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CALL of
HORROR ROLEPLAYING
C'THULHU

Minions



Fifteen Brief Encounters

by Paul McConnell

with Lishman, Sutton, Leather, Dykins,
Atkinson, Allen, Newhouse, and Ford

C'THULHU
HOUSE
A CHAOSIUM
PUBLICATION

MINIONS

by Paul McConnell

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Chaosium Inc.

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W Mouthbreathers

Lost property

Six foot plot

Put on top

The Last of Joy

Circle of Friends

W P n o t e S i o n e n W

Painted in a Corner



SERENDIPITY

Advertisement

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LABORATORY ASSISTANT

TEEK Industries have a position for a Laboratory Assistant.

There is a generous salary for a dedicated scientist able to accept the position immediately and willing to keep irregular hours.

The estate is pleasantly sited in the outskirts of Boston, with easy access to all main roads, and only a ten minute walk from the railway station.

The successful applicant will be working with the latest electrical and transistorised monitoring equipment, working solitary and with the research team. Some previous experience in security and a knowledge or appreciation of the paranormal is desirable.

Apply in writing to: TEEK Industries, Glendale Road, Boston, Massachusetts.



The above advertisement can be found in a respected newspaper or, more likely, a scholarly or scientific journal. More than one investigator may be made aware of the job opportunity, but as only one person is required to fill the position the keeper will have to decide who is most suitable, perhaps by making applicable Skill rolls. Interested investigators will be contacted two weeks after submitting their formal applications, and asked to attend an interview.

There will not be an opportunity for applicants to do their 'homework' on TEEK Industries because, as they learn at the interview, the company is government-funded and the nature of their business highly confidential.

Dr McBride, Head of Research and Development at TEEK Industries, has hired a conference room in one of Boston's most prestigious hotels in which to conduct the discourse. The proceedings are quite relaxed, but the doctor does nothing to disguise his serious-mindedness. The investigators will be told nothing more at this stage other than the fact that the job is to take over monitoring a particular experiment the company has had running over the last six weeks. Due to a broad spectrum of tests, the ideal candidate would have a good knowledge in the base areas of

science, and especially **Physics** and **Chemistry**. The investigator's application should be successful, as the competing candidates are a poor crop of students and time wasters. If there are no objections to signing a standard contract that restricts TEEK employees from discussing company matters outside work, Dr McBride will advise the remaining applicants that the position has been filled.

The investigator will work in the research building, one of many bland, concrete structures, set away from the heart of the TEEK Industries estate. There is a security guard at the main doors of the building, at all times. Once inside the building, laboratory employees are escorted directly along the corridor to their right, and let into the artificially-lit Security Corridor. Laboratory staff are not given keys to the building, as they are expected to stay all their six hour shift past this point.

The Main Laboratory and Test Areas, both accessed through the Security Corridor, are separated only by a sheet of glass, two inches thick, that stretches across from one wall to the other, and from the ceiling to the floor. The Main Laboratory is where ninety-nine percent of the time is spent, looking after and taking readings from

the equipment. Apart from the light of the Main Laboratory the only luminance in the Test Area is from the monitoring apparatus and, after several steps down into a chamber, the white glow from a port window set into a robust, cast-iron door, set in the opposite wall.

Only Company Directors, such as Dr McBride, are free to enter each building as they please; even government officials need to make an appointment before they are even permitted through the main gates. Every employee of the company is issued an identity card that must be worn on the lapel at all times. This card will not allow access to any other part of the estate. Any other of the buildings must be contacted through the direct telephone line. This is how employees are expected to make requests for any equipment or supplies they might need. Refreshments and amenities are laid out in the Main Laboratory, as the area may not be left unattended. In case of a life-threatening emergency, such as a fire, there is an electrical alarm system and an Emergency Exit in the Security Corridor. After hearing the alarm is the only time that the security guard is permitted into the Security Corridor.

Apart from being casually informed that the building used to be a test area for research into supposed bearers of psychic phenomena, no other details of the company's business, past or present, will be forthcoming or attainable. The results of a previous project were disappointing, so it was recently discontinued and succeeded by this current undertaking.

The first day of work will be a long and arduous introduction from Dr McBride to the research facilities. Understanding the principle of much of the equipment and machinery will be easy to digest, so long as the investigator has the level of proficiency of **Chemistry** and **Physics** needed to carry him or her through the interview. Keepers may grant checks in these skills, as a result of this day of induction.

Through an affinity with his study of archaic sciences, behind the metal doorway in the Test Area is a Magical Gate created nonchalantly by Dr McBride. He believes to have tapped onto a source of energy that is admittedly, so far, beyond his understanding. His **Cthulhu Mythos** knowledge is minimal, and so has persuaded TEEK Industries to invest research into understanding what he has chanced upon.

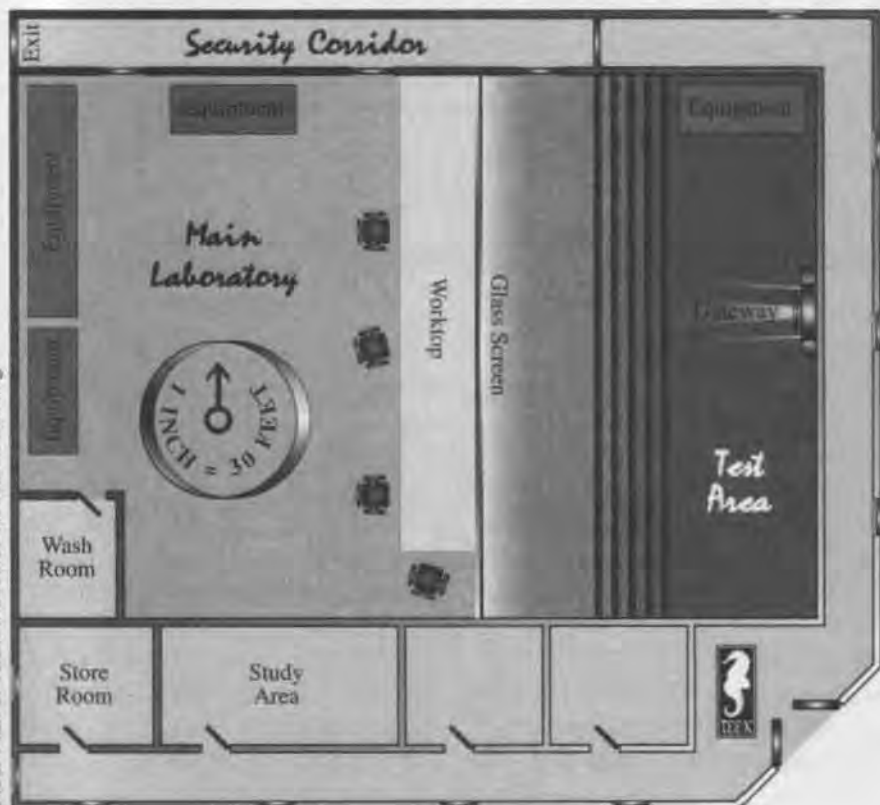
The portal window issues a bright, fuzzy eminence, which is difficult to look at for too long without goggles. All that can be seen by squinting beyond the glass is something like a subterranean scene, wherein incandescent life-forms 'swim'; some of them octopod, others eel-like. The preeminent centre of interest is a being of roughly humanoid shape who occasionally presses its hands and face up to the glass and looks into the laboratory with its oversized and empty, gawking face. There is no evidence of the creature's ability to acknowledge the contents of the laboratory; tests set up to attract a response have always been inconclusive. There may be a nominal SAN loss of 0/1 on first seeing the creature's vacant gape.

