

THE BLEEDING STONE OF IPHTAH

A Call of Cthulhu Scenario

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INTRODUCTION

This scenario was used as the basis of the final scenario in the 1984 GamesDay official *Call of Cthulhu* Competition. Although it does not have a set points system or objective goals, it provides plenty of opportunities for individual players to display their 'talents' or 'inadequacies' as rolegamers, as well as providing an interesting one-off session or addition to an existing campaign.

This scenario is designed to work with 3-5 players, all of whom should be familiar with the *Cthulhu* system.

KEEPER'S INFORMATION

This scenario details the Great Race of Yith's attempt to evade the destruction of their race at the hands of the Flying Polyyps, some 50 million years ago, and their manipulation, through the Bleeding Stone, of the unfortunate Professor Foster. In their never ending quest for knowledge, they stumbled on the possibility of creating a gate in the time which would allow their physical beings, huge iridescent cone-shaped bodies, to travel through time and reinhabit the planet from which the polyyps had once banished them.

The Scheme Of The Great Race

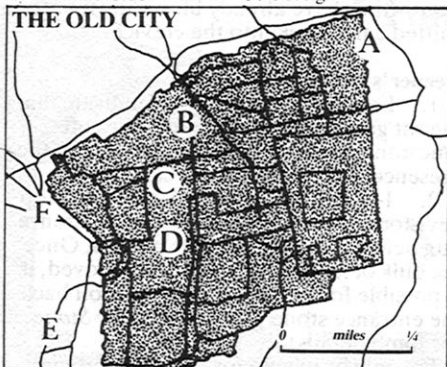
At various stages in Earth's history the Yith contacted suitable humans to extract from them what they could, to supplement their ever growing knowledge of the universe. As well as this psionic transfer of information, their human 'ambassadors' constructed secret shrines dedicated to the worship of their masters. In exchange the Great Race passed on some of their many secrets of science, technology and magic. This process was intended to sound out a possible 'stress point' in the time continuum through which their physical beings could once more unite with their mental manifestations. Once a suitable site had been found a circle of shrines were constructed which, when activated by the triggering stone, would create their cosmic highway. Disaster befell the race's plans when thieves raided one of the temple sites and stole its precious triggering stone. Years later, Professor Foster purchased the 'relic' from a Constantinople bazaar and unwittingly fell prey to the Great Race. The alien entities contacted Foster and have been using him to construct an immensely detailed picture of Earth in its current time period. His role was to pave the way for his masters and trigger the 'Drawing of the Gate' by replacing each stone from the circle of shrines, in strict sequence, with its cosmically charged partner. The culmination of this ritual is drawing near . . . However, Foster's strong will has enabled him to temporarily thwart his masters' wishes, with the help of strong hallucinogenic drugs (opium) which sufficiently dull his sensitivity enough to prevent total domination of his subconscious. As the professor begins to deteriorate mentally and physically under the strain of his struggle, the greedy Lotto used his addiction to help uncover what he thinks is Foster's great archaeological find. It is at this point that the players enter the scene . . .

THE CHARLES LACY EXHIBITION

After a torturous journey from Europe, even the stony silence of the Charles Lacy Roman pottery exhibition seems a pleasant diversion from the chaos and confusion of



A: Archaeological Museum D: Library
B: Lotto's Bar E: Colonial Office
C: Domino Club F: Foreign Office



the packed city of Jerusalem and its bustling street markets. The exhibition itself is quite unremarkable, there are much better examples of such relics back in the British Museum and most of the typically European visitors look equally unimpressed.

Keeper's Notes

The players' attention should be drawn to a dishevelled creature shifting nervously between the exhibits. He wears a soiled white three piece suit, and his general appearance and manner are that of a European. A successful Anthropology roll will suggest that he is of Turkish origin. Players choosing to examine his actions will realise his attention is directed towards the party, rather than the exhibition. After a few minutes he will attempt to strike up some rather flaccid conversation with one of the players. The stranger's English is adequate although heavily accented, and his conversation shows an embarrassing lack of knowledge of this topic. The mysterious stranger continues to loiter until the party decide to leave. Once outside the small admirer will finally introduce himself to the PC's as *Lakey* and suggest a quiet drink with a friend of his, who, he claims, is a great art authority. Assuming the players accept his offer, Lakey will march them off to *Lotto's*.

