s movie *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* hangs on the wall of this room. It features his character, Frederic Larsan, puzzling over a clue near a dead (but glamorous) woman. A framed poster for Bainbridge’s movie *Vathek, an Arabian Tale* features his character, the sinister djinn known as The Giaour,

towering over all the other characters and laughing malevolently.

KITCHEN

A flyridden stink of unwashed dishes and heaped trash pours from this room as the Investigators open the door. Cockroaches and half-eaten cans of food lying among the antique china attest to the rank decay. Another, even fouler odor emanates from the pantry; Investigators who are physicians, veterans of the Great War or who have been policemen or private investigators recognize the smell of death. This costs 0/1 SAN.

LIBRARY

Investigators should be encouraged to search the room for any books from the Cthulhu Mythos, perhaps even with the appearance of similar titles or authors (the *Cellini Fragments?*). Alas, no matter how thorough the search, there are no such volumes in this room, unless one counts the very complete collections of the works of Poe and Bierce. (There is also a copy of Arthur Machen’s *Casanova*, but this would in no wise affect someone’s Cthulhu Mythos rating.) A vault built into the wall stands half-open and prints of Bainbridge’s films lie unspooled in celluloid heaps on the floor. These are highly flammable.

If Investigators examine all the furniture in the room, they find a folder in a locked desk drawer that holds papers from Bainbridge’s journey to Tibet: airplane and passenger ship ticket stubs, his passport, letters of reference for local guides (both Sherpa and lowlander), and a map of Tibet with an unexplored region labeled “Tsang” in Bainbridge’s handwriting.

MUSIC CONSERVATORY

A gleaming white grand piano sits in the center of the room, with a piece by Chopin lying open on its music stand. Sheet music lies scattered in meaningless clumps over the floor. (If investigators reassemble it into order, the only complete songs are Benny Krueger’s “I Cried for You,” Al Jolson’s “I Wonder What’s Become of Sally?” and Ethel Waters’ “There’ll Be Some Changes Made.” A dead potted palm looms in one corner beside a gilded faux-Egyptian canopic jar. (An Egyptology skill roll shows that Bainbridge is no more an Egyptologist than anyone else infected with the Egyptomania of the 1920s.)

PANTRY

There is a hideous discovery in the center of the pantry: the bloated corpse of Bainbridge’s missing agent, Robert Berkham, with a terrible blunt impact wound to the head. He is sprawled over a small oriental throw rug with an antimacassar from one of the chairs covering most of his face. He has been dead several days. Flies’ eggs form

a teardrop in his half-open eye. Seeing the body costs another 0/1 SAN. Almost hidden behind four sacks of weevil-infested flour is the padlocked door to the wine cellar.

SCREENING ROOM

A comfortable miniature theater with a permanent silver screen, small proscenium stage, projector, adjustable lights, plush seating, small bar and side table for buffets. Large cabinets store prints of Bainbridge's movies, which are all made of highly flammable silver nitrate stock. There are also home movies of Malcolm, Paulette and little Malcolm Jr., along with various famous friends from Hollywood.

When investigators arrive in the room, the lights are dimmed and the projector is playing a scene from Bainbridge's film *Apprehension*. He plays a killer of beautiful young women who is frightened and on the run from the police, and who has taken refuge in an isolated convent where a lovely young novice has taken pity on him. The film is full of stark images of fearful faces gazing uncertainly from the darkness.

A framed wall poster for Bainbridge's movie *The Sideshow Man* features his character, the oily and villainous Professor Manfroto. A framed poster for *Written On the Rain* features his character, the horrifying Twisted Man, about to strangle an innocent victim. A poster for *The Shedim* features his character, the gruesome demon called the Shedim. Finally, a framed poster for *Apprehension* features Bainbridge's character, Scourby, in a chiaroscuro portrait that suggests a crescendo of mind-shattering terror.

STUDY

A brass bust of Shakespeare sits on a varnished Chinese desk beside the gilt-worked telephone, which is quite dead. Careful inspection or a Spot Hidden roll detects a small bloodstain on a corner of the base of the bust, and closer examination discerns a few human hairs likewise clinging to the sculpture.



There is a "clean pattern" in the dust of the carpeting near the desk in the oblong shape of a throw rug. This is where Berkham fell when he died from the smashing blow Bainbridge dealt him with the Shakespeare bust; Bainbridge wrapped the carpet around his corpse to carry

it cleanly to the pantry. A locked cabinet holds several important letters (see page 56-57).

"A Lost Face" hidden in this room occasionally speaks intelligible, crafty words and phrases calculated to mislead listeners and get them to wander aimlessly. It speaks in the voice of a young delivery man that brought Bainbridge his groceries for a few months before transferring to a store in the San Fernando Valley town of North Hollywood. The severed face-thing is hidden underneath another throw rug and is difficult to find; if investigators do, they lose 0/1D3 SAN.

WINE CELLAR

Stairs down to the wine cellar are located just behind the pantry, behind a locked door. Another set of stairs lead down to the wine cellar from the outdoors, also behind a locked door. Investigators must make a successful Locksmith roll or use brute force to get past the padlock (opposed by STR 12 unless they have a prybar).

A winding, narrow staircase leads down to a roomful of dusty racks of wine bottles. There is nothing unusual about any of the wines, except that they are unusually expensive and extremely good vintages. There are bricks, mortar, buckets, hods and such lying about. These tools came from the work shed on the estate grounds.

A Spot Hidden roll or specific inspection of the walls allows Investigators to notice that one of the room's alcoves has been freshly and badly bricked up, perhaps three to six months ago. The new masonry is partially covered by a framed poster for Bainbridge's hit film *The Mask of Amontillado*, which features the actor in the role of the vengeful Montresor.

If the Investigators spend about an hour or so for loud, backbreaking labor with picks and hammers, they find the decayed corpse of Jack Han. He had only been knocked unconscious when he was thrown into this loathsome death-cell, and he died of thirst despite catching and eating some vermin. His discoverers lose 1/1D3 SAN as Han's desiccated corpse falls out of the wall, its fingertips worn to blood-encrusted nubs by clawing at the bricks from the inside.

GETTING FROM FLOOR TO FLOOR

The two floors of the main house are connected by two stairways, one in the front of the house, the other in the back. They are quite well made and do not creak in the least.



THE UPPER FLOOR

As the investigators climb the stairs, the sound of music grows louder. It comes from a doorway down the hall.

The rooms and side corridors of the upper floor, as well as the main staircase, are all linked by one main corridor. Toward the back of the house, in a dimly lit expanse of corridor, words are written in lipstick on the wall in a shaky but legible (masculine) cursive hand: "Thank you for all your service, Jack. There is only one thing left now that I need from you."

GUEST BATH

A smashed mirror greets Investigators in this room, which is just as filthy as all the other bathrooms in the mansion. A few scattered brown droplets on the tiled floor can be readily identified as dried blood. A framed poster for Malcolm Bainbridge's movie *She's a Cad!* features his character, Stanley the Butler, mugging for the viewer while his crazy blonde boss-lady falls back into a young male star's arms.

GUEST BEDROOM ONE

Like all the bedrooms in the house, this chamber is lavishly decorated in a rococo-Orientalist fashion. It has also not been occupied in quite some time. The floor-mirror is smashed. A framed poster for Bainbridge's movie *Crusade On Smith Street* features his character, Officer

McInnis, dragging himself agonizingly toward a lighted doorway, desperate to share a vital clue with the other policemen.

GUEST BEDROOM TWO

Another unoccupied bedroom. The shards of a broken mirror scatter light from the dusty-curtained windows or the Investigators' electric torches. A framed poster for Bainbridge's movie *The Wolf of Paris* features his character, The Wolf, in a huge silhouette that merges the slouch-hatted villain with his mitered bishop alter ego, towering over the skyline of Paris and the young hero and heroine.

GUEST BEDROOM THREE

The remains of a makeshift barricade are scattered around the outside of the bedroom door—someone (Bainbridge) was clearly boarded up in the room against his or her will (by Jack Han) and then broke free. A Spot Hidden or Mechanical Repair roll reveals that the barricade is months old and was apparently carefully removed from the inside. A triptych-style dressing mirror lies flat on the floor in splinters of glass.

The bed has a long-dried bloodstain on its mattress and covers. A Spot Hidden roll finds a small, pinkish-brownish object just underneath the bed. A Medical or Biology roll reveals that this ragged, odd-shaped patch of leathery tissue is a four-square-inch patch of human skin sliced off with a razor. If the investigators examine it closely enough,

they discover that it has a tiny, warped human face on it; this costs 0/1 SAN. This “Lost Face” is truly dead and makes no sounds.

A framed poster for Malcolm Bainbridge’s movie *Wicked Passion* features his character, John Wesley Hardin, brandishing a six-shooter amid several other characters.

GUEST BEDROOM FOUR

Judging by the thick layer of dust, this room has not been occupied—or cleaned—in quite some time. The mirrors on the nightstand and the closet doors are smashed to pieces. A framed poster for Malcolm Bainbridge’s movie *South of the Sudan* features his character, cruel One-Thumb Tyler, threatening to use a whip on a beautiful and nearly nude young actress.

A “Lost Face” hidden in this room occasionally mutters or shouts unintelligibly in the voice Elliot Cline, who Bainbridge met on a few business occasions; Investigators recognize the voice without seeing the horror with a Listen roll. The gobble of rotting tissue making these sounds is smeared on the wall behind the poster for *South of the Sudan*. Finding it costs 0/1D3 SAN.

JACK HAN’S ROOM

This room has been torn apart. All the rich, decadent eastern furnishings have been laid waste, heaped up in a pile in the middle of the room. A number of cryptic books and scrolls lie nearly completely burnt in a charred corner under a singed blanket. A Library Use roll reveals these tomes to have been original editions, hand-scribed in odd languages. A Cthulhu Mythos or Occult roll reveals that they are hand-copied notes from such notorious books as the *Zanthu Tablets*, the *Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan*, the *Decrees of Serpent-Bearded Han*, and the *R’lyeh Text*. They are too incomplete to be of any use to anyone, now.

A clue to the riddle of Malcolm Bainbridge is here. An Art or Art History roll reveals that not only are the ruined furnishings much too expensive to be afforded by Mr. Han, but some of them share a distinctive auction-house marking tag with other luxurious furnishings in the house—western-style furnishings. This makes it obvious that Jack Han did not furnish his room in this fashion.

An Investigator who searches Han’s wardrobe and makes a Spot Hidden roll finds a satchel containing some black-and-white photos of several Chinese-American parents with their children, and a turn-of-the-century postcard in Mandarin Chinese. (It is from Jack’s late wife, informing him that she has just boarded the boat for San Francisco from Shanghai with their son and her aged parents, but it will only be readable by Investigators with a language skill in Mandarin Chinese.)

MALCOLM JR.’S BEDROOM

Decorated after the fashion of a castle from the novel *Ivanhoe*, this is clearly a long-abandoned child’s bedroom. The bed is covered with toys and photos of the boy and his parents. Here, too, the mirror on the chest of drawers is dashed to flinders. Along the wall behind the bed two words are scrawled in a child’s paint, too high for any child to write: “LOVE YOU.” A framed poster for Malcolm Bainbridge’s movie *Memories of Mr. Middleton* on the wall features his character, Bowman the Groundskeeper, smiling out at the viewer from within a wreath along with the rest of the main cast.