An impressive array of monitoring equipment is focused on the Magical Gateway. There are a dozen monitors to register any breaches of atmosphere and possible chemical leaks into the Test Area. Another monitor is fixed to the glass window of the doorway to measure the stress factor; and a similar sensor-dish focussed in its direction to record any localised sonic vibrations. Up until now there have been no such occurrences, even when the creature pushes past the glass.

Due to the doctor's shaphazard spell-casting, the investigator is in no immediate danger from what might be beyond the doorway, as an Elder Sign is also unwittingly, but fortunately, worked into the metal door.

Dr McBride may have some unshared notion that what he has is a window to another dimension. These suspicions were first aroused after some early tests he did to try to magnify his view, to better see beyond the portal; certain optical filters revealed forms and colours he still finds impossible to record or describe.

If the doorway is ever breached by excessive damage or opened by the wheel-lock, anything could happen; the creature could escape or the investigator could enter the Magical Gate to finish up heaven-knows-where. The true extent of the doctor's machinations are left open for development, but suffice to say, this scenario should offer some moral dilemmas. ●





SIX FOOT PLOT

Entries from the Journal of Thomas Boullan, with its Continuation Overleaf

what our mothers used to tell us about baking cakes; "Be careful what you put in, because you can't take it back out." If we hold a workable premise, this could go beyond separating ingredients of culinary delights. It could break down our own physiological and psychological makeup, on a molecular level: I can see a waiting room full of rich, middle-aged women, vying to spend their money on an injection to style their hair, recolor their eyes and even lose their weight! Or we could isolate and tame a bad temper—no!—a mental affliction!—a terminal disease!

In contemplation, we've realised the potential of our discovery, and have agreed it would be irresponsible to let this work continue. I thought we could have had some fun with this—and done a lot of good—but to impulsively circulate these findings in a world populated mostly by bigots would be eminently careless.

Narcolepsy—

Fakirs of northwest India (and some Buddhist sects of Japan, so Gareth says) have experimented successfully with long-term self-inhumation since the 17th century. They would recover essentially unharmed from their state of suspended animation, having been laid buried beneath the ground for hours, weeks, and sometimes, years—although here, it was necessary to forcibly crank their jaws open, afterwards. So irrefutable was the validity of their practice, it was responsible for a spread of their peoples' faith in the magical powers of yoga used by the Fakirs, and in the black magic of their Jadoo Wallahs.

But like many of mine and Gareth's fancies, a respected confidant from our scientific community is hard—no, impossible—to find. To come across a mind sympathetic, to sit and smoke with us, discussing the formative principle of our pet conjecture—even if theirs turned out to be a contrary stand—would be refreshing, once in a while. The reason behind this perpetual ostracism is as clear as it is disappointing: a matter once scrutinised is as difficult to disprove as it is to prove. Let them all keep to their beaten paths!

The only real interest shown by the Western world into the study of this

One of the investigators is contacted by the police authorities and told news of the violent and untimely death of a cousin, Thomas Boullan. He was knocked dead hours earlier in the morning by an interstate locomotive on a terribly lonely run of track just inside the industrial sector.

His identity was established by a library card found in the breast pocket of his shirt. The investigator's name, address, and association with the dead man was recovered from a years'-old Christmas card folded-up in the lining of his coat.

The investigator will need to identify the scrapings of the cow-catcher, and will then be asked to recover Boullan's personal effects from his flat and keep them in store, in case evidence of a will is found.

Boullan should not have been a particularly close relative; the little the investigator remembers is from university. Even then Boullan was a very private person and generally kept to himself. At the same time, he could be wonderfully impulsive and outspoken when on the subject of science; this 'unacceptable' conduct had him thrown

'art of dying' has been from simple charlatans looking to exploit the phenomena through borrowing only the ocular concept, to be repackaged only to derive common parlour tricks, performed to amuse the masses. Inevitably, the exposure of these fakirs only goes further to increase people's general level of cynicism.

But we can do this with science!

We know, from an exhaustive article Garath found written in an old edition of the Calcutta Medical Gazette; the Fakir put himself through such yogi ablations as swallowing a 25 yard length of fine cloth, that was then regurgitated to clean out his alimentary canal. Other preparations involved cutting away the muscles from under his tongue and folding it back down his throat, before falling into a special trance to preempt the death of his mind and soul.

Pretty sure that all this self-torture is quite unnecessary—and with neither of us knowing any yoga—Garath has opted, instead, for a preparatory diet of fresh fruit and a good dose of chloroform. Nevertheless, to affect a complete simulation, we have had to acknowledge, then isolate, the integral contribution that yoga has in the base principle of narcolepsy: the mastery of our immediate existence through a total control of the mind and body.

We are thoroughly excited by this experiment, as we have actually been able to improve on these findings with the development of a special serum that gives control over the body's autonomic nervous system. Yoga does, indeed, reduce the heartbeat and oxygen consumption, but our tests show that the basal metabolic rate remains dangerously erratic. In hibernation, the rate is always lowered and there is never any question of the blood sugar supply fluctuating past the required level.

Our formulae, that Garath calls his 'sleepers', contains extracts from the glands of an Australian frog, *Lymnodynastes ornatus*, that buries itself for weeks, in suspended animation, beneath the ground. I have since discovered that the cells of our common dormouse are essentially identical to the *Lymnodynastes ornatus*, and have asked Garath to, in future, check with me before expending near-on \$200 of our resources on impulsive commodities. But since we had the frogs—

out of more lectures than the investigator may care to remember. Since school, Boullan and his good friend and co-partner, Dr Garath Christian, have involved themselves in a string of controversial and sometimes dangerous studies of, sadly, unspectacular achievement. Their theories have been too fanciful for the serious attention of the medical world or any of the scientific community. And, as they make it their business to often attack some of the basic principles of science, the tragic consequence has meant they have gone unpublished.

