Istanbul Discovery

Call of Cthulhu, 7th Edition

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Much of the information is available from the Internet.

# Forward

It is again time to think about writing another horror filled adventure for Call of Cthulhu. The keeper has just finished a year campaign and is now preparing for another long campaign. I need to fill-in with a few games of horror.

This time the year is about 1926 and the setting is one of my favorite places: Istanbul. I have decided to have a problem with one of the most terrifying creatures I have read about in H.P. Lovecraft’s writing: The Colour Out of Space[[1]](#footnote--1).

No story has scared me more than this one. The publication data is close to my time line for the adventure and the creatures are one of the most deadly in the rules. Sounds just perfect!

I was able to purchase an old copy of a travel guide from 1925 with a nice section on “Constantinople.” This allows for some more correct details for the adventure.

Michael R Wild

22 June 2015, “Summer solstice,” Aloha, Oregon

**This document is meant for the Keeper’s eyes-only.**

# Introduction

The investigators are summoned for their expertise to Istanbul. They take the Orient Express or other ways to get there and find the locals have officially banned ancient horrors and legends. The local official, Mustafa, needs them to sort three mysteries and look into a possible copy of the dreaded and now officially non-existent Necromonican. It is 1926 in Turkey and there are many horrors afoot![[2]](#footnote-0)

# The Story

The new government of modern Turkey is proud of it modern thinking. Ancient legends and terrors are for the ignorant as far as the new government is concerned. Ankara, a freshly minted new capital city, does not want to be bothered by people who give away the blue eye for protection.

The investigators are asked to travel to Istanbul by the Orient Express to appraise a supposed copy of the dread book Necromonican. There they meet their local agent Mustafa. He will make the introductions and allow them to examine the book. He is using the investigators as experts as this involves ancient horrors that the new central government says do not exist. The book is a fake, but an excellent one. The investigators may pursue the forger to learn what he knows and how he learned it. Mustafa would like no more books of ancient horrors to appear.

While enjoying the sights of Istanbul there is another issue and Mustafa again needs the investigators’ special knowledge, skills, and discretion to avoid again facing things that the government has declared imaginary. A local artisan has created impossible colors and amazing glowing plants and buildings in small shop. A Colour Out Of Space egg has hatched and it has started to drain the area of life. The artisan, now hopelessly insane, has used the creature in his insanity to make the new art. The investigators will need to find the creature and the other eggs before part of Istanbul’s old city is burned out.

There is a group of importers of antiquities that seems to acquire amazing treasures. Mustafa is sure that the investigators will find this worthy of investigating. The importers are using magic to travel back in time and bury valuables so they can recover them. The hounds are also on the track!

A cistern hides unspeakable horrors. The area was sealed by powerful magic. The construction of a new sewer pipe had disturbed the magic. Things are getting loose! Can the investigators repair the magic or worse face what should not be disturbed. Mustafa again asks one more time for their unique skills.

So four chances of unspeakable horrors and intrigue in 1926 Istanbul are presented.

## History Lessons—Istanbul after The Great War

The setting is about 1926 in Istanbul. A travel writer of this time, the Rev. Donald Edward Lorenz, writes, “all pre-war guide books of Mediterranean lands are now practically obsolete” in the introduction to his new seventh “post-war” edition[[3]](#footnote-1). The fall of the Sultanate is now complete and Turkey has been a Republic since October 1923. The Ottoman Caliphate was abolished in the next year and most of the leaders and families forced to leave. Secular laws are now changing Turkey. The fez is banned in 1925 and the leader of Turkey, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, is leading reforms to modernize the Turkish Republic. Turkey is now a country where religion is carefully regulated by harsh laws to protect the people from ever returning to the failures and slavery of the Sultanate.

Just a decade earlier Turkey under the Sultan joined Germany in war against the Allies[[4]](#footnote-2). The story of the amazing political stunts made by Germany to befriend Turkey in 1914 makes fascinating reading—articles are available from the Internet. In summary the German warships *Goeben* and *Breslau* are accepted into the Sultan’s navy—replacing ships purchased from Britain but never delivered as the would-be Turkish ships are requisitioned for the war and enter the British Navy. The German crews of *Goeben* and *Breslau*, the ships renamed to Turkish names, dressed in incredible and fancy Turk uniforms raise the Ottoman flag on the former German ships and are ordered by the Sublime Porte, the Sultan’s government, to attack Russia. Turkey enters The Great War in fall of 1914 at war with the Allies using a former German battleship. Soon Churchill, frustrated by no progress on the front in France and Belgium, creates a second front by invading Turkey’s Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915-1916. The attack is a failure with great loss of life and material (included in the losses is the mining and sinking of the *Titanic*’s sister ship *Britannic,* the largest ship in the world, remodeled as a hospital ship for the Gallipoli campaign). Four years of war with the British and French and the disruption of trade and taxes bring economic chaos to the Sublime Porte. In fall of 1918 and before the surrender of Germany a treaty is signed on a British battleship that is the surrender of Turkey under the Sultan. Like the Kaiser in Germany, the Sublime Porte is overthrown and a new republic created; the Sultan and family are exiled.