LOTTO'S BAR

As the players push their way into the smoky confines of the bar it will become obvious that some of the city's less respectable inhabitants are seated amongst the small network of tables. The bar itself is a strange mix of old city and new European. Beads and silk mix with martinis and suits. A few soldiers have encamped against the bar, whilst locals haggle and drink in the room's numerous niches. The noise, smoke and heat are quite overpowering, especially to those unaccustomed to the chaos of Jerusalem.

Keeper's Notes

Seated at the far end of the room, flanked by two burly locals, is *Lotto*. He is clean-shaven and immaculately dressed in a white cotton three piece suit. Despite the noisy crowd, a small space has formed around his table. Most of the low life seems reluctant to venture too near his table. *Lotto* is a courteous and charming character. Once introduced by *Lakey*, *Lotto* will strike up some general conversation about the players' reasons for visiting the city and then move onto the subject of the exhibition. Any players with archaeological skill

will recognize that his knowledge of the subject is rather less developed than he implies. Despite this he will tell the party of his own 'dabbings' in the archaeological field. He has recently sponsored an English professor to excavate a possible site, hoping to uncover relics for his own private collection. As the evening progresses *Lotto* will confess to being worried by the lack of progress being made by *Foster*. Despite over two months of 'dig time', at considerable expense, the professor has failed to uncover anything more than a few unremarkable pots and tools. *Lotto* realises the time and effort involved in excavation, but can't believe so little has been achieved in two solid months of work. Although a man of considerable means, his revenue is not limitless. If, during the conversation, the players express an interest in his plight or dig, *Lotto* will suggest that they visit the site. He suggests it would be a perfect break from the rigours of city. In return for discreetly examining the professor's progress, he will supply transport and supplies (if necessary). Protection from the less savoury locals will be taken care of by *Lakey*, who will be armed with the 'necessary precautions'. Should the players express interest in his offer, *Lotto* will invite them to stay at his hotel the night before the journey, to facilitate an early start. *Lotto* will bid the party goodnight and retire, leaving them with their new guide, *Lakey*.

GENERAL INFORMATION

At this point the players have time to generally prepare themselves for their expedition. Anyone enquiring further into *Lotto's* background with locals will uncover very little, save the fact that he has considerable interests in the city's club and hotel businesses.

1. The city Library holds few clues. However, most of the librarians seem to know Professor *Foster*. Up until two months ago he was their most regular attendant, virtually ensconced in the building's study room. The subject of his work seems unclear, as his reading matter varied widely, from whole encyclopaedias to modern works of fiction.

2. The Colonial Office is responsible for administration. The Foreign Office is concerned with regional policy in the Middle East. All too frequently this has led to interdepartmental friction. Investigators would be advised not to hamper these departments with their inconsequential affairs. At the time of the adventure Jerusalem has just undergone a series of riots and both departments advise steering clear of trouble, which may be difficult in such a turbulent climate.

DOMINO CLUB

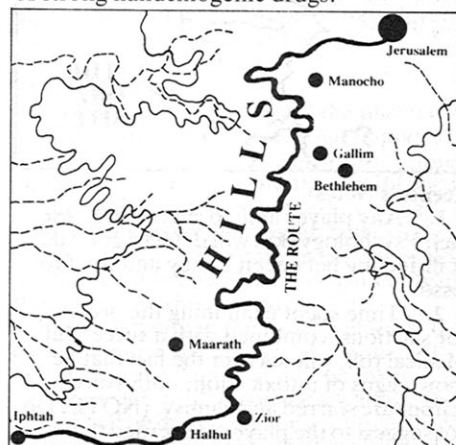
Lotto's Hotel is located off the Via Dolorosa in the Christian quarter. Once inside *Lakey* will show the players to their rooms and suggest a meal in the hotel's ground floor restaurant. The rooms are sparsely furnished, and judging from the giggling emanating from some of the adjoining bedrooms, their purpose seems less than reputable! The downstairs bar fills as the night draws in. Most of the patrons are crowded against it, and few seem interested in the food being served. After arranging the players orders, *Lakey* will excuse him-

self and return to the bar where he continues a conversation with a young Arab.