The investigator may have had foresight to engage the assistance of other members of the team to help with yanking furniture from his cousin's rooms. The group will be shown up to the small lodgings by the resident landlady, Mrs Croxley, who asks if the apartment can be cleared before sundown, as there is a gentleman wanting use of the rooms that coming evening. As soon as the landlady learns that one of the investigators is family to Boullan, she will have no reservations or guilt in gifting them \$20 for his dead cousin's back-rent.

The state of the lodgings manifest Boullan and Christian's achievements in exploring their 'alternative' realms of science: as they enter, the door jams halfway under junk piled up within. At this, the landlady simply rolls her eyes and leaves the investigators to their chore. Books and papers litter the whole space of the floor, curling up around the legs of simple wooden furniture, and concealing the worn pattern of the carpet beneath. And matching decor for the walls are teetering shelves of dusty books stacked, in no recognisable order, from the floor up to the low ceiling.

The next room is less claustrophobic and holds down a little more order; it would seem to have been put aside for the practice of science. Boullan's personal journal of his and Dr Christian's most recent and ongoing experiment is open on the desktop nearest the window—see nearby reference. There can be other dubious finds amongst the apartment's motley assortment of chemicals and tomes; this might be a good opportunity to slip the investigators another 'little something' to help inaugurate a plot for an additional or future scenario.

The apartment's remaining rooms maintain the untidy theme throughout, but—apart from, perhaps, the presence of bunk beds—hold nothing out of the ordinary, or of singular interest.

Medical Practice

Call for **Idea** rolls if, after reading the reference, the full gravity of the situation is not clear: Boullan was killed before he was able to exhume his colleague, who still remains, as Boullan put in his journal, 'buried at Charlie Parker's plot'. The investigators should also figure out why Boullan chose a secluded route across the railway track, back to his apartment: he did not want to attract the attention of passers-by with his 'experiment'.

Time should be of the essence. Dr Christian will have been buried six hours before the investigators are even made aware of his cousin's death; and the time

spent at the mortuary should have been no more than an hour. Allowing another hour before finding the Boullan's journal; the soonest the investigators could possibly act on their findings is about eight hours after Boullan helped Dr Christian to his self-inhumation.

The now quite exhilarated investigators should not leave the flat without a **Spot Hidden** roll. This will bring to their attention a framed university photograph mounted in proud view, on one of the walls. It is of a class from the local university; the caption betrays it as just over seven years old. From the disparate well-wishes scrawled over the picture, a student by the name of Charlie Parker is revealed as the somewhat intense looking young man standing in the front row, sandwiched between the investigator's cousin and—the now doctor—Christian.

Before the investigators can set off and pursue any wild ideas to find where Dr Christian is buried, and generally save the day, they will have to deal first with the problem at hand. Unlikely to want to fritter their valuable time, the investigators can put off moving Boullan's things by paying his landlady the aforementioned \$20 back-rent as well as a minimum of \$30 extra, to satisfy her inconvenience, allowing them to press on with their digging. When visiting the investigator's former university, before even reaching reception, the investigators will notice Boullan and Dr Christian in amongst an attractive exhibition of reunion photographs, up in the foyer. There is no evidence that Charlie Parker attended the recent celebrations. Asking at reception—with a quick **Fast Talk** roll—finds out the reason why: the man died two months ago from a terminal illness.

Allot another hour for an accomplished stopover at the university.

GREEN FINGERS

With the stringent time consideration, the investigators will most likely agree to split-up so as to cover more ground. There should be no more than a few

Using the serum, Gareth should be able to tune his sensory channels to a higher consciousness, whilst under the earth, and alter his perception of time, so not to experience tedium and trigger mental panic. Like the needle skipping across a gramophone record, his time will go, for the most part, unnoticed.

For the last week, Gareth has consumed only milk and yogurt, then, it is my recommendation that he fasts in the few days leading up to the immurement. Gareth, himself, as expressed his intention to bathe in hot water for a full two hours beforehand, to tenderise the flesh and manny him with the soil. It is also going to be necessary to close off his ears and nostrils with soft wax, in defence against worms and insects. Which reminds me: I might need to restart his lungs with a good set of bellows; I must remember to stop by at the hardware store, tomorrow.

Thumbing through his references, Gareth found an old African myth, claiming that the state of narcolepsy would unleash a magical strength if the mind was left to slip. This power is said to flail out with mindless ferocity, making the recipient impervious to pain and empower him with the ability to summon wild animals. This is perhaps his only single indication of disquietude for the experiment; he has even asked me to bring my revolver to his exhumation, the next day. All a lot of silly talk, of course; in a few weeks time he'll read through this, in an apartment in Paris or somewhere, and laugh.

I am to bury Gareth at Charlie Parker's plot. At first, I thought it seemed a little disrespectful to Charlie (God rest his soul) but as Gareth pointed out, the conditions are perfect; the earth is well spaded over, and few are those who would desecrate a dead man's ground.

We think it best if no-one yet be taken into our confidence. If everything works out I am to repeat the feat under public and medical scrutiny. I suppose this whole practice is technically illegal, but Gareth and I have always needed to be a little flexible in our approach. In any case, these indiscretions will be all forgotten as they are reaping through the rewards of our work. Generally, I think we have become a little too civilised, as a race; we need to fall back onto a forgotten tier of transgression, if we are to progress. As Gareth would say; 'you've got to get it all, to get it all to grow.'

leads open for investigation. Acquiring Charlie Parker's old address should not present a problem; they will find it no more than fifteen minutes walk from Boullan's apartment. Parker left behind a widow and three infant children. Mrs Parker is acquainted with Boullan and Dr Christian, and is all too aware of their professional reputation, but knows nothing of any recent experiments. She will be pleased to direct them to her husband's grave, just so long as she is given no reason to suspect them of doing anything but pay their respects.

If the investigators do not think to interview Mrs Parker, for all they know, Charlie Parker could be buried in any one of town's six graveyards or cemeteries. In this case, use a **1D6** to simulate their search, with each wrong guess losing them a precious hour of time. Award the investigators instant success if they have sense to begin by looking through the tombstones sited nearest Parker's property.

