

ANIMALS

Ape	Bat	Bear
Large Animal	Diminutive Animal	Large Animal
Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)	1/4 d8 (1 hp)	6d8+24 (51 hp)
Initiative: +2 (Dex)	+2 (Dex)	+1 (Dex)
Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft.	5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)	40 ft.
Armor Class: 14 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural)	16 (+4 size, +2 Dex)	15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: 2 claws +7 melee, bite +2 melee	—	2 claws +11 melee, bite +6 melee
Damage: Claw 1d6+5, bite 1d6+2	—	Claw 1d8+8, bite 2d8+4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	1 ft. by 1 ft./0 ft.	5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —	—	Improved grab
Special Qualities: Scent	Blindsight	Scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2	Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2	Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities: Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7	Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10 Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4	Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Climb +18, Listen +6, Spot +6	Listen +9, Move Silently +6, Spot +9*	Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +14
Advancement: 5-8 HD (Large)	—	7-10 HD (Large)
Boar	Crocodile	Dog
Medium-Size Animal	Medium-Size Animal	Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)	3d8+9 (22 hp)	2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative: +0	+1 (Dex)	+2 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.	20 ft., swim 30 ft.	40 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+6 natural)	15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)	16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural)
Attacks: Gore +4 melee	Bite +6 melee; or tail slap +6 melee	Bite +3 melee
Damage: Gore 1d8+3	Bite 1d8+6; tail slap 1d12+6	Bite 1d6+3
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Ferocity	Improved grab	—
Special Qualities: Scent	—	Scent
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2	Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2	Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4	Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2	Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Listen +7, Spot +5	Hide +7*, Listen +5, Spot +5	Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5
Feats: —	—	Wilderness Lore +1*
Advancement: 4-5 HD (Medium-size)	4-5 HD (Medium-size)	—
Elephant	Horse	Leopard (Mountain Lion)
Huge Animal	Large Animal	Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice: 11d8+55 (104 hp)	3d8+6 (19 hp)	3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +0	+1 (Dex)	+4 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft.	60 ft.	40 ft., climb 20 ft.
Armor Class: 15 (-2 size, +7 natural)	13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural)	15 (+4 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks: Slam +16 melee, 2 stamps +11 melee or gore +16 melee	2 hooves +2 melee	Bite +6 melee; 2 claws +1 melee
Damage: Slam 2d6+10, stamp 2d6+5; gore 2d8+15	Hoof 1d4+1	Bite 1d6+3; claw 1d3+1
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.	5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Trample 2d8+15	—	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d3+1
Special Qualities: Scent	—	Scent
Saves: Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +4	Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2	Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2
Abilities: Str 30, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 7	Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6	Str 16, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6	Listen +6, Spot +6	Balance +12, Climb +11, Hide +9*, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Spot +6
Feats: —	—	Weapon Finesse (bite, claw)
Advancement: 12-22 HD (Huge)	—	4-5 HD (Medium-size)

	Lion (Tiger) Large Animal	Lizard, Giant Medium-Size Animal	Rat Tiny Animal
Hit Dice:	5d8+10 (32 hp)	3d8+9 (22 hp)	1/4 d8 (1 hp)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)	+2 (Dex)	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	40 ft.	30 ft., swim 30 ft.	15 ft., climb 15 ft.
Armor Class:	15 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)	15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)	14 (+2 size, +2 Dex)
Attacks:	2 claws +7 melee, bite +2 melee	Bite +5 melee	Bite +4 melee
Damage:	Claw 1d4+5, bite 1d8+2	Bite 1d8+4	Bite 1d3-4
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.	2 1/2 ft. by 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Attacks:	Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d4+2	—	—
Special Qualities:	Scent	—	Scent
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +2	Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2	Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 21, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6	Str 17, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2	Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills:	Balance +7, Hide +4*, Jump +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +11, Spot +5	Climb +9, Hide +7*, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4	Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10
Feats:	—	—	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Advancement:	6-10 HD (Large)	4-5 HD (Medium-size)	—
	Shark Large Animal (Aquatic)	Snake, Small Viper Small Animal	Wolf Medium-Size Animal
Hit Dice:	7d8+7 (38 hp)	1d8 (4 hp)	2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)	+3 (Dex)	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	Swim 60 ft.	20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft. 50 ft.	50 ft.
Armor Class:	15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural)	17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)	14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural)
Attacks:	Bite +7 melee	Bite +4 melee	Bite +3 melee
Damage:	Bite 1d8+4	Bite 1d2-2 plus poison	Bite 1d6+1
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft. (coiled)/5 ft.	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	—	Poison	Trip
Special Qualities:	Keen scent	Scent	Scent
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +3	Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1	Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2	Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2	Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6
Skills:	Listen +7, Spot +7	Balance +11, Climb +12, Hide +15, Listen +9, Spot +9	Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +1*
Feats:	—	Weapon Finesse (bite)	Weapon Finesse (bite)
Advancement:	8-10 HD (Large); 11-17 HD (Huge)	2 HD (Medium-size); 3 HD (Large)	3 HD (Medium-size); 4-5 HD (Large)

APE (CR 2)

These powerful omnivores include gorillas and mature male baboons. Normally, these creatures are not aggressive, but when roused to anger, they can be quite deadly.

BAT (CR 1/10)

Bats are nocturnal flying mammals. The statistics presented here describe small, insectivorous bats.

Combat: Blindsight (Ex): Bats “see” by emitting high-frequency sounds inaudible to most other creatures. This allows them to locate objects and creatures within 120 feet. A *silence* spell negates this, forcing the bat to rely on its normal vision, which has a range of 10 feet.

Skills:* Bats receive a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Listen checks. These bonuses are lost if blindsight is negated.

These massive carnivores weigh more than 1,800 pounds and stand nearly 12 feet tall when they rear up on their hind legs. They are bad-tempered and territorial. Bear statistics can be used for almost any big bear, including the North American grizzly and polar bears. A polar bear’s white coat bestows a +12 racial bonus on Hide checks in snowy areas.

BEAR (CR 4)

Though not carnivores, these wild swine are very bad-tempered and usually charge anyone who disturbs them.

A boar is covered in coarse, grayish-black fur. Adult males are about 4 feet long and 3 feet high at the shoulder.

Combat: Ferocity (Ex): A boar is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled (0 hit points) or dying (-1 to -9 hit points).

CROCODILE (CR 2)

These aggressive aquatic predators are 11 to 12 feet long. They lie mostly submerged in rivers or marshes, with only their eyes and nostrils showing, waiting for prey to come within reach.

Combat: Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the crocodile must hit a Medium-size or smaller opponent with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, the crocodile grabs the opponent with its mouth and drags it into deep water before attempting to pin it to the bottom. The crocodile automatically deals bite damage each round it maintains the pin.

Skills:* A crocodile gains a +12 racial bonus on Hide checks when submerged.

Combat: Pounce (Ex): If a lion leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the lion must hit with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake.

Rake (Ex): A lion that gets a hold can make two rake attacks (+7 melee) with its hind legs for 1d4+2 points of damage each. If the lion pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

Skills: *Lions receive a +4 racial bonus on Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks. In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +12.

Giant Lizard (CR 2)

This category includes fairly large, carnivorous creatures from 3–5 feet long, such as monitor lizards.

Skills: *Giant lizards receive a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. In forested or overgrown areas, the Hide bonus improves to +8.

Rat (CR 1/8)

These omnivorous rodents thrive almost anywhere.

Skills: Rats receive a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance checks. They use their Dexterity modifier for Climb checks.

Shark (CR 2)

These carnivorous fish are aggressive and liable to make unprovoked attacks against anything that approaches them.

Smaller sharks are from 5–8 feet long and not usually dangerous to creatures other than their prey. Large sharks can reach around 15 feet in length and are a serious threat. Huge sharks are true monsters, like great whites, that can exceed 20 feet in length.

Combat: Sharks circle and observe potential prey, then dart in and bite with their powerful jaws.

Keen Scent (Ex): A shark can notice creatures by scent in a 180-foot radius and detect blood in the water at ranges of up to a mile.

Snake (CR 1/2)

Snakes usually are not aggressive and flee when confronted. Venomous snakes, however, often bite before retreating.

Skills: Snakes receive a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance checks. They can use either their Strength or Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is better.

Combat: Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 11); initial and secondary damage 1d6 points of temporary Constitution damage.

Wolf (CR 1)

Wolves are pack hunters infamous for their persistence and cunning.

Combat: A favorite tactic is to send a few individuals against the foe's front while the rest of the pack circles and attacks from the flanks or rear.

Trip (Ex): A wolf that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without making a touch.

If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip the wolf.

Skills: *Wolves receive a +4 racial bonus on Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Dog (CR 1/3)

This category includes working breeds such as collies, huskies, and St. Bernards.

Combat: If trained for security, these animals can make trip attacks just as wolves do (see the Wolf entry).

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a riding dog is up to 100 pounds; a medium load, 101–200 pounds; a heavy load, 201–300 pounds. A working dog can drag 1,500 pounds.

Skills: *Dogs receive a +4 racial bonus on Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Elephant (CR 8)

Massive herbivores of tropical lands, elephants are unpredictable, but are sometimes used as mounts or beasts of burden.

This entry describes an African elephant. Indian elephants are slightly smaller and weaker (Strength 28), but more readily trained (Wisdom 15). These statistics can also represent prehistoric creatures such as mammoths and mastodons.

Combat: Trample (Ex): As an attack action, an elephant can trample Medium-size or smaller creatures for automatic gore damage. It does not need to stop when entering a victim's threatened area.

A trampled opponent can attempt a free attack in response, but this incur a –4 penalty. If the opponent does not attempt this free attack, she can attempt a Reflex save (DC 20) for half damage.

Horse (CR 1)

The statistics presented here describe any of a variety of breeds of working horses. They usually are not ready for use before age two.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a horse is up to 230 pounds; a medium load, 231–460 pounds; a heavy load, 461–690 pounds. A horse can drag 3,450 pounds.

Leopard (CR 2)

The statistics presented here describe any of a variety of breeds of mid-size feline predators, including jaguars, panthers, mountain lions, and pumas. These cats are about 4 feet long and weigh about 120 pounds; they usually hunt at night.

Combat: Pounce (Ex): If a leopard leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

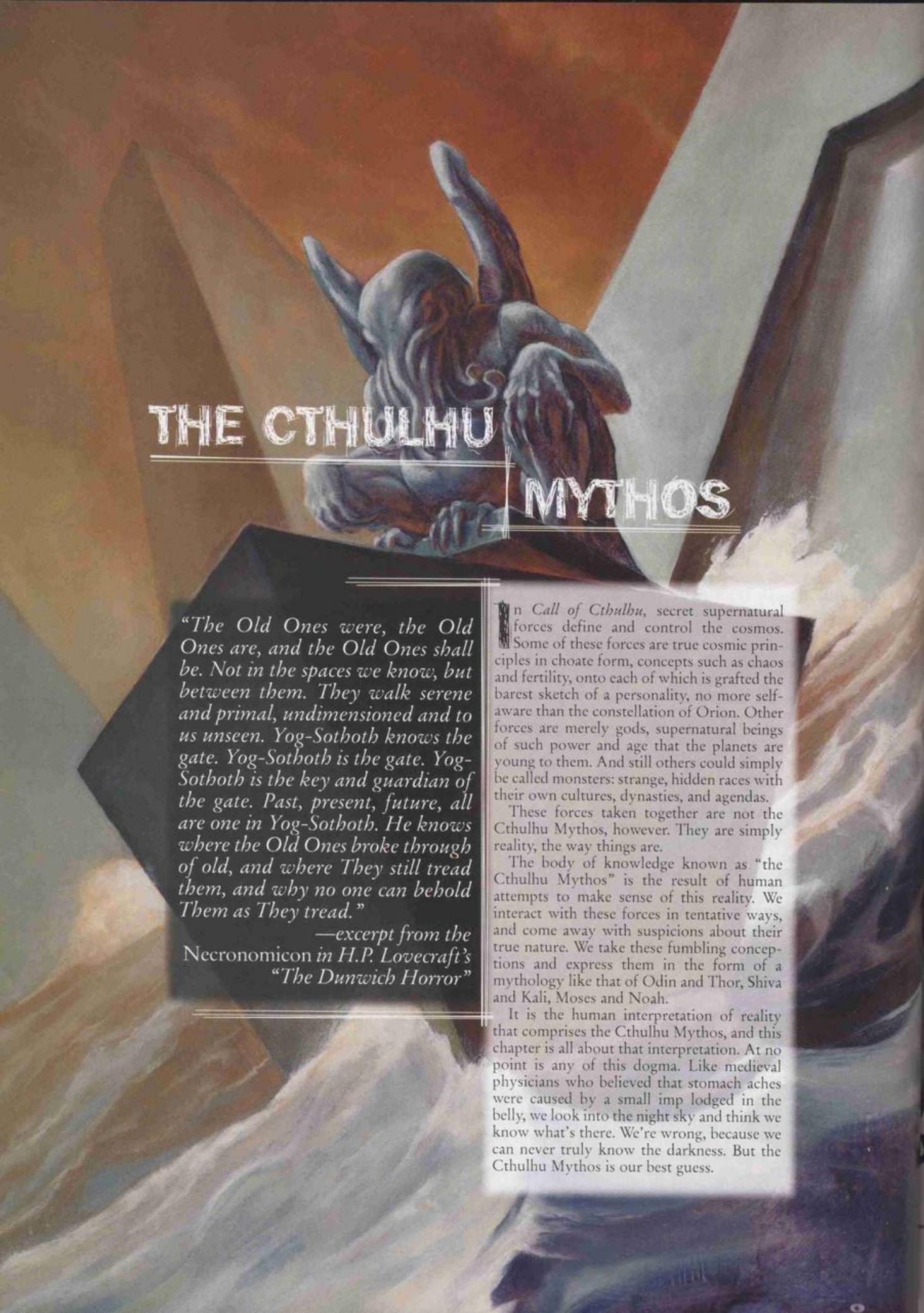
Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the leopard must hit with its bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake.

Rake (Ex): A leopard that gets a hold can make two rake attacks (+6 melee) with its hind legs for 1d3+1 points of damage each. If the leopard pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

Skills: *Leopards receive a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance checks. In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus improves to +8.

Lion (Tiger) (CR 3)

The statistics presented here can be used to describe mature African lions. Smaller tigers may use the same stats, although a fully mature Bengal tiger should have the stats of an advanced lion of at least 6 HD. These large cats generally grow 5–10 feet long and weigh 330 to 750 pounds. The two genders of either cat are not equal sizes, but they use the same statistics.



THE CTHULHU MYTHOS

"The Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be. Not in the spaces we know, but between them. They walk serene and primal, undimensioned and to us unseen. Yog-Sothoth knows the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the key and guardian of the gate. Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where They still tread them, and why no one can behold Them as They tread."

—excerpt from the Necronomicon in H.P. Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror"

In *Call of Cthulhu*, secret supernatural forces define and control the cosmos. Some of these forces are true cosmic principles in choate form, concepts such as chaos and fertility, onto each of which is grafted the barest sketch of a personality, no more self-aware than the constellation of Orion. Other forces are merely gods, supernatural beings of such power and age that the planets are young to them. And still others could simply be called monsters: strange, hidden races with their own cultures, dynasties, and agendas.

These forces taken together are not the Cthulhu Mythos, however. They are simply reality, the way things are.

The body of knowledge known as "the Cthulhu Mythos" is the result of human attempts to make sense of this reality. We interact with these forces in tentative ways, and come away with suspicions about their true nature. We take these fumbling conceptions and express them in the form of a mythology like that of Odin and Thor, Shiva and Kali, Moses and Noah.

It is the human interpretation of reality that comprises the Cthulhu Mythos, and this chapter is all about that interpretation. At no point is any of this dogma. Like medieval physicians who believed that stomach aches were caused by a small imp lodged in the belly, we look into the night sky and think we know what's there. We're wrong, because we can never truly know the darkness. But the Cthulhu Mythos is our best guess.

In fact, knowledge itself is dangerous. As long as we stick to our workaday world we can muddle along with everyone else. But when we begin to pry, when we explore the mysteries of reality, when we seek the answer to the cosmic riddle, we enter a conceptual Chernobyl. The more we learn, the more our minds are damaged. Push too far, ask too much, and you go insane.

Knowledge is not power. Knowledge is annihilation.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS

Throughout this chapter, you'll see sections titled "Lovecraft Speaks." These are excerpts from Lovecraft's stories, poems, letters, and essays. No better articulator of Lovecraft's concepts exists than the man himself, so we might as well have him address you directly. These excerpts are found in S.T. Joshi's definitive biography *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life* (Necronomicon Press, 1996).

HUMANS AND THE COSMOS

The cosmos is everything: the universe, the stars, the planets, all forms of life, the physical laws that govern them, and the agendas at work that affect us all. Unfortunately for us, humans didn't create the cosmos, and neither did anything we commonly know. There is no God, no Allah, no Buddha. Humans do not possess immortal souls, and when we die, we are but dust.

Worse, the cosmos does not exist to give us an interesting place within it. It exists to exist. Our role within the cosmos is only what we make of it, for in the grand scheme of things, we are irrelevant. Even when we live, we are but dust.

Our vague conceptions of things such as gravity and subatomic particles are but the barest verge of a vast, unknowable whole. Like blind sailors marooned atop an iceberg, we fumble to understand our terrain without guessing the truth: the bulk of our reality lies occluded beneath the surface. More terrible still, it is but a solitary mass drifting without direction in an infinite ocean of mystery. And the ocean is full of monsters.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: A STRANGE VISION

I saw the heavens verminous with strange flying things, and beneath them a hellish black city of giant stone terraces with impious pyramids flung savagely to the moon, and devil-lights burning from unnumbered windows.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "He"

LOVECRAFT'S VISION

This game is based on Lovecraft's vision of a cosmos that is very different from the one we know in real life. It looks like ours, but that familiar appearance masks a hideous core. That core is the notion that humans are limited, insignificant beings who cannot possibly understand, let alone perceive, the true workings of reality.

In Lovecraft's cosmos, the natural order we think we know can be perverted, inverted, or simply ignored by beings far more powerful than us. Day can become night, a hotel can become a slaughterhouse, a trusted friend can become a monster. These beings are free to reimagine the world we live in, and their merest thoughts transform reality itself. Our notions of stars, planets, and gravitational orbits are no more substantial than wisps of smoke, and as easily disrupted.

Contact with these beings is harmful to us. In the world of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, a monster is a malicious creature who can kill you. In the world of Call of Cthulhu, a monster is a being so alien and strange that it's like mental plutonium: get too close, and your mind sickens and dies.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: THE DANGER OF KNOWLEDGE

The most merciful thing in the world, I think is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu"

THE CORRUPTION

If no one ever looked twice at shadows or asked questions of the darkness, we might all get along okay. But humans are ever drawn to mystery—and especially to power. The secrets embodied in the Cthulhu Mythos contain plenty of both.

People study the Mythos for many reasons but the result is the same: corruption. As they look deeper and learn more, they become more and more twisted. Like any addiction, knowledge of the Mythos destroys your affection, your willpower, and your interest in anything else. Once corrupted, such people sacrifice anything to get more of the dangerous knowledge they crave. Theft and murder are but thresholds. Beyond them lies the transformation of self into something other than human, the ultimate endeavor of anyone who studies the Mythos for too long.

The reason is simple. Once you truly understand that humanity is a dead end, the only way out is to stop being human.

HUMANS AND THE MYTHOS

The world of the Cthulhu Mythos is a place of horror and wonder, mystery and action. It is full of desperate people doing terrible things. Sinister priests and nefarious cults worship beings so hideous and powerful that their very names can destroy you. This is a world where serial killers paint canvases of death across entire continents to honor beings no one ever sees, a world where the cities of alien races await discovery beneath the waters of the ocean or the sands of the desert, a world where maniacs mate with monstrous beings from distant worlds to produce loathsome offspring. Every step brings a new horror, every door a fresh hell.

Investigators enter this world to do what they can. They are firefighters of the unknown, charging forth to quench the latest outbreak of cor-

rupting flame. Their victories are silent, their failures numerous, and their destinies grim.

They move in a hermetic subculture of heroes and villains, neither of whom is eager to see these secrets made public. For the heroes, exposure of the Cthulhu Mythos would only spur madness and death on a grand scale. For the villains, they can exercise their powers far more easily on an ignorant populace.

So it is that the world of the Cthulhu Mythos remains a secret world, one that is far larger and more malignant than the one we commonly know. Like a cancer, it rots us from within. But like a disease, its release would only bring harm.

A QUESTION OF ACCURACY

Because the Cthulhu Mythos is the creation of humans—an attempt to explain and systemize the alien and the unknowable—it is fragmentary at best. Contradictions and confusions are common, and much of the Mythos is just plain wrong. You can't believe anything you hear and only half of what you read.

Call of Cthulhu does not attempt to present a coherent, consistent Mythos because no such explanation exists, either in the world of the game or in the real world. Lovecraft introduced only fragments of the Mythos in his work, and the thousands of writers who have followed in his footsteps have only served to muddy the waters. Like our investigators in the game world, the best we can do is guess.

Moreover, the Cthulhu Mythos in the game shouldn't provide a coherent vision. To cite S.T. Joshi again, the Mythos is an *antimythology*. It exists to destroy all human mythologies by revealing their irrelevancy, and it offers nothing as a replacement except chaos and destruction.

THE COSMIC NARRATIVE

As if in mockery of other human mythologies, the Cthulhu Mythos has its own narrative that explains how things came to be as they are. When a cultist says he's going to reveal the secrets of the cosmos, this is the sort of thing he'll tell you. Keep in

ABOUT THE CTHULHU MYTHOS

Lovecraft didn't call his creations "the Cthulhu Mythos." That title was coined by August Derleth, Lovecraft's posthumous publisher. During his life, Lovecraft used terms such as "the Arkham cycle" and "Yog-Sothothery," but only informally. Indeed, he had little intention of creating a coherent Mythos. His interest was in writing individual stories, some of which had elements in common but that all expressed his philosophy and aesthetics. As

mind that this narrative is neither objective nor trustworthy because it's been assembled by the kinds of people who worship monsters.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: THE DEFEAT OF TIME

Time, space, and natural law hold for me suggestions of intolerable bondage, and I can form no picture of emotional satisfaction which does not involve their defeat—especially the defeat of time, so that one may merge oneself with the whole historic stream and be wholly emancipated from the transient and the ephemeral.

—H.P. Lovecraft,
letter to
August Derleth, 1930



SPACE AND TIME

Our understanding of space and time is very limited. We perceive three dimensions, and suspect that time is a fourth. Other forms of life operate in many more dimensions than this. Such beings understand that movement is possible within and between all these dimensions. All times and places are one to

them and there are no boundaries on their actions. Near and far, past and future—these concepts are interchangeable. The entirety of existence could simply be labeled Now/Here.

Thus, there is little in the way of a linear history of the cosmos. Some scholars of the occult might say that one thing happened three million years ago because of evidence in the fossil record—but what are fossils and strata to beings who straddle time and space with a thought? History is an illusion and matter is a lie. Trust neither.

his biographer S.T. Joshi has commented, the Cthulhu Mythos isn't a mythology or a philosophy in itself; it is merely a set of plot devices—characters, monsters, books, and gods—that Lovecraft used to express his ideas in the form of fiction.

So don't get too hung up on defining "the Mythos" as an organized system with a hierarchy of deities and a consistent set of beliefs and practices. Use it the way Lovecraft did: as a set of plot devices to tell your stories.

YOG-SOTHOTH

Completing the trinity, Yog-Sothoth gives Azathoth and Shub-Niggurath what they need: time. For Yog-Sothoth is time itself, the friction that arises at the intersections of dimensions. Death needs time for what it kills to grow in, and so does Azathoth need Yog-Sothoth to provide the temporal framework in which Shub-Niggurath's awesome fecundity can birth worlds. Without time, death and life merely cancel each other out and all is oblivion. With time, death and life are a cycle and a struggle.

TRUE GODS

The true gods are not the gods of humanity. Somewhere in the heart of space-time the conceptual weight of cosmic principles grows so dense that they take material form and the rudiments of identity. We call them the Outer Gods. They have no real personality or agenda—only urges, because they are physical laws rendered in slightly fewer dimensions than the cosmos itself and are therefore distinct from the broader canvas of reality. You may speak to them all you want, but they do not speak back. Yet sometimes they come when you call.

Three exist that we know of, and they form a trinity of death, life, and time. Taken together, they are the closed system in which the cosmos exists.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: THE TERRIBLE STARS

*I have whirl'd with the earth at the dawning,
When the sky was a vaporous flame,
I have heard the dark universe yawning,
Where the black planets roll without aim;
Where they roll in their horror unheeded, without knowl-
edge or lustre or name.*

—H.P. Lovecraft, "Nemesis"

AZATHOTH

The great glory that is Azathoth is the cosmos made manifest. He is chaos incarnate, the void at the heart of reality, the abyss that stares back. His greatest urge is that of entropy: the tendency of ordered systems—galaxies, planets, civilizations, life, the atom—to degrade and collapse. We see his power in the faces of the old as their skin wrinkles, their hair turns gray, and their bodies weaken and fail. We hear his voice in every earthquake and feel his touch in the cold caress of cancer. The question "Why does the cosmos exist?" has no answer—but Azathoth is its punchline.

SHUB-NIGGURATH

She represents life itself, the urge that drives all creation, the origin of everything. But she is not merely life; she is the *urge* of life, the fertility principle. Every coupling of man and woman is done in her name and serves her purpose. She is the antithesis of Azathoth—yet this does not make her an ally of humans. She and he are complementary, a synthesis of life and death. Without the fertility of Shub-Niggurath, Azathoth would have nothing to destroy. Without the chaos of Azathoth, Shub-Niggurath would be stagnant and unchanging. Together they couple across all reality in an orbit of life and death, and the cosmos is their bed.

NYARLATHOTEP

The Outer Gods have a representative, perhaps a self-appointed one. This messenger is Nyarlathotep, said to have a thousand faces. Nyarlathotep manifests in our world as he pleases, even in the form of a human. He is a trickster, and you must be wary of him, but he has great gifts to bestow upon the worthy. Whether he himself is truly an Outer God or something else altogether is a mystery known to none except Nyarlathotep himself.

Great Cthulhu is Their cousin, yet can be spy on Them only dimly. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! As a foulness shall ye know Them. Their hand is at your throats, yet ye see Them not; and Their habitation is even one with your guarded threshold. Yog-Sothoth is the key to the gate, whereby the spheres meet. Man rules now where they ruled once; They shall rule where man rules now. After summer is winter, and after winter summer. They wait patient and potent, for here shall They reign again.

—excerpt from the Necronomicon
in H.P. Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror"

age and power, so much so that many races and people worship and serve them as if they were the true gods. Unlike the Outer Gods, these beings do have conscious agendas, even if we often do not understand them. We call them the Great Old Ones, and those we know of have been on our world since before the dawn of humanity—if indeed they even experience time the same way we do.

They are vulnerable, though only to forces more powerful than we could ever marshal. At some point in space-time there was a great shift in the cosmos and the Great Old Ones on our world were trapped here. Some still roam the land, awake and active but unable to leave. Others exist in a sort of torpor, not dead but dreaming, deep beneath the ocean or in remote caverns. And some reside on other worlds, but touch ours from time to time.

The nature of the cosmic shift that trapped them here is a mystery. Perhaps Azathoth rumbled, or Shub-Niggurath birthed a strange new galaxy, or Yog-Sothoth forgot about them. Regardless, something fundamental happened and the Great Old Ones could no longer leave Earth. They live deep in the oceans, or the deserts, or the forests, or in strange places that are both of our world and yet elsewhere.

Though they are false gods, they are still beings of great power. If you serve them, they may reward you.

CTHULHU

Not dead but dreaming, Cthulhu rests within a sealed vault on the sunken Pacific island of R'lyeh. His thoughts reach out from his drowned home and touch the minds of sensitives, psychics, artists, and madmen. The greatest of the false gods, Cthulhu is also the most threatening. Under the right conditions R'lyeh can rise and Cthulhu can awaken, bringing terror and destruction to the world. His face, a mass of tentacles, appears in the carvings and artworks of nearly every culture on the planet. He is an oceanic parasite on the mass consciousness of the world.

HASTUR THE UNSPEAKABLE

An enigma wrapped in a riddle. Some say that speaking his name aloud can bring disaster, while others insist that he has a secret, true name that is the real threat. Hastur dwells on a distant world within an amorphous, nightmare city called Carcosa. If he can be said to represent anything, it is that of corruption itself.

NODENS

An anomaly among the false gods, Nodens is an ally of humanity in the sense that the enemy of your enemy is your friend. He is a cosmic hunter, always pursuing greater and greater prey, and he has not infrequently tracked and slain the minions of the Great Old Ones. Some believe he is a human who has transcended humanity; certainly, he lives now mostly in dreams.

YIG

Humanity has always feared snakes and serpents. Yig is the embodiment of the serpentine principle: cold-blooded, sinuous, hungry, and ripe with poison. Said to be the father of snakes, Yig maintains an active relationship with his worshipers and the serpents who are his spawn. He could be described as the most anthropomorphic of the Great Old Ones—but even so, his minions strike at us when we enter their territory.

MORDIGGIAN

From the battlefields of Rome to the ovens of Auschwitz, heaps of wrecked human bodies recur throughout our history. Mordiggian is the charnel god, a celebrant of death on a massive scale. He is the god not of clashing armies, but the corpses they leave behind. Wherever there is death and rot and mortified flesh, Mordiggian is nearby. He whispers in the ears of the dead and takes secrets from their swollen lips.

TSATHOGGU

A nearly dormant deity of sorcerers and other seekers after knowledge, Tsathoggua is willing to bargain for secrets. He is little-known these days, though isolated wizards still travel across the stars to bow down before him in search of mysteries.

CHAUGNAR FAUGN

This strange and often silent being offers little more than hunger. Terribly alien, he drifts among humans in search of victims to devour or enslave. His goals are unknown, though he has given

magical power to those who serve him. He is Pandora's Box, a risk only to those who open him.

CTHUGHA

The stars themselves are home to this being of pure fire. It has no special connection to our world, but can be brought here by maniacs to unleash terrible destruction. Cthugha burns and burns, the heart of a star ripped from its body and sent to haunt the galaxies.

ITHAQUA

The walker on the winds is largely confined to the cold northern parts of our world, though his reach extends everywhere. He is capricious and mercurial, a being of terrible temper and savage violence. Many know him as a wind god, though the rushing air is but one of his powers. He strikes from the night sky against those who anger him.

EIHORT

A fertile corruptor and a mother to parasites. Eihort spawns a steady stream of its brood, hideous creatures that infest humans and cause their bodies to erupt with yet more of their kind. Eihort exists only to propagate, a localized manifestation of the Shub-Niggurath principle.

GLAAKI

A cousin to Eihort, at least in conceptual terms, Glaaki likewise exists to infect and corrupt humans to make itself more powerful. Rather than destroy its human victims, however, Glaaki turns them into immortal slaves. Many come to Glaaki willingly in search of eternal life. Few are grateful for what they receive.

YGOLONAC

Hardly any of the Great Old Ones are as mindless and direct as Y'Golonac. His only instinct is to devour life. He is the ultimate consumer. Curiously, he is associated with perversion and degradation, his unthinking hunger translated by human minds into a desire for sexual supremacy and cruelty, to own what they cannot eat. Likewise his transformation of worshipers' bodies speaks to their desire to shape and escape the prison of flesh.

SHUDE M'ELL

Deep within the earth the great worm known as Shudde M'ell burrows and chews at the heart of the world. He is the embodiment of secret obsessions and dire conspiracy, a tireless evil no one ever sees or even suspects.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: THE SEA IS A SECRET

I cannot think of the deep sea without shuddering at the nameless things that may at this very moment be crawling and floundering on its slimy bed, worshiping their ancient stone idols and carving their own detestable likenesses on submarine obelisks of water-soaked granite. I dream of a day when they may rise above the billows to drag down in their reeking talons the remnants of puny, war-exhausted mankind—of a day when the land shall sink, and the dark ocean floor shall ascend amidst universal pandemonium.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "Dagon"

AVATARS

When gods interact with humans, they often take the form of avatars. Avatars are human versions of gods, representatives or embodiments. Some are normal humans possessed temporarily by the divine, while others are merely simulacra, parodies of the human form that have no independent existence. Nyarlathotep, for example, may well be an independent avatar of Azathoth—but in turn, he has both possessing and independent avatars of his own. Hastur manifests in our world as the King in Yellow, a tatteredemion of nightmares and insanity. Y'Golocan corrupts the bodies of his worshipers so they resemble him, headless and corpulent with hungry mouths in the palms of their hands.

Possessing avatars may leave their human hosts safe and sound when they depart, or the hosts could be mutated, or even destroyed. Independent avatars can be slain a thousand times only to return; they are merely expressions of will, not vulnerable creatures of limb and sinew, and their destruction is little more than an annoyance.

The existence of an avatar does not mean the god itself is taking direct action. Some avatars are anthropomorphic frameworks designed by human sorcerers, a sort of interactive container through which you can communicate with the god. In this regard, avatars are like a computer simulation of a nuclear blast—it is safer to deal with an avatar than with its source, but that safety also serves as a limiting factor on what the avatar can accomplish for you.

BEASTS

The presence of the Great Old Ones on our world brought other creatures here, many of whom live among us still. They remain hidden from most people, either pursuing their agendas or waiting for the time when the cosmos shifts again and the Great Old Ones are free once more.

Some can make useful allies or servants to human sorcerers and worshipers. Others live only to destroy.

THE MI-GO

The ultimate scientists, mi-go are an interstellar race comprised of sentient, telepathic fungi. They have a tremendous capacity for curiosity and observation, but are simultaneously so alien that their simplest inquiries result in disaster and madness for their subjects. The mi-go are currently obsessed with researching human intuition, our ability to make conceptual leaps across several logical progressions at a single step. They study and probe us relentlessly, and their experiments always end in the destruction or perversion of our fragile bodies. The mi-go are the ultimate expression of the search for knowledge, the instinct of discovery taken to its cold and dispassionate conclusion.

THE DEEP ONES

Beneath the ocean dwells Cthulhu, but he is not alone. His servants are the deep ones, a race of amphibious humanoids that reside in alien cities under the waves. They are the ocean with intelligence, a wave of inhuman passion that comes to shore to sow destruction and corruption. Many are driven to mate with humans, subvert our very genetics, and give birth to monsters. Their rulers are Dagon and Hydra, ancient members of their race.

THE GREAT RACE

Where the mi-go seek to meddle and alter, the Great Race merely observes. They are the scribes of reality, recording the events of history into a vast library in the distant past. Their minds travel across time to possess other races, mental parasites who consume entire worlds to ensure their own survival. Yet they record the history of everyone they destroy, evincing a sort of clinical compassion or at least a distant interest. Only humans exceed their ability to admire what they extinguish.

THE ELDER THINGS

They are mostly gone now, but once they built great cities across the surface of our world. Some still remain, warning signs of our own future. For just as humans will one perish and be replaced by another dominant race, so were the Elder Things first triumphant and then extinct. Their surviving artifacts are full of strange knowledge.

OTHERS

The beasts of our world are legion. Ghouls devour the flesh of dead humans in their underground labyrinths. Shantaks ride the star-winds, great bird-lizards of deep space. Serpent people are ancient wizards, mostly destroyed by time but who can adopt human guise, even today.

DREAMS

The Great Old Ones talk to us in dreams. Their minds are vast and alien, and they reach out to us in our sleep. In our dreams they show us visions of the world that is/was/were. If you obey the dreams, then the Great Old Ones give you magic and power. Eventually they may make you more than human.

Yet you must be wary. The dreams of a Great Old One can destroy your mind or kill you, the way you might step on an insect without realizing it.

THE END TIMES

Our fate is foretold: The stars will come right and the Great Old Ones will be free. At that time humanity will be destroyed and the false gods will again roam the stars and the spaces between them.

The nature of this event, known as the End Times, is not well understood. It may be that we can make it happen faster or slower. Or perhaps it is a fixed point in space/time beyond our ability to affect.

But one thing is certain: When the stars do come right, it will be the end of the world. Those of us who can transcend our own humanity will walk with the Great Old Ones among the stars, and all the cosmos shall be ours.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: THE HUNGER OF PRAYER

My contention is that religion is still useful amongst the herd—that it helps their orderly conduct as nothing else could . . . The crude human animal is ineradicably superstitious, and there is every biological and historical reason why he should be . . . Take away his Christian god and saints, and he will worship something else.

—H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Woodburn Harris, 1929

HERESIES AND CONTROVERSIES

Even a narrative as broad as the preceding one has dissidents. Several alternate beliefs that some cultists or investigators may hold also exist.

HUMANOCENTRISM

Some people believe that even the Outer Gods are beneath the gods of Earth—that like Satan and his demons, they are merely embodiments of moral evil, and that the God of the Bible—or Allah, or Buddha—is still supreme. From this perspective it is our spiritual duty to oppose these beings and resist their temptations.

NYARLATHOTEP

What is Nyarlathotep? Given that he is some sort of representative of the Outer Gods, he has a curious level of consciousness and takes a surprisingly strong interest in corrupting even individual humans. The inherent inhumanity of the cosmos would seem to make such petty meddling unlikely. Some believe that Nyarlathotep was once human, and was the first human to transcend humanity and join the realm of Azathoth. Now he plays with us as we would play with monkeys.

A separate heresy holds that the Great Old Ones themselves are all masks of Nyarlathotep—that Cthulhu, Eihort, and the rest are merely avatars. If so, Nyarlathotep's interest in humanity grows even more obsessive and inscrutable.

He is the nearest thing the Cthulhu Mythos has to Satan, a seeming violation of humanity's presumed insignificance. No one knows why he interacts with us the way he does.

ELDER GODS

Others believe the Great Old Ones were defeated by a group of beings known as the Elder Gods: good deities waging war against evil. Thus, the cosmos is a battleground between the good Elder Gods and the evil Great Old Ones, and our planet is a critical piece of terrain. The Elder Sign, an ancient magic sigil that has some defensive power against supernatural beings, is said to be a gift of the Elder Gods.

ELEMENTALISM

Another view is that the Great Old Ones are symbolically tied to the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air, as represented by Nyarlathotep, Cthulhu, Cthugha, and Hastur. Presumably other Great Old Ones could have other symbolic ties.

ELEMENTS OF THE MYTHOS

A number of elements commonly appear in the Cthulhu Mythos. These are defining plot devices and motifs that appear throughout Lovecraft's work. These can become major building blocks of the adventures you'll create. We include guidelines for making your own versions of these elements in your campaign.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: MORE THAN MURDER

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature"

tion of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature"

CULTS

Cults are groups of religious fanatics who usually keep their existence a secret. They worship one or more Mythos entities with a variety of rituals, garments, altars, and other trappings of religion. Human sacrifice is common, as is interaction with supernatural beasts.

Many cults have agendas. The most basic is worship: Their adoration of the diabolical makes them feel powerful and secure. Others have more concrete goals. They might want to rule the world or destroy it. They may conspire to gain political power, or search for a set of magic artifacts important to their beliefs. Often they seek to serve the will of their god—and since their gods rarely provide direct orders, they have to fill in the blanks with their own insane ideas.

In fact, most cults are self-created rather than the inheritors of dogmatic traditions. They take ideas from other cults and belief systems and then merge them with the peculiar dreams and symbolologies of their deity. Even two cults who worship the same entity may do so in different ways because they aren't drawing on a coherent history the way Christianity or Islam does.

The haphazard nature of cults is also a result of their corruption and insanity. Cults are dangerous groups to fight because they believe in a cause and do anything to achieve it.

DESIGNING A CULT

To create a cult for your campaign, follow these steps. (You don't have to do them in this particular order, however.)

Choose a purpose. For most cults, this means worshiping a deity, a monster, or an idea such as "violence" or "chaos." This isn't a plan so much as it is a meaning, a reason to exist.

Truth.) Some cults even have two names: a safe one for the outside world and a powerful one for the inner circle of fanatics.

BOOKS

Choose an agenda. What are they up to? Do they hold their ceremonies quietly and go home, or are they after something? Cults should have goals both big and small.

Create a leader. Who runs the cult today? Come up with a name and a paragraph or so of biography. You can also design stats.

Create a founder. Who started the cult? This might be the current leader—if so, is that because it's a new cult or because the cult resurrected the founder? And why did he begin the cult in the first place?

Describe the cultists. Who joins this cult? Some cults are all raving lunatics, but others recruit business and political leaders. Do they have normal lives, or are they all living in the woods dancing in pools of blood? Write up important cultists the investigators might encounter—guards, snoops, sorcerers, and anyone who deals with outsiders.

Describe the resources. Resources are any sorts of assets the cult owns or uses. These may include a temple or meeting place, a bank account, a cache of weapons, magic artifacts, books, contacts, allies, and so forth. Some cults have nothing more than whatever the members own, while others own jets and office buildings.

Write the manifesto. Many cults have a core statement of beliefs that they memorize and chant. This might be a ritual to honor their god or a cryptic series of questions and answers that members recite to reinforce the cult's teachings. By writing this in the cult's own words, you figure out if they are educated and literate or raving and nonsensical, as well as figuring out their style and obsessions.

Design the symbol. Cults often have a symbol they use as identifying decoration. This symbol might appear on rings or brooches the cultists wear in daily life, the way Masons do. It might be on ceremonial robes, painted on banners, or carved into the skin of their victims. You could pick an astrological symbol, an occult symbol such as a pentagram, or make something up. It doesn't matter if you can't draw; just roughing it out lets you describe it verbally to the players. Perhaps the investigators see it in their dreams.

Record the history. Was the cult created in ancient Rome—or is it a new cult that just claims to descend from ancient Rome? Has the cult been active in politics, business, or society? Have they killed or recruited anyone important or famous? Where have they operated over the years, and what kinds of activities and agendas have they pursued?

Name the cult. Cult names range from the obscure to the obvious, the inspired to the banal. Primitive or unimaginative cults use words such as *darkness, blood, death, night, hands, eyes*. (*The Eye of Death. The Hands of Night. The Blood of Darkness.*) More subtle or sophisticated cults might choose names that let them fit into society, perhaps even appearing in the phone book. (*The Brotherhood of Light. The Empowerment Temple. The Way* and the

One way knowledge of the Mythos propagates is through books of occult knowledge. Insane sorcerers and murderous cultists fill thousands of pages with their rambling discoveries on the nature of reality or the worship of their deity. These are rarely written with clarity and organization; instead, they're created by maniacs writing for an audience of one. Some are in ciphers that no one but other cultists can decode.

Reading such books is one way to gain knowledge of the Mythos. But they are very rare and little known. Cultists and other dangerous people covet them. Some investigators simply destroy such books on sight, treating them as if they were a deadly virus on the verge of breaking out. Certainly, worse ideas exist.

DESIGNING A BOOK

To create a Mythos book, follow these steps in any order.

Choose the topic. What is the book about? Some books, such as the *Necronomicon*, are insane overviews of the entire cosmos—long, confusing, and detailed versions of the Cosmic Narrative presented earlier. Others are guides to specific cult worship practices, the occult equivalent of *The Book of Common Prayer* or *The Baptist Hymnal*. Still others are journals of magical experimentation, diaries of madmen, ruminations on the secret history of the world, weird poetry, or almost anything else.

Create the author. Who wrote it? Perhaps it was one person, or several people working together. If it was several people, they might have added material to the book over a period of centuries. Some books might claim to be by one author but actually be by someone else—a mystery to solve.

Write the history. Who published it and when? Were most copies burned in a mysterious fire, or is it sitting in used-book stores across the country? Did any government ban the book? Was the author prosecuted for writing it, or did he go mad and commit suicide when the last page was done? Who owns the book now, and who wants it? Mythos books almost always have a story behind them. This is also where you choose what language it was written in, and whether it has been published in other languages since.

Describe the appearance. Is it a modern paperback, an old typeset hardcover, or a sheaf of loose pages written in blood and made of human skin? Does the cover show a cult symbol, a title, or some kind of image? Are there locking clasps and a poison needle trap?

Design the stats. Look at the books in the Magic chapter for guidelines. You need to choose the Examination Period (1 day to 1d20 weeks), the DC for successfully studying the book (20 to 25), the number of spells (none to 4d6), the contact and completion Sanity losses (1 to 1d10 and 1d4 to 2d10), and the number of Cthulhu Mythos skill ranks it bestows (+1 to +3). If its language is especially esoteric, you may decide to raise the DC of the Speak Other Language check to decipher it. Powerful books should be hard to find, difficult to decipher, and dangerous to own.

Customize the book. The book stats in the Magic chapter are pretty general because they're intended for you to customize—and so the players who read this rulebook won't know everything. Choose (or roll) the number of spells for your book, decide which spells they are, make up the bizarre names the spells appear under, and note whether any of the spells are bogus or dangerously flawed. Write up a paragraph about the content of the book so the players know what their investigators have read. Make up a handful of Strange Events like the ones on page 120 that are unique to this book, in case you need them.

MAGIC

Within the Mythos, magic is real, but that doesn't mean it's good. Whether it's a spell that summons a monster or an artifact that melts flesh, the magic of the Mythos is always dangerous and corruptive. Spells are usually found in books. Artifacts could be in tombs, cult temples, or in the hands of crazed sorcerers. Some artifacts sit in museums and art galleries awaiting discovery.

Magic violates the principles of reality that we understand. It's a discipline close to the true nature of reality, and therefore a doorway into madness and pain. Use it with caution and fear it always.

Because magic has power, it is valuable. Just because you have found an artifact that does something wondrous doesn't mean that someone—or something—won't come looking for it.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: CITY IN DREAMS

Several nights ago I had a strange dream of a strange city—a city of many palaces and gilded domes, lying in a hollow betwixt ranges of grey, horrible hills.... I felt that I had once known it well, and that if I could remember, I should be carried back to a very remote period—many thousand years, when something vaguely horrible had happened.

—H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Maurice W. Moe, 1918

DESIGNING A SPELL

Creating a spell is mostly a matter of guesswork and comparison.

Choose the purpose. What do you want the spell to do? If you're creating the spell for use in a specific adventure or campaign, consider what role the spell plays in the story. Is it the spell the cult has to find to destroy the

world, or do they have the spell but need an obscure material component?

Create the name. Name your spell with a simple, descriptive title so it's easy to remember what the spell does. This name is for your reference only, so it doesn't have to be fancy or strange.

Design the stats. Using the spells in the Magic chapter as your model, work out the stats for your spell. To start with, find an existing spell that you think has a similar power level or importance to your new spell and use its stats as a base. Then decide the basic statistics: components, cost, casting time, range, target, duration, and saving throw.

Write the description. Explain what the spell does, what it requires, how it works, and so forth.

Customize the spell. Now that you have a spell like those in the rulebook, bring it to life. Make a list of four or five colorful, mysterious names the spell is known by. Write a short history—who created the spell, important situations where it was used, and where to find it. If it has components, write those up in detail so you can describe this all to the players. You could even write the actual text of the spell as it would appear in a Mythos book, complete with ciphers, mysterious symbols, obscure descriptions, insane rants, and so forth.

GODS AND MONSTERS

The alien beings who lurk and plot play a very important role in the Mythos, even though they don't appear out in the open much at all. Because they're so dangerous and powerful, investigators shouldn't encounter them face-to-face very often. The human cultists who worship these horrors are much more common, as is evidence after the fact of these creatures' activities—whether that's a footprint in the forest or a strange mist that lingers for hours.

Gods play the role of the distant threat. They're somewhere else, perhaps in space or under the ocean, and the adventure you're playing is all about how someone wants to awaken or summon that god. The investigators are doing their best to ensure this doesn't happen.

Monsters are a little more up front. A powerful cult might have a monster as a sentry or ally, or they could summon one to deal with a group of nosy investigators. A Mythos creature is usually an element you should save for the climax of the scenario. There should always be a chance that at least one of the investigators will die or go insane from the experience.

DESIGNING A GOD OR MONSTER

The first question you should ask when designing gods and monsters is: Why bother? This rulebook already contains a slew of such creatures. Cults are full of insane, deluded people who may worship a god or monster under any of a number of names or interpretations. If you want a cult who worships a sky god and Ithaqua isn't doing the trick, have them worship Cthulhu—even though he's in the ocean. A typical cult is too crazy to realize the difference. Perhaps they read a Mythos book that used the sky as a metaphor for the ocean, and they interpreted it too literally—occult tomes aren't written like VCR instructions.

in *Call of Cthulhu* are meant to be weird and powerful. They should have all sorts of bizarre abilities and attacks. Some might damage you by eating your shadow, or control your mind just by holding your hand. Others could walk through walls, enter one door and leave another, or turn concrete into water. If you're going to make a new beast, you might as well make it as weird as you can.

Write the description. Start by quoting your appearance notes and then explain the nature of the thing. Does it worship or serve a particular god? Where is it from and why does it turn up on Earth—was it summoned, or did it fly here through the interstellar night? Make notes on distinctive behaviors, smells, and desires. Does it want to mate with humans, or eat our brains?

You can twist and distort this rulebook's description of the gods and monsters any way you like because the humans who have built the Cthulhu Mythos were liable to write just about anything. Change the name, change the appearance, or change the cult. Go with your instincts. These creatures are the masters of reality, and they transcend time and space. Like Nyarlathotep, they could appear in any guise or under any description. Cthulhu lies sleeping at the bottom of the ocean, sure. But some heresies might have him on the moon, or beneath the Grand Canyon, or walking among us in human guise. The Cthulhu Mythos is a set of plot devices used to tell stories. Bend it to your will.

If it's a question of familiarity, you can still pull this trick. Are your players tired of deep ones? Use the deep one stats, but make them insect-creatures who live in subway tunnels preying on late-night travelers. A fresh coat of paint on the same old stats can work wonders, and this furthers the amorphous, contradictory nature of the Mythos that keeps it mysterious.

Still, sometimes you just need a new beast. You might want to adapt a creature you have read about in a book or seen in a movie. Here's how.

Choose the model. Even if you're intent on making a new critter, there's probably something in this rulebook you can use as a starting point. If it's human-size, start with a ghoul. If it's bigger, try a shoggoth. If it can fly, check out the byakhee. If it can fly and it's really big, look at the hunting horror. Use the advancement rules, if they give you ideas. A few minutes of skimming can easily find you a creature that has the basic attributes you want. This helps ensure that your creation is built along a similar stat scale as the existing ones. It should also give you some clues to how powerful your creation will be.

Describe the appearance. What does it look like? Lovecraft described his monsters as combinations of other things, or as not quite looking like something but still suggesting it somehow, because he wanted to create impressions in his readers' minds of indescribable alien entities. He described the byakhee, for example, as "...not altogether crows, nor moles, nor buzzards, nor ants, nor decomposed human beings, but something I cannot and must not recall." Don't get lost in prosaic descriptions like, "The Bangalore is 6 feet tall and has nine legs and two big red eyes." That's boring. Get weird and eccentric in your descriptions, and never feel that you have to stick to your own phrases—these things don't obey the laws of space and time, remember? They can have twelve legs today and no legs tomorrow if it makes for a scarier encounter. All that matters is that your players should be afraid.

Create the name. You have to call it something. Most names in the Cthulhu Mythos were chosen by human sorcerers and maniacs who encountered these beasts and needed a name for them afterward. They might have taken a name from a sound the creature made, or from a word in an alien language, or just used something that sounded impressive to them. Embrace this variety and come up with multiple names for your creature.

Design the stats. Using the model you have chosen, work up the beast's stats. Besides the basic attributes and so forth, have fun with the special attacks and qualities. Even moreso than in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, gods and monsters

MYSTERIOUS SECRETS

The Cthulhu Mythos is full of secrets, and Lovecraft's stories are typically all about the unraveling of such secrets. This is because in exploring secrets we gain knowledge, and knowledge leads to corruption, and then something awful eats your face.

Typical secrets in Lovecraft's stories include things like: a village whose residents have been breeding with monsters for generations; a dead wizard who has used magic to possess the body of a living person; a sorcerer who seems to be a ghost, but is actually adrift in space-time.

A mysterious secret has several layers. Some sort of surface behavior or situation gets you interested. Then there is an initial explanation or resolution that seems to suggest all is well. But the weirdness continues and the explanation falters, so you look deeper. You find sinister clues that suggest something terrible. Finally you figure it out, and that resolution coincides with the climax of the story.

Mysterious secrets are great fun to design because they're like laying a minefield. You get to put all sorts of nasty surprises in the ground and then slap a pretty garden on top. When investigators stop to sniff the flowers, something explodes.

DESIGNING A MYSTERIOUS SECRET

Create the secret. This can be anything unpleasant that someone wants to keep quiet. Perhaps the investigator's father was half-monster, or the guy who lives down the street is building a gate to a terrible dimension in his basement, or the funeral homes in the city are all linked by underground tunnels full of ghouls, or a house is bigger on the inside than the outside, or a serial killer is really a mind parasite that leaps from host to host.

Choose the carrier. Who knows the secret? Maybe no person actually knows it—the truth could exist only in an old book, or recorded on a security-camera videotape.

Craft the agenda. There's a reason why it's a secret. Someone is working to keep the secret quiet, and designing their agenda helps you build the rest of the mystery.

Build the layers. Make up a couple layers of explanation to put on top of the truth. If a guy is building a time machine made from human heads, his nocturnal walks through poor neighborhoods might be explained by his having an affair with someone who lives in that area. The affair is real—but it's also his cover for cutting

off the heads of homeless people. On top of that is his explanation for why he's been missing so much work lately and always looks tired: He has the flu. (But if he is so sick, what's he doing going out every night? Oh, he's having an affair. But why are all the murders in that same area? Holy cow, it's made of heads!)

