Friend Or Foe

It has been my experience, when introducing new characters into games, that the original group will treat the new comer like they have a defcon 1 level of cooties. It is quite amusing to see the new comer attempt to breach the circle of trust in a group once introduced. It could be the we are trying to role play something interesting and a normal introduction is just not that exciting or maybe we feel that this new character needs to prove themselves worthy before they are fully accepted. In some cases I think it is warranted however most of the time we are just trying to get the new character up and running and get back to the story at hand. The conversations that characters have with one another can go in circles however and sometimes even create tension between one or more characters which can create an interesting dynamic in the storyline or a block in forward inertia.

For exampled lets say we have a group of four investigators who just lost a good friend when they uncovered a Deep One colony beneath the old warehouse they were investigating on the docks. They were all pretty banged up and have been discharged from the hospital. Making their way back to the hotel they convene at the hotel cafe in the morning to regroup and make a plan going forward. They decide to head to the local library and try to find anything they can about the caverns they discovered under that warehouse. In doing so a professor of geology introduces himself and says that he couldn’t help but overhear them talking about the caverns and being a geologist he offers to provide information about the local subterranean landscape. The remaining three investigators begin a delicate game of cat and mouse with the professor, which would have you think that he introduced himself as Obed Marsh. The conversation turns ugly and the professor is turned away. So now we are going to have to find another way to introduce our helpful professor into the group, the suspicion has already been established and so the next encounter is definitely going to seem like the man is tailing the investigators. So it seems we have role played ourselves into a corner here. It is going to take some fairly unorthodox work to get this professor into the inner circle.

It could just be human nature to be guarded and suspicious when a new person comes into our lives, but think about it, is that really the case. If you were researching a cave you found, which didn’t have monsters in it, and a helpful professor offered his expertise and knowledge to you would you not happily take him up on the offer. After a bit of conversation would he not become a resource for you, you might even get his phone number and ask if you could bend his ear again sometime. Now you have an awesome geology professor that you can bring up at parties when validating some bullshit your are telling your friends, “well I have a geologist friend who says”. If you did have a cave with monsters in it, would you not want an experts opinion about the caves and mineral make up of the area? At the very least do we not realize we are playing a game and that poor Trevor whose character just died horribly really wants to get back into the game, not have to act like a deep cover operative trying to infiltrate the most secretive criminal organization on the planet. Come on folks, I just want to tell you about rocks and get eaten by something eventually.

It makes some sense that investigators in a Call of Cthulhu game would be guarded and not want just anyone to wander in and be privy to the secrets of eldrich horror that the rest of the group holds, but to have a basic conversation, I think we are safe there. You have to think in terms of what others may think of you as an investigator. First off our professor would not in his wildest dreams think that the group encountered ocean dwelling, Dagon worshiping, Cthulhu calling monsters in a cave by the docks. So to him you are all talking about caves and guess what, ah geologist here, I know about that shit. Of course being a geology professor how often does he get a chance to talk about his passion with people who aren’t his students or other colleagues at work. As long as you keep the monster part out of the story there should be no problem right, you can drop a bit of fishman hints once he gets deeper in and see if he calls you back next time.

I have had groups who, even when all the characters have been in the core group for some time, still manage to with hold information from each other and keep a tight lip when they know something that could be useful to the group. I am not sure what we think we are accomplishing by not spilling our guts about the horrors we know to be true. I mean initial you don’t want to tell people you just met that you have taken jaunts on winged beasts through space to Celeno, but if your buddies were riding right along side you like an episode of cosmic horror CHIPS, why not let them know. You can asses the variable trustworthiness of a person and let out what you think is appropriate for the level of depth that character has been immersed into thus far. Even better just dump it in their lap and see how well they handle it. If you are trying to protect the person form the horrors you have seen, well there are more right around the corner, it’s better to get it all out in the open, no need to be protective. The person you refuse to confide in today, could be the food for a blasphemous beast tomorrow, so theres not need to be protect their delicate sensibilities.

When it comes to mythos tomes and forbidden knowledge