If the investigators believe Dr Christian is buried at Charlie Parker's plot, they should not allow themselves the luxury to pick and choose their

time. To wait for the cloak of night would surely mean the doctor's certain death, and similarly, a legal exhumation would also waste them more valuable hours. But, help emphasise the severity of their actions, as they dig around the fresh earth of the grave by having a wedding party burst abruptly from out of the church. Or better still, one of the investigators glimpse sight of Parker's widow approaching the graveside, requiring one of them to hinder her while the others finish the undertaking. Since the grave is but two months old, the investigators will spend little more than a few minutes spading through the soil. They are likely to feel confounded by what little their efforts uncover. There is no evidence the grave has previously been defiled; Charlie Parker lies hushed inside an artless coffin; hands clasped daintily around a small rosewood box, containing his simple treasures.

Amongst this bundle of intimate effects is one photograph of Charlie in a scene with an elderly woman and two small children, digging up a row of mixed vegetables. As they read the handwritten caption on the reverse side, the full ambiguity of it all should wash over the investigators and rest heavily in the pit of their stomachs: *'Helen and the kids, helping out at Charlie's plot'*.

Dr Garath Christian is buried at Charlie Parker's plot: a slender portion of land once used by Charlie for the cultivation of his very own grocery produce. The allotment has been allowed to fall into disorder; it is nigh-on impossible to see the vegetables for the weeds. Apart from, that is, one bare patch, several feet across, where the tangled and overgrown foliage has been recently uprooted and pitched aside.

Thomas Boullan and Dr Christian's 'sleeper' serum does not work—have

Dr. Garath Christian

STR7	DEX9	INT18
CON9	APP8	POW15
SIZ10	SAN75	EDU18
HPs10		MPs15

*Skills Dodge35% History72%
First Aid75% Chemistry93%
Electrical Repair88%
Library Use75% Medicine75%
Natural History91% Law14%
Pharmacy75% Occult42%
Physics77%*

Attacks Fist50%(1D6-1D4)

the investigators believe what they like—but the only reason the doctor has survived is because the ground under which he lay is rich with peat and perforated with the roots of surrounding, dead and hollow trees. This will do little, of course, to stop him dying in two weeks from malnutrition should the investigator fail to acknowledge his dilemma.

When dug up and unwrapped from a sheet of white linen, Dr Christian gasps heavily at the sweet air, and, through fits of coughing, falls weakly to his hands and knees. Depending on how prompt the investigators were in finding him, effectively determines the state of the doctor's mind, once he is exhumed. The chloroform administered by Boullan was good for eight long hours; so the investigators should have been mindful to the doctor's plight just as his spirit woke, bound in torture.

Dr Christian could be the proverbial 'cornered animal' half-expected through reading the final entries of Boullan's journal; or the sensitive creature who becomes awkwardly emotional when told of his good friend's death. Tally up the number of hours spent in the search; multiply that number by 1D6 and—if the doctor fails a SAN check—deduct that figure from his current score.

To determine the extent of this damage, consult the appropriate Insanity Table from the *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook. *





terrible head

*Fate was an accident, borne into
suffocation, trapped by white walls,
and made to suffer nightmare food.*

*Taking shape in the flesh
and growing stronger
through all the trials.*

*Tired of trying and feeling
the cold, release the chains to
this world and fly like
sparrows of filth.*

*On this evening of
my life, one good
hope is worth a cart-
load of certainties.
Save the children.*

*While the left hand is
under the skin, come
and share in a deep,
wordless knowledge.*

*Nadens counts in the young and
treads the path from here into a realm
of interminable and consuming
magnitude.*

*Bare things that would
push back the invisible
thresholds of the mind.*

*Graze off another layer
and expose these primitive
perceptions to the shining
fury of His gentle
roasting.*

*Sixteen legs, thirty-
two eyes, and similar
in different ways.*

*Do more than overwinter
this kind from shallow corners.
He is the future.*

Contents of Mrs Rainbird's Biscuit Barrel

Mr and Mrs Rainbird require the advice of a qualified psychoanalyst, and approach one or more of the investigators for attention. The couple arrive unannounced at the investigator's practice, Mrs Rainbird clutching something like a biscuit jar close to her breast, to ask whether they can be seen at this short notice.

The exigency is not that either of the Rainbirds regard Mrs Rainbird's mental state as dire, but because Colin Rainbird is a piano tuner with The Boston Symphony Orchestra and has a need to leave town for two weeks the day after tomorrow. Before which, he is keen to understand just why his wife has in the last two weeks starting hearing voices in her head. Even more disturbingly, she taken to writing these messages down onto slips of paper which she then folds up and keeps in a biscuit barrel.

With a **Psychology** roll, an investigator may diagnose that Mrs Rainbird is *slightly* mad, but no more. Certainly the best move towards understanding her condition is for the investigator to use his skill to **Persuade** her to reveal the contents of the jar. Mrs Rainbird is as mystified by her behaviour as her husband and is unable shed any light as to the meaning or nature of what she has written. Experienced investigators will be confident that the young woman is under the influence of something more substantial than facile eccentric delusions. Were the investigators to goad Mrs Rainbird into speaking candidly about any matter that is troubling her, or of any recent exposure to something out of the ordinary, they will soon be on the scent. The young woman is a kindergarten teacher bedevilled by the memory of an incident that occurred on the last day of the summer semester.

'My class were permitted to spend the afternoon playing in the garden out near the duck pond where some of the children often try and capture dragonflies as they skip close to the water's edge. Two of the boys, whilst digging in the soil, unearthed a pair of ebony-black chrysalides, measuring an impressive several inches in length. This was brought to my notice as the

two began to bawl; they had disturbed an ant's nest and each had insects crawling up their arms. Spurred on by the anxious children, with help from the groundsman, I later retrieved their find and carefully carried the shiny pods over to the greenhouse where they have lain for these first two weeks into the summer holiday.'

With the recollection of this seemingly inconsiderable event Mrs Rainbird experiences an inexpressible sense of foreboding that rouses an urge to call by at the school. And in absence of a better idea, the investigators may wish to humour the tormented women and escort her there.

Gaining access to the building is not a problem as, curiously, the building is not properly secured. Turning the latch to the front door, Mrs Rainbird hurries down the empty corridors and out into the garden, with her husband and the investigators in tow. With the exception of the boarded and battened west face, the greenhouse is a totally sashed and glazed construction, through which the party is met with a formidable sight.

From inside, a monstrous bipedal insect the size of infant child scratches at the glass. Without question the creature is from an aberrant nest, but in spite of this, one might imagine this particular specimen to be also damned with severe disfigurement. Black greasy skin is stretched taut over a featureless face, and as it hovers—beating its leathery wings with surprising rapidity—its underdeveloped legs are held tight against the thorax where its body is lightly coated with pale brown hairs.