MASTER BEDROOM

The master bedroom is heaped with clothing of every conceivable sort: men’s, women’s, everyday garb and costume pieces. An electric phonograph player sings away to itself, and as the Investigators open the door the stylus skips across the waxen disc and the singer’s voice hiccups in a tinny repetition of the chorus (“*Oh please don’t talk about me when I’m gone—scritch—Oh please don’t talk about me when I’m gone—scritch—Oh please don’t talk about me when I’m gone—*”).



MANSFINGER

Jack Han, unfortunate servant

The walls were once hung with plaster masks of the many faces of Malcolm Bainbridge, but those mementoes lie in fragments on the dusty floor. One of the curtains on the great four-post canopy bed is half torn off, and there are old dried bloodstains on some of the sheets. A photograph of the handsome Mr. Bainbridge and his beautiful wife and child sits on the bed, carefully cleaned.

There are no screen acting trophies on his shelf, as the Academy has not yet begun to present its famous awards.

A framed poster for Malcolm Bainbridge's movie *The Unholy* features his character, Old Mother Colby, gazing out menacingly at the viewer as a procession of coffins passes in the background.

MASTER BATH

Dominated by a large gilded bathtub supported by Atlas-like Grecian statues, this lavatory is grimy, mildewy, and unclean. The dressing nook, which was once surrounded by floor-length mirrors and bright lights, is now littered with fragments of glass. The Tibetan word "nyonmong," meaning "affliction," is scratched over and over into the enameled lip of the bathroom sink. A framed poster for Bainbridge's movie *Toilers of the Sea* features his character, Gilliatt, holding his sweet and pretty leading lady as they gaze out hopefully upon the unforgiving Atlantic Ocean.

SOLARIUM

Dust cakes the floor-length windows of the solarium. Wind gusts mournfully through one of the upper broken panes.

Dead flowers are scattered among a letter-opener, a paperweight, an ashtray, and the fragments of a lovely vase on the floor. Several dead plants in pots are arranged artistically around the room.

A "Lost Face" hidden in this room occasionally emits a weird, ominous wordless song in a piping, childish voice. It was a face of Malcolm Jr. that grew on Bainbridge's body, and it is his voice. If investigators have met the toddler, they recognize it. The small dollop of mutated flesh is buried among the roots of one of the potted plants. It is difficult to find, but if the Investigators do, they lose 0/1D3 SAN.

OTHER ROOMS

Additional rooms are up to the Keeper to detail. They are much as they appear to be, but are strewn with costume pieces, covered in a thin layer of dust and in a slight degree of disrepair.

SOLVING THE MYSTERY

What happens when Investigators discover the true reason for Bainbridge's disappearance depends largely on how they present themselves to Bainbridge. He can be placated for a time by those who pretend that everything is normal at Dellfaire, but it won't be long before he decides they must be tricking him. Those who try to shock him into facing reality aren't going to solve his problems, either. Bainbridge is a paranoid psychotic but he is only too aware of his reality. And he is not a "split personality." When he takes on one of his roles, no matter who it may be, he is aware that he is acting. The insanity for Bainbridge lies in the delusion that he is performing once more for cameras, and that the voices of the pustules within his mind are the voice of a director guiding him through his great impersonations. He sometimes "breaks the fourth wall" and interacts with "the maestro," but this should not happen until later in the scenario to avoid spoiling any surprises.

He has tried to cut all the faces off his body, or burn them off, but it's never enough. The pain and the howling laughter in his head are too much for the man. The "Lost Faces" he has already sliced from himself have proven impossible to completely kill, and he has hidden them away. He made the mistake once of picking up one of the sickening little gibbering bits of flesh and eating it, in a desperate bid to shut it up. He hears it from somewhere inside his guts now.

Bainbridge believes in some corner of his twisted psyche that if only someone can kill his invented character of Han, the Lama of Tsang, then he can be cured of the doom of the thousand faces. That killing need not be real; it can be play-acting that one is destroying Han, if it's convincing enough—it needs a Psychology roll and an Art (Acting) or Persuade roll to carry out the role-play for Bainbridge's benefit. Bainbridge will not hold back, of course. Anyone play-acting the hero in "the death of Han" will be at risk of murder at the actor's hands.

Bainbridge can never be free. His curse is permanent, and even if investigators assist him in "killing Han" he only lapses into the hallucination that he is normal again. Shortly thereafter he creeps back into lunacy.

The actor's role in life can only end in his death or his permanent installation in an insane asylum (with persistent rumors among the staff that "this one is special"), one more wreck on Hollywood's boulevard of broken dreams.

Bainbridge might be dragged out of Dellfaire and forced into the sanitarium. But can he be kept there? Tough, two-fisted Investigators who force him to undergo treatment are likely targets for his inevitable revenge. Hospital orderlies, doctors and nurses will not believe

ridiculous stories about his magical power to take on their appearances and escape. The police laugh at such warnings. Of course he's good at disguises. He is the only real rival to Lon Chaney.

If Investigators can talk with Bainbridge carefully and get through to him, they can convince him to stay in a hospital for treatment that will never work. But if he is strong-armed like a sack of cornmeal, Malcolm Bainbridge's movie personalities include some very nasty characters that will patiently pursue the investigators across the world and enact horrible revenge upon them, one by one.

A MOMENT OF TRUTH

If any Investigator presents Bainbridge with a mirror, forcing him to view his reflection, he stares in frozen shock for a moment—allowing the investigator a clear view of his nauseating curse in the mirror—and then he smashes the glass, heedless of injury. The Investigator must make a Sanity roll as per the Black Goat's Disguise spell.

MAY I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH, SIR?

If anyone thinks to “break scene” and ask Bainbridge politely for his autograph, he immediately and terrifyingly transforms back to his “normal” self right in front of them, dropping all pretense and signing the proffered item. Witnessing the transformation costs 0/1D6+2 SAN.

THE DEATH OF DELLFAIRE

At the Keeper's discretion, at any point in the night, if Bainbridge believes he has killed the Investigators or driven them off his estate, he may become gripped with his recurring despondency and douse the place with gasoline from his garage and torch it. The men of the Los Angeles Fire Department's Hollywood station will never arrive in time to save the house or its occupants.

SHOTS FIRED

Dellfaire is located on a large tract of land, surrounded by other large estates. The neighbors throw a lot of parties and have gotten used to Bainbridge shouting and screaming in all kinds of voices (albeit not as much as lately). Voices don't get any attention from outsiders. If Investigators (or Bainbridge) start shooting guns, however, that will definitely get the neighbors to call the police. (See “Going to the Police,” page 46.) They arrive even faster if they hear explosions. Note that the police have access to both submachine guns and grenades if they feel it is necessary to use them.

THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND DEATHS

Actually killing Bainbridge during his “killing Han” scene is the most merciful possible outcome, and it could

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be argued as a self-defense killing from the evidence in the house. But it won't be easy. Bainbridge is a clever psychotic, often armed with deadly weapons, and in an extended brawl with Investigators he is entirely capable of confusing them by taking on their appearance (and more importantly, their voices).

Malcolm Bainbridge isn't bulletproof, fireproof or anything-proof. He does, however, have a thousand faces. Each has its own reserve of hit points. When he is "killed" in any face but his own, genuine form, he appears to die in that guise, complete with a "death scene." Each time he "dies" in this way the witnesses lose 0/1D4 SAN. He cannot assume that face again. But he will change to another face, preferably when no one is looking (SAN cost 1/1D6+2 to witness), and rise again at full HP. Bainbridge feels tremendous pain and terror each time he undergoes these deaths, and has no desire to do so. Nevertheless, his seeming immortality can make him appear quite daunting to violence-prone investigators.

THE THOUSAND-AND-FIRST DEATH

If the investigators do kill the real Bainbridge, he calls out for Paulette and his son as he is dying. The moment should not be not stagey or hammy, but genuine. Bainbridge welcomes death and fears it at the same time.

After he breathes his last, something unbearably loathsome happens: Bainbridge's cadaver dissolves into dozens of tiny, twisted faces (like his "Lost Faces"), each attached to its own nauseating polyp of oozing flesh like some horrible Salvador Dali painting of the damned. The morsels of slimy tissue flow into the crevices of the floor and walls, dissolving down into the whispering darkness of the depths of the Earth. Those who witness this vomit-inducing sight lose 1D6 SAN and will be haunted by it in dreams for the rest of their lives—especially if they ever see another Malcolm Bainbridge film.

Unfortunately, there is another problem with killing Bainbridge. The lack of a corpse means that there is no way to prove he is actually dead. The investigators, having killed a famous millionaire and seeing his body dissolve itself before their revolted gaze, must answer to an extremely unhappy Mr. Cline and Mrs. Bainbridge for his disappearance, to say nothing of the powerful movie studio that worked with Bainbridge and the very corrupt police department in the city. No one is going to accept any crazy stories about dissolving dead men.

After they are "sweated" and beaten by detectives, the investigators should make a group Luck roll (rolling against the lowest of their Luck scores). If it succeeds, they are merely run out of town and told never to return. If it fails, the Investigators are accused and face a very unpleasant legal situation. (See "Going to the Police," below.)

Paulette Bainbridge will have Malcolm declared legally dead in the mid-1930s, and until then the estate will be managed by his attorney.

GOING TO THE POLICE

This is a bad, bad idea. Malcolm Bainbridge is insane and dangerous. He is also still worth a great deal of money—for himself, for his wife, for his agent and for his studio. Hollywood is a company town in the 1920s, and a great deal of crime and scandal is swept under the rug by brutal, corrupt cops who know how to keep people's mouths shut if they're paid right—or how to spread bad publicity all over L.A.'s dozens of newspapers and tabloids if they're not.

At first blush, calling the Hollywood division of the Los Angeles Police Department seems like a very good idea when Investigators spot danger at Dellfaire. After all, the Investigators have only to exit the estate, drop in on a wealthy neighbor or possibly drive down to the Ralphs grocery (depending on the hour of day) and use a payphone. If all else fails, they have the option of visiting a police station in person. Surely nothing could go wrong then. Or could it?

Bainbridge's agent and his wife both prefer to keep this out of the public eye, and that includes involving the police. Neither of them agrees to pay the Investigators anything if this happens, and in fact, both immediately swear out a complaint against the Investigators with the Los Angeles District Attorney that alleges that they have conspired to frame Malcolm Bainbridge, world-renowned movie star, for murder. This is absurd, but Cline and Paulette are too emotionally involved and cannot believe the horrifying truth.

After a short encounter with the police (which the Keeper may run out, if desired, with the assumption that the cops will suffer casualties due to Bainbridge's supernatural tricks but will ultimately prevail by brute force) Bainbridge himself will be taken to a mental hospital and placed under private and very expensive care. No visitors, most especially the Investigators, are permitted. But this is not the end of the matter.

Neither Cline nor Mrs. Bainbridge are directly responsible for what follows, as the messy business at Dellfaire must be "cleaned up" by the forces of business and law. Millions of dollars and Hollywood's glittering reputation are at stake. Bainbridge's studio pays off the police to clear the mad actor's name—by not revealing what they know, and by throwing the D.A. a group of patsies: the Investigators.