Surrender of *Goeben* now called *Yavuz Sultan Selim*[[5]](#footnote-3)*.*

In the setting’s time, about 1926, the western armies are no longer occupying Turkey or Istanbul (the British ship H.M.S. Dreadnought, the first “Dreadnought” styled modern battleship, served in Istanbul in 1918[[6]](#footnote-4)). Turkey is now a country with a border that ends in the Anatolian plain—the modern borders of Turkey. The larger Ottoman Empire is gone. Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and other counties that appear too often in reports of modern warfare and terrorist news are created from the partitioning of the empire. Westerners, who only know the names for the various areas from the bible references, assign these names to many new countries created by treaties. These borders and names are meaningless to most people who live in the area. The names of “Orient” or “East” to describe this area are forgotten and replaced the modern names of Turkey and Middle East. Saudi Arabia rises too from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and the failed revolts of Laurence of Arabia. Israel will rise from the terrors of the next world war in the former territories Ottoman Empire in 1947 and claim to be the successor of the Ottoman Empire. The twentieth century and the next century will burn with wars and terrorism from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and the Western treaties to partition the Ottoman Empire.

Returning to the city where the story is set, the name for the city in the early twentieth century is still Constantinople for the authors of travel books and also used on many maps and material from the period in English, French and German. The use of “Istanbul” by Westerners becomes more normal in the mid-twentieth century after the next world war. Turkey is treated in 1926, and the Turks would say even today, as a stepchild of Europe instead, as the Turks see it, as a gateway to the Middle East and Asia. Moving to race, the ethicality of the Turks is “white”[[7]](#footnote-5) The German Kaiser—interviewed in 1908 but not published until 1934—said, “The future belongs to the white race.”[[8]](#footnote-6) Germany’s support and later alliance with the Ottoman Empire must also be viewed through a white supremacist len. Europe saw the “white” people of Turkey as following the false religion and needing to be directed back to the Western values and religion. The aforementioned travel writer, Rev. Lorenz, writes in his “Constantinople” chapter about he fall of Christendom: “Christendom was given over to the faith of the false prophet.”[[9]](#footnote-7) Jim Crow still burns in southern United States, racism is still accepted in the 1920s, and tolerance for religious differences is yet to be even declared as a goal until World War 2 brings forward more horrors. The people of 1920s are products of their times as are we.

Death and destruction rule the start of the twentieth century. The Great War toll is seventeen million lives lost. The Turks deny the Armenian and Greek Genocides that happened near the time immediately before the founding of the Republic—the numbers of death and the count of people displaced are disputed. The Spanish Flu (1918-1922) kills 3-5% of the world’s population. All the great powers are still trying to explain the great loss of life and material to their people from what was then called The Great War and most ruling government change or fall. Japan’s empire will rise as part of its alliance with the Allies and Japan learns Navy building and Empire building from Britain. USA becomes isolationist. Britain and France try to recreate their Empires. Belgium atrocities in Africa are defended. Germany is blockaded and will starve until it agrees to war reparations costing half a million or more lives plus those lost to the Spanish Flu; Germans will not forget this. The League of Nations and Washington Treaty are created tries to prevent another Great War.

The war-tired world turns away from these horrible events at this point in time: The times are called the “Roaring Twenties” by Americas, a time of economic growth and over indulgence—for the wealthy. Germany and Europe are finally recovering from war and the “Golden” or “Crazy” years start in Europe as they are remembered. The twenties in Europe while not innocent are at leased filled with enthusiasm for the future and peace.

The seeds of hate and horrors-to-come that are buried in the ashes of the Great War begin to grow. In 1926 Hitler, still on parole and forbidden to speak publically in much of Germany, becomes “Führer” or “Leader” of the Nazi party. He publishes the second part of *Mien Kampf* in December.

The keeper should keep the recent events in Turkey of 1926 and the general outlook of Westerners towards the Turks in mind as he or she tries to recreate Istanbul in the minds of the players.

## The City of the 1920s

Istanbul is a city that sits on two seas and two continents. It is at the joining of the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea. The Marmara Sea leads to the Mediterranean. The Bosporus separates the sections of the city as does the Golden Horn, a channel with many bridges over it in the 1920s. The old city is sometimes called Stanboul in the 1920s. Across the Golden Horn is Pera on the hills and Galata near the water with the new quay. Scutari is on the Asian side of the Bosporus. See picture below[[10]](#footnote-8).



The Internet has plenty of maps and information on Istanbul and Turkey. One interesting map of “Constantinople” is a French and German map of 1922. It is extremely detailed and perfectly shows all the sights and shape of the city. It is available on the Internet as an image and printed copies can even be purchased. It can be a great help.

According to Rev. Lorenz travel book there are 1,125,000 people residing in the city in 1925. He claims that half are Turks, less a quarter are Greek, with the rest being made up of various ethic groups including Armenians and Jews. He counts 379 mosques in what we call now Istanbul. Rev. Lorenz also recounts the economics of Turkey showing a negative trade balance of more than 10M Turkish lira. Exports consist of tobacco, dried fruit, wool, and of course carpets[[11]](#footnote-9).

According to Rev. Lorenz in his “Practical Notes” on Constantinople[[12]](#footnote-10) the currency is the Turkish pound (£T, though it is actually called the Turkish lira, it is pegged to the pound in the 1920s; “pound” is not far from the truth) and worth in gold units $4.32 in 1925 (This is close to the exchange rate for British pounds in the same year). The £T is divided into 100 piasters managed as silver coins of various dominations. A piaster divides into 40 para and managed as bronze coins. Paper money is depreciated now and worth only 1/7 its gold value.

Let us be more formal for those who like better facts. The currency of Turkey is the Turkish lira and was pegged to the British pound and French franc in 1926. The British pound converts to $4.86 in 1926. The lira again pegged to 2.8 lira to a USA dollar in 1946 and thus a British pound converts to 11.2 lira. In 1926 the Ottoman lira is still in circulation as are newer notes from the republic. The Ottoman lira notes will be out of circulation in 1927[[13]](#footnote-11). The symbol is ₺ and the symbol entered the Unicode standard in 2012[[14]](#footnote-12).

Returning to the travel guide and its practical notes, a carriage costs fifteen piastres an hour or eighty for a day (costing 60 cents and $3.20). For game purposes a discount can be as much as 1/7 the cost in Constantinople for locally produced items but this requires manipulating currency and bartering for a better price. Services, such as carriages and guides, will always be discounted. Imported items will be more expensive and thus full price (or much higher priced if exotic or military). Critical failures of trying to reduce prices will bring the attention of the local police and fines will be levied. Local officials are unhappy when rich Westerners try to shakedown their merchants.

Trying to make a profit on exchange rates and manipulating currency, while possible, is not what the players should be focused on and would like upset the locals.

The Pera Palace Hotel is the best western styled hotel in 1926 and is just a walk from the British Embassy. It is of course in the center of the Pera section of the city that is often called the Europe Quarter of the city. Hotel Bristol is also available—a less expensive hotel (and now the Pera Museum). Various competent restaurants serve French food and of course fine quality Turkish food is available. Basic services are available in Pera for Euopeans such as tailors for making suits. Unlike Shanghai in China—many Keepers have played setting in China—Pera is not controlled by the Western powers and so Turks keep the peace and laws are modern, there is little corruption at this time. The corruption was swept away with the Sublime Porte overthrow and the officials are aware of the consequence of corruption. Fines will be high and justice swift for crimes that threaten the peace of the in Pera or other parts of the city.

## Sight Seeing

This information is available on the Internet or any guidebook. Notes are made here on how the setting of 1926 works. Some of these locations appear in the adventures.

Istanbul is an amazing city that has much to see. To reach the city by the Orient Express in the 1926 it is necessary to connect to a boat to finish the journey. The trip from Varna is via a steamer that travels the Black Sea and then into the Bosporus to dock at the quay at Galata in the city. From there on the docks a carriage is taken to Pera and a hotel. This is already an amazing trip and that is just to get to the hotel! On the shores of the Bosporus and quite noticeable is the disused palace of the Sultan: **Dolmabahce Palace**. It is not open for tours in 1926.

The old town, Stanboul to many, contains most of the amazing treasures, but near the hotels in Pera is the **Galata Tower**, built by Italian traders, and gives a great view of the city. The convent of the **Whirling Dervishes** is in the same area, near the top of the hill in Pera and also near all the foreign embassies. Many schools and churches here to service the European living in this area—all part of the “European Quarter.”

The **Hagia Sophia** is still a mosque in 1926. It will become a museum in 1935. It is an amazing sight with its huge dome and marble and other stonework. The huge disks of camel leather painted in gold and black calligraphy fill each bend of the structure high above the floor proclaiming the faith practiced here[[15]](#footnote-13).

The tour of the **Hippodrome** seems to be a means to distract the tourists from other more interesting topics. **The Obelisk** from Egypt, the **Serpent Column** and the **Built Column** are not as interesting as the rest of the city. The stands and other stonework from the ancient times were taken and used to build other structures leaving just the three columns. Rev. Lorenz states that all of the magnificent bronze statues once stood with the Hippodrome were lost in the Crusaders sack of the city[[16]](#footnote-14). The author finds the there is very little see and the columns seem sad without meaning now.

The **Mosque of Ahmed I** directly faces the Hagia Sophia and during calls to prayer the call the call is done in turns. This mosque is a masterpiece of religious architecture and beauty and is known in this time the “china mosque” as it has blue tile as one of it main themes inside—much like the china plates sold in Europe by such as Wedgewood and Royal Doulton. It is now known as the **Blue Mosque**.

The **Spice Market** is a small market that is filled with stalls that sell spices, candies, pastries, and all sorts of exotic items. The citizens of the city use this market so prices are reasonable and bargaining is more for fun than to reduce prices. The Spice Market is just across the Golden Horn and near the **Galata Bridge** that is only about a decade old in 1926. The bridge is floating wooden bridge built by a German firm and is a toll bridge. A white uniformed local collects tolls: 5 para for pedestrians, 10 para for pedestrians with backpacks, and 100 para for carriages (between a few cents and a nickel).[[17]](#footnote-15)

The **Grand Bazaar** is near the center of the old city and at this time is not the tourist trap it has become in the Twenty-first century. It is the model of everyone fantasy of a exotic eastern bazaar. Windy path lead to more and more exotic products, colors, smells, and items. The old court of the Sultan seems to be still in place as eunuchs attending their ladies and the ladies’ children mix in the crowd in 1926. The bazaar is separated into different trades and items. There are textiles, gems, gold, metal work, junk, and antique areas. The 1926 version was much more windy streets and alleyways. Over the years since more and more of the Grand Bazaar was enclosed. It is very easy to get lost and very hard to find the same shop again.

Rev. Lorenez gushes: “Here may be bought Oriental perfumes and cosmetics; curiously shaped weapons, whose handles are often encrusted with gems and inscriptions from the Koran, together with others whose handles are beautifully carved in ivory, sandalwood and mother of pearl.” He ends with “it seems as though the wealth of the Indias were concentrated in these Bazaars.” [[18]](#footnote-16)

The locals do not shop here unless looking for an exotic item or an old item.

The **Suleymaniye Mosque** is one of the great mosques in the city. It is on a hill with in a ten minutes walk of the Grand Bazaar. Its clean line, white stone and huge dome make it bright building in the skyline. The colors of white and stained glass in the design make it inviting to the tourist or the worshipper. The graveyard includes Suleymaniye and his wife’s graves in elaborate mausoleums.

The **Subterranean Cisterns** is huge and appear to many to be another Haga Sophia built underground filled with water. It is over 330 feet long and over 180 feet wide in 1926. It is an amazing place. Its entrance, there is a small fee, is near the Haga Sophia in the courtyard of a Turkish house[[19]](#footnote-17).

There are many other things to see and do in 1926 Istanbul. This should be a good start for the Keeper and players.

## Game Mechanic

The **cost of items** and the use of various currencies while a bother for tourists should not distract from the game. Just assume that with the cost is about the same with the investigators getting some items cheaper and others more expensive. The 3-5% currency exchange fee will make any good deals be less attractive. Exotic items, military items, guns and the like will be very expensive and hard to find.

**Making skill checks** could disadvantage die in Istanbul. Trying to use library skills in a Turkish library will require a disadvantage die. Charm and fast talk skills are at a disadvantage in the streets of Istanbul, in general. Trying to fit in and become more “hip” to the culture can reduce the cost of failures. A failure becomes, “That is an insult here in Turkey, but I see you are trying to be helpful and that was just a mistake—you are forgiven but I must take my leave,” instead of “You have insulted me and my family—I will contact the high officals and have you expelled or at least fined for your insolence, good day!” which could have consequences.

The Keeper should ask the players how their **characters adapt or don’t adapt** to a Muslim county and to the Turkish culture. It would be good to ask them how they are dressed and how much local currency they carry and what breakdown. Not having the right currency could cause a disadvantage die.

**Hotels have safes** for large amounts of cash and valuables. Generally the space is limited in the safe for guests to add a few valuables to the safe. A luck roll should be made to determine if something goes wrong—a critical failure means some form of shenanigans will happen (giving the Keeper a whole new story line). A regular failure means that there is no space or the hotel staff is unwilling to take the risk of accepting the items, “We had a scare last week with a countess who thought she put her jewels with us, quite mad, and we a bad time of it until the maid found the sparkles under a pillow—No sir we will not accept any more risk.” Guests should bring their own well-made trunks and possibly even a safe (Remember the safe in the movie *Titanic*).

# The Scenes

The text is split into four sections. The first, “The Book,” should happen well first as it introduces the setting. In each of these sections are the scenes to use with the players. Each scene contains a short description, some text to read or paraphrase, and elements to play through the scene. All creatures are supplied with skills so the Keeper can know what to value to use. The author feels that a base set of skills should always be supplied to enable better play.

# The Book

These scenes all involve first meeting the guide Mustafa and learning about the book. Mustafa wants to first determine if the book is real and also if it is dangerous. Mustafa is here to protect the peace and the foreigners. Aboo is a crook and disgraced minor official who used the last of his influence to purchase a shop, at a much-reduced price, and set himself up as a bookseller. Aboo is friendly and knows that as long as he is useful as consulting political advisor and just sells books that are obscure and out of favor and his customers are folks outside of Turkey, he will be fine. Aboo has received the book from Heinrich Strasser a local printer. Heinrich is an evil man who has stolen and killed for his collection of torn pages and fragments of many eldritch books and writings. While Aboo is just a poor corrupt disgraced former official trying to make a living in the newly minted Turkey Republic, Heinrich is insane. Heinrich is trying to raise money to make the correct bribes to turn him from Turk to German and return to the Fatherland. He denies that he was born in Pera and is the son of a German Embassy staffer and a maid. He is a villain but obscure. The players may decided to leave him in place and use him as an ally or stop him to protect the world from his evil plans.

## Scene 00: Reaching Istanbul

The investigators, it is assumed, reach Istanbul by taking a train, usually the Orient Express from Paris or Vienna or connecting to the train. Without events they reach Varna on the Black Sea and transfer to a small steamer that will take them for a day trip along the coast of the Black Sea to the Bosporus and to the Galata Quay.

Read or paraphrase:

*The travel was the usual hustle and bustle intermixed with long boring and discomfort of long journeys. It takes days to cross Europe and to reach the Black Sea and Varna. Again there is the repacking and removal of same to the ship, a small steamer that cannot be as old as it looks, and off again. Food is poor and the movements of the ship after the forward movement of the train for a week does not make food more appealing. The trip finally reaches the moving but calm waters between Asia and Europe: The Bosporus.*

*The romantic look and gaze, the tourist being out cameras and snap, and the crew suddenly panic as the voyage ends once again with out expectation as if all the crew are new to the passage. Chaos runs the length of the ship.*

*The boat docks with more skill and less churning that you would expect but the boat bounces up and down more than you would expect when tied to the quay. The current of the Bosphorus and the Marmara Sea are strong. In the normal moments of panic and relief you and your luggage are delivered to your hotel up a large hill in the European Quarter known as Pera.*

The investigators may select the Pera Palace or the cheaper but still European styled Hotel Bristol. They are to meet man wearing a white carnation and called Mustafa. He has arranged for a tea at Pera Palace for the travelers.

The rates for the hotels are high, but Mustafa has arranged a deep discount for the investigators. Assume the hotel and food costs will be normal for 1926 in any city.

## Scene 01: Mustafa

The investigators are working with a local official they know only as Mustafa. He has sent them a letter (see below in Handouts) and asked them to come. He will meet the investigators in the Pera Palace Hotel for tea at 4PM. This is near the time for the call of prayer. As we don’t know the date the players arrive in the hotel the exact calculation cannot be done ahead of time. Instead the text assumes it happens while tea is being poured. He is wearing a whTHeite carnation (silk) and has arranged a private Tea for the meeting.

Read or paraphrase:

*The Pera Palace Hotel could be anywhere in Europe. The chandeliers, the uniforms, the cozy chairs all make it look as once of the more expensive hotels in London or Paris. It is in Pera section in a city once called Constantinople and is called that here in this hotel. The workers are Turks who actually seem to like their work, you can already tell then you are not in Paris or London, and the treats offered are Turkish style and pastries of impossibly thin dough or impossible spun nests of same mixed with nuts and local honey—not cakes. The mix of sounds and tastes and smells assure you that Pera Palace is in Pera.*

*A gentleman wearing a silk carnation in his well made dark German styled western suit is talking to the staff and directing tea and various delights both Turkish and more familiar in London or Paris. He hands a card to a bellhop. The uniformed bellhop, a young and well-polished Turkish boy of no more than 14 years of age, address you in English and then in French-perfectly, “Mr. Mustafa has arrange a private tea in the small ball room, his card.” He then presents the card and waits a moment for you to read it and before you have time for questions he speaks again and again, in English and then in French, “Mr. Mustafa is known to the hotel and we establish his identify for you—this is he who sent you a letter and a local official known to the hotel.” He nods and turns his whole body, his back never to you, and points you to a hall off of the main entrance. Another man, older, dressed as a waiter smiles and wave you forward.*

It is assumed that the players will agree to have their characters join the tea. The staff will have little more to say then presented. They will not expand on Mr. Mustafa’s name or role in the Turkish Government. He is just the local fixer and handles the foreigners when needed. Mr. Mustafa is more a government tourist representative and undercover customs agent ensuring the safety of the foreign visitors and the locals from the foreign visitors than a guide. The hotel will vouch for him.

Read or paraphrase:

*The tea is set in a small ballroom and set in bright colors and floral patterns. All the china is bone and standard for hotels in London or Paris or apparently in Pera. No double boilers for tea here, as is the custom of Turks, and the china replaces the fine glass of Turkish tea. Mr. Mustafa stands proudly among the tables and next to the one overflowing with European and Turkish delights. He smiles and says, “Welcome my friends! Please have some tea and dessert.” He is a middle-aged man of clear complexion and grey eyes. His suit is dark and German style and his shoes are fine leather with a nice shine. His silk carnation is in his lapel. He appears a mix of a customs agent trying to trick you into a indiscretion and a travel agent hoping the food will be good at the next stop. He pulls out a small book form his jacket and he reads each name and polite guesses who is who. “You must be Mr. Such-and-such as I can tell by your leaned looks and tan from some many digs,” is the style of his address as he checks that everyone is who he believes them to be and that everyone is accounted for. The call to prayers is heard while he does this. He and the staff seem not to have heard it as it repeats through all the locals mosques.*

The investigators will likely have questions, skill checks, and other ideas or wish to just enjoy the tea.

Read or paraphrase:

*Your host turns to address you, “We have work to do. We will meet a man in the old town who has the book. There you may view it and consider it value. I, as a servant of our new government, does not believe in magic or horrors of the past—we are a modern country and do not have these things. That does not mean our friends cannot research these old pagan beliefs and tell us so much about our past. You are experts and debunkers of superstition. You are experts on old things and their values—even pagan worship objects. We need your help as we are a modern new country and we do not have these thing,” he says as if lecturing for some one.*

Mustafa will lead them in the night to the bookseller. They must travel to the old city and cross the Golden Horn by the Galata Bridge, a toll bridge. They will likely need more than one carriage. They are to meet after hours and after the city quiets, about an hour after the call to prayers for sunset.

The players may wish to explore the area, look for supplies, or investigate Mustafa. They have some time to look into things.

An exploration of Mr. Mustafa will find his name in some news articles as helping solve some crimes involving foreigners. He is called a local official and agent in the articles. There are rumors of some strange lights in the old city and colors that are odd. There are articles of some amazing finds that are while archeologically uninteresting are very valuable such as agent unmarked gold bars. Find such a treasure is quite amazing and on a history check very strange indeed. There are also adds from last year about odd ancient texts being discovered. As the government considers these more pagan items, they can be sold as most appear to be imported. All of this information is available for various checks from the investigators. Mustafa is well connected in the government, smart, and often lucky.

**Mustafa, Age 48, Local Official**

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 50 INT 70 POW 80 DEX 65 APP 55 EDU 65 LUCK 75

SAN: 75

HP: 10

Build: +0

**Damage Bonus:** N/A

**Weapons:** .38 Revolver 20%, damage 1d10 (average damage 5)—He is usually unarmed.

Fighting (Brawl) 55%, damage 1d3 (average damage 1)

**Skills:** Accounting 30%, Climb 15%, Credit Rating 60%, Charm 60%, Cthulhu Mythos 0%, Dodge 40%, Drive Auto 5%, Drive Carriage 30%, Fast Talk 70%, First Aid 35%, General Science (1920s) 40%, History 30% (knowledge of Istanbul and people 60%), Intimidate 45%, Jump 20%, Language (own Turkish) 65%, Language (English) 60%, Language (German) 50%, Language (French) 40%, Language (Arabic) 30%, Law 40%, Library Use 10%, Listen 15%, Persuade 60%, Occult 40%, Psychology 30%, Ride (Horse) 60%, Spot Hidden 35%, Stealth 30%, Throw 20%, Track 10%

Mustafa carries a blue eye charm that he will not let anyone know about. It will prevent him from dying in some conflict by just managing to avoid serious injury and so on. He is very lucky indeed. The blue eye charm also acts as an Elder Sign. It can save his life once a year. He has not needed for a year so he will escape on death in the adventure, if needed.

## Scene 02: The Old City Book Seller

This is the meeting with the bookseller at his shop after hours. The bookseller is Aboo and he is not a Turk but a retired and disgraced official from the now non-existent Sublime Porte. All this information can be gleaned later from various attempts to get information. It is likely that the investigators will be at a disadvantage die as they are foreigners and likely don’t speak Turkish.

With success the players learn that Aboo is a well-known seller of rare books. He was caught taking the pay of the Germans and forced to retire from the Sublime Porte—most are not retired but executed. He sells most books to foreigners and sells books that have found their way into Istanbul—he never sells Turkish antiquities.

Read or paraphrase:

*You invest into a two carriages and the toll on the Galata Bridge to reach a small wooden building in a remote section of the old town behind the ancient walls of Byzantium near the Suleymaniye Mosque and near the prison. Not the best part of the town. Mr. Mustfa points out the wood and says that only the richest shop owners can afford wood. “I suspect the shop was a gift to keep our bookseller quite. Aboo knew many secrets of the Empire and is on occasion requested to recall events of the Sublime Porte. Aboo is the name he goes by,” Mr. Mustafa says as way of introduction to the shop. The shop has many western books in various languages with the exception of Turkish. There is a lot of German.*

*The lights are still on the shop but quite low. You enter and an older man with a beard and shinny happy eyes and a double boiler of tea rises and greets you and Mr. Mustafa with a smile. He greats Mr. Mustafa in Turkish with many old style greetings and hand waving—He has sly smile as he seems to be playing that Mr. Mustafa is the Grand Vizier and treats him with all the formality of The Sublime Porte. Aboo turns to you and Mustfa mentions you. You hear “American” and your other nationalities mentioned in the Turkish. Mr. Aboo addresses you; “Welcome my friends please join me for tea. I am very happy to meet any friends of Mr. Mustafa and even more experts on the more arcane subjects.” His English is perfect and also American styled—something you seldom find in Europe. “I had some good friends at the American Schools and Embassy,” he says acknowledging your surprise. “I am a natural for languages and forget nothing,” he says as he pours you tea.*

*You enjoy tea and Turkish pastries. “Too work,” he says with a sighs. His shop appears more like a library with most books on shelves. Some books are behind glass and locked. He waves you a small room. You notice the huge bank vault door and the metal walls. “During the civil war we had a few banks collapse and some even burned. I was able to recover a nice room like this. It was difficult to install,” he says as you look around. He takes out a key and unlocks a large safety deposit box. He waves to Mustafa to pull out the metal box and place it on the table in the small room. “It is a nasty piece of work,” he says as you see a face is tanned into the leather of a book. The room seems colder.*

The book is clearly of recent manufacture and creepy. It is a forgery. It uses extra thick paper to reduce the number of pages needed to fill it out. The pages are printed and hand written. It appears that someone has taken various scraps of lore and combined them into a masterpiece of book binding art and forgery. It is a valuable book as a piece of art, occult knowledge, and there are hints of Mythos too and a complete spell inside. It is mostly in German.

**Istanbul Book**

A recent forgery of the Necromoncon but filled with bits and pieces text copied from fragments of real works. The book is written mostly in German but is often quite clear and can often be translated with just a dictionary. The book is of modern creation bound in pigskin made to look like a human face. It uses think heavy paper. It is much condensed and therefore takes less time to absorb it contents and hidden knowledge.

**Sanity Loss:** 1D4

**Occult:** +4

**Cthulhu Mythos:** +1/+2

**Mythos Rating:** 25

**Study:** 4 weeks

**Suggested Spells:** Chant of Thoth (called Scholar’s Luck in the text) and Dust of Suleiman (called Dust of the Sultan and the dust of a Sultan can be used in the place of mummy dust, the dust must come a body of royality).

The players can pay about 150 Turkish pounds gold to take it with them ($300 gold dollars, this is about $4000 in 2015 spending power). Anything lower will not please Aboo as he has to pay Mr. Mustafa and the forger. This is a unique book and he expects to be paid.

The safe is locked with a combination lock and a large key for the second gate. Aboo changes the safety deposit box used after each visit; only he knows which box it is in. It would require a major “bank-job” to break into this vault (a disadvantage die at least for the first locks). It would also be hard to not be noticed—the locals will not stand-by and let Aboo be robbed. Also Aboo lives in a small apartment above the shop. The shop is closed for daily prayers and Aboo attends the local mosque.

**Aboo, Age 65, Bookseller**

STR 40 CON 40 SIZ 40 INT 60 POW 60 DEX 50 APP 70 EDU 70 LUCK 50

SAN: 45

HP: 8

Build: -1

**Damage Bonus:** -1

**Weapons:** .38 Revolver 70%, damage 1d10 (average damage 5)—He keeps a German pistol hidden in his robes. He is very good with it.

Fighting (Brawl) 5%, no damage

**Skills:** Accounting 50%, Appraise 70%, Archeology 50%, Art (History) 50%, Art (Forgery detection and making) 60%, Climb 1%, Credit Rating 50%, Charm 70%, Cthulhu Mythos 40%, Dodge 25%, Drive Auto 1%, Drive Carriage 10%, Fast Talk 50%, First Aid 20%, General Science (1920s) 10%, History 50% (knowledge of Istanbul and its politics 90%), Intimidate 5%, Jump 1%, Language (own Turkish) 70%, Language (English) 70%, Language (German) 70%, Language (French) 60%, Language (Arabic) 60%, Law 40%, Library Use 90%, Listen 15%, Persuade 60%, Occult 80%, Psychology 60%, Ride (Horse) 60%, Spot Hidden 60%, Stealth 5%, Throw 1%, Track 1%

Aboo is very good with information and finding things out.

## Scene 03: The Forger Appears

The forger will be coming to Aboo’s shop later that night to pick-up his cut and to discuss how it went and if they could produce more documents to sell. They are supplying Mustafa with a small handling fee of 10 Turkish pounds. Heinrich Strasser is the forger. He was born in Pera and is the illegitimate son of a German Embassy staffer named Strasser and a Turk who was his maid. Henrich is a printer and master forger and bookbinder.

He will come to Aboo’s shop on the night the book is shared with the investigators. He will appear there once or twice week or so thereafter. He is delivery Aboo’s order from his shop, Deutschland Press, in the nice part of Pera. This actually some more samples of forgeries for Aboo to consider and suggest changes. Henrich will continue to produce more material and sell it through Aboo and other booksellers and art sellers.

## Scene 04: Deutschland Press

Heinrich Strasser is the owner and printer for his shop Deutschland Press. He is a friendly man on the surface but is actually an insane artist and forger. He uses a German name and speaks all but Turkish, his true native language, with a slight German accent. He dresses and plays the part of a German with clicking his heals as if he was high born German, but he is half Turk and is a citizen, natural-born, of Turkey.

Heinrich’s plan is to keep making forgeries and sell them through Aboo and other local sellers. He needs the money to pay for his transformation from Turk to German via bribes and proper payments to officials to look-the-other-way. He will not let anyone get in the way of his plans.

He keeps his library underground in an old wine cellar that keeps the text at a constant temperature. He uses lye and other chemicals to keep the cellar dry and clean. He has a metal spiral staircase that is very narrow, one person at a time, to get to the cellar. He has an electric fan to push air into the cellar. He uses a battery to power it that he charges with a steam engine he uses to run his presses.

Read or paraphrase:

Deutschland Press is in Pera, the European Quarter to some, and specializes in printing wedding invitations, business cards, menus for the local Western style restaurants and that kind of thing. They also print flyers and small news supplements.

**Heinrich Strasser, Age 35, Printer and Forger**

STR 60 CON 60 SIZ 60 INT 60 POW 40 DEX 80 APP 50 EDU 50 LUCK 75

SAN: 0

HP: 12

Build: +0

Magic Points: 6

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** .38 Revolver 70%, damage 1d10 (average damage 5)—He has a fine quality German pistol hidden in a holder often when he travels. He is very good with it. It is well hidden in his suit (the suit is designed to hide the gun).

Fighting (Brawl) 65%, 1d3.

Fighting (sword cane) 65%, 1d6

**Skills:** Accounting 20%, Appraise 30%, Archeology 10%, Art (History) 40%, Art (Forgery detection and making) 80%, Art (Bookbinding, printing) 70%, Climb 15%, Credit Rating 40%, Charm 25%, Cthulhu Mythos 60%, Dodge 45%, Drive Auto 15%, Drive Carriage 15%, Fast Talk 25%, First Aid 10%, General Science (1920s) 5%, History 15% (knowledge of Istanbul 30%), Intimidate 45%, Jump 15%, Language (own Turkish) 70%, Language (English) 50%, Language (own German) 70%, Language (French) 45%, Law 10%, Library Use 65%, Listen 15%, Persuade 25%, Occult 65%, Psychology 1%, Ride (Horse) 30%, Spot Hidden 40%, Stealth 5%, Throw 1%, Track 1%

**Spells:** Chant of Thoth, Cloud Memory, Dust of Suleiman, Elder Sign, and Shrivelling.

**Insanity:** Afraid of sharp angles (just make him nervous) and terrified of dogs.

## Scene 05: The Lost Library

The library that Heinrich has collected all these years and stolen and killed for is in the dry cool basement under his shop. The contents of the Istanbul Fragments are cursed by all the evil that Heinrich has done to obtain them and also all the evil they have been involved in over the years. Heinrich is conscious of the curse and ensure that he never falls for it. Any physical contact with the fragments that make up the Istanbul Fragments means a Lesser Hound of Tindalos (see below) begins to become interested in the person that made the contact and they will then track them through time until the find them and kill them.

Read or paraphrase:

*Down a very narrow iron spiral staircase that takes you far underground you find a large room that is cold but dry. There are lanterns and electric lights to see by. The room contains three map chests and some bookcases with glass doors. There are gloves and white over coats and magnifying glasses by a small neat desk.*

*Many of the books are just fragments of a book, a few pages not burned or ruined by time. Most of the books are in terrible condition. The map chest contains not maps but small fragments in boxes or between pieces of glass. There are some unused pieces of glass, glasscutter, torch, copper metal tape, and solder on another workbench.*

*A fan, also electric, appears to bring in fresh air. The air is filtered and passed over some dry chemicals. More trays of dust or chemicals are around the room—drying agents.*

*There are no sharp angles in the room. Someone went to the trouble of covering all the corners with cement.*

**Istanbul Fragments**

These are a collection of fragments and copies of fragments that are hundreds of years old. The content is occult and unworldly knowledge. The fragments are ordered in cases of drawers with the most fragile fragments sealed between two pieces of glass. An orderly index of the fragments and German translations are kept in a series of hand written and typed monographs.

**Sanity Loss:** 1d4

**Occult:** +6

**Cthulhu Mythos:** +4/+9

**Mythos Rating:** 45

**Study:** 36 weeks

**Suggested Spells:** Chant of Thoth (called Scholar’s Luck in the text), Dust of Suleiman (called Dust of the Sultan and the dust of a Sultan can be used in the place of mummy dust, the dust must come a body of royalty), Elder Sign (called Shield of the Scholar), Contact Deity/Cthulhu

Additional books found in the library (see rules for information): *Malleus Maleficarum* (German translation) and *The Golden Bough.* These books are not part of the curse.

**Lesser Hound of Tindalos, Scavengers of Time**

STR 80 CON 150 SIZ 80 INT 80 POW 24 DEX 50 APP 10 EDU N/A LUCK 70

**SAN:** N/A

**HP:** 23

**Damage Bonus:** +1d6

**Build:** +1

**Move:** 6 / 40 flying

**Weapons:** Paws 90%, damage 1d6+1d6+ichor (1d6 damage around, wipe off to stop damage, DEX check, first aid check, etc). The ichor is partially alive and “bites” the victim until removed. It is hard to wipe it off and fight.

Tongue 90%, damage 1d3 POW draining (permanent unless a Power check is made for each attack) per hit.

**Armor:** 2-point hide, regenerates 4 hit points a round until reaching zero or is dead; mundane weapons do no damage and have not effect. Enchanted weapons do full damage[[20]](#footnote-18).

**Skills:** Climb 70%, Credit rating N/A, Dodge 40%, Fighting (Brawl) 90%, Jump 60%, Listen 60%, Stealth 40%, Spot Hidden 70%, Track 90%, Throw 5%

**Sanity Loss:** 1d3 / 1d20 sanity points to see a hound

**Invisible spell:** May use five power points to become invisible for one round. Disadvantage die to attack.

**New Corner spell:** May use five power points to disappear through an angle in the area and attack from another angle the next round.

**Start again spell:** For ten power points when killed it disappears and attacks again from another angle on the next round. This is possible no matter how it is killed.

This hound will just keep coming back over and over until it is out of power points.

## Scene 06: Conclusion

# The Colour of Art

Scene 01: Mustafa Request

Scene 02: The Night Lights

Scene 03: The Mad Artisan’s Studio

Scene 04: Colour

Scene 05: Conclusion

# Handouts

## Mustafa’s Letter

Text of letter:

*Istanbul, Local Government Office*

*August 1, 1926*

*Friends!*

*I am a local official in the city of Istanbul, once Constantinople, and I am troubled by mysteries that our most learned new government has declared to be the imaginations of ignorant people. Not wishing to run afoul of more learned men I have sent you an invitation to come to our city and to review a document that is obviously filled with ancient superstitions. The question is what is the name and is it correct that a copy of the dread Necromonican could exist here in our new modern Turkey? As you are known to understand and to clarify these types of mysteries and are respected men who our new government would require to explain the mystery of how this book could exist in our great city—please come soon.*

*I will meet you at the Pera Palace Hotel on your entrance to our city—I will know you are there. I am a local offical with some skill. I will wear a white carnation and I am called Mustafa. I will look for you for tea at 4PM on you first day in Pera.*

*Please come prepared to authenticate, appraise, and possibly purchase the item. Our new government no longer values this kind of antiquity and I would be rid of it.*

*Regards,*

*Mustafa*

His card

Agent of the Republic of Turkey

Keeper of the peace, Istanbul

Mustafa

Foreign Relations, Republic of Turkey

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1. Please see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Colour_Out_of_Space> for more information on this story first published in 1926 by H.P. Lovecraft. [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. With apologies to Sir Conan Doyle. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. Lorenz, D.E., *The New Mediterranean Traveller*, Eleventh (1925 Revised) Edition, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
4. The Allies include Britain, France, Russia, Japan and USA. The Central Powers include Germany, Austria-Hungaria, and Turkey. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
5. See <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AYavuz_Sultan_Selim_1919_painting.jpg> .  
   By Connard, Philip RA [Public domain or Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons from Wikimedia Commons [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
6. See in the British Imperial War Museum website <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5472> for sketch of ship in Constantinople. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
7. See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_race-ethnicity> . [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
8. Hale, William Hale, “The Future Belongs to the White Race,” *The Atlantic: World War I*, Summer 2014, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
9. Lorenz, *Mediterranean Traveller*, 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
10. This is from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantinople_map_German.png> and is allowed to appear here as long as it is referenced. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
11. Lorenz, *Mediterranean Traveller*, 131-133. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
12. Lorenz, *Mediterranean Traveller*, 154-155. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
13. This is from various sources in the Internet including finding the exchange for British pound to USA dollar in 1926. The currency rates for major countries were pegged to precious metals and did not float in the 1920s. Some of this information can be found in Wikipedia articles on Turkey and its currency and bank notes. Historical currency exchange rates are found here <http://www.measuringworth.com/> . [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
14. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_lira_sign> . [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
15. Picture is of the Hagia Sophia’s dome and is from the author’s collection and was taken in 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
16. Lorenz, *Mediterranean Traveller*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
17. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galata_Bridge> for more information on the bridges and tolls. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
18. Lorenz, *Mediterranean Traveller*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
19. Photo is from the author’s collection. The notes are mostly my recollection. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
20. Any weapon that has been enchanted in anyway will do full damage. The belief of the users that the item is enchanted and some limited enchantment is enough. Hitting them with a book like *The Golden Bough* would work! [↑](#footnote-ref-18)