The elderly groundskeeper is sprawled lifeless before the greenhouse; he collapsed from shock and died of heart failure sometime during the last twenty-four hours. The chrysalides he and the young teacher recovered had recently grown as they entered the final instar of metamorphosis, and ultimately emerged two horrible Nightgaunts. Consult the rulebook for further details about these terrible creatures of the Mythos.

Only one of them is observable through the steamy glass; if studied for any length of time the investigators will be spectator to certain mannerisms. The humidity of the mini-environment has bred a rather brooding captive. When not in flight one can see its wings have not properly formed; the soft membranes hang limp and appear damp and indented at the edges. The Nightgaunt unfurls them once every hour to reveal a vein lacing that is pumped rigid with blood to support the creature for up to several minutes of continuous flight.

Other notable behaviour includes it walking precariously around with its wings fanned wide, and feeding on the flowers and greenhouse plants by burying its face and sucking up the particles of food like a sponge. The Nightgaunt also becomes particularly listless during the night as it is a cold-blooded creature and can not rely on its body to generate heat.

Nightgaunt		
STR13	DEX11	INT2
CON10	SIZ14	POW9
	Armor2ptskin	MPs9
	Move8/12flying	HPs12
		SAN Loss 1D6
		Attacks Tickle30%

When the investigators enter the greenhouse there will be a flurry of movement as the creature becomes highly distressed. They are also met with the pungent odour from the hibernaculum remains that mingle underfoot with a bright yellow liquid secretion, as well as the brittle husk of the other ill-fated beast. A little while after pupation this less fortunate creature became trapped in a corner of the greenhouse and expired simply from disorientation.

The feeble survivor the investigators are faced with will endeavour to escape at the earliest possible opportunity, and, once free, will battle in a frenzied darting flight against the considerable evening breeze to migrate to a celestial climate. *



the last of joy

Jeremy McFadden
Keepers Cottage
Stranraer
Great Britain

My dear friend,

It has been about five years too many. As I think you know, I got round to marrying some years back. Sorry you couldn't make it across for the wedding - I hope your mother made a full recovery. Do you remember Wendy from the university, now? She said that she vaguely recalls there being another American around the campus for a year or so, that could well have been you - Look, she's not too well, and I think we're in deep trouble.

It's something to do with her heritage, I think. I once told you her family were divided, but you don't really know the half of it. Her father passed away, back home, twelve years ago, during the time we were sitting our degrees. He saw her alright; she was left a legacy of a bloody-good-many acres of farmland back in Massachusetts - as well as a house.

Well, the truth of the matter was, even before receiving the letter bringing news of the death, Wendy had confided in me an unwilling to move out of Scotland once her courses were over. She had never been easy in her father's company. It wasn't that he was a cruel man, not at least in any violent sense, but from what I can make out, there was forever an impenetrable tension between them. For instance - not wanting to rubbish the man, but - she told me that her mother had died in labour, and although he had never expressed as much, her father made Wendy feel resented or somehow responsible. She was told at an inquisitive that he had burned every photograph that had held his dead wife's image as one of the painful processes in coming to terms with his loss. She was flatteringly told that her mother should be forgotten. The most extraordinary thing, I think you'll agree.

It was in the latter years of university that I became very fond of Wendy. She felt she had made a break from the old way of life in America, and was finding it impossible to come to terms with the thought of returning back to an empty home. Well, save for a skeleton staff, she

would have been stuck over there by herself. So there was this process of considering whether to stay over here for good. I think you know the rest. I'd fallen straight into a good job, so helped tip the scales and asked for her to stay with me, and her hand in marriage.

We employed lawyers and solicitors to arrange sale of the property overseas, and though the transaction took longer than it should have, she was guaranteed a fair and substantial credit, enabling us to secure the purchase on a quite idyllic beach-house off the northern coasts. We spent coming-up-to four happy years at Keepers Cottage - and then things just went wrong. Now she's worse than in death - she's just no longer Wendy.

There is nowhere else I can turn for support, I still consider you the closest and most trusting friend a man could need. Will refund the price of your travel, just get over to Stranraer before I can feel it, she's dragging me down with her. I must express a bent on us not meeting at the house; book yourself into the Belforte House Hotel and I'll meet you in the lounge, on the morning, the 28th of July. Send a cable to confirm. All God's speed.

Jeremy McFadden

Letter from Jeremy McFadden

One of the investigators receives this handwritten letter from Jeremy McFadden, a close school friend, and is presented with a momentous appeal for help. Besides exchanging a few seasonal greetings, the investigator will have put some distance between their relationship after finishing a stint with him at Edinburgh University and moving back to America ten or more years back.

The Belforte House Hotel is a rather pleasant establishment set into the bustling heart of Stranraer. The investigator should check-in late the evening before meeting with Jeremy. That meeting will occur next morning in the hotel lounge over coffee.

After the first few minutes, all the rudimentary anecdotes and good humour is exhausted and the burly Scotsman will rub his thick-fingered hands together in front of him over the tabletop, summoning an aura of restlessness between them. Jeremy's voice falls hushed and he will edge yet closer over the surface of the table to speak of his tribulations.

He will reveal that his dear wife, Wendy, is struck with a particularly atrocious affliction, an hereditary spinal deficiency that curses certain branches of her family's descent. Wendy had spoken to him many years earlier of it, but death hardly made suitable chatter for a newly-married couple, and so the matter was dropped.

Jeremy has bruises and cuts over his face and neck. Some of the injuries are closed and yellowed; a **First Aid** roll suggests he is taking a long-term battering. If asked about it he will explain that he has resurrected an interest in boxing—an enthusiasm developed through his university years—and insists that the injuries are superficial and the least of his worries. As the investigator is about to find out, they are in fact *evidence* of unfathomed worries.

Further, if the investigator makes any physical contact with Jeremy, the

friend will visibly wince under the sting of other injuries hidden beneath his loose cotton shirt. Noticeably tormented, Jeremy will peer up from his fuming cup, the glassy whites of his eyes rimmed raw with the weight of suffering his containment all this time alone. When he first tries to speak, his voice fails him and the words give into a decomposed delivery, about which he is discernibly abashed. He swiftly stages a tantrum of coughing and wheezing, affording him a moment to collect himself.

Lungs filled up with rich and sooth-



ing vapours of caffeine, Jeremy will go on to explain—with both the tone of his voice and his wounded expression low and pleading—that Wendy has categorically refused to be examined by a doctor, and has gone as far as to suggest she would threaten the life of any stranger who crossed the threshold of the house. Thankfully, in the five months she had been so deranged, no one had visited. Jeremy has been at a loss as for what to do. This meeting is the first time he has shared anything of the full agony of his dilemma. He goes on to express a desire for the investigator, also, not to confide in another at this early stage.