Keeper's Notes

During their meal the players will notice that *Lakey's* conversation with the man has turned into a somewhat heated confrontation. A successful Listening roll will reveal the nature of the argument - namely money for goods supplied. Obviously enraged, the young man storms out of the bar, cursing loudly. *Lakey* will leave shortly afterwards, along with two of the hotel's large 'attendants'.

Lakey is in fact chasing up on one of *Lotto's* clients, whose credit for drugs has reached an unsatisfactory level. The unfortunate youth is attacked once outside, and beaten unconscious. Any players who follow the group outside will see the two thugs attacking the youth, while *Lakey* stands casually watching the horrific scene. If the outside player(s) confront *Lakey*, he will explain that, "In my country we do things our way. If a man fails to pay his debts, he must face the consequences..." *Lakey* will usher the characters back into the bar and divert them from any further questioning. The victim will take some time to crawl away if anyone manages to go to his aid, they will get little from him. A successful Medical roll will show he is under the effect of strong hallucinogenic drugs.



KEEPER'S TIMELINE

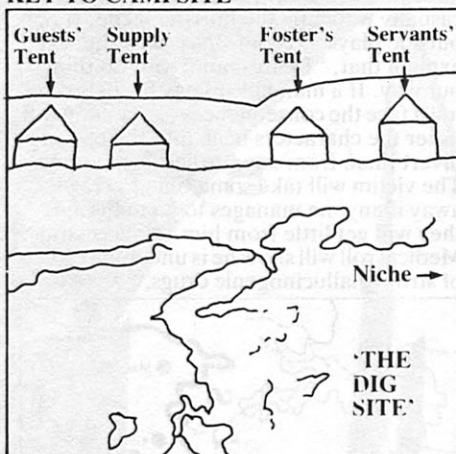
10.00 AM: Party arrive
10.00-12.15: Van unloaded.
12.15 PM: Professor *Foster* shows party 'dig site' and then retires to tent feeling tired.
3.00 PM: Players' free to roam site. *Lakey* joins *Foster* in tent. Locals spotted in surrounding hills.
10.00 PM: Professor and *Lakey* begin to argue.
3.20 AM: *Foster* murders *Lakey* and attempts to dump body in secret. Following morning — *Foster* falls into coma.

10 am

As the vehicles pull into the dusty campsite, two Arab guards emerge from the small tent nearest the track. The site is not obvious at first, but scattered tools and marker flags give away its location. After a short delay the professor emerges from the largest of the four tents. The presence of so many Europeans overwhelms him at first, but his caution soon disappears as he discovers the purpose of this unexpected visit. He greets *Lakey* tersely and directs the unloading of supplies.



KEY TO CAMPSITE



Keeper's Notes

1. Any player able to successfully use their Psychology skill will detect a good deal of ill-feeling between Lakey and the Professor.

2. Time spent examining the professor's actions, combined with a successful Medical roll, will uncover the fact that he shows signs of intoxication, both voice and actions are slurred and clumsy. (NOTE: Do not suggest to the player concerned that his condition may be drug induced.)

3. The Arab guards speak little English, and answer only to the professor. Both of them loiter around the camp when not helping Foster. They will not allow players to enter his tent unless authorised, an unlikely occurrence.

4. Any players who deliberately watch the unloading of the truck will notice that Lakey carefully carries a small brown box into the Prof's tent. The mysterious box was not in evidence in the back of the truck.

12.15 pm Onwards

Once the truck is unloaded, and its contents stored away, the professor retires to his tent, obviously exhausted, followed a few minutes later by Lakey. At around 12.40 Foster emerges, apparently invigorated, and rallies the players round for a tour of the site. During the tour the Professor babbles voraciously about the various cultures and history of the area. He explains to the players that he believes the site of Tell 'Akil-lu' is one of the first permanent settlements of the Israelites in Palestine. If questioned about the slowness of the survey, Foster will immediately realise that Lotto is

behind this impromptu visit. "He has no idea of the processes of excavation, too impatient by far... does not understand the British way of doing things..." Despite this, it is obvious that the site is hardly touched. It certainly doesn't show the results of two months hard work. After an hour the professor will excuse himself, feeling ill, and limp off back to his tent.

Players with an archaeological ability over 40% will be familiar with the term 'Tell', a Semitic word describing an artificial hill formed through repeated occupation over the course of centuries.

Keeper's Notes

Whilst examining the site the players may notice a high, pitted ridge off to the left of the dig. A successful Spot Hidden Item will reveal that in one of the cliff's numerous hollows have been partially dug-out. If questioned, the professor will quickly explain its purpose - simple rock sampling. Foster will try to dissuade any closer examination of the niche.

3.00 pm

The surrounding area holds little of interest. the plateau above the ridge leads off towards similar rocky outcrops. A Spot Hidden will reveal signs of movement about 600 metres away, where a figure, clad in white robes, appears to be watching the proceedings. He is in cover, any attempt to approach him will prove fruitless, as he will simply withdraw behind the outcrop. The dig site itself is quite unremarkable. Any players with archaeological skill will realise it is nothing more than a section of Roman fort.

Keeper's Notes

The figure is in fact a tribesman who has taken interest in the activity at the site. Should the keeper wish to inject some extra drama, the local tribesmen could decide to 'drop in' for some of the dig's supplies. Another interesting twist to the plot might involve the tribe attacking shortly before the players trigger the Dimensional Shambles, the resulting chaos would make quite a spectacle!

THE NICHE

Over the passage of time the elements have heaped a bank of sand against the face of



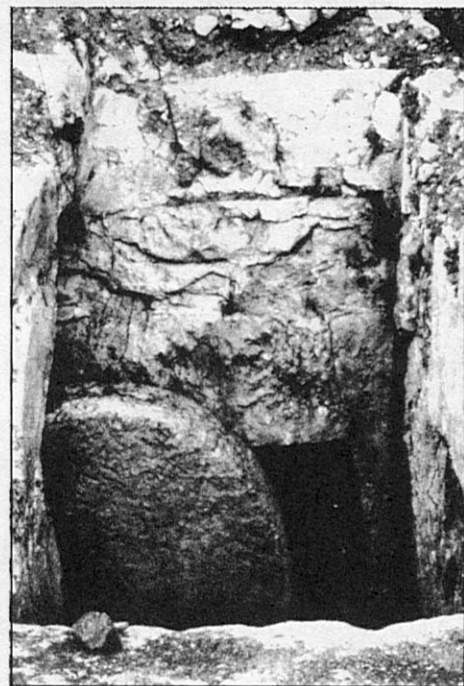
the cliff. The excavated area seems to be centred in a deep cut in its face. The constant winds have already blown most of the shifted earth back into the crevice.

Keeper's Notes

1. Exploratory digging will indicate that the slit goes back quite far into the soft limestone. A Geology roll might suggest the presence of a rough natural cave.

2. 1—2 hours digging will reveal the top key-stone of an arch with its stepped entrance dug below ground level (see photo). Once the bulk of loose earth has been removed, it is possible for the investigators to roll back the entrance stone (see *Turning the Stone* for tomb details).

It would be unwise for players to attempt an entrance while the professor and Lakey are awake.



3.20 am, Murder!

Any player awake, or close enough to Foster's tent, will be awoken by a muffled scream. After a momentary silence, the sound of a large object being dragged across sand can be heard (Listen roll). Silence returns and a few minutes later the light in Foster's tent goes out.

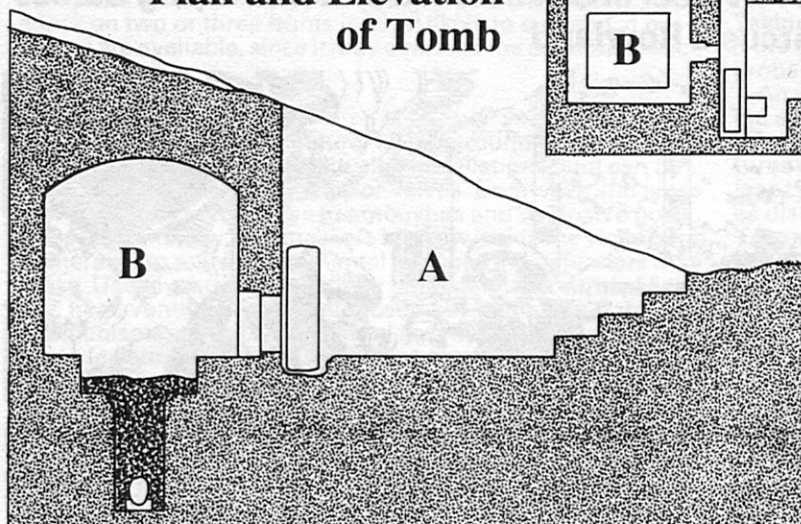
Keeper's Notes

The sound was that of Foster stabbing the sleeping Lakey, in a frenzied attempt to get at his box of tricks. The 'tricks' are, in fact, a small collection of lethal narcotics, stored in the mysterious brown box (seen earlier in Lakey's possession). Listening at the tent will uncover the faint clinking of glass bottles, interspersed with sharp intakes of breath. Should anyone attempt to look inside the tent, by peering under the awning or by slitting its side, they will see Foster administering a lethal dose of opium. Lakey is slumped by the bed, a pool of blood is slowly collecting around his lifeless body.

1. If the players decide to remain hidden and monitor events as they unfold they will see Foster and one Arab drag Lakey's corpse to the truck. Foster will tidy the bloody trail, and then return to his tent while Lakey is driven away by his servant to



Plan and Elevation of Tomb



be dumped. Early next morning the truck will return. The Arab will explain Lakey has business to attend to in the city.

2. If the players intercept the professor whilst in the tent, he will babble wildly, claiming that Lakey attempted to kill him. It requires little deduction, however, to realise that the knife wound in Lakey's back makes his claim of self defence somewhat dubious. Once Foster's lethal dose begins to take effect, his ranting will become incoherent, then inaudible as he lapses into a coma, from which he never recovers.

3. The players' car has mysteriously developed a flat tyre, making pursuit of the truck impossible. The puncture was caused by a knife, obviously no accident.

THE PROFESSOR'S TENT

Whatever the players' actions are during the night, the following morning Foster will be dead from an overdose of drugs. The players can enter the tent freely, as Foster's Arabs seem too confused to prevent them doing so. Once inside, the Professor's cluttered quarters will produce some interesting discoveries.

1. Various pieces of archaeological equipment are scattered carelessly about. Some remain unpacked.

2. A sprawling collection of books litter a large collapsable desk. They range from scientific journals, encyclopaedia and maps, to newspapers, photographs and cheap novels. All are well thumbed.

Scattered over these books are over four hundred pages of handwritten notes. They are written in a strangely simplistic style, as if the reader has no understanding of the authors' subject matter. An hour's careful study will reveal it to be a massive world anthology, detailing world environment, geology, political systems and history. A work of such detail would require months of intensive research to compile. Note: these are Foster's notes to the Great Race of Yith.

Hidden amongst the general debris is a small map. Finding it requires a successful Spot Hidden. The poem on maps reads as follows:

'Our time is your salvation,
The minds will meet the matter
once more . . .'

3. At the foot of Foster's bed sits a chest, along with various clothes and personal items it contains a bundle of black velvet. The cloth protects a strange stone (see The Bleeding Stone for details).

THE BLEEDING STONE

The original stone that can be found in Foster's tent is a solid red semi-opaque capsule shape some 2 foot in length; it is not heavy, neither is it vulnerable to damage. The stone to be discovered in the tomb is transparent but milky; when swopped around the stones will slowly (three or four minutes) exchange colour. If an investigator looks through the transparent stone he/she will be able to clearly see the dimensional shamblers. Always the last holder of the bled stone will be menaced.

THE TOMB

The stone can be rolled aside revealing a small crawl-through opening, about two feet high. The walls, ceilings and floor are bare limestone, allowing no more than three people around the well. The crumbling chamber is dominated by a hexagonal well. Its lips rise some three feet above the floor and is made of hard black stone. A Geology roll will classify the well as obsidian, a vitrious volcanic rock. A careful search of the tomb will confirm initial impressions that the rock surface and well are unmarked, giving no clues to its origins. The well is less than 6 feet deep, and at its bottom, partially buried in sand is a strangely shaped stone. It is identical in all respects to the professor's except in that it is transparent and colourless. The stone sits neatly in a shallow cup, recessed into the stone.

Removing the stone from its cup requires little effort.

Cast of Characters

	STR	CON	SIZ	INT	POW	DEX	CHA	SAN	EDU	HP	AGE
Lakey	10	11	7	11	10	14	6	38	7	8	34
Lotto	10	8	12	13	8	7	9	64	10	11	42
Prof Foster	8	7	10	17	6	6	12	0	19	5	37
Arab Servants	14	11	12	9	12	13	10	59	6	11	30's
Local Arabs	13	12	14	11	13	12	13	63	4	12	20's

(Lakey and Arabs will be armed at the Keeper's discretion)

	STR	CON	SIZ	INT	POW	DEX	HP	MOVE	CLAW	ATT	DAM
Dimensional Shamblers	18	16	19	8	10	10	19	7	30%		1d8+1d6

(See Call of Cthulhu main rules for other details)

TURNING THE STONE—Keeper's Notes

In order to begin the turning ritual, the professor's stone must be placed in the well's cup. The 'charged' stone will slowly begin to drain its cosmic energy into the sister stone. Once the stone has bled (approximately five minutes) it can be transported to the next shrine in the circle. These steps should be followed exactly, failure to do so results in the summoning of three Dimensional Shamblers, whose task it is to 'persuade' the stone's holder to perform his/her task correctly. Attempting to leave the site with both stones or a partially (or totally) bled stone will stir them into action. They will simply force the holders back towards the shrine, ignoring anyone else and continue their vigil until the holder emerges with the correctly charged stone. Leaving the tomb with the original stone unbled will merely cause the wind to develop into a nasty storm. This should give the players time to contemplate their predicament as they shelter from the worst of the weather.

There is one way to break this diabolical chain: placing both stones in the well together causes the cosmic energy to flow from one stone to anyone and back repeatedly. Should the players allow this oscillation to continue the stones will begin to whine, building to an ear shattering climax seconds before they implode, bringing the entire cliff-face down on any players foolish enough to stay and watch.

CONCLUSION

Once the turmoil is over and the players have destroyed the shrine, what happens? Assuming they salvage the professor's notes and gain some insight into the ritual (possibly through insane realisation) they may begin to understand the significance of their act. If they succeed in doing so, it is then up to the keeper to award increases in sanity to those players who deserve it.

But complicity in the ritual will leave the party, or more specifically, the stone holder, with a problem. Even if the investigators decide to abandon the adventure the holder will be driven, by some strange force in his subconscious, to seek the next shrine in the chain. The character might suddenly disappear at a suitable opportunity and attempt to complete the ritual. This could provide an interesting scenario in its own right, as the party desperately searches for their companion, slowly realising the dreadful implications of his absence.

Most of the information required to run such a sequel is contained above. It should be noted that the scenario's casualties would be under investigation by the authorities. Players might have a harder time convincing Lotto of their innocence in Foster's and Lakey's deaths; what did they find at this site? Was it valuable enough to kill for?□