Set the hook. You need an initial hook to snag the interest of the investigators. To use our time-travel maniac example, his brother or friend might want to know why he's acting so strange and missing so much work. Or the hook might be the recent decapitation murders of homeless people.

Make it freaky. Each layer of discovery should include something that is slightly off-kilter, a little bizarre. If the layer is purely mundane, after all, there's no reason to look further. Maybe the guy has faded bloodstains on his shirt when he explains about the affair ("Oh, that's cranberry juice"), or the woman he's been dating will only answer questions on the night that just happens to have a full moon. (She's actually an ancient sorcerer possessing a modern woman's body, and she wants our crazy fool to build the occult time machine to free her from the past.)

SINISTER CLUES

Clues are what makes this a game of mystery, because many of the adventures you play are all about finding things out. For a great

example of Sinister Clues, read Lovecraft's story "The Call of Cthulhu." In that tale, a long series of clues at first appears to be separate and not very meaningful events. But as the story comes together, those clues combine to explain a Mysterious Secret that reveals the full scope of the tale's horror. Lovecraft's novel *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* does this as well, and T.E.D. Klein's excellent novella *Black Man With A Horn* is almost entirely composed of Sinister Clues.

The key to using clues is to remember how knowledge is corrosive. The more you learn, the worse off you are. Either a clue is a terrible thing or it's a very mundane thing that becomes terrible when you get the next clue and realize what the first one meant. Clues are like the breadcrumb trail in the fairy tale about Hansel and Gretel, except they always lead straight into the witch's oven. Then the door snaps shut behind you just as you realize where you have come, and the flames flare up, and the moment of final revelation is pure apocalypse.

DESIGNING A SINISTER CLUE

Only a couple of steps to this exist, but they require some real thought and cleverness.

Choose the revelation. What does the clue reveal? You should decide this first before you even worry about whether the clue is a newspaper article, journal, statue, or whatever. The clue should point to something, and you need to figure out what it tells the investigators.

Craft the container. The container is the form the clue appears in. It might be a physical piece of evidence, such as a footprint or a broken window. It could be a document, such as a newspaper clipping, an old diary, or a nursery rhyme. Perhaps it's a conversation, something a witness tells you as you're interviewing him about the mystery.

Build the surprise. Ideally there should be something about the clue that surprises the players when they think about it. The clue might just be "Joe drinks a lot of water," but then the players remember the old book that said resurrected wizards sometimes turn to dust and maybe that means—oh, no! The key to a great clue is that it shouldn't be blatantly sinister or horrifying in itself. Instead, the horror should occur in the mind of the player as

By Their smell can men sometimes know Them near, but of their semblance can no man know, saving only in the features of those they have begotten on mankind; and of those there are many sorts, different in likeness from man's truest eidolon to that shape without sight or substance which is Them... Kadath in the cold waste has known Them, and what man knows Kadath? The ice desert of the South and the sunken isles of Oceans hold stones whereon Their seal is engraven, but who hath seen the deep frozen city or the sealed tower long garlanded with seaweed and barnacles?

—excerpt from the Necronomicon
in H.P. Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror"

she makes the connection between the clue and something she learned earlier. By triggering that mental connection, the players scare themselves.

Consider this story: A group of investigators are tracking a strange creature in the woods where some hunters had vanished. They find a clue: a lump of spoor the creature left behind after a meal. The heroes have it analyzed, fully expecting it to contain digested human remains. Instead, it has digested grizzly bear remains. For a moment, the players are confused, but then one of them thinks, "Oh, God! This thing eats grizzly bears!" Then the players are really scared. The clue, as mundane as it appears at first, makes them scare themselves.

HORRIBLE FAMILIES

Families and bloodlines are of particular importance in the Mythos. Characters may discover that their ancestors included supernatural beings, or that their great-grandparents were sorcerous cannibals. These tainted family trees are never over and done with either, because knowledge and agendas are passed down by blood. In Lovecraft's "The Rats in the Walls," the main character devolves into the cannibalistic devil-worship of his forebears after he begins exploring his family's history. Poor Charles Dexter Ward resurrects his ancestor only to be murdered and impersonated by him. The Whateleys of "The Dunwich Horror" are perhaps the best example, since they're a Horrible Family, a Cult, and a Mysterious Secret all wrapped up in one neat package. (They even have a Book, a Monster, and Magic—really, they have got the works.) The bottom line: When

conflicts can provide Sinister Clues to the Mysterious Secret. In *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, Ward learns about his sorcerous ancestor, Joseph Curwen, through accounts written by Curwen's neighbors in the 1700s.

the corruption of the Mythos gets into your blood, no good ever comes of it.

DESIGNING A HORRIBLE FAMILY

Several points to consider in creating a Horrible Family follow.

Create the secret. What is so horrible about the family? Use the steps in the Mysterious Secret section to work this out. In Lovecraft's stories, the secret of a Horrible Family is usually related to some deception of identity, often involving a bloodline not entirely human. A beloved wife is possessed by the mind of her sorcerous father, or the ancestor who traveled in Africa mated with a terrible ape-creature. The secret means that the family is not what it appears to be, and the truth is something hideous.

Choose the focus. The focus character is the family member whom the investigators have the most contact with, such as Edward Derby in "The Thing on the Doorstep." He or she is the embodiment of the family's secret and is the avenue by which the investigators discover the truth. If the family's horror has been building across generations to some purpose, then the focus character is the result.

Decide the agenda. What is the point of the secret, and what role does the focus character play? Often the agenda is simply that of discovery and exposure, as with the narrator of "The Rats in the Walls" who unwittingly uncovers his family's history of cannibalism and murder. This usually means the focus character is sympathetic, an unwitting

victim of his family's horror. That character can thus become an ally who needs the investigators' help. In other cases, the agenda is some sort of restoration of power. Lavinia Whateley mated with a god to produce her hideous offspring, and Wilbur Whateley was the result—a half-monster obsessed with furthering his true father's presence in our world. Wilbur knows his family's secret from the start, and it's the role of the investigators to discover the truth. Sometimes the focus character may start as an unwitting victim, but be turned into a willing agent of evil.

Build the family. Write up the other living members of the immediate family. Look for opportunities to create heroes, villains, and more secrets. Wilbur Whateley, for example, had a monstrous twin brother nobody outside the family knew about.

Write the history. Every horrible family has a story. Write up their history including the origins of the secret, the actions ancestors took for or against the horror, and how the focus character came to be. As with the modern family members, litter the history with good and evil ancestors. Their half-forgotten

STRANGE PLACES

Few terrible things happen by daylight in public places. The worst events occur at night in abandoned buildings, haunted forests, or other Strange Places. The Cthulhu Mythos is full of such locations, and some of them are stranger than others.

Lonely Towns. Lovecraft's fictional towns of Arkham, Dunwich, Innsmouth, and Kingsport are all isolated little places where awful things can happen behind closed doors. Innsmouth was so remote that it turned into a haven for half-human, half-monstrous creatures and hardly anyone noticed. Lonely towns are scary once you realize one fact: There's so few people that they could all be working together!

Big Cities. These locales aren't any better—as in Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook," where an inner-city slum is home to a dangerous cult. Cities also extend beneath the ground. Awful ceremonies can occur in disused subway tunnels, forgotten basements, unknown caverns, or ancient labyrinths.

Oceans. Vast and mysterious, oceans are homes of horror. The Great Old One known as Cthulhu lies dreaming on the ocean floor in the sunken island of R'lyeh. The Deep Ones who serve him live there as well, and come to the surface to wreak havoc among humans.

Deserts. Oceans of the land, deserts conceal ancient secrets beneath their shifting sands. Long-abandoned cities of alien races await discovery, and strange truths are buried beneath the pyramids of Egypt.

Outer Space. Terrible creatures such as the mi-go and byakhee come from outer space, and when they leave, they may well take unlucky humans with them. Seemingly random disasters come from space, such as the living meteorite whose arrival corrupts and destroys a farming family in "The Colour

Out of Space."

Other Worlds. Earth can be a strange place, but there are places stranger still. The mi-go mostly reside on Yuggoth, a world we know as Pluto. The shifting concept-city Carcosa lies on a distant world and is home to Hastur and the King in Yellow. Things lurk on the Moon and Mars, and there are other worlds in distant galaxies where loathsome things live and plot.



DESIGNING A STRANGE PLACE

Strange Places are very diverse, but here are a few suggestions for creating your own.

Choose the nature. What do you want the place to be? A human town or a lost alien city? A distant world? Start by picking a broad category.

Create the inhabitants. Who or what lives there? It might be a cult hiding within a teeming metropolis, or a few hungry beasts haunting a ghost town.

Design the strangeness. What's so strange about this place? If it's an alien environment, can humans survive on their own, or do they have to accept monstrous parasites into their bodies just to breathe the air? For a lonely town, work up the Mysterious Secrets and the histories behind them.

Plan the access. How do investigators get there? If it's an alien world or a city on the ocean floor, can they use technology to reach it, or must they go through magical gates? Even a lonely town can have access issues. In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," the narrator has to take a grotty bus that only passes through Innsmouth once a day—meaning he has to stay the night.

Write the history. What is the story of this place? Figure out who or what founded it, what its history has been over the years, and what lies in its future.



THE TASTE OF ASHES

If the varied elements of the Cthulhu Mythos have anything in common, it is surely the looming specters of doom and futility. Every scholar or cultist to research this body of knowledge has come to the same realization: The forces of the cosmos are so powerful and so primally inimical to humankind that we face certain destruction.

In short, *Call of Cthulhu* is a game you cannot win. Earth is doomed and so is everyone on it. In Lovecraft's story "The Shadow Out Of Time," we even get a glimpse of our planet's future, when humans are only a legend and the lands and seas are populated by monsters.

Perhaps it is our destiny to escape this world's fate and make our home among the stars? No. If anything, what lies beyond our atmosphere is even more dangerous than what moves among us now. No escape exists from the finality of our extinction.

One day the stars will come right and the Great Old Ones will be freed from their prisons. Cthulhu will rise from the ocean, Ithaqua will roam all the world's skies, and the infectious madness of Hastur will spread from person to person. All this has been foreseen.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: THE NEMESIS OF SCIENCE

Life is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer daemonic hints of truth that make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous. Science, already oppressive with its shocking revelations, will perhaps be the ultimate exterminator of our human species—if separate species we be—for its reserve of unguessed horrors could never be borne by mortal brains if loosed upon the world.

—H.P. Lovecraft,
"Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family"

THE INEVITABLE FALL OF HUMANITY

What is to become of us? In Lovecraft's story "The Call of Cthulhu," a cultist describes our fate. He says the End Times will be easy to recognize, for they will come at a point when all humanity is consumed by violence and hedonism. Our societies will resemble those of the Great Old Ones themselves: lawless and wild, without any purpose except destruction.

We are not living in the End Times right now. But like the smoke from a distant fire, we can see them from here. Our world is burning. We have gone from being a single species to a set of rapacious civilizations, from there to clashing nations, and from there to uncivil societies. Step by step, as we factionalize into subcultures and sub-subcultures, betraying our communities for the sake of our personal obsessions, we grow ever closer to being a world of people-states where each individual places self above all. We are becoming a race of tyrants, feeble imitations of the Great Old Ones. The prophecies are coming true, one step at a time, as we march into the global abattoirs of our own making. The beings we know as the Cthulhu Mythos are not responsible; they are merely farther along the evolutionary track than we are. In them, we see our future, and that of the entire cosmos: order crumbling into chaos, life shriveling into death. Divide by zero.

than can be put into words—all civilisation, all natural law, perhaps even the fate of the solar system and the universe. I have brought to light a monstrous abnormality, but I did it for the sake of knowledge. Now for the sake of all life and Nature you must help me thrust it back into the dark again.

—H.P. Lovecraft, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: THE HUMAN BEAST

... civilisation is but a slight coverlet beneath which the dominant beast sleeps lightly and ever ready to awake.

—H.P. Lovecraft, "At the Root"

THE TERRIBLE TOLL OF DEFIANCE

What then must we do? The easy answer is nothing. We can lose ourselves in the distractions of shopping and politics, even the welcome responsibilities of family and career. In the face of a future so vast and so terrible that it is futile to even resist it, who can blame those who are content to live their lives in ignorance or denial? We are so young, and the cosmos is so old.

Those who do make a stand have little to look forward to. Again and again, the heroes of Lovecraft's stories struggle to understand the darkness and gain only madness or oblivion. They are destroyed by monsters, driven mad by revelations, or hide from the certain doom they now know awaits them. They may win battles, but they always lose wars. No one retires to live happily ever after.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: CYANIDE CURE

Every aptitude which I wish I had, I lack. Everything which I value, I have either lost or am likely to lose. Within a decade, unless I can find some job paying at least \$10.00 per week, I shall have to take the cyanide route through inability to keep around me the books, pictures, furniture, and other familiar objects which constitute my only remaining reason for keeping alive.

—H.P. Lovecraft, letter to Helen V. Sully, 1935

HEROISM AND HORROR

Nonetheless, heroes emerge. Normal men and women step forward to fight the darkness though they know they will ultimately fail. Even in the face of chaos they stand firm, putting everything and everyone they love at risk for the sake of the precious days remaining to us, and the unborn generations who may yet spend many of those days in peace.

Investigators of the unknown are brave, intelligent, and compassionate heroes who are not willing to surrender to destiny. Like Tolstoy, who in the face of poverty roamed the streets to give away all his money; or Dylan Thomas, who urged us not to go gentle into that good night, but rage against the dying of the light; or the man who stood before the tanks in Tiananmen Square, certain of defeat, but refusing to compromise.

Every investigator reaches a moment when it is easier to run away, ignore the evidence of her senses, and let sleeping dogs lie. Cowards turn back, but heroes press on, challenging the darkness in terrible places where even angels fear to tread.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: RETROGRADE

Instead of triumph I have found terror, and my talk with you will not be a boast of victory but a plea for help and advice in saving both myself and the world from a horror beyond all human conception or calculation. . . . Upon us depends more

SAVING THE DAY

Some heroes fight the impossible, fighting for the sake of today. They have people they care about, and they know they must take on this challenge to keep those they love from harm. What does it matter if the world is going to end? Today remains, and today is worth fighting for. Even if the planet is doomed there is a life to save right now, a wrong to redress, a hideous agenda to thwart. A small victory is still a victory, and there's no reason to go down without a fight.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Others struggle to add their light to the sum of light. By taking up the mantle of hero they become exemplars of selflessness and community—the very values the cosmos would erode. In their defiance of the inevitable they inspire others to stand with them, to do something worthwhile with their time on this world, to make hay while the sun shines.

YOUR ONLY JUDGE IS YOURSELF

In the end, this reality is one that doesn't care if we live or die or what we do with our days upon the Earth. What matters is what you choose to believe in, and what actions you take to show it. Pick your battles and make your stand. At the end of the day, even in the moment of your annihilation, you'll know you were not content to sit back with the rest.

You're a hero, and even if no one else realizes it, you still made a difference while you could.

If the Cthulhu Mythos has a saving grace it is this: By putting our existence in such stark relief, by propping up such insurmountable foes, by hurling the very fabric of reality against us, we can finally see who we really are. The Mythos is a vast mirror held up before the face of humanity. If you want to like what you see there, the power is in your hands.

LOVECRAFT SPEAKS: COLD COMFORT

No change of faith can dull the colours and magic of spring, or dampen the native exuberance of perfect health; and the consolations of taste and intellect are infinite. It is easy to remove the mind from harping on the lost illusion of immortality. . . . Personally, I should not care for immortality in the least. Nothing better than oblivion exists, since in oblivion there is no wish unfulfilled. We had it before we were born, yet did not complain. Shall we then whine because we know it will return? It is Elysium enough for me. . . .

—H.P. Lovecraft,
In Defence of Dagon



THE GAMEMASTER

"The predatory excursions on which we collected our unmentionable treasures were always artistically memorable events. We were no vulgar ghouls, but worked only under certain conditions of mood, landscape, environment, weather, season, and moonlight. These pastimes were to us the most exquisite form of aesthetic expression, and we gave their details a fastidious technical care. An inappropriate hour, a jarring lighting effect, or a clumsy manipulation of the damp sod, would almost totally destroy for us that ecstatic titillation which followed the exhumation of some ominous, grinning secret of the earth."

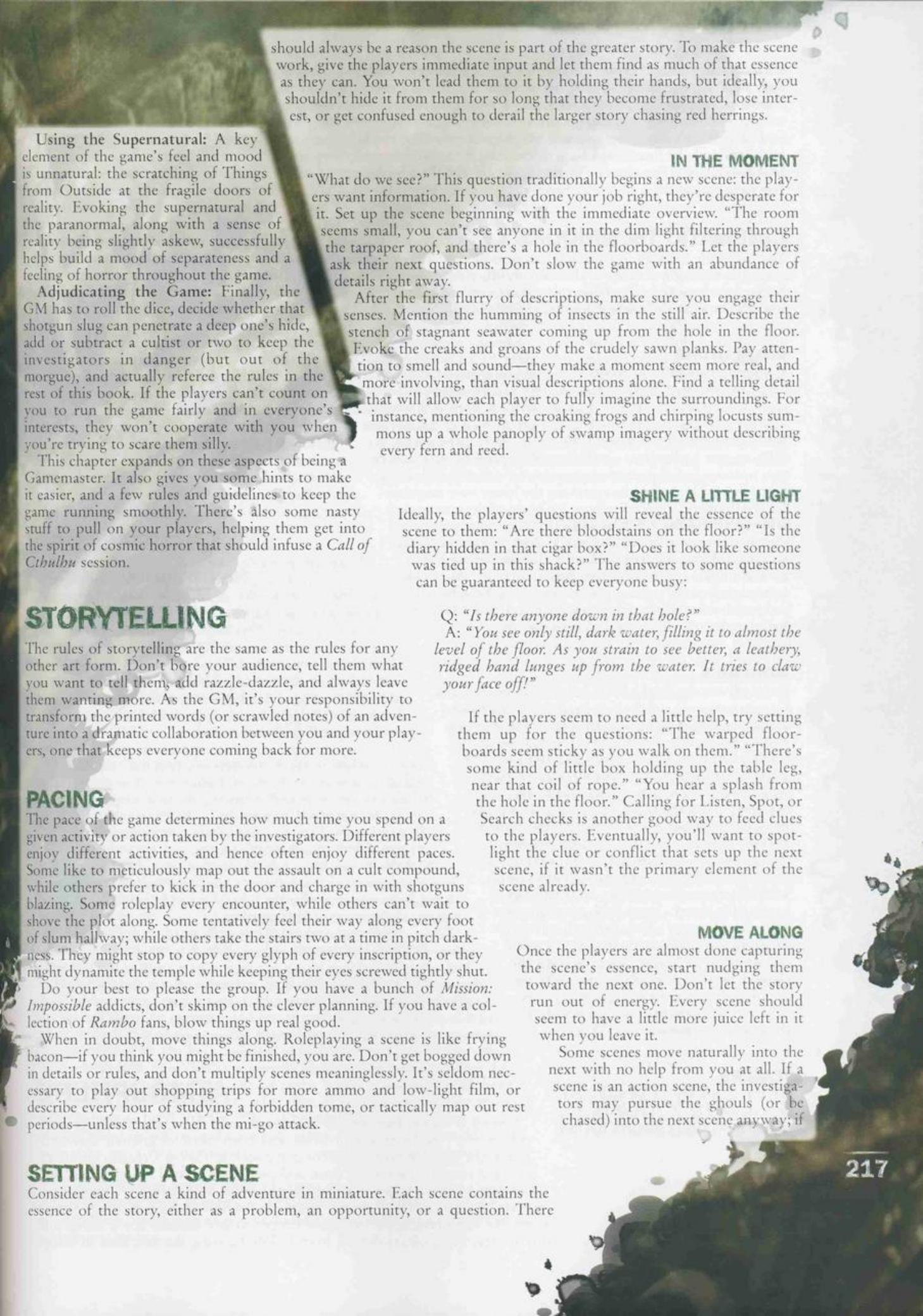
—H.P. Lovecraft, "The Hound"

The Gamemaster is not only the guardian of the game's ultimate truth, but also the storyteller and referee, dispenser of justice and terror, puppet master behind horrible conspiracies against the very integrity of the planet, and hidden guardian angel for the brave. Player characters would thwart such hellish designs. In other words, it's a big job. The Gamemaster's responsibilities include five important tasks.

Crafting a Story: First and foremost, a game session is a story. It should make some sense and hang together rationally, providing a beginning, middle, climax, and ending. Telling spooky stories around the campfire is how horror began; your *Call of Cthulhu* games should aim for at least that degree of immediate power.

Setting a Mood: A *Call of Cthulhu* session should convey a mood that allows the story to unfold as fear, paranoia, and tension increase. Keep the atmosphere friendly to the game and focused on its development. Intensity is the key. Game time should "feel" different from normal time, even if nothing immediately gruesome is happening.

Scaring the Players: A key component of that mood should, of course, be horror—*Call of Cthulhu* is a horror game. The characters' sanity and lives are at risk. Conveying to the players at least a fragment of the soul-freezing terror their characters are experiencing is a crucial part of the GM's task. If you have properly set the mood, the players should even be cooperating with you to scare themselves.



should always be a reason the scene is part of the greater story. To make the scene work, give the players immediate input and let them find as much of that essence as they can. You won't lead them to it by holding their hands, but ideally, you shouldn't hide it from them for so long that they become frustrated, lose interest, or get confused enough to derail the larger story chasing red herrings.

Using the Supernatural: A key element of the game's feel and mood is unnatural: the scratching of Things from Outside at the fragile doors of reality. Evoking the supernatural and the paranormal, along with a sense of reality being slightly askew, successfully helps build a mood of separateness and a feeling of horror throughout the game.

Adjudicating the Game: Finally, the GM has to roll the dice, decide whether that shotgun slug can penetrate a deep one's hide, add or subtract a cultist or two to keep the investigators in danger (but out of the morgue), and actually referee the rules in the rest of this book. If the players can't count on you to run the game fairly and in everyone's interests, they won't cooperate with you when you're trying to scare them silly.

This chapter expands on these aspects of being a Gamemaster. It also gives you some hints to make it easier, and a few rules and guidelines to keep the game running smoothly. There's also some nasty stuff to pull on your players, helping them get into the spirit of cosmic horror that should infuse a *Call of Cthulhu* session.

STORYTELLING

The rules of storytelling are the same as the rules for any other art form. Don't bore your audience, tell them what you want to tell them, add razzle-dazzle, and always leave them wanting more. As the GM, it's your responsibility to transform the printed words (or scrawled notes) of an adventure into a dramatic collaboration between you and your players, one that keeps everyone coming back for more.

PACING

The pace of the game determines how much time you spend on a given activity or action taken by the investigators. Different players enjoy different activities, and hence often enjoy different paces. Some like to meticulously map out the assault on a cult compound, while others prefer to kick in the door and charge in with shotguns blazing. Some roleplay every encounter, while others can't wait to shove the plot along. Some tentatively feel their way along every foot of slum hallway; while others take the stairs two at a time in pitch darkness. They might stop to copy every glyph of every inscription, or they might dynamite the temple while keeping their eyes screwed tightly shut.

Do your best to please the group. If you have a bunch of *Mission: Impossible* addicts, don't skimp on the clever planning. If you have a collection of *Rambo* fans, blow things up real good.

When in doubt, move things along. Roleplaying a scene is like frying bacon—if you think you might be finished, you are. Don't get bogged down in details or rules, and don't multiply scenes meaninglessly. It's seldom necessary to play out shopping trips for more ammo and low-light film, or describe every hour of studying a forbidden tome, or tactically map out rest periods—unless that's when the mi-go attack.

SETTING UP A SCENE

Consider each scene a kind of adventure in miniature. Each scene contains the essence of the story, either as a problem, an opportunity, or a question. There

IN THE MOMENT
“What do we see?” This question traditionally begins a new scene: the players want information. If you have done your job right, they’re desperate for it. Set up the scene beginning with the immediate overview. “The room seems small, you can’t see anyone in it in the dim light filtering through the tarpaper roof, and there’s a hole in the floorboards.” Let the players ask their next questions. Don’t slow the game with an abundance of details right away.

After the first flurry of descriptions, make sure you engage their senses. Mention the humming of insects in the still air. Describe the stench of stagnant seawater coming up from the hole in the floor.

Evoke the creaks and groans of the crudely sown planks. Pay attention to smell and sound—they make a moment seem more real, and more involving, than visual descriptions alone. Find a telling detail that will allow each player to fully imagine the surroundings. For instance, mentioning the croaking frogs and chirping locusts summons up a whole panoply of swamp imagery without describing every fern and reed.

SHINE A LITTLE LIGHT

Ideally, the players’ questions will reveal the essence of the scene to them: “Are there bloodstains on the floor?” “Is the diary hidden in that cigar box?” “Does it look like someone was tied up in this shack?” The answers to some questions can be guaranteed to keep everyone busy:

Q: “Is there anyone down in that hole?”

A: “You see only still, dark water, filling it to almost the level of the floor. As you strain to see better, a leathery, ridged hand lunges up from the water. It tries to claw your face off!”

If the players seem to need a little help, try setting them up for the questions: “The warped floorboards seem sticky as you walk on them.” “There’s some kind of little box holding up the table leg, near that coil of rope.” “You hear a splash from the hole in the floor.” Calling for Listen, Spot, or Search checks is another good way to feed clues to the players. Eventually, you’ll want to spotlight the clue or conflict that sets up the next scene, if it wasn’t the primary element of the scene already.

MOVE ALONG

Once the players are almost done capturing the scene’s essence, start nudging them toward the next one. Don’t let the story run out of energy. Every scene should seem to have a little more juice left in it when you leave it.

Some scenes move naturally into the next with no help from you at all. If a scene is an action scene, the investigators may pursue the ghouls (or be chased) into the next scene anyway; if

it's an investigation scene, they may follow the scent there themselves. They may have an idea that excites them; a plan to defeat the shan, a strategy for uncovering the cultist plant on the Air Force base, or whatever. If they're interested and excited and going somewhere, get out in front and lead them there, even if—especially if—it's not where you thought the scene would lead. If they're seriously off track, let them lose a little momentum before you start applying the brakes—or add a few clues or threats to subtly put them back on the path you have prepared.

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

You can easily compare roleplaying games to movies. The two art forms share the same imperatives of drama, conflict, storytelling, and action. Some of the same techniques directors use in movies to create suspense or advance the story can come in handy for *Call of Cthulhu* Gamemasters.

INTERCUTTING

If your players split the party—sending one group of characters to scout the haunted house while the rest ask questions in town—their decision can be fatal to dramatic tension. Even if the characters have all gone to the house, one group may check upstairs while the others poke around the cellar. With intercutting, the GM can run both scenes simultaneously, spending an action or two upstairs and then cutting away to the cellar to follow the party there. This can make searching the house very suspenseful and dramatic, especially if one (or both) of the groups runs into something horrific. Cut away from the cellar party after the rat-things swarm out and attack. Both groups will be in an agony of suspense as you describe the upstairs bedrooms to the oblivious investigators two floors up. Although intercutting can be confusing to new players, it can help tie separated parts of the story together and avoid boring half the players while you deal with the rest.

MONTAGES

Some adventures need a fairly lengthy set-up. A Delta Green op against a chthonian hatchery in the Congo doesn't really get going until they reach the site—but that's a thousand miles inland through a brutal civil war and Abhoth knows what else along the way. Rather than saying, "You take off from Homestead AFB, land in Kinshasa, go upstream, and get to the area," try presenting a more impressionistic montage of experiences. Describe the hurried packing of gear into the C-130, the tire fires on the runways at Kinshasa, the suspicious expressions of the river pilots, encounters with a militia or mercenary group, and maybe even a crocodile attack. You could even run very abbreviated scenes of combat against rebels or primitive tribes, or just run a "typical day on the river" scene. By presenting the elapsed time as a montage, not only do you draw the players into the story, you can build suspense or foreshadow themes or plot points.

TEASERS

At the beginning of virtually every episode of *The X-Files*, some poor schmo unwittingly disturbs the mu-

tant, or gets whacked by the aliens, or otherwise dies horribly, graphically, and—best of all—dramatically. You might consider beginning an adventure with a "cut scene" teaser, telling the story of the gruesome event briefly yet with plenty of disturbing and atmospheric detail. You may want to remind your players that their PCs won't be able to act on any "out of game" information you reveal during the teaser.

Better yet, pass out abbreviated NPC character sheets and let your players (or one or two of them) game out the messy death of Jane Bystander, late of Arkham, Mass. Later in the adventure, when the "regular" characters come upon Ms. Bystander's eviscerated corpse, it has more personal meaning to your players than just another baldly narrated forensic exhibit.

ENDING THE SESSION

Whenever possible, end the session either with a question or a bang. When you and the players break up the game for the night, they should be excited about what just happened, and they should want to resume play soon. This helps keep the game's continuity between sessions, making the players eager to get into character next session and cooperate to rebuild the atmosphere of the story. Finishing the session out with an adrenaline-pumped combat scene, a vital revelation that changes everything, or a juicy mystery to solve is the easiest way to get that kind of response.

This may require you to compress some scenes and expand others to reach the session's "natural" climax at the end of game play for the night. Ideally, you'll be compressing the dull, talky scenes and expanding the taut, suspenseful ones anyway (as described previously in the Pacing section). This cliffhanger can make your game seem more exciting even if you don't quite hit the mark for the ending.

With that in mind, consider the perfect session ender a mark to shoot for, but not a "must have"—don't railroad players or rush through the adventure for the sake of a good final scene. A great ending to a lousy story isn't worth it.

Take some time after the ending to talk to your players about the game, or better yet, listen to them discuss it. Find out what they liked, what they didn't like, what they were mystified by, and what they can't help chewing over. Listen closely to what they're considering for next session. Use this to adjust your pacing, and even the story of this and future adventures, so that next session, you can restore the atmosphere of the game and move on to further terrors.

ATMOSPHERE

There's a reason that we call the mood and feel of a game its "atmosphere"—it's hard to grasp, invisible, and often taken for granted. But without it, the game is dead. A horror game such as *Call of Cthulhu* requires a special distance from normal time, and even from normal action-and-adventure gaming. Even when nothing overtly weird or horrible is happening—especially when nothing overtly weird or horrible is happening—it should seem like something appalling could happen at any minute. Some things add atmosphere, while others detract from it. Emphasizing the first class of things

Describe wounds graphically. "Take 8 points of damage" is dull. "The deep one hits you for 8 points of damage" is little better. Try this: "The thing's immense paw hits you like a sledgehammer. Its ice-cold talons tear your arm to ribbons, dealing 8 points of damage."

If your players really trust you, try running combats in which you keep track of all damage yourself. Never tell them how much damage something deals, but describe the effects graphically. "The tentacle slaps across your shoulder, briefly paralyzing your arm and setting up a weird ringing in your ears." (1-2 points) "The tentacle slams into your chest and you hear ribs crack; you taste your own blood and your vision goes gray." (8-9 points) "Your blood sprays everywhere, and you feel like you're going to pass out." (massive damage check)

Self-Destruction: Deadly enemies of evil soon discover new capacities for madness and violence within themselves. For some players, this is part and parcel of the horror of *Call of Cthulhu*. A "good cop" PC who finds himself brutally torturing a cultist to find out where the ritual takes place; a peace activist who dynamites a tenement to kill the thing in the basement; a CIA agent who reveals secrets to the Russians to get access to the Kremlin copy of the *Necronomicon*; a Catholic priest who must chant spells from a heretical and blasphemous tome to save a small town—in each case, the "hero's" self-image has eroded, along with his sanity. This kind of "personal horror" depends on you knowing your players, and their characters, well. Often, players find new capacities for roleplaying within themselves, if you know how to present the opportunity.

and minimizing the second is the key to developing a creepy mood from the moment you pick up the dice, clear your throat, and say "When last we left our intrepid heroes, you were standing in the still, humid air outside the bayou church, waiting for sunset"

BUILDING ATMOSPHERE

Two levels exist that must be considered when creating the atmosphere for your *Call of Cthulhu* game. The first is the in-game level: things immediately related to or occurring within the story and the adventure itself. Many published adventures provide a modicum of support for in-game considerations. The metagame level—the atmosphere outside the story, between you and your players wherever you're physically sitting down to play—is almost always up to you.

IN-GAME CONSIDERATIONS

Much of the work of building atmosphere is done by the adventure you have bought or designed. It likely involves suspicious NPCs, spooky locations, horrible monsters, and some kind of sanity-blasting magic. However, a few "generic" atmosphere-building themes work well to establish and emphasize a properly disturbing sense of distance and horror. Look them over, and identify any tricks you may wish to use while running the adventure, or themes to add if they aren't provided already.

Isolation: Opposing the insanity of the Cthulhu Mythos must occur in isolation. Should the world at large ever discover the horrible truth, Those Outside will win. Steeped in the blasphemous horror of the Mythos, the investigators soon have more in common with the vile cultists they battle than with the innocents they protect. Normal people often react with suspicion or oblivious disregard for the investigators' deadly sacrifices. They may even begin to subconsciously sense the taint of corruption clinging to the PCs. Even allies, friends, and family should appear worried or unnerved at the investigators' appearance. The effect on bystanders might become noticeable—children cower, cats hiss and arch their backs, priests cross themselves and turn away.

Helplessness: As investigators fight the Cthulhu Mythos, they inevitably descend into madness or succumb to a hideous death. Players should never be puppets, and few players appreciate a tale of ultimately bleak horror without the tiniest shred of hope. But many great stories begin with the hero helpless to react. Batman saw his parents' deaths as a child. Fox Mulder witnessed his sister's abduction. When the investigators arrive at the scene of some unmentionable horror, have them arrive just a little too late rather than 24 hours after the body grows cold. Killing an NPC that the PCs can't save reinforces the horror, even as it gives them incentive (and information) to defeat the monster. Monsters that guns can't stop, or sorcerers who won't stay dead, emphasize this theme.

Violence: Players usually enjoy a heaping dose of violence. Make sure your gunfights are as loud, dangerous, and confusing as the real thing—go around the table demanding responses now, and if a player stumbles or stammers, move on remorselessly.

Although most of your attention should be on the story, the horror, and the action within the game, the world outside the game can affect all these things. So can your attitude or actions when revealing the story or horror to the players.

Setting: In general, horror doesn't flourish in brightly lit rooms with cartoons on TV, noisy computer games, and lots of distracting toys. In general, play with just enough light to see the character sheets, dice, and rules. A few candles and dim shadows are scarier than a fluorescent light bulb. Don't encourage TV shows or computer games during the session; you're there to game. Keep all distractions to a minimum. Horror can be fragile.

To help build the atmosphere, you may want to provide handouts for players: floor plans of the old courthouse, copies of the missing millionaire's will, or newspaper articles about a UFO. If you're a deft hand with desktop publishing, try recreating a newspaper font, or if you feel like experimenting with coffee stains and fountain pens, draft that old letter on "antique" parchment. Picture magazines can provide NPC photos or faraway jungle temples. Granted, you shouldn't slow the game down scrabbling for "just the right picture." Don't let the players assume that anything without a handout isn't important. Just consider how handouts and props can bring your *Call of Cthulhu* session to life.

Style: All the handouts in the world won't save you if you present a dull game. Use your tone of voice to set the mood. Keep it low and urgent, almost whispering, for the suspenseful search through the graveyard, then turn loud and panicked when the ghouls

attack. If a sudden gunshot interrupts a tense stakeout, announce it by slamming your palm on the table and saying, "A bullet shatters your windshield—what do you do now?" Keep the players involved, interested, and reacting instinctively.

To keep things interesting, try on accents or verbal tics to give definition to your NPCs. Hunch over while acting as the crippled beggar woman, or stand up and glower down at the players as the arrogant serpent-man priest. Your voice, your facial expression, and your entire body language are part of what your players draw on (even if only subconsciously) to follow the story—use all these things to tell the tale you want, how you want it.

SUCKER PUNCHES

Nothing builds atmosphere like scaring the living daylights out of your players. *Call of Cthulhu* being what it is, that shouldn't be too hard to arrange. Here are a few sucker punches you can throw to get your players breathing shallowly again.

HORRIBLE FEELING OF WRONGNESS

A wave of nausea, a choking stench of rotting pork, a bizarre cold spot, afterimages of stars appearing in the daylight sky, or a powerful sense of déjà vu—none of these are good things, especially when they seem to come with no warning. Depending on how badly you want to worry your players, you can call for a Spot or Listen check, and then (regardless of the dice) unleash one of these "wrong" feelings. The "wrongness" can stem from an upcoming encounter (and be a kind of horrid premonition) or be the lingering aftereffect of a previous encounter or a hastily read tome. Either way, the players begin worrying about the game again.

A SENSE OF BEING WATCHED

A slightly more serious version of the previous example is the sense of being watched. You can handle this as subtly as asking, "Who has weapons drawn right now?" You might just blatantly say, "You have the bizarre feeling that you're being watched. The sky is clear and you don't see anyone nearby." Be ready to handle the inevitable series of Search and Spot requests with something vague, or with this: "The feeling seems to have gone away, and you certainly don't see anyone—right now."

DISSOCIATION

This is a much more serious attack of "wrongness"—a time slip can swallow two hours (especially appropriate if the players have been wasting game time), the skies or scenery can melt or tear, everyone nearby can suddenly appear freshly dead, or unholy voices can chant in the investigators' heads. Then, suddenly, everything is back to "normal"—although perhaps the sun is shining a little *too* brightly now. Again, this can be a creepy premonition or an inevitable result. Calling for a Sanity check is appropriate for more serious dissociation, although a failed check shouldn't cost more than 1 or 2 points.

CULTISTS ATTACK!

"When in doubt, have two men with guns burst through the door."

It was good advice when Raymond Chandler said it, and it's good advice now. If you can work it into the plot, have a lesser thug try something violent. Don't kill the investigators—this should be a wake-up call, not an assault. You can plant helpful clues on the assailants for the benefit of lost investigators and confused players.

MONSTER ATTACK

You should only spring a monster if you're willing to kill a character to get the game back on track. Monsters are not trivial wandering obstacles in *Call of Cthulhu*. They shouldn't just "reduce resources"—Mythos monsters kill.

Hastening the first confrontation, or using a monster for a quick hit-and-run, can scare players straight—as long as they think you mean it. NPCs who have outlived their usefulness make excellent gory "wake-up kills" in this kind of encounter. If necessary, let the hero's friend die so everyone else can flee.

Make sure that the sucker punch you just threw doesn't interfere with the story of the adventure. Don't attack the party with deep ones if your game is set in the Mojave Desert, and don't gruesomely kill an NPC who hasn't divulged the essential clue the PCs need to open the secret panel. More importantly, don't divert the whole game down a side track when it's not necessary. Remember, the important thing is to get pulses racing, restoring the atmosphere of horror.

FEAR, SHOCK, AND HORROR

In *Call of Cthulhu*, the GM and the players have a contract with each other to build an atmosphere of horror. This makes the game more fun for everybody, because there's a shared emotional link that becomes much stronger as a group experience. To do your part, it's good to know the basics of building horror.

FEAR: THE ANTICIPATED UNKNOWN

A big part of the mood comes from the fact that the players know something awful is going to happen. The game is called *Call of Cthulhu*, for gosh sakes, and the adventure probably has some cool name such as "The Unpleasant Awfulness In The Sewers." As long as you don't actively destroy the mood, the players can often scare themselves with anticipation.

MENACE

Some things, places, and events, are just inherently menacing. Whether through our ancient caveman instincts or years of horror stories and movies, we know that if there's a full moon on a foggy night, something bad is going to happen. With enough attention to atmosphere, even the corniest thunderstorm or howling wolf can put your players on edge. You can work with these ancient fears, and with the modern fear-masters, to build menace in your adventure. A few common situations and elements of menace follow.

rotting marsh grass again, or pass the bloating corpse of yet another eyeless cow, they'll remember the horrible events they witnessed last time. If you have successfully built tension and fear with some menacing stimuli in earlier adventures, repeating them can reap a well-deserved harvest. Just make sure that the players can never depend on anything being routine or ho-hum. Mix up old menaces, or shake up the rhythm of the ensuing nightmare.

Darkness: More than just a negative attack modifier, darkness is the place where Things That Should Not Be Seen lurk and hide. The shadows restrict PC knowledge, movement, and options. Restriction feeds into nervousness, helplessness, and mounting fear. Other environmental menaces include thunderstorms or blizzards (restricting visibility and free movement), fog (especially greenish fog billowing from a weed-choked ruin), and enclosed spaces. A pitch-dark, claustrophobic sewer tunnel—with plenty of rainwater pouring in through the gratings—is an ideal place to stash monsters and give investigators the willies.

Bad Places: Some places just aren't where you want to be. That, of course, is where the horror lurks. Stereotypical haunted mansions and hillbilly smokehouses have their own unique charms. So do cemeteries, crypts, and circles of standing stones. These may seem like clichés, but clichés only seem hackneyed from the outside. If your players have immersed themselves in the game, and if you have built an atmosphere of fear, the creak of the mausoleum door can easily summon up mental horrors. You can also try to modernize such clichés for contemporary fears. Sewer tunnels replace dungeon walls, an urban crack-house stands in for the moonshine shack, and the waste-disposal landfill becomes the new cave of the Chimera.

Animals and Vermin: The natural world behaves oddly in the face of the unnatural. Birds can suddenly fall silent, or (even more disturbingly) burst into a cacophony of song mimicking human speech. Dogs or horses that shy at a grayish spot in the meadow obviously know something the investigators don't. Some animals are menaces in themselves, not only large predators such as crocodiles or wolves, but commonly feared creatures such as rats, cockroaches, and snakes. Adding rabies, or maggoty wounds, or any number of further awfulness, to any of these creatures can increase the fear. Even if the rabid cat doesn't attack the investigators, the sight of it jerking and yowling, fur matted and eyes staring, should creep out the players.

Death: The sight of a corpse, skeleton, or even a crushed skull can (or should) disturb the hardest character. Adding details to the sight can convey information ("The skin has been scored and slashed by a hundred cuts.") or add menace and mystery ("It looks like the heart was simply cored out, although that doesn't explain the bluish slime in the cavity."). Bones cracked for marrow or gnawed by human molars, pictures from fashion magazines pasted onto a model's skull, or amateurish efforts at preserving significant body parts can all add menacing details in the players' minds, allowing them to imagine their predicament.

Previous Danger: Regardless of where the investigators met horror before, when they begin to see the same cracked road signs, smell the familiar stench of

The shocking surprise is the keynote of modern horror, whether it comes in italics at the end of a Lovecraft story or as the whine of a chainsaw in a horror movie. The "tension and release" formula of the slasher flick has become a standard because it works. Use its power in your game, even if you feel you must give it a slightly more sophisticated veneer. Regardless of whether you prefer Hitchcock or Leatherface, shock works.

BOO!

Just adding a sucker punch to a menacing situation can be enough to spark a shock in the players. When a flock of byakhee start from the gnarled oaks, or a dimensional shambler steps out of a painting, a quick description in a raised voice sets the tone of sudden terror nicely. The great thing about the Thing from the Darkness model is that it works whether the investigators try to spot it or not. Even if they do see it, that only changes the shock from "A ghoul erupts

from the grave you just passed" to "The grave earth is moving, no, bubbling, no, falling away from the erupting ghoul!"

You can even get a slow-building shock if the monster materializes in front of the heroes and you have a chance to luxuriate in its graphic description: its flailing tentacles, gaping jaws clotted with human sinew, wickedly curved talons, or greenish pus-covered skin. Since most monsters are

even more bulletproof while coalescing out of the mists, the investigators can't do anything except drink in the horror. Keep the grue building steadily, but don't drag it out.

As a change-up from the inevitable attack in the Bad Place, consider a monster ambush in the PCs' home or headquarters. If they have slipped up and left something personal that the Hounds of Tindalos can track, or allowed the cult to follow them back to the precinct house, that's an invitation for a Mythos cult with initiative to make their lives hell—or make them much shorter.



MY GOD, ELIOT, IT WAS A PHOTOGRAPH FROM LIFE

Much of the shock of the Cthulhu Mythos comes from a series of terrible revelations that build on each other. Sometimes these revelations more closely resemble simple jumpie-outie “boo!” style shocks. When the mi-go rips off his face mask, or when the MJ-12 agent starts sprouting shoggoth tendrils, that can be a standard shocker. But it also indicates that things are not what they seem. Even an investigator’s supervisor, friend, or wife could be infected with the taint, with none the wiser until the crisis point.

Emphasizing this omnipresence with subtle cues can add lingering paranoia and menace. All the inhabitants of Innsmouth show unpleasantly froglike features—as does a prominent Massachusetts congressman. An investigator’s wife uses a phrase in passing—one he’s only heard before as a catch phrase in a cult. The buzzing tones of the mi-go appear on the latest techno album.

Subtle cues might only be visible in retrospect. The powerful air-conditioner in the casino office exists to keep its revenant owner from rotting. The ornamental moat in a Japanese restaurant serves as a “circle of salt” around a servitor of the Outer Gods.

HORROR: THE FLOOD OF FUTILITY

One recurring message in Lovecraft’s fiction is that the universe is an uncaring machine—it is destined to smash the Earth, mankind, and our petty laws of physics in an inevitable deluge of madness. Conveying the overall sense of horror and grim futility—while emphasizing the heroism, and the absolute necessity, involved in fighting it—is the great philosophical job of the *Call of Cthulhu* Gamemaster. And it can be a great way to creep the hell out of your players.

TOTAL IMMERSION

From the icy mountains of Antarctica to the steaming jungles of Malaysia, or the steel-and-glass towers of Los Angeles, the Cthulhu Mythos manifests on Earth. In all times and places, from distant quasars to tiny viruses, and in myriad dimensions unplumbed, madness and death roil. Everywhere the heroes travel, the Mythos resists them. Once they have willingly opened their eyes to its horror, they can never shut them again.

The omnipresence, eternity, and inescapable nature of the Great Old Ones should slowly fill any *Call of Cthulhu* campaign. Emphasize connections between isolated data points. Present the investigators with malign threats and non-Euclidean pockets wherever they look. Create a universe wholly driven by inhuman madness. Even “refresher” battles with gangsters and vampires should have at least thematic ties to the ongoing decay and destruction of humanity. Don’t hesitate to imply horror where sane witnesses see only tragedy; the heroes are no longer sane witnesses to anything human. Even if you reveal the truth with glacial slowness, the players will soon see Cthulhu’s shadow everywhere.

NO ESCAPE

Every now and then, faced with the totality of Cthuloid nightmare, a group of investigators may decide to do the “smart thing.” They’ll pour cement into the tunnel entrance,

dynamite the haunted house without looking inside, burn all books without reading them, and generally become cowards. You should make it clear through the events of your campaign that this is not an escape. Problems left untended get worse, not better. The now-total darkness in the tunnel should give the hunting horror enough power to begin psychically attacking nearby villages. The rat-things in the basement of the house should be able to escape through the splintered timbers. The book, sadly, detailed the only ceremony capable of reversing the Immanentization of Hastur.

BLOOD AND GUTS

From the cosmic to the personal—the essential horror of individual mortality resonates well with the existential horror of collective doom. Taking the *Grey’s Anatomy* approach to Gamemastering can pay dividends both in the realms of immediate shock and disgust and in the larger sphere of theme and mood. Give every monster a specific *modus operandi*. When the investigators look at an “auto accident” and see the telltale marks of a chthonian tentacle, you gain further horror by evoking the monster.

If your players become jaded, consider other details. Describe the way pulped flesh clusters blue and bruised under pale discolored skin, or the way a corpse squelches under the hero’s foot like a sack of hamburger meat left in the sun.

Too much reliance on gore can dull its impact, so don’t overuse the splatter. If your players seem to be growing callous after the ninth or tenth bucket of blood, shift to another technique. Fortunately, the world of the Cthulhu Mythos is full of strange phenomena that seemingly exist solely to unnerve characters—use them all, mixing them for their fullest potential.

THE SUPERNATURAL

Technically, the message of Lovecraft’s fiction is that there is no “supernatural” as such—those Things That Should Not Be are actually terrifyingly natural parts of the cosmos as it actually exists. Only mankind’s cowardice and egotism classifies the Great Old Ones as “blasphemous.” They are as much a part of the true universe as the Ebola virus or the Norway plague rat, albeit far deadlier. Conveying the true nightmare of the Cthulhu Mythos to players requires a deft touch—and sometimes an extra bucket of squirming, greenish blood.

STRANGE PHENOMENA

The first hints of the supernatural come diffidently. Only the alert, the knowledgeable—and the paranoid—can detect the pattern of inhuman horror in a flickering neon light or a faint smell of juniper on the wind. By using strange phenomena and traces of the uncanny, you can let your players have the fun of piecing together an unsupportable truth from insufficient evidence.

ménage à folie into a full-blown cult complete with rituals and theologies. Their inhuman gods may care nothing for such trivia, but the human mind desperately seeks pattern, even—especially—in the face of the meaningless horror of the Great Old Ones. Those who fall completely into madness and emerge on the other side with a debased and limited understanding of the awful truths of existence become powerful sorcerers.

TRACE EVIDENCE

Strange fibers from millennia-old flax, a human handprint left in fossilized amber, a smear of hydrocarbon paste in the lungs of a “heart attack victim”—anomalous trace evidence serves as a marker for the unnatural and a great hook for an adventure. Characters should learn that even the tiniest fragment of bone or the faintest smell of ozone can be a vital clue (not that they could ever explain it to the FBI, of course).

An old, but still resilient, technique for keeping the evidence evanescent is the mysterious malfunction. Photographs fade, videotapes blur, computer disks become corrupted, and that chitinous body left in the lab is nothing but a smear of quasi-organic soup after 24 hours. By carefully keeping the evidence balanced on the knife-edge of nonexistence, the PCs may come to doubt their own senses.

MALFUNCTIONING TECHNOLOGY

Technology doesn't necessarily need to malfunction after the fact to send the message of the Mythos. A Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua might drain the juice from a halogen flashlight; the quantum wake of the dimensional shambler's entry could wipe hard disks or scramble GPS transponders in a whole building. Even machinery that still functions perfectly can give useless readings. A laser rangefinder insisting that the stone altar is somehow both 60 and 100 meters away across the pentagonal floor will give PCs headaches. An infrared scope might only detect the star vampire as a flowing cold spot that warms as it feeds.

AS A FOULNESS SHALL YE KNOW THEM

Every monster, spell, or phenomenon in the game should have some signal of its presence, something odd or unusual, from a reek of rotten violets to a scraping of bone on bone. Use smells, sounds, cold or warm spots—any kind of subtle signal to raise hackles on the investigators' necks. If the monster or spell itself doesn't bring a foulness with it, it can still perturb reality, whether that's by stalling car engines, boiling canned soup with the trace heat of its passage, or causing ominous patterns in the TV static. A spell might cause concrete to bud and blossom like roses; an extradimensional creature might turn small birds and animals inside out as it manifests and warps dimensionality around it. Nothing in *Call of Cthulhu* “just happens,” but it might appear to happen for no reason.

SORCERERS, CULTISTS, AND MADMEN

Exposure to the truths of the Cthulhu Mythos drives men mad. Investigators spend the majority of their time and energies containing those madmen, preventing them from transferring their own insanity to an innocently slumbering world. Even a casual or isolated student of the Mythos can slide into mania and obsession. Lone madmen may have bizarrely idiosyncratic spells, strange notions of the truth and how it fits with their own pathetic lives, or some uniquely horrible way of doing things. If a few of these students fall in together, or fall in with a particularly charismatic or gifted devotee of blasphemous lore, they tend to follow a mass insanity, turning their

ENCOUNTERING THE OBSESSED
When presenting cultists, sorcerers, or other madmen in a *Call of Cthulhu* game, give some thought to the stresses that brought them to this point. A student of grimoires driven insane by the blasphemous *Book of Eibon* may mutter incoherent phrases to himself. A mathematician whose abstruse theories opened the door to Yog-Sothoth may scribble indecipherably on walls or napkins, or mutilate patterns in his skin. Someone raised in the horrific cults of Dagon might twitch uncontrollably at the word “father” or the smell of seawater.

Personalize each pathetic wretch. Make sure your conventional NPCs are suitably individual and realistic, enough so that the players can tell the mad from the sane. When in doubt, of course, babbling, drooling, sudden rages, frenetic hopping about, flashes of obsession, and other cinematic madness can convey a more than adequately disturbing message—especially if the ravings eerily parallel developments in the character's own career.

ABERRANT BEHAVIOR

Even madmen may react reasonably, if not rationally. Determine what an NPC madman wants to accomplish, and what means, real or imaginary, are available toward that goal. A sorcerer is quite likely to risk everyone's life, including his own, to complete a ritual he believes can translate the entire state of California to demonic bliss at the court of Azathoth. If the heroes disrupt the ceremony, he may leave the whole cult behind and flee in order to preserve his vital link to the True Gods. A Nyarlathotep cultist obsessed with Egyptian artifacts will predictably break into the British Museum if she can, or seduce a professor who can get them for her, or do whatever else she thinks will obtain the Bowl of Thoth.

MAGIC AND RITUALS

The magic of *Call of Cthulhu* may be the science of a different dimensional plane, or a higher mental sphere, than our own. To human observers, or at least to sane human observers, it can seem arbitrary and bizarre. You should emphasize the freakish and unnatural side of magic, while hinting at some larger, more horrible pattern beneath it all where possible.

HOW MAGIC CAN LOOK

The look and feel of *Call of Cthulhu* magic can vary depending on the GM's goals in the adventure.

Unearthly Glows and Sepulchral Howls: For a full-blown vision of the uncanny, magic should warp and twist the fabric of space and normalcy. Not only should the spell leave a lambent greenish trail in the air, but raise horrible welts on witnesses, create an

acrid stench, make dogs howl, and cause whippoorwills to cry out. Especially at the climax of the adventure, there's no real reason to leave a horrific special effect unused if you think it will work. Magic in *Call of Cthulhu* is no routine matter of fireballs and magic missiles, but a violation of all that is holy and rational.

That's Strange: Of course, a subtle and disturbing sense of unease comes when the magic has some effect—but nobody can really tell what it was, or what it had to do with the spell. Describing passing dissonant effects is an excellent way to get more subtle perturbation across. “The whole clearing seems to bulge and ripple like a soap bubble.” Or how about this: “For about 10 seconds, your senses seem crosswired, sounds appearing like shuddering bolts of color, and sights bursting on your tongue like rotten fruit.”

Either effect should have plenty of impact, while remaining mysteriously immune to scientific analysis. Finding traces of magic hours or days later—even dramatic traces such as burns or dead vegetation—can still provide mystery, especially if none of the PCs remember anything like that occurring at the time.

Spellcraft and Occultism: It’s possible that investigators have skills they have taken specifically to identify such anomalous occurrences. When they use them, know that knowledge within the Mythos isn’t absolute. As part of this, an investigator with Spellcraft shouldn’t be able to identify a spell he’s never heard of, read about, or seen before. Any investigator with Knowledge (occult) may only have one or two areas of expertise; when he tries to interpret esoteric subjects he’s never studied, you may want to raise the DC for those skill checks. When investigators are confronted with something as capricious and mystical as magic, even Cthulhu Mythos checks might reveal insane insights instead of blatant facts.

RITUALS

The “standard” insane Cthulhoid ritual is familiar from bad voodoo movies, lurid paperback thrillers, and tabloid reports of Satanic orgies. This familiarity can work to build menace, but it can also stifle creativity and dull the impact of what should be an adventure’s climax. A few common elements of Cthulhoid rituals, along with some suggested variants or spice, follow.

Ceremonial Roles: The cult sorcerer, high priest, or chief monster officiates before a foaming throng of cultist madmen. Often an innocent victim must be slaughtered. However, a calm, stoic cult that renounces individuality may have no obvious leader—or a cult may pass “communion with the gods” from member to member like chain lightning, leaving everybody and nobody in command. The “sacrifice” may be willing, or may already be the container for the monster or its spawn. One or more of the “foaming cult” may be an undercover police officer or DEA agent—although the hapless agent may also have gone mad, erupting in maniacal gunplay at an inopportune time.

Chanting: Horrible rites in debased Latin, ancient inhuman tongues, or mongrel pidgin tongues of primitive tribes split the air, building up to the Ancient Names that Free and Form. To change things up, present a ritual chanted in New Age Californian gobbledegook, or beeped in mathe-

matical code, or sung in a high mass of eldritch beauty, or dubbed into a trance mix at a rave. The names of the deities may be concealed in numerical cipher, spoken a syllable at a time, subvocalized by the adepts, or carved into the celebrants’ flesh.

Costumes and Equipment: If the cultists all wear long robes and all-concealing hoods, it’s easy for investigators to infiltrate the circle unnoticed. Presumably, the high priest wears a different robe, with eldritch symbols or gold trim, and usually has a staff, dagger, or other tool of sorcerous impedimenta. Presenting the would-be infiltrators with a “skyclad” ceremony of nude cultists can make a significant change. Or the cult can hide beneath choir robes, Klan hoods, or some other camouflage. Every cultist might have a ritual staff, and the dagger might actually be held by the sacrifice to cut his own throat at midnight.

The Interrupted Summoning: The approved approach to Cthulhoid rites and ceremonies is to bust them up with extreme prejudice. Thus interrupted, the ceremony grinds down to a messy halt, the gates of the universe shiver but remain closed, and Arkham remains unconsumed for another year. An interrupted ritual might, however, open the gates a trifle (just enough for some unpleasant entity to squeeze through) or injure reality in some other way. Killing the sorcerer might not even interrupt the ceremony, if his dead body can continue it, or if his spilled blood contains enough energy to summon Shub-Niggurath’s Dark Young. While the players shouldn’t be punished for interrupting Cthulhoid rituals, it’s important to keep the rituals unpredictable enough that ignorance and good intentions are not enough.

REFEREEING THE GAME

The mechanical niceties of running a game of *Call of Cthulhu* boil down to four precepts: toss the dice, know the rules, keep the peace, and reward the survivors. Everything else is just splatters on the wallpaper, or peculiar exhalations from freshly dug graves.

SECRET ROLLS

Some rolls, when seen by a player, reveal too much. A player who rolls to see if her character finds a trap and sees that she has rolled very poorly knows that the information you give her as a result of the roll is probably unreliable. (“Nope—the pyramid shaft seems smooth and unbroken to you.”) The game is more interesting—and the atmosphere of suspense is thicker—when a player doesn’t know if his private eye has successfully sneaked past the sentries at the manor house.

In cases where the player shouldn’t know the die result, make the roll yourself, keeping the dice behind a screen or otherwise out of sight. Consider making some of the following skill checks for your players where they can’t see the result:

Cthulhu Mythos, Demolitions, Diplomacy, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Psychic Focus, Search, Sense Motive, Spellcraft, Spot.

Chases: Have a map covering the terrain across which the chase will occur. Make sure there's a copy without all your notes that the players can look at to fix their characters' plight in their minds. If the monsters' movement capabilities or the characters' vehicles have special rules, look those up. Miniatures, or even little toy trucks and plastic dinosaurs, can add a graphic element that players can use to immerse themselves in the moment.

Fights: It won't take you too long to memorize the basic combat mechanic of *Call of Cthulhu*. But if you're hazy on the specific rules for submachine guns, and the heroes are about to bust Robert Suydam's mob in Mafia-controlled Red Hook, you may want to refresh your memory. Any monsters or villains the investigators are likely to shoot at (or be attacked by) should have their attack modifiers, damage ratings, weapon skills, hit points, and so forth visible where you can mark off expended ammo, magic, or blood. Sketching the location where the fight will happen can clarify tactical possibilities in your mind, and again helps your players focus on the game, keeping them on the same page with you.

Ambushes: These specialized fights really need to be mapped out in advance, but you shouldn't reveal the tactical map until the ambush begins. Otherwise, you'll spoil the surprise when ghouls jump out of the abandoned subway tunnel. Not only should you know everything else you need for a fight (hit points, special attacks, and so on), but you should have a general tactical plan for the bad guys to use.

Spell Use: If a spell has an unusual component, or will debilitate the caster, or otherwise has an even more dramatic effect than a "normal" spell, make sure you note that to yourself. A common mistake among busy Gamemasters is neglecting to let the spelcasting monsters use their fiendish powers. Make sure that a deep one sorcerer gets all the bang his undersea master demands. Review spell ranges and other details in light of your tactical map—your players will.

YOUR WORD IS FINAL

George Patton once said, "A good answer right now is far superior to the perfect answer next week." It was true for tank warfare in Europe then, and it's true for running roleplaying games today. If you have done your job, your players identify with their heroes—it's only natural for them to try to stay alive or sane by appealing your judgment or searching for an edge. However, another part of your job is to present a story and keep a mood alive. Endless arguments about rules or where, exactly, that deep one was hiding won't help anyone either. Don't let the game stop while people page through rulebooks and angrily shake miniatures at each other. Make your ruling, stick to it, and move on—the success or failure of the game is ultimately your responsibility.

USING THE RULES

The rules of a roleplaying game may seem complex at times. After all, they have to represent everything that could possibly happen in the world at any time. When you add in monstrosities from non-Euclidean dimensions, sorcery left over from the archaic empires of the serpent men, and gods who shred reality like rice paper, that becomes a pretty big job. The key is to grasp the underlying logic of these rules. Be familiar with their central principles such as skill checks and how they represent the "basic reality" of the *Call of Cthulhu* universe. Read this book through and stay familiar with its basic concepts. Don't hesitate to extrapolate from the underlying principles when something comes up that the rules remain silent on.

COMMON SITUATIONS

In addition to the general rules, be ready to familiarize yourself with specifics needed for a given adventure or session of the game. When rules you seldom use come into play in the course of the adventure, it slows things down if you have to reread them in the heat of battle. Nothing scares players less than the sight of a GM frantically thumbing through the book as their PCs enter a haunted house. (If you must check a detail in the rulebook during the game, either page through it languidly, as though the PCs' fate hardly warrants your concern, or if necessary, make something up.) Don't be afraid to make notes on index cards or a note pad, or in the margins of the adventure if you're running a published one.

It should go without saying that you should always have your own up-to-date copy of each PC's sheet. This can help you plan adventures and keep track of hit points so you can fine-tune combats for maximum danger and terror. For some common situations, you can follow something of a checklist to make sure all the necessary details lie at your fingertips when the ichor starts to flow.

NPC ATTITUDES

In general, the GM runs an NPC just as a player runs a PC: You take whatever actions the NPC would naturally (or supernaturally) take, assuming such action is possible. This means you should know an NPC's basic outlook, priorities, and attitudes ahead of time, so you can roleplay the character properly. Choose NPC attitudes based on circumstances. Modern city-dwellers are indifferent, while

inbred backwoods Dunwich folk may be unfriendly or even actively hostile to “furriners.” An NPC’s job may also dictate his or her response; a corner barkeep may be friendly to anyone spending money, while a policeman walking the beat may be indifferent to and suspicious of shady types with criminal appearances (such as many investigators). Standard attitudes, and their range of expected behaviors, appear in the following table.

Player characters can attempt to change the attitude of NPCs by using Diplomacy checks (or Charisma checks if the character has no ranks in Diplomacy). In particular circumstances, the investigator might be able to use Intimidate instead. Roll the check, consult the appropriate line on Table 10-1: Attitude Adjustment for the NPC’s starting attitude, and determine if the check result was sufficient to improve the NPC’s attitude. (It doesn’t take a roll, however, to make an NPC turn hostile.) In general, a given PC cannot repeat attempts to influence an NPC.

Attitude	Meaning	Possible Actions
Hostile	Will take risks to harm you	Attack, interfere, berate, flee
Unfriendly	Wishes you harm	Mislead, gossip, avoid, watch suspiciously, delay, insult
Indifferent	Doesn’t much care	Socially expected interaction
Friendly	Wishes you well	Chat, advise, offer limited help, advocate
Helpful	Will take risks to help you	Protect, back up, heal, aid

For instance, the attitude of a county sheriff who was originally unfriendly improves to indifferent if the PC’s check result is 15 or higher—and on a check result of 25, the sheriff’s attitude would improve all the way to friendly. The GM should freely add or subtract modifiers to the PC’s check based on the player’s roleplaying and the approach the character takes. Appealing to the sheriff’s innate sense of decency may work better than attempting to bully him or overawe him with vague stories of “government connections.” Of course, a particularly craven, or politically ambitious, sheriff might respond better to threats or hints. Not only attitudes, but motives and responses, should vary from NPC to NPC.

EXPERIENCE AND IMPROVEMENT

Experience points represent what the character has learned from his harrowing adventures, often at great cost. They allow a character to gain levels, and thus to become more skilled while keeping a tenuous grip on sanity a little while longer.

The GM awards each character experience points (XP) at the conclusion of each adventure. They represent skills honed in desperate battle or feverish study, and the cold (but very real) comfort of knowing that unutterable evil has been staved off for another day.

TABLE 10-1:
Attitude Adjustment

Starting Attitude	Hostile	Unfriendly	Indifferent	Friendly	Helpful
Hostile	less than DC 20	DC 20	DC 25	DC 35	DC 50
Unfriendly	less than 5	5	15	25	40
Indifferent	—	less than 1	1	15	30
Friendly	—	—	less than 1	1	20
← “More Hostile”			“Less Hostile” →		

AWARDING EXPERIENCE

The Quick and Dirty Method: The simplest method for awarding experience works like this: When a character finishes two adventures, he gains a level. This method is arbitrary, but effective. The Gamemaster has complete control over how difficult each adventure is and how long it lasts. A typical adventure lasts at least two to four game sessions. By this method, a 20th-level character has survived forty adventures—quite an accomplishment for a game with such a high mortality rate.

Story Goals: For Gamemasters who want more detail, experience in a *Call of Cthulhu* adventure depends on a series of “story goals.” At the beginning of each game session, the Gamemaster lists at least four challenging tasks the characters can accomplish to advance the story. This list is for the Gamemaster’s own reference, kept hidden from the players. Each story goal contains at least a verb and a noun. In *CofC*, some of the most common verbs for story goals are: discover, recover, find, destroy, subdue, save, rescue, oppose, stop, and survive.

For instance, in a typical *Call of Cthulhu* session, the investigators may need to:

- survive an attack by zombies,
- recover a tome,
- discover a cult leader’s secret,
- find the hidden room in his basement,
- destroy an artifact, and
- stop a summoning.

Not every accomplishment in a story requires a story goal, and not every story goal may be necessary to actually finish an adventure. A typical 4-hour game session should include about four to six story goals. At the Gamemaster’s discretion, if the investigators do something significant and unexpected to advance the plot, he may award them for an additional goal. Published adventures include suggested story goals; the Gamemaster is free to tailor other goals to the characters participating.

At the end of each game session, the GM awards experience for each goal fulfilled. Each one is worth a base reward of 300 XP. Multiply this amount by the average character level, divide it by the number of characters, and award it to the surviving investigators. By this method, advancing in level requires an investigator to fulfill an average of thirteen story goals, an accomplishment that takes at least three or four game sessions.

You may also feel your campaign benefits more from character continuity than from a punctuated series of one-way trips to the asylum.

Gamemasters may wish to encourage selfless heroes rather than sociopathic crusaders—a party that rescues the human sacrifice rather than simply napalming the cult's temple should get additional benefits to their Sanity, as befits characters who have not yet become completely callous in the face of the Mythos.

Note: For an encounter involving combat with a group of creatures, the verb for that story goal is usually “survive.” This doesn’t require the investigators to actually destroy all the monsters. In fact, they don’t even need to actively fight them. As long as they survive the encounter, the characters have fulfilled this type of story goal.

ADJUSTING REWARDS

Depending on the party’s level, the GM may deem some challenges relatively easy, while others may be extraordinarily difficult. Killing the evil sorcerer with a sniper rifle from 500 yards away before he even begins a ritual might be an easy challenge, worth only half the XP award. Killing him with machetes in the middle of a frothing ring of cultists, as Yog-Sothoth’s sanity-blasting spheres emerge from the clouds and rain gray death upon the hilltop—that might be a more difficult challenge, worth more than the standard award, perhaps 125%, 150%, or even double the amount. This is purely at the Gamemaster’s discretion.

Although any monster in *Call of Cthulhu* should be quite a threat, even at relatively high party levels, resist the temptation to inflate awards for them. The most dangerous monsters, such as a fully grown hunting horror or several shoggoths, might be worth a bonus, but you should reserve such awards for truly grave situations wherein the characters overcome the odds despite being clearly outmatched. A monster’s Challenge Rating (see page 157) is a rough guideline of how deadly an encounter will be, but in *Call of Cthulhu*, this rating is relative. An experience bonus should be based on the drama and difficulty of a situation, not an impersonal and arbitrary statistic.

Encounters with cultists, mad wizards, occult gangsters, and other humans are easier to adjudicate. If an adversary has been built using the rules for characters, this gives a clear indicator how tough he is.

A cultist more than two levels below the average character level in the group is a pretty easy challenge. A sorcerer more than two levels above the average level is a difficult challenge. Use these guidelines when designing adventures—the goal is to challenge the characters, scrape them along the ragged edge of death and madness, but leave enough of them alive to split an XP award. Striking this balance is part of the art of adventure design.

SANITY REWARDS

The Sanity chapter presents +1d6 Sanity points as the standard award for advancing to the next level of character progression. The GM can and should vary these awards to suit individual campaigns. As presented, this rate of Sanity recovery should provide, at best, a fighting rear-guard against total psychotic disintegration. After four adventures, an active character will likely have been exposed to a fairly rigorous regimen of sanity-blasting monsters and magic. When investigators confront the Mythos, insanity is as inevitable as death itself.

GMs who wish to emphasize a “purely Lovecraftian” sense of ominous, inevitable doom—and investigators struggling heroically as their mental barriers erode—will likely find the standard award matches this flavor of gaming. You might want to tweak Sanity awards upward if you present a more-hellish-than-usual regimen of extradimensional abominations in a series of adventures.

LEVEL ADVANCEMENT
After garnering sufficient XP by overcoming challenges, an investigator can go up a level, gaining the skills, feats, attack bonuses, hit points, and Sanity points associated with level increase.

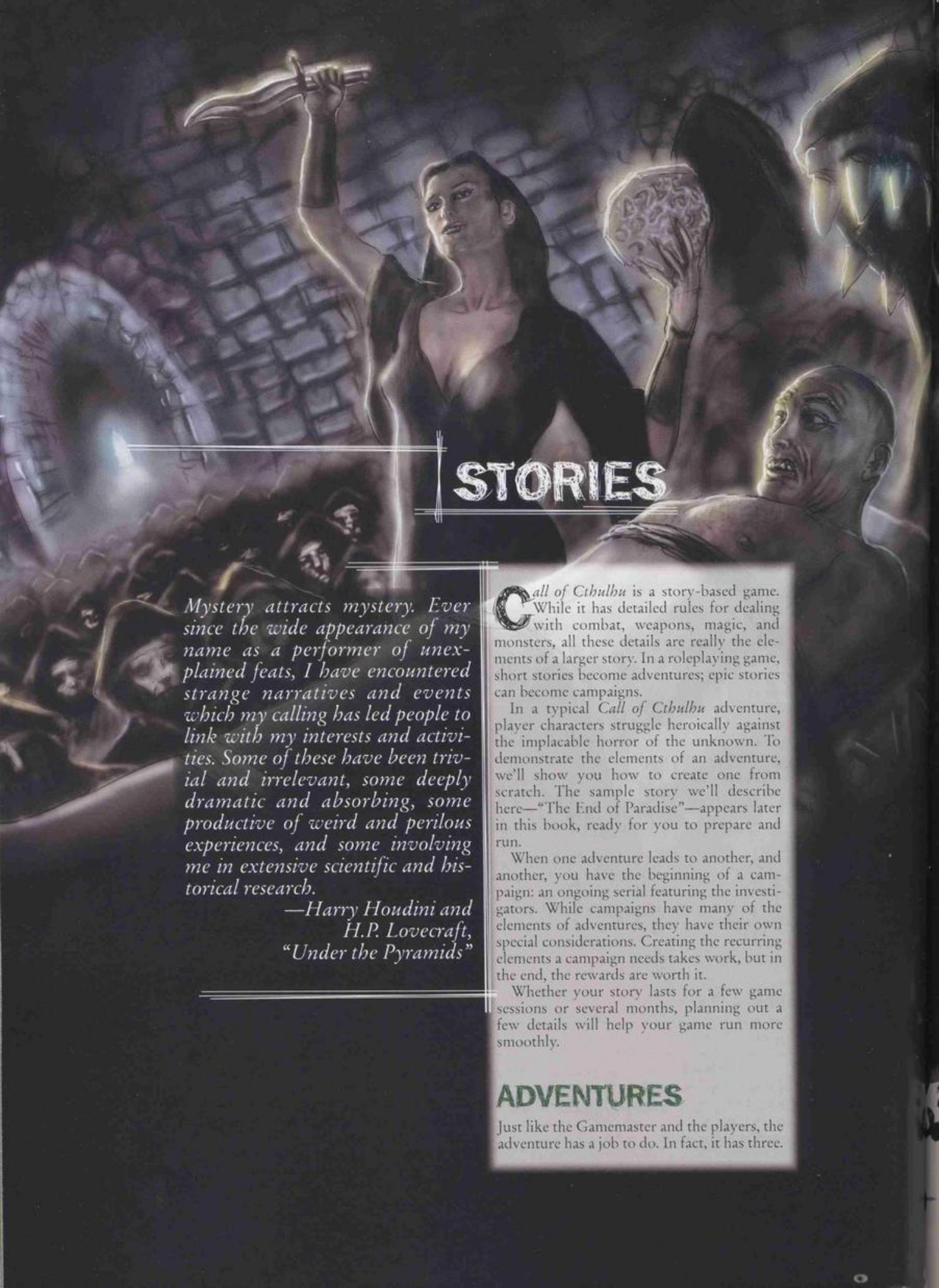
The system presented above allows precious investigators to “level up” every three to five sessions. If the PCs in your game are leveling up more often than once every two adventures, or less often than once every four, you should examine your XP awards and the challenges you have presented in the stories themselves. If most of the story goals you create aren’t very dangerous or threatening, the game isn’t much of a challenge.

Of course, you can also tailor the experience system to convey a specific flavor of game, if you so desire.

Pulp Horror: If you want your game to have the exciting techno-thriller feel of a Tom Clancy novel, or the pulse-pounding conflicts of a Robert E. Howard tale, give characters more XP per challenge. The characters regain Sanity more rapidly, become more skilled and (somewhat) harder to kill, and more closely resemble pulp heroes, not fainting academics. This encourages them to mow through hordes of dispensable cultists to dispatch some summoned horror. This scale of rewards gives the players a sense of individual heroism and superiority that some gamers find more rewarding. Just make sure that the challenges remain interesting, frightening, and genuinely dangerous, or the game can degenerate into a routine “hack and slash” mentality, rather than true horror.

Grim Horror: On the other hand, the ultimate theme of cosmic horror and the Cthulhu Mythos is the fundamental insignificance of humanity. To emphasize this theme, Gamemasters may wish to run a low-powered game of grim horror, awarding experience points conservatively. Lower-than-normal XP awards can keep players on their toes, since relatively weak characters can seldom withstand a direct, unanticipated confrontation with the unknown. The story goals of the game should reinforce this mood, emphasizing survival over discovery.

In a grim horror campaign, intelligence, problem-solving, and detailed planning become paramount, allowing the GM to emphasize subtle clues, intricate plots, and slow-mounting horror. With judicious adventure design, and care and attention to matters of mood and atmosphere, the GM can keep players involved in a long-running *Call of Cthulhu* campaign without their characters ever leveling up. Such a “grim and gritty” game may involve a fairly high level of character death and madness—but victories over the Great Old Ones have a special savor, and perhaps a more profound significance, when attained at such a high cost.



STORIES

Mystery attracts mystery. Ever since the wide appearance of my name as a performer of unexplained feats, I have encountered strange narratives and events which my calling has led people to link with my interests and activities. Some of these have been trivial and irrelevant, some deeply dramatic and absorbing, some productive of weird and perilous experiences, and some involving me in extensive scientific and historical research.

*—Harry Houdini and
H.P. Lovecraft,
“Under the Pyramids”*

Call of Cthulhu is a story-based game. While it has detailed rules for dealing with combat, weapons, magic, and monsters, all these details are really the elements of a larger story. In a roleplaying game, short stories become adventures; epic stories can become campaigns.

In a typical *Call of Cthulhu* adventure, player characters struggle heroically against the implacable horror of the unknown. To demonstrate the elements of an adventure, we'll show you how to create one from scratch. The sample story we'll describe here—"The End of Paradise"—appears later in this book, ready for you to prepare and run.

When one adventure leads to another, and another, you have the beginning of a campaign: an ongoing serial featuring the investigators. While campaigns have many of the elements of adventures, they have their own special considerations. Creating the recurring elements a campaign needs takes work, but in the end, the rewards are worth it.

Whether your story lasts for a few game sessions or several months, planning out a few details will help your game run more smoothly.

ADVENTURES

Just like the Gamemaster and the players, the adventure has a job to do. In fact, it has three.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Broadly speaking, adventures can be structured in two ways: linear and nonlinear. A linear adventure moves in a single line, like a train. The investigators get on at one end, they move through the adventure, and they get off at the other end. A nonlinear adventure moves in different directions at different times, like a basketball game. The investigators enter the court, they try a lot of different strategies against their opponents, and they leave the court once somebody triumphs.

The crucial difference between linear and nonlinear adventures is the question of who's in charge. In a linear adventure, the person who created it is in charge of what happens because she chooses the scenes, the order they occur, and how the investigators move from one to the next. In a nonlinear adventure, the Gamemaster and players are in charge of what happens, because they are in an open environment with a lot of options and they choose what to do next. Both have their good and bad points.

An adventure must:

- Promise a story,
- Offer a puzzle, and
- Deliver a threat.

PROMISE A STORY

An adventure isn't just a story—it's actually the *promise* of a story. When the Gamemaster uses an adventure properly, the players fulfill that potential. The events of the story are never absolute; instead, the Gamemaster and players create the story as they play the game.

Just as a screenplay needs a cast and crew to become a movie, an adventure needs players to become a complete story. If you try to make it a complete story without considering what your players want or need, with no possibility for variation, neither you nor your players will have much fun when you sit down at the table.

OFFER A PUZZLE

Call of Cthulhu is a game of horror, but it also entails investigation, mystery, and discovery. Even when you run the game as a slam-bang action event, the adventure should offer some element of the unknown for the players to figure out. Many adventure puzzles are familiar from mystery novels and TV shows: Who killed the victim? Who stole the statue? Why did the explorer disappear? These large-scale puzzles often drive the entire adventure.

Other puzzles are smaller and more immediate: How do we open the secret door? What code is the cipher message in? What does the magic statue do? The players answer these puzzles during the adventure—and if they fail, bad things happen. Of course, part of the fun of *Call of Cthulhu* is when bad things happen.

DELIVER A THREAT

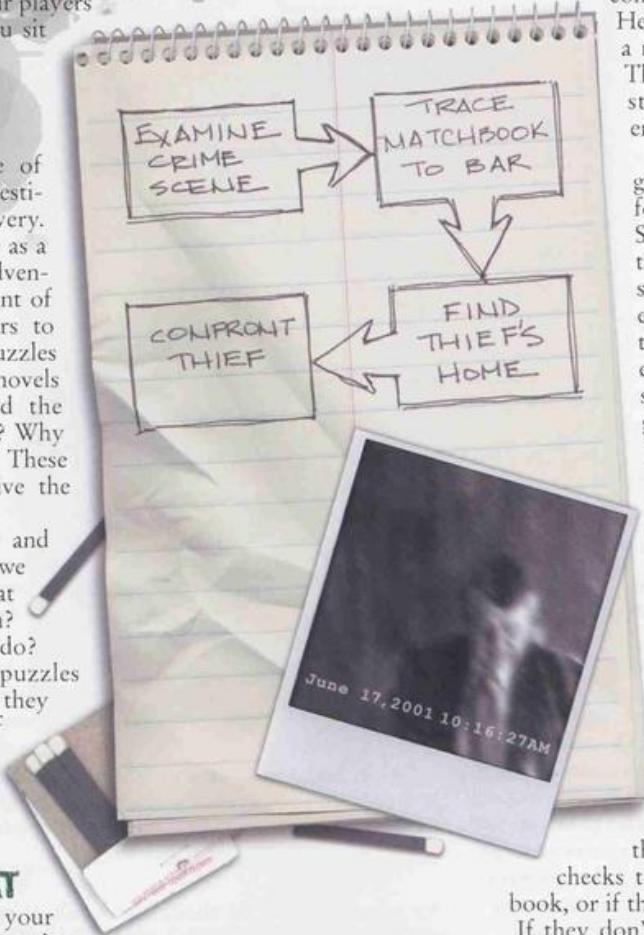
When you play an adventure, your group may fail to fulfill the promise of a story. They may ignore part of the plot, or even refuse to solve the offered puzzle. However, an adventure also delivers a threat, presenting situations in which the investigators are in danger. Perhaps evil cultists attack them, or perhaps they have to break into a dangerous temple and steal a powerful artifact. Even when the story collapses and the puzzle remains unsolved, a threat creates its own story. It poses two questions: Why are we in danger, and how can we survive? That threat alone can build puzzles around it as you play. If you're stuck for a story and can't come up with a puzzle, start with a threat and build from there.

LINEAR ADVENTURES

Here's an example of a linear adventure. The investigators are hired to find a missing statue, and the only clue is a blurry image of the thief from a surveillance camera. Near the scene of the crime they discover a matchbook from a bar. They show the thief's image to the bartender, who says it looks like a guy who drinks there on Thursday nights. They stake out the bar and spot the thief. They confront him at his apartment. He rips his face off, turns into a monster, and attacks them. They defeat him, recover the statue, and the adventure ends.

Linear adventures are good because they're easy for everyone to understand. Something happens first, then something happens second, and finally the players naturally realize that they should move from one event to the next. In every scene, the GM has a simple goal: guide the players so they choose to go to the next scene without realizing that you're guiding them. Linear adventures are good because you can design them to tell a very compact, well-structured story that's satisfying for the group—in other words, the promise of a story almost becomes a certainty.

However, linear adventures can also be easy to derail. What happens if the investigators fail the skill checks that would find the matchbook, or if they do find it, but ignore it? If they don't go to the bar, there's no more adventure, and the Gamemaster has to quickly make up another way for them to get back on track in the middle of the session. Even worse,



the players can become annoyed because the clues to the next scene are too obvious. A matchbook from a bar left at a crime scene? Come on! That might work on players who have never read a book or watched television. It might not work on yours.

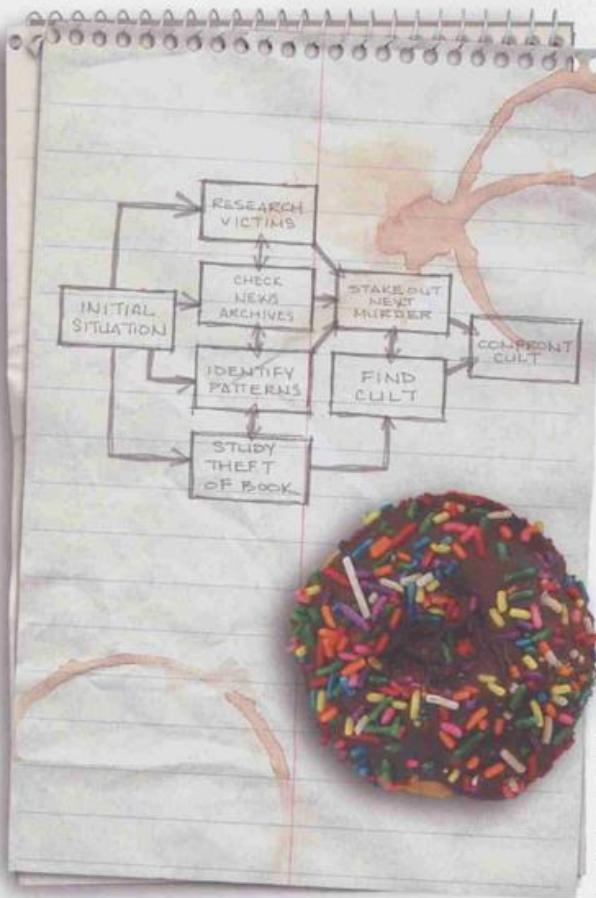
Thus, when creating a linear adventure, you should design several ways for the investigators to progress to the next scene. If you require skill checks to reveal clues, what happens if they all fail the rolls? As long as you plan plenty of options to move from scene to scene, the players won't feel like you're railroading them through the story. You should end up with an exciting roller coaster that moves quickly and steadily so the players never realize it only goes one way.

NONLINEAR ADVENTURES

Here's an example of a nonlinear adventure. An evil cult is murdering priests and leaving their bodies around the city at the points of a giant pentagram, centered on city hall. They're using a magic ritual in an old book they stole from the university, a ritual to take control of the mayor's mind. They have killed three priests and have two to go. The last must be killed on the night of the full moon, one week from now. A friend of the third victim asks the investigators for help. The investigators can do a number of things: research the victims, study newspaper archives for similar crimes, decipher the pattern of the bodies and the dates of the murders, stake out likely locations for the next murder, investigate the theft of the book, and eventually confront the cult. For each option the adventure explains who they meet, what they learn, and what can happen as a result.

Nonlinear adventures are good because the GM and players tell more of the story collectively than in linear adventures. The investigators make their own way through the adventure, choosing which clues to pursue next. If there are several investigators, the group can pursue multiple clues at the same time, allowing each to make use of her specialties. That way, the players won't feel like the Gamemaster is pushing them through a series of pre-planned events.

However, in nonlinear adventures, the promise of a story is not as strong.



court and a rival team with clear strategies and goals—people who won't wait passively for the PCs to act.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

An adventure can be about almost anything, but we can divide adventure topics into four main categories: mystery, rescue, exploration, and assault. Many adventures contain several or all these topics. It's useful to talk about them separately so we understand what they mean and develop each one properly, even when we eventually jumble them all together.

OUR SAMPLE ADVENTURE: WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Our sample adventure is a mix of linear and nonlinear structures. The first half of the adventure is linear, so the players can get into the story and have some narrative support underlying their choices. The second half is nonlinear, so they can take some responsibility for fulfilling the promise of the story and also face more of a challenge.

More of the details are up in the air, and story may result from improvisation more than planning. The Gamemaster might want the adventure to end on the night of the full moon at the big ritual because that would be exciting and dramatic, but the investigators might solve the mystery early, give their evidence to the police, and read about the arrests in the newspaper—not very exciting.

Also, the investigators may get confused or frustrated. Where a linear adventure provides direct links to the next scene, a nonlinear adventure does not. It's up to the players to move the story forward, and some groups are not always good at it. Not everyone would be a very good detective in real life, and nonlinear adventures often require the skills of a natural problem-solver.

To create a good nonlinear adventure, you need to assemble lots of useful information, even information the investigators might never learn. You set up the premise, the villains, their goals, the timeline they're working on, the main clues and story elements the investigators can examine, and the reason all these are tied together. Ideally, any reasonable choice the players make leads them to more choices, until they have won or lost.

If the story is like a basketball game, you should end up with a clean, well-marked

Here are some sample assaults:

- A violent cult in an abandoned church.
- A supernatural fortress in the heart of a city.
- A mysterious island full of monsters.
- A lunatic in a barricaded restaurant.
- A mobster in his well-guarded mansion.
- A prison or asylum seized by inmates.

MYSTERY

A mystery adventure is all about solving a puzzle. It presents a situation that requires an explanation, and the story consists of the investigators figuring out what the explanation is. The adventure often begins when someone asks the investigators to solve the mystery and they examine the initial situation.

Here are some sample mysteries:

- A dead body in a locked room.
- An artifact stolen from a museum.
- A blackmail attempt.
- A building blown up.
- A message in code.
- A normal person acting mysteriously.

RESCUE

A rescue adventure is all about getting back a missing person or object. Usually this means a kidnapping or a theft or an unexplained disappearance. There may be a ransom demand. The adventure often begins with someone asking the investigators for help, but the rescue could be of a missing investigator.

Here are some sample rescues:

- A celebrity kidnapped by an obsessive fan.
- A professor missing in a foreign country.
- A child taken by a maniac.
- A student brainwashed by a cult.
- A secret document stolen by spies.

EXPLORATION

An exploration adventure is all about a journey into the unknown (although obviously, "the unknown" varies by era). This may be an expedition into a dangerous land or a scientific experiment to travel through dimensions or into space. The adventure often begins with the investigators planning and equipping for the trip.

Here are some sample explorations:

- A jungle river with an unknown source.
- A mountain no one has climbed.
- A massive cave complex beneath a city.
- A lost tomb in a desert.
- A gateway to another planet.
- A ruined city at the bottom of the ocean.

ASSAULT

An assault adventure is all about a thrilling combat mission. Perhaps a madman with a machine to destroy the world is hiding on a remote island, or an apartment building is full of zombies. The adventure often begins with the investigators examining the target and planning strategy.

An adventure can easily have elements of more than one topic. For example, a mystery can lead to an exploration that leads to an assault that leads to a rescue. The key is not to get lost in the big picture. You should examine your adventure concept, identify the topics you're using, and then ensure that each one is fleshed out enough to satisfy you and your players.

MIXING TOPICS

The content of an adventure is where you work out the details of all the broad decisions we have discussed so far. In fact, once you have the content prepared you're pretty much ready to go. It's time for the hard work. After this section we'll look at some special issues in adventure creation.

CONTENT

We can divide an adventure into seven sections:

- The opening hook,
- Motivation to continue,
- Initial challenges,
- Further developments,
- Pointers toward climax,
- The climax,
- And the aftermath.

OPENING HOOK

The opening hook is the initial situation that gets the investigators involved. It may not be the first thing that happens in the whole story, but it's the first thing the investigators notice.

The opening hook should be exciting and intriguing, like the opening sequence in many action movies. Give it plenty of flair and style so that your players are jazzed about the game.

MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE

Even with an opening hook, the investigators need a reason to get involved. For an adventure to have any credibility—that is, for it to feel like it could really be happening—the investigators need a motive. Why would a group of normal people investigate a museum robbery? That's what the cops are for!

The characters your players choose should help define this. If some or all of them are private investigators, police detectives, or special agents, that's an easy motivation. But what if they're academics, or students, or occultists? What if they're all homeless schizophrenics or inbred mountain folk? Players sometimes come up with really strange characters, from chauffeurs to tribal fishermen. If the Game-

OUR SAMPLE ADVENTURE: WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

"The End of Paradise" is a mystery adventure. In our case, it's going to be the mystery of a haunted movie theater and a young woman confronted with a bizarre supernatural event.

master chooses to allow them in her game, she needs to know their motivation in the game.

How do the characters get involved? The simplest solution is for someone who has a relationship with an investigator to ask for help, even if it's a character who never existed before this adventure. Many published *Call of Cthulhu* adventures do this. An investigator's cousin, brother, uncle, colleague, or friend is involved in the opening hook, and that gets the investigator involved. The rest of the group comes along for the ride.

Unfortunately, this technique gets old really quick. Just how many relatives do you have, and why are they all involved in supernatural horrors? This is a good starting device, but if you run more than a couple adventures like this, your players will start to groan.

Whenever possible, design your adventure with your group in mind. Are they hungry for knowledge of the unknown? Then they'll be motivated if a rare occult text has been stolen. Are they out for justice? A missing child or a terrible crime against an innocent person can spur them forward. Are they fighting supernatural evil? A baffling manifestation in a haunted house may draw them in.

The key here is simply to pay attention. When players design characters, they're giving you cues about what type of game they want to play. As you create your adventure, think about ways to motivate them. If you use a published adventure, this is especially important because the designer doesn't know your group. She might have used the default friend-in-need or relative-in-danger approach, or just assumed your heroes already have a reason to work together. Don't be afraid to change things around so the adventure has more appeal to your players.

INITIAL CHALLENGES

The opening hook should suggest one or more steps for the group to take. This section is where you work out what those steps are so you can be prepared for your players to take them.

First, what are the obvious questions? Imagine that you're a player presented with the opening hook. What would you want to know?

This section of the story usually involves establishing the very basic facts of the situation, and there's where you get the six key questions: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why? The investigators should start the game by seeking the answers to these questions.

Many adventures begin with some sort of a crime scene. Perhaps someone was murdered, or something was stolen. You need to plan the details of the scene so the players can ask you questions and hunt for clues. Is the scene indoors or outside? Is there furniture or other objects? If it's outside, has heavy rain destroyed the



footprints of the culprit? A map or floor plan is very important.

Other adventures don't start with an obvious physical location and instead begin with a social one. Perhaps someone has vanished. The investigators need to figure out what the person did in the hours or days before vanishing and talk to people who saw her in that time. That means you need to know the victim's recent schedule, come up with names for the people, and decide what they say when interviewed.

It's especially important in these initial challenges that you nail down the details in your notes. Later in the adventure, as the story picks up speed, the players are not as demanding of nit-picky information. At the beginning, they're hungry for clues. With an ample supply, you can offer important and irrelevant ones side-by-side and give the players the challenge of sorting them out. Without an ample supply, you'll make up irrelevant details on the fly during the game—and your players may notice the difference.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Once the players overcome the initial challenges, they'll follow the important clues into the main part of the adventure. This is the section where they really start to learn what's going on. Two important elements occur in this section that rarely happen earlier: small victories and sudden dangers.

Small Victories: When a mystery leads to more mysteries, players can get frustrated. They need to accomplish something along the way to feel like they're making real progress. In this section of the adventure, build in a couple of small, achievable challenges that the players can resolve. If someone is lying, offer a way to discover the lie. If something is missing, perhaps it can be found—because the villain has already used it to get something else. Letting them nail down a few certainties will help them get their bearings for the challenges ahead.

Sudden Dangers: All work and no play is no fun. Players like danger because it's exciting. Your adventure should have some opportunities for danger during this section. The villain could send one of his weaker minions to attack the investigators. They may have to make a dangerous trip across a flooded river. Perhaps they must infiltrate a cult ritual while undercover. Build in some danger opportunities such as this so your players don't get bored.

the climax comes, they learn what the goal is, or who the villain is, or the fate of a character who disappeared earlier. At the same time that they're breaking down the door and charging into the maw of horror, they should also have their eyes wide open with surprise at what they're learning. If ignorance is bliss, enlightenment should be terrifying.

The climax is also where the main combat usually occurs. Combat in this game is very deadly, especially if you're using any supernatural creatures. Plan your climax carefully. There should be more than one way for the investigators to resolve the situation. Busting in and shooting guns might be one way, but swapping a powerful artifact for a fake replica could also work. Always provide alternative solutions to reward clever play.

AFTERMATH

When the investigators resolve the climax—for good or ill—they usually have one very big problem: covering their tracks. They have probably broken some laws and may even have killed someone. Try to plan for this. If there are gunshots, do the police show up? If the climax happened in public, are there witnesses who can identify the investigators? Make some notes about possible repercussions before you play, since some of them could happen immediately after the climax.

Other aftermath issues remain. Is there a reward for resolving the situation? Do the investigators need to make any kind of report to someone, or deliver some bad news?

Finally, plan to leave something mysterious that you can return to in a future adventure. The players should never be fully comfortable that they have answered all the questions.

Call of Cthulhu is a game of mystery, and after the game there should be a point where a player asks something such as, "Hey wait—what was up with the rain of blood?" Smile and put away your notes. Don't define everything. Always leave them uncertain.

DESIGNING MAJOR SCENES

Even in a nonlinear adventure, you should be able to foresee some major scenes and make plans for them. Interviewing a guy who runs a junkyard about something he heard last night is not a major scene. But if the guy waves his hands and the junk assembles itself into the click-clacking, razor-wielding Lord of Bloody Metal, that's a major scene. By preparing notes about such scenes in your adventure, you can make them exciting and dramatic. Here are four types of major scenes, and suggestions on how to make them work to best effect.

CLIMAX

In *Call of Cthulhu*, horror is strongly associated with knowledge. The message is clear: ignorance is bliss. The climax to an adventure should therefore blend horror with revelation. Set up a couple of key plot questions to be answered within the climax, so the moment when everything goes crazy is also when the final pieces of the puzzle are revealed. Also, make sure that these questions are answered in an unpleasant and frightening way.

For example, the investigators may learn that the villain is doing something terrible at a certain time and place. Then when

OUR SAMPLE ADVENTURE: WHAT'S THE CONTENT?

Opening Hook: A young woman working in the old movie theater has been seriously injured because of something she saw. Rumors of a ghost bring the investigators into the mystery.

Motivation to Continue: During their initial visit to the theater, the investigators have a strange supernatural experience. No one really believes them, but they know what they saw. Something's not right.

Initial Challenges: Explore the movie theater more. Research its history, and check into the company that has just bought it.

Further Developments: The first small victory is the discovery of the secret basement ritual room beneath the theater. Another small victory is the discovery of a surviving member of the cult with information to share. The heroes arrange an interview, but unfortunately, it ends when he attacks the investigators.

Pointers Toward Climax: A younger cult member is still alive, but living under a different name. He is actually the anonymous philanthropist funding the otherwise innocent arts group renovating the theater. The heroes already suspect him, but they can't find enough evidence to arrest him—or stop the next premiere he's arranged for the theater. On the night of the big event, the investigators discover an old photograph that shows the philanthropist with the rest of the cultists decades ago.

Climax: The cultist has chosen the night of the premiere because he knew a terrible monster would return to the theater later that night. In the midst of the creature's rampage through the audience, the investigators must battle the cult leader and save the audience from a terrible death.

Aftermath: The investigators may have to cover up what happened at the gala. Even worse, one of the photographs in the lobby suggests this cult was part of a larger group. Are there other survivors, and other terrible creatures?

DISCOVERIES

A major-scene discovery is where the investigators get some crucial clue that reveals an important secret of the plot. For instance, at the end of H.P. Lovecraft's short story "The Whisperer in Darkness," the narrator discovers the wax face and hands of the person he's been speaking to and realizes that person was a monster in disguise.

Think about how this example relies on the character making the mental leap from discovery to horror. If the narrator had simply looked in the window and seen the monster, that wouldn't have been as scary. So make your discoveries symbols or suggestions of the true discovery. The thrill is what happens in your mind, not what happens before your eyes. Good discoveries force you to rewrite your own memories, because you have started to really understand what's going on.

The best way to reveal a discovery is to do it casually and have it be the result of player action. Mix the important discovery in with other details and clues, instead of just obviously handing it over. If the players find it for themselves by sorting through a bunch of information you have given them, the moment will be electric as the horrifying realization passes from player to player. All you have to do is sit back and watch the fun, because the best scare is the one that players give themselves.

NPC INTERACTION

A major-scene NPC interaction is where the investigators have an important conversation with someone. It might be important because of who the NPC is, or it might be because the conversation itself leads to a discovery.

Such encounters provide major roleplaying opportunities, so don't skimp on them. They can be particularly effective if the NPC in all innocence gives the investigators the final piece of some puzzle, provoking horror as they realize its significance. ("Why yes, didn't you know your missing friend was adopted? Never did find out who the father was. I certainly hope you find her soon.")

Making this kind of scene work means you need to know who your NPC is, what she is like, what the NPC knows (and is willing to tell), where the encounter occurs, and what interesting things can happen as it unfolds. By making notes on these elements, you'll be ready to make the scene work well.

COMBAT

Almost all combats qualify as major scenes. To prepare for a combat, the two most important things you need to prepare are the creatures (or NPCs) the investigators fight and a diagram of where the combat occurs. If you have these nailed down, you'll be in good shape.

But you can do more. If you have your diagram done—even if it's just a rough sketch—think about what kinds of objects are in that location and how they could affect combat. In a warehouse, there might be a monster hiding on top of a stack of crates, waiting to jump down at a dramatic moment. In the printing room of a newspaper,

there's the giant printing presses waiting to crush anyone who falls into them.

Also, instead of having all the bad guys attack at once you can bring them on in stages. The combat could start with an attack by a couple thugs, then cultists show up after a minute, and finally, the monster they have summoned arrives.

With careful planning, you can make a combat feel like a small adventure in itself, complete with an opening hook, further developments, and a climax.

HORROR

Scenes of horror are the most important kind in *Call of Cthulhu*. And in truth, a scene of discovery, NPC interaction, or combat can easily turn into a scene of horror. That's one of the secrets of horror, actually. Anything ordinary can be twisted into something horrible.

A horror scene has three important elements: surprise, originality, and details. Surprise should be obvious. If the investigators go to a creepy house in the middle of the night expecting to find a monster and they find one, it's not horror. Surprise is important to horror because it's a reversal of expectations. It takes the understanding the players have of their situation and reveals the opposite, shattering their assumptions and making them feel vulnerable.

Originality is also important, though it's not as big a deal when you're running a game for novices. Lovecraft's creations are very original, and they should last you for a while. After that, there are the works by his friends and colleagues. But when your players have all read the rulebook and collected all your favorite anthologies, and they just aren't surprised by deep ones anymore, it's time make something up.

For instance, our junkyard hick of the earlier example (see Designing Major Scenes) could have just summoned a ghoul. But maybe there were ghouls in the last adventure. "The Lord of Bloody Metal" is a freaky idea, and it sure isn't in the rulebook. You can even use some existing monster's stats if you like—they're only numbers, after all. Just ditch the name and appearance, keep the stats, and make up something original instead.

Finally, details really help sell the horror to your players. It isn't just the Lord of Bloody Metal. It's the click-clacking, razor-wielding Lord of Bloody Metal. And why is the metal bloody? Because this nightmare assembly of metal parts taken from fatal car wrecks is stained with the blood of the people who died in those accidents—and the whole thing chews up and eats stray dogs, chunks of which catch on

OUR SAMPLE ADVENTURE: MAJOR SCENES

Discovery: The investigators discover a secret passage beneath the stage that leads to a hidden basement. This area hasn't been open for decades, and it's full of cobwebs, skulls, and weird ritual objects. An old movie projector triggers the manifestation of a supernatural movie.

NPC Interaction: Interviewing the old cultist offers useful information couched in mad ramblings. Dealing

with the philanthropist is tricky, though, because he's really a cultist in disguise who wants to mislead the investigators. The players may not even suspect him until they talk to him.

Combat: One of the old cultists, locked in an asylum, flips out and attacks the investigators.

Horror: The night of the big fundraiser at the theater, the floor collapses. A sea of roiling film emerges as tentacles—and attempts to kill everyone.

undercover as professors, family members of any of the above, and so on. A good narrative structure provides focus for character creation, while still allowing the players plenty of individuality and creativity.

the metal and are dragged rotting across the filthy soil. Just by knowing those details, you can freak out your players much more when the Lord comes grinding toward them. And don't forget the junkyard hick, with his blackened teeth, six fingers on each hand, and the prosthetic leg he wears made from rune-inscribed dog bones.

THE FIRST STORY

The first adventure you run for a new set of investigators is tricky. Even if the players are experienced, it's important to find ways to help them get their investigators started and working together. Fortunately, this is one area of adventure creation where the players can help you a lot.

FORMING A GROUP

When the players sit down to create new investigators, one of two things can happen. Either each player makes her own character without consulting anyone, or the group can work as a team to make investigators who belong together.

The first option makes your job harder. Imagine if the players come to you with a private detective, a professor of dead languages, a union organizer, and a bus driver, none of whom know each other. What kind of adventure can you create to draw these characters together and get them working on the story? The simple solution is to set up an opening hook that occurs in a place where they all might be—a diner, for example, or late at night on a city bus. They're the only ones there, and then an NPC enters who does something dramatic that gets them all involved. Other options could be the reading of a will for a dead person who knew them, a mistaken arrest that gets them thrown in the same jail cell (such as the film *The Usual Suspects*), a vacation where they're all on the same cruise ship, a mysterious invitation to a party (such as either version of *The House on Haunted Hill*), a public event (such as a parade), or a subway platform at two in the morning.

The second option, where the players create new characters who already have relationships, makes things much easier. What do they all have in common? Perhaps the characters all work at the same detective agency, or they're all FBI agents and specialists. Maybe they all go to the same college, or they're childhood friends, or they live in the same apartment building. The Settings chapter suggests a number of narrative structures. Published *Call of Cthulhu* sourcebooks such as *Delta Green* and *The Golden Dawn* provide others.

Not all groups of players know to create characters as a team. You can help them by brainstorming ideas for narrative structures, or just tell them which one you would like to use. If you have an idea for an adventure set at a college, tell the players the setting and ask them to make characters who would fit. Even with a narrative structure that specific, players still have a lot of freedom. At the college, for example, their characters might be students, faculty, administrators, janitors, groundskeepers, campus police, reporters on the education beat, writers or artists who bring their work to the campus, spies living

With the group set up, you need to craft the opening hook of this first adventure in such a way that all the investigators can get involved. However, they don't have to jump in all at once. The opening hook might only feature a couple of the investigators, who then ask the others for help.

The key here is credibility. In other words, do the players feel comfortable believing that their investigators would get involved in the adventure?

Credibility isn't as much of a problem in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. All the characters are adventurers in a fantasy world who are looking for danger and rewards. Even if they all just show up at the same inn or tavern, it's easy to motivate them—money, the possibility of finding magic items, and gaining notoriety can motivate just about anyone.

In *Call of Cthulhu*, the characters are very different. If you're

playing a professor, for example, you have a job and students. You can't just run off to Katmandu for three months to chase a cultist—you would lose your job! And for that matter, why would a mild-mannered professor drive his car eighty miles an hour

while firing a shotgun out the window at cultists? Does he even own a gun? Has he ever shot one before? Why isn't he at the campus coffeehouse reading academic journals?

Some players don't care about credibility. They understand that this is a game in which normal people are drawn into horrifying adventures, and they don't worry about their character motivation. But if the lack of credibility is too blatant, or goes on too long, even these players will stop thinking of their investigators as people and start using them as chess pieces, moving them around the board and sacrificing them casually. If the players stop believing in their characters, they won't be nearly as horrified at the terrible things that happen. And that's no good.

What you can do, then, is start that first adventure off right. Work with your players to create a cohesive group, then design an adventure (or change the opening hook of an existing one) that makes sense for your group. The more you make the players feel like they really are playing normal people who are naturally drawn into an adventure, the more real it all feels, and the more horrifying it'll be.

STAYING TOGETHER

As the first adventure moves toward its climax, if you're considering a campaign, you should be thinking about how to keep the group together. You have given them a good reason to assemble for this story, but what if you want to run another one? They

can't all be sitting in the same diner again when a cultist walks in and rips his face off, just like last time. You need to encourage them to stick together without being obvious about it.

The best way to do this is to pick an important part of the story in your first adventure and don't use it up. Perhaps the villain, or the villain's assistant, or the villain's lover gets away at the end. Perhaps the investigators failed to explain some of the mysterious events, and those events continue. Perhaps the whole story suggested a larger story, one the investigators realize they must pursue further.

The end of the adventure shouldn't feel like the end. Yes, the investigators have foiled the plot somehow—but when the dust settles, they should start chatting about the parts they didn't resolve, and what they should do next. If the players have their own ideas about what they want to do in the next game session, you'll know you have built a cohesive team.

THE JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY

One reason why it's important to provide credible motivations to a group of characters is because so many incredible things will happen to them. *Call of Cthulhu* is full of supernatural situations, strange magic, and terrible monsters—things that people in the real world do not encounter. But investigators in the game do encounter these things, and they do so quite often.

This is the journey into mystery: the transition an investigator goes through from being a normal person to being a person who is aware of and engaged with the evil forces of the supernatural. It's a journey familiar to us from movies and novels.

Look at the film *The Terminator*, for example. Sarah Connor starts off as a normal person. When Reese kidnaps her and rants about the robot apocalypse to come, she reacts as a normal person would: She escapes and goes to the police. Then the Terminator arrives, and she realizes that Reese is telling the truth. She stops being a normal person and begins doing abnormal things: having car chases, shooting guns at killer robots, and believing a guy everyone else thinks is crazy.

In the sequel, Sarah has completed the journey. She's spent years becoming a master of guns and bombs, training herself and her son for the terrible future that awaits. She is no longer a normal person; instead, she has become an effective investigator.

Nearly every player character in *Call of Cthulhu* makes this transition. Managing the transformation so that it is both credible and dramatic is difficult—especially when a new investigator joins an already transitioned group. Here's some advice for making this work.

THE BIG PROOF

New investigators usually have no belief in the supernatural. Players may portray them as snickering or politely skeptical when the crazy guy, such as Zadok Allen, the town drunk in Lovecraft's short story "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," rants about deities and monsters. But then something impossible happens, and the investigators have to reshape their worldview to account for what they have seen.

The first time you use the supernatural on a new set of characters, it should be a major scene. You might have some magical things happen early on that are minor enough to be explainable. But when the big proof hits, it should be thrilling and scary.

Pay particular attention to this scene. You should be describing the events as if they are something new and terrible—even if the players themselves have seen it all before in other games. You are creating an environment in which they can roleplay their characters, and part of the fun is in portraying their reactions to that first shock.

Give your players the opportunity to react. In the movie *Ghostbusters*, the heroes encounter a ghostly librarian. They peek around the corner at her, excited and afraid, fumbling with their scientific instruments. When they try to deal with the ghost and it turns into a hideous monster, they scream and run. It's frightening and exciting, even though the movie is a comedy. You should make your adventure's initial encounter with the supernatural just as dramatic. Give the players a chance for their investigators to scream, run, shoot guns, fall down stairs, fail Sanity checks, and generally react the way most any of us would in that situation: by freaking out.

THE TRANSITION

After the big proof, the investigators need a chance to regroup and process this discovery. Perhaps only some of them saw it, in which case the rest think their friends are now crazy. Playing through this kind of interaction, where half the party is wild-eyed and ranting while the rest look at them like they have lost their minds, is great fun.

Soon enough, everyone sees the big proof. Granted, there could be interesting exceptions, such as the investigator who remains a skeptic and always misses out on the big proof—such as Scully in early seasons of *The X-Files*—but again, that's an exception.

At this point, and especially with experienced players who have new characters, you have a real challenge. They have only seen one small part of the Cthulhu Mythos, but it's easy to just assume that they now know all about it. Instead, they should be trying to integrate what little they have seen into what they already believe about the world. When they're on the trail of another adventure later on, they should be making assumptions about what they're dealing with that are based on that previous experience; assumptions that are probably wrong. ("But that last one we saw flew! Why is this one living underground?")

Your job during this period is to remind them of their ignorance and keep the supernatural fresh. Use different facets of the Cthulhu Mythos that don't have much connection to each other, and make up stuff on your own. Over time, the players should have fun with the process of trying to put together an explanation for all this stuff, instead of just assuming that they have got it all worked out. Never let them get comfortable, even when they have become like Sarah Connor in *Terminator 2*. You should always have one more awful surprise for them waiting just around the corner.

THE INITIATE

Even when you have a whole pack of Sarah Connors, sooner or later one of the pack dies or goes insane and you have to bring in Miles Dyson. He's the scientist in *Terminator 2* who doesn't believe all this apocalypse nonsense. Sarah solves the problem by having the Terminator show off his robotic parts, at which point the good doctor freaks out and decides to blow up his own lab.

In other words, eventually either a new investigator joins the hardened group of monster slayers or they have to convince an NPC to help them in their strange quest. How do you and your players manage this so the character in question gets involved?

Either you can throw credibility out the window and just have the new character sign up for the action, or you can work through another transition. The former is easy, but the latter can be fun. The other players get to be the battle-hardened veterans, cynical and assured. ("You'll believe soon enough.") Perhaps they come up with big proof of their own, like showing off the Terminator's titanium endoskeleton. Perhaps they play dumb until the next supernatural encounter, at which point they haul the screaming novice away and, over a few stiff drinks, assure him that they know the truth and can fill him in.

This can all be highly entertaining for everyone—unless it takes too long. In *The X-Files*, Scully eventually became a believer, though it may have happened a couple seasons too late.

So when it's time for an initiate to get involved, do some fast thinking. If it's going to be a while before the next big proof, maybe you can speed things up, or stage some other supernatural event you hadn't planned for. You might even have the initiate go off on a side adventure, or stage a kidnapping, so she can return to the group shaking and covered in slime. ("I believe! I believe!")

The point is to make the journey into mystery dramatic, exciting, and fun for your players to roleplay. When it starts to drag, cut it short, convert the skeptics, and get back to the freaky stuff.

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are what happen to the investigators as a result of the adventure. If they broke into the cultists' temple, were there innocent witnesses who called the cops? If the PCs blew up a van full of bad guys, are they wanted for murder? If they angered the Lord of Bloody Metal but didn't kill it, does it seek revenge?

Consequences aren't much fun, are they? It sure is easy to just pull some crazy stunt and then wander off, with no witnesses to testify, no police on your trail, and no surviving bad guys out for vengeance.

Still, letting the investigators off easy isn't very satisfying or believable. In the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, if you rampage through an orc tribe, it's pretty unlikely that they'll place a fat bounty on your head that makes every scuzz-

bucket in the kingdom try to kill you—though that would be pretty cool. *Call of Cthulhu* is different. If you thwarted the aims of the Cult of Six Thousand, they'll want revenge. If you broke into the museum to steal the Dagger of Thoth, you'll have the police, the media, and the insurance company looking for you, slapping sketches by eyewitnesses on the evening news and making your life miserable. If you had a running gun battle on the interstate with a car full of maniacs, somebody innocent probably got hurt and the whole chase may have been broadcast live by a news chopper. One wrong move can destroy your entire life, sending you underground to fight evil.

Consequences make sense, especially since so many investigator tactics involve breaking the law in blatant ways. The trick is to make consequences interesting, so they become part of the plot instead of annoying static.

PUBLIC SCRUTINY

Police detectives are smart people with excellent training, substantial resources, a cooperative citizenry, and a tight network of allies and information. Reporters are the same, only they have cameras instead of badges. Both are very interested in crime, especially violent, sensational, or weird crimes. Guess who they'll be looking for?

Just playing cops and reporters straight, as an ongoing irritant, gets annoying. Make this fun—it's a story, after all, and not a simulation of real life. Personalize some of these NPCs. Don't just have "the cops" on the trail of the investigators.

Make it Detective Callahan, a tough cop out for justice. Have her pop up on the news, always the first at the crime scene, and make her the one who asks your neighbors suspicious questions. By personalizing the consequences of criminal activity, you make them interesting. Over time, Detective Callahan—or Kolchak, that nosy reporter—can become an important recurring character in your adventures. Maybe she becomes an ally, even an unwitting one—anonymous tips can be a useful investigator tool. She might arrive on the scene once or twice to save investigators from a fate worse than death.

Maybe she falls victim to the villain, and you promise to avenge the death of your one-time enemy. Regardless, she's more than just an irritating killjoy. She's someone with a name, a personality, and an agenda. Really, she's another investigator. She's just investigating you.

PRIVATE INTEREST

It isn't just cops and reporters who get on your case. Private citizens may get involved. The families of victims, for example, may hire detectives to follow you. If you vandalized a villain's apartment, the company that owns the building may send insurance

investigators after you, or the superintendent may just spend a few nights hiding in the basement with a baseball bat in case you come back. People react to violations of life, property, or privacy in weird ways.

VENGEANCE

Thwarting the plans of a bad guy is a good way to get him angry. He may come after the investigators when they least expect it. If he's dead or out of action, he may have allies, followers, or replacements who take up the cause, or try to get a little revenge. This is particularly useful if they act in the middle of an unrelated adventure, because the investigators have to sort out just who is up to what. Your past can rise up and bite you.

ANGRY COSMOS

Finally, there's the whole angle of supernatural trouble. If you interrupted the summoning of Ithaqua, he just might strike back at you, perhaps through other followers. Maybe he'll summon his monstrous servitors, or he might just rip the roof off your house and carry you into space. Maybe you know too much.

Then there's ghosts. The restless spirits of innocent victims may follow you around, causing trouble even though they want to help you. That evil cult leader you killed may come back from the grave, either as an angry ghost or a shambling, rotting corpse who wants to eat your brains. (The ghost template is a great place to start with this kind of complication.)

And of course, monsters aren't stupid or solitary. Deep ones work together, and even a slain Hound of Tindalos may have a vicious mate that pursues you across the eons. No matter how cautious an investigator may be, there's always a chance for consequences. Good campaigns thrive on such stuff.

CAMPAIGNS

At its core, a campaign is a linked series of adventures. By using recurring characters, settings, and elements—such as villains, monsters, and themes—the Gamemaster creates a tapestry of interesting questions for the players to answer. The player characters are the one element that usually remains constant between adventures. While characters may come and go, either by going mad, dying, or retiring, some will certainly continue their quest into the unknown.

Then the figured silk slipped a trifle from one of the greyish-white paws, and Carter knew what the noisome high-priest was. And in that hideous second stark fear drove him to something his reason would never have dared to attempt, for in all his shaken consciousness there was room only for one frantic will to escape from what squatted on that golden throne. He knew that hopeless labyrinths of stone lay betwixt him and the cold table-land outside, and that even on that table-land the noxious shantak still waited; yet in spite of all this there was in his mind only the instant need to get away from that wriggling, silk-robed monstrosity.

—H.P. Lovecraft,
The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath

campaign only have the player characters in common. At other times, there are other elements that continue in the campaign from game session to game session.

Both adventures and campaigns usually have a climax—a point at which the answers are found for the puzzles presented in the adventures. Sometimes that climax is internal to the characters, such as when a character realizes she is of deep one heritage. At other times it is external, such as when the group saves the world from the rebirth of Mordiggian.

MOTIVATION

Like adventures, each campaign requires a motivation for the investigators to continue. While many characters have personal motivations for investigating the Cthulhu Mythos—and their motivation to complete the first adventure—the motivation for the campaign has to be a little different. It's an overriding necessity that is bigger than any one character—whether that's saving the world from Cthugha, preventing the rebirth of Chaagnar Faugh, or destroying the Cult of Kali controlled by Nyarlathotep. Here are some of the most common ones.

OUR SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: MOTIVATION

To start on the construction of our sample campaign, the first decision we need to make is the motivation of the campaign. What do you, as the GM, want from the game? Since we're just starting out, let's use a simple, classic *Call of Cthulhu* motivation: Saving the World.

A good way to imagine a campaign is to picture it as a vast mansion, one that's full of passageways, staircases, basements, secret chambers, and even inhabitants. While an adventure is simply a room in that house, full of items and people to explore, a campaign is the mansion itself. Once the players finish exploring one room, there are any number of directions for them to continue, from the roof to lost tunnels beneath the foundations.

Constructing a campaign from scratch is really not as hard as it might sound. Like a house, a campaign has an entrance. Once inside, characters may find different routes to travel, each one different, but each eventually leads to the same place. A campaign also has a blueprint, which maps out where its elements go and how they serve to further the story.

A campaign is bigger than an adventure, but many of the same principles still apply. Seen as a whole, the campaign could be considered a large adventure unto itself; however, it requires too much play time to complete in a few sessions. Sometimes the adventures linked in the

keeping them locked beyond our ken for one more day, year, or millennium.

This motivation usually incorporates all the previous motivations. Generally the players in this type of campaign have to stop something from occurring, or have to cause something to occur to prevent everything they have ever known from ending.

COUNTDOWN

This type of motivation is a standard in *Call of Cthulhu*. The players are trying to unravel the mysteries of the campaign to stop something from happening. There's a time limit on their investigations, a point past which the investigators' actions will make little or no difference.

Finding a kidnapped girl, locating an artifact before the cultists do, completing the seal on the tomb before it rises again, foiling a ritual to vastly increase Ithaqua's power—each is a motivation that is strong enough to drive a party of characters forward.

EXPLORATION

Exploration of the unknown is a classic motivation in many roleplaying games. It doesn't matter if the players are charting the unexplored expanses of Antarctica or the barred room at the top of the stairs in their childhood home. What is important here is the player's descent into the unknown. By taking the players out of their element and placing them into the unknown, you are giving them a motivation to find out where they are, what's there, and how to get back. This is one of the oldest motivations in the horror genre.

RECOVERY

This motivation is similar to the "countdown" motif, but not quite the same. Here the players are united in their efforts to find something, whether that's a missing ring, a stolen book, or a lost city. Often this motivation can lead to others, such as exploration or countdown, the recovery acting as a conduit into a deeper adventure.

SAVING THE WORLD

Saving the world is a motivation central to the concept of *Call of Cthulhu*. While it is not possible (as far as humanity is concerned) to permanently destroy the deities of the Cthulhu Mythos, it is possible, from time to time, to push them back a bit,

A campaign element can be pretty much anything. A person, a cult, a Federal organization, a stone statue, or a sentient lake—each one can be a campaign element, depending on the circumstances.

When in doubt ask, "What role does it fulfill in the campaign?" Does a person's death lead the players into an investigation? Does a Federal organization recruit the players to infiltrate a cult? Does the stone statue cause something to rise from the lake under the full moon? If it serves a role that the players can exploit within the game, it's a campaign element.

Elements can be passive or active. Active elements pursue their own ends in the game, such as cultists searching for a book, a creature looking to sever the bloodline, or a statue that haunts the investigator's dreams at night. Active elements are useful tools to move the game forward when things bog down.

Passive elements require character interaction to activate. The secret manuscript hidden in the wall, the bottle that contains the essential salts of your ancestor, the book that waits in the museum—each is a passive element. Passive elements often serve as rewards for good investigation techniques, since they're rarely found unless the players are looking in the right places. Sometimes they can be just as dangerous as active elements. The difference is that passive elements wait to be found; active elements find you.

Let's look at some of the common elements found in a typical *Call of Cthulhu* game.

VILLAINS

Villains are the most common campaign element seen in *Call of Cthulhu*. The madman who prays to the Haunter of the Dark, the lone scientist who hopes to unravel the secrets of gate technology in unholy union with the mi-go, the woman who sacrifices children to Azathoth to extend her life—each is a villain, and each is a tool for the GM to use in a campaign.

Villains can be either active or passive campaign elements, depending on their methods. For example, one villain might hide her activities until discovered by investigators, while another might blatantly pursue the goals of his deity, killing whoever gets in his path.

OUR SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: CAMPAIGN ELEMENTS

So what elements should we use in our sample campaign? First of all, we need a location for the player characters—a base of operations, as it were. We decide to place them as the staff of a college's parapsychology department. Let's call it Hunt College. They work out at the Springfield Annex, a cramped, dark, moldering wing which none of the other university staff frequent. All the characters live locally or on campus.

Now that we have a backdrop for the drama, let's make up the drama. Basically, we need some agency that is trying to end the world. How about a cult? Let's settle on a small cult with limited resources. We'll call them The Brotherhood of the Worm. They're led by Professor Claude Brüchs, a clever and ruthless man who hides himself in

plain sight as a professor of antiquities at Hunt College. Brüchs is initially a passive element, but later becomes an active element—in this case, a villain.

Now let's make up the way they'll end the world. Brüchs has gotten his hands on the Transvaal Papers, a portion of a manuscript written by a Luther Transvaal, a madman who worshiped a deity called T'gala in South Africa at the turn of the century. (The Transvaal Papers are a passive object.) Brüchs hopes to use these papers to infect a willing member of the cult, probably a student, with the spawn of this deity, and then populate the world with such spawn (the monsters).

There you have it in broad strokes: a location, organization, villain, and object, all set up for a roller-coaster save-the-world campaign. Piece of cake, right?

THE BLIND MASSES

Since most of the world is not privy to the secrets of the Cthulhu Mythos, this campaign element covers every nonplayer character not directly involved in the campaign. The library clerk, the arresting officer, and the prosecuting attorney are all members of the blind masses.

Depending on their uses, members of the blind masses can be either passive or active campaign elements. They are useful in their capacity to move the game along, either by providing information or by limiting the players' range of actions within the campaign. Most of the NPCs the characters encounter in any *Call of Cthulhu* campaign will be from these masses.

THE ORGANIZATION

This campaign element can be almost any type of group. The Royal Order of Buffalo, the Cult of Nyarlathotep—even the FBI—is an organization as far as campaign elements go. What matters is the group's intent, and this is what makes them either an active or passive campaign element.

A passive organization is marked by its lack of knowledge. If its agents have no idea what's really going on, then they're a passive element, no matter how deeply they get involved. If they do know what's going on, they're an active element. Cults organized in the worship of the Great Old Ones should always be considered active elements.

Organizations can assist or deter the players in their pursuit of the answers to the campaign, by giving them information, stopping them from looking into certain leads, or even trying to kill them.

MONSTERS

Unlike other games, most *Call of Cthulhu* campaigns do not encourage players to hunt down monsters in the hopes of killing them (except under very specific circumstances). Instead, the game encourages players to avoid direct confrontations with the supernatural. When monsters are encountered, it is usually on their terms. This generally means that either the players are at the heart of the problem presented in the adventure, or they have screwed up badly.

Monsters are almost always active campaign elements. Use them sparingly. Horror hinges on surprise and the unexpected. The last thing you want to hear from a player during an encounter with a monster is that it's "just another deep one."

RED HERRINGS

A red herring is a lead in a campaign or adventure that turns out to be unrelated to the current adventure or campaign. This is not to say it can't be a supernatural mystery unto itself, only that it has nothing directly to do with the current investigation.

LOCATIONS

Other common elements in any campaign include the recurring locations in the game. Do the investigators have a base of operations? Do they work out of a university? An office? Is there a cult stronghold they are working to destroy? A manor atop a craggy cliff the hybrids frequent? These types of locations are campaign elements because they focus the players' attention. Plans usually revolve around locations, so they feature centrally in campaigns.

Usually locations are passive elements—a place to rest, research, or sleep. But sometimes they are active, such as the sacrificial stone at the water's edge. Locations are vitally important to any good campaign. Think about them carefully before you begin.

OBJECTS

Objects can be any inanimate object vital to the story in the campaign, such as a statue of Cthulhu, the gun that killed the professor, or a book with the *bind soul* spell in it. Objects are often important campaign elements, and sometimes they are the central element around which an entire campaign rotates.

MILESTONES

In the structure of a campaign, milestones are vital points where clues are revealed, leads realized, or some vital situation resolved—one way or another. Milestones are sometimes intersections between overlapping adventures, where a loose end from one adventure leads to the beginning of the next. Reaching a specific milestone may actually be the goal behind an adventure, whether the characters know it or not.

The goal of a campaign should be more than just advancing in level. Marking the milestones toward the conclusion of a campaign gives it the structure of a story, and that's what *Call of Cthulhu* is really about.

Dropping false leads like this into a campaign is a good idea if you feel the players are moving too quickly toward the campaign's climax, or if they need a tangent. You can give the players a break from the main campaign and let them explore and solve some other adventure in the meantime. When they're done, they can jump back to the main story.

out, or simply reading books gives the characters some idea of what's going on and clues of how they might stop it. As long as the players have some idea of what they're looking into, they'll have no end of questions about their subjects.

Reinforcing campaign elements through reiterations of their stories in this manner can add a whole new depth to your campaign. It's one thing to meet a man named Mr. Shiny at a burger joint, and a whole other thing to see his name and picture in a two-hundred-year-old book.

Think of milestones like the boxes on our flowchart earlier—they're stages you pass through to complete the story. The links between them can be linear or nonlinear, depending on the structure of your story.

The four most common milestones in a campaign are:

- The intro,
- Bookwork and footwork,
- The heebie-jeebies,
- And the confrontation.

After detailing each one, we'll see how to create and organize each of our milestones, giving our story a little more structure.

THE INTRO

The introduction to the campaign should establish at least some of its main elements. Even if they are simply mentioned, that's enough to place them within the players' minds. When you later refer to them, the players will pick up on them quickly. It's not necessary to immediately jump into an elaborate storyline. Instead, you can ease the players into it with a side adventure that hints at the campaign's theme, but does not directly involve it.

A good introductory adventure draws the players into the bigger mysteries of a campaign, while still answering a few questions or resolving an issue or two. The loose ends of the introductory adventure are what's most important. Make sure they're intriguing enough to be followed, but not obvious enough to point right toward the campaign's climax.

BOOKWORK AND FOOTWORK

This first milestone consumes most of a *Call of Cthulhu* game. Running around looking things up, checking people

OUR SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: MILESTONES

We'll keep our sample campaign pretty straightforward. The intro should draw the players in. A graduate student is killed at Hunt College and a valuable manuscript belonging to the parapsychology department is taken. The intro adventure involves tracking down his killer, then culminates in the capture or killing of a member of the Brotherhood of the Worm.

Once the murder is solved, the investigators move to the bookwork and footwork milestone. By researching the cult, they uncover extensive leads. One book describes the cult as it was at the turn of the century, with just enough tasty tidbits to imply that a few survivors might still be around.

To mix things up, we'll follow with a red herring adventure. This one deals with former owners of the Transvaal Papers and their fates. This adventure might have some supernatural elements—the papers could have been owned by an insane scholar, a sorcerer, or a madman whose abandoned house is now filled with rat-things. Generally, the supernatural threat in our red herring should have

This is the portion of the campaign where the investigators are in the thick of it. They know something supernatural is going on besides what they encountered in the introductory adventure. They have some ideas what it might be, but they're not exactly sure what to do about it.

Everything at this point is usually seen as some sort of possible threat. Any stray phone call, passing encounter with an NPC, or suggestive newspaper article can be enough to drive the investigators on some new witch-hunt, filled with the surety that this new lead is important—even if it just turns out to be a red herring. This is a good tactic to keep the players on their toes. Sprinkle a few bits of disinformation in with the information. That way they don't fully know what to expect. And as we have said before, surprise is the hallmark of any good *Call of Cthulhu* campaign.

THE HEEBIE-JEEBIES

This is it: When the investigators come to the climax of the campaign. Sometimes they find their way there on their own, sometimes they're chased there, sometimes this milestone catches up with them when they're not expecting it. Either way, it's the culmination of their investigations, and it should be as dramatic as you can make it. Pull out all the stops.

NONPLAYER CHARACTERS

Nonplayer characters are an important part of any campaign. Working out their personalities beforehand can shape and direct the campaign, while making your job of running it much, much easier. NPCs can be broken down into three simple groups, depending on just what they are up to in the campaign. If you can, you should work out the statistics, spells, and abilities of the NPCs involved in the campaign before you start. We'll examine some NPC types below.

nothing in it directly related to the cult or their mission.

Once this little tangent adventure is through, it's back to the campaign and on to the heebie-jeebies. The cult, fearing that the investigators know too much, try to scare them off. If this doesn't work, the investigators and their allies are targeted for assassination through gruesome supernatural means. Further leads then point the survivors toward an on-campus conspiracy.

After that, it's red herring time again. This time, the lead is a false one, without any real import to the campaign. The players become suspicious of a faculty member who has no relation to the cult. The investigation appears to have supernatural elements—the faculty member belongs to a secretive fraternity—but in the end is simply a diversion.

Once this little mistake is cleared up, it's off to the confrontation. The investigators are actively set up by Brüchs and set upon by the cult. One of the cult has already been impregnated by the T'gala, and the rapidly growing fetus wants a victim to feed on after its birth.

This should be more than enough material for a full campaign.

ALLIES

Nonplayer characters who assist the characters in their investigations are allies. An ally does not necessarily need to be knowledgeable of the Cthulhu Mythos. If the characters need help, and the NPC lends a hand, she is an ally.

MEDDLERS

Meddlers are the opposite of allies. These NPCs think they know what is going on and try to stop the investigators from completing what they need to do. Meddlers are not necessarily enemies, and may even have the best of intentions. A character's mother could be a meddler, for instance, committing her son because she overheard him talking about cults, demons, and spells. A policewoman who tries to stop the PCs from harming a dangerous cultist would also be meddling.

Meddlers increase the difficulty of the PCs' task because they must be avoided or evaded without harming them if at all possible, and confronting them can often lead to disaster. For instance, a hero might be locked up as a dangerous maniac, forced to go on the run, or even gunned down by a SWAT team.

ENEMIES

Enemies are NPCs out to get the investigators, either physically or mentally. Enemies need not be violent or even evil. Only their intentions toward the investigators really matter. If what the enemy NPC wants to come to pass would cause the characters intense physical or mental distress, then he or she is an enemy.

CAMPAIGN PLAYER CHARACTERS

The central axis around which any *Call of Cthulhu* campaign rotates is the group of player characters who populate it. Their investigations are the center of the story, and anything they do in the game is important, since they are the stars of the campaign.

Call of Cthulhu has a reputation as a game where player characters come and go rapidly due to insanity or death. Actually, this is usually not the case. In any group, there are usually a few level-headed thinkers or lucky investigators who survive from adventure to adventure, rebuilding the group to continue their descent into the world of the Mythos. This chain of causality is critical in any *Call of Cthulhu* campaign. Without it, the game becomes a farce where the player characters are random people picked off the street to continue a now-nonexistent group's pursuit of the unknown.

If you run the game correctly, you'll never have to hear an investigator scream, "C'mon, waiter, we have a cult to destroy!" Several ways exist to maintain a coherent group with a reason to be there, even if some colleagues are lost from time to time.

OUR CAMPAIGN: NPCS

Next, we should work out the NPCs in our campaign. First off, we have a villain (Brüchs) and several of his cult members as side villains—including the Spawn of T'gala, our monstrous villain.

Then we have some meddlers. The local police chief, Garret Yardley, sticks his nose into every suspicious event on campus. The dean of the college, Elmer Hunt, hates the parapsychology department and is looking for any excuse

A CENTRAL NPC

Designing a central NPC is a fine solution to the problem of maintaining an ongoing series of characters. The characters are organized—and sometimes financed—by an NPC who has an interest in the Mythos, but lacks the time, inclination, skill, or sanity to complete such a search on her own. Perhaps this character is the sole survivor of a group that fought the Mythos in its day, but is now too crippled or enfeebled to carry on the fight himself. Perhaps she is a parent whose child was sacrificed by a cult and wants to ensure others don't suffer the same loss. Whatever the reason, when characters are lost, new characters can be brought in by the NPC, who has the funds or connections to bring in the best of the best.

AN ORGANIZATION

Another good solution relies on an entire organization, such as the Theron Marks Society, the Gilchrist Trust, or the Delta Green conspiracy. The characters are in the employ or debt of some sort of organization interested—at least tangentially—in fighting the Mythos. When player characters die, new ones can be brought in without much fuss to replace them.

A LEGACY

This campaign focus is a little more subtle. The characters are select members of some sort of odd group—and sometimes, they don't even know it! Whether they all suffer from the deep one taint, or the descendants of those who burnt the witch Ezikiah Browne, or all once touched a certain book, the characters have all been chosen. This special something sets the characters apart from the common world, either offering them a reason to investigate the Mythos, or requiring them to act—if only for their own sanity and survival.

THINKING ON YOUR FEET

Even if you work out all the elements and NPCs for a campaign beforehand, never pass up the chance to introduce a new one, or hang on to one when it's introduced in passing. Sometimes the players can throw you for a loop by heading in a direction you didn't expect. What do you do when the players decide to talk to a NPC you hadn't even considered until the moment it comes up in a game? Tell

to get rid of it. Rupert McCain is the poor soul the investigators suspect (incorrectly) is a member of the cult in our red herring adventure.

We'll also throw in one ally, so that the players aren't totally out in the cold. Louis Manning is a detective from Ann Arbor, Michigan. His little brother was killed in the Transvaal Papers robbery, and he's very interested in why someone would kill his brother over a bundle of old papers.

them "Sorry, I didn't make up that guy yet, try next time?" Of course not. Do what GMs do best. Make something up.

THE MAGIC WORD: CONSISTENCY

Half the job of being a GM is remaining consistent in your descriptions. If an NPC's name is one way one day ("Tipton S. Smith"), it should be the same the next time the characters encounter him (not "S. Tipton Smith"). If you make up an NPC off the cuff, and the players seem to enjoy interacting with him, don't pass up the chance to define that character further. Write the NPC's name down, along with a few notes about what she is like. Then work out the details later.

Keeping a little notepad handy is very useful in any ongoing campaign. Keep it around during a game session. If a fact slips your mind, you can check it before you make a mistake that will confuse the players and disrupt the game.

RECYCLING

Bringing elements over and over again into the campaign sets it apart from a simple adventure. Always keep an eye out for elements—whether they're pre-made, homemade, or on-the-spot creations—that could be brought back in a future adventure within the campaign.

Try your best to recycle NPCs who interested the investigators in some way. It doesn't matter if the NPC was a good guy or a bad guy, a flirty secretary or a powerful sorcerer, a wisecracking reporter or a suspicious sheriff—what's important is their inherent appeal to the players. Look for that spark and keep it burning by bringing him or her back game after game.

THE END

Wrapping up a campaign is as easy as wrapping up an adventure. Once the climax of the campaign has been reached and the mystery is solved, the campaign is on its downswing toward the end. A campaign can end in one of four ways.

RECYCLING VILLAINS

A good villain never really dies. A good example is Sax Rohmer's insidious Dr. Fu Manchu, who gets shot in the head at the end of one book and begins the next by having his minions kidnap a reliable brain surgeon. Whether rumors of the villain's death were exaggerated or he managed to slip away at the last possible moment doesn't really matter. Villains survive if you want them to and if you think their future involvement in the campaign will be interesting.

What if the villain was finished off personally by the characters themselves? No problem. It's easy in a world

This type of ending occurs when too many players drop out, having become bored with the game or the particular campaign. Perhaps the campaign wasn't structured well, or didn't have a conclusion in mind. Maybe it was inconsistent, too improvisational, or just not scary. Never try to drag out a campaign that has lasted longer than the players' interest. Suck it up, close it down, and come up with something new. Learn from your mistakes, resolve to do better next time, then move on.

THE DANGLING THREAD

The investigators wrapped up the campaign only to find several leads, which appear to point toward something even bigger and more horrible going on elsewhere. What's an investigator to do but follow them? This is a great springboard to launch the players into another campaign. Use it wisely. Try to resolve the most important plot of the last campaign before launching a new one—an epic that continually changes direction is frustrating.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

In this type of campaign, whatever the investigators were trying to do has been done. Things work out for the best. The characters followed the investigation to its logical conclusion, and the darkness has been pushed back for a time. This is the rarest of all possible campaign endings in *Call of Cthulhu*.

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE

Something the investigators did near or at the climax of the campaign was incredibly, amazingly wrong. Perhaps they rushed to a final confrontation with something that's way out of their league, overlooked a vital clue, or decided to stay and fight when they should have fled. In any case, they failed at their attempt to solve the mystery of the campaign, and they're all going to die. When this happens, make their last few minutes of game time dramatic and fun. Great moments of heroism come from fighting overwhelming odds.

Go into gruesome, wordy detail about their deaths, and the painful moments that lead up to them. Let them shoot it out with the minions of the Mythos. Heck, why not? Make them interested, despite themselves, in their characters' deaths and in seeing who's the last one standing (or screaming). Then wrap it up, and consider how you'll plan your next campaign.

populated with the monstrosities and magic of the Cthulhu Mythos to come up with a way for the dead to come back to life. For example, the leader of the Silver Twilight, Carl Stanford, was on R'lyeh when it sank back into the Pacific in *Shadows of Yogo-Sothoth*, yet can be encountered again several years later in *Masks of Nyarlathotep* quietly reading Mythos tomes in a private library.

Don't use this trick too often, however, or the players will begin to expect it. And the expected is never scary. Spring it on them only if you know it will get their hearts pounding. Nothing is worse than a predictable villain.



SETTINGS

For this place could be no ordinary city. It must have formed the primary nucleus and centre of some archaic and unbelievable chapter of earth's history whose outward ramifications, recalled only dimly in the most obscure and distorted myths, had vanished utterly amidst the chaos of terrene convulsions long before any human race we know had shambled out of apedom. Here sprawled a palaeogeon megalopolis compared with which the fabled Atlantis and Lemuria, Commoriom and Uzuldaroum, and Olathoe in the land of Lomar are recent things today—not even of yesterday; a megalopolis ranking with such whispered pre-human blasphemies as Valusia, R'lyeh, Ib in the land of Mnar, and the Nameless City of Arabia Deserta. As we flew above that tangle of stark titan towers my imagination sometimes escaped all bounds and roved aimlessly in the realms of fantastic associations—even weaving links betwixt this lost world and some of my own wildest dreams....

—H.P. Lovecraft,
“At the Mountains of Madness”

According to H. P. Lovecraft, the beings of the Mythos have been resident on the Earth since before the seas first formed, billions of years ago. “The Great Old Ones are, the Great Old Ones were, and the Great Old Ones shall be again,” as the quote goes. One of the most attractive aspects of *Call of Cthulhu* is that stories of heroic investigators fighting to keep the Cthulhu Mythos at bay can be set in any corner of the world and during any time period. The horrors of the Mythos can be fought on the foggy streets of Victorian London, the backwoods and forgotten corners of Lovecraft’s Jazz Era New England, the shadows of the Second World War, or in the closed, smoke-filled rooms of the New World Order. If the GM is willing to stretch a little, the investigators could battle the Mythos by torchlight in the Middle Ages (as in Chaosium’s *Strange Eons*) or with six-guns during the American Wild West (as in Pinnacle’s *Adios, a-Mi-Go*). Each approach is really a subgenre within the broader genre of the Cthulhu Mythos.

This chapter suggests a variety of settings to base your campaign on, as well as several thematically coherent time periods across the 20th century. Much of the chapter is a timeline grid with dozens of adventure ideas cross-referenced by subgenre and time period. As you prepare to run the game, mine this chapter for historical settings and story ideas.

TIME AND PLACE: THE BIG PICTURE

Choosing the time and place is critical when designing a *Call of Cthulhu* adventure or campaign. The setting establishes the mood, the atmosphere, and the tone of the adventure. It establishes the historical context and limits the equipment and technology available to the investigators. The setting determines the kind of adventures that follow.

Conversely, the style of adventure the GM wants will determine the time and place the adventure is set. For instance, if the GM wants the adventure to be an expedition into uncharted African territory, then she must realize that uncharted territory is going to be much more difficult to find today than it was a hundred years ago.

At a minimum, there are two categories to consider when preparing to run the game: time and place. In broad terms these categories can be divided into Now and Then and Near and Far, as in the table below. But note that "Then" means remote in time—it could be the future as well as the past.

	Now	Then
Near	Known from daily life	Vaguely known from movies and books
Far	Somewhat known from the news media	Unknown and alien

NOW AND NEAR

For most people reading this book, "Now and Near" means the western world at the dawn of the 21st century. Here the tools and technology are familiar. No strange or baffling customs exist, no antiquated prejudices or superstitions. In modern, familiar settings, the investigators don't have to sweat details such as basic food, water, medical treatment, or transportation, except in extraordinary circumstances. The most pertinent survival question for investigators in a modern familiar setting will quite often be "Have I exceeded my credit limit?"

It's easy for the GM to plan an adventure in modern, familiar settings. Maps are available through stores, libraries, and the Internet. Prices for weapons, tools, or plane tickets are just a phone call or Web search away. Travel times are just as easy to calculate, as are accurate details of weather conditions. Modern familiar settings don't require deep research.

For the investigators, all the tools and weapons of the modern world are available. Conversely, they themselves can be victims of such high-tech trinkets as hidden microphones, miniature tracking devices, long-range sniper rifles, and remotely detonated bombs. The forces of law and order are more likely to be available in a modern, familiar setting, which can be an asset or a liability. Very often in a *Call of Cthulhu* adventure, the investigators are forced to commit unlawful acts in their fight to hold back the evil of the Cthulhu Mythos. In a modern, familiar setting, the investigators may very quickly find themselves pursued by law enforcement if they act without careful planning. Modern authorities are unlikely to accept supernatural explanations for events. Even worse, they may protect dangerous cultists under the aegis of religious freedom, right up to the point when those cultists act—after which it's far too late.

"Now and Far" represents modern adventures set in unfamiliar locales. It's still the beginning of the 21st century, but the GM and investigators have left the world they know for more dramatic, exotic, and hostile environments. The heroes might man a frozen research station in Antarctica, or hike through the guerrilla-filled jungles of war-torn central Africa, or climb high into the Tibetan Himalayas in search of the Tcho-Tcho homeland, or huddle inside a deep-sea submersible diving to the bottom of the Marianas Trench. All the tools and weapons of the modern world are still available to the investigators, but they're taking those tools into hostile and inaccessible environments where help and resupply are more difficult, if not impossible. Credit cards may be useless. Cell phones readily leave their useful area. Acquiring fuel, food, and water may be taxing. Communicating with the locals may be impossible if there's a language barrier. These are areas of the world where there are no authorities to consult, no police, no hospitals, and no reliable infrastructure. Battling the environment will be as challenging as trying to foil the machinations of the Mythos.

The modern, unfamiliar setting requires more research from the GM to produce a compellingly realistic environment. You may need to answer questions such as these:

What's the typical temperature during the Antarctic winter?

What language do they speak in Burundi?

What's the crush depth of a modern bathysphere?

When the GM has to answer one of these sorts of questions with "I don't know," it breaks the mood of the story. When in doubt, extrapolate, then look up the answer and make corrections for the next session.

THEN AND NEAR

To effectively present a familiar setting changed by time, the GM must do a great deal of research. The starting point is the here and now. While some things are familiar and easily adapted, others are not. Prices must be adjusted, technological changes must be accounted for, and even the maps may need to be changed. After all, one dam can change hundreds of square miles of landscape. Social customs, laws, and morals all change over time as well. What is socially unacceptable today may be perfectly acceptable a century ago, and vice versa. Sexism, racism, and religious intolerance were the status quo in previous eras, even within living memory. Law enforcement of the early 1900s, with regular beating of suspects, would seem brutal and thuggish by today's standards. On the other hand, the authorities of the past are more likely to help the investigators eradicate a cult, not because of its supernatural connections, but because its members and beliefs disturb the status quo or are members of cultural or racial minority groups.

The roleplaying rewards of such research are great. The investigators are able to explore the world that was, or perhaps even the world that will be. In a familiar setting, changed by time, the investigators can find themselves in the last days of the Old West, the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, or the "Noir" era of the 1940s. The familiar can even be warped into a dark, cyberpunk near-future where the End Times are coming to pass.

THEN AND FAR

"Then and Far" is the most research-intensive setting for the GM. This rulebook is limited more or less to the 20th century, but an enterprising GM could set her adventure in a cave during the last Ice Age, a stronghold of the Knights Templar in the Middle Ages, or in the pressurized colonization domes of a terraformed Mars. Bizarre and alien settings are also readily accessible to a group of investigators stumbling through the results of a *create gate* spell. In any one of those settings, everything is alien and unfamiliar to modern-day players. Obviously, this kind of adventure takes the most research.

In most cases, encountering an unfamiliar setting changed by time means the investigators are globetrotting in the past. Such adventures immerse the players in far-flung corners of the world during the days when the Earth had a truly epic scope. Such settings are often the backdrop for world-girding conspiracies and campaigns such as *Masks of Nyarlathotep* or *Walker in the Wastes*. The cults that adore the Great Old Ones often carry out their gods' will in isolated and primitive corners of the world. If the investigators hope to defeat these forces, at some point they'll have to hunt them where they live, whether that's in the jungles of the Congo, the Andes Mountains, the deserts of Arabia, the frozen wastes of Siberia, or the isolated archipelagos of Micronesia.

TIME PERIODS

We have divided the entire modern era into ten loose time periods. Any one of these is suitable for a long-term campaign. These different time periods aren't just matters of historical recreation; each is stylistically and thematically distinct, and in essence forms a subgenre of its own. Read through them and see what kind of setting appeals to you.

THE AGE OF EMPIRES: 1890–1909

The two decades straddling the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries comprise an era when the great European empires still dominate the globe. Royal families with bloodlines stretching back to the Renaissance still hold great political relevance. Africa, Asia, and the Pacific are divided among European and, for the first time, American spheres of influence. It is an age when advances in technology seem to promise wonders undreamed of. Dirigibles, submarines, and the first airplanes make their debut. At the same time, the wide reach of colonial empires creates culture clashes where naive westerners encounter unknown mystical tradi-

"Professor Angell must have employed a cutting bureau, for the number of extracts was tremendous and the sources scattered throughout the globe. Here was a nocturnal suicide in London, where a lone sleeper had leaped from a window after a shocking cry. Here likewise a rambling letter to the editor of a paper in South America, where a fanatic deduces a dire future from visions he has seen. A despatch from California describes a theosophist colony as donning white robes en masse for some "glorious fulfillment" which never arrives, whilst items from India speak guardedly of serious native unrest near the end of March."

—H.P. Lovecraft,
"The Call of Cthulhu"

sulting Russian Civil War kills millions more as Bolshevism emerges as a geopolitical force. America's war experience leads to two decades of isolationism. The war is a truly global affair and greatly increases worldwide communication and transportation links. One side effect of this is the efficient spread of the 1919 influenza outbreak that kills millions. In this setting, corpse-eating monsters roam the body-strewn battlefields of Europe. Occult conspirators plot to build their postwar fortunes hand-in-hand with smugglers, profiteers, and traitors. It is the nadir of human civilization—for now.

THE JAZZ AGE: 1920–1929

Following the savagery and madness of the Great War, the 1920s is an era of personal self-indulgence and institutional corruption. In the United States, it is the era of the Volstead Act, more commonly known as Prohibition. Massive bootlegging profits turn the neighborhood ethnic gangs of America's big cities into a criminal empire that buys, sells, intimidates, and kills public officials at all levels of power. In some cities, the rule of law disintegrates. Meanwhile, news of this extravagant corruption spreads by radio, telephone, automobile, and aircraft as these and other technologies proliferate to all economic levels. Labor unions, Bolshevism, and foreign immigration contribute to the first Red Scare and the reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan. A wave of paranoia and xenophobia sweeps the west. As if to cap this era of decadence and self-indulgence, the New York stock market crashes on October 29, 1929, leading to a world depression. The horrors of the Mythos mingle freely with humanity, manifesting in lonely New England towns and the dark hearts of cities.

tions and secret societies on every continent. The potential for riches can turn even the staunchest Victorian into a idolater of foul gods.

THE ROUGH BEAST: 1910–1919

The era of the 1910s is dominated by the horror of the Great War, what we know today as World War One. The decadent political structures of the last century are lining up for war, not realizing that the technology and industrial power of the previous era are not delivering wonder to the world, but horror. Poison gas, machine guns, and massed artillery, combined with obsolete tactics stubbornly applied by a stagnant leadership, exterminates an entire generation of young men and creates a philosophical and moral vacuum. The Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires collapse. The re

THE AMERICAN GIANT WAKES: 1940-1949

This is the decade America, quite literally, saves the world in the most epic and murderous conflict in human history. Once the Nazi and Japanese war machines are smashed, America feeds and rebuilds the shattered nations of Europe and Asia with the Marshall Plan. During the 1940s, America harnesses the power of the atom and breaks the sound barrier, but there is a darker side.

The superpowers make the opening moves of the Cold War, a conflict that will define the next half-century. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) tramples the Constitution in the pursuit of "Commies" and their fellow travelers, a resounding echo of the earlier Red Scare. Ironically, at the same time as the government hunts everywhere for traitors, it harbors and protects Nazi war criminals who will be useful shadow warriors. Created in 1947, the CIA and Air Force come to symbolize the twin demons of unchecked power and impending Armageddon. American scientists conduct radiation experiments on the mentally ill and handicapped, mirroring the inhuman experiments conducted by some of the German and Japanese scientists America has recruited for its military-industrial complex. The alleged 1947 "flying disk" crash at Roswell, New Mexico, plants the seeds for a conspiracy theory that persists beyond the end of the millennium.

THE COLD WAR: 1950-1959

The world is slowly being squeezed into two factions: America and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its puppet regimes. Many nations, particularly the former empires of Europe, view American influence as fearfully as Soviet domination. HUAC's Richard Nixon becomes Vice President of the United States, while Senator Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunt carries on its work, raising paranoia and character assassination to new heights (or lows). It is a time of blacklists, loyalty oaths, and guilt by association.

THE RISE OF DARKNESS: 1930-1939

As the world economy collapses, chaos, misery, and famine follow in its wake. To ensure stability and order, many populations accept domination by brutal tyrannies: Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Franco's Spain. Japan, Italy, and Germany all begin their brutal military conquests. China, deadly in its weakness, cannot protect its population from warlords, bandits, and foreign invaders. In America, the Wild West is reborn with the rise of motorized gangs of bank robbers, such as the Dillinger gang and Bonnie and Clyde. Just as in cowboy days, America romanticizes its sociopathic killers. The "dust bowl" of the Midwest turns American farmers into refugees in their own country. Cities are choked with breadlines and throngs of the unemployed. Some of America's richest citizens even consider the New Deal to be a Bolshevik plot and conspire to overthrow the government. It is a desperate time when many consider fascism to be a form of salvation—and what fascism cannot achieve, obedience to alien masters might.



The anticolonial wars begin in Africa and Asia. Red China emerges to rekindle western fears of the xenophobic "yellow peril." The hottest spot in the Cold War involves Red Chinese troops, Soviet pilots, and Americans all locked in combat in the Hermit Kingdom of Korea. During the 1950s, Communism still appears to be a monolithic power. Hungary's move toward independence is crushed by the Warsaw Pact. Using espionage and ruthless drive, the USSR makes great strides to catch up to America, culminating in the launching of Sputnik. For the first time since the dropping of the atomic bomb, and despite unrivaled national prosperity, Americans wonder if they will be overtaken by the Communist Bloc. Even at the height of power and promise, fear rules our souls.

THE HOT WAR: 1960–1969

America and the USSR battle for control of space, culminating in the 1969 moon landing—perhaps the pinnacle of human technological achievement and national will. The Cuban Missile Crisis leads the world as close as it ever comes to nuclear war. It is the era of bomb shelters and *Dr. Strangelove*, as the superpowers strive toward ever more terrifying weapons. Some see Armageddon as inevitable, perhaps even desirable.

Anticolonial brush wars rage across Africa and Asia, dragging America into a twelve-year conflict in Vietnam that all but destroys the nation's sense of purpose. Violence colors politics at all levels. Civil rights workers are murdered by the Ku Klux Klan, triggering a brutal battle between Klansmen and the FBI. War protesters are beaten and gassed, and American TV viewers get a front row seat for the police riot at the '68 Chicago Democratic convention. Soviet tanks crush the Prague Spring that same year. Assassinations dot the political landscape as two Kennedys, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Ngo Dinh Diem, Patrice Lumumba, and Rafael Trujillo are killed by assassins' bullets. Charles de Gaulle barely escapes, and Fidel Castro survives (but not for the U.S. government's lack of trying). The Arab-Israeli wars continue to grow in intensity, and the Middle East is a political powder keg ready to explode.

THE DREAM DECAYS: 1970–1979

America's war in Vietnam, the tragedy and failure of the social movement of the '60s, and the Watergate scandal leave the country disillusioned, unwilling to act on the world stage and seeking decadent distractions from rising social problems. This is the era when urban blight devours the inner cities, when municipal governments declare insolvency, and rampant inflation consumes savings. Around the world, terrorism is on the rise. The SLA kidnaps Patty Hearst, the Munich Olympics are a bloodbath, and Carlos "the Jackal" creates a terrorist legend. The Iranian hostage crisis and the U.S. response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan expose America as impotent, timid, and bumbling. OPEC's oil embargo demonstrates how America's enemies could shut off the economy as easily as flipping a light switch. Many believe America will continue its downward spiral to the status of second-rate power, not

permitted the merciful death of a white-hot nuclear Armageddon. Confidence in political leaders drops, and extremist solutions look more and more appealing.

ESCALATION TO GLOBALISM: 1980–1989

The 1980s are a strange combination of jingoistic patriotism, rampant avarice, and even a touch of optimism. Not since the 1960s has the arms race been so intense or the level of confrontation between East and West so high. America regains its national pride by beating up poor and helpless countries such as Grenada and Panama, but gets bloodied when stumbling into Lebanon. England fights a meaningless and expensive war with Argentina over the destiny of a few thousand Falklands sheep. The savings and loan industry is bled white by well-connected embezzlers until it collapses, requiring a massive taxpayer bailout. Corporate raiders find there is easy money to be made not through building American industry, but by destroying it. Secret wars are fought in Central America using laundered arms-for-hostages money. As prohibition built the American Mafia, the public's appetite for cocaine builds the South American drug cartels, and the resulting violence makes the bootlegger wars of the 1920s seem tame. Whole nations are destabilized by the drug economy. At home, the War on Drugs erodes many search-and-seizure rights once held inviolate. Public health officials all but ignore the AIDS outbreak until it escalates from a public-health issue into a political tar baby.

Meanwhile, the Soviets get their own taste of Vietnam as conflicts in Afghanistan drag on for year after bloody year, exposing the Soviet soldier as a drunken, spiritless conscript not old enough to shave. Then, almost without warning, the Berlin Wall falls. Eastern Europe makes a mad break from its Soviet masters. Germany rushes toward reunification. Romanian tyrant Nicolae Ceausescu dies in front of a firing squad. American policymakers look on gobsmacked, and publicly wonder what will happen next.

NEW WORLD ORDER: 1990–MODERN DAY

America's military orchestrates the greatest public relations coup of all time by blasting Iraq into the Stone Age every night on CNN. The teetering Soviet Empire collapses like a jigsaw puzzle following a drunken and inept coup attempt by the ossified old guard. Yugoslavia trades in economic viability and political stability for rubble, ethnic cleansing, and war crimes. America is left as the sole superpower, deeply divided about how to use its newfound clout. Technology and marketing turn computers into home appliances. The Internet changes communications and commerce forever. AIDS becomes the first of a long line of emerging viruses to confound epidemiologists and slaughter populations. They are joined by the return of defeated biological foes whose reckless exposure to antibiotics is now producing new and stronger variants.

With its soldiers killed and harassed by the Somalis they were saving from starvation, America is less and less willing to be the world's policeman. Russia

looks as if it's trying to reenact the last days of the Weimar Republic, hemorrhaging the secrets of nuclear, chemical, and biological weaponry to the highest bidders. Western Europe is incapable of putting out the fires in its backyard without U.S. money and incentive. The "People's" Republic of China is perhaps the most untouchable outlaw nation on Earth, running roughshod over human rights, international law, and trade agreements, but unassailable due to its economic clout. Even Disney wants to see Mickey Mouse watches on the wrists of a billion Chinese citizens. Huge corporations begin to dwarf nations in setting the global political agenda. Africa turns into a corpse factory as Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Algeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia compete for the most gruesome self-inflicted genocide. In Seattle, ordinary citizens express the growing sense of individual powerlessness by striking out at a world trade conference. In New York, terrorists destroy the World Trade Center.

And the future? It's so bright you have to wear shades—but the light is that of an oncoming train.

SUBGENRES

Call of Cthulhu can be played in a number of ways. Each is a variation on the basic genre of fighting the Mythos. For the GM, a subgenre is a source of story ideas; for players, it's a framework within which they create investigators and play the game.

Each subgenre includes a sample group. This is an organization that supports your group of investigators, providing them with a reason to work together and giving them a source of new investigators when death or madness takes a player character for good.

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

The Lovecraft Country subgenre takes the investigators into fictional New England to encounter locals created by H. P. Lovecraft, specifically within the Miskatonic River Valley in Massachusetts. Along this river can be found adventure settings such as the squalid, backwoods hamlet of Dunwich, the doomed and decaying port city of Innsmouth, the dream-shrouded artist colony of Kingsport, and the historic college town of Arkham, home of Miskatonic University and its infamous library. The kinds of investigators commonly found here are archaeologists, anthropologists, antiquarians, and academics of all stripes—Lovecraft's preferred characters. Others include artists, dilettantes, physicians, physicists, and, every once in a while, a policeman. Such investigators are pretty much on their own, without resources or reinforcements to support their fight against the Mythos. They often come into contact with the Mythos accidentally and are forced to improvise with the materials at hand.

SAMPLE PC GROUP: MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY

This micro-Ivy League college is a liberal arts institution in the sleepy college town of Arkham, Massachusetts. Known for sterling academics and an unusually high murder rate, Miskatonic is home to superb departments of

archaeology, anthropology, and history, as well as a minor but prestigious medical school.

Investigators based at Miskatonic can draw on useful information resources, such as academic experts in obscure disciplines whose knowledge may be crucial in the course of a typical *Call of Cthulhu* adventure. Some faculty members have even encountered the horrors of the Mythos personally, such as Dr. Armitage of the campus library, and can offer valuable advice and subtle aid. Finally, the library holds copies of several rare occult tomes, including the infamous *Necronomicon*.

HOMETOWN HORRORS

With the Hometown Horrors subgenre, the GM finds ways to insinuate the cosmic horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos into the everyday world, usually in a location familiar to the players, such as the town you all live in. In effect, you're creating your own Lovecraft Country. Hometown Horrors usually involve a band of investigators drawn from the community, ordinary folks who would not normally pursue the mysteries and horrors of the Mythos if it were not forced upon them. Having been brought together in an impromptu way, the investigators can become the core of a campaign group for future adventures.

SAMPLE PC GROUP: THE THERON MARKS SOCIETY

Founded in 1920 by occult scholar and explorer Theron Marks, the society that bears his name was a typical group of *Call of Cthulhu* heroes: intrepid, inquisitive, and a little too quick on the trigger. Marks recruited a curious assortment of part-time, low-rent occult investigators, then set about thwarting the shadowy horrors he had encountered in the course of his travels in distant lands—including trips to alien worlds, if Society rumors are to be believed. He and his group had numerous run-ins with the law and cultists alike. A steady stream of dead or insane Society alumni spoke to the dangers of their both-guns-blazing approach to investigation. The eventual fate of Theron Marks and his Society is a mystery that your investigators might well solve.

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

The Private Troubleshooters subgenre puts the investigators into an organization chartered to solve mysteries and gather information. This could be a national news service, such as a member of the Hearst newspaper empire, or a tabloid television show. They could be employees of a big private investigations firm such as the Pinkertons or the Burns Detective Agency, or a modern mercenary outfit such as Executive Outcomes. National or international scientific organizations such as the National Geographic Society, the Royal Geographical Society, or the Smithsonian Institute give the investigators an expense account and a reason to look into mysteries around the world. Private organizations exist that even track down incidents of the occult and paranormal activities and debunk them, as Harry Houdini did in the '20s and the *Skeptical Inquirer* does today.

SAMPLE PC GROUP: THE GILCHRIST TRUST

Professor Hiram Bannister, a noted parapsychologist, is the head of an unusually well-funded psychical research group known as the Gilchrist Trust. Endowed by an eccentric millionaire, the Trust has a very specific charter. If they can deliver substantive proof of the supernatural by late 1930, Prof. Bannister's group receives a lifetime of funding and support. If they fail, the money stops cold. In the meantime, there are a large number of milestone goals left behind in the jumbled files of Dr. Franklin Gilchrist's world travels, such as hunting for Yeti or investigating haunted houses. There's also his vast New Jersey estate, which contains warehouses full of mysterious and sometimes dangerous artifacts recovered from decades of exploration by Gilchrist and his mysteriously vanished son. All these items need to be cataloged, researched, and sometimes destroyed for the safety of humanity. Meanwhile, the law firm of Mark, Megrem, and Fincher casts a skeptical eye at its late client's foundation. Penny-pinching accountants at the firm are liable to cut an active investigation short at the slightest provocation, with little tolerance for wild, unsubstantiated stories of bloody cults and mad gods.

BADGES AND SECRETS

The Badges and Secrets subgenre drops the investigators into a world of cops, G-men, and spies, where they pursue adventures because they're charged by society with unraveling crimes and mysteries. They do so with official sanction and official powers, but their efforts are hampered. They can't tell superiors their cases could have paranormal explanations without being ridiculed as fools and madmen. The paradox here is that the investigators are using logical, methodical, and scientific means to unravel the irrational, chaotic machinations of the Mythos and its agents.

SAMPLE PC GROUP: DELTA GREEN

Founded in the wake of the government's 1929 Raid on Innsmouth, the group known by the code name Delta Green fought the forces of the Cthulhu Mythos with honor, but without glory. After a disastrous 1969 operation in preinvasion Cambodia, Delta Green was shut down by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were ignorant of the terrible secrets the agents of DG had uncovered over the years. Undaunted, the group's leaders changed Delta Green from a legitimate agency to an illegal conspiracy, operating within the federal bureaucracy and stealing money and resources from anywhere it could for the sake of the good fight. DG agents today are secret conspirators drawn from dozens of federal agencies, from the FBI to the IRS and NASA. They keep their DG operations quiet for the sake of their careers and for humanity itself, walking a razor-wire path between success and tragedy.

ESOTERIC ORDERS

The Esoteric Orders subgenre is one where the investigators don't need to be exposed to the existence of the occult, largely because they begin as believers. More than that, they are members of an organized group that reinforces that belief. Such organizations fully embrace the existence of the supernatural and require no convincing in such matters. These organizations could be something as guardedly outré as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, as drolly eccentric as a Society for Psychical Research, or as prosaically quirky as a group of amateur UFOlogists. They could even be members of a New Age religion who discover there is more to their leadership's beliefs than harmonized energy and self-actualization. Perhaps the investigators have been hoodwinked into the worship of the Great Old Ones? At least

they have the belief system to look closer and learn the truth.

It would be cumbersome to give a detailed, consecutive account of our wanderings inside that cavernous, aeon-dead honeycomb of primal masonry; that monstrous lair of elder secrets which now echoed for the first time, after uncounted epochs, to the tread of human feet.

—H.P. Lovecraft,
“At the Mountains of Madness”

SAMPLE PC GROUP: THE GOLDEN DAWN

This group of mystics and amateur academics pursues enlightenment and secret knowledge with equal fervor in the misty streets of Victorian London. Led by the eccentric Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, and disrupted by political struggles between the great Irish poet W. B. Yeats and a young Aleister Crowley, the Golden Dawn is an example of a real-life esoteric order suitable for use as a *Call of Cthulhu* subgenre. While some members of the Dawn busy themselves with drawing-room séances and the secret messages of angels, others explore the mysteries of standing stones and the horrors behind the legend of King Arthur. This group focuses on the folklore and ghostly history of the British Isles, with the lively yet spectral continent of Europe just a channel away.

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

In the Global Hot Spots subgenre, the investigators are brought together by both the organizations they belong to and by the situation they are in. Here the investigators might be U.S. Marines stationed in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion, members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, behind-the-scenes infiltrators in the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge, or Red Cross workers in a third-world disaster area. Among the death and destruction of what some call “skull-based economies,” the Mythos lurks. Is the chaos of civil war and genocide man-made, or spawned by the machinations of the Mythos and its agents? That's what the investigators must learn against a backdrop of constant peril. They'll have resources to rely on and reinforcements to call in, but as in the Private Troubleshooters and Badges and Secrets subgenres, they'll have a difficult time engaging those resources if they tell their superiors the truth about the real enemy.

SAMPLE PC GROUP: THE BLACKWELLS

Sam Blackwell runs a tight outfit. His team of mercenaries is recruited from the world's finest law-enforcement organizations, militaries, and intelligence agencies. That makes the Blackwells so expensive that only the wealthiest international corporations can hire them—but no one else would need them. Now that companies are the new nations, commerce is more political than ever. Why terrorize a well-guarded embassy when you can attack an oil rig, or a remote customer service office, or a sweatshop footwear factory? The Blackwells specialize in risk assessment and security consultation, but for their richest clients they take a proactive approach: illegal and covert search-and-destroy missions against terrorist groups, rioting indigenous tribes, and even rival corporate security teams. But in the midst of these morally bankrupt shadow wars in hot spots around the globe, Sam Blackwell pursues his own secret agenda: revenge against the mysterious international cult that murdered his entire family in retaliation for an early operation. What is the Cult of Cthulhu, and who is their leader? Sam Blackwell wants to know, and he always gets his man.

OTHER SUBGENRES

While this book only covers the kinds of adventures available during the last century or so, other subgenres are certainly possible for *Call of Cthulhu*. They could be set in the distant past or even the far future. What's important to remember when creating a new subgenre is maintaining balance between the investigators and the Mythos—or rather, preserving the imbalance that already exists. A good subgenre should help your group build a coherent and exciting storyline, without turning the forces of the Mythos into a cartoon or a straw man.

While it might appeal to some players to try a far future/sci-fi subgenre and equip their investigators with powered battle armor and plasma rifles, the GM should remember to balance the scenario so that brute-force solutions fail. Gamemasters should not allow the investigators to substitute tools and weapons for intelligence and cleverness. Similarly, the GM cannot expect the investigators to resolve a scenario by destroying a shoggoth if the investigators are medieval European monks and knights whose weapons are hopelessly ineffective. The adversaries must be balanced with the investigators' ability to defeat them, whether by force or guile. This balance is the most important and difficult factor to maintain in *Call of Cthulhu*.

PLOT HOOKS

Once you have a time period and subgenre in mind, it's good to have some adventure ideas you can tackle right off the bat. This section offers dozens of different plot hooks, organized by time period and subgenre. Of course, you aren't limited to just the story ideas you'll find at your campaign's intersection—they're meant to be representative of the kinds of stories you'll probably tell. Feel free to pick and choose ideas you like from anywhere.

Many of these plot hooks are inspired by short stories, books, movies, and television shows. Because these are usefully common points of reference you can find and enjoy for yourself, we have included the sources for such ideas. Stories and books include their respective authors. These aren't recommendations for intrinsically good dramatic works—some of the films, for example, are really bad. But all contain nuggets of stories that could work well in your *Call of Cthulhu* campaign.

Because his stories appear so frequently, attribution to H. P. Lovecraft is simply abbreviated as HPL. Also, many of the films cited are based on books or stories; the film is usually listed owing to its ease of rapid digestion for harried GMs seeking basic story ideas. In some cases, the film and the book are cited in separate plot hooks because of useful differences between them.

THE AGE OF EMPIRES: 1890–1909

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

June 1892, meteorite falls into yard of Nahum Gardner's farm near Arkham. ("The Colour Out of Space," HPL)

1905, Miskatonic U. medical student Herbert West uses the Arkham typhoid outbreak as cover for his experiments in reanimating the dead. ("Herbert West—Re-animator," HPL)

Rumors circulate that Miskatonic University's wild bohemian set is involved in black magic and impossible happenings. Are these the activities of attention-seeking posers, or is there something fouler afoot? ("The Thing on the Doorstep," HPL)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

The evil and unnatural carnival comes to town and spreads its corruption. (*Something Wicked This Way Comes*, Ray Bradbury)

An unscrupulous and decadent mine owner uses necromancy to revivify the dead and put them to work in his mines, which are so dangerous that no locals will work them. (*The Plague of Zombies*)

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

Whodunits in the vein of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

1893, Edwin M. Lillibridge, reporter for the Providence *Telegram*, disappears during his investigation of the Starry Wisdom cult. ("The Haunter of the Dark," HPL)

Anthropologists unearth a mummified proto-human in the Far East and transport it by rail to civilization. The corpse is actually the residence for a hibernating alien intelligence that hungers for human life and knowledge. (*Horror Express*)

Following up on a previous expedition, investigators discover a passage into an underground realm, revealing prehistoric survivors, subterranean oceans, and the remnants of lost civilizations. (*Journey to the Center of the Earth*, Jules Verne)

An expedition to the South Pole seeks "the passage through," the opening into the hollow earth, but is marooned when its leadership is killed and its ship crushed by winter ice. (*The Forbidden Quest*)

A dirigible-borne expedition to the Arctic Ocean discovers a volcanic island inhabited by survivors from an ancient epoch. (*The Island at the Top of the World*)

An expedition to Africa discovers a lost civilization ruled by a cruel, immortal empress, who holds the secret of eternal life and is worshiped as a goddess by the inhabitants of her realm. (*She*)

BADGES AND SECRETS

Urban lawmen must unravel the series of gruesome and inexplicable murders in the vein of Jack the Ripper—only to find that they are ritual cult murders.

Lawmen on the frontier find themselves facing some ancient horror the local natives know but fear to speak of. (“They Bite,” Anthony Boucher)

November 1, 1907: Cthulhu cult in Louisiana swamp broken up by police raid led by Inspector John Raymond Legrasse. (“The Call of Cthulhu,” HPL)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn stumble upon the Mythos while searching for occult powers. Do they try to harness the power, or seal it away?

Investigating a haunted house, the Society for Psychical Research finds more than it bargained for.

April 17, 1908: last known sighting of noted occultist Alonzo Typer. (“The Diary of Alonzo Typer,” HPL)

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

Natives in the Belgian Congo take up the worship of Nyarlathotep to destroy their brutal colonial oppressors. (“Than Curse the Darkness,” David Drake)

Westerners trapped in China discover there is more behind the Boxer Rebellion than nationalism and mysticism.

Japanese Imperialism begins with secret societies dedicated to annexing Korea, Manchuria, and the Russian far east. Is their true master the Emperor, or something older and fouler?

The Spanish-American War: As America steals the remnants of the Spanish Empire, strange and undisturbed realms are invaded. Evils undisturbed since

the last Arawak died stir in the mountains of Cuba. In the jungles of the Philippines, temples and other remnants of the sunken civilization of Mu have lain undisturbed for thousands of years. Are their dark gods roused by blundering American soldiers?

THE ROUGH BEAST: 1910-1919

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

1913: Wilbur Whateley and his horrific twin brother are born in Dunwich on Roodmas. (“The Dunwich Horror,” HPL)

Dr. Nathaniel Peaslee suffers a bout of “amnesia.” In truth, his mind has been replaced by one of the time-traveling Great Race, who then uses his body to explore the modern world and perform tasks important to its race’s future destiny. (“The Shadow Out of Time,” HPL)

1915: Events quickly begin to deteriorate around the Whateley farm in Dunwich. Wilbur grows with unnatural speed. Locals believe that the Whateleys are performing ancient pagan practices among the standing stones on Sentinel Hill. (“The Dunwich Horror,” HPL)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

Mentally and physically disfigured veterans return home to communities that fear and loathe their injuries. What



GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

Ghouls feast on the mountains of dead filling the trenches and no-man's-land of Flanders. Their cult gathers adherents as the slaughter continues apparently without end.

1915: Herbert West, as a doctor in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Flanders, continues his ghastly experiments in reanimating the dead. ("Herbert West—Re-animator," HPL)

August 20, 1917: German U-29 malfunctions and sinks, settling among the undersea ruins of an unknown civilization on the ocean floor. ("The Temple," HPL)

Wars in the outposts of the Empires, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Polynesia bring "civilized" man into contact with horrors that have been undisturbed for millennia.

An off-course German U-boat, the U-33, stumbles upon a island where terrible prehistoric survivors still thrive. (*The Land That Time Forgot*)

mad bargains will they make to regain their limbs or calm their shattered psyches?

Millions of young men come home not at all, except in coffins. Grieving parents and spouses would do anything to have their loved ones back. Some unlucky few find a way to bring them back, with loathsome and terrible results.

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

1912: African explorer Sir Arthur Jermyn rediscovers the ancient city of the White Apes that his great-great-great-grandfather had written of, and soon discovers the hideous truth of his ancestry. ("Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family," HPL)

Any "normal" investigation is complicated by the war. Borders are closed, communications are restricted, and the sea lanes are a shooting gallery in a new kind of conflict: unrestricted submarine warfare.

BADGES AND SECRETS

Global war means global espionage. Spies are supposed to discover secrets, but there are secrets man was not meant to know. Perhaps the agents of some government agency have dabbled with powers they shouldn't have in a misguided attempt to change the course of the war?

An army of deserters from all sides in the war have carved out a kingdom in the Carpathian Mountains. Is their commander just emulating the infamous warlord Vlad the Impaler, or is he truly Dracula? (*Masks of Evil*)

Centuries-old Fu Manchu and his secret society, the Si-Fan, plot the overthrow of western governments through threats, assassination (successful against even the most well-protected targets, and carried out by bizarre and sometimes supernatural means), and darker methods. The full resources of the British Empire, then at its height, prove inadequate to stop or capture the sinister Chinese mastermind or disperse his network. (*The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, Sax Rohmer)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Spiritualists or members of occult societies such as the Golden Dawn (now splintered into many rival factions, one of them led by the infamous Aleister Crowley) could discover that their own government is trying to use the occult to aid their nation's cause. Knowing the horrific costs such bargains can exact, can they stop such foolish dabbling and not be branded traitors to their nation?

THE JAZZ AGE: 1920-1929

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

1921: Dr. Allen Hallsey, who was reanimated by Herbert West in 1905 and confined to the Sefton Asylum, is forcibly liberated by a group of Herbert West's other escaped re-animation experiments, who then wreak bloody vengeance upon their tormentor. ("Herbert West—Re-animator," HPL)

During the winter of 1927-28 officials of the Federal government made a strange and secret investigation of certain conditions in the ancient Massachusetts seaport of Innsmouth. The public first learned of it in February, when a vast series of raids and arrests occurred, followed by the deliberate burning and dynamiting—under suitable precautions—of an enormous number of crumbling, worm-eaten, and supposedly empty houses along the abandoned waterfront. Uninquiring souls let this occurrence pass as one of the major clashes in a spasmodic war on liquor. Keener news-followers, however, wondered at the prodigious number of arrests, the abnormally large force of men used in making them, and the secrecy surrounding the disposal of the prisoners. No trials, or even definite charges, were reported; nor were any of the captives seen thereafter in the regular gaols of the nation.

—H.P. Lovecraft,
"The Shadow Over Innsmouth"

A few weeks later, the Horror escapes from the abandoned Whateley farmhouse. ("The Dunwich Horror," HPL)

September 12, 1928: Professor Albert Wilmarth of Miskatonic University barely escapes the agents of the mi-go in Vermont. ("The Whisperer in Darkness," HPL)

September 15, 1928: Professors Armitage, Rice, and Morgan from

Miskatonic University confront and banish the Son of Yog-Sothoth in Dunwich. ("The Dunwich Horror," HPL)

Poet Edward Derby falls under the sway of the much younger Asenath Waite, who is in truth but a shell housing her father's intellect. Derby is the sorcerer's intended new "home." ("The Thing on the Doorstep," HPL)

Mathematician Walter Gilman dies horribly, his heart eaten out, after staying in Arkham's infamous "Witch House." ("The Dreams in the Witch House," HPL)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

Doctor Munoz "dies" when his effort to preserve his reanimated body fails dramatically in New York City. ("Cool Air," HPL)

Professor George Gammell Angell is assassinated by agents of the Cult of Cthulhu after he learns too much about the cult's activities. His nephew continues his dangerous researches. ("The Call of Cthulhu," HPL)

Charles Dexter Ward of Providence succeeds in resurrecting his ancient ancestor Joseph Curwen, only to have the grim sorcerer murder him and take his place. Only the intervention of the family physician confounds Curwen's evil plans. (*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, HPL)

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

Whodunits in the style of Agatha Christie.

August 8, 1924: Investigation of catacombs under Exham Priory in England ends in disaster as Mr. Thornton, a psychic, and Mr. Delapore, the owner, are driven mad. Delapore murders and cannibalizes his partner in leading the investigation, Captain Edward Norrys. ("The Rats in the Walls," HPL)

August 1928: Sealed entryway to underground world of K'n-Yan discovered under "ghost mound" near Binger, Oklahoma. ("The Mound," HPL and Hazel Heald)

Investigators uncovering the true fate of the Martense clan dynamited the Martense mansion and the entire top of Tempest Mountain, blocked up numerous mound burrows, and destroyed certain overnourished trees. ("The Lurking Fear," HPL)

After finding a message in a bottle, an expedition is mounted to find the survivors marooned on the "lost continent." (*The People That Time Forgot*)

Archaeologists unearth mummy of long dead Egyptian sorcerer and accidentally revive him, unleashing the ancient evil. (*The Mummy*, 1932 and 1999)

BADGES AND SECRETS

Winter 1927-1928: Federal agents investigate town of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, and the Esoteric Order of Dagon. ("The Shadow over Innsmouth," HPL)

February 1928: Federal raid on Innsmouth: hybrids are rounded up and imprisoned, docks and warehouses dynamited, and torpedoes fired into the Devil's Reef offshore. ("The Shadow over Innsmouth," HPL)

A depraved gangster turns to the powers of the Mythos to destroy his enemies, line his pockets, and gain limitless power.

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Investigators must rescue their associate who has fallen under the influence of a powerful cult leader and his minions. (*The Devil Rides Out*)

Thrill-seeking members of the Lost Generation dabble in dangerous occult mysteries, seeking meaning and finding only horror.

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

Millions die during the Russian Civil War and resulting famine. Ghouls, migrating from the killing fields of Europe, thrive in the charnel house of the USSR.

March 23-April 2, 1925: Sunken city of R'lyeh remains above the surface of the South Pacific. Psychic emanations of dreaming Cthulhu results in worldwide episodes of madness and erratic behavior among the psychically sensitive. ("The Call of Cthulhu," HPL)

April 2, 1925: Crew of steamship *Emma* encounter R'lyeh. Only Captain Gustaf Johansen escapes as Cthulhu wakes and the island sinks. ("The Call of Cthulhu," HPL)

THE RISE OF DARKNESS: 1930-1939

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Edward Derby, in a desperate attempt to save himself, murders his wife Asenath in hopes of thus destroying his father-in-law, Ephraim Waite, who is inhabiting and controlling Asenath's body. To his horror, the old wizard takes over Derby's body and forces Derby's mind into his wife's cadaver. A family friend, discovering Derby's journal, learns the truth and murders Derby's body, slaying the wizard who inhabits it. ("The Thing on the Doorstep," HPL)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

Writer Robert Harrison Blake dies from a mysterious lightning strike after researching the deserted Sentinel Hill church in Providence, previously used by the Starry Wisdom cult. Dr. Dexter, a reputable physician with a taste for odd folklore, disposes of a Mythos artifact discovered in the church by Blake, called the Shining Trapezohedron, by throwing it into Narragansett Bay. ("The Haunter of the Dark," HPL)

Bankrupt farmers in the American dust bowl invoke Shub-Niggurath to save their farms and instead bring a reign of unnatural and loathsome fecundity.

The Depression brings lost souls to seek the King in Yellow among the decaying, breadline-choked cities.

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

Whodunits in the style of Dashiell Hammett.

November 9, 1930: The Miskatonic University Antarctic Expedition arrives at McMurdo Sound. (*At the Mountains of Madness*, HPL)

January 22, 1931: Professor Lake of the MU Antarctic Expedition penetrates the interior of the continent using aircraft, discovers unknown but well-preserved advanced life forms, and then loses radio contact with expedition HQ. (*At*

THE AMERICAN GIANT WAKES: 1940-1949

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Miskatonic University Library's restricted book collection has been the target of sorcerers and cultists for many decades. Now foreign agents are trying to liberate the *Necronomicon* for high-ranking Nazi occultists.

the Mountains of Madness, HPL)

Archaeologist must find the tomb of Genghis Khan and recover powerful artifacts before the cultists and their diabolical leader can use them to incite an Asian uprising. (*The Mask of Fu Manchu*)

July 17, 1935: Miskatonic University Expedition to Great Western Desert in Australia ends. Expedition leader Professor Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee stumbles upon an entrance to a buried alien city but later cannot locate the entrance again. ("The Shadow Out of Time," HPL)

An isolated South Seas island is the home of a scientist obsessed with unravelling man's evolution. Using surgery and drugs on animals, he has created a population of semihuman creatures. Marooned investigators will have to decide who are the monsters when the experiments rebel. (*Island of Lost Souls*)

Lost explorers stumble across a hidden paradise, Shangri-La, somewhere on the Tibetan plateau, where the inhabitants can live to be centuries old, as long as they never leave. (*Lost Horizons*)

Rumors persist of another hidden enclave, its dark twin, named Leng, home to the Tcho-Tcho people.

BADGES AND SECRETS

Armed robbers steal more than they bargained for: a Mythos artifact or totem.

The Nazi leadership scours the world for items of occult significance. (*Raiders of the Lost Ark, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Members of a spiritualist society soon find themselves the targets of Nazi agents infiltrating their group to discover whether they have any secrets the Führer can use.

A wealthy and powerful sorcerer and his cult plan a sacrifice on the site of the fortress he betrayed during the Great War. Only his old nemesis, nearly as mad as he is, has a chance of stopping him. (*The Black Cat*)

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

New conquests by the Nazis, Italians, and Japanese accidentally disturb the wards and sigils trapping an ancient and evil supernatural force, unleashing it on the locals and invaders alike. (*The Keep*)

Fleeing Stalin's bloody purges, defectors bring secrets of the Kremlin west—including ancient tomes from the lost library of Ivan the Terrible.

Young American veterans pick up all manner of souvenirs from around the globe and return home with them. Who knows what powers or poisons are contained in the squat, ugly, octopoid statue brought back from a South Pacific archipelago?

War creates all kinds of refugees. Fearing Nazi crematoriums, a few horrific devotees of the Great Old Ones flee from the Old World. Some of these "displaced persons" carry horrible physical taints and are kept hidden from public view. Unnoticed within a wave of immigrants, they come to America to test the nation's limits on freedom of religion.

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

Whodunits in the style of Raymond Chandler.

The hardened private investigator gets a case that just doesn't add up, at least not until all thought of wholesomeness, hope, and reason are thrown out. Such concepts cannot exist alongside the Mythos.

As the Nazi and Imperial Japanese war machines roll across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, the investigators are hired by museums, private collectors, or other less savory persons to retrieve "certain treasures" (and tomes) from the occupied territories. The clients may even be completely anonymous, but they certainly can't be worse than the Nazis, can they?

BADGES AND SECRETS

Allied and Axis agents scour the world for occult artifacts that might tip the balance of power. What each side cannot secure for its own use, it destroys.

Nazi occultists plan to contact one of the ancient races of the Mythos and form an alliance or, worse, summon one of the Outer Gods to Earth.

American and Soviet agents scour the ruins of the Reich for the occult artifacts collected by the Nazi leadership. Such terrible objects of power must be kept out of Stalin's grasp.

Nazi sorcerers flee to South America or find sanctuary with American

agencies. It's up to the investigators to root them out and exterminate them, even while their own agencies are trying to utilize the Nazis' arcane powers.

What crashed in the New Mexico desert in 1947? Was it a weather balloon, some artifact of the Mythos, a salvaged Nazi weapon, a flying disk, or something worse? Are the investigators trying to find the truth, or cover it up?

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Following the first postwar UFO sighting, members of a "UFO contactee" group want to make psychic contact with benevolent "space brothers." What they actually manage to contact is neither benevolent nor brotherly. It is, however, from outer space, and very, very hungry.

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

All the world is one hot spot in this era. Even more than World War One, the conflict opens up hidden and obscured corners of the world to the prying eyes of all.

American Marines storm ashore to find the Japanese garrison vanished, the island abandoned like the *Andrea Doria*. What did the Japanese disturb? What was called down on them? How can the Americans survive what's coming?

When Allied soldiers liberate one of the Nazi death camps, they discover not only the evidence of sadistic medical and scientific experiments but also obscene occult rituals. Did the Nazis succeed in their summoning? And if so, is something hiding among the liberated prisoners?

As the Communist Chinese push back the Nationalists, they try to wipe away China's past. The cults and secret societies that have thrived there for centuries are forced to flee—to Burma, Thailand, Formosa, and even overseas to America, bringing the worship of the Great Old Ones with them.

THE COLD WAR: 1950-1959

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Kingsport, the dream-shrouded artist colony that has always wavered just on the edge of dreams, becomes a haven for the emerging Beat Generation. More and more questing souls find their way to the Strange High House in the Mist and into the realms beyond. ("The Strange High House in the Mist," HPL)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

Alien doppelgangers, birthed from enormous seed pods, begin replacing people around town in a silent invasion of the Earth. (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*)

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

A research laboratory on an isolated island becomes a death trap as escaped, mutated lab animals besiege the lab, having grown enormous, savage, and voracious. (*The Killer Shrews*)

Following an earthquake, archaeologists in Central Asia discover a passage into an underground realm, isolated for thousands of years, where decadent human masters brutally exploit a population of semihuman slaves. (*The Mole People*)

Investigators attempting to debunk the beliefs of a cult leader find themselves marked for death as the cult leader summons a extra-dimensional horror to make examples of them. (*The Curse of the Demon*)

An investigator is hired by a mysterious client, only to discover that is he working for a powerful occult entity and that the true target of the creature's interests may be closer than he thinks. (*Angel Heart*)

BADGES AND SECRETS

Government scientists probe a mysterious radioactive cloud atop an Alpine mountain. The cloud is the entryway into our dimension for a horde of alien invaders. (*The Crawling Eye*)

Air Force personnel and scientists find themselves trapped in an arctic research station with an alien monster impervious to normal weapons and extremely hostile to terrestrial life. (*The Thing*)

An expedition returns from Antarctica, its members dead or mad. The fossilized plants they bring back turn out to be alive, mobile, and predatory. (*The Navy vs. the Night Monsters*)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

UFO contactee cults proliferate with the popularity in the belief in UFOs. Agents of the mi-go infiltrate them to acquire influence and understanding of humanity.

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

The Korean War is the great confrontation between East and West, the hottest spot in the Cold War. No end is known to the kind of strangeness that American GIs might encounter in the mountains of "the Hermit Kingdom."

The anticolonial wars begin as former colonies demand the freedom promised them during World War II. England, France, Belgium, Portugal, and the Netherlands fight to protect the remnants of their 19th-century empires, while some natives turn to the power promised by the worship of the Great Old Ones

of their home environment. (*Quatermass II*)

A derelict alien spaceship unearthed beneath the city is discovered to be linked with paranormal occurrences dating back centuries. Once unearthed, its psychic emanations grow stronger, poisoning any human minds it touches. (*Quatermass and the Pit*)

to counter the force of modern arms.

The Middle East heats up as the birth of the state of Israel in 1948 displaces millions of Palestinians.

THE HOT WAR: 1960–1969

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

The Hippies follow the Beats (Beatniks) into the artist colony of Kingsport. Still seeking the same escape from reality, they too find their way into the Dreamlands or the Strange High House in the Mist. Others may find themselves drawn to the cult that has always haunted Kingsport. ("The Strange High House in the Mist" and "The Festival," HPL)

Attempting to probe the mysteries of the human mind, a Miskatonic University psychology professor and his graduate students experiment with the Plutonian Drug, Liao, and attract the attention of the savage and ravenous Hounds of Tindalos. Other experiments might lead to calling the Render of the Veils, Daoloth. ("The Hounds of Tindalos," Frank Belknap Long; "The Render of the Veils," Ramsey Campbell)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

After the whole town is inexplicably rendered unconscious for 12 hours, many women in town become pregnant. The children, actually alien-human hybrids, are powerful psychics who ruthlessly destroy anyone who opposes their plans for the Earth. (*Village of the Damned*)

The Hippies seem harmless, in a ragged, vagabond sort of way. But does their message have the siren call of a cult of youth, where the old have no place? What will parents do when their children decide their continued existence is no longer necessary? Any number of rituals and spells could be slipped to unsuspecting flower children by unscrupulous cultists under the label of "mantras" and "meditation chants."

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

A laboratory on an isolated island accidentally spawns mutant creatures that subsist on calcium and devour human bone to get it. They threaten to slaughter the island's inhabitants and escape. (*Island of Terror*)

Archaeologists discover a hidden grotto beneath a Mayan temple and accidentally disturb the ancient and protoplasmic god that guards the site. (*Caltiki, the Immortal Monster*)

BADGES AND SECRETS

Whodunits in the style of John Le Carré.

A spaceship orbits the Earth and returns with a mostly dead crew. The sole survivor has become the host for an alien organism that mutates his body and escapes with the intention of germinating. The investigators must hunt the former astronaut down and destroy the alien horror he has become. (*The Quatermass Experiment*)

Alien invaders, parasitically possessing humans, infiltrate the government to get the funding and manpower they need to terraform our world into a replica

Psychic investigators probe the mysteries of a haunted house but soon find the investigators are falling under the house's outré influence. (*The Haunting; The Haunting of Hill House*, Shirley Jackson; *The Legend of Hell House*, Richard Matheson; *The House on Haunted Hill*).

An occult artifact, the skull of the Marquis de Sade, becomes available at an auction house. Its corruptive influence begins to undermine the sanity of anyone who gains possession of it. (*The Skull*)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Nuclear Armageddon looms over the world. Everyone lives in the shadow of the bomb. Would the worshipers of the Great Old Ones try to provoke World War Three to clear the Earth of humanity for their alien masters? (*Fail-Safe; Dr. Strangelove*)

The Anticolonial Wars: Now America has found its way into the fray, bolstering corrupt and brutal governments because they pantomime opposition to communism. Secret and not-so-secret wars blaze across Vietnam, Laos, Angola, and the Congo, just to name a few, and will soon engulf peaceful Cambodia as well.

Americans find themselves fighting people they have never heard of in places they have never heard of. Such places may hide the Mythos and its worshipers, more often among America's allies than its insurgent enemies.

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

As the big cities decay, populations flee to the suburbs. Will old abandoned communities such as Innsmouth or Dunwich be rediscovered by developers looking to build bedroom communities on the ruins of such ghastly locales? Could this create a Mythos version of Love Canal?

THE DREAM DECAYS: 1970–1979

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Strange doings with the new funeral home owners. They are performing grisly experiments to enslave the newly dead for their alien masters. (*Phantasm*)

Bloody rituals of fertility continue to be practiced in secret in the isolated corners of America's agricultural heartland. (*The Dark Secret of Harvest Home*)

The local haunted house becomes ground zero for an infestation of vampires that sweeps through the isolated small town. (*Salem's Lot*, Steven King)

Once again, a veteran returns home, mentally and physically scarred by the war in Southeast Asia, but he's brought with him a wife from a little known hill-tribe called the Tcho-Tchos. Perhaps they will open a restaurant....

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

An investigative writer disappears, leaving behind his case notes and tapes that lead his publisher to supernatural occurrences. (*The Norliss Tapes*)

Serial murders prove to have either supernatural motives or a supernatural perpetrator, but the authorities won't recognize the problem. Only the investigators know what needs to be done. (*Kolchak: The Night Stalker*)

BADGES AND SECRETS

An accidentally released biological warfare weapon causes violent insanity. Government forces must quarantine the outbreak at all costs. (*The Crazies*)

Investigators arrive at an isolated island community to investigate an anonymously reported crime, only to discover that the locals are believers in the occult who have lured the investigators to the island for a sinister purpose. (*The Wicker Man*)

Nazi war criminals working for ODESSA use cloning to attempt to resurrect Adolf Hitler. (*The Boys From Brazil*)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Former cult member turned investigator finds himself under attack by supernatural means from his former masters, who are trying to prevent him from following up a new case. (*Spectre*)

The staff of an experimental psychiatric retreat accidentally causes one of its patients to physically manifest her rage in the form of asexually produced mutant children. (*The Brood*)

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

In response to decades of persecution, Islamic Fundamentalism sweeps the Middle East, destroying Lebanon and swallowing Iran, raising the specter of a true jihad against the West. Is the hand of Nyarlathotep behind this rising tide of intolerance and fanaticism among a major world religion?

Terrorism sweeps through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The IRA, RAF, PLO, and a maddening array of alphabet-soup organizations sow horror and death. Again, is the Crawling Chaos behind it all?

Cambodia's Auto-genocide: What could explain the kind of insanity that could cause a people to slaughter one-third of their own population except the intervention of the Great Old Ones? Is this Maoist brainwashing or mass sacrifice?



Biological warfare research is outlawed by treaty but continues in secret. As scientists search the world for more exotic materials and mutagens, one group of researchers gains access to the Milk of Shub-Niggurath and shoggoth proto-matter. They then weave elements of the Outer Gods into their most destructive weapons.

ESCALATION TO GLOBALISM: 1980-1989**LOVECRAFT COUNTRY**

New experiments in re-animation of the dead at Miskatonic U. leads to bloody mayhem, madness, murder, and very weird sex. (*Re-animator, Bride of Re-animator*)

A brilliant yet mad physicist creates a device to pierce the veil of human perception and is devoured by extradimensional entities. His invention continues to function and threaten the rest of humanity. (*From Beyond*)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

The investigators' new home is also home to a vengeful spirit looking to exact its revenge. (*The Changeling*)

The investigators' hometown is haunted by a terrible crime, kept secret for a century. The vengeance for the crime comes from the sea as the undead shamble forth to claim the guilty and the innocent. (*The Fog*)

An isolated small town is cut off and besieged by unnatural and ravenous creatures of unknown origin. (*Tremors*)

An isolated mountain town is threatened by the release of a protoplasmic biological weapon that could devour all terrestrial life. The bio-warriors who created the monster are more than willing to sacrifice the town to protect their new weapon. (*The Blob*)

Child murders are actually sacrifices that ensure the success and prosperity of the community's rich and powerful. (*The Believers*)

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

An Antarctic research station becomes ground zero for an insidious shape-shifting alien invader, unearthed from millennia-old glacial ice. (*The Thing*)

Their hometown destroyed by supernatural forces, the investigators go on the road to hunt down the agents of the Mythos. (*Phantasm II*)

Having inherited an antique store specializing in arcane artifacts and blasphemous tomes, the investigators must use the store's records to track down and recover the horrid items and the cultists, sorcerers, and victims who purchased them. (*Friday the 13th: The Series*)

A body shipped home for burial from South America bring a plague of deadly spiders who are socially organized like ants and act with intelligent direction. (*Arachnophobia*)

BADGES AND SECRETS

A deep-space probe returns to Earth with an alien creature that spreads its destructive influence. The investigators must contain the "plague" at all costs. (*Lifeforce*)

Investigators attempting to rescue the crew of a sunken ballistic missile submarine discover that unnatural forces were responsible for the loss of the vessel. (*The Abyss*)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

A monastic brotherhood has guarded an ancient and evil entity slumbering for centuries, only to have it awaken and begin to extend its foul influence and power. (*The Prince of Darkness*)

An investigator discovers that she is a monster, the victim of a tainted bloodline that goes back thousands of years. (*Cat People*)

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

Cold War Confrontations: The Soviets in Afghanistan, the Cubans in Angola, the Contras in Nicaragua; millions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives are spent as East confronts West. All around the world there are opportunities for the worshipers of the Great Old Ones to provoke the superpowers into more deadly confrontations.

While America is winning the Cold War, it is losing the Drug War. The level of violence is growing, the level of corruption rivals the worst years of Prohibition, and the level of government complicity is even worse. The hand of the King in Yellow can be seen behind this spiral into hopelessness and decadence.

AIDS begins its globe-spanning march of death. By the end of the decade some sub-Saharan countries have an infection rate of over 20%. With so many people facing death, how many will be willing to sell their souls to the Outer Gods in order to stave off the inevitable, or gain vengeance on those who stood by, ignored the crisis, and refused to help?

NEW WORLD ORDER: 1990 TO MODERN DAY

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Arkham has remained a university town where students press the boundaries of human knowledge. Students looking for short-cuts examine the papers of students from decades ago, perhaps uncovering lost research of Herbert West, Crawford Tillinghast, and Harley Warren. ("Herbert West—Re-animator," "From Beyond," and "The Statement of Randolph Carter," all by HPL)

HOMETOWN HORRORS

The old mill, the cornerstone of the small town's economy, is possessed by a demon, which requires periodic sacrifices in order to assure prosperity. (*The Mangler*)

When the island town's historic cemetery is moved, the carrion feeders living beneath it come looking for fresher provender among the islanders. (*Bleeders*)

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

Investigators probe the legend of the local bogeyman and find themselves the targets of the all-too-real malevolent entity. (*The Blair Witch Project, Curse of the Blair Witch*)

Following their first experience dealing with a monstrous threat, the investigators are hired to deal with a second outbreak. (*Tremors II: Aftershocks*)

The investigators accidentally discover an artifact hidden for centuries. It is the key to an unnatural and horrid kind of immortality. The artifact is pursued by cultists and opportunists who will kill to get it. (*Cronos*)

A powerful sorcerer flees the superstitious Puritan past to the skeptical, permissive present in order to hunt down a scattered spellbook that is the key to fulfilling his master's designs on the Earth. (*Warlock*)

BADGES AND SECRETS

Government agents investigate incidents of the occult and conspiratorial forces behind the scenes. (*The X-Files*)

Government agents are charged with finding and eliminating a supernatural threat to national security. (*Ultraviolet*)

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Investigators join a private, but powerful, organization to combat the supernatural and evil, only to find the organization has a hidden agenda all its own. (*Millennium*)

Investigators researching chaos-theory mathematics find themselves the target of a corporation wishing to control world markets and cabalistic cultists seeking the name of God. (*Pi*)

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

The Disunion of the Soviet Socialist Republics: In the rubble of the fallen empire lay instruments of mass destruction undreamt of. Will the worshipers of Ithaqua try to use the "Dead Hand" fail-safe system to launch a nuclear strike against the U.S. in order to create a nuclear winter, or will the bio-weapon horrors of "Rebirth Island" in the Aral Sea find their way ashore?

Balkan Balkanization: As the Eastern Bloc splinters, economic viability is voluntarily and enthusiastically exchanged for rubble, rotting corpses, and ethnic cleansing. Hopefully the Great Old Ones are responsible; otherwise humanity has done it to itself again, engaging in self-inflicted genocide.

African Bloodbaths: Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire—Africa is racing to depopulate itself between casualties caused by famine, war, and disease (especially AIDS). The whole continent resembles the prophecies of the Great Old Ones, where man is but an ingredient in the bloody feasts of the Outer Gods.

ADVENTURE 1: THE END OF PARADISE

This adventure has been designed for a group of 1st-level investigators. It takes place in the modern day, in an older neighborhood within an unnamed city or town.

BACKGROUND

Built in 1892 by the wealthy Allen family, the Paradise Theater was a showplace for stage acts, the finest venue in town. It seated 350 people, and the walls were a glorious riot of bas-relief and gilt. When the attractions of vaudeville began to fade in favor of those of the silver screen, the Allens decided to convert the Paradise into a movie theater. From 1928 on, the Paradise showed film after film for generations of entertainment-hungry citizens.

The Paradise closed in 1974. The costs of renovating the aging structure and the single yellowing screen conspired to make it unprofitable. Already in considerable disrepair, the ensuing years of neglect left the Paradise in ruins.

The theater's one-hundredth anniversary came and went with little fanfare besides a maudlin editorial in the local paper. But a year ago, hope emerged: A local arts group bought the theater from the Allen Foundation and began a slow process of volunteer renovation and improvement, in the hopes of restoring the Paradise to its former glory as a home to both performing arts and cinema. That new hope is close to realization, as the theater reopens in just a couple of days.

But there's trouble in Paradise. A young woman had an accident there recently and has been hospitalized. Rumors are spreading that the theater is haunted, and that the woman saw something horrible. Some old-timers even remember other unsettling incidents, long forgotten until now, and whispers of madness and corruption dog the once-sterling reputation of the Allen clan and its legacy foundation.

The investigators must solve this mystery, and fast. The secrets of the Paradise are covered by dust and dimmed by age, but those secrets still have teeth.

PUBLIC FACTS

The following information is public knowledge, and is either widely known or readily accessible.

The original builder of the Paradise was Robert Allen, a wealthy man who developed and owned much of this neighborhood. His children and grandchildren lived off his investments. In 1953, they founded the Allen Foundation to manage the

family's substantial assets and donate money to various charity groups, primarily childcare-related. The last member of the Allen family was Jessica Allen, who died in 1983 at the age of seventy-two. No living heirs exist.

The Paradise is now owned by Metro Arts, a nonprofit group that produces performances, art exhibitions, and film events. The group has a full-time staff of six and hundreds of donating members and supporters. Although it has a small office, the Paradise is the group's first permanent event and exhibit space. The head of Metro Arts is Sara Landry, a feisty middle-aged painter and arts organizer.

Metro Arts has spent the last year renovating the theater. Although much work remains, Metro needs more funding to take the project further. The members have decided to open the theater a couple days from now to focus more attention on their work. At an opening-night gala fundraiser they'll screen a double feature: the wartime classic *Casablanca* and the French satire *Rules of the Game*.

The injured woman is Mary Green, an art student and frequent Metro volunteer. According to published reports, she was painting a ceiling in the main theater space one evening and fell from the scaffolding. She broke her left leg, arm, and pelvic bone, and suffered a mild concussion. Metro's insurance is covering her care, and she is in stable condition. However, she is said to be undergoing psychological evaluation, possibly related to the concussion. An unnamed friend told the local paper, "Mary says the Paradise is haunted or something." Her family—both parents and her brother—have declined comment and refused media requests for interviews with Mary.

According to the paper, this isn't the first time for a ghost sighting. Harry Samson, a janitor at the Paradise from 1952–1974, told the reporter, "I used to hear strange things there all the time, like something moving around in the walls and floors. The Allens always said it was rats. Musta been some big rats."

GETTING STARTED

Your first task as GM is to figure out how the investigators get involved in the mystery. Here are several suggestions, based on the sub-genres of the Settings chapter.

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

Set the Paradise in Arkham or Providence. The Allen Foundation is a major benefactor of Miskatonic Medical School's pediatrics facility, and Metro Arts has close ties with the university's arts faculty. Mary Green is a graduate student of M.U. The investigators might be friends of Mary or Sara, or a faculty member could recruit them for investigation or research into the history of the theater. The Allen family could be related to Zadok Allen of HPL's story "The Shadow over Innsmouth."

HOMETOWN HORRORS

The investigators could be patrons of Metro Arts, or they could be hired by Metro's insurance company to examine the working conditions at the theater. If they have an interest in history, they may want to document the renovations or just examine the theater's background.

PRIVATE TROUBLESHOOTERS

A haunted theater sounds like trouble, all right. To get a look around, the investigators might volunteer to help clean up the theater—then snoop when nobody's watching.

BADGES AND SECRETS

A psychotic cultist interrogated after a recent operation in another city made a curious statement: "Paradise is coming. It's coming back to life." He hanged himself later that day. The man had no known connections to the city where the adventure is set, so maybe it's just a coincidence of phrasing. A little poking around can't hurt. Perhaps the investigators should pose as government safety inspectors.

ESOTERIC ORDERS

Jessica Allen, the last of the family's heirs, developed a sudden interest in mysticism late in life. Members of the local alternative-spirituality community remember her pleading requests for cleansing rituals and wards against hostile spirits, requests she would make and then abandon only to renew them weeks later. She never spoke of what distressed her so, and died soon afterward. The Paradise may well be home to the restless dead—is Mary Green another victim?

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

Although this adventure isn't particularly suited for a Global Hot Spots campaign, you could always get creative. The theater could be in a South American city besieged by the drug trade, or in a turbulent Eastern European republic. Perhaps the Allen Foundation is now run by an American trustee, and local citizens are suspicious of U.S.-style gentrification. Metro Arts could be a cover for a drug ring, or the Allens might have been on the CIA payroll during the rule of a dictatorship.

OPENING SCENE

In this scene, the investigators visit the Paradise Theater using whatever excuse is appropriate to the subgenre you're playing in.

It's daylight, but the sun has been absent, shrouded in clouds. The Paradise stands on a dirty street. Across the road sits a car with no tires, cryptic orange graffiti scrawled on the back window—probably just a police marker that the car needs to be towed, but it's hard to tell. A dead dog lies in the driver's seat, erupted belly roiling with maggots. As the investigators walk up to the Paradise, the baroque façade is darkened with grime, but the marquee is clean, the neon crisp and alight, letters placed to form a message: PARADISE IS

COMING BACK. A woman on a ladder holds a piece of plastic formed into the word THE, and she carefully places it above the other words. She sees the investigators and calls a hello, then climbs down to greet them.

This is Sara Landry, head of Metro Arts. She's a compact woman with deep-set green eyes, freckles, and long brown hair, wearing blue jeans and a flannel shirt with the sleeves pushed up to the elbows. When introductions are complete, she looks up at the marquee and nods. "It's a sign," she says with a grin.

Sara leads the group through the front doors and into the lobby. No matter what explanation the investigators have given for the visit, Sara says she has to take care of something for a few minutes and they should look around the place. "Don't fall off anything!" she calls as she walks off to the room marked Storage 1 on the floor plan.

At this point, the investigators can explore the building. Whatever business they may have with Sara can wait. Use the floor plan and the following room descriptions as the players choose where to go.

During this scene, some unusual things happen. They're described in the "Whammies" section on page 262.

THE PARADISE FLOOR PLAN

The Paradise has a main floor, an upper level with balcony seating, and a basement. Location descriptions are grouped by level. Some Metro Arts volunteers are working here, and they are mentioned in the text where needed.

GROUND LEVEL

Lobby. The Paradise lobby is two stories high, with plush red carpeting and turn-of-the-century décor. Four circular sofas are here, being reupholstered by Metro volunteers named Frank Harris and Jeanette Reynolds. Grand staircases flank the walls and lead upstairs. The walls and staircase are carved with fanciful images of nymphs and satyrs.

Tickets. A small booth with a barred window facing outside, where tickets are sold. At present, the window is covered by a Metro Arts poster describing the renovations and the upcoming opening-night event.

Will Call. Identical to the ticket booth, but this one's for people who are picking up reservations. At present, you can't get into the Will Call booth because the door is blocked by junk in Storage 2.

Storage 1. Metro Arts is using this area to store its cleaning and renovation supplies, as well as stacks of fliers promoting the upcoming event. A new circuit panel is here that controls power in the front part of the building. Against the north wall by the door is a folding table with a telephone, laptop computer, and paperwork. This serves as the temporary office for the theater work. After the opening scene, Sara is in here talking on the telephone.

The desk also has clips of various advertisements from local papers announcing the premiere. None of the ads are terribly large, ostentatious, or even expensive. The advertising was delayed until the last minute because of some confusion over the date of the premiere. If anyone asks, Sara says the ads were generously paid for by Richard Jacobs, the current trustee of the Allen Foundation.

Storage 2. This room is packed with old stuff. Most anything the Metro staff has found gets stuck in

here. Torn curtains, stacks of old drink cups, broken theater seats, rolls of moth-eaten carpet, and boxes of dusty papers put into storage before the theater closed in 1974 fill this room. These include reams of financial documents, theater programs, folded-up movie posters from the 1960s, business cards for people long dead, old photographs, and other yellowing ephemera. None of this is relevant to the adventure.

Men's Room and Ladies' Room. Metro has gutted and replaced both bathrooms to comply with accessibility laws. They're clean and functional.

Concessions. The concession stand has been cleaned up, and there are cases of snacks and soft drinks waiting to be unpacked. Another volunteer, Molly Ivory, is here installing an espresso machine.

Coat Check. Spiffed and ready. Metro found a stash of unused claim tags from the 1940s and plans to use them on opening night.

Theater. The large theater area is still a bit rickety and threadbare. Metro hasn't been able to reupholster the seats, but they have repaired the broken ones and given everything a good cleaning. Metro volunteers are finishing a massive job of cleaning and repainting the ornately carved ceiling. The last patch of work is to the left, where the scaffolding is. That's where Mary Green had her accident. At present, two volunteers are working in here: Kris Nichols and Jack McGowan. Kris is on the scaffolding working on the ceiling, and Jack is vacuuming the floor.

Screen and Stage. The large movie screen is built atop an elevated platform that was once a performance stage. The 1928 renovations cut the stage back considerably to make room for more seats. Metro plans to install a retractable screen to reclaim stage space, but that's a project for down the road. The loading-dock door has a heavy padlock that hasn't been opened for decades, and is now completely covered by a large, dusty mirror. The area behind the screen is barren except for a couple of very tall ladders. They were once used to adjust theatrical lighting on the ceiling, but that equipment was sold off years ago. No lights back exist here, so poking around requires a flashlight.

UPPER LEVEL

Projection Booth. Metro can't afford to install new equipment here yet, but it has given the existing gear a thorough cleaning and repair. The booth remains rather dingy and in need of paint. Metro has installed a new circuit panel in this room to control the lights and sound system of the whole theater.

Storage 3. Cleaning supplies for the balcony, along with velvet ropes for closing off the upper floor when needed.

Storage 4. This room is empty. It stinks of old cigarette smoke, because the projectionists used it as a break room during screenings.

LOWER LEVEL

Basement. This is a large open space that was once quite beautiful, but has long since fallen into moldy ruin. During Prohibition in the 1930s, the Allens operated the basement as an illegal speakeasy. There's still an old bar down here, and some ratty couches and chairs. At some point after the theater closed, one of the exit doors was jimmied open and the basement became a haven for the homeless and teenagers. The walls are covered in graffiti, and the carpet smells of

urine. Metro hasn't done anything down here except get the furnace working and reroute the electrical wiring to new boxes elsewhere in the building. The old circuit board is a big wooden slab about 8 feet tall by 6 feet wide, covered with large throw switches and dials—it looks like it came straight from Frankenstein's lab. The board isn't connected to anything now.

Secret Basement. This area is accessed through a door behind the bar, but the door is covered in plaster and paint so it blends into the wall. The contents of the secret basement are described in "Examine the Basement" (page 266).

WHAMMIES

A whammy is a sudden, strange event that you can spring on the investigators whenever the moment is right. These whammies occur as they look around the Paradise. Use some or all of them as you like. Whenever possible, only use a given whammy on a single investigator so that none of them agree on what they saw. Except where noted, NPCs either never notice whammies or aren't around when they happen.

ROBERT'S MUSIC

As soon as the investigators are on their own, call for Listen checks against DC 15. Attentive investigators hear music playing very, very faintly. It sounds like an orchestra playing the popular classical tune "Carmina Burana," familiar from the soundtracks of numerous movies, including *Excalibur*. (If you have this music, you might play it very softly when the characters enter the Paradise.) They hear the music everywhere they go, but can never find the source. The volunteers don't hear the music, but shrug and say, "It's probably Robert playing his boom box someplace."

Who is Robert? The Metro people say he is a new volunteer who showed up recently, and comes and goes as he pleases. Anytime the investigators hear or see anything curious, the staff says it's probably Robert.

The investigators never meet Robert. He's always somewhere around, or he just left, or something or other. He may not even exist. The Metro staff isn't playing a joke; they see him all the time. Robert is a person that only the NPCs encounter.

The next time a player asks a question about the music, tell the group they no longer hear it.

THE LOADING DOCK DOOR

Behind the stage curtains is the large sliding door that opens onto the loading dock—or at least it used to open. The door hasn't been opened since 1932, and at this point, it's painted shut on the outside. Inside, it's closed with a big old padlock. No one knows where the key is.

The first time the investigators go backstage—and remember there is no light back there, except what leaks in around the curtains—they see the door as an opening into another area. A flickering light in the doorway catches their attention. Drawing closer, they can see a dim image: a dark space walled by curtains. Beyond the curtains is a flickering light that seeps in at the edges, like that of an old movie.



PARADISE THEATER

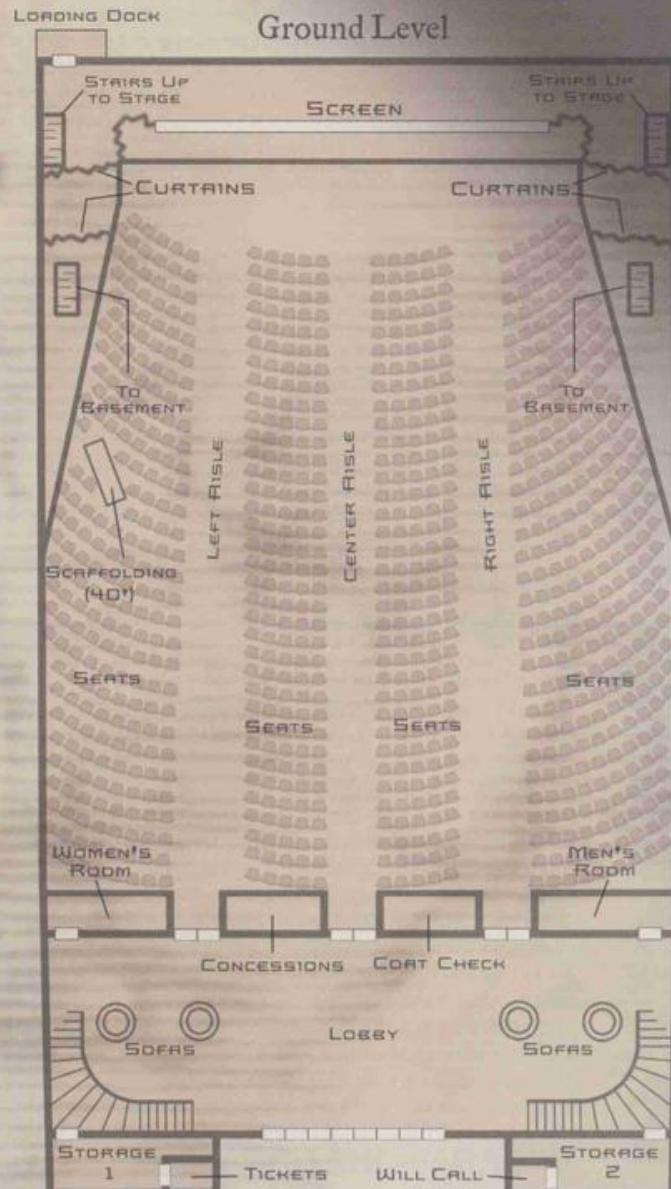
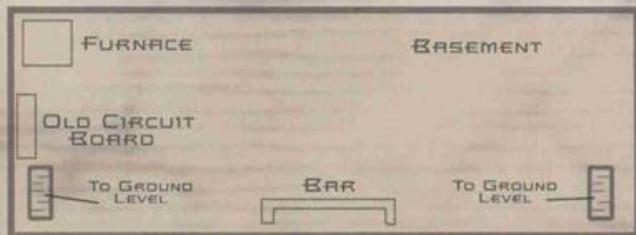
Welcome to the newly remodeled
Paradise Theater.



Theater would
all the Metro
the hard effort
so gladly offered.
g of this grand
an ambitious project,
the help of these
he cultural integrity
unity would be
played. Paradise
asks you!



Yes, there's plenty of room
in the aisles...and every seat
is a great seat!



"Remember, there's an upper level
for you."



If investigators try to enter the space, they bump into a smooth, unyielding surface of polished glass. The dock door has a massive mirror propped up against it. The curtains are actually the ones behind the investigators. Now the light beyond the curtains is steady, and the investigators are looking at their reflections. They didn't see themselves in the glass until they touched it.

THE LANDING

Investigators on the upstairs landing looking down at the lobby notice something peculiar: the pattern of the carpet below resembles intertwined, naked bodies. At that moment the lights flicker from a power surge, and in the flashing light the bodies seem to writhe and shift (Sanity check, 0/1). Then the lights come back on full, and the carpet pattern just looks like ordinary carpet. In another room, a Metro volunteer calls out: "Hey, somebody get Robert to check the wiring again!"

THE FURNACE

While in the basement, the investigators hear a clanging sound from the furnace. At first it might just be noisy old pipes, but then the clanging becomes more insistent, as if someone were inside and banging for help.

An investigator can open the metal hatch where coal used to go. (The furnace was converted to piped-in natural gas in the mid-1960s.) It's hot to the touch, which it shouldn't be. Opening the hatch, the interior of the furnace is full of flames and a burning man screams (Sanity check, 0/1d2). Then the flames are gone, and the metal is cool. The vision goes by too quickly to get a good look at the man's features.

SARA AGAIN

Once the investigators have looked around, and preferably just after a whammy has happened, Sara finds them and says hello. She's ready to address whatever topic brought them here. Play this out according to your subgenre. If the investigators are posing as volunteers, she puts them to work cleaning the upstairs. If they're safety inspectors, she answers their questions and shows them Metro's safety procedures for scaffold work. If they're researchers or historians, she points out the architectural features and talks vaguely about the theater's history—she really only knows what's in the Public Facts section (page 260).

Sara has no interest in ghosts or mysteries. She just wants to get the theater ready for opening night. Speaking of which, she gives the investigators free passes to the event and says she hopes to see them there. It's a couple days away (you can decide just how long).

VISITING MARY

Whenever the investigators complete their visit, Sara announces to all the volunteers that she's going to the hospital to bring Mary some chocolates. Anyone is welcome to join her. If the investigators are hesitant, Molly Ivory (or another volunteer they interacted with) says she'll go and encourages the investigators to come along, as

she believes Mary could use some cheering up.

Mary Green is at a large public hospital. She's lying in bed, her body connected to a traction apparatus to help her pelvic bone set properly. Her arm and leg are in casts, and there are bandages on her head. Her eyes are bruised. She's in a room with another patient, an emaciated old man whose eyes are closed and whose breathing is raspy. He's attached to a pulse monitor and other medical instruments that constantly beep and whir. He appears to be either asleep or unconscious.

If for some reason the investigators look at his chart to learn his identity, the man is Harry Samson, a former janitor for the Paradise who was mentioned in the Public Facts section. He suffered a heart attack a couple days ago, shortly after he spoke to a reporter about the hauntings at the theater. He does not regain consciousness while the investigators are here.

As Sara leads the group in, Mary is watching television. Sara has tears in her eyes. Sara makes introductions and sympathies are shared. She puts the box of chocolates on the side table.

Mary says very little and looks wary. She stares at the investigators from the moment they arrive. At some point she says, "You're from the Paradise, aren't you?" Sara explains who they are again, a little nervous.

The beeping from the machines increases suddenly and a buzzer sounds. The man in the other bed cries out briefly and then his face goes slack. Sara yelps and runs out of the room to get a nurse; if another NPC volunteer came along, she goes with Sara. The noise from the machines is terrible, a cacophony of electronic sounds that make no sense. Mary says something that sounds like, "I didn't fall down. I fell up." It's hard to hear with all the noise (Listen check, DC 15).

Two nurses and a doctor rush in, followed by Sara and the other NPC, if present. The staff begins emergency procedures and goes straight to defibrillation. As they use the paddles to jolt electricity into the old man's body, the lights in the room go out with each burst. Sara watches the scene, aghast. Mary continues staring at the investigators. Then she nods at the television on the wall behind them.

As the lights go up and down and the man's body spasms, the television is shorting out. Images of a ballet dissolve into static, and the sound of a film projector comes through. Then the screen shows the hospital room, as if a camera were mounted inside the television. The investigators see themselves around the bed, and the pulsing lights, and Mary staring. A blurry figure stands next to Mary, with indistinct hands stroking her face. Then the screen explodes in a burst of electricity, sending fragments of glass blowing into the room. The investigators must make a Reflex saving throw against DC 10 or take 1 point of damage. A nurse screams.

The old man is dead. The doctor calls the time of death. He gestures at the television and tells a nurse, "Get Robert to fix that damned thing." (If the investigators ask the doctor about this, he tells them that Robert is a building services worker. They can try to find him, but like the Robert of the Paradise, he's always somewhere else.)

Mary says again, clearly this time: "I didn't fall down. I fell up." She won't answer further questions and Sara ushers everyone out of the room. If the investigators try to visit Mary again, her family has transferred her to a private clinic and they aren't taking visitors.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Up until now, this has been a linear adventure. It's time for the players to take the reins and advance the story themselves.

Following their experiences at the Paradise and at the hospital, the investigators should be convinced that something strange is going on. The next several sections discuss some of the choices they might make. "Research" sections require a Research check or checks; the DCs are provided where needed. Likewise, "Interview" sections require a Gather Information check.

EXAMINE THE CEILING

To check the ceiling of the theater, the investigators can climb the scaffolding. No more than three people should be up there at once. Getting to the top safely requires a Climb check against DC 5.

The carvings in the ceiling are similar to those in the lobby—figures from fantasy and mythology. However, the ones here are much less pleasant. The faces are leering and unpleasant. Some scenes suggest the aftermath of rape and torture, but never clearly enough to be definite.

A Listen check against DC 10 detects the hum reported by Kris and Jack, if the investigators interviewed them. It does indeed sound like breathing, and it's very faint. They cannot identify a source, except that it seems to come from beyond the ceiling in a general sort of way.

Examining the ceiling closely (Search DC 12) reveals that a nearby scene of a Bacchanalia is hinged—it's some sort of small door. This discovery only occurs when no NPCs are present.

The scaffolding isn't directly underneath the panel, but a single investigator can just barely reach it from here if the others hold his waist while he leans out. It takes some poking and pulling until the catch is found: the empty eye socket of a dead nymph contains a switch. Once the switch is pushed, the panel opens up into the ceiling. Only the lone investigator leaning out from the scaffold can see inside.

Looking up through the panel, the investigator is somehow looking down at the theater below. It's as if the panel held a mirror, or there were a second Paradise built upside down on top of this one. But this is no reflection. The Paradise that the investigator sees through the doorway is full of people. The seats are covered with writhing bodies issuing a howling scream, illuminated by the flickering light of a film projector. Ghastly music plays, music that the investigator recognizes: it's what they thought was the "Carmina Burana." It's not. This music is strange and alien, deep and resonant, and only the barest melodies have any resemblance to what they thought they heard the first time they entered the Paradise. The movie screen is a jumble of shadows and light, amorphous shapes that suggest tentacles, mouths, and eyes, but never resolving into anything definite. As the crowd screams, the floor begins to sink into a vortex and the entire theater collapses into an abyss. The shapes on screen emerge from the abyss, swallowing up the audience. This terrible vision costs 1d6/1d10 Sanity points.

The strange forces try to pull the investigator through the doorway. The others can try to hold him back. The pull has a Strength check DC of 20. If the others fail, the investigator falls up through the doorway and the panel slams

shut behind him. There's a distant scream, and then a slam a moment later as the investigator appears bent across the theater seats below. The fall deals 1d6 points of damage. The investigator is covered in a viscous slime and may be unconscious or dead. It's time to call the ambulance and try to explain what happened. If any of the other investigators succeeds at the Strength check, he or she manages to pull the investigator back and the panel slams shut. Either way, no trace of the panel remains. The ceiling is solid.

RESEARCH METRO ARTS

[DC 10] Sara Landry started Metro in 1981 after she finished art school. It's been her full-time career since 1990. The organization is normal in every respect.

[DC 12] Funding for the purchase of the Paradise came from Richard Jacobs, a local philanthropist.

RESEARCH RICHARD JACOBS

[DC 10] Jacobs has been profiled by local media numerous times over the years. He was an anonymous orphan, born sometime around 1930 and raised by the St. Matthew's Orphanage. (In truth, he was raised by the Allen Home for Children until 1937 and then transferred to St. Matthew's, but this seemingly minor detail has never made it into published accounts of his life.) He got a job as a bank teller during high school and soon became a manager. The rest of his career is a string of financial successes, mostly in real estate development. He's never married and has no children.

RESEARCH THE ALLEN FOUNDATION

[DC 10] Robert Allen's grandson, George, started the foundation in 1953 to manage the family's real estate assets and use their revenues to fund charitable organizations. George died in 1968 leaving a daughter, Jessica, who managed the foundation until her death in 1983. Today the trustee of the Allen Foundation is Richard Jacobs. In a newspaper article, he says the title is mostly ceremonial, and that the long-time staff of the foundation do most of the work.

[DC 12] The Allen Foundation had an earlier incarnation of sorts as the Allen Home for Children, a small private orphanage started by Robert Allen in 1892. In 1937, it ceased operations and the staff and children were transferred to the much larger St. Matthew's Orphanage, a Catholic home for orphans that still exists today and is a widely respected institution.

RESEARCH THE PARADISE

[DC 10] Besides the information mentioned in Public Facts, the most interesting thing the investigators can learn about the Paradise is the story of its basement speakeasy. It was a private key club, meaning that members had to have a key to get in. The bar was known as the Sound and Light Club, and it ran for most of the 1930s.

[DC 12] In 1936 police raided the club on suspicion of kidnapping. A man named Arnold Langtree, the guest of a club member, told police

he met a woman at the club and they hit it off. After a few drinks, she began telling him that the club had "private parties" sometimes, and invited him to accompany her to one. Then two doormen escorted her into another room behind the bar. When Langtree questioned them a few minutes later, they denied ever seeing the woman, whose name he did not know. The police raid found nothing, and apparently the club was back in business a few weeks later.

[DC 15] Arnold Langtree died a month later, the victim of a hit-and-run driver.

A player might ask if there was another room off the basement, as the above story suggests. The investigators didn't notice any such room during their visit to the theater.

RESEARCH THE SOUND AND LIGHT CLUB

[DC 10] Further research into the speakeasy key club reveals that it existed before and after Prohibition, and that its tenancy in the basement of the Paradise was only temporary. The SLC began as a social club for Freemasons in 1900, but soon evolved beyond its Masonic roots into a private club for businessmen and politicians. In the 1940s, the Sound and Light Club sponsored an annual carnival to raise money for children's charities. The group shut down in 1953, its popularity among the city's moneyed classes usurped by the Rotary Club and the steady loss of early members to old age. (References don't mention the disappointment of its youngest member at the time, 23-year-old Richard Jacobs.) During its lifetime, the group was based in a variety of locations throughout downtown.

[DC 12] All the addresses the club had were within six blocks of the Paradise.

[DC 15] A 1985 newspaper article about the history of charitable groups in the city makes brief mention of the SLC's short-lived carnival fundraisers of the 1940s. A surviving SLC member, Frank Long, is quoted in the article.

INTERVIEW VOLUNTEERS

[DC 10] Most of the people working at the theater say they haven't had any weird experiences, but two have a different response. Kris Nichols and Jack McGowan are doing the same work Mary Green was, cleaning and painting the ceiling of the theater. They both say they have heard a hum coming from the ceiling when they're up there on the scaffold, and they don't know what's causing it. They say it comes and goes in a cycle, like an air conditioning system perhaps, but there's nothing in the theater that should make that sound. "It's almost like breathing," Jack says with a laugh. Neither think it's anything strange, just an old building making noise.

If the investigators ask who was working with Mary the day she fell, everyone says it was Robert. But he was just cleaning. No one knows how to reach him.

INTERVIEW FRANK LONG

[DC 10] Frank Long is the only still-living member of the Sound and Light Club. The investigators might find his name while researching the group. He is listed in the phone book, but a

call or visit finds his aging spinster daughter living there instead; she can tell them that her father is in a nearby sanitarium with daily visiting hours.

At the sanitarium, the staff directs the investigators to a withered little man sitting alone in a rocking chair on the porch. Frank has Alzheimer's disease and is difficult to interview, as he frequently loses track of where and when he is. But his memories of days gone by are strong, and if prompted well, he'll begin talking about the SLC. He says many different things, all jumbled up. Some sample statements follow that you can use as you like in response to investigator questions; he doesn't answer anything directly.

"Sound and light, sound and light. That's what movies are made of! Sound and light, yes. Movies on the screen, the silver screen, movies in your head, the silver head."

"The club, yes, the club. Not a club. No, no. A church. Yes, a church. A church not made with hands. Look ma, no hands! Heh, heh."

"They say it's coming. Paradise is coming. I'm due. I'm owed. I paid my owes. I'm first in line. I'm last to stay. I can't wait. Paradise is coming."

"It's not a rest home. No rest. No rest at the gate. He's the key and the gate, you know. The sound and the light. All in one, like my Swiss Army knife. All in one."

After babbling cryptically for a minute, Frank stops talking and looks at the investigators with suspicion. His face hardens. "Heathens! Meddlers! Steal secrets from an old man. I can see through your face! Your lying face!"

At this point, Frank leaps out of his chair and claws at the face of the nearest investigator. After 5 rounds, an orderly rushes up and restrains the old man; until then, he attacks with murderous intent.

Frank Long

Crazed old cult minion. Male 1st level; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3 subdual, fists); SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 8.

EXAMINE THE BASEMENT

The investigators may have seen a reference to another room in the basement, or they may just poke around down there some more for their own reasons. If so, a Spot check against DC 15 reveals the faint impression of a door behind the bar, plastered and painted over. A few minutes with a hammer or crowbar gets the plaster off. The door is a normal wooden one and opens with a good shove.

The area behind the door, labeled "Secret Basement" on the floor plan, has not been used since the early 1950s. It is located directly beneath a large section of the theater. Decades of dust have filtered down through the ceiling boards, coating this area in a fine gray powder. No working lights exist here, so it's time for flashlights.

The door opens into a small area blocked off by three fabric screens that stretch from floor to ceiling. They are made of a thin, gauzy material and are stretched taut. Revealed in a flashlight beam, they initially look like mist.

As soon as an investigator steps inside, she feels a slight shift beneath her feet. The character has stepped on a pressure plate and triggered a surprise. A loud



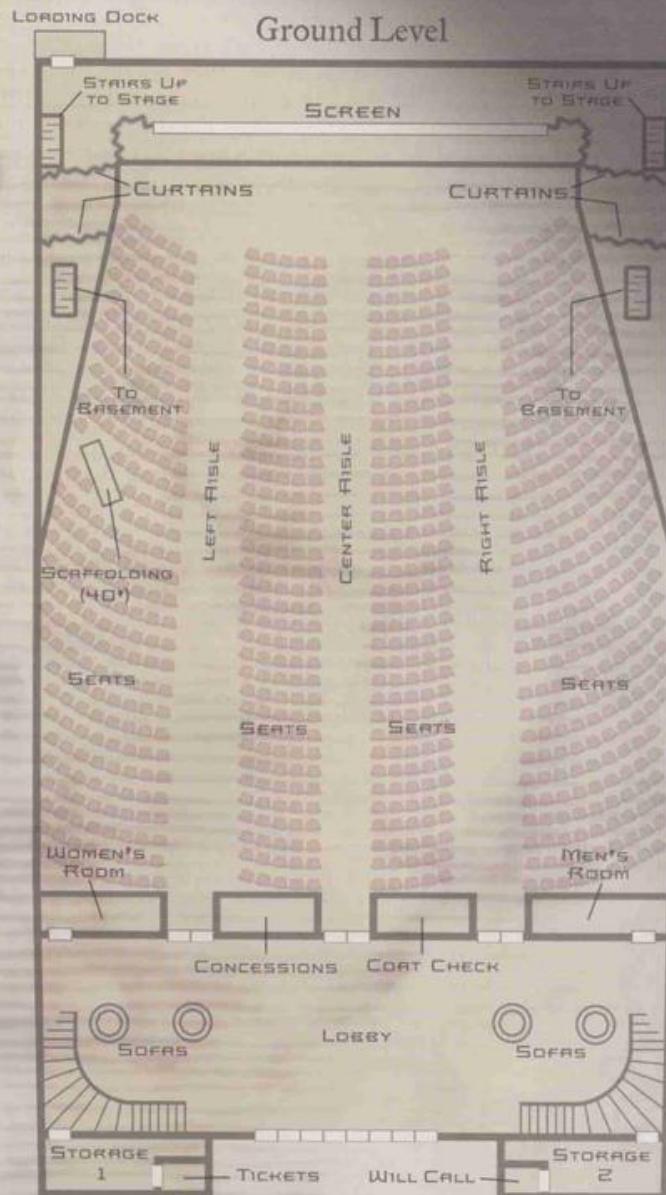
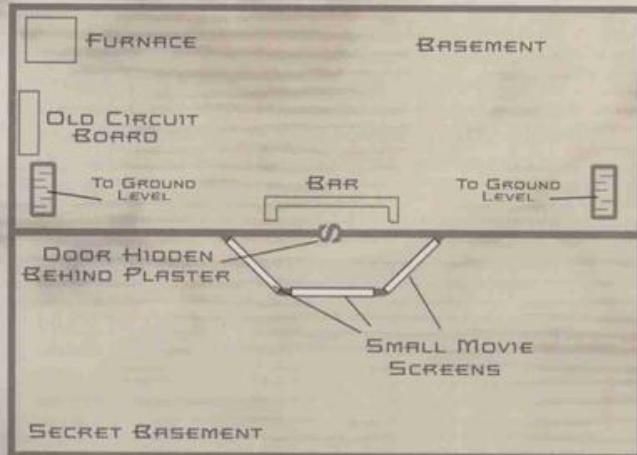
PARADISE THEATER

Welcome to the newly remodeled Paradise Theater.

Theater would fill the Metro with the hard effort so gladly offered. Of this grand ambitious project, the help of these cultural integrity would be played. Paradise asks you!



Yes, there's plenty of room in the aisles...and every seat is a great seat!



"Remember, there's an upper level for you."



whirring sound starts up as three old 16mm projectors begin operating, and suddenly there are moving images on the three fabric screens, projected from behind. The images in grainy black-and-white depict a crowd of men dressed in suits, all wearing masks of blank faces with no eyes or mouth. They are standing in the secret basement, and clearly this footage was shot by three cameras rolling simultaneously in the doorway. Projected, they form a nearly continuous image. The men simply stand there, staring at the viewer. After a few moments it's clear that this is just a short loop of film that plays again and again. Nothing really happens.

Gaps exist between the three screens, through which the investigators can reach the rest of the room. They see the three projectors first, each placed some distance behind its corresponding screen. All have power cables running up into the ceiling. The images they project appear on the back sides of the screens as well, since they're translucent.

The three projectors are mounted on top of massive wooden thrones, covered in gold leaf and now blanketed by dust. Each is elevated on a dais about 8 inches high. The walls and ceiling are all covered by a mural showing the night sky as seen from the roof of the Paradise.

If anyone is clever enough to take a picture of this mural and do a bit of research, the position of the stars in the sky correspond to a specific time of year (Research check, DC 15). On the night of the theater's opening, the position of the stars above the theater will correspond to their positions in the mural. Both facts should be readily apparent to anyone who can make a Knowledge (astronomy) check against DC 15.

The floor is decorated with a 40-foot-diameter circle of inlaid marble, within which are a number of twisted sigils corresponding to no known religion or mythology. (If anyone asks, the sigils look like those painted on the back of the abandoned car outside the theater—though the car has been towed away by now.) The floor is stained in numerous places, and analysis can prove these stains are blood, fifty years old and older. The back of each throne has a latch that opens to reveal a small alcove beneath the seat. Each contains a human skull, a candle, and a trumpet. The central throne also contains a handwritten book, described in the nearby sidebar.

Nothing else of note rests in the secret basement. However, at some point while the investigators are here the projectors grind to a stop—or the investigators might turn them off. Either way, the images on the screens inexplicably persist for another few seconds. Just as they fade away, all the men in the crowd lower their masks. The image goes away too quickly to see what was revealed. The images of the men removing their masks do not appear on the film loops and do not appear again.

INTERVIEW RICHARD JACOBS

[DC 15] The DC reflects the difficulty investigators have in meeting him. Richard Jacobs is a very wealthy businessman with a busy schedule. If an interview does occur, Jacobs is an aging but dignified man who wears the best suits and speaks with a polished dignity. In his plush uptown office, he tells the investigators that he loved going to the Paradise as a kid. While he couldn't see a profit in restoring the Paradise to a commer-

cial enterprise, he did think it had a future as a low-cost arts project. He had donated to Metro Arts before, and his staff worked out the deal with Sara Landry at his request. "There's still a lot of life in that place," he says. He encourages them to come to the opening night event.

If the investigators have already learned about Jacobs's role as trustee at the Allen Foundation—something he doesn't volunteer—he nods pleasantly and confirms that he was a friend of the Allen family for a long time, and knew both George and his daughter Jessica. He says his work as trustee is primarily for fundraising efforts. He notes that his donation to Metro Arts to buy the Paradise from the Allen Foundation benefited three of his favorite causes in one fell swoop.

If they ask him about the Sound and Light Club, he thinks for a moment, then describes it as something George Allen was involved in when they were friends. He characterizes it as a long-defunct businessmen's social club. He denies ever being a member. "Back then I wasn't rich enough!" he says with a hearty chuckle. A Sense Motive check (DC 18) reveals that he's lying. (Make this roll secretly for the characters, if you prefer.) Richard is indeed a former member of the club.

Richard Jacobs hasn't attended the society's rituals in decades, but he has continued to perform them on his own, waiting patiently for a moment when the stars would be right. Based on the hunch from the Sense Motive check, the investigators may immediately confront him or even prevent him from attending the premiere, but they have no evidence of him doing anything illegal. Regardless of which reaction the investigators prefer, the show must go on.

OUT OF SPACE, OUT OF TIME

Further mysterious events are possible in the midst of this investigation, but they're not essential to the plot. By now, investigators in the Paradise may notice that the recent supernatural events have a few recurring themes: a building in flames, a panicked crowd, and malfunctions casually attributed to "Robert."

Because of past rituals in the nightclub, these events occur as distortions of space and time. The scenes with "Robert" portray events in Robert Allen's past, back when he first owned the theater. However, if anyone wants to research whether there's been a fire here before (Research DC 15), the answer is no. The visions of fire and panicked crowds are portents of a terrible tragedy to come.

A secret society that once met in the building routinely revered a deity who had power over time itself. Richard Jacobs, as a former member of the cult, knows that on the night of the gala premiere, the stars are right for an avatar of that deity to return to the Sound and Light Club's former temple.

THE BOOK OF THE SOUND AND LIGHT

In English, author unknown, c. 1900. This handwritten volume contains rituals and prayers to a deity described variously as "The All in One," "The Key and the Gate," and "The Sky Door." Examination Period: 1 week (DC 20).

Contains two spells: "The Corridor of One" (contact Yog-Sothoth) and "Persistence of Vision" (mind transfer). Sanity loss 1 initial and 1d3 upon completion. Cthulhu Mythos +1 rank.

THE LOBBY PHOTOGRAPHS

There's something new in the lobby: The western wall is now decorated with vintage photographs of the Paradise, taken from across the decades. If the investigators ask Sara about them, she says they found them in the old storage room weeks ago and had them cleaned and framed by volunteers. She just picked them up this afternoon.

Three dozen photographs of various sizes and ages are here. Some depict theatrical productions from the theater's early years, while others show well-dressed crowds celebrating in the lobby or sitting in the audience during a film. A couple of photographs are of interest to the adventure, and can be detected with a Spot check.

[DC 10] One shows a 1952 fundraising event held in the lobby, with a large gaudy banner dedicating the event "to the St. Matthew's Orphanage, from the Sound and Light Club." Two men stand in the foreground, posing for the camera: George Allen and a young Richard Jacobs (who was in his early twenties at the time). Frank Long is clearly visible in the background.

[DC 12] Scattered among the many images are three photographs showing three generations of Allen family patriarchs: Max Allen, Frederick Allen, and George Allen. Although taken decades apart, all three are done the same way: a man standing on the upper balcony of the Paradise looks down at the photographer, who uses a wide-angle lens to capture the beauty of the room. If the investigators notice these photographs, it's time for a whammy of sorts. Just as you finish describing them, there's the flash of a camera. Turning around, the investigators see a photographer standing just inside the doors, aiming upward. On the balcony overhead stands Richard Jacobs, smiling and dignified, in the same pose as that of the Allen men. If he's met the investigators before, he sees them and waves jauntily.

[DC 12] Another fundraising event at the Paradise conceals a curious secret. Close examination reveals a poster in the background of a crowd scene. It's hard to read, but it appears to say "Welcome Sound and Light Club International Chapters," followed by the names of prominent cities across the country and around the world.

The characters should have a few days to pursue their investigation. During this time, the GM does not need to do more than hint at something terrible in the building. These events are merely foreshadowing. The investigators might have suspicions about Richard Jacobs, but should have no clear legal way to stop him. (Even then, he can use his madman's intuition, as described below, to foil their attempts.) Unless the characters blatantly break the law to stop to the screening, the events in the Opening Night section occur as planned.

OPENING NIGHT

Whatever the investigators know or suspect at this point, there is little direct action for them to take until the opening night gala, which they presumably attend. All the Metro volunteers and staff are here, as well as several hundred prominent citizens of the city (including Richard Jacobs). The festivities begin with a party in the lobby, complete with a jazz trio playing in the center. After an hour, the crowd moves into the theater and the films begin.



THE WARMUP

When it's time to enter the theater for the first screening—*Rules of the Game*—the jazz trio stops playing. The theater's sound system begins playing "Carmina Burana." Metro volunteers open the doors to the theater and the crowd begins to file inside as the music rumbles. If the investigators look for Richard Jacobs, he's by the concession stand chatting politely with Sara Landry and greeting people as they enter the theater.

WHAT TO DO?

Although the investigators have no direct evidence, they should have real suspicions that something bad is going to happen tonight at the Paradise. They might confront Richard Jacobs, or try to stop the event from continuing. They might just play along and see what happens.

CONFRONTING JACOBS

Just because the investigators have no proof of anything doesn't mean they won't go after this old man. He laughs off any bizarre accusations they make and encourages them to take their seats and enjoy the show. If they press him, he says they're rude and stalks off. If they get violent, there's not much he can do except struggle and shout for help. Still, if they somehow get him out of the theater or otherwise keep him from doing anything, the event goes off without a hitch, and all is well for tonight.

Richard Jacobs

Cultist of Yog-Sothoth: Male 5th level cult sorcerer; HD 5d6+5; hp 22; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d3 subdual, fists) or +3 ranged (1d10, pistol); SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 14.

Skills: Bluff +8, Cthulhu Mythos +5, Gather Information +9, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (biology) +10, Knowledge (occult) +9, Knowledge (history) +8 Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +5, Search +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +8.

Feats: Awareness, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot.

Special Abilities: Madman's intuition.

Possessions: Colt Delta Elite (see page 98).

Spells: "The Corridor of One" (contact Yog-Sothoth) and "Persistence of Vision" (mind transfer).

Madman's Intuition: The disintegration of a cult sorcerer's brain leads to intuitive short-circuits that defy conventional logic. After 3rd level, with a successful Intelligence check, a cult sorcerer somehow knows, even with very little observation, which member of a party is the weakest (or the most magically skilled), whether the police are watching the cemetery, where the unguarded door is, how many shots are left in a PC's gun, and other similarly vital information. At 5th level, this ability often allows a cult sorcerer to maintain a seeming facade of sanity, providing the expected answers to questions or responses to social interaction.

CONFRONTING SARA

If the investigators tell Sara their suspicions of supernatural danger, she calls them crazy. But if they make some excuse about safety or a natural danger, she'll at least listen to them. She knows this theater well, though, and it's been inspected numerous times. Most likely she just reassures them that everything is going to be fine. If they disable her somehow, it changes nothing about the remaining events—Sara is innocent.

STOPPING THE SHOW

The best option to stop the event is that old favorite, yelling "Fire!" in a crowded theater. More directly, the investigators might trigger the fire alarms or even set a fire. Either way, the crowd flees with minor injuries and the evening is a disaster—but not as much of one as would otherwise be the case.

SUCCESS

If the investigators either disable Richard Jacobs or stop the event, all is well. Metro Arts soldiers on. More information on this outcome appears in Aftermath on page 271.

FAILURE

If the event continues and Richard Jacobs is free to act, he takes his seat in the theater with everyone else. The music winds down, the lights go out, and the projector whirrs up. A beam of light cuts through the darkness and fills the screen. The opening credits to *Rules of the Game* roll and there is brief applause. If the investigators are in the theater, their seats are toward the front near the screen.

Half an hour into the film, it starts to stutter. The image rolls and jumps, going in and out of focus. The images of the film change to the footage from the basement, of men in suits and faceless masks, and there is a grinding sound from the projection booth. The image is jumping so much it's hard to make out. Good-natured calls of "Focus!" come from the boisterous crowd. Then the image steadies, the men take off their masks, and a blinding light fills the room. A crashing sound and screams erupt from the rear of the theater. The tremendous light begins to strobe.

In between flashes, the investigators see that the back third of the theater has collapsed into another subterranean chamber. Theater patrons, many still in their seats, fall through the breaking timbers, screaming. They land in a dark mass that proves to be thousands of feet of nitrate movie film stock, an early film format long since abandoned because it's highly flammable.

In moments, the film ignites and the back third of the theater erupts in flames. The burning film writhes up and out of the chasm as if alive, grabbing nearby patrons and pulling them into the fire. Richard Jacobs emerges, lifted up by the tendrils of film. He is burning and laughing at the same time, and the nitrate tentacles lift him higher and higher until he passes through the hidden door in the ceiling. Then the film explodes and the building starts to collapse. This event causes 1d10/1d20 Sanity loss.

AFTERMATH

The investigators' first priority should be survival. Their best chance is to run for the fire doors toward the front of the theater, since they can't cross the flaming wreckage to get back to the lobby.

If an investigator is sitting in the front of the theater, call for skill checks such as Jump or Climb to serve dramatic effect, but let him escape if that's what he's trying to do.

If an investigator is sitting in the rear of the theater, however, he needs a Jump check or Reflex save (DC 10) to exit the theater as the floor collapses. On a failed roll, he takes 1d6 points of damage and takes fire damage on his initiative count each additional round.

Any who linger in the theater may be attacked by the burning tentacles (see below); they must then free themselves or be dragged to a fiery death. The tentacles focus on anyone who's attacking the center of the writhing mass or trying to stop Richard Jacobs.

If no one threatens the creature or cultist, the tentacles attack one random investigator within their reach each round. If you like, you can choose the closest one, the one currently in the most danger, or one who's simply taking insane risks for no apparent reason.

Burning Tentacles of Film

Lesser Servitor of Yog-Sothoth: Large ooze (fire); HD 10d10+80; hp 150; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 12 (+4 Dex, -2 size); Atk +9 melee (1d2+2, 8 tentacles); Face/Reach 10 ft. by 5 ft./40 ft.; SA Improved grab, swallow whole; SQ Amorphous, blindsight, darkvision; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 18, Int -, Wis 10, Cha -.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the burning tentacles hit an opponent with a tentacle attack, it deals normal damage. The creature then attempts to start a grapple as a free action without allowing its opponent a free attack; the creature uses its tentacle to hold its victim. With each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds (assuming the victim doesn't break free), the creature can automatically deal the listed damage or attempt to swallow its victim whole (see below).

Swallow Whole (Ex): Once the creature has successfully used its improved grab against a victim, it can attempt a grapple check on a later round to swallow its victim whole. If it succeeds, it swallows its target, who is then held immobile inside the burning tentacles. The victim is unable to take any actions, but is horribly aware of his surroundings. While swallowed, the target takes 1d3 points of fire damage per round. The creature can swallow one Medium-size target for every 5 hit points it has remaining.

Amorphous (Ex): The creature is not subject to critical hits and cannot be flanked.

Mindless (Ex): The creature is immune to all mind-affecting spells.

One useful strategy the investigators can attempt is this: If Richard Jacobs is killed or incapacitated before he escapes into the ceiling, the disaster shuts down immediately. The burning tentacles collapse, the fire sputters, and the building remains standing.

If the disaster happens, authorities cite the existence of an unknown basement area—behind the secret basement the investigators may have discovered—that was long ago used to dump a large collection of nitrate films that were taken out of circulation. A weak floor under the weight of the crowd and the combustible movie stock combined to produce the disaster, which killed dozens and injured more than a hundred. No credible reports of the film coming to life exist, though a few survivors might agree they saw something strange if the investigators poke around. Lawsuits swiftly destroy Metro Arts. Even if the Paradise survived, it is soon demolished and the land sold for a condominium project.

Unless the investigators took care of him themselves, Richard Jacobs survives the disaster and his strange epiphany unscathed. The following week he announces that he has sold his assets in the city and is leaving to travel the world. He's gone the week after.

If the disaster is averted but Jacobs survives, the danger isn't over. The next time there's a crowd at the Paradise, he'll be there and the same disaster unfolds whether the investigators are there or not. If they have taken care of Jacobs in some permanent fashion, however, the Paradise lives on.

EXPERIENCE AND SANITY AWARDS

TYPICAL STORY GOALS:

- Discover Mary's secret.
- Discover Richard Jacobs's secret.
- Subdue Frank Long.
- Find the hidden room in the attic.
- Find the hidden room in the basement.
- Recover the tome.
- Stop the summoning (or survive it).

BONUS SANITY REWARDS:

Stopping the event before the disaster starts: 1d4.

Stopping the disaster after it starts: 1d6.

FURTHER SCENARIOS

This doesn't have to be the end of the story, as a number of mysteries remain. What was the secret of the Sound and Light Club and the entire Allen bloodline? Was Richard Jacobs really just Max Allen? If the SLC shut down in 1953, what took its place? What about all the Sound and Light Clubs in other cities, as suggested by the photograph in the lobby? You can weave these questions and the shadowy history of the Paradise into future scenarios, establishing an occult conspiracy that can survive without Richard Jacobs.

ADVENTURE 2: LITTLE SLICES OF DEATH

Those little slices of death. How I loathe them.

—Edgar Allan Poe

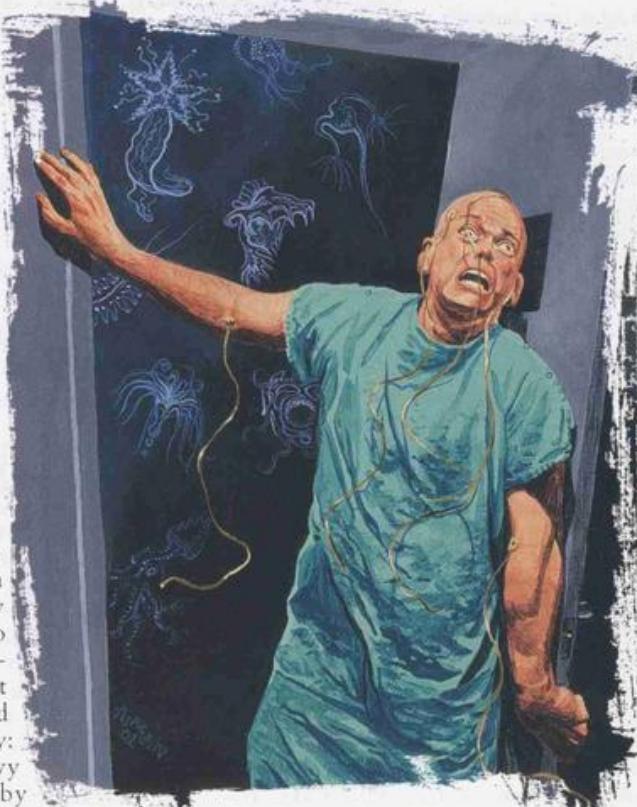
This scenario can be inserted at any time into a campaign, or it can be used as a stand-alone adventure. The story takes place in the Torgerson Sleep Research Clinic in Chicago. Although the details are written for the modern day, it can be adapted to other eras in the 20th century with a little bit of work.

Any group of 1st-level investigators that has survived a Mythos adventure should suffice for this story. If you're using the adventure on its own, you can opt to have one or two players create characters who work at the sleep clinic.

PRELUDE

Before this adventure begins, at least one of the player characters has been troubled with terrible nightmares (or some other sleep disorder). On the night the story begins, one of these investigators enters the Torgerson Sleep Research Institute as a patient, either by his own free will or as prescribed by a psychiatrist.

If you prefer, the investigator's dream can serve as an opening hook to the adventure. Feel free to describe it in graphic detail, possibly tailoring the imagery to an event in a previous adventure. No matter what the dream is, it should always end the same way: A mysterious, shadowy figure lurking nearby grows tentacles, then uses them to gently caress the investigator's face. Every time, as soon as this happens, the investigator bolts upright in bed, screaming. If several investigators are troubled with sleep disorders, only one of them should have this dream. If you can describe its imagery well, the resolution of the adventure provides resolution to the dream as well.



USING THE SCENARIO

Sleep disorders are, of course, not at all uncommon in the sanity-blasting world of the Cthulhu Mythos. An investigator might be having nightmares (or another sleep-related malady) because of revelations in a tome, an experience with a spell, an encounter with a monster, or a disturbing event in a previous adventure.

If this adventure is being used in a campaign, at least one of the investigators should be a patient at the clinic. Since patients only need to be present during the night, they can easily pursue their personal interests or conduct activities pertaining to other adventures during the day. Within a day or two, it becomes obvious that there's something

strange going on at the clinic. The patient then has a good reason for inviting other characters to help investigate by hanging around the clinic at night.

If this is a one-shot or introductory adventure, you may want to allow a few players to take on the roles of clinic staff, including orderlies, interns, and researchers. If this is the case, have the players choose what occupations they want to play and have them create characters that will fit in. For instance, a researcher should have Research and Knowledge (psychology) as core skills.

Give these players some advance knowledge regarding the layout and the personnel of the clinic. You can substitute player characters for any NPCs except Dr. Roth, Dr. Joshi, and Sam Brendel. If it helps advance the story, have events and dreams concerning the various NPCs happen to player characters instead. It's still a good idea to let one or two players play patients—that way, they can be on the "front lines" when experiencing the horrors to come.

and heart rates slow and the body becomes almost immobile. Then, after 20–30 minutes of slow-wave sleep, we lighten into Stage Two again and almost immediately change gears into very active brain-wave patterns, triggering REM sleep. Simultaneously with this dive into REM, our respiration and heart rate increase substantially. We also lose our ability to use our postural or skeletal muscles—this is called sleep paralysis.

Along with these phenomena, our brain becomes so active that we start to hallucinate and have dreams. Our eyes move down to midline, just as in wakefulness, and they begin to move sporadically, often in relation to what we are dreaming. In effect, a dreamer is a highly activated brain in a paralyzed body. This state lasts 10–20 minutes before we fall back down into Stage Two again. This ends the sleep cycle, which then starts all over again.

After the first sleep cycle, we gradually lose our delta sleep and replace it with longer and longer periods alternating between Stage Two and Stage Five (REM) sleep. By the final sleep cycle of the night, we spend approximately half our time in Stage Two and half in REM.

Contrary to popular belief, sleepwalking and other similar parasomnias (sleep disorders) do not occur during REM sleep. A person cannot sleepwalk while dreaming because of sleep paralysis. Sleepwalking occurs in slow-wave (Stage Three and Four) sleep and may be related to subconscious thought occurring at the time, but not actual dreams.

As part of your preparation for this adventure, read the information on sleep, familiarize yourself with the layout of the clinic, and review the cast of characters. Then introduce the players with the first section: Checking In. Follow the events of the timeline, presenting them to the players as appropriate. Don't be afraid to start things slowly, allowing the tension to build for the first night or two. The investigators have three days to figure out the cause of several strange events at the clinic. If they haven't figured it out by the fourth night, or if they don't take steps to destroy the source of the problem, all hell breaks loose.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND ON SLEEP

All mammals need sleep. This need for sleep is remarkably standardized in both quality and quantity and, if disturbed, results in problems during wakefulness. Sleep is divided into two distinct states: nonrapid eye movement sleep (NREM) and rapid eye movement sleep (REM). These two states occur in a roughly 90-minute cycle that repeats five to six times a night and includes five stages of sleep.

As we fall asleep, we enter the transition sleep called Stage One and begin our first sleep cycle. Within a few minutes, we evolve into our baseline sleep, or Stage Two sleep. It is from Stage Two that the other three stages emerge. Stage Two occupies approximately 50–65% of our sleep time. Within 15–20 minutes, we slowly transition into Stage Three and then Stage Four sleep, often called delta sleep or slow-wave sleep. Delta sleep is similar to being in a coma, but unlike a coma, it is reversible.

As we experience these first four stages of sleep, respiration

CLINIC LAYOUT

The Torgerson Sleep Research Institute was once a normal neighborhood medical clinic located near DePaul University north of downtown Chicago. The two-story structure is about fifty years old, with an unimpressive brick façade that's about fifteen years old. The windows of the second story were obviously covered over at that point. The interior has been done in clinical white, with worn wooden trim around windows, around doorways, and along the yellowing tile floor.

The doors are all heavy and wooden (DC 23 to break down, hardness 5, 20 hit points). None of the windows open; all of them have been sealed shut. The facility has central air and heat.

It is important that the GM become familiar with the layout of the clinic, since virtually all the action in the adventure takes place here. Refer to the map on page 275; you may also want to photocopy it for the players.

FIVE STAGES OF SLEEP

STAGE ONE SLEEP

Stage One sleep is experienced while falling asleep. It's a transition stage between waking and sleeping. This stage usually lasts 1–5 minutes and occupies approximately 2–5% of a normal night's sleep. Stage One sleep is dramatically increased in some cases of insomnia and disorders that produce frequent arousals, such as apnea (or snoring).

STAGE TWO SLEEP

Stage Two sleep follows Stage One, and is the baseline of sleep. This stage is part of the 90-minute cycle and occupies approximately 45–60% of sleep.

STAGE THREE AND STAGE FOUR SLEEP (DELTA SLEEP)

After approximately 10–20 minutes, Stage Two sleep evolves into delta sleep, which lasts 15–30 minutes. This is called "slow-wave" sleep because brain activity slows

down dramatically from the "theta" rhythm of Stage Two to a much slower rhythm of 1–2 cycles per second. The height or amplitude of the "delta" waves increases dramatically. In most adults, these two stages are completed within the first two 90-minute sleep cycles (within the first 3 hours of sleep).

Contrary to popular belief, delta sleep, not REM, is the deepest stage of sleep and the most restorative. A sleep-deprived person's brain craves delta sleep first and foremost. In children, delta sleep can occupy up to 40% of all sleep time. This is what makes children so hard to awaken during most of the night.

STAGE 5 SLEEP (REM SLEEP)

REM sleep is the active stage of sleep, comprising 20–25% of a normal night's sleep. Breathing, heart rate, and brain wave activity quicken, and vivid dreams can occur during this stage. Sleep researchers refer to the fifth stage as REM sleep (rapid eye movement sleep) because the sleeper's eyes move about rapidly under closed lids. After REM sleep, the body usually returns to Stage Two.

LOWER FLOOR

Closet. Each closet contains miscellaneous office-related supplies, old files, and other uninteresting stuff.

Conference Room 1. This room contains a large wooden table, eight to ten chairs, a dry-erase board on the wall, and a television/VCR on a stand.

Conference Room 2. This room contains a large wooden table, eight to ten chairs, a dry-erase board on the wall, and some fake potted plants.

Director's Office. Barbara Phillips's office has an extremely tidy and professional appearance. She has a desk, a few chairs, a number of file cabinets, and a computer desk with a computer on it. At the end of each day, she locks her door. (Bypassing this precaution requires an Open Lock check, DC 15.)

Elevator. This old elevator takes 2 full rounds to travel between floors, plus a round's delay for the doors to close. Few of the staff members use it, since it's quicker to take the stairs. The elevator only gets used when someone's carrying a heavy load or wheeling a cart.

Furnace Room. This room is almost entirely filled by the furnace and air conditioner. There's barely any room to move. Except when the machines need tending, no one ever goes in here.

Lounge. Most of the staff members spend their breaks and downtime in this room. It has a pair of worn couches, a smattering of chairs, a television with a VCR, a radio/tape player, and a refrigerator that stores employee lunches and drinks. Next to the refrigerator, each employee has a small wooden slot in a large wall-mounted shelf to hold mail and memos. These slots are filled by Randy, the administrative assistant, each morning. Next to the mail shelf, a time card clock and rack hold time cards for hourly employees, and a bulletin board displays announcements for the staff.

The lounge also contains a heavy-duty washer and dryer for handling the linens (one of the orderlies' least favorite duties), as well as a small microwave and hot plate for employee lunches and the patients' meals. An outside caterer brings in patient meals when needed; the orderlies heat them up here.

Maintenance Room. Cleaning supplies and tools are stored here. This is also where the water main, fuse box, and hot water heaters can be found.

Men's Room. This bathroom has multiple sinks, urinals, and stalls. The door does not lock.

Office. Randy spends most of his time here. It includes a desk, a long table, a few chairs, and dozens of file cabinets. Randy has a small collection of superhero action figures collecting dust on his desk around his computer.

Patient Room 1. Each patient room appears much like a common hospital room. They're intended for patients who stay here around the clock, but because this is quite rare, they aren't used as much as the sleep rooms (listed below). Each one has a small bathroom with a sink, toilet, and shower.

A hospital bed, a pair of end tables, a wall-mounted television, a pair of stuffed chairs, and a lamp furnish the room. Electrical equipment for the polygraph hookups (see Checking In, page 279) are positioned next to the bed. A closed circuit camera is mounted in one corner near the ceiling. The polygraph leads and the camera are hooked to monitors in the computer lab on the upper floor.

Patient Room 2. This room is identical to patient room 1.

Reception. Potted plants and a few couches flanked by tables covered with out-of-date magazines greet visitors coming in through the front door. The reception area is mostly a long counter. Angela Smith sits here during business hours to greet incoming patients and make sure they fill out their requisite forms. She also alerts the researchers to patient arrivals.

In the back of the room, beyond the counter, Angela keeps a computer and a file cabinet for her accounting duties and for updating patient accounts. A drawer here holds keys to all the labs on the upper floor, as well as the offices on the lower floor. Standard procedure is for whoever is using a lab to check out the key from Angela and return it to her afterward.

Station 1. Once a nurse's station in the old clinic, station 1 has numerous cabinets and drawers for the orderlies to stash common supplies—everything from syringes to extra pillows. Each station also has a fire extinguisher, a first-aid kit, and miscellaneous belongings of the orderlies: half-read paperbacks, boxes of crackers or cookies, and so on. The countertops are usually clear.

Storage. Linens, paper products, some dry and canned food, tools, and other miscellaneous items are stored in these large closets.

Women's Room. This bathroom has multiple sinks and stalls. The door does not lock.

UPPER FLOOR

Bathroom. This unisex bathroom has a sink, shower, toilet, and urinal. The door locks (Open Lock check, DC 10, to circumvent).

Computer Lab. The computer lab is filled with five desktop computers, a large bank of servers, a scanner, two printers, a digital camera, and a photocopy machine. Two monitors are hooked up to the cameras in patient rooms 1 and 2, respectively, on the lower floor. The polygraph leads in those rooms are also monitored from the computer room (see Checking In, page 279).

At the start of the scenario, Dr. Joshi uses this room during the night to monitor Sam Brendel. During the day, however, it is unoccupied and used to make copies, color printouts, and even (by the orderlies and sometimes the patients) to play networked computer games or surf the Internet.

Videotapes from all the cameras and paper printouts of various polygraph readings are stored on shelves covering the north wall.

A Computer Use check (DC 25) is needed to get into the clinic's computer files, because they are password protected. Once inside the system, an investigator can obtain personnel and patient records and even access the current research notes of the various doctors.

Someone with access to this room could also reroute any of the various cameras in the patient rooms or sleeping rooms so they could be viewed by any monitor in the system. For example, an investigator could rig it so that the camera in SR 1 transmits to a monitor in lab C. This would require a Disable Device check (DC 15) or Repair check (DC 20).

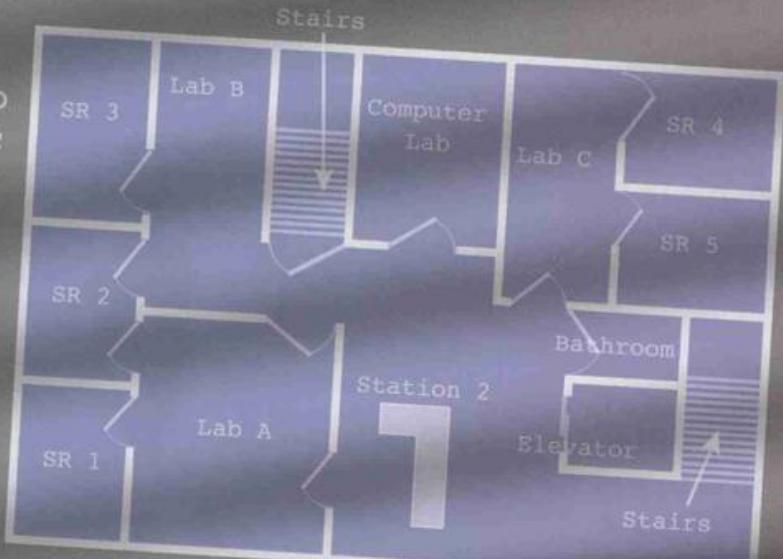
Elevator. This is the same elevator described on the first floor.

Lab A. Currently, this is where Dr. Roth is working with his patients, Tim Larson and Nick Keller. The lab has two monitors hooked up to watch SR 1 and SR 2, as well as the readouts for the polygraph (see Checking In, page 279). The

Torgerson Sleep Research Clinic



Upper Floor
Torgerson Sleep Research Clinic



Lounge

Maintenance

Furnace

Stairs

Patient Room 1

Patient Room 2

Director's Office

Men's Room Women's Room

Closet

Office

Conference Room 2

Conference Room 1

Station 1

Reception

Stairs

Elevator

Storage

Lower Floor
Torgerson Sleep Research Clinic

STUDY VI

lab also contains a desktop computer and printer on a wall-mounted countertop, a CD player and a number of soothing, restful CDs, a desk covered with books, magazines, and papers, and three office chairs. A cabinet full of various supplies holds everything from printer paper to petroleum jelly to blank video tapes to ballpoint pens. None of the books or papers are of much interest, since Dr. Roth carries his notes with him.

Dr. Roth keeps a strange machine in this lab. It sits on a wooden pallet with caster wheels. The machine is 3 feet high, 2 feet wide, and 2 feet long. It has a squarish, dull gray exterior made of steel. A few dials and a pair of toggle switches are displayed on the top. A pair of needle indicators seem to be associated with the dials, but it is not at all clear to the uninitiated what their displays actually measure.

A Knowledge (electronics) check against DC 25 is needed to even guess at what Dr. Roth's strange machine might be, and even then, the examiner only realizes that it produces an electromagnetic field in a very strange way. If in-depth study is attempted, treat the device as an artifact with a Examination Period of 1d2 days (see Handling Artifacts, page 119).

Roth prefers not to discuss his work, saying it's still in a preliminary stage. He doesn't want to be scooped. If asked directly (Diplomacy or Gather Information, DC 20), he says his machine measures bioelectrical energy fields. He's studying the connection between sleep disorders and the ambient energy produced by the body. If he can establish a causal relationship between the two, that would mean that manipulating one might have a beneficial effect upon the other. Of course, his research is still in its early stages, but he thinks he's really on the track of something. See the Roth's Machine sidebar for more information on the device and its effects.

Lab B. This lab has two monitors hooked up to watch SR 2 and SR 3 and the readouts for the polygraph. The lab also contains a desktop computer and printer on a long wooden table, a CD player and a number of soothing, restful CDs, two desks—one covered with books, magazines, and papers, the other empty—and two office chairs. A cabinet holds various supplies, everything from printer paper to petroleum jelly to blank video tapes to ballpoint pens. None of the books or papers are of much interest, and the magazines are all six to eight months out of date.

Also, there is a locked metal cabinet that contains various drugs needed by the researchers (Open Lock, DC 25, to open). These drugs include any relevant medications listed in the Sanity chapter (see Psychiatric Medications, page 51) as well as a variety of simpler medications, such as muscle relaxants and aspirin.

ROTH'S MACHINE

This obviously homemade device creates a special energy field about 20 feet around it once it is activated and properly tuned. The field allows a human within it to view creatures and objects that take up the same space as we do, but on a different harmonic frequency. It also allows those same creatures to view humans and objects in our world.

Dr. Roth is unaware of similar experiments in the 1920s involving Dr. Tillinghast's infamous Ultraviolet Projector. Savvy investigators familiar with these incidents know of these creatures as Terrors from Beyond. (For more details and imagery, consult H.P. Lovecraft's "From Beyond.")

After some preliminary experiments, Dr. Roth has come to believe that these creatures are the true source of many night terrors. According to his theory, the human mind sometimes accidentally achieves a state during sleep in which, just for a moment, it can catch a brief momentary awareness of Terrors. This leads to an immediate reaction of panic, so that the person wakes with a start. The awareness is too brief to catch the attention of the creatures, however.

Lab C. This lab has two monitors hooked up to watch SR 4 and SR 5 and the readouts for the polygraph. The lab also contains a desktop computer on a desk with a printer on the floor, a portable CD player with headphones and a number of CDs, a cabinet full of various supplies, an old couch covered in magazines, and a pair of office chairs.

Lab C is also equipped with a white sound machine; it makes a steady drone to block out noise and facilitate sleep. This is moved into one of the sleep rooms if it's needed.

SR 1. A "sleep room." This is a room for patients who stay at the clinic only at night (that is, the majority of the research subjects). It contains a bed, a nightstand, a lamp, and polygraph equipment to hook up the subject. A closed-circuit camera is mounted in one corner near the ceiling. The door has a small one-way mirror for direct observation. The electrical equipment is all connected to monitors in lab A.

SR 2. As the other sleep rooms. It connects to both lab A and lab B. This room can be monitored from either lab.

SR 3. As the other sleep rooms. The electrical equipment is all connected to monitors in lab B.

SR 4. As the other sleep rooms. The electrical equipment is all connected to monitors in lab C.

SR 5. As the other sleep rooms. The electrical equipment is all connected to monitors in lab C.

Station 2. Pretty much identical to station 1, except that it's often not quite as tidy. The counter is usually littered with a couple of medical journals, a half-drunk can of Coke, and less significant items.

Roth's machine prolongs this rarefied mental state. Those experiencing a sleep terror continue to perceive the Terrors from Beyond even after they have awakened. He doesn't realize, however, that the Terrors can continue to perceive them. In fact, once the creatures have fully attuned to their new surroundings, other people in the energy field can also see them, and are thus in danger themselves. When the machine is turned off, the mutual awareness is disrupted.

He is completely oblivious to more serious dangers. Prolonged exposure to the field makes one more likely to have night terrors and, eventually, experience night terrors long enough to suffer an outright attack, even without the presence of the field. A 10% chance exists each night that any person who has been exposed to the effect of the machine (that is, anyone who's been in the clinic) will be attacked by a Terror for 1d6 rounds after a sleep terror awakens them from normal sleep. This decreases to 5% if the character is more than 50 miles away from the clinic, and 0% if the machine is not turned on at all that night. The attunement fades over time, so after six months the risk of nightly attacks ends unless the person is again exposed to the field.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The GM has many nonplayer characters to keep track of in this adventure. All of them are briefly summarized here, but not all of them are important to the plot. In fact, most are provided as extras.

Trimming the Staff: Gamemasters new to this game may find sixteen NPCs at the clinic a bit much to handle. Not all these people are present at any one time, and only eight of them work the night shift. Some have only minor or unobtrusive roles. If players are portraying workers at the clinic, they can easily substitute their characters for some of the extra workers listed here.

If that's still more NPCs than you feel comfortable handling, consider a few more cuts. Drop Barbara Phillips and let Dr. Corbett double as the Clinic Director (officially in charge, but with less clout than Joshi or Roth). Drop Randy Carter and let Angela absorb his duties in addition to her own. Drop Wilbur and Mabel and let the orderlies (Steve and Ted) do cleaning chores as well as their other work.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Thomas Joshi (Night Shift)

Dr. Joshi is a middle-aged, portly, successful researcher. He is heavily funded and considered by most scientists in his field to be a genius. Currently, he has the high-profile project of working with Samuel Brendel (see below). This has had him on the evening news twice in the last few weeks.

Joshi is arrogant and dislikes interruptions. In fact, he dislikes anything that will keep him from his work. He is openly contentious with Corbett and Roth, condescending to the orderlies, and even rude to Brendel's guards. He has a wild theory concerning a sixth stage of sleep in which a particularly disturbed individual can commit potentially heinous acts and not be aware of them—or even awaken. He suspects this is the case with Brendel and wants to exploit him to prove his theory.

DIFFERENT TIME PERIODS

"Little Slices of Death" is set in the present day, but with a little work can be adapted to work pretty much in any time in the 20th century.

Before 1940: While the use of electrical devices to monitor patients' heart rate, muscle movement, and brain waves is not unknown in the early part of the century, the machines used in the adventure should be larger and much more primitive than those described here. (The GM's mad scientist imagination should run free.) In this environment, Roth's machine is much less an anomaly, at least as appearance goes. The Torgerson facility is years ahead of its time in using physical means to monitor and treat sleep disorders. Obviously, all the computers, VCRs, and televisions are not present. Phones should be present, except in the very early

Dr. Thomas Joshi: Male 3rd level; HD 3d6+3; hp 13; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee or +1 ranged; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Diplomacy +7, Drive +6, Heal +9, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (biology) +10, Knowledge (medicine) +10, Knowledge (psychology) +10, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Psychoanalysis +10, Research +13, Speak Other Language (Latin, Greek) +5 each, Spot +6.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Skill Emphasis (Heal), Skill Emphasis (Research).

Dr. Melissa Corbett (Night Shift)

Corbett is in her late thirties. She is slender, friendly, and professional. She works hard, but has not had the success of Dr. Joshi—not that she necessarily wants the limelight like he does. Less preoccupied with her pet theories than either Joshi or Roth, Dr. Corbett usually handles the miscellaneous cases that come to the clinic (including those of player character patients). She finds Joshi insufferable but Roth pleasant enough, if quiet.

Dr. Melissa Corbett: Female 2nd level; HD 2d6; hp 8; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk -1 melee or +1 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Diplomacy +8, Heal +6, Knowledge (biology) +7, Knowledge (medicine) +7, Knowledge (psychology) +7, Listen +6, Psychoanalysis +7, Research +7, Speak Other Language (German, Spanish) +3 each, Spot +6, Swim +4.

Feats: Dodge, Trustworthy.

Dr. Edgar Roth (Night Shift)

This forty-something thin, quiet man recently received a large grant to study night terrors (described in the Night Terrors sidebar, page 278). Roth is driven and can be downright cold to someone interrupting his work. He keeps his lab locked while he's using it. Dr. Roth recently commissioned a man named Maxwell White to make a machine for him. White is considered by most to be a crackpot electrical engineer who has a problem with alcohol and can't hold down a steady job. The machine is detailed in the description of lab A (page 274) and the accompanying sidebar (page 276).

Dr. Edgar Roth: Male 4th level; HD 4d6-4; hp 10; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +2 melee or +3 ranged; SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 16, Wis 9, Cha 11.

Skills: Computer Use +10, Heal +6, Knowledge (medicine) +10, Knowledge (physics) +10, Knowledge (psychology) +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Psychoanalysis +10, Repair +10, Research +10, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Lightning Reflexes.

years of the century—in which case the receptionist has the only one. Due to limitations and prejudices of the time, the director of the clinic is a man, named Robert Phillips.

1940–1960: Sleep research is still in its infancy. The researchers are all far more psychiatric in focus than modern-day researchers, who rely heavily on physiological evidence and treatments. Due to limitations and prejudices of the time, the director of the clinic is a man, named Robert Phillips.

1960–1980: Sleep research is in full swing at this point, so the Torgerson Clinic is no more an anomaly than in the present. Although there is a single, large computer in the computer lab, none of the other labs are equipped with computers. No VCRs are present.

1980+: Use the adventure as written.

STAFF

Barbara Phillips (Day Shift)

Ms. Phillips is the Clinic Director. Young, attractive, and businesslike, she has nevertheless failed to earn the respect of her coworkers, since she lacks any background in psychiatry or any real understanding of their work. Her expertise is in writing grants and charming potential donors. They consider her too focused on finances and not enough on the research and work that the people in the clinic accomplish. Director Phillips has a master key to all doors in the clinic that she carries with her at all times.

Angela Smith (Day Shift)

Angela is the friendly, somewhat flirtatious receptionist who doubles as the clinic's accountant. An attractive thirty-something woman, she is strictly a 9-to-5 employee. She does her job well, gets along with all the staff (including Dr. Joshi), and is a whiz at accounting. If none of the PCs are interested in a little extracurricular romance, she'll flirt with Officer Nelson.

Randy Carter (Night Shift)

The clinic's administrative assistant, Randy is a young university student working part-time. He's smart but a bit of a slacker. Randy is a friend of Steve Buchart, one of the orderlies.

Steve Buchart (Night Shift)

Buchart is an orderly at the clinic. Tall and thin, Steve is very caring and attentive to the patients. He likes to play cards and is good friends with Randy. He works nights.

Ted Robinson (Day Shift)

Another orderly, Robinson (he likes to go by his last name) is muscular, with a shaved head. He does his job and little more, spending whatever time he can grab reading this week's novel. He works the day shift.

PATIENTS

Sam Brendel (Present Night and Day)

In his late thirties, Sam Brendel would be the stereotypical pudgy computer programmer except for one fact: He was arrested last month for the brutal murder of his wife. Brendel claims that he has no memory of it—he just woke up and found her stabbed, bludgeoned, and dead. Sam is the victim of an extreme sleep disorder (severe parasomnia). When Dr. Joshi heard about Brendel's case, he pulled strings to bring the man to the clinic to be observed and tested. The police department has him under constant guard. Brendel's trial begins in six weeks.

Sam hates the clinic. He complains that this place sets him on edge in a way he can't fully explain, and that he sleeps terribly here. As the adventure proceeds, his sleep-walking becomes increasingly violent—and increasingly dangerous.

Sam Brendel: Male 2nd level; HD 2d6+6+3; hp 19; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +5 melee or +2 ranged; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Computer Use +9, Craft (electronics) +7, Disable Device +7, Drive +5, Knowledge (electronics) +7, Knowledge (physics) +7, Listen +6, Repair +7, Search +7, Spot +6.

Feats: Toughness, Skill Emphasis (Computer Use).

Tim Larson (Present at Night)

Tim is a sandy-haired 12-year-old boy plagued with night terrors. He is currently Dr. Roth's patient. He continues going to school, with his parents bringing him by in the evening and picking him up in the morning. He lives in Chicago and has been a part of Dr. Roth's study for one week. If asked, Tim says that he's never had so many night terrors as he's had since he got here. He thinks Dr. Roth is making him worse, not better.

Nick Keller (Present at Night)

Nick is a shy 13-year-old bothered with night terrors. He is very thin and quiet, and suffers from a stutter when nervous. Nick's mother stays in a nearby hotel at night (the Kellers are from Iowa) and takes Nick to see various Chicago sights during the day. Nick has been Dr. Roth's patient for two days.

Nick is terrified of Dr. Roth, but he won't say why. A successful Diplomacy check (DC 20) gets him to say, "Dr. Roth brings the monsters into my dreams."

At the GM's option, Nick could possess the Sensitive and Second Sight psychic feats, which are just beginning to manifest themselves—much to his distress.

OTHERS

Wilbur and Mabel Jurgens (Night Shift)

This elderly couple works evenings as the cleaning crew. They are very friendly and unobtrusive. They have a single master key for all doors in the clinic, but not the various cabinets, desks, or file cabinets. They usually start work around five o'clock, finish within a few hours, then go home.

Charles Peal (Day Shift)

Officer Peal is one of Sam Brendel's round-the-clock guards. An off-duty policeman, he does not wear a uniform in this capacity. He has no

NIGHT TERRORS

Sleep terrors, or night terrors, are characterized by a sudden arousal from slow-wave sleep with a piercing scream or cry, accompanied by autonomic and behavioral manifestations of intense fear. A professional might describe the event to a layman as a short circuit occurring in the brain, sending incorrect information.

Sleep terrors manifest with tense muscles, excessive perspiration, and sudden, sometimes violent motion. The

patient usually sits up in bed, unresponsive to external stimuli. If awakened, he is confused and disoriented. Amnesia for the episode occurs, although sometimes there are reports of fragments of very brief vivid dream images or hallucinations. Night terrors do not occur during REM sleep, however, so any of the patient's attributions to dream images are clearly false. These may be the result of subconscious rationalizations for obviously inappropriate fear responses. The episode may be accompanied by incoherent vocalizations.

opinion on whether Brendel's "dream defense" is legitimate. He works days.

Officer Charles Peal: Male 1st level; HD 1d6+2; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +1 melee or +3 ranged; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +3, Gather Information +4, Hide +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +4, Search +3, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Proficiency (pistol).

Possessions: Smith & Wesson Model 29 Revolver (1d10 damage).

Robert Nelson (Night Shift)

Officer Nelson is the other of Sam Brendel's guards. He is muscular and balding, and does not wear a uniform at the clinic. He is convinced that Brendel's "dream defense" is a scam and that he should go to jail. He is on duty at night.

Nelson and Joshi despise each other. Joshi often insists on checking on Sam Brendel during the night, especially when Sam has had an episode of sleepwalking. Nelson insists that "the prisoner's" room should be kept shut. Officer Nelson's concerns over security may increase as the story proceeds, possibly as the result of the investigators' actions.

Officer Robert Nelson: Male 2nd level; HD 2d6+2; hp 9; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +3 melee or +3 ranged; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Gather Information +6, Hide +5, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (law) +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Spot +6.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (pistol).

Possessions: Smith & Wesson Model 29 Revolver (1d10 damage).

Monica Slayton (Barely Present)

Brilliant and ambitious, Slayton is Sam Brendel's lawyer. She is always perfectly presented and groomed and never goes anywhere without her briefcase and cell phone. She comes by every day at least briefly to see Sam, make sure he's being treated well, and talk to Dr. Joshi in hopes of turning up something that will help in Brendel's defense. Slayton will not be present when any of the supernatural events occur.

CHECKING IN

When the player characters first come into the clinic, Angela greets them warmly and acts as if she was expecting them. Patients must fill out and sign a number of standard forms and waivers. A Knowledge (law)

ADJUSTING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure is designed with four 1st-level characters in mind. If the PCs are higher level, make the following modifications:

Change Sam Brendel so that he is one level higher than the average party level.

Change all other major NPCs so that they are within three levels (up or down) from the average party level.

check (DC 10) or Knowledge (medicine) check (DC 15) is needed to determine that they are indeed typical and routine. Dr. Corbitt comes to reception while the patients check in. She and Ted Robinson show the patients around the facility. This is a good time to give the players an idea of the layout and perhaps even a photocopy of the maps on page 275. Dr. Corbitt is willing to answer any question about the lab honestly to her patients. Eventually, they come to lab C and the sleeping rooms attached to it.

Corbitt shows the patients the sleep rooms, the cameras and monitors, and the polygraph. She shows how the eleven leads connect to various parts of the body. Each one has jellied suction cups that are taped on for extra support.

When preparing a patient for the polygraph, she attaches two under the chin, one above and one below each eye, one behind each ear, one in the middle of the forehead and two on the back of the head. The leads plug into a device in the wall that connects to the polygraph machine in the lab.

The polygraph has three parts: the electro-oculogram (EOG) that records eye movement, the electroencephalogram (EEG) that records electrical activity in the brain, and the electromyogram (EMG) that records muscle activity.

Each patient is hooked up each night to these leads and monitored on the video cameras as well. These observations determine if there are physiological reasons for whatever problems the patient is suffering. Later, the patient is observed under the effects of different drug therapies and again after some psychological counseling, if that's prescribed. Then again, most cases in the clinic don't advance that far (and it is very unlikely that the adventure will get to that point before the disasters caused by Roth's experiments intervene).

TIMELINE

This adventure is governed by a flow of events. Player characters can do whatever they wish, at least until they blatantly break the law and authorities begin to interfere. Unless they directly intervene to change what's going on, they experience the following events in the order presented below.

As a GM, you will have to make these events fluid and alter them as needed. For example, if a PC volunteers to be another subject for Joshi's experiments, then she might get drawn into the effects of the machine directly.

Experienced investigators may actually track down the Terrors from Beyond or find Dr. Roth's strange machine before the fourth night. For instance, the use of spells or psychic powers may give characters an edge in their investigation. Be prepared for this eventuality, and be ready to accelerate events if the story warrants it.

DAY ONE

The patient or patients check in, meet the staff, and learn the layout and procedures of the clinic as described in Checking In.

The Terrors from Beyond can be doubled in number, but be aware that such a modification makes the creatures deadlier (increasing the CR from 1 to 3). Another option is increasing the terrors by 1 HD each. This increases their attack bonuses and saving throws by +1 and gives them each, on average, 4 more hit points (increasing the CR from 1 to 2).

NIGHT ONE

The first night spent at a sleep clinic is always a patient's acclimation night. No real study or observation is attempted. The idea is that the patient should relax, become used to her surroundings, and be able to have a normal night's sleep the following night.

Robinson, one of the orderlies, wakes up with night terrors at home this night but doesn't tell anyone about it (unless asked later on).

During the night, Sam Brendel sleepwalks in a very agitated way. Characters at the clinic who are awake and on the ground floor can make Listen checks (DC 18) to hear him. At one point, he begins testing the door handle. Dr. Joshi comes running down from the computer lab to make sure that the guard (Robert) doesn't do anything that might harm Sam.

If necessary, Joshi claims that he's having trouble getting proper readings with his equipment; a Sense Motive check (DC 10) reveals this is true. Sam has walked to the door, tearing off his monitoring electrodes in the process.

Joshi enters the room before Robert can stop him. An alert (or meddlesome) investigator may actually get there first. Getting Sam back into bed without waking him, and keeping him from violent or dangerous activity, requires a Diplomacy check (DC 15). It's not easy, but unless there is interference from others, Joshi tries to get Sam back into his bed while Robert stands ready in case Sam gets violent. Joshi insists vehemently that no one disturb or harm his patient, belittling and insulting everyone who does not follow his instructions without question. In the process, he alienates Robert, who begins to grumble about the "mad scientist's" reckless behavior.

Dr. Roth's second night of experiments with the machine lead to his first partial sighting of the Terrors from Beyond, which he calls a "night terror." (Nothing much happened last night, although Roth did accidentally attune Robinson, one of the orderlies, to the Terrors.) Roth turns off the machine as soon as he sees the thing, and waits for his heart to stop pounding. From this point on, Roth becomes paranoid that others will try to stop his research and begins to display an obsessive determination to continue.

DAY TWO

Director Phillips complains about the large electricity bill to everyone, eventually issuing a memo to all the staff. She even leaves a nasty note on the employee bulletin board in the lounge (Spot check, DC 11, to notice it right next to the time clock.) Most of the staff ignores her, blaming the furnace or the air conditioner, whichever is appropriate for the time of year. The truth is, it's Dr. Roth's new machine, which causes a huge spike in the clinic's power use.

Dr. Roth accidentally leaves a book on quantum physics in the lounge (Spot check, DC 15). If asked, he says it's just his hobby,

SLEEPWALKING

Sleepwalking consists of a series of complex behaviors that are initiated during slow-wave sleep and result in walking during sleep.

Episodes can range from simple sitting up in bed to walking, and even to apparent frantic attempts to escape from some imagined pursuit. The patient may be difficult to awaken. When awakened, she is often mentally confused. She usually remembers nothing of the episode's events.

Sleepwalking originates from slow-wave sleep and, therefore, is most often evident during the first third of the night or during other times of increased slow-wave sleep,

which is at least partially true.

Patients other than Sam are allowed to leave once they awake, filling their day with whatever activities they wish. They are free to hang around the clinic as well, if they have nowhere else to go. Most patients go to movies or take walks in the park. The researchers usually write up some reports in the morning and then go home to sleep, returning in the evening.

NIGHT TWO

A PC patient sleepwalks that night, highly agitated (determine randomly if there is more than one PC patient). She has dreams of invisible creatures that seem to be trying to get at her and others. Since they are invisible, she doesn't know where to flee, making this a particularly terrifying and even frustrating dream.

Dr. Corbitt attempts to put the PC gently back in bed. If another investigator tries this first, it requires a Diplomacy check (DC 15). If the attempt fails, there's a 50% chance that the PC deals 1d3 points of damage to herself by running into a wall, knocking over the lamp, falling down stairs, or some similar misadventure.

Meanwhile, Roth uses the machine again, this time for a longer period. He catches a Terror from Beyond on tape for an extended period, but because of an insane insight, shuts off the machine before the thing can get too close to his patients. Both of them wake up screaming at the same time.

Anyone in the clinic can attempt to make Listen checks for this strange occurrence. For each investigator on the upper floor, a success against DC 12 lets him hear Roth's patients wake up screaming. If the Listen check succeeds against DC 20, the investigator hears strange buzzing sounds from Roth's lab (lab A). If confronted, Roth claims it's just his equipment. (Nothing appears amiss when he lets them in, since the machine has been switched off.)

DAY THREE

On the third day, Dr. Corbitt has a disturbing dream at home, similar to the one the PC patient had the night before, but she doesn't

such as after sleep deprivation. The motor activity may terminate spontaneously, or the sleepwalker may return to bed, lie down, and continue to sleep without reaching alertness at any point. Sleep talking can also be observed during these events.

Sleepwalking can include inappropriate behavior, and even falls and injuries. Physical harm can result from the attempt to escape or simply from walking into dangerous situations. The person attempting to awaken the patient can be violently attacked. Other parasomnia activity, such as sleep terrors, can also occur in sleepwalkers.

Sleepwalking in the lab means that the patient pulls off all the polygraph leads, which must be reapplied.

NIGHT THREE

A random PC (preferably *not* a patient, but someone else who has spent a lot of time at the clinic) wakes up in a cold sweat, screaming with a night terror. He remembers, briefly, the image of some horrible, amorphous creature floating over him, about to take a terrible bite out of his sleeping body.

Dr. Corbitt notes spikes in the PC patient's polygraph readout during the night. This is caused by the presence of the field created by Roth's machine.

Wilbur and Mabel Jurgens, while cleaning Sam Brendel's room early in the evening, note that the bedsheets are torn and have a strange, sticky substance on them in places. This substance is a residue from the Terrors from Beyond, who manifested here briefly during a night terror of

Sam's. Wilbur and Mabel assume it's a new kind of gel, like that used to attach the monitors, and mention the mess it makes if anyone chats with them. In the meantime, the Terrors from Beyond are causing malfunctions in the machines and cameras, so no photographic evidence exists.

During the night, Sam Brendel sleepwalks again. This time, he doesn't just check the door—he slams into it a few times. Characters who are awake and on the same floor as Sam can make Listen checks (DC 15) to hear him. Sleeping characters make this check at a -5 penalty.

As before, Dr. Joshi comes running down from the computer lab, making sure that the guard (Robert) doesn't do anything that might harm Sam. He argues that he must enter the room to see his patient, becoming belligerent with anyone who gets in his way. If anyone gets there first, or accompanies Dr. Joshi, getting Sam back into bed without waking him and keeping him from violent or dangerous activity requires a Diplomacy check (DC 15). Grappling him is a more direct option (see Grapple, page 78), but it makes Joshi furious.

To further complicate matters, Dr. Joshi steadfastly refuses to take obvious precautions (such as strapping Sam down to the bed). He sees all such suggestions as attempts to undermine his authority. He is doubly upset if Officer Nelson supports any of these suggestions.

DAY FOUR

Angela Smith does not report in to work, nor does she call. An attractive, slightly incompetent temp shows up around noon, and leaves promptly at five o'clock. A note with Angela's phone number is

SLEEPING INVESTIGATORS

At least one investigator is asleep each night at the clinic. Cautious investigators may decide to sleep in shifts, but even then, a Concentration check (DC 15) is required to stay awake for more than a few hours beyond midnight in such a restful environment. Obvious circumstance modifiers may apply (such as drinking a lot of coffee or sitting near the white noise generator).

Sleeping characters are helpless. They cannot take actions, but they can hear noises. If a sleeping character makes a successful Listen check at a -5 penalty, she wakes up when danger or suspicious activity is nearby. The GM should make this check secretly so that players are unaware of any such dangers.

Characters who are awakened by either sound or physical shaking (which works automatically) must spend a full round coming to their senses and becoming aware of their surroundings before they can take actions.

If an investigator seems to be sleeping through all the good stuff, engineer some of the night events so that they occurs when a PC patient is awake—say that he's on the

way to the restroom or having a late-night snack. Make it known that it is okay for the patients to have guests come and spend some time during the night to observe them. This might allow for investigators who are not patients to get in on the action, especially once strange events start taking place.

As an unusual alternative, you might have sleeping PCs dream that they hear a disturbance when strange events occur. Filter real-world events through the hazy world of their dreams. They might imagine floating down corridors to investigate, wandering through the empty building toward disturbances, or simply sensing something tentacled and unpleasant hovering over their beds. At the GM's discretion, a psychic might be able to actually sense a Terror nearby while sleeping, or her psychic powers might manifest in the physical world as a result of events in the dream. Despite the researcher's expectations, an investigator might even sleepwalk while experiencing these sensations.

Above all else, be inventive. If a character is being shut out of the adventure because of a few failed Listen checks, consider other options.

still attached to the computer at the end of the day (Spot check, DC 10). She isn't answering her phone. Further investigation shows that Angela is not in her apartment, but there are signs of a struggle, included shredded and bloody sheets. The Terrors from Beyond attacked and consumed her in the night.

A feeling of unsettling wrongness hangs around the lab on this day. The PC patients do not feel rested. They feel better if they get out of the clinic for a while.

During that same day, Dr. Corbitt wakes up screaming and covered with sweat from a night terror in her own home. She remembers the same disturbing image mentioned by the PC patient on Night Three. Worried that she might be cracking up, she keeps it to herself and just seems a little quiet the following night back at the clinic, drinking an unusual amount of coffee to stay awake. A Diplomacy check (DC 18) is needed to get her to tell anyone about her unsettling experience.

Anyone making a Spot check (DC 18) while near Station 2 notices some strange marks in the countertop. A deliberate examination of the area easily turns this up (Search DC 10). A successful Knowledge (biology) check (DC 15) suggests that they are bite marks, made by a huge, toothy mouth unlike anything found in nature.

The day guard, Charles Peal, mentions to anyone chatting with him that he has not been sleeping well lately. He woke last night in a cold sweat, and he's got a strange mark on his leg. A successful Knowledge (biology) or Knowledge (medicine) check against DC 15 reveals that he has been bitten. The shape of the teeth don't correspond to any known creature. Charles remembers nothing of the incident.

NIGHT FOUR

At the beginning of the evening, when he shows up at the clinic, Dr. Joshi appears run down. He complains of poor sleep. The truth is, he's been having nightmares and night terrors as well.

During the night, Sam Brendel sleepwalks again. This time, he thrashes about much louder than he has on previous nights. During his nocturnal rampage, he overturns several pieces of furniture. Characters who are awake can make Listen checks to hear him downstairs (DC 10 downstairs, DC 15 upstairs). This time, Dr. Joshi does not come running down. If a character checks in on Joshi, he finds his horribly mutilated body in the computer lab (Sanity check, 1/1d4+1). The corpse appears to be covered in horrible bites, with large chunks of him missing. Joshi fell prey to the Terrors from Beyond made aware by Roth's machine.

Meanwhile, Sam's special parasomnia condition, worsened by the effects of Roth's machine, causes him to begin smashing on the door to his room. In this state, Sam has a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength, giving him a total bonus of +9 to smash down the door (DC 23). Eventually, he succeeds. Robert draws his firearm and waits for a doctor to come to instruct him. If 5 rounds pass with Sam still behind the door and no

one of authority to tell him what to do, Robert must make a Wisdom check (DC 15) not to open the door in an attempt to subdue Sam before he hurts himself. If Robert fails this check and opens the door, or if Sam breaks down the door, Sam attacks any and all he encounters. If he subdues Robert, Sam takes his gun and begins firing at anything that moves—including Terrors from Beyond. Without Weapon Proficiency (pistol), he has a -4 penalty on his ranged attacks.

While this is going on, Roth locks himself and his remaining patients in lab A and refuses to let anyone in. Roth is concerned about anyone discovering his secret research, but he claims that his patients cannot be disturbed without causing harm. In fact, his patients' parents have signed waivers for this sort of isolation. Unfortunately, this happens at the same time that the Terrors from Beyond make their first really concerted attack.

On this night, the Terrors are ready when the machine turns on. Two of them appear, one in SR 1 and one in SR 2, and immediately attack patients. Roth, completely unprepared for this, goes indefinitely insane and stands by, gibbering. The victims' screams are very loud (Listen checks are DC 5 throughout the lab). They attempt to get away from the creatures and out of the lab.

The creatures, who have now acclimated enough to the machine's effects that they have full run of the entire clinic, are happy to attack and feed upon anything that they can find.

If the police are summoned, they arrive and eventually subdue Sam (if the investigators and others in the clinic have not already done so). They want to question everyone at the clinic, especially if they hear screams from upstairs or encounter Joshi's bloody corpse. Unfortunately, the police have no effective way of dealing with the Terrors from Beyond, who continue to attack as long as Roth's machine is still turned on. Unless the investigators figure out what's causing the attacks and how to stop them, the presence of officers may simply add to the body count.

DAY FIVE

Police spend a lot of time at the clinic and reporters are on the scene as well, painting a picture of a "strange laboratory of bizarre medical and psychological experimentation on children." Dr. Roth is arrested (if he's still alive), although it's not at all clear he'll be mentally competent to stand trial. Everyone else is questioned and then sent home.

If the problem has been resolved by now, the clinic is closed and the site is sealed by the police, pending a police investigation. If no one has shut down the machine by now, investigators who wish to enter the building must sneak in. By day, this is difficult (DC 25), given the attention the building has just received. By night it is easier (DC 15) but more dangerous, since the Terrors from Beyond have not forgotten their feasting. They reappear and attack anyone who enters.

PLAYER CHARACTER ACTIONS

The preceding timeline describes events, but it doesn't take into account the actions of the player characters. Here are a few likely actions and how to handle them.

SPYING ON DR. ROTH

Characters could use the equipment in lab B to monitor SR 2, or simply look through the window in the door. If they're in the right place at the right time, they might catch a glimpse of a Terror from Beyond and risk their sanity. Depending on the night this occurs, they will see the creature for a brief glimpse, a few rounds, or even longer. Interfering with the experiment prompts Roth to turn off the machine immediately and deny everything. Before the final night, if the machine is turned on again, no creatures are visible (since there isn't anyone in the area having a night terror at the time). It's the characters' word against Roth's, and the characters' story is fairly unbelievable. If necessary, Roth suggests to his colleagues that the PCs were experiencing residual dream images, or sleep-related hallucinations.

Viewing the creatures on video results in no Sanity loss, for the Terrors from Beyond only show up as a murky disturbance on the screen. Most people unfamiliar with the Mythos would simply write off such "evidence" as a technical glitch.

A clever character can reroute any of the various cameras in the sleep rooms, so that they could be viewed by any monitor in the system. For example, a character could rig it so that the camera in SR 1 transmits to a monitor in lab C. This requires a Disable Device check (DC 15) or Repair check (DC 20).

If the PCs go to Roth's home, there is nothing incriminating there except a slip of paper with Maxwell White's phone number clipped to a strange machine schematic. Treat it as the machine itself if someone attempts to figure out what it is. He also has a lot of books on experimental, multidimensional physics. If the investigators spend time studying the schematic, anyone with Disable Device or Repair has a +5 equipment bonus to disable Roth's machine at the end of the adventure. Roth himself does not go anywhere other than home and back to the clinic at any time during the adventure.

DEALING WITH THE MACHINE

Anyone within 20 feet of the machine when it is turned on may notice a barely perceptible static charge in the air (Spot check, DC 15). For anyone near the machine, it may be visible as shiny sparks playing across smooth surfaces such as walls and countertops (Spot check, DC 11).

The machine can be turned off with a Disable Device check (DC 15) or Repair check (DC 20). It may be easier to just smash the machine. This requires 10 points of damage; the device has hardness 5. Because of the buildup of energy within the machine and the area around it, once the device is in operation, it can't be shut down by turning off the power or simply unplugging it.

As soon as the machine stops functioning, the field disappears, as do the Terrors from Beyond. Initially, the Terrors from Beyond cannot return until brought out by someone having a sleep terror episode within the effects of the field. However, by the fourth night of the scenario, the field has attuned everyone within the clinic to the Terrors, enabling the Terrors to manifest and attack anyone, whether they're sleeping or not.

LEAVING THE CLINIC

Of course, when things get weird, the investigators might flee. Dr. Corbett, if she's able, tries to convince her patients to stay, telling them that whatever is happening to them in their sleep will only get worse if they leave. The unintentional implication is that the strange events of the clinic will follow them, which is more true than she knows. In fact, everyone who has been exposed to the machine's field will begin to have night terrors and encounters with the Terrors from Beyond.

If they survive these encounters and the machine has not been destroyed, the investigators have to return to the clinic and make sure that machine is never turned on again. Once the crisis hits, Dr. Corbett aids them in every way possible. She can even become a replacement character if one of the original investigators is killed or disabled.

CONCLUSION

Assuming the investigators survive, they are likely to be distrustful of any sort of health facility for some time, which should make for potentially interesting situations later on in a continuing campaign. Dr. Roth, if he survives, goes to jail for reckless endangerment of a minor and possibly even manslaughter, depending on how much suffering his experiment has inflicted. No one officially recognizes the encounter with the Terrors from Beyond; instead, the few witnesses blame any bizarre sightings as the result of "experimental treatments and psychiatric drugs." The whole thing remains a mystery discussed in paranormal and conspiracy Internet forums for years to come.

EXPERIENCE AND SANITY AWARDS

TYPICAL STORY GOALS:

- Subdue Sam Brendel.
- Protect innocent patients.
- Discover Dr. Roth's secret.
- Disable his insidious machine.
- Discover the Terrors before the first attack.
- Survive the Terrors from Beyond.

BONUS SANITY REWARDS:

Saving Nick Keller and Tim Larson: 1d3 Sanity.

Completing the adventure: 1d6 Sanity.

APPENDIX: LOVECRAFTIAN D&D CAMPAIGNS

On a rainy, miserable night, a weary dwarven fighter and a half-elven wizard make their way into a small, nameless village. The wizard manages to produce a little magical light, hoping they can determine whether one of the thatched-roof buildings is an inn where they can take shelter. As they near the largest building, they note a strange orange glow from under its door. The dwarf grips his axe tightly as he hears a chant from within.

Ia! Ia! Cthulhu Ftagn!

This is no simple shelter. It's the worst thing they could have stumbled upon—a cult's temple!

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign that incorporates the Cthulhu Mythos provides an interesting—if not horrific—change of pace. Dark gods and ancient, forbidden knowledge can have a place in any fantasy setting, but imagine a world where even the bravest, most powerful characters must still fear the overpowering, oppressive forces that govern reality. This would be a place where the gods are at best indifferent, and more likely are malevolent—and hungry. Clerics are insane cultists, and those who struggle against them and the dark forces they represent risk not only their lives, but their very sanity.

PLAYING ON THE DARK SIDE

If you adopt the Cthulhu Mythos into your campaign, the largest change will most likely be one of tone. As in *Call of Cthulhu*, characters will feel more vulnerable, for no matter how powerful they become, the Great Old Ones are always greater. Religion is not a source of comfort or succor, but a dangerous enemy. Characters are suspicious, even paranoid, for a seemingly innocent commoner could secretly serve a cult. And yet, with such dark challenges come the opportunities for great heroism.

MAGIC

Arcane magic in a Lovecraftian fantasy setting should work normally. *Fireball*, *magic missile* and *mage armor* spells offer a means of combating the horrors of the Mythos, and a ranger armed with a pair of magic swords can hold his own against a deep one.

Divine magic, on the other hand, is in the purview of those who serve the dark deities who further their incomprehensible agendas. All clerics are insane cultists, poring over dark tomes to learn more of the evil beings they serve. They channel power from deities such as Cthulhu

and Shub-Niggurath, although the more mindless and indifferent deities such as Azathoth might be completely unaware of the clerics' actions. They may not even realize (or care) that such cultists exist.

Druuids, on the other hand, fall into two camps. Dark druids devote themselves to the impersonal, unforgiving aspects of nature, becoming as indifferent as the forces they serve. As a sharp contrast, nurturing druids want to preserve and defend life and stand against the horrors around them. Druids, working with rangers, would be the main source of healing spells and items available in the campaign for noncultists. (As an option, some Gamemasters may want to consider beginning such a campaign at 5th level, when druids first receive healing spells.)

Paladins do not rely on a deity for their power, but on their own inherent sense of morality. They are rare individuals who unfortunately do not last long as they charge heroically against the forces that threaten all life as we know it.

Spells such as *raise dead* and *resurrection* are rare, possibly nonexistent. Thus, the concept of coming back from the dead is limited to those who serve the Mythos—always a mark of someone evil and insane. Likewise, spells of a curative nature, or those that take away disease and other afflictions, could also be less common than in a typical DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Any healing spell stronger than *cure light wounds* may be hard to find, and *restoration* won't be available. The world is plagued with sickness and injury, much like Europe in the Middle Ages of our own world.

SOCIETY

This is a world of fear. Mere mortals stand against the unyielding tide of cosmic entities and foul beings that seek to prey upon them—if those mortals notice them at all. In such a world, people can wield fearsome powers, so that even creatures such as flying polyps, Yithians, and dholes might take notice. The past is filled with wars barely won, where human, elf, dwarf, halfling, and gnome armies have clashed with mi-go and serpent people.

An ancient order of monastic elves watches from magical ships over the place where they know the ancient, sunken city of R'lyeh waits in the deep waters to rise again. Those in the know realize that the stars harbor other worlds where terrible beings such as Hastur and Cthugha dwell, and of a dark, distant place called Yuggoth. Wizards and sages both fear and covet an ancient book of magic called the *Necronomicon*. Intrepid adventurers seek the lost ruins of the cities of the Elder Things and the powerful magic relics those ruins hold.

IT WORKS BOTH WAYS

Call of Cthulhu Gamemasters can use material from the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules as well. The following spells from the D&D Player's Handbook suggest themselves as potentially interesting additions to *Call of Cthulhu*: *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *doom*, *deathwatch*, and *death knell*.

Ignore details that do not apply, such as schools of magic.

The following monsters from the *Monster Manual* would make powerful and interesting servitors of the Old Ones: aboleth, allip, black pudding, chaos beast, cloaker, doppelganger, gibbering mouther, grick, howler, kyton, mind flayer, mohrg, otyugh, phasm, shadow, and tendriculos.

MONSTERS

The monsters found in the Creatures chapter are close enough to regular D&D monster descriptions that all you need is the information below concerning treasure, alignment, and spell resistance to use them in your D&D game.

One guideline regarding magic is essential: If the description of the monster states that it casts some randomly determined spells from the Magic chapter, it would be more appropriate in D&D to add sorcerer levels to that creature (as many as needed or wanted), and then increase its CR by the same amount.

Animated Corpse: Use D&D zombie.

Byakhee: Treasure none, alignment LE.

Chosen of Hastur: Treasure as character before transformation, none or incidental after transformation, alignment CE.

Colour Out of Space: Treasure none, alignment N.

Chthonian: Treasure standard, alignment CN, SR 15.

Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath: Treasure none, alignment CN.

Deep One: Treasure half standard, alignment CE.

Dhole: Treasure standard, alignment LE, SR 29.

Dimensional Shambler: Treasure none, alignment CE, SR 15.

Elder Thing: Treasure standard, alignment NE, SR 16.

Fire Vampire: Treasure none, alignment CE.

Flying Polyp: Treasure none, alignment CN, SR 21.

Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua: Treasure none or double (item guarded), alignment NE.

Ghost: Use D&D ghost.

Ghoul: Treasure standard, alignment CE.

Gnoph-Keh: Treasure standard, alignment LE.

Great Race (Yithian): Treasure standard (Great Race gear), alignment LN.

Gug: Treasure half standard, alignment LE, SR 18.

A NOT-SO-DARK VARIANT

Of course, you could just take the spells, monsters, and deities provided in this book and add them to your existing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. In such a world, the deities of the Mythos would not be the only gods, but instead a pantheon of particularly evil and menacing ones. Clerics would not be uniformly evil, and the world would not necessarily be an inherently dark place.

USING CALL OF CTHULHU MATERIAL IN A D&D GAME

The campaign setting we have described here is just one option—there are many ways to incorporate the material found in this game in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. The monsters, gods, spells, and Sanity rules from *Call of Cthulhu* all make for interesting additions. If you wish to create your own Lovecraftian campaign, the following information should help.



Hound of Tindalos: Treasure none, alignment CE.
Hunting Horror: Treasure none, alignment CE.
Insect from Shaggai: Treasure double standard, alignment CE.
Lloigor: Treasure standard, alignment NE, SR 17.
Loup-Garou: Use D&D werewolf.
Mi-Go: Treasure double standard, alignment LE.
Mummy: Treasure double standard (common mummy) or quadruple standard (greater mummy), alignment LE (common mummy) or NE (greater mummy).
Nightgaunt: Treasure none, alignment NE.
Rat-Thing: Treasure half standard, alignment CE.
Serpent People: Treasure standard, alignment CE, SR 5 + character level.
Servitor of the Outer Gods: Treasure none, alignment N, SR 17.
Shoggoth: Treasure none (shoggoth) or double standard (shoggoth lord), alignment CN (shoggoth) or NE (shoggoth lord).
Spectral Hunter: Treasure special, alignment CE, SR 18.
Spider of Leng: Treasure half standard, alignment CE.
Star Vampire: Treasure standard, alignment NE.
Tcho-Tcho: Treasure standard, alignment CE.
Terrors From Beyond: Treasure none, alignment CE.
The Worm That Walks (Crawling One): Treasure double standard, alignment LE.

SKILLS AND FEATS

For the most part, you do not need to use *Call of Cthulhu* skills and feats in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. They are either already present (such as Power Attack or Wilderness Lore) or they are new but inappropriate (Rolling Shot, for example, could not be used with a bow). The psychic feats are not balanced for use in a D&D game, but if that's not terribly important in your campaign, they could be used. The feat Wealth would unbalance most D&D games.

MYTHOS MAGIC

The spells found in the Magic chapter would, for the most part, make interesting additions to a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign. Use the descriptions of the spells with the following additional information, while disregarding the spells' ability score damage and drain costs, as well as Sanity costs.

If a spell has the same name as a D&D spell, use the D&D version.

CofC SPELLS FOR D&D

- Animal Form:** Transmutation, Clr 4, Drd 3, Sor/Wiz 3
- Banishment of Yde Etad:** Abjuration, Sor/Wiz 4
- Become Spectral Hunter:** Transmutation [Evil], Sor/Wiz 5, components 1,000 XP
- Bind Enemy:** Abjuration, Clr 6
- Bind Loup-Garou (Cage of Kind):** Transmutation, Drd 4
- Bind Soul:** Necromancy [Evil], Sor/Wiz 6
- Black Binding:** Necromancy [Evil], Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4
- Zombies created by this spell do not count against the HD total for undead created by *animate dead*, and vice versa. The gems required must be worth 100 gp.**
- Body Warping of Gorgoroth:** Transmutation [Evil], Sor/Wiz 4
- Breath of the Deep:** Evocation, Sor/Wiz 5
- Bring Pestilence:** Necromancy [Evil], Clr 4, Drd 4
- Call Deity:** Conjunction [Evil], Clr 9, components 5,000 XP
- Candle Communication:** Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 3
- Cast out Devil:** Abjuration, Clr 4
- Cast out Shan:** Abjuration, Sor/Wiz 3
- Chant of Thoth:** Transmutation, Clr 3
- Circle of Nausea:** Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 2
- Cloak of Fire:** Evocation [Fire], Sor/Wiz 2
- Cloud Memory:** Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting], Sor/Wiz 3
- Clutch of Nyogtha:** Evocation [Evil], Sor/Wiz 3
- Consume Likeness:** Necromancy [Evil], Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2
- Contact Creature:** Conjunction [Calling], Sor/Wiz 6 (level varies depending on monster), components 100 XP
- Contact Deity:** Conjunction [Evil], Sor/Wiz 9, components 5,000 XP
- Contact Human:** Enchantment, Sor/Wiz 4
- Create Bad-Corpse Dust:** Necromancy, Clr 6
- Create Barrier of Naach-Tith:** Abjuration, Sor/Wiz 6
- Create Gate:** Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 8, components 3,000 XP
- Create Scrying Window:** Divination, Sor/Wiz 4, components 750 XP
- Create Self-Ward:** Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 7, components 2,000 XP
- Create Time Gate:** Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 9, components 10,000 XP
- Curse of Chaugnar Faugn:** Necromancy [Evil], Clr 5
- Curse of the Putrid Husk:** Illusion (Phantasm) [Mind-Affecting], Sor/Wiz 2
- Curse of the Rat-Thing:** Necromancy [Evil], Sor/Wiz 5, components 800 XP
- Curse of the Stone:** Illusion (Phantasm) [Mind-Affecting], Clr 3, Drd 3, Sor/Wiz 3
- Dark Resurrection:** Necromancy, Sor/Wiz 7, components 3,000 XP
- Death by Flames:** Evocation [Fire], Drd 3, Sor/Wiz 2
- Deflect Harm:** Abjuration, Brd 4, Sor/Wiz 3
- Detect Life:** Divination, Clr 1, Drd 0, Sor/Wiz 1
- Dismiss Deity:** Abjuration, Clr 9, Sor/Wiz 9, components 5,000 XP
- Dread Curse of Azathoth:** Necromancy [Evil], Clr 7, Sor/Wiz 6
- Eibon's Wheel of Mist:** Abjuration, Brd 3, Sor/Wiz 2
- Elder Sign:** Abjuration, Clr 8, Sor/Wiz 8, components 1,000 XP

- Summon/Bind Creature:** Conjuration (Calling), Sor/Wiz 7, components 1,000 XP
Unmask Demon: Divination, Clr 3
Unspeakable Oath: Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 5, components 1,000 XP
View Gate: Divination, Sor/Wiz 2
Voice of Ra: Transmutation, Clr 4
Voorish Sign: Transmutation, Clr 4
Wandering Soul: Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 7
Ward against Psychics: Abjuration, Sor/Wiz 2
Warding the Eye: Abjuration, Sor/Wiz 1
Wave of Oblivion: Transmutation, Clr 5
Wither Limb: Transmutation [Evil], Sor/Wiz 5
Wrack: Transmutation [Evil], Sor/Wiz 4

- Enchant Item:** This spell is inappropriate for a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game.
Evil Eye: Necromancy [Evil], Sor/Wiz 2
Eye of Light and Darkness: Evocation, Clr 8, Sor/Wiz 8, components 1,000 XP
Eyes of the Zombie: Necromancy [Evil], Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Find Gate: Divination, Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2
Fist of Yog-Sothoth: Evocation [Evil], Clr 3
Flesh Ward: Abjuration, Sor/Wiz 3
Frozen Tracks: Enchantment (Compulsion), Clr 2
Grasp of Cthulhu: Evocation [Evil], Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 4
Hands of Colubra: Transmutation, Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 3
Healing Touch: Conjuration (Healing), Clr 3, Drd 4
Hide from the Eye: Transmutation, Clr 3
Identify Spirit: Divination, Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 3
Imprison Mind: Enchantment (Compulsion), Sor/Wiz 4
Look to the Future: Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 8
Mindblast: Evocation [Mind-Affecting], Sor/Wiz 4
Mind Transfer: Evocation [Mind-Affecting], Sor/Wiz 5
Mirror of Tarkhun Atep: Divination, Sor/Wiz 4
Pipes of Madness: Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting], Brd 3
Pose Mundane: Illusion (Phantasm) [Mind-Affecting], Sor/Wiz 2
Power Drain: Transmutation, Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Power of Nyambe: This spell is inappropriate for the D&D game.
Raise Night Fog: Conjuration (Creation), Clr 1, Sor/Wiz 1
Red Sign of Shudde M'ell: Evocation, Sor/Wiz 2
Return to Rest: Necromancy, Sor/Wiz 5
Seal of Isis: Abjuration, Clr 4, Drd 4, Sor/Wiz 4, components 200 XP
Sekhmenkenhep's Words: Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting], Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 2
Shriveling: Evocation [Evil], Clr 3
Siren's Song: Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting], Brd 3
Skin of Sedefkar: Transmutation, Sor/Wiz 1
Snare Dreamer: Enchantment (Compulsion), Clr 4
Song of Hastur: Transmutation [Evil], Brd 5
Soul Singing: Transmutation, Brd 4
Soul Trap: Necromancy, Sor/Wiz 5, components 1,500 XP
Spectral Razor: Necromancy, Sor/Wiz 6
Steal Life: Transmutation [Evil], Sor/Wiz 7, components 750 XP

SANITY AND THE HARDENED ADVENTURER

You can easily incorporate the Sanity rules in this game into a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game. Doing this will give the game a different flavor—less of a high fantasy tone and more of a dark, grim feel as experienced characters are deeply affected by what they have done and seen.

Since D&D characters live in a world of magic and monsters, however, they are not as susceptible to Sanity loss from encountering creatures. Each character should have 3 points of Sanity resistance, +1 point per level. This is the amount of Sanity loss a character can ignore in such situations. Thus, no character will ever lose Sanity from seeing an orc, and a 3rd-level character will never lose Sanity from seeing an ogre.

The DM may decide that Sanity resistance does not apply to personally horrific experiences, such as seeing a close friend die.



MONSTER-INDUCED SANITY LOSSES

Following is a list of monsters in the *Monster Manual* and suggested Sanity losses for characters who encounter them.

Aboleth 1/1d10, achaierai 0/1d10, allip 1/1d10, animated object 0/1d6, ankheg 0/1d8, aranea 1/1d10, arrowhawk 0/1d8, assassin vine 0/1d4, athach 1/1d10, azer 0/1d6.

Barghest 1/1d10, basilisk 0/1d6, behir 0/1d6, beholder 1/1d10, belker 0/1d6, blink dog —, bodak 1/1d10, bugbear 0/1d6, bulette 0/1d8.

Carriion crawler 1/1d8, celestials (see below), centaur 0/1d4, chaos beast 1/1d10, chimera 1/1d8, choker 0/1d8, chuul 0/1d8, cloaker 1/1d8, cockatrice 0/1d6, couatl 0/1d6.

Celestials: archon —, astral deva —, avoral —, ghalee —, hound 0/1d4, lantern none, trumpet planetar 0/1d6, solar 0/1d6.

Darkmantle 1/1d8, delver 0/1d6, demons (see below), destrachan 1/1d8, devils (see below), devourer 1/1d10, digester 0/1d8, dinosaurs —, dire animals —, displacer beast 0/1d6, dragons @1/1d6 + age category, dragon turtle 0/1d8, dragonne 0/1d6, drider 0/1d8, dryad —, dwarf —.

Demons: balor 1d3/1d20, bebilith 1/1d10, dretch 0/1d4, glabrezu 1/1d10, hezrou 1/1d8, marilith 1/1d10, nalfeshnee 1/1d10, quasit 0/1d6, retriever 1/1d10, succubus 0/1d6, vrock 1/1d8.

Devils: barbazu 1/1d8, cornugon 1/1d8, erinyes 0/1d6, gelugon 1/1d10, hamatula 0/1d6, hellcat 1/1d8, imp 0/1d6, kyton 1/1d10, lemur 1/1d6, osyluth 1/1d8, pit fiend 1d3/1d20.

Elemental 0/1d8, elf —, ethereal filcher 1/1d6, ethereal marauder 0/1d8, ettercap 0/1d6, ettin 0/1d8.

Formian: myrmarch 0/1d8, queen 1/1d8, taskmaster 0/1d6, warrior 0/1d6, worker 0/1d4.

Frost worm 0/1d8, fungus —.

Gargoyle 0/1d6, genie (see below), ghast and ghoul 0/1d6, giant 0/1d6, giant eagle —, giant owl —, gibbering mouther 1/1d10, girallon 0/1d4, gnoll 0/1d4, gnome —, goblin 0/1d4, golems (see below), gorgon 0/1d6, gray render 0/1d6, grick 1/1d8, griffon 0/1d6, grimlock 0/1d6.

Genie: djinni: 0/1d4, efreeti 0/1d8, janni —.

Golems: clay 0/1d6, flesh 1/1d10, iron 0/1d8, stone 0/1d6.

Hags: annis 0/1d6, green hag 0/1d6, sea hag 1/1d10.

Halfling —, harpy 0/1d6, hell hound 0/1d4, hippogriff 0/1d6, hobgoblin 0/1d4, homunculus 0/1d4, howler 0/1d8, hydra 0/1d8.



Invisible stalker —.

Kobold 0/1d4, kraken 1/1d10, krenshar 0/1d8, kuo-toa 0/1d6.

Lamia 0/1d6, lammasu 0/1d6, lillend 0/1d6, lizardfolk 0/1d6, locathah 0/1d6.

Magmin 0/1d6, manticore 0/1d8, medusa 1/1d8, mephit 0/1d6, merfolk 0/1d4, mimic 0/1d6, mind flayer 1/1d10, minotaur 0/1d6, mohrg 1/1d10, mummy 1/1d8.

Naga 0/1d8, night hag 1/1d8, nightmare 1/1d8, nightshades (see below), nymph —.

Nightshades: nightcrawler 1/1d10, nightwalker 1/1d8, nightwing 1/1d8.

Ogre 0/1d6, ooze 1/1d6, orc 0/1d4, otyugh 1/1d8, owlbear 0/1d4.

Pegasus —, phantom fungus 0/1d8, phase spider 0/1d6, phasm 1/1d8, planetouched —, pseudodragon 0/1d6, purple worm 0/1d8.

Rakshasa 0/1d8, rast 0/1d8, ravid 0/1d8, remorhaz 0/1d8, roc 0/1d6, roper 1/1d8, rust monster 0/1d6.

Sahuagin 0/1d6, salamander 0/1d8, satyr 0/1d4, sea lion 0/1d4, shadow 0/1d6, shadow mastiff 0/1d6, shambling mound 0/1d8, shield guardian 0/1d6, shocker lizard 0/1d6, skeleton 0/1d6, skum 0/1d6, slaad 1/1d10, spectre 1/1d8, sphinx 0/1d6, spider eater 0/1d8, sprite 0/1d4, stirge 0/1d4.

Tarrasque 1d3/1d20, tendriculos 0/1d8, thoqua 0/1d6, titan 0/1d6, tojanida 0/1d8, treant 0/1d6, rrion 0/1d6, troglodyte 0/1d6, troll 0/1d6.

Umber hulk 0/1d8, unicorn —.

Vampire spawn 0/1d6, vargouille 0/1d8.

Wight 0/1d8, will-o'-wisp 0/1d8, winter wolf 0/1d4, worg —.

none, wraith 1/1d8, wyvern 0/1d6.

Xill 0/1d8, xorn 1/1d8.

Yeth hound 0/1d6, yrthak 0/1d8.

Yuan-ti: abomination 0/1d8, halfblood 0/1d6, pureblood —.

Zombie 1/1d8.

Appendix 1: Animals —.

Appendix 2: Medium-size and Large vermin 0/1d6, Huge and Gargantuan vermin 0/1d8, Colossal vermin 0/1d10.

Appendix 3: Celestial and fiendish creatures, Sanity loss as the base creature; ghosts, Sanity loss as the base creature or 1/1d8, whichever is worse; half-celestials —; half-dragons, Sanity loss as the base creature or 0/1d8, whichever is worse; half-fiends, Sanity loss as the base creature or 0/1d8, whichever is worse; lich, Sanity loss as the base creature or 1/1d8, whichever is worse; lycanthrope 0/1d8; vampire 0/1d6.

DEITIES AND GREAT OLD ONES

The deities described in the Cthulhu Mythos chapter are beyond mortal ken in the *Call of Cthulhu* game. They usually need no statistics, for they are beyond such things.

However, in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, where player characters can cast *wish* spells and struggle against the most powerful of dragons, they can make formidable foes, whether as evil gods worshiped by insane clerics, or extraordinarily powerful enemies that high-level characters do battle with (or both).

With a little bit of work, these mechanics can still be used in a *Call of Cthulhu* game. After the GM drops all references to D&D spells, removes stats for alignment and treasure, and converts a few skills (using the information in the appendix), these deities are still titanic threats to groups of investigators. To accommodate this approach, some background references in this section still pertain to the *CofC* setting.

For GMs converting these D&D stats to *Call of Cthulhu*, any reference to a “standard action” should be changed to “move action or attack action.”

Presented here—in familiar formats adaptable to both D&D and *CofC*—are the deities and Great Old Ones of the Mythos.

DIVINE QUALITIES

All gods are creatures of the outsider type or Great Old One type. Gods’ physical characteristics vary from god to god, and are noted in their individual descriptions.

Gods are divided into four ranks, from least to most powerful. The four ranks are demigod, lesser god, intermediate god, and greater god. Overgods may exist, whose powers outstrip even a greater god.

All gods have the immunities described in the following entries. These immunities do not apply if the attacker is a god of higher rank (for instance, a demigod’s energy immunity does not protect it from an energy attack made by a lesser, intermediate, or greater deity).

These qualities are:

Energy (Ex): Each god is immune to electricity, cold, and acid.

Disease and Poison (Ex): No form of disease or poison harms a god.

Immune to Stunning, Paralysis, and Instant Death: Gods are not subject to the massive damage rule. Furthermore, gods are immune to stunning, sleep, paralysis, death effects, and disintegration.

Transmutation (Ex): A god is immune to polymorphing, petrification, or any other attack that alters its form, although any shape-altering powers the god might have work normally on itself.

Draining and Ability Damage (Ex): A god is not subject to energy draining, ability draining, or ability damage.

Mind Effects (Ex): A god is immune to mind effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects).

Checks (Ex): A god adds a bonus on all checks. The bonus is 5 for demigods, 10 for lesser deities, 15 for intermediate deities, and 20 for greater deities.

Spell Resistance: A deity can avoid the effects of spells and spell-like abilities that directly affect it. The listing includes a numerical rating. To determine if a

spell or a spell-like ability works, the caster must roll 1d20 + her level. If this result equals or exceeds the deity’s spell resistance (SR) rating, the spell or spell-like ability works. The deity is still allowed a saving throw if it is entitled to one normally.

ADDITIONAL QUALITIES

Gods have additional qualities that cannot be suppressed (but possibly blocked) by a god of higher rank.

Immortality: Gods are naturally immortal and cannot die from natural causes. Gods do not age, and do not need to eat, sleep, or breathe. The only way for a god to die is through special circumstances. However, as al-Hazred wrote in the *Necronomicon*, “That which is dead does not eternal lie, and in strange eons, even death may die.”

No Automatic Failures: When a deity rolls a 1 on an attack roll or saving throw, calculate success or failure normally.

Senses: A god’s senses extend for up to five miles. In effect, a god can see, hear, touch, and smell at a distance of five miles just as well as a human can perceive things that are close enough to touch. Perception is limited to the deity’s normal senses. For instance, a demigod cannot see in the dark unless it has dark-vision, nor can it see through solid objects without some sort of x-ray vision power (or by using its remote sensing ability, as described in the next section).

Remote Sensing: As a move action, a god can perceive everything within five miles of any of its own worshippers or any of its holy sites or objects (such as temples, shrines, statues of the deity, and objects or locales sacred to the deity). This effect also can be centered on any place where someone speaks one of a god’s names or titles for up to an hour after the name is spoken, and at any location when an event related to the deity’s domain occurs (see the section on domains, below).

Divine Aura: A god’s mere presence can deeply affect mortals and deities of lower rank, who might find the experience either uplifting or unsettling, depending on the god’s mood and actions, and their relationship to the god.

All divine aura effects are mind-affecting, extraordinary powers. Mortals and other gods of lower rank can resist the aura’s effects with successful Will saves (DC 20 + the god’s Charisma modifier). Gods are immune to the auras of gods of lower rank. Any being who makes a successful saving throw against a god’s aura power becomes immune to that god’s aura power for one day.

Divine aura is an emanation that extends in a radius of up to 50 feet from a god. The god chooses the size of the radius up to its maximum, and can change it as a free action. If the god chooses a radius of 0 feet, its aura power effectively becomes nonfunctional.

The god can choose from the following aura effects each round as a free action. When choosing an aura power, the god can make its own worshipers or beings of its own alignment (or both) immune to the effect, also as a free action. The immunity lasts one day or until the god revokes it.

Once affected by an aura power, creatures remain affected as long as they remain within the aura's radius.

- Daze: Affected beings stare at the god in fascination. They can defend themselves normally, but can take no actions.
- Fright: Affected beings become shaken and suffer a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks. The merest glance or gesture from the god makes them frightened, and they flee from the god as quickly as they can, although they can choose the path of their flight.
- Resolve: The god's allies receive a +4 morale bonus on attacks, saves, and checks, while the god's foes receive a -4 morale penalty on attacks, saves, and checks.

Grant Spells: A god automatically grants spells and domain powers to mortal divine spellcasters who pray to it. Most gods can grant spells from the cleric spell list, the ranger spell list, and three or more domains. Many deities also can grant spells from the druid or paladin spell lists. See the individual deity entries for domain specifics. A god can withhold spells from any particular mortal as a free action; once a spell has been granted, it remains in the mortal's mind until expended (see Chapter 10 of the D&D Player's Handbook).

Domain Powers: A deity can use any domain power it can grant five times per day (if the power normally can be used more often than that, the god gets the greater number of uses).

A god can use any domain spell it can grant as a spell-like ability at will. The god's effective caster level for such abilities is 15th. The saving throw DC for such abilities is 10 + the spell's level + the god's Charisma bonus (if any) +5.

A deity or Great Old One can also cast, at will as a spell-like ability, any spell with its name in the title (*fist of Yog-Sothoth*, *grasp of Cthulhu*, and so on).

Spell-Like Abilities: All the deities presented here can use the following spells at will—*blasphemy*, *deeper darkness*, *desecrate*, *detect good*, *detect magic*, *dispel good*, *magic circle against good*, and *teleport without error*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 20th-level sorcerer.

Communication: A god can understand, speak, and read any language. This includes nonverbal languages. The god can speak directly to any and all beings within one mile of itself per rank. (For instance, a greater god can speak directly to any being within four miles.)

Remote Communication: As a move action, a god also can send a communication to a remote location. The god can speak to any of its own worshipers, and to anyone within one mile per rank of a site dedicated to the god (such as a temple, shrine, or sacred grove), or within one mile per rank of a statue or other likeness of the god.

The creature being contacted can receive a telepathic message that only it can hear, or the god's voice can seem to issue from the air, the ground, or from some object of the god's choosing (but not an object or locale dedicated to another god of equal or higher rank than the god who is speaking).

In the latter case, anyone within earshot of the god's voice can hear it.

Teleport: A god can *teleport without error* at will, as the spell cast by a 20th-level character, except that the god can transport only itself and up to 1,000 pounds of objects. If the god has a familiar, personal mount, or personal intelligent weapon, the creature or item can accompany the god if the god is touching it, but the creature's weight counts against the god's weight limit. This is a spell-like ability.

AZATHOTH

Colossal Outsider (Greater God)

Domains: Evil, Chaos, Madness, Death

Hit Dice: 72d8+2,091 (2,666 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 140 ft., fly 360 ft. (poor)

AC: 63 (-8 size, +1 Dex, +40 natural, +20 divine)

Attacks: 6 slams +102 melee

Damage: Slam 4d6+17 (Improved Critical) + Int drain

Face/Reach: 40 ft. by 40 ft./25 ft.

Special Attacks: Intelligence drain, wail of madness, *alter reality*, divine celerity, squamous blast

Special Qualities: Divine qualities (see above), remote sensing 20, damage reduction 55/+4, SR 52, dark-vision 60 ft., divine fast healing 200, fire resistance 40, sonic immunity

Saves: Fort +89, Ref +61, Will +61

Abilities: Str 45, Dex 13, Con 69, Int 3, Wis 12, Cha 34

Skills: Concentration +104, Cthulhu Mythos +71, Knowledge (planes) +71, Hide -15, Listen +66, Spot +3

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Dodge, Endurance, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Sunder, Toughness, Weapon Focus (slam)

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Unique

Challenge Rating: 50

Treasure: ×5 standard

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Advancement: None

Sanity Loss: 1d10/d%

That last amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the centre of all infinity—the boundless daemon sultan Azathoth, whose name no lips dare speak aloud, and who gnaws hungrily in inconceivable, unlighted chambers beyond time amidst the muffled, maddening beating of vile drums and the thin monotonous whine of accursed flutes.

—H.P. Lovecraft, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*

Azathoth is the chief deity of the Cthulhu Mythos, and has existed since before creation. Some say it had a hand in the creation of the multiverse (or at least a pseudopod). It dwells beyond normal space-time at the center of all existence, where its amorphous body writhes unceasingly to the monotonous piping of a flute. Lesser gods and servitors dance mindlessly around Azathoth to the same music.

COMBAT

Azathoth is never alone at the center of existence. Even if called or summoned, he manifests with one flautist (usually a Servitor of the Outer Gods) to play its music, and 1d4 other gods described in this book.

If engaged in physical combat, Azathoth forms pseudopods from its amorphous flesh, which it uses to slam enemies. However, its favorite tactic against mortal enemies is its wail of madness. Only if pressed by enemy deities will Azathoth deign to use its terrible squamous blast, annihilating all mortal foes nearby so that it may concentrate its energies against the gods.

Intelligence Drain (Su): Whenever Azathoth hits an opponent with a slam attack from a pseudopod, the opponent is permanently drained of 2d4 Intelligence points (or twice that on a critical hit) as he is momentarily forced to stare into the abyss that is Azathoth's mind.

Wail of Madness (Su): At will, Azathoth can produce a terrible keening. All creatures within 100 feet who have a Sanity score are reduced to 1 Sanity if they fail a Will saving throw (DC 62).

Alter Reality (Sp): The deity can duplicate any spell in this book or any spell of 9th level or lower in the D&D Player's Handbook as a move action. The duplicated spell has no material or XP component. Its saving throw (if one is allowed) is $62 + \text{the god's Charisma modifier}$.

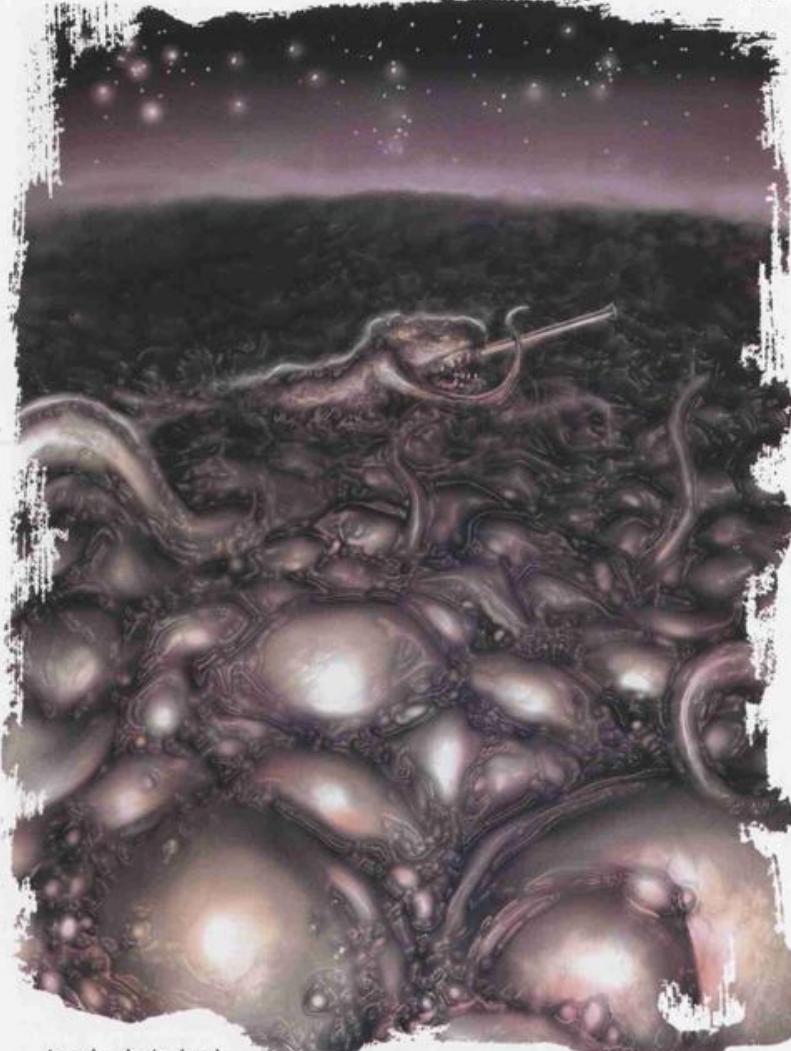
Divine Celerity (Su): The god acts as if *hasted* for 10 minutes (100 rounds) each day. The duration of the effect need not be consecutive rounds. Activating this power is a free action.

Squamious Blast (Su): Azathoth can use this power twenty-four times per day. The ray created can extend up to twenty miles. Targets the ray strikes take $42d12$ points of damage. No saving throw exists for this, but the god must make a ranged touch attack to hit.

Azathoth's blast usually takes the form of a half-melted lump of insane dream accompanied by a shrill chorus of thundering flutes. Energy resistance has no effect against the ray.

The ray destroys any *wall of force*, *prismatic wall*, or *prismatic sphere* it hits (all layers in a prismatic effect are destroyed). The ray itself is unaffected and can strike a target behind the *wall of force* or prismatic effect.

Remote Sensing (Ex): Azathoth can extend its senses to twenty remote locations at once (and still sense what's going on around itself).



Azathoth is both blind and idiotic, a "monstrous nuclear chaos." In fact, the essence of Azathoth is part of all physical matter in the multiverse, though he can also manifest as the distinct amorphous mass described here.

WORSHIP

Other gods of the Mythos revere, and even worship, Azathoth. For instance, Great Cthulhu himself is the chief priest of Azathoth, though he serves from afar, and only when the stars are right. The chief instrument of Azathoth is Nyarlathotep (though some say it is Nyarlathotep that controls the idiot deity Azathoth). The urges of Azathoth are immediately fulfilled by the Crawling Chaos.

Azathoth is rarely worshiped by mortals, for the god offers little in return. (In D&D, only a few clerics who serve Azathoth are granted powers from the god's domains.) Usually Azathoth is called by accident, thereby unwittingly bringing disaster and horror. Only the criminally insane knowingly worship such a being. Nonetheless, such worshipers may have special insights into the nature of the universe, its origin, powers, and meaning, insights perhaps understandable only by other madmen. Supplicants who are truly daring may seek to summon the manifestation of Azathoth, though doing so entails terrible risk, lest Azathoth become irritated at the interruption of his servitors' incessant piping.

CTHULHU

Colossal Great Old One (Demigod) (Water)
Domains: Evil, Death, Destruction, Water
Hit Dice: 42d12+378 (882 hp)
Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 140 ft., swim 140 ft., fly 360 ft. (poor)
AC: 47 (-8 size, +1 Dex, +39 natural, +5 divine)
Attacks: 6 tentacles +56 melee, 2 claws +50 melee, stamp +50 melee
Damage: Tentacle 4d6+16 (Improved Critical), claw 2d8+8, stamp 4d6+8
Face/Reach: 40 ft. by 40 ft./25 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, horrid constrictions 4d6+12, spells
Special Qualities: Divine qualities (see above), damage reduction 40/+4, divine fast healing 50/round, SR 37, darkvision 60 ft., water subtype, fire resistance 25, sonic resistance 25, alter size, alter form
Saves: Fort +39, Ref +31, Will +37
Abilities: Str 42, Dex 12, Con 29, Int 33, Wis 27, Cha 29
Skills: Alchemy +56, Climb +61, Concentration +54, Cthulhu Mythos +56, Hide -15, Knowledge (arcana) +56, Knowledge (undead) +56, Knowledge (geography) +56, Knowledge (history) +56, Knowledge (planes) +56, Knowledge (religion) +50, Listen +55, Scry +56, Search +56, Spellcraft +56, Spot +55, Swim +38
Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (tentacle), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (tentacle)
Climate/Terrain: Aquatic (especially the Pacific Ocean)
Organization: Unique
Challenge Rating: 34
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Chaotic evil
Advancement: None
Sanity Loss: 1d10/d%

A monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopuslike head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. This thing . . . was of a somewhat bloated corpulence . . . It lumbered slobberingly into sight and gropingly squeezed its gelatinous green immensity through the black doorway. . . . A mountain walked or stumbled.

—H.P. Lovecraft,
"The Call of Cthulhu"

Great Cthulhu is nightmare made flesh, towering well over 100 feet high. His head appears as an octopus or squid, with writhing lengths of tentacle reaching 25 feet or more. His



body is a corpulent slab of slime-kissed flesh, generally humanoid except for his enormous size and terrible claws on his hands and feet. Great batlike wings grow from his back, useful both in the air and in the water.

Cthulhu dwells in the corpse city of primordial R'lyeh, sunken deep beneath the surface of the Pacific. He lies in a deathlike trance, but someday the city will rise and he will wake. When he does, let the world weep, for his hunger is an entity unto itself, and will not be slaked.

In the city are also entombed other creatures of primordial ancestry, creatures who are possibly members of Cthulhu's race, though none have taken on aspects of godhood, as Cthulhu has. Great Cthulhu is the high priest and ruler of them all, and is by far the most potent.

WORSHIP

Though lost in millennial sleep, Cthulhu has sent horrifying dreams to mortal men, driving most into madness. Perhaps that is why Cthulhu's cult is the most widespread and popular cult of the earthly Great Old Ones. This cult believes that Cthulhu plunged down from the stars with his kin and built a great prehistoric city at R'lyeh, ruling the world. When the stars changed, their continent sank beneath the sea. The city and its inhabitants fell into a death-sleep where they await their reawakening by members of Cthulhu's cult. When R'lyeh rises above the waves, members of the cult will be on hand to open the vast ebony vault in which Cthulhu dreams, whereupon he will awaken and destroy the world, but sparing the faithful so that they may set up a new world order.

In *Call of Cthulhu*, entire tribes are recorded as worshiping Cthulhu, from remote Inuits to degenerate Louisiana swamp-folk. He seems to be most wor-

HASTUR THE UNSPEAKABLE (THE KING IN YELLOW)

shaped among sea-folk, or beings that live near the sea. He is served by the beings known as the deep ones as well as by the octopoid things known as the star-spawn of Cthulhu.

In DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Cthulhu is also served by aboleths, mind flayers and their kin, and kraken (from the *Monster Manual*). Cthulhu's cult is prehistoric and of many variants. Cthulhu himself has many names, most of which can be traced back to their original form. Thus, two of his names are Tulu and Thulhu.

COMBAT

Great Cthulhu can quell even extraordinary threats with his terrible face tentacles and claws. When pressed, he can call upon a host of divine or arcane spells, or other divine abilities. In any event, Cthulhu prepares for few combats without requiring the aid of several of his star-spawn.

Improved Grab (Ex): If Cthulhu hits an opponent smaller than him with a tentacle, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action (without provoking an attack of opportunity).

Horrid Constriction (Ex): Once he has hold of an opponent, each successful grapple check he makes during subsequent rounds automatically deals one of four different effects to the opponent or object grasped: flesh disorporation, energy drain, madness, or disintegration. Great Cthulhu decides the effect for a given round and for a given tentacle. More than one tentacle may grip one victim.

Flesh disorporation literally causes living creatures to rot, automatically draining 2d4 points of Str, Dex and Con permanently. Energy drain confers six negative levels on a creature that fails a Fort save (DC 39); otherwise the tentacle only confers three negative levels. Madness drains the creature's Sanity and Wisdom to 1 (all the rules for massive Sanity loss apply). Finally, disintegration affects grappled creatures as per the *disintegrate* spell (Fort save DC 39).

Spells: Cthulhu knows and may cast all the spells listed in this book except *summon/bind nightgaunt* and *contact Nodens*. In addition to his domain spells and spell-like abilities that all Mythos deities possess, he can also cast *meteor storm* ("Call Down the Stars"), *call lightning*, *circle of death*, *control weather*, *firestorm* ("Starfire"), *gate*, and *unhallow* (from the D&D Player's Handbook). He casts these spells at will, each 1/day, as a 40th-level sorcerer. Cthulhu never loses Sanity for casting (since he has no Sanity score).

Alter Form (Ex): As a move-equivalent action, Cthulhu can alter his form, including clothing and equipment. The god's body can undergo a limited physical transmutation, including adding or subtracting one or two limbs. The god can remain in the altered form indefinitely, but resumes his own form if slain.

Cthulhu's attack bonus, Armor Class, and saves do not change. The god does not gain any of the assumed form's special abilities, attack forms, defenses, ability scores, or mannerisms.

The god can use his alter size power simultaneously with this one to become taller, shorter, thinner, or heavier.

Cthulhu can also alter his form as if using the spell *gaseous form*, which gives him the appearance of a thundercloud of oily, nauseating green mist.

Colossal or Medium-size Great Old One (Demigod)

Domains: Chaos, Destruction, Evil, Madness

Hit Dice: 40d12+340 (600 hp)

Initiative: +10 (+6 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 140 ft., swim 140 ft., fly 280 ft. (good)

AC: Colossal 43 (+40 natural, +5 divine, -8 size, +6 Dex) or Medium-size 31 (+20 natural, +5 divine, +6 Dex)

Attacks: Colossal form: 3 tentacles +30 melee; King in Yellow form:

1 touch +43 melee

Damage: Tentacle d%+13

Face/Reach: 40 ft. by 40 ft./25 ft. or 5 ft. by 5 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Touch of madness, automatic metamagic (Silent Spell)

Special Qualities: Divine qualities (see above), damage reduction 40/+4, SR 37, darkvision, blindsight, *alter reality*, alter size, divine dodge (50% miss chance), divine fast healing 25/round, link to Aldebaran

Saves: Fort +34, Ref +23, Will +29

Abilities: Str 36, Dex 22, Con 45, Int 20, Wis 35, Cha 33

Skills: Bluff +30, Cthulhu Mythos +33, Innuendo +30, Knowledge (psychology) +33, Knowledge (occult) +25, Listen +32, Move Silently +34, Perform +39, Psychic Focus +32, Sense Motive +40, Spot +40

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Whirlwind Attack

Psychic Feats: Sensitive, Psychometry

Climate/Terrain: Any (often the city of Carcosa)

Organization: Unique

Challenge Rating: 37

Treasure: Triple standard

Alignment: Neutral evil

Advancement: None

Sanity Loss: 1d10/d%

"Have you seen the Yellow Sign?"

—R. W. Chambers, "The King in Yellow"

Thus, in fulfillment of the third geas, [he] entered the thousand-columned palace of Haon-Dor. Strange and silent were those halls . . . In them were faceless forms of smoke and mist that went uneasily to and fro, and statues representing monsters with myriad heads. In the vaults above, as if hung aloof in the night, lamps burned with inverse flames that were like the combustion of ice and stone. A chill spirit of evil, ancient beyond the conception of man, was abroad in those halls; and horror and fear crept throughout them like invisible serpents, unknotted from sleep. Threading the mazy chambers . . . [he came] to a high room whose walls described a circle broken only by the one portal, through which he entered. The room was empty of furnishment, save for a five-pillared seat rising so far aloft without stairs or other means of approach, that it seemed only a winged being could ever attain thereto. But on the seat was a figure shrouded with thick, sable darkness, and having over its head and features a cauldron of grisly shadow.

—Clark Ashton Smith,
"The Seven Geases"

Hastur's appearance varies widely, mostly depending on who offers the description. Some maintain that he is half-brother to Great Cthulhu and of similar size and shape. Others have portrayed him as a huge ravening bipedal beast. Some theorists, noting the appearance of the Chosen of Hastur after the god has possessed them with some of his essence, have argued that he must be a bloated and boneless giant, while one witness described him as an octopod entity with an unspeakably hideous face.

The only form that is well-attested is that of Hastur as The King in Yellow, said to be an avatar of He Who Must Not Be Named. The King is fearfully tall (at least 8 feet) and unnaturally thin, seemingly made up entirely of tattered yellow robes that obscure the face of whatever lurks within.

Hastur is perhaps the least understood of all the major figures in the Cthulhu Mythos. Some say he is the embodiment of the entropy principle, the inevitable tendency of all things to move from order to disorder or chaos. Others claim he has a bond to determinism, its exact opposite, the idea that all things proceed mechanistically from cause to effect, with no possibility of free will or divergence from the fated course.

One Mythos scholar, noting the baroque nature of Carcosa and popularity of Hastur's cult among creative types, posited that Hastur's city is a parasitic entity that absorbs people and places and transfers them into itself. Additional evidence for this latter possibility lies in the fact that in the oldest references Hastur is referred to a place, not an entity, suggesting that the place is the entity and that all other manifestations are projections of a particularly powerful genius loci.

If so, the stricture against naming Hastur would originate not from the belief that the Great Old One would hear and smite any who named him, but from the idea that belief generates power. By naming and thus personifying Hastur the entity is called forth from potential into actual existence.

WORSHIP

Like Great Cthulhu, Hastur is worshiped by many species. The so-called "spawn of Hastur" are said to be octopod beasts inhabiting the Lake of Hali. The byakhee are often called "the servants of He Who Must Not Be Named" in Mythos texts, but whether they are a race created by Hastur or simply absorbed and enslaved by him is not known (and, in fact, moot).

In *Call of Cthulhu*, Hastur's cult was briefly popular in the Renaissance (cf. the lost Marlowe play *The King in Shreds and Tatters*), but it has been steadily growing ever since the fin de siècle period of the 1890s, when the



elusive play *The King in Yellow* first appeared. Those who pledge themselves to Hastur often take the Unspeakable Oath, allowing Hastur to possess their bodies at some future date in return for some present favor or boon. (Horribly enough, if the person taking the oath dies, Hastur will possess her blood-kin instead when the time comes, for the god will not be denied.) A large and active cult, The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, flourishes in the modern day, not as a lunatic fringe group gathering furtively in old warehouses, but as prosperous, influential business and political leaders.

Tsathoggua is a god in decline, then Hastur is clearly one in ascendance, soon perhaps to pass into lesser god status.

Hastur's sigil is

The Yellow Sign, an oddly disturbing triad of three hooked curls. The

password for Hastur worshipers everywhere is the phrase "Have You Seen the Yellow Sign?" Speaking the god's name is very dangerous (see below), as is reading the

play *The King in Yellow*—the one draws Hastur's attention to the speaker, while the other directs the reader's attention to Hastur, obsessively.

COMBAT

In his Colossal form, Hastur is an awesome foe, no matter what exact form or shape he takes (that being primarily dependent upon what his viewers expect). His appearance may be preceded by a host of 2d% byakhee and accompanied by 1d20 "spawn of Hastur." (These beings are identical to, but less in power than, his octopod form; each has roughly half his Hit Dice, possesses two-thirds the AC bonus, and deals 3d10 points of damage with each tentacle attack.) Destroying his Colossal form does not destroy him permanently, but destroying the City and the Lake, if it could be done, would achieve that goal.

In his avatar as The King in Yellow, he is more likely to attack by spell or by transferring every opponent in his vicinity to the lost city of Carcosa, essentially trapping them in the sanity-draining world of the play.

The Chosen of Hastur (Ex): Hastur can, at will, transform any mortal foolish enough to have made the Unspeakable Oath into a monster known as "the Chosen of Hastur" (see the Creatures chapter). This transformation is one-way; the original creature cannot be restored thereafter. If the character who made the pact has been destroyed, Hastur can either transform and animate the corpse or transform the deceased character's closest blood relative instead. (The power of the Oath is such that the god will not be denied).

Touch of Madness (Ex): The King in Yellow may deliver a touch attack that drains d% points of Sanity from the target.

Special Attacks: Divine blast, hand of death, spells
Special Qualities: Divine qualities (see above), damage reduction 50/+4, SR 67, alter size/alter form, avatar, create object/create greater object, divine celerity, divine dodge, divine fast healing 35/round, divine shield, gift of life, instant move, rejuvenation, summon hunting horror/summon shantak, darkvision, blindsight
Saves: Fort +39, Ref +32, Will +60
Abilities: Str 60, Dex 25, Con 39, Int 75, Wis 80, Cha 50
Skills: Nyarlathotep has 32 ranks in all skills.
Feats: Improved Initiative, Dodge, Mobility
Psychic Feats: Sensitive, Telepathy, Psychometry, Psychokinesis, Mind Reading, Mind Probe, Dowsing
Climate/Terrain: Any
Organization: Unique
Challenge Rating: 45
Treasure: None or triple standard
Alignment: Chaotic evil
Advancement: None
Sanity Loss: Human form 0/1; monstrous avatar 1d10/d%

Then down the wide lane betwixt the two columns a lone figure strode; a tall, slim figure with the young face of an antique Pharaoh, with prismatic robes and crowned with a golden pshent that glowed with inherent light. Close up to Carter strode that regal figure; whose proud carriage and swart features had in them the fascination of a dark god or fallen archangel, and around whose eyes there lurked the languid sparkle of capricious humour. It spoke, and in its mellow tones there rippled the mild music of Lethean streams. 'Randolph Carter,' said the voice, 'you have come to see the Great Ones whom it is unlawful for men to see... Fain would the powers from outside bring chaos and horror to you, Randolph Carter.... Forget not this warning, lest horrors unthinkable suck you into the gulf of shrieking and ululant madness. Remember the Other Gods; they are great and mindless and terrible, and lurk in the outer voids. They are good gods to avoid.... [P]ray to all space that you may never meet me in my thousand other forms. Farewell, Randolph Carter, and beware; FOR I AM NYARLATHOTEP, THE CRAWLING CHAOS!'

—H. P. Lovecraft,
The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath

Alter Reality (Sp): The City of Carcosa, with the King as its representative, can change reality with a mere thought. This usually takes the form of the characters' surroundings becoming more like Carcosa, merging imperceptibly into the City of the Yellow Sign itself. For example, just after reading *The King in Yellow*, a character's perceptions may alter. He may find doors appearing that lead to rooms that do not exist by daylight. Characters entering such areas would be wise to return, if possible, before such portals fade at the next setting of Aldebaran (see below), as they may or may not return when Aldebaran next rises. In the City of Carcosa itself this effect is much more pronounced, as objects and surroundings constantly change when unobserved, making the place a never-ending labyrinth that has no beginning and no end—a potential entrance in every human mind, but one without an exit.

Alter Size (Ex): Hastur may alter his size at will, from Fine to Colossal, as a free action.

Divine Dodge (Ex): The reality-warping field that surrounds Hastur makes it difficult to target him correctly. Half the time he's simply not there when the attack arrives. In practical terms, this means all attacks targeting him have a 50% miss chance. Even area effects have the same chance of affecting him. Only the divine power perfect strike (see Nodens) can overcome this protection.

Divine Fast Healing (Ex): Hastur, in all his forms, enjoys divine fast healing (25 points per round).

Link to Aldebaran (Ex): All of Hastur's projected forms are linked to the Lake of Hali and City of Carcosa, which are located on a distant world in the star cluster known to us as the Hyades. Therefore, he can only manifest on our world when Aldebaran, the brightest star in that cluster, is above the horizon.

Spells: Hastur can cast any spell in any form as a 20th-level sorcerer, but is more apt to do so when in the form of The King in Yellow. In this form, he may automatically cast any spell as a silent spell. His favorite spells are, of course, *song of Hastur* and *unspeakable promise*, both of which are made available to all his worshipers.

NYARLATHOTEP, THE CRAWLING CHAOS

Medium-size to Colossal Outer God [Outsider] (Intermediate God)

Domains: Chaos, Destruction, Madness, Magic, Trickery

Hit Dice: 35d8+490 (650 hp)

Initiative: +11 (+7 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: Medium-size 60 ft.; Colossal 140 ft. (bipedal) or 180 ft.

(quadruped); Father of Bats/Haunter of the Dark fly 280 ft. (good)

AC: Medium-size, 32 (+0 base, +15 divine, +7 Dex); Colossal 54 (+30 base, +15 divine, -8 size, +7 Dex)

Attacks: Medium-size by weapon +50/+45/+40/+35 melee, or by spell;

Colossal primary attack +42 melee, secondary attacks (if any) +37 melee

Damage: Medium-size by weapon +25 (Str) or by spell; Colossal 10d10+25 primary attack, 5d10+25 secondary attack(s)

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft. (Medium-size) or 40 ft. by 40 ft./25 ft. (Colossal)

Nyarlathotep is the most protean of all the gods; only a few of his Thousand Faces, or "Masks," have been recognized and catalogued. Most are dire, mindless, ravening monsters who smash and destroy all in their way with a ferocity that would put a dhole to panicked flight, but a few are human to outward appearances. Doubtless other races could tell of other avatars of the Crawling Chaos that mockingly resembled members of their own species.

It has been said that mankind makes evil as bees make honey: as a natural byproduct of its existence. If so, then Nyarlathotep is the beekeeper, tending to all humanity's worst impulses. His goal is to spread chaos and thus usher in the Dark Times, the Days of the Gods. He is very patient, and practices a sort of reverse Benthamism: Each action is guided by what will create the greatest amount of chaos or suffering among the greatest number of people. He might thus pass up the

opportunity to utterly destroy one individual to have the chance to shake the sanity of many, being a great believer in cumulative effects. This world is also only one of many receiving his attention: Using his many avatars and accessing Yog-Sothoth's ability to transcend time and space, he is active simultaneously in many different eras. But all his schemes have a common thread and are part of a single plan: making mankind more like the gods, stripped free of all restraints and protections, as apt prey for his masters.

Nyarlathotep speaks every language with equal fluency. Is he not the Messenger of the Outer Gods?

WORSHIP

Nyarlathotep is feared and honored by many cults under many different names. In "The Call of Cthulhu," the witch-covens of Salem and Old Europe knew him as The Dark Man. Egypt trembled under the reign of the god-king the Black Pharaoh, Nephren-Ka. The Brotherhood of the Beast summoned him as the Black Sphinx, while the Brotherhood of the Bloody Tongue had no name for the Thing that came in answer to their sacrifice. Aborigines know him as The Father of Bats; jazz aficionados as The Royal Pant (a legendary black saxophone player), and the Church of the Starry Wisdom as The Haunter of the Dark (a colossal hunting horror). As the messenger of the Outer Gods (Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Shub-Niggurath, and others), Nyarlathotep puts in appearances at many ceremonies honoring those beings and receives a share of their worship. He maintains contact with the cults devoted to all the major Great Old Ones (Cthulhu, Hastur, Tsathoggua) and many of the minor ones as well, seeing them as a choice instrument for spreading death and destruction, madness and chaos.

In addition to being able to call on virtually any cult devoted to a Great Old One or Outer God, Nyarlathotep can summon almost any Mythos creature except for nightgaunts (the servitors of Nodens). In the Waking World, he is particularly fond of summoning hunting horrors; in the Dreamlands, shantaks; elsewhere, his choice depends upon the occasion and what is readily at hand.

COMBAT

In human form, Nyarlathotep prefers to avoid melee. Although quite capable, he rarely initiates combat, defending himself with spells if the need arises. In his various Colossal monstrous forms, he



enjoys giving full vent to bestial ferocity and generally attacks any foe within sight, ravening until his lust for destruction has been sated.

Alter Size/Alter Form (Ex): At will as a free action, Nyarlathotep can change his size and that of objects he is touching that weigh anywhere up to 1,500 pounds. The new form can be anywhere from as small as a grain of sand (Fine) to as tall as 1,600 feet (Colossal). He can also add or subtract a limb, grow wings, switch genders, or make any other comparable change. The Messenger uses these abilities to switch between his various Masks as needed. One of Nyarlathotep's favorite combat tactics is toying with foes while in his human form, then switching to one of his Colossal forms when attacked. Nyarlathotep can also assume the forms of specific people, either real ones he has replaced (such as Dr. Dexter of Providence) or fictitious ones he has created for that specific purpose (such as the saxophone player The Royal Pant, or the 1920s occultist Lostalus Black).

Avatar (Ex): In addition to assuming multiple different forms, Nyarlathotep is able to create a copy of himself when he needs to be literally in two (or more) places at once. The avatar is slightly less powerful than the god himself, having 5 fewer HD, AC 25 (Medium-size) or 47 (Colossal), a -5 penalty on the god's normal attack rolls, and a -5 penalty on the god's normal saves. Furthermore, each of the avatar's ability scores is five points lower than the god's. In addition, two of the god's powers—create greater object and rejuvenation—are not

available to its avatars. Nyarlathotep can create up to ten avatar-projections at the same time. Each projection is fully aware of everything that happens to the others, and the god himself shares fully in this (he simply has multiple bodies functioning all at the same time).

Create Object/Create Greater Object (Ex): Nyarlathotep is able to create objects, both mundane and wondrous, by sheer willpower alone. He often rewards faithful cultists or tempts wavering mortals with such gifts. He cannot create Mythos tomes and artifacts or magic items this way, but by accessing Yog-Sothoth's time and dimensional travel, he can usually locate such items and redistribute them where they'll do the most harm, according to his desires.

Divine Blast (Ex): Up to twenty-three times per day, Nyarlathotep can release part of his personal energy as a ray. This ray can strike a target in a direct line of sight up to fifteen miles away, dealing 35d12 points of damage. No saving throw exists, but the Messenger of the Outer Gods must make a successful ranged touch attack for the blast to hit its designated target. He can shape the blast to look like any form of energy he wishes—incarnate darkness, a bolt of lightning, a sudden fireball, or some more bizarre and sinister appearance. A divine shield offers complete protection from such a blast.

SHUB-NIGGURATH, BLACK GOAT OF THE WOODS WITH A THOUSAND YOUNG

Divine Celerity (Ex): For a total of 15 minutes each day (which can be taken in time increments as small as a single round at a time), Nyarlathotep can speed up time for himself alone. He gains a +4 haste bonus to AC and may take an extra partial action each round that the divine celerity lasts.

Divine Dodge (Ex): All attacks targeting the Crawling Chaos have a 50% miss chance (even area effects); he's simply not there when the attack arrives. Only the divine power perfect strike in the hands of a being more powerful than Nyarlathotep himself can overcome this protection.

Divine Shield (Ex): As a free action, Nyarlathotep can create a shield that blocks 150 points of damage before collapsing. Usable seventeen times per day, the shield can be customized to ignore damage from any attack form to which he is already immune (such as acid, cold, and electricity), prolonging its usefulness. The Outer God can shape the shield into a transparent barrier of up to 150 square feet or into a sphere or hemisphere of up to 15 feet in radius. The shield can be placed around Nyarlathotep himself or some mortal or item he wishes to preserve from destruction.

Gift of Life (Ex): With this power, Nyarlathotep can restore a dead creature to life, no matter how long she has been dead or what condition the body (if any) is currently in. It cannot restore a creature against its will, but it can resurrect outsiders, elementals, and other creatures not usually eligible for such resurrection. It can reincarnate someone whose soul is trapped (for example, in a *magic jar*). It can even restore characters slain by the hand of death ability, as long as they were not slain by an Outer God more powerful than Nyarlathotep.

Hand of Death (Su): Nyarlathotep can simply slay any single mortal who has displeased him who is within fifteen miles of a shrine specially devoted to him, as long as there is an unbroken line of effect. The mortal is allowed a Fortitude save (DC 39) to survive the effect. If she fails, she is completely destroyed, agonizingly consumed in a nimbus of divine flame; it doesn't even leave even ashes behind. If the target succeeds at the saving throw, she still takes 10d6 points of damage. He prefers to use this power before witnesses, so that others may learn a lesson from the horrible death of their fellow. Only Nyarlathotep himself, or a being more powerful than he, can return life to a mortal slain in this manner.

Instant Move (Ex): As a move action, in the blink of an eye, Nyarlathotep can vanish in one spot and instantly reappear in another anywhere up to 450 feet away. He can act immediately after teleporting (cast a spell, launch an attack, alter size and form, and so on).

Rejuvenation (Ex): Nyarlathotep is very difficult to destroy (it has been attempted many times). An attack sufficient to kill him simply disperses his essence for 10d10 days. During such periods his avatars continue to function normally, often arranging some unpleasant fate for the one who killed their prime.

Spells: Nyarlathotep can cast any spell as a free action. According to some radical occultists, he was a patron of witch-cults, responsible for spreading knowledge of spells and magic in the dark times between the collapse of pagan sorcery and the rise of the New Age movement. He can grant a worshiper of any Mythos deity any spell he thinks it good for them to have. *Power of Nyambe* is a favorite spell of his to bestow on sorcerers who have pleased him with their dark deeds.

Colossal Outer God (Intermediate God) [Outsider]

Domains: Animal, Chaos, Evil, Earth, Plant

Hit Dice: 53d8+1,961 (2,200 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)

Speed: 180 ft.

AC: 45 (+30 base, +13 divine, -8 size, +0 Dex)

Attacks: 13 tentacles +47 melee

Damage: Tentacle 4d10+22, tentacle-mouth 2d12 plus blood drain

Face/Reach: 50 ft. by 50 ft./25 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab/constrict, tentacle-mouth, squamous blast/mass squamous blast, *life and death*

Special Qualities: Divine qualities (see above), damage reduction 48/+4, SR 45, avatar, divine fast healing 93/round, divine shield, energy immunities, gift of life, rejuvenation, summon Dark Young, darkvision, blindsight

Saves: Fort +64, Ref +27, Will +37

Abilities: Str 55, Dex 10, Con 85, Int 15, Wis 30, Cha 44

Skills: Animal Empathy +53, Cthulhu Mythos +38, Disguise +31, Handle Animal +53, Heal +24, Intuit Direction +46, Knowledge (biology) +38, Listen +30, Perform +53, Spot +46

Feats: Athletic, Animal Affinity, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Multi-attack

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Unique

Challenge Rating: 48

Treasure: None

Alignment: Chaotic neutral

Advancement: None

Sanity Loss: 1d10/d%

Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young!

—H. P. Lovecraft, "The Thing on the Doorstep"

Here, it seemed, was the source of all this miscreation and abomination. For the gray mass quobbed and quivered, and swelled perpetually; and from it, in manifold fission, were spawned the anatomies that crept away on every side through the grotto. There were things like bodiless legs or arms that flailed in the slime, or heads that rolled, or floundering bellies with fishes' fins; and all manner of things malformed and monstrous, that grew in size as they departed the neighborhood of [the pool]. And those that swam not swiftly ashore when they fell into the pool... were swiftly devoured by mouths that gaped in the parent bulk.

—Clark Ashton Smith,
"The Seven Geases"

Shub-Niggurath's natural form appears as a vast protoplasm that constantly vomits forth living things of every shape, size, and description. It devours them just as quickly unless they make their escape. When summoned forth, the Great Old One invariably sends an avatar,



whose form varies according to the expectations of the summoner. The most common form to those who worship Shub-Niggurath is a colossal dark organic mass that is so bioactive that it festers and boils on its surface. The mass's form is not fixed: It extrudes tentacles, testicles, and hooved limbs as it opens mouths, eyes, and vaginal orifices in endless processions. No feature endures beyond a few minutes before it collapses into rotteness and is reabsorbed by the eager life of the mass as a whole. Sometimes swollen globules on the fetid mass's side burst open, giving birth to Dark Young; sometimes the god offers teats to suckle; sometimes its genitalia attempt to penetrate or impregnate willing cultists—or unwilling sacrifices. Few who touch the Great Old One survive, and few who see the Black Goat of the Woods retain their sanity after the sight.

Shub-Niggurath rarely ventures forth from his/her lair, a deep cavern known as the Dark Woods for the bizarre growths that crowd its vast chambers and winding passages. The Black Goat does not recognize the organizational principles that divide plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, and viruses into separate kingdoms. His/her/its progeny commonly combine features of two or more of these categories. Shub-Niggurath's avatar can only be summoned into natural surroundings. The god favors undisturbed woods, the older and more entangled the better.

Shub-Niggurath's presence bestows glossolalia, the ability to speak in tongues, upon her worshipers.

WORSHIP

As the embodiment of the horrible fecundity of life, which festers and grows in every possible environment, Shub-Niggurath has been

worshiped in some form by almost every culture on Earth, as well as many never found here (the few exceptions being scientific, atheistic races such as the Great Race). Those who conceive of her as a fertility goddess worshiped her as Magna Marta ("The Great Mother"); those who saw him as a priapic engendering principle called instead on the Black Goat of a Thousand Young. Some of the wild bacchanalian rites associated with Dionysus

worship—banned in Roman times—were orgies in honor of Shub-Niggurath.

Recently the god has made available to his/her/its worshipers a substance known as "the Milk of Shub-Niggurath." Ejected or lactated from the Outer God during certain manifestations, the Milk has great generative properties, mutating any living thing exposed to it. Whether coalesced as ova, sperm, or "mother's milk," his/her/its Milk has the power, if left in isolation, of spontaneously generating minute life forms from its own mass.

COMBAT

Shub-Niggurath has dozens of tentacles at any given time and can attack with up to thirteen of them at a time, but each is so large that only one can target a Medium-size target at a time.

Improved Grab/Constrict (Ex): On a successful hit, the tentacle immediately begins a grapple as a free action. If the grapple is successful, the tentacle either constricts the victim for $4d10+22$ points of damage or holds him pinned. The next round, a mouth opens in a section of the tentacle holding the character and begins sucking all his bodily fluids; see blood drain, below.

Avatar (Su): As noted above, Shub-Niggurath never appears in person when summoned but always sends an avatar in his/her place. The avatar is slightly less powerful than the deity's own form, having 5 fewer HD, AC 39, a -5 penalty on the god's normal attack rolls, and a -5 penalty on the god's normal saves. Furthermore, each of the avatar's ability scores is 5 points lower than the god's. In addition, the avatar has the god's power of rejuvenation. The god and avatar are each fully aware of everything that happens to the other.

Blood Drain (Ex): A character attacked by one of Shub-Niggurath's tentacle-mouths loses $3d10$ hp and $3d6$ points of permanent Constitution drain each round. A character whose Constitution reaches 0 is reduced to a brittle, dried husk, quite dead.

Divine Shield (Su): As a free action, Shub-Niggurath can create a shield that blocks 130 points of damage before collapsing. Usable forty times a day, the shield can be customized to ignore damage from any attack form to which the Outer God is already immune (acid, cold, electricity, fire/heat, sonic), prolonging its usefulness. The Outer God can shape the shield into a transparent barrier of up to 130 square feet or into a sphere or hemisphere of up to a 13-foot radius. The shield can be placed around any creature or object the Black Goat wishes to protect, including itself.