Despite the fact that the Investigators called in the police to begin with, the People of the State of California bring charges of murder, conspiracy and extortion against them. The official story is that they found Bainbridge helpless to

control his actions, eliminated his helpers so they could no longer protect him, and attempted to force Bainbridge to give them his wealth. When this failed, the Investigators attempted to extort a ransom from Mrs. Bainbridge (she will, with great shame, pretend this is true) for her husband. When all of this failed, the “desperate criminals” (the Investigators) tried to avenge themselves by framing Bainbridge for their crimes.

The case is ridiculous. It should be drummed out of court. But there are no civil rights groups to appeal to, the system is rigged against them with plenty of money and favors, and the Investigators should never have put this process into motion. Hollywood Division “finds evidence” linking the Investigators to the deaths at Dellfaire and clearing Bainbridge, and the District Attorney’s office has them arrested, booked and held in cells at Hollywood Division pending trial, with no possibility of bail. (They are “dangerous and unstable,” possibly “subversive.”)

If the Investigators defend themselves to the court by insisting that Malcolm Bainbridge has supernatural powers, they are remanded to a much less cushy mental hospital than he is, and spend the next 5D6 years there undergoing electroshock, ice bath and pharmaceutical treatments. Each Investigator faces a 20% chance of being lobotomized during their stay. (Lobotomized Investigators are no longer in play.)

If the Investigators defend themselves to the court by arguing that Bainbridge killed his victims through normal means, they face an almost unbelievably unfair trial. The Investigators are tried before a downtown Los Angeles judge as a group, and the police who investigated the scene of the crime act as witnesses against them. The evidence brought to the case is damning and utterly false. The Investigators are initially to be tried without a jury of their peers. If they demand that their lawyer secure a jury trial for them, it will go much harder on them, because Bainbridge’s celebrity status makes them the villains.

In any case, the trial is rushed, their defense attorney is bribed to “throw” the case by the movie studio, and the presiding judge has been bribed the same way. There is no *CSI 1925* to prove that the evidence has been substantially faked or tampered with. Bainbridge is not competent to say anything in court or even appear in it. The prosecuting assistant district attorney is extremely skilled, the jury despises the Investigators and the whole thing is being buried deep in the newspapers. It goes extremely badly. At least the Investigators can console themselves that they didn’t have to wander around in that dark, scary mansion without the intervention of the police.

Muckrakers and scandal mongers of all types will be thrilled to pay the Investigators for dirt on Bainbridge, but selling out this way from the jailhouse will only make them look worse and their story less likely to be true.

No one will ever believe them in the general public for generations to come. Even then, it will only be a “dark side of Hollywood” piece of gossip.

The base chance of conviction is 65% due to the diligent efforts of the police and DA’s office. Add +10% for their defense attorney (it doesn’t matter if it’s a public defender or a private practitioner) being bribed by the studios, unless the Investigators somehow replace him with someone honest. Add 15% for the presiding judge being bribed, again unless the Investigators can somehow overcome the bribery. This leaves only a 10-35% chance that the Investigators will walk free. If they do, they’ll still receive a very rough message from the police: Leave town and never come back.

For sentencing, roll 1D100.

01-30: The investigators are placed in Los Angeles County Jail for 2D6 days to await transfer under guard by automobile and train to Folsom State Prison, where in 10D6 days they are to be hanged by the neck until dead, may God have mercy on their souls.

31-00: The investigators are sentenced to 2D6x10 years at Folsom State Prison without possibility of parole. They are transferred there from L.A. County Jail by automobile and train under armed guard.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MALCOLM BAINBRIDGE

Bainbridge is a tall, once-handsome man with black hair and piercing blue eyes, with the strong build of a silent-movie star who does most of his own stunts. Keepers should encourage Investigators to expect him to live up to his screen image as a suave, dapper leading man. However, if Investigators succeed in entering Dellfaire undetected, he is found to be a dirty, unshaven maniac wearing a grubby mohair suit.

With a great deal of warning of their arrival, or shortly after his discovery of their presence, he takes the time to groom himself properly with his hair-pomade, smoking jacket, and straight-razor. Despite his self-loathing, his insanity drives him to make himself presentable to his audience—but he has no mirrors, and his hands shake so badly that he is oblivious of the web of cuts he makes on his chiseled features, or the section of skin sliced away (replaced by a festering, scabby open wound).

In his own original form, Bainbridge mutters to himself incessantly. He is lost in a nightmare world of terrifying

voices that whisper forgotten obscenities, bound up in his own personal hell with his anguish at losing his wife and child. And slowly, inexorably, the little faces and their vile personalities have begun to shape his actions.

The mad actor sought a cure for his hideous curse, but he is now certain that there is no way to escape. On some level he means to die. Unfortunately, the shattered pieces of his mind continue to play out the roles he acted for the silver screen, and they wish to make the Investigators a part of their fantasy world forever. Bainbridge wishes to die, but they wish to kill.

In playing these “roles,” he always attempts to confuse or delay Investigators, no matter what his persona. He always suggests splitting up to cover ground more quickly. Creative Keepers may also wish to have Bainbridge depict “roles” like Paulette, Berkham and Jack Han sometimes as they really are or were, or as he imagines them.

The “Lost Faces” hidden across the estate and house help Bainbridge maintain the illusion, to some extent, that he is more than one person. Any useful voice might call from around a corner or just downstairs; someone might be singing in the bathroom or laughing in the cellar, while Bainbridge is right there in front of the Investigators.

With Bainbridge’s amazing ability to take on anyone’s appearance thanks to the Black Goat’s Disguise, the Keeper should take every convenient opportunity to confuse the Investigators. How many people are in Dellfaire, anyway? Where is Malcolm Bainbridge? And why is our friend acting so strangely since he came back from checking out the other room?

MALCOLM BAINBRIDGE, AGE 37 WORLD-FAMOUS SILENT FILM ACTOR

STR 13 CON 16 SIZ 14 INT 12 POW 8
DEX 18 APP 16/1 EDU 13 SAN 0 HP 15

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Fencing Foil 50%, 1D4+db

Fist/Punch 55%, 1D4+db

Club or blunt object 50%, 1D6+db

Mirror Shard 25%, 1D3+db

Meat Cleaver 20%, 1D6+db

Skills: Credit Rating 65%, Cthulhu Mythos 20%, Dodge 76%, Drive Auto 35%, Escape Artistry 85%, Listen 35%, Locksmith 85%, Occult 50%, Quick-Change Artistry 85%, Read/Write English 80%, Sing 30%, Swim 30%.

Spells: Black Goat’s Disguise*, Elder Sign.

**New spell in this scenario.*

BAINBRIDGE’S SKILLS

Bainbridge spent several years working with an escape artist and magician, the Amazing Kolzow, who capitalized on the early success of Harry Houdini. He is very difficult to restrain with knots or locks. He also changes costumes and props with lightning speed, especially since makeup is no longer a consideration.

THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

It is imperative to note that the spell (Black Goat’s Disguise) does not change Bainbridge’s clothing and props, only his body and hair. He needs to escape the Investigators to change his outfit and pick appropriate props. Resist the urge to alter the spell to permit it to change these things as well, as that makes it too powerful and reduces Investigators’ chances of ever solving the mystery of the many faces of Bainbridge. It also ignores the surreal, comical and grotesque potential of catching Bainbridge in an inappropriate costume for his role.

LET’S KEEP AN EYE ON THIS ONE

Many Investigators will probably want to keep Bainbridge constantly in their sight and never leave him alone or permit him to step away. He will constantly attempt to do so, and this is made easier because the estate is extremely shadowy, cluttered and maze-like. But most Investigators are determined, and unless Bainbridge (and his “Lost Faces”) can fool them, they might stick to him like glue. He can only be in one place at a time, after all, and there are no secret passageways at Dellfaire—it takes him time to go from “set” to “set,” and to change his appearance completely.

If this happens, Investigators soon (within five to fifteen minutes of game time) begin to have an uncanny sensation that they are being watched. The feeling is accurate, because they actually are being watched—by Bainbridge’s pustule faces. The things are invisible outside of his reflection, or until the growths are separated from him by dismemberment or death. The sensation induces a creeping paranoia, and investigators must begin to make Sanity rolls every 10 minutes of game time or lose 1 SAN each time. If they overpower Bainbridge and drag him away from Dellfaire, the paranoia follows them wherever they take him and never stops until they are out of his presence.

The Keeper should play on this growing sense of being watched. An innocent sound (of a rat skittering or a tree branch knocking a window) becomes the sound of someone moving upstairs. A shadow in the corner of the eye seems to be the movement of a spy hiding just out of sight.

If the investigators seize Bainbridge and attempt to “take off his disguise” by prying at his face and body for a mask or makeup, they discover that it is impossible. This requires a Sanity roll as the implications sink in, costing 0/1 SAN. Any Investigator who continues to hold onto Bainbridge must make a second Sanity roll as he or she feels the distinct sensation of an invisible mouth on Bainbridge’s body nipping with tiny, misshapen teeth that leaving marks on the Investigator’s skin. SAN loss is 0/1D2.

FEATURING MR. MALCOLM BAINBRIDGE IN THE ROLES OF . . .

In alphabetical order . . .

MRS. PAULETTE BAINBRIDGE

A significant portion of the horror of this role, for Malcolm, is that it is what he sees in his mind’s eye as the love of his life and the mother of his child. He loves her fiercely, with every fiber of his being, and she is every woman on Earth to him. Sometimes at night when the voices dim a little, he darkens his room of every light but one, and is filled with a hundred shades of self-loathing and need as he becomes his own dear wife.

She is a thousand fantasies and a hundred thousand memories for Malcolm Bainbridge. Sometimes she’s a homemaker, cooking on his rancid stove, or a lover reclining in mildewed lingerie on the great bed in the master bedroom. At times, when the voices in his head multiply and he’s filled with pain and rage and revulsion, Bainbridge sees her as a screaming harpy tormentor. The Investigators may see Mrs. Bainbridge cast in any female role that Bainbridge can think of, from any of his many films. Of course, they’ll wonder how it can possibly be her. If they talk with “Mrs. Bainbridge” about their earlier meeting, “she” awkwardly plays along with them, but since Malcolm Bainbridge does not know any of the details, it will not take very long for things to very obviously go astray.

THE TWO MRS. BAINBRIDGES

The real Paulette was once a level-headed woman, but she’s become fragile with the strain on her nerves of this past year of fear and doubt and her persistent abuse of tranquilizers. If she sees Bainbridge’s reflection and learns the truth of his affliction, her mind almost certainly snaps as well; her SAN loss for Bainbridge’s weird condition is double that of an Investigator.

If the Investigators leave Dellfaire to question Mrs. Bainbridge a second time without dealing with Malcolm Bainbridge, when they arrive at the hotel Mrs. Bainbridge will be gone. She has left little Malcolm Jr. at her sister’s home in Santa Monica and has gone to Dellfaire, according to the hotel concierge, at about the same time that the Investigators were coming to meet her. By the time they arrive at Dellfaire, she is in the hands of her lunatic husband. It is up to the Keeper whether or not she is already dead, or if the Investigators have a few minutes left to rescue her. If they do nothing, they will never hear from her again.

Captured by her husband, Mrs. Bainbridge pleads with him to get help and reunite their broken home. Bainbridge is driven by his demon faces to kill her as well, and only comes to his senses briefly after her demise. It is up to the Keeper whether the Investigators can prevent her death.

THE REAL PAULETTE BAINBRIDGE, AGE 28 WIFE AND MOTHER

STR 8 CON 10 SIZ 8 INT 13 POW 7
DEX 10 APP 15 EDU 12 SAN 5 HP 9

Damage Bonus: -1D4

Weapons: none

Skills: Credit Rating 65%, Drive Auto 35%, Listen 35%,
Read/Write English 60%, Sneak 30%, Swim 30%.



Mr. Berkham was a suntanned man in his late 40s with a wild flip of hair and a taste for bright pastel suits. He was slender, with an ingratiating smile, smoked occasionally and sometimes punctuated his sentences with “Y’see” and “Do tell.” As portrayed by Malcolm Bainbridge, Robert Berkham is a parody of himself. He wears a blood-red necktie against a sunshine yellow shirt and smokes two or three cigarettes at once. He rapidfires his speech with “Y’see” and “Do tell” and is fired up with greed to a homicidal pitch. Perhaps the most disturbing thing about Bainbridge’s version of Robert Berkham is that he only thinks to perform the role after someone has already discovered the real, dead, Mr. Berkham in the pantry.

Berkham was the senior partner of Berkham & Cline by virtue of winning a coin toss with his friend Elliot Cline. They cut their teeth as junior agents working with “crazy actors” on the Broadway circuit in New York and came west to make it big. Of all their clients, from Mukluk Buck the Eskimo Hero to the femme fatale Kushtri Odom, Malcolm Bainbridge was the biggest and brightest. He was a genuine star. Berkham lost confidence in the other players signed to Berkham & Cline and wanted Bainbridge back at any cost, so he visited Dellfaire. Sadly, he was not prepared to meet a truly crazy client. Bainbridge’s mental condition has degenerated to such a state that he has made no effort at all to bury or even hide Berkham’s corpse beyond perfunctorily dragging it into the pantry and leaving it there.

The false Robert Berkham tries to find out what the Investigators are doing at Dellfaire. If they answer him honestly, he laughs and explains that everything is all right, and Malcolm has just been having a little trouble with his health—he should be ready to receive guests in a few days. He asks the Investigators to give him their contact information. That may prove disastrous if Bainbridge attempts revenge against them later.

BOWMAN THE GROUNDSKEEPER

The film *Memories of Mr. Middleton* was a heartwarming Christmas tale about the good-natured Mr. Middleton, the operator of an orphanage full of sweet, ragged children. The angelic Mr. Middleton quietly arranged things throughout the story so that all the good little boys and girls ended up in wonderful homes, and the few who were still there at the orphanage on Christmas Eve were made as happy as could be. Mr. Middleton’s right-hand man in all his good deeds was lovable Bowman the Groundskeeper, played by rising star Malcolm Bainbridge. Always seen with a rake, hoe, shovel or other large and dangerous garden implement, crusty but charming Bowman was Mr. Middleton’s sounding board and accomplice. He always knew how to keep a secret. If the Investigators meet Bowman, he imparts some homespun



MANSFINGER

Robert Berkham, y’see

wisdom and offers to help with whatever they need. If they accept his aid, he sabotages their efforts in every way.

JACK HAN

Jack Han was a slight, wizened Chinese-American man of advanced years with parchment-like skin and soft brown eyes. He wore a servant’s simple blue-and-white uniform and wore small bifocal glasses to read his evening newspaper over herbal tea.

When Bainbridge takes on the persona of Jack Han, he plays him as he remembers the Tcho-Tcho lama of the Plateau of Tsang, replete with the elaborate silk robes of an eastern potentate. His gentle voice implies a serene dignity belying his depraved love for cruel and degenerate rituals associated with the Black Goat of the Woods, Shub-Niggurath. He attempts to cajole investigators into freeing him from his “magical imprisonment” on the grounds of the estate, and if they seem interested he promises to teach them “eastern wisdom” without cost and without limit.

Bainbridge as Han explains that he is bound within the encircling wall of the estate grounds by ritual tablets that are buried next to the middle of the north, south, east and west walls. Of course, nothing is buried there except

possibly a concrete drainage culvert or buried natural gas pipe, but he drags this ruse out as long as possible, and does his best to let the Investigators get wrapped up in the task so that he can sneak up on one and smash a pickaxe into the back of his or her skull.

The real Jack Han was simply an elderly domestic servant employed by Malcolm Bainbridge because the old man was a good valet and driver, and because having “an oriental serving-man” added an exotic cachet to Bainbridge’s household. Jack Han has three surviving children in Los Angeles’ Chinatown, who have never been allowed to visit Dellfaire in the year Bainbridge has been barricaded inside. They have no idea that their father is dead. The police are not yet aware that Jack Han is missing, and if they were, most of them would not care.

Jack’s two sons, Louis and Calvin Han, are men in their early 40s with families of their own. They are a hard-working florist and photographic developer, respectively. Jack’s daughter, Adelaide Chow (née Han), is a housewife in her late 30s. She’s constantly trying to keep her two squabbling boys on their best behavior, but it’s a losing battle. None of the three know anything about the supernatural or the bizarre events at Bainbridge’s mansion.



Bowman, groundskeeper who never was

JOSEPHINE THE MAID

There is no Josephine the maid at Dellfaire, nor was there ever any maid there by that name. Josephine was the name of the flighty maid from Bainbridge’s 1920 film *She’s a Cad!*, in which Bainbridge played a supporting role as a butler named Stanley. Josephine the maid, as portrayed by Malcolm Bainbridge, is a cheerful, airheaded woman with a feather duster who looks just like his wife, Paulette Bainbridge. She’s likely to send Investigators on a hazardous wild goose chase searching the house for Malcolm Bainbridge, only to “remember” that “Mr. Bainbridge went out of town for a few days and he should be back this coming weekend. You should drop by on Saturday night around eight.”

OFFICER MCINNIS

A stern, by-the-book cop that Bainbridge played as a bit part in the movie *Crusade On Smith Street*, Officer McInnis is armed with a revolver and a wooden billy club that he will use on anyone who gives him “too much lip.” McInnis is there to “check on things” and “was called by a neighbor who heard noise.” If Investigators include McInnis in their prowling, he splits off from the group to either “go check on something” or to walk down the hill a few blocks to his patrol car or to use a phone box to call in to the station. (There are no radio-equipped police patrol cars until 1929.) Once alone, he stalks and murders Investigator.

OLD MOTHER COLBY

From Bainbridge’s film *The Unholy*, Old Mother Colby is a ruthless murderess from a turn-of-the-century cutthroat tenement of the sort that used to infest New York City’s Five Points neighborhood. She is a simpering, heartless crone who takes advantage of any unguarded moment alone with an Investigator to attempt to kill him or her with any handy blunt object.

STANLEY THE BUTLER

The role of Stanley the butler in *She’s a Cad!* was a breakout part for Bainbridge. It helped him establish a screen presence, which he then surpassed with his amazing range of roles in later films. Stanley the butler is a short, balding, mustachioed gent in a slick black tuxedo whom Bainbridge plays with an upper-class New England accent. Stanley is a more or less harmless persona, but not very helpful to Investigators. Like Josephine, Stanley tells Investigators that Bainbridge is away from Dellfaire and will be back tomorrow night at around 9 p.m.

THE TWISTED MAN

In one of Bainbridge’s most spectacular roles, he recreated the appearance of a beggar he once saw in an alley in Singapore for a 1924 film called *Written On the Rain*. The

character was simply called The Twisted Man, and was a grotesque spy and killer for hire for an exotic underworld mastermind.

The Twisted Man doesn't at first appear to be a human being. At first glimpse, he resembles a manikin or a corpse that someone wound up contortionist-style into a tangle of warped limbs and left in a heap of rags. Even his matted mop of brown hair and glassy eyes just sit there on his head as if they were a wig and two doll eyes, not so much signifying a face as the end of a body. Bainbridge as the Twisted Man waits until someone comes near, then lurches to life with a wordless groan and rattles his cup for coins. He can't talk, he just paws at the Investigator and begs.

Whosoever gives him money will be his target. After he believes no one is watching him, he tortuously unlocks his arms and legs and stagger-hobbles through the house. His benefactor is his planned victim for a quiet strangulation when no one is near enough to help—just like the movies. If no one comes near, the Twisted Man just lies there in a pile and watches the investigators. He watches and he waits.

You

Malcolm Bainbridge can impersonate anyone he has met even once, and that includes the Investigators. Naturally, he doesn't know everything they know and can certainly be tripped up by details (such as wearing different clothing), but he is a brilliant actor and impressionist.

Other Roles

The Keeper is encouraged to create other roles for Bainbridge as needed, but to keep the confusion at a manageable level. A certain delicacy is required. While Bainbridge may, for example, have portrayed a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer or a circus clown at some point in his career, either persona might seem unlikely in the context of the happenings at Dellfaire.

A Cineaste's Edge

If it is already well established that an Investigator is a film enthusiast and well-versed in the roles played by actors like Bainbridge in their movies, the Keeper may offer an opportunity to make an Idea roll to get a "creepy feeling of recognition" about a persona taken on by Bainbridge. But this should not be carried too far, since it could easily reveal too much, too soon.

THE MAJOR ROLES OF MALCOLM BAINBRIDGE

'APPREHENSION' (1924) SCOURBY. A PAWNBROKER

This almost hallucinatory, ultra-Expressionist thriller clearly influenced Hitchcock's later work (rumor has it Hitchcock was on the set during production). The plot is almost impossible to follow, but the film is so well made and the performances so strong that the suspense and dread it generates are almost palpable. This is the only film in which Bainbridge does not wear a heavy disguise, but instead uses only the planes, lines and angles of his own face to convey a growing atmosphere of unease.

'THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO' (1923) MONTRESOR. A NOBLEMAN

A phenomenal performance by Bainbridge as Renaissance Venetian nobleman Montresor, who murders his friend/enemy Fortunato by walling the man up in the dungeons under his family's castle.

'CRUSADE ON SMITH STREET' (1921) OFFICER MCINNIS. A GOOD COP

Bainbridge has a good supporting part in this movie about the war to clean up a major American city despite the best efforts of vice barons and their allies in the political machine. Bainbridge's death scene, as he's shot to death by hoodlums under a bright full moon, is unforgettable.

'MEMORIES OF MR. MIDDLETON' (1922) BOWMAN THE GROUNDSKEEPER

A beloved Christmas film about the saintly proprietor of an orphanage (Lionel Barrymore as Mr. Middleton) and his fun-loving helper, Bowman the Groundskeeper, played by Malcolm Bainbridge.

'THE MYSTERY OF THE YELLOW ROOM' (1923) FREDERIC LARSAN. DETECTIVE

An adaptation of the classic locked-room mystery by Gaston Leroux, in which Bainbridge played debonair police detective Frederic Larsan.

'SHE'S A CAD!' (1919)
STANLEY THE BUTLER

A rare comedy turn for Bainbridge and his first major featured role, this time as loyal butler Stanley.

'THE SHEDIM' (1922)
THE SHEDIM. A DEMON

A tale of the medieval Jewish ghetto in Warsaw, this film pitted Bainbridge (playing the fearsome Shedim) against co-star Conrad Veidt, who played a heroic rabbi and exorcist.

'THE SIDESHOW MAN' (1925)
PROFESSOR MANFROTTO

Malcolm Bainbridge plays the cruel thief, confidence artist, mountebank, kidnapper and cheat Professor Manfrotto, looking very stereotypically Italian but with Satanic touches of a forked beard, pince-nez glasses, goat-headed cane and stovepipe hat.

'SOUTH OF THE SUDAN' (1924)
ONE-THUMB TYLER

Bainbridge establishes himself as a formidable screen action villain with his character of One-Thumb Tyler, a brutal thug (played shirtless, scarred and with one thumb strapped down and "missing") and the master of the lives of everyone in a remote East African trading port. A pre-censorship film infamous for its portrayal of opium smoking, gay characters, sadistic violence and a man devoured by a crocodile.

'TOILERS OF THE SEA' (1920)
GILLIATT. A GUERNSEYMAN

A box office failure: an adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel of love and sacrifice, in which Bainbridge played tough, earnest young sailor Gilliatt.

'THE UNHOLY' (1922)
OLD MOTHER COLBY. AN INNKEEPER

A sprawling tale of the crime and degeneracy of old New York in the days of the Plug Uglies and other bloodthirsty gangs of the 19th century, this movie features Bainbridge cross-dressed as the two-faced psychopath Old Mother Colby.

'VATHEK. AN ARABIAN TALE' (1923)
THE GIAOUR. AN AFRIT

An adaptation of William Beckford's fantasy classic. Bainbridge played the role of the sinister djinn called The Giaour in makeup so horrific and convincing that they say ladies fainted in the aisles.

'WICKED PASSION' (1920)
JOHN WESLEY HARDIN. OUTLAW

A not-very-faithful depiction of the life and death of several notorious Wild West outlaws, including Bainbridge as John Wesley Hardin. Scenes include his tense confrontation with Wild Bill Hickok and later death in the Acme Saloon in 1895.

'THE WOLF OF PARIS' (1924)
THE WOLF. A MASKED SMUGGLER

Bainbridge is fairly hammy in his portrayal of The Wolf, a masked, gun-wielding criminal in 19th century Paris who doubles by day as an ordained bishop in the Catholic Church.

'WRITTEN ON THE RAIN' (1923)
THE TWISTED MAN

Bainbridge chose to play the Twisted Man, a hideous assassin and spy, because he knew it was the role people would remember in this lurid melodrama about young lovers fighting a web of crime.

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THE BLACK GOAT'S DISGUISE

This spell endows its user with the uncanny ability to take on the outward image of anyone—male or female, of any ethnic type, and of any age from childhood to venerable old age. The outward image is perfect in conception, extending to voice, mannerisms, gait, and any distinctive scent (cologne, perfume, tobacco, etc.) characteristic of the person being imitated. The spell-user needs only don the appropriate garb and accessory props (as from Malcolm Bainbridge's extensive private costume wardrobe) to complete the illusion. However, in order to carry out this transformation, the spellcaster must have observed the person being imitated for at least 12 minutes, followed by a slow period (five to ten minutes) of adjustment in which the spellcaster's flesh swells, contracts, tints, and molds itself. During this time the spell-user can take no other action than to walk at a movement rate of 6, perform simple actions such as opening doors, and gurgle out a few words. After the identity has once been assumed, it can thereafter be assumed at will (with a one-round transformation period, during which most users prefer to remain hidden). Each use of this ability to change form to one already "known" costs nothing, but each new form taken on costs one point of SAN. Obviously, the Sanity cost is no longer a consideration for Malcolm Bainbridge. Directly witnessing the transformation costs the investigator 1/1D6+2 SAN.

After each new identity is added to the repertoire, the spellcaster receives a horrid pustule-face, visible only in a mirror. Glimpsing the spellcaster's reflection costs 1/1D6 SAN.

Each face has its own Hit Point reserve and its own life or death. If Bainbridge has taken on the role of the Headsman of the Tower of London and the investigators shoot him, the wound will appear consistently on the Headsman but not on any other face that Bainbridge assumes.

Fire will kill all of the faces, and Bainbridge with them, in a single conflagration.

TIMELINE

1888: Malcolm Bainbridge is born on a small farm in Ohio.

1901-1903: Bainbridge abandons his family's struggling farm at age 14 to join a small, seedy traveling circus and sideshow, working any job that's given him.

1904-1908: Bainbridge works the American vaudeville and theater circuits, pushing himself to improve and advance in every possible way.

1909-1913: Bainbridge tours worldwide as the assistant to escape artist and magician The Amazing Kolzow.

1914-1916: Bainbridge diverts his life from show business and tours Asia in search of esoteric knowledge and philosophical peace; he finds the curse of the thousand faces instead.

1917: At age 29, Bainbridge begins his Hollywood acting career

1919: Bainbridge becomes a rising star with his portrayal of the comic supporting character Stanley the Butler in *She's a Cad!* He is represented by Elliot Cline of the Berkham & Cline Agency.

1920: Bainbridge marries Paulette Gilroy, a script girl.

1921: Birth of Malcolm Bainbridge Jr. Bainbridge hires an elderly Chinese-American manservant, Jack Han, to help out around the house.

1922: Proceeds from the holiday hit *Memories of Mr. Middleton* (in which Bainbridge co-stars and is also a co-producer) enable Bainbridge, age 34, to purchase his estate, Dellfaire (previously built and owned by faded 1910s movie star Corky Stinton).

Earlier this year: Bainbridge's final film, *The Sideshow Man*, is released. Shortly afterward, the curse of the thousand faces overwhelms him and Bainbridge sends his wife and son away.

Now: Robert Berkham visits Bainbridge and is murdered. One week later, the investigators are called in. ☹

PREGENERATED INVESTIGATORS

MICHAEL THEISS

ART HISTORIAN AND FILM ENTHUSIAST

STR 7 CON 4 SIZ 11 INT 17 POW 16
DEX 10 APP 9 EDU 18 SAN 72 HP 8

Damage Bonus: none

Skills: Art History 75%, Climb 50%, Credit Rating 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 4%, Fast Talk 50%, Film Knowledge 75%, Library Use 45%, Occult 65%, Persuade 60%, Other Language (French) 85%, Other Language (Italian) 85%.

Equipment: Wallet, wristwatch, electric torch, fountain pen and booklet of paper, lighter, pack of cigarettes.

Description: Age 45, distinguished, with a sharply intelligent gaze, well-dressed and tasteful. Mr. Theiss is an author and sometime lecturer in the arts who has acted as a consultant on a number of films and has acted as a "friendly face" (for a fee) to help studios and handlers "talk down" distraught, strung-out actors from suicide attempts, fleeing the country, etc. He engages them in talk about their art form while others do the heavy lifting of dealing with whatever the actor is about to do (set themselves on fire, mutilate their pet Chihuahua, etc.).

DOCTOR REBEKAH POWERS

THEOLOGIAN AND PERSONAL COUNSELOR

STR 4 CON 12 SIZ 9 INT 15 POW 18
DEX 6 APP 16 EDU 19 SAN 78 HP 11

Damage Bonus: -1D4

Skills: Credit Rating 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 6%, Fast Talk 55%, Hide 30%, History 50%, Library Use 55%, Listen 60%, Occult 65%, Persuade 55%, Psychoanalysis 60%, Psychology 75%, Spot Hidden 60%, Theology 55%.

Equipment: Purse, wristwatch, electric torch, pencil and booklet of paper, flask of 80-proof bourbon (non-flammable).

Description: 33 years old, pretty, vivacious, a million-dollar smile and costly clothing that fits right in with the Hollywood "fast set." Doctor Powers combines new-fangled Freudian psychology, a smidgen of occult blather (spiritualism, Egyptian reincarnation, energies in balance, Christian revivalism, astrology) and her own personal charisma to act as a friend and confidante to celebrities all over tinseltown. Oh, the stories she could tell you about Douglas, D.W., and all the rest. But right now, she's on the clock and has work to do.

FRANK WOODWARD

MORGAN-WESSLER DETECTIVE AGENCY

STR 13 CON 12 SIZ 15 INT 14 POW 15
DEX 13 APP 12 EDU 15 SAN 67 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Attacks: Fist/Punch 70%, 1D3+db damage

Club 60%, typically 1D6+db damage

Grapple 50%, special

Handgun (.38 revolver) 40%, 1D10 damage

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 56%, Drive Auto 50%, Fast Talk 55%, Hide 40%, Law 45%, Library Use 50%, Listen 55%, Persuade 55%, Sneak 40%, Spot Hidden 55%.

Equipment: Wallet, wristwatch, electric torch, pencil and notepad, .38 caliber revolver and extra ammunition.

Description: Age 37, strongly built, dressed in a nondescript dark blue suit and hat. He has a "great stone face" of complete impassivity. Only Sanity-roll situations get a reaction from Woodward; otherwise he's unmovable. He's seen it all, heard it all and done it all. He suffers the minimum possible SAN loss from encountering ordinary blood and gore. He worked for the railroads until a passenger (a grifter working a con scam on the Santa Fe) got rough one night while being kicked off the train and stabbed Woodward in the leg. That left him with a slight limp and a desire for easier work. He gets into some rough situations working with Hollywood clients, but it's rarely anything he can't handle.

A.J. HARRINGTON

MORGAN-WESSLER DETECTIVE AGENCY

STR 11 CON 13 SIZ 12 INT 13 POW 12
DEX 14 APP 10 EDU 17 SAN 52 HP 13

Damage Bonus: none

Attacks: Fist/Punch 70%, 1D3 damage

Grapple 55%, special

Club 50%, typically 1D6 damage

Handgun (.38 revolver) 50%, 1D10 damage

Skills: Climb 50%, Dodge 68%, Drive Auto 50%, Fast Talk 65%, Hide 55%, Listen 50%, Martial Arts (Judo) 50%, Persuade 40%, Sneak 60%, Spot Hidden 70%.

Equipment: Wallet, wristwatch, electric torch, pencil and booklet of paper, .38 caliber revolver and extra ammunition, pocketknife.

Description: Age 34, slim and short, with brown hair and darting, nervous brown eyes, with a slight Boston accent. Harrington wears a nondescript dark brown suit and hat, and his body language is edgy and slightly anxious. He is ready for action and a bit paranoid. Having worked as a strikebreaker on the docks in San Pedro and served in the Great War in 1918, he's a little shell-shocked but is hardened to violence. He suffers the minimum possible SAN loss for encountering ordinary blood and gore. Harrington is generally the "bad cop" and Woodward the "good cop" in their team.

December 4, 1913

Mr. Malcolm Bainbridge
c/o The Royal Armbruster Hotel
Sydney, Australia

My dear Mal,

I don't want to let you go without one final attempt to save you from your youthful folly. I know that what old Gil told you about the Tibetan magic is a very tempting idea, but I hope you will reconsider, as I've begged you to do. You're a young man with a lot of talent and a tremendous gift for making people happy. I think of you as a second son, and since my own boy died, you're the only family I have left in this world. I don't think there's anything the tribesmen on that plateau can do for you that you can't already do with your own skill and imagination. You're a great performer and a prodigious actor. Let it shine through without resorting to desperate measures.

Gil told me that he sold you those pages he had from those old books. All that guff, the Zanthu Tablets, Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan, the Decrees of Serpent-Bearded Han, and the R'Lyeh Text, Gilly never had the guts to use any of it himself. And look how far he's gotten on his broken-down talent! You don't need any of that, Mal. You have all the stuff that a man needs to become a star. You just have to believe in yourself.

I'm begging you again. I'm not too proud to do it. Please, don't look for the secrets hidden in Tibet. Come back to the footlights and make me proud.

Your friend, sincerely,

Karl

Karl Kolzow
c/o "Amazing Kolzow Productions"
New York, Singapore, Sydney, Hong Kong, San Francisco

February 28, 1923

Mr. Malcolm Bainbridge
Dellfaire, Hollywood, California

Dear Mr. Bainbridge,

I just wanted to write you this note to thank you again, from the bottom of my heart, for your great generosity toward me and my family. Providing me with paid time off to spend with my sons and daughter at such a difficult time in their lives, as well as facing my own personal loss, was a truly kind and big-hearted gesture. I truly appreciate it, and I hope to repay your goodness in some small way with whatever loyalty and hard work I can offer you in my old age.

I know that I am not a very open man, and I don't say very much, but right now everything in my heart and soul says, "Thank you, sir."

My true regards,

Jack Han



Mr. Malcolm Bainbridge
Dellfaire, Hollywood, California

Bainbridge, you son of a bitch --

I don't know how you do it, but I intend to find out. Whatever it is you do that grants you that damnable miracle of changing yourself so completely, so thoroughly... I will find out if I have to pry it out of your cold, dead body. I'm wagering that Chaney already knows, but he makes it all seem so possible to do with just putty and paint and rubber and straps. I know better.

I'm warning you, Bainbridge. I won't be made a monkey by your weird occult powers. You can't steal my roles forever. If I were you, I'd tread mighty damn carefully now, you bastard.

*Handouts for
"The Man With a
Thousand Faces"*

DELTA GREEN: DIRECTIVES FROM A-CELL

BY ADAM SCOTT GLANCY

One of the beauties of *Call of Cthulhu's* BRP system is the way it handles task resolution. Just find the appropriate skill and roll the target number or less. Success or failure as well as degree of success or failure are determined in a one roll.

Looking at skills and groups of skills can tell you more about a character. They suggest knowledge and abilities that live in the spaces between the skill scores. High scores in Spot Hidden, Disguise, Conceal, Sneak, Locksmith, Sneak and Hide are the kinds of skills that professional espionage agents and counter-intelligence officers would have. But do those skills necessarily translate into the specialized knowledge necessary to perform a dead drop, a brush pass or a black bag job?

In Delta Green, we can answer that question with the Tradecraft skill and by playing out the details of tradecraft.

Tradecraft is usually defined as the specialized skills of professional intelligence and counter-intelligence operatives. Playing Delta Green has thrown a spotlight on tradecraft because the campaign setting almost universally puts the players in the role of modern professional investigators with backgrounds in the intelligence and law enforcement communities. Player characters are expected to have high levels of training, professional standards and systems of institutional tradecraft that the agency that trained them developed over many decades.

Back in 1999 Pagan Publishing published an optional skill called Tradecraft (base skill 5%) in *Delta Green: Countdown* (now available again in print and for the first time in PDF). Author Adam Crossingham designed the Tradecraft skill to combine with and modify other skills when conducting covert and clandestine activities. To plant a bug, for instance, you roll both your Electronics skill and your Tradecraft skill. If both skill rolls succeed

then the bug is in place, working and undetectable. Making the Electronics roll but failing Tradecraft means that the bug works but could be detected by a Spot Hidden roll. Failing Electronics and making Tradecraft would mean that the bug isn't working, but won't be detected.

This combination of skills could be applied to clandestine surveillance (Spot Hidden), undetectably picking a lock (Locksmith), or tailing a car (Drive Auto). Tradecraft allows you to exercise a skill in a way that prevents detection of the task you have performed.

Of course, the effect could be replicated by combining the primary skill with existing skills such as Hide, Sneak, and Conceal. The Tradecraft skill was meant to consolidate those stealth-related skills when they're used specifically for intelligence work, leaving the character with more skill points to spread around. Which is not out of line with the archetype of the highly trained intelligence professional.

What using Pagan's Tradecraft skill during the game can't do is satisfy the oft-voiced desire to know the specifics of executing covert and clandestine operations. Players who run spooks and feds want to know how to convincingly act like spooks and feds. Adding a new skill to the game isn't going to provide the immersion these players are looking for. They want to know the tricks of the trade.

As the Keeper, you should encourage them to learn how to fake it convincingly. When a player uses actual intelligence and counter-intelligence tradecraft, have it enhance the character's in-game performance. The simplest way is to provide a bonus to skill rolls based on the tradecraft the player uses. As a rule of thumb, grant a 5% bonus to the Tradecraft-related skill roll for each specific tradecraft technique that the player describes, up to 1/5 the Tradecraft skill level.

DIRECTIVE 108: TRADECRAFT MEETS LOVECRAFT

For example, a player wants to determine if he is being followed without revealing that he is on the lookout for a tail. He needs to roll under Spot Hidden/Tradecraft. To gain a bonus, he could tell the Keeper the actual tradecraft technique he's going to use: a cleaning run. The player character checks for a tail using reflections in store windows while he appears to be browsing. He goes into public places with confining entrances and exits. He sits in a coffee shop to read the paper while keeping an eye on the patrons. That's three key details, worth up to +15%.

Further, sometimes just knowing detailed tradecraft techniques could eliminate the need for a die roll. Rather than just using a Conceal roll to set up a dead-drop system, the player could describe the intended system in detail based on real dead drops from the Cold War. Whether to obviate the skill roll based on such juicy player details is always the Keeper's call. Of course, if you don't roll you don't gain a skill check, but sometimes reducing the risk is worth it.

Picking up genuine intelligence and counter-intelligence tradecraft is easier than one imagines. Intelligence agencies rarely share their techniques, not even the old dusty ones from one or two conflicts back, but intelligence historians such as Norman Polmar and H. Keith Melton provide a great deal of accurate information. Tradecraft can be picked up from the memoirs of intelligence officers like Robert Baer, Peter Wright, Victor Ostrovsky and Oleg Kalugin. In many cases, however, the authors' former employers screen the manuscripts to prevent them from revealing current intelligence methods and capabilities. Journalists who write on intelligence matters generally don't have that restriction. Books by Mark Bowden, James Bamford and Robert Young Pelton contain very specific examples of tradecraft.

Fiction is another source of tradecraft, but one that should be taken with a grain of salt. More often than not, when I read accurate tradecraft in fiction I can recall the historical incident, memoir or news story from which the author had cribbed the details. Better to get it from an original source.

The information age has granted us a bounty of search engines for finding articles, websites or even good ol' fashioned books on the subject.

The best way to introduce tradecraft into your Delta Green game is to make sure everyone around the game table is involved. If it's just you as Keeper instructing the players on good tradecraft, that puts a lot of weight on one pair of shoulders. Getting all the players involved in learning about tradecraft will almost always benefit the whole group. That's just more eyes on the same target and more information being brought in from a wider variety of sources.

It has been suggested that it's asking too much of the players to want them to know all the ins and outs of modern espionage just because they want to play Delta Green. That makes about as much sense as suggesting it's asking too much for *Dungeons & Dragons* players to know something about the fantasy genre. The very fact that players are playing Delta Green suggests they are interested in the horror, mystery and espionage genres, all three. They probably have already consumed a great deal of pop culture and entertainment on these subjects. They won't be overly burdened by consuming some more.

What's that? You say you want a condensed set of tradecraft and procedures tailored specifically to Delta Green operations? Sorry. You're not cleared for that.

Not yet. ☞

WHAT DO YOU FEAR?



MONSTERS!
UNDEAD!
MYSTERIOUS HAUNTINGS!
AAAAAAAAAAUUUGH!

**BUMPS
IN THE
NIGHT** from
Pagan Publishing

WWW.TCCORP.COM

THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8 >

genius who dedicated a large part of his fortune to the scientific pursuit of . . . well . . . fighting crime. He even had a loyal partner, chemist Alexander Gettler. This dynamic duo's career forms one of the book's central threads.

The second element? Science! Every chapter is named after a different killer substance, and each toxin's description is admirably thorough. From its molecular structure, effects on the body, characteristic symptoms and (in several cases) its distinct flavor, odor or mouth-feel, poisons from chloroform through carbon monoxide get a treatment that perfectly balances specificity with accessibility. Explaining science that an average reader can grasp isn't easy; Blum just makes it look easy.

Alongside the poisons, we have the poisoners. Some are psychotic, like Frederic Mors who, after confessing to eight chloroform murders, escaped from custody and disappeared without a trace. Some are mercenary (Ruth Snyder convinced her lover to kill her husband) and some are sordid (Mary Frances Creighton, who escaped one poisoning conviction only to be sentenced, years later, for helping her teen daughter's lover kill his wife). Some are bafflingly unsolved, like the Shelbourne Restaurant case: Sixty people ate arsenic-laced pies, eight of them dying from it.

What emerges, as the reader follows Norris through his challenges and discoveries, is a tone-perfect portrait of the era. Before Norris cleaned house and Gettler worked on detecting substances like radium, thallium and mercury, poisoning seemed like the perfect crime. Even if you were clumsy enough to be suspected, the reputation of forensic science was so low, your lawyer could probably mock the evidence out of court.

But the best history, perhaps, comes in the chapters on alcohol—wood, ethyl and methyl. These provide Blum with a framework to examine Prohibition as it passed, through its unintended consequences (bootlegging, transformed drinking habits, and thousands of deaths) emerged, and as it was repealed. The ban on liquor emerges, not just as one event of the age, but as a central fact of many lives. Also, deaths.

How, though, does one tie all this to *Call of Cthulhu*?

First, it gives you a taste of period lab-work. The accessibility of Crookes tubes (as mentioned in the Lovecraft oeuvre) is touched on, as are the early days of gas chromatography. Did you know refrigeration down to -103 degrees was so commonplace, it was used to ship vegetables? Dry ice was available in Lovecraft's New York.

As a bonus, the science is disgusting. Want a slightly nauseating clinical tone for your game? Describe how tissues were tested by finely mincing a few pounds of a relevant organ, then boiling them down to a residue. For control subjects, Gettler used unclaimed corpses, and unclaimed live dogs—both in large quantities.

Another use for *Keepers* is as a 'cheat-book of villainy.' Got a plot but need someone twisted and evil to carry it out? The criminals described have various motives, methods and degrees of expertise, but most were looking for the easy way to what they wanted. They used rat poison, cosmetics or over-the-counter drugs because they were available. If they'd had access to the Eltdown Shards, they might have tried that too.

On the other hand, if you're well-stocked on evildoers, *The Poisoner's Handbook* gives plenty of evil for them to do. If charging in with a Tommygun doesn't fit their style, maybe filling the room with deadly gas would. Poison gas was so commonplace in vermin-infested New York, there were instances where it killed residents by mistake.

But perhaps the best role for *The Poisoner's Handbook* is 'historical anchor.' It's rich with details about policing, politics, and all levels of society at the heart of the epoch. Want an excuse for why a bungled killer still got away with it? It's in here, along with an equally persuasive rationale for effective, aggressive investigation. Its examples don't constrain your plots: It provides, instead, a menu of rationales for events in the Roaring Twenties.

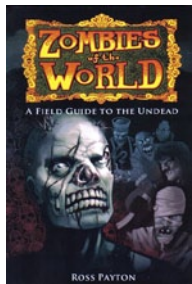
The 1920s-30s, with all their racism, flash and ignorance, can be as integral to a Lovecraft story as cosmic horror. Without a sense of humanity, the alien terror of the Mythos falls flat. If we don't care about the investigators, their madness or sacrifices are wasted. But if they're people of their time, with comprehensible beliefs and behaviors, then their collision with the

THE EYE OF LIGHT & DARKNESS

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incomprehensible is thrown into powerful relief. The possibilities from that kind of grounding, arising from details both scientific and historical, are what convinced me to give this nine phobias.

But I am the guy who likes books about poisons.



ZOMBIES OF THE WORLD

BY ROSS PAYTON

PUBLISHED BY SLANG DESIGN

REVIEWED BY CHASE W. BECK

When I first heard about Ross Payton's *Zombies of the World*, it sounded unnecessary. After all of the movies, the Romero remakes and the satires by Snyder and Wright, and all the book treatments from Stephen King to Brooks' wonderfully informative and eye-opening survival guide and pseudo-historic account, it didn't seem like we really needed any more material about the living dead. They have saturated every medium imaginable. I love zombies, but at some point, probably around the time *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* came along, it seemed as if everybody was already talking about them.

Then I held Payton's book in my hands. Suddenly I understood what made it fun: It was a field guide.

You probably remember your high school biology class, where you had to carry around a picture book of flowers or insects, trying to collect enough of either to pass. That's what *Zombies of the World* does. For zombies.

It takes the approach that not only have zombies been around since the dawn of man, but we've known about them and feared them all along. In these enlightened times, many zombie types have become endangered or even extinct. We, as self-appointed protectors of the planet,

must preserve them from further harm.

Zombie 'types' are derived from our own history or popular media. For example, the "Common Gray Shambler (*Mortifera immortalis romeroi*)" exemplifies those seen in *The Night of the Living Dead*. Each zombie type is given a full page of description including behavior and method of reproduction. These enjoyable and informative write-ups are accompanied by full-color drawings and world maps showing the ranges of each species, as well as designations that range from "Least Concern" to "Extinct."

A book containing only these descriptions would be a great buy. Payton also throws in some fascinating fiction concerning how the world and society would react to these various species of zombies. It contains information on the Zombie Rights Movement, insights into zombie intelligence research and details on how zombies can be used as a source of near limitless energy. One of my favorite sections shows how human survivors can be much more dangerous during a zombie attack than the zombies themselves. Another great entry that really got my imagination going was the all-too-brief description of *The Abattoir*, a fictional novel about unsafe factory conditions and the use of (disguised) zombies as an inexpensive workforce.

While lacking much direct application to Cthulhu gaming, *Zombies of the World* can serve as a source of many ideas. Any one of these zombie descriptions could make for an exciting game session or a campaign.

The pictures are fantastic, but some can seem a little cartoony at times. I enjoyed that once I got used to it, but another approach might have worked better. Each zombie type gets a genus, species and subspecies name. Since these names describe various incarnations of diseases, it would make more sense to show light microscope or electron microscopy photos of the bacteria or virus itself rather than a picture of someone infected by the disease. Showing a picture of the zombie might be more descriptive, but it's less informative, and often confusing when paired with the scientific name for the disease. It would be like labeling a picture of a rabid dog "Rabid Dog (*Lyssavirus rabies*)"; a rabid dog is not the rabies virus just as the Common Gray

Shamber is not *Mortifera immortalis remeroi*. That's a small and perhaps nitpicky complaint, but any book that is marketed as a scientific field guide had better get the science right, or at least provide an explanation for why standard practices were not followed.

All in all, though, *Zombies of the World* is a delightful and useful book and earns 8 phobias.



ELDER SIGN

DESIGNED BY RICHARD LAUNIUS AND
KEVIN WILSON

PUBLISHED BY FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

The focus of so many exotic curios and occult artifacts at the museum is the cause of a new threat to Arkham. They weaken the barriers to the beyond, letting Gates open and monsters in, and laying a path for an Ancient One to make its way to Earth and lay waste to mankind. Only a few dedicated Investigators have the knowledge and will, and perhaps the allies and the tools, if not necessarily the time, to locate enough Elder Signs to seal the portals and prevent the Ancient One's arrival. This is the setup for *Elder Sign*, a board game from the designers of *Arkham Horror*. It uses the same artwork and trade dress as *Arkham Horror* and *Mansions of Madness*.

Elder Sign is a cooperative game, meaning that the players are opposed by the game itself rather than the other players. It features a time component that regulates when the Ancient One will arrive and other, random events that occur throughout play. To overcome these events and prevent the arrival of the Ancient One, the Investigators must explore the Museum, having Adventures within its confines, to find and marshal the resources necessary to save the world.

Elder Sign includes several sets of large and small cards, various tokens and counters, a card clock, and a set of

customised dice. Of the large cards, the Investigators are characters controlled by the players, the Ancient Ones are the alien entities coming to Earth, and the Adventure Cards are encounters and situations that the Investigators must resolve to gain resources and Elder Signs. The small cards represent various Common and Unique items, Spells, and Allies (all beneficial to the Investigators), as well as Mythos cards that have various deleterious effects.

The game's primary time component is represented by the Doom Track on each Ancient One's card. If this Track is filled in, the Ancient One is summoned to Earth. In which case, the Investigators have to jointly face the Ancient One and defeat it in combat, a difficult prospect. The second time component is the Clock. Every time it strikes midnight—every fourth turn—a new Mythos Card comes into play with immediate and lingering effects.

At the heart of *Elder Sign* are its custom dice. These are rolled by a player on his turn to try and match the symbols of the Tasks on each Adventure Card. A player can make several attempts, gaining better dice by expending Item, Spell, and Ally cards or his Investigator's special ability. If he succeeds, the Investigator is rewarded, sometimes with Elder Signs, at other times with more Items, Spells, Allies, and even Other World Adventure Cards, like a trip to the Plateau of Leng. If he fails, he can lose Stamina and Sanity, unleash monsters that make resolving Adventure Cards more difficult, or add tokens to the Doom Track.

The players all have the same goal and the current player can elicit advice from the others. It is a "dice and decision" game: A player must decide where to send his Investigator and how to assign his dice.

The game is pleasingly produced, though the rules are a little succinct, needing a careful read through. Game play is tense; resolving an Adventure Card, let alone defeating an Ancient One, is not easy, and the Investigators are frequently beset by random and lingering events that add to the atmosphere of the game as seen in the art. This and the wide selection of cards means that *Elder Sign* offers plenty of replay value and room for expansion.

With everything being card-based, *Elder Sign* is not as location-oriented as *Arkham Horror* and *Mansions of Madness*,

which reduces the possibility of seeing a coherent narrative emerge in play. The focus on dice mechanics can have the same effect, although they and the time requirements do induce tension.

Elder Sign captures much of the tension and atmosphere of fighting desperately against the Mythos. That it does so in such a self-contained and time-constrained manner is a sign of a good design, at the heart of which is clever, tension-inducing dice rolling. Not too complex for the casual player, but still evocative for the Lovecraft devotee. Worth rolling seven phobias.



STUNNING ELDRITCH TALES

BY ROBIN D. LAWS
PUBLISHED BY PELGRANE PRESS
REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

If Pelgrane Press got the most appropriate author in Ken Hite to write the best game of Lovecraftian investigative horror since 1981—*Trail of Cthulhu*, reviewed in *The Unspeakable Oath* 18—it scored a double in getting Robin D. Laws to pen that game’s first scenario anthology. *Stunning Eldritch Tales* is a set of four scenarios written for *Trail of Cthulhu*’s Pulp mode, and so are slightly more action and adventure orientated than many *Trail* scenarios. Further, they are inspired by particular sub-genres found in the pulps, including man versus nature, masked adventurers, and international intrigue. All are set during the “dirty decade” of the 1930s, but could be adapted to other periods. Given the simplicity of *Trail of Cthulhu*’s rules, all could be run with other Lovecraftian investigative horror RPGs.

The first scenario, “The Devourers in the Mists” pits man against nature, casting Investigators ashore, shipwrecked on the beaches of a mysterious South Pacific island. Initially, their focus is on survival, on the need for food, water and shelter, but the Investigators suffer from a growing unease after they see strange

lights on the horizon, hear chants and growls in the mist-filled jungle, and feel as if they are under surveillance. Clues can be found at the sites of a second shipwreck and a crashed aeroplane, which could be that of Amelia Earhart (the scenario is set in 1937) or, depending upon when the Keeper sets the scenario, could merely be a shadow of the past or the future. The scenario comes with six pre-generated Investigators and there are guidelines for tournament play. It naturally focuses on the survival process. Inevitably, “Devourers in The Mists” draws comparisons with *Lost*, but this scenario has none of the television series’ unanswered meanderings, instead providing two or three good sessions of impending dread.

“The Devourers in the Mists” is followed by a possible explanation as to why the Investigators are in the Orient: “Shanghai Bullets.” Set before the city’s capture by the Japanese, it combines international intrigue with a Hitchcockian McGuffin hunt, hurling the Investigators into a world of espionage, gangland rivalries, and the dichotomy of the International Settlement’s glamorous exoticism and seedy poverty. This potboiler of a scenario is superbly supported with a rich supply of NPCs and background material. Its background and opening scenes are so good that they are worth using for when a Keeper runs the Shanghai chapter of *The Complete Masks of Nyarlathotep*.

The third scenario, “Death Laughs Last,” involves a murder mystery in New York. Wealthy philanthropist Addison Bright has been found impaled by a javelin in his study. The Investigators are hired to solve his murder and keep his reputation unsullied. This is a traditional investigative scenario that puts a definite Mythos twist upon the madness of the costumed adventurer.

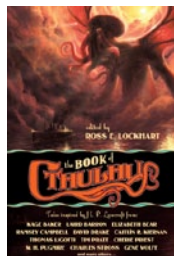
Rounding out the collection is “Dimension Y,” in which maverick physicist Polton Williams invites the Investigators to the inaugural demonstration of a new and radical device, the Y-Scope. Activating the device exposes them to a strange radiation, increasingly intense nightmares and eventually waking visions that tear at their Sanity. It drives others to murder, and the Investigators should realise that it is only a matter of time before they find themselves heading the same way. “Dimension Y” introduces the “Ticking Clock” scenario

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to *Trail of Cthulhu*, which calls for careful handling of time by the Keeper.

All four scenarios are well written, with advice aplenty and new rules for *Trail of Cthulhu*. Each works as a simple one-shot, while “Devourers in the Mist” and “Dimension Y” would also work as campaign starters. The standout scenario is “Shanghai Bullets” because it so evocatively captures its subgenre and gives a sense of the Paris of the Orient. Overall, a solidly fearsome foursome worth seven phobias.



THE BOOK OF CTHULHU

EDITED BY ROSS E. LOCKHART

PUBLISHED BY NIGHT SHADE BOOKS

REVIEWED BY GREG STOLZE

The Book of Cthulhu is an anthology of Mythos short stories. None are written by Lovecraft, but all show the influence. How well that influence works varies from piece to piece.

But what is a good Mythos short story? My standard is whether the story uses Lovecraftian themes, concepts or mood to examine something new, or whether it simply rehashes tentacles and cosmic nihilism. With one glaring exception, many of the best in here take the Mythos somewhere new. Others tread water, or simply aren't viable hybrids.

Let's start with the disappointments. For me, the book's worst feature was not any particular story, but slack proofreading throughout. Do missing (or extraneous) quote marks, problems with italics, and absent connective words like “to” and “of” bother you? Because once I spotted the pattern I couldn't stop looking for them.

“Calamari Curls” by Kage Baker isn't badly written, but with a cutesy-fey street mime conjuring extradimensional wrath for cash, it doesn't need to be. “To Live and Die in Arkham” by Joseph S. Pulver Sr. mixes hard-boiled

detective language with Lovecraft's setting and weird magic, but it felt like the author really wanted to write gritty crime and was willing to add creepy tomes to sell it. A similar problem plagues John Langan's “The Shallows.” There's a great, affecting story about a sad family and a dog in there: Pity it's bogged down with dimensional shifts and monsters.

The anthology's mid-range is full of stories that have tone, theme, plot and characters pulling together in traces, like Caitlín R. Kiernan's “Andromeda Among the Stones” (though she does seem overfond of comparing things to buttermilk). Others, such as “Jihad Over Innsmouth” by Edward Morris, concoct intriguing blends that can't quite go the distance—especially if they over-reach. Or, like the usually-stellar Bruce Sterling's “The Unthinkable,” if they don't reach far enough.

Ramsey Campbell's “The Tugging” evokes the 1970s (when it was written) through a fine command of detail. “Flash Frame” (by Silvia Moreno-Garcia), “Lost Stars” (Ann K. Schwader) and “Fat Face” (Michael Shea) are all solid and benefit from investing heavily in their mundane settings of skeezy Mexico, a Boulder women's-empowerment collective, and L.A.'s prostitution industry. “Fat Face” in particular does a nice job of marrying human tragedy to inhuman horror.

Two other stories (W.H. Pugmire's “Some Buried Memory” and Molly Tanzer's “The Infernal History of the Ivybridge Twins”) take chances, make big departures, and make it work. Pugmire's resembles Lovecraft in Dreamlands mode, telling the story of a grave robber coming home to her heritage with an arch, idiosyncratic tone that works better than you'd expect. As for Tanzer's story, purists will hate its humorous tone, but if you judge it by its own standards, it's an amusing story that moves briskly along and gets just where it wanted to go.

The collection's best stories often use the Mythos as a backdrop to historical human conflicts. “Shoggoths in Bloom” by Elizabeth Bear touches on American racism between the World Wars without devolving into a message story, and backstops it with beautiful description and a strong sense of science. As for David Drake's “Than Curse the Darkness,” it's just a bold idea: Taking the themes of “The Dunwich Horror” and applying it to the setting and

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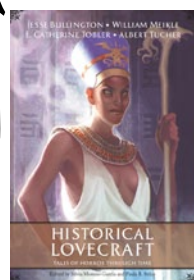
details Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Drake makes it work. The harrowing details of the Congo's Belgian occupation plausibly answer the question, "Why would anyone want to destroy the world?" He makes it sound like we almost deserve it.

Other fine historical stories include Joe R. Lansdale's "The Crawling Sky" (pulp horror western that gets by on the strength of dialogue and action scenes), "The Oram County Whoosit" by Steve Duffy (a tale of unfortunate discovery during the gold rush, echoed years later for an ill-starred journalist) and "The Men From Porlock" by Laird Barron (in which a lumberjack finds far worse things in the north woods than the chills, toil, and injury that Barron describes with detail reminiscent of Algernon Blackwood's "The Wendigo"). "A Colder War" by Charles Stross makes the Mythos impact on humanity overt, during the Oliver North era, and takes us through a full-blown apocalypse without ever getting cute, striking a false note, or relieving the pressure of politicians playing with forces beyond their pay grade.

T.E.D. Klein's "Black Man With a Horn" is singled out in the introduction as the editor's introduction to Cthulhu mythology, and I'm glad it got included. It's extremely subtle, keeping most of the events obscured by the remove of letters and news reports, while the narrator's personal decay and resignation steadily fill the reader, like a tear preparing to spill from an eye. It has no shocks, but is the second-most affecting tale in the book.

The most affecting is Thomas Ligotti's "Nethescuria," even though it does nothing original or outstanding in terms of character, setting or plot. Ligotti does mood; that's what he does, and any other element of story is included at the minimum level the atmosphere requires and no more. It's a limited approach, but when you've got a hammer that good, why use anything but nails?

Overall, most of the narratives here are solid, and there are more excellent pieces than failures. A broad variety of approaches and styles are on display. If nothing else, *The Book of Cthulhu* indicates the width of topics that Lovecraft's ideas can infect and encompass. I'd give it 6 phobias—or 5 if you care a lot about proofreading.



HISTORICAL LOVECRAFT

EDITED BY SILVIA MORENO-GARCIA AND
PAULA R. STILES

PUBLISHED BY INNSMOUTH FREE PRESS

REVIEWED BY BRIAN M. SAMMONS

The cover of this anthology of Lovecraftian tales by the wonderful Innsmouth Free Press features understated art of an Egyptian woman with a big hat and a staff festooned with images of Cthulhu. Perhaps the art is a bit too understated; it really doesn't grab your attention. But that's the cover. Let's get to the meat of this collection of 26 Lovecraftian tales set all over time and place.

I must admit I was a bit concerned when I immediately recognized only one of the authors in the table of contents. After some thinking I remembered reading a few of the others before, as well, but noticeably absent were most of the big names in modern Mythos collections. I'm all for giving newer authors exposure, and some of the scribes here may be very accomplished, and it may be only due to my own ignorance that I don't know their work better; but you see many of the same names in Lovecraft fiction again and again because they tell Lovecraftian stories very well in their own unique voices. Their omission here was a bit disheartening. But I endeavored to put that out of my mind and read the book with fresh eyes.

First, the good. The stories are placed all over the world and in many points in history, with tales divided between ancient times, the Middle Ages, and the recent past. So this book gets an A+ for variety if nothing else. The writer whose name I immediately recognized, William Meikle, does his usual great work, delivering with "Inquisitor" perhaps the best tale in the anthology.

Another winner was by Orin Gray, an author I need to get more acquainted with if his "Black Hill" is typical. His story puts a whole new twist on the phrase 'oil crisis.' I

also want to draw attention to “The Good Bishop Pays the Price” by Martha Hubbard. Set in the Byzantine Empire, it was one of the most historically steeped stories in the book, and yet it was entertaining, mysterious, and never dusty, dry or dull.

Another thing I liked about this collection was the number of shorter tales. I love a nice, leisurely soak in Lovecraftian dread, but sometimes a good, quick shock feeds the hunger for horror. A good example is “Deus Ex Machina,” a tale of ancient Greece which accomplishes a hell of a lot in just over two and a half pages. These four gems shone the brightest.

Now the bad. If all of these stories were in fact gems, then some would not shine at all, dull with uninspired characters and predictable plots. Worse, a few are simply pastiches. They seem to consciously mimic the prose, tone, and style of H.P. Lovecraft rather than telling Lovecraftian stories in a unique voice. One tale in particular I thought was pretty good, but the author’s persistent use of Lovecraftese kept drawing me out of the story.

The stories I would actually call bad are, thankfully, few and far between, but the sad truth is that much of this book is just sort of forgettable. *Historical Lovecraft* is not a terrible book. Perhaps if it had been released some years past, when the pickings for good Mythos fiction were slimmer, I might have liked it more. But we are blessed to be in a virtual golden age of Lovecraft-inspired goodness, with plenty of publishers putting out high-quality books based on HPL’s creations and ideas, and it’s hard to recommend this title over other recent Mythos books unless you have unlimited funds or you are a completist for all things Lovecraftian. Its standout stories bring it up to six phobias.



THE DOOM FROM BELOW

BY STAN!

PUBLISHED BY SUPER GENIUS GAMES

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW POOK

The Doom From Below is a sequel of sorts to *Murder of Crows*, Super Genius Games’ inaugural scenario for *Call of Cthulhu* (reviewed in *The Unspeakable Oath* 20). It is set in the 1920s near Bethlehem, New Hampshire, but it can be relocated to almost any mountainous and forested location and game period. The science fictional nature of its horror suits it for many modern or science fiction RPGs.

The scenario focuses on the one curious locale, a strange sinkhole and the caves below it. Initially the Investigators encounter natural dangers such as thick roots, insects and bats (and their guano), and then a mystery—one that could be the source of the bird and animal attacks that threatened Bethlehem in *Murder of Crows*. What the Investigators and the Keeper find is a locked-room situation supported with plenty of detail.

The plot to *The Doom From Below* is well explained as is the background; in some cases, overly so. Its Mythos elements are relatively light, at best expanding on an ancient alien presence in New England, although the investigators do not encounter that particular race during the course of play. One nice touch is that the investigators’ need for physical skills such as Climbing and Jumping, often overlooked by players, are covered by the inclusion of two NPCs.

Where *The Doom From Below* suffers is in the lack of maps for the cave system. Also, the four pregenerated Investigators are poorly designed and at odds with the suggested college anthropology/geology department, the Department of the Interior, or the corporate research team ideas that the scenario suggests would be investigating the sinkhole.

Although it lacks polish, *The Doom From Below* is a pleasingly small and self-contained affair worth four phobias. ☹

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE:

SHE HAD EVERYTHING

By BRENNAN BISHOP

She had everything I had wanted in a victim. She was intelligent, attractive, kept to a routine, and sprinted like a deer. I watched her come out of the University once it got dark and I began to follow her. I knew the road she took. I could've met her along it at any point, but I preferred to do it from start to finish. She didn't have many friends outside of a little circle, but that would've worked in my favor once the news of her murder hit the pipeline.

My little friend, the knife, was ready. I was ready. She was ready. I kept pace with her for nearly thirty minutes along that dimly-lit parkway until she cast a glance at me with a furrowed brow. It was then that the universe was ready. I dashed towards her. It was always the same, the screaming, but every time I hoped that maybe this one was smarter than the rest. Maybe she would say something, a sentence so profound it would stop me in my tracks, make me doubt myself, allow her to escape, or even attack me first.

Once I came close, with an ex-girlfriend. She shouted 'No,' and that she loved me. It was a lie. Her fearful eyes said so.

I want someone to share a connection, no matter how brief. I don't know what she would have to say, only how it would affect me. Something that was deep, meaningful, full of truth and emotion that we alone would share forever. Maybe then I could stop.

But this time it wasn't any of those things. Not a meaningless scream, not a profound connection. The words that came out of her barely caused me to slow. It was gibberish. Random-letter garbage tumbled out of her like blended alphabet soup. I knocked her over and was so disappointed in what she has said, so angry at her and at myself for thinking she might have been different, that I didn't notice the thing that had appeared behind us.

I think she called it. She had a connection, I could feel it then—but not with me. At least, not the way I could have expected.

Despite my surprise I never dropped the knife. It was just that my arm had come off while the thing struggled to pick me up. It managed to get me on the second try, though, and now we're heading upwards, toward the stars. I can still hear the girl, shrieking at us in that same gibberish from down below while her creature's wings beat all around me. I can feel myself getting colder as the park gets smaller and the moon bigger. My arm doesn't hurt. I doubt I will have much time for pain.

I realize I'm smiling.

Finally, someone different.





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