A successful **Fast Talk** is needed to gain his trust before involving any other of the investigators.

That will be the essence of this preliminary meeting; Jeremy and the investigators should arrive at the best way for them all to confront his wife and sit the problem out together. This

can not happen until after six-thirty that evening, because Jeremy has already taken more than his fair time from work to look after her. Since Wendy has refused to be examined by specialists or receive any treatment, Jeremy can offer his employer no documentary proof of his commitments. He fears it is a only a matter of time before he is dismissed from his post.

Sleep with the Fishes

The investigators should stop over at the McFadden household one hour before daylight is due to fail. [If they betray their promise to Jeremy and choose to visit the cottage prior to this, they find the place secured and by all appearances empty.]

Alongside Keepers Cottage there is a view of punishing waves over the loch breaking onto the rocks that pour out onto the ground shingle of beach. The horizon will have, as yet, nibbled only a sliver off the setting sun, but a pair of thick curtains are pulled tightly across the front window of the otherwise quite affable building. A **Spot Hidden** roll has the investigators notice that a pane of glass in one of the upper rooms is cracked and starred. The fabric inside the windowpane twitches as they drive off the serpentine road along Loch Ryan and into the driveway.

The investigators will be ushered directly inside by Jeremy, who sheepishly waits for them at the front porch. Fresh cuts have broken out over the man's face. The investigators are asked to seat themselves in the sitting room whilst he prepares coffee in the next room. The house is silent, all except its structure bowing and creaking under the coastal winds.

Through the high ceiling, there will come one powerful thump from the room above that will make even the most collected investigator start in his seat. On this, Jeremy bursts into the sitting room, his eyes to the ceiling, wearing a nervous smile and with steaming beakers of coffee carried

daintily in each of his oversized hands, brimming over onto the carrying tray.

In his now usual agitated tone, Jeremy explains that his wife is taking a bath. He goes on to claim that the previous upheaval was, in all likelihood, a bar of soap slipping through her fingers onto the bathroom floor. Through another thin, wiry smile, Jeremy goes on to tell of Wendy spending practically all her waking hours in pursuit of cleanliness. He ponders, in whispers, whether through sterility she thinks to wash the disease from her system? He then goes off at tangents with fear for his and the investigators' safety: *What if it were some dreaded*

virus, and not the hereditary condition he thought?

This lack of confidence is completely unbecoming Jeremy's impressive size and physique; it may take a couple of minutes and a **Psychoanalysis** roll to calm him down. An investigator must explain how Wendy can not be helped unless Jeremy demands that she come down now for the meeting. For several long minutes the investigators are left while Jeremy is upstairs attempting to coax his wife from out of the bathroom. It is a tiresome wait that is prickled with a measure of apprehension, with the sounds of the sea, the buckling beams of the house and the trembling whispers and imploring taps their friend gives for his wife through the oaken door above. There are no clocks or fine ornaments in the sitting room. The radio is half-covered and on its side with the face broken in.

When Jeremy comes back down, his eyes are rimmed red and a successful **Psychology** roll suggests that his sudden offer to make them all a sandwich is really an opportunity to reassemble his dignity. After less than a minute, a **Listen** roll has the investigators hear something pitter-patter on the bare boards outside the door of the sitting room going into the kitchen. Then, there will come a noise from the kitchen to break the virtual silence, like a rusty hammer through cold, crystal chimes.

The investigators will find the kitchen door bolted and now all silent within. It will take as much time to break down the door as it does to climb the side gate and enter the house from the rear by the wreckage of, what were, the French windows. All of the kitchen is needled with shards of glass from the broken windows overlooking the beach. Jeremy looks to have been thrown, half throttled and bleeding, across the linoleum floor. He has a heavy concussion and is, for the most part, inarticulate.

Despite the pain, in several desperate attempts, Jeremy rises onto an elbow, splashes a shot of whisky into the bottom of a glass and swills out onto the floor a residue of fine glass needles. Quickly pouring himself another, he falters out through the flapping curtains, crunching glass underfoot and mumbling something about Wendy and suicide.

The investigators may be compelled to wonder after the manner of person capable of clouting a man of Jeremy's size with such conviction. The crux of the matter is that Wendy McFadden is in the final state of metamorphosis—she is a Deep One.

Saving Face

The distant klaxon from the late Stranraer to Larne ferry carries over the Irish Sea. With it comes the lights of small fishing boats and of the working city, fluttering and drawing out across the waves.

The footprints scraped freshly into the sand are monstrous. The investigators must pace with their heads stooped low against the dust-filled gusts of wind whilst following the disturbing trail, out towards the far-off tidal waters. During the minutes of pursuit they give from the McFadden beach-house, the tracks of their taloned quarry alter. They become somehow bolder, elongated and sunken from their maker slipping under the sodden and yielding sand. But there is something else; if the investigators take time to pause and fall down to a crouch and examine the footprints closer, with a **Track** roll, there is an inexplicable urgency in the stride.

Continuing the arduous approach of the waters' edge, the investigators follow the ugly and dragging footfalls to a high rise of jagged rocks. Standing at the foundation of the fifty foot bank of stone briefly awards the investigators asylum from the feverish winds.

The investigators then catch sight of Wendy; a silhouette hobbling





slowly over the open rise for the biting saltwaters below. If Jeremy is able to keep up with the party, his reaction on seeing his wife will be one of great relief: they have prevented her from causing herself harm.

Whether Jeremy's desperate cries are heard or not over the gale, the preoccupied woman carries on her strange hobble over the rocky summit. Nor is Wendy delayed as her long, summer dress hooks over the crags; the grimy, taut fabric ribboning, bil-

lowing, and cracking from the coastal winds as she paces staunchly on, betraying outlandish strength in her bloated and misshapen body.

The investigators can observe that while her steps are at least as strong as theirs, her movements seem relatively dull. Despite having to hold one palm raised in order to block the glare of the setting sun, with a **DEXx3** roll the investigators can dash up and over the unctuous slope and are able to catch up with Wendy before she finishes her descent to the shoreline.

Her dress is stretched tight across her rounded back. Her shoulders are swollen hard. Her breathing becomes hoarse and laboured as she is approached. The symptoms of the disease are visible from head to what could now barely be described as feet.

Wendy McFadden

STR17 DEX12 INT11
 CON10 POW11 SIZ15
 Armor1 SANLoss1D6
 HPs13 MPs11
 Skills Dodge35% Climb45%
 Swim90% Sing75%
 Attacks Claw25%(1D6+1D4)

Her hair is missing in clumps and her skin looks feverous and scaled. She is so very much an abomination that investigators may earnestly wonder if it would not be kinder to let Wendy throw herself to the waves.

'Come on, darling, you're not well,' Jeremy will shout firmly. At the same time he swallows hard, betraying his covert fear. The first sweep of Wendy's webbed claw whistles through the cold air, delivering her dumbstruck husband a savage blow to the stomach. Startled, he will put a hand to his numbed side, hold it down in front of him, to discover he is bleeding badly. Disbelievingly, Jeremy slowly scans her haggard, bloated, vacant face and slumps back, horrified, reeling senseless in the heather. ✱



lost property



The Black Amulet

Details of just how this unusual amulet comes into the hands of an investigator are left wide open. Have him or her find it beforehand in your ongoing campaign or let him recover it from a dusty old junk shop.

It is a solid disc of onyx with twin semi-precious jewels set as eyes and a monetary worth of around \$500. Its less evident property is that it wards off malicious intent, better than an Elder Sign. To use and recognise this power, an investigator must already know how to create an Elder Sign. The amulet may serve only as a regular ward, and may not be used as a personal charm for warding off Mythos creatures; however, there is no magic point or POW loss to use this disc. Be sure the investigators have had possession of the amulet long before running this encounter.

This is an opportunity to supply one investigator with some details of his or her home base, set into the suburban back-roads of town. The assumption is that the investigator has the said amulet in the security of this residence.

Another party besides the investigator is familiar with the amulet and

laying plans for its recovery; which is the essence of this encounter.

On a relaxed evening when the investigator is at home, perhaps entertaining one or more friends or colleagues, he notices the tall figure of a man standing outside the cottage. He should think nothing of this until later into the evening, perhaps on closing the curtains, when the man is seen still loitering further off down the lane. With his back to the cottage and in silhouette under the single street-lamp where he stands, nothing about him gives any indication of who he is.

Unless disturbed, the figure waits for hours, doing nothing more than shuffle his feet. If approached, he detects the slightest footfall, and will bolt away across the fields and be offered darkened asylum by the surrounding woodland. The elusive prowler has come to the investigator's cottage in an effort to steal back the amulet for its previous owner, whose identity is unimportant and can be best contrived by the keeper.

The prowler, a Ghoul, has found itself inhibited from entering the cottage, due to the mysterious cloaking

properties of the black amulet therein. This also prevents the creature from breaking and entering when the cottage is later unoccupied. It is recommended there be a break between gaming sessions before running the rest of this scenario. It is important the player does not suspect this following scene to be a direct continuation of the one previous. Furthermore, the investigator should not suspect the machinations of the recent prowler, and so, have no specific reason to single-out the protection of the amulet above anything else at the cottage.

The second attempt at stealing the black amulet will be made one morning, in the dark and early hours, while the investigator is sleeping. The cottage is set on a road used as a trade route by morning traffic—a short cut in and from the city centre. The investigator will have become quite used to the rumbling clamour of wheels plunging down the lane, passing only feet away from the front door, each and every morning. This morning, there will come a terrible smash that nearly rattles the glass loose from every window of the small building; this can not fail to interrupt the investigator's slumber. Jumping upright in bed he sees the dancing light on the bedroom curtains from burning wreckage outside.

An old Model T is in flames, but there is no immediate danger of an explosion. The sole occupant is slumped senseless over the wheel; his face veiled with blood and tangled hair. The investigator will not recognise the driver as the prowler from the other evening; it is in fact the Ghoul. With the remnants of its humanity, it has managed to drive the wreck of a car down the lane at a dangerous speed and purposefully crashed it into the side of the investigator's cottage. It then hopes to be helped over the threshold, into the cottage, and so counter the defences of the amulet.

The creature's appearance is hidden from the investigator beneath a horrible disguise of blood and dust from the accident. The inability to communicate with the Ghoul might be excused by the shock of the ordeal, but if the investigator persists there could be suggestion made to the patient be-

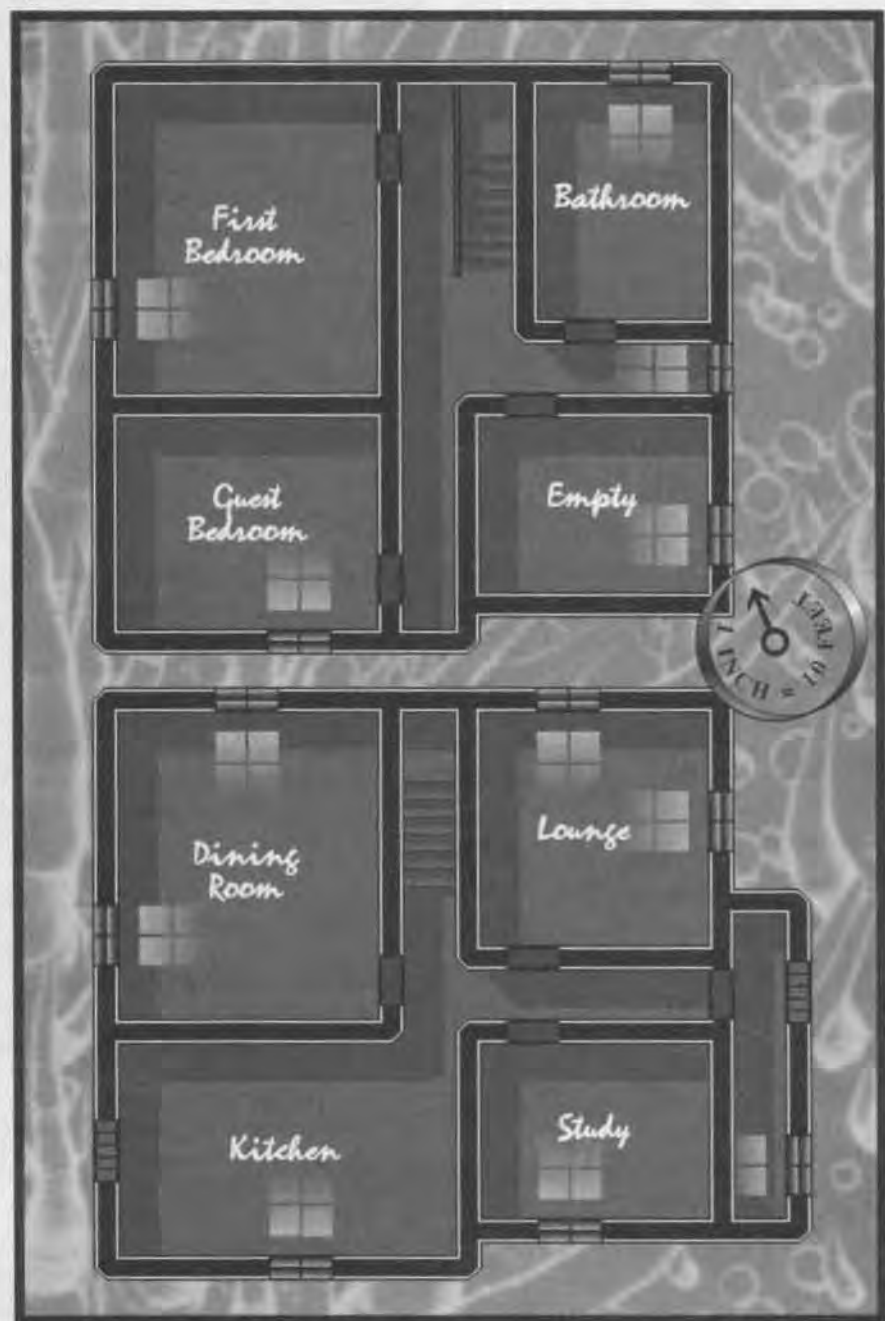
ing slightly retarded. Once the Ghoul is helped inside it will feign unconsciousness on the sofa, and wait its chance to search the house for the amulet, just as soon as the investigator is asleep or out of the cottage.

The creature will not accept being pampered and is very standoffish; when moved it will let out shrilling cries of pain that should dissuade the investigator from disturbing it further. The cottage has no telephone, but the crashed car can be made road-worthy with a **Mechanical Repair**, so the investigator can go into town for a doctor. If he is at pains to leave his

patient alone, one of the early morning truck drivers may stop and promise to send medical assistance.

On waking, or returning home, the investigator will find the rooms of the cottage in turmoil and the Ghoul ferreting around for the amulet. Only when confronted with violence does it stop searching and reveal its true bestiality, the lights of the early morning traffic rushing past, cutting its jagged features out of the dark.

Use the *Call of Cthulhu* rulebook for the Ghoul's statistics; reduce its Attacks and Damage due to its broken arm and teeth. •



Floor-Plan of Investigator's Cottage



CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Octopus in Bottle of Red Wine



George Flannery approaches the investigators, carrying a small parcel, and requests their learned advice. Mr Flannery—a stern, eloquent, but fragile-looking old man—is an experienced pharmacist with something they should find diverting.

'I have a hell of a thing for you. As you're aware, red wine is still available over the counter at some drug stores as medicine to prevent heart failure. I own such a store at the other side of town. The long and short of the matter is that I 'prescribed' myself a bottle last night only to come across the damndest thing. I left the uncorked bottle breathing in the lounge whilst I took a short bath. Only later, by the light of the fire, I met with a shock to find this inside.'

George Flannery		
STR9	DEX9	INT18
CON11	APP10	POW10
SIZ11	SAN50	EDU19
HPs11		MPs10
Skills Listen70%		
Dodge39% First Aid63%		
Hide77% Psychology35%		
Sneak75% Biology40%		
Pharmacy79% Chemistry68%		
Spot Hidden53% Latin42%		
Attacks Fist52% (1D3)		

Their visitor pulls the string of his parcel and unwraps a bottle of wine, holding it up to the light of the window for the investigators to see what looks to be a species of octopus inside; lifeless, its tentacles sway peacefully in the rusty claret.

'Taken aback, I allowed the bottle to fall between my soapy fingers to the floor where it would most certainly have smashed had it not landed on the hearth rug.'

'One reads of our oriental cousins being open to most any practice that might impress the flavour of their food and beverages, but I've heard of nothing,' he tips gently the wine bottle, *'quite like this.'*

A **Natural History** roll identifies the creature as being no strain of marine life. On study, even though the cork has been jammed back into the neck of the bottle, the life-form has reacted badly to oxidation. The chemist can concur that in the space of three hours the animal has withered considerably.

A **Know** roll allows the investigators to elaborate on Flannery's earlier premise. If they so wish, they may enlighten him with their knowledge of how many unsavoury things the Chinese are rumoured to bottle with their spirits, anything from snakes and small animals to human intestine. It is rarely done to enhance a flavour, but rather to distill an essence of life that is believed will benefit the consumer. The doctor will scoff at and is dismissive of such esotericism in this matter:

'An overactive imagination, sirs, is like an open wound; open to suggestion and open to bacteria. And as you should well know, a bloodless wound will never heal.'

Just exactly what the chemist means with his florid analogies is best left open to interpretation. If the investigators are obstinate and persist with their 'mumbo jumbo' it is likely that he will quickly lose faith in their powers to reason and—thinking them to be charlatans—leave the premises disgruntled.

If the investigators interview Flannery properly, it should soon be clear that Flannery is really only interested in the monetary value of the bottle; his assumption is that his supplier has sold it on to him oblivious of its possible worth. The investigators will also learn that the chemist has five more of its like, back at his shop.

A learned investigator might take his chance and taste this rare beverage: Aside from the presence of the octopoid life-form the wine has a good overall appearance. In order to analyse the wine properly the investigator should fill his glass no more than one third

full. It can be seen to have a paler intensity out of the bottle, with striking clarity. By swilling the wine around in the bowl of the glass it can be observed how the wine runs down the sides like tears; by this the investigator can decide the wine has 'good legs' and is high in alcohol levels.

Although the appearance leads the investigators to think they are dealing with a wine well over thirty years old, there are odd conclusions in the taste. It contains a high tannin level left by the grape, so it tastes harsh on the teeth and gums, and makes the mouth feel terribly dry. If the wine had matured under proper conditions the tannin would have balanced out and turned to sediment.

This leads the investigator to the conclusion that the wine is in fact very young, contrary to his or her first impression. It is possible that the creature, at whatever stage it entered the wine, mysteriously prevented the maturation process.

However, opening the bottle has just as remarkably *accelerated* this maturation period, and by the conclusion of this scenario the wine should be a very pleasant drink over which—depending on how events unfold—the investigators either can drink to success or drown their sorrows.



Full Bodied

If the investigators have not thought to ask first, during the short journey to his store, their client will volunteer the exact circumstances for just how he came by the 'mollusc preserve'. Mr Flannery's store had been in business scarcely three months when, one lazy Monday afternoon, two smartly dressed men entered and presented him with a seemingly lucrative deal, where he could come by full cases of good red wine at truly knockdown prices. Mