



# The Acolyte

—by Sandy Petersen—

Welcome to the first installment of The Acolyte. Those of you so crass as not to recognise my name should consult the title page of the sacred 'Call of Cthulhu' rule-book. See me there? That's my claim to fame.

So how did my name get there? When I was in grammar school, I came across an ancient tattered book of forgotten lore in my father's library. This book purported to be printed on specially-made paper for use of Our Boys Overseas (it was produced during World War II, you see). I took it to bed with me and read one of the stories. It was "The Outsider", as I recall. Though I didn't understand it (after all I was only 10 years old) the story fascinated me. At the third reading though I realised that the narrator had touched a MIRROR, and was totally blown away. I quickly followed by reading "Pickman's Model" and "The Music of Erich Zann", and so on to "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Call of Cthulhu".

That was that. After that collection I was an HPL fanatic. But it was hard to be much of a fanatic when that was the only HPL available. Anywhere. When I was 15, the local university was kind enough to permit me a library card. In that library I found Lovecraft's hallowed works - "The Outsider and Others" and others. I didn't realise how lucky I was. The library hadn't yet realised the value of those books, so I checked them out freely. The year after I graduated from high school, the library realised its mistake and put those books into a special locked case where they have remained inaccessible ever since.

I discovered other horror writers such as Frank Belknap Long, Clark Ashton Smith, and August Derleth through Lovecraft. I wasn't able to get my very own copies of Lovecraft till my senior year at high school, when Ballantine released him in paperback with absolutely embarrassing artwork.

So that's how I became an acolyte of Lovecraft's. Now on to how I became a gamer and ultimately melded Lovecraft and gaming together.

I've been a gamer as long as I can remember. I started out with Risk and Clue in grammar school and progressed to Avalon Hill by junior high. I discovered D&D in 1974. No one else around played it, and I and my small coterie of friends had to figure it all by ourselves. When other, more sophisticated, games came along, we tried them, too. In 1978, we bought the original RuneQuest. At first, we played RuneQuest and D&D about equally. D&D gradually shrank in importance as RuneQuest grew until in a year, we didn't play D&D at all.

In 1980, my friend Steve Marsh talked me into writing to Greg Stafford, president of the Chaosium. I sent him some monstrous ideas, along with a RuneQuest cult. The cult was published in Different Worlds magazine and I was paid 24 dollars. Wow! I'd never gotten paid for anything I wrote before. Not only that, Greg suggested that I fill a book with monster ideas. Thus was born Gateway Bestiary, my first professional venture.

In October 1980, I asked Greg Stafford if he would be interested in a RuneQuest supplement/guide to Lovecraft's Dreamlands. He wrote back to say that Chaosium had hired a fellow to write a Lovecraftian horror game - the real thing, not just a RuneQuest supp. I begged to be permitted to help in the project in any way possible. At least to let me see the project. And Greg's reply was, in essence, "We're not happy with the way the game is turning out. Would you like to do the whole thing yourself?" And dumped it all in my lap. I was happy as a shoggoth at a piccolo convention.

A year of heartbreak later, Call of Cthulhu was published. It was released November, Friday 13th, during the worst thunderstorm northern California had had in decades. So I knew that someone knew what was going on.

From there I hurtled down the toboggan of reverse evolution until now I spend most of my waking hours designing games and scenarios.

There. That's quite enough of autobiography. I promise not to discuss such sordid things in the future.

So we now leave the past and move on towards the future. In October, Chaosium released

the first solo Cthulhu supplement: Alone Against the Wendigo. Last December we released the second: Alone Against the Dark.

In February 1986 comes Terror From the Stars, a short supplement containing 2-3 scenarios and a big fold-out map of the world showing every single place that Chaosium has placed a scenario.

In April 1986 we plan to release The Dreamlands, a boxed supplement with complete rules, maps, gazetteer, and scenarios for playing in Lovecraft's Dreamlands. So we come full circle. I started out trying to get the Dreamlands into print. And now, Dreamlands is the 11th Chaosium Call of Cthulhu supplement.

I've been led to understand that Chaosium's releases don't make it to England until months after they've been available elsewhere. A scandal and a shame.

Now that the mighty Games Workshop is publishing some of their own supplements, starting with Trail of the Loathsome Slime, perhaps you over there in perfidious Albion will get scenarios more regularly. And I personally peruse and approve every single scenario that Games Workshop intends to publish (except those in White Dwarf). So if they're great, praise Games Workshop. If they stink, blame me - I could have prevented their publication.

Oh yes. If anyone wants to write to me personally, be sure to include a couple of international postal coupons. The address is:-

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Yog-Sothoth Nebled Zin,

Sandy Peterson

## RE-ANIMATOR

reviewed by Carl Ford.

Credits: Starring Bruce Abbott, Barbara Crampton, David Gale, Robert Sampson and Jeffrey Combs as Herbert West. Produced by Brian Yuzna. Directed by Stuart Gordon.

For interested readers, Reanimator surfaced for a special showing at the NFT as part of the British Film Year celebrations in its UN-CUT form. When the film finally makes the rounds over here in mid-Jan, the film will, I can assure you be but a mere shadow of its former self.

Without doubt Reanimator is the most violent exploitation horror flick that I have ever seen - and I can say I enjoyed every minute of it. Why? Because, the film doesn't take itself seriously. The whole film is made with an element of humour so black that you couldn't find your way with a torch. The cast put in an excellent performance, most notably Jeffrey Combs in the title role. The gore is totally over the top, buckets of blood drench almost all the sets and humour fills the screen. The pair go hand in hand - and you won't see another movie like this one for some time.

The film is set in modern times, but the setting is still Arkham and the Miskatonic University. The film tends to include 'bits' from all the Lovecraft 'west' tales and manages to blend them together into one big monster quite nicely. Some of Lovecraft's more humorous lines are here incorporated, for maximum laughs. Such as the scene where West injects the corpse of Dr. Allan Halsey with the re-animation fluid and goes out of control until it is stopped in its tracks by Herbert - "Damn it, it wasn't quite fresh enough!"

The version I saw went un-rated in the States - a move usually reserved for extremely hard-core porn flicks, not since Dawn of the Dead has a horror movie made this bold move. However, over here, the distributors have no choice, either the film goes before the censors board, or it doesn't get a release. This means that the little scene I reported of, a couple of issues ago, involving a severed head and an unconscious girl doesn't make it into the UK print. Probably a relief for most ardent Lovecraft fans, but a definite boo for readers with a sick mind. I can see other problems involved with the final scene where the reanimated (and headless) body of Dr. Hill explodes, whilst trying to kill West. The special effects are great, when given the budget of the production. But I am warning you, this film is violent, readers who support the laws of censorship in films of this nature will definitely not approve, neither will stick-in-the-mud HFL readers. But for those of you who like a horror movie that doesn't pull its punches - may I recommend Reanimator, I foresee a strong cult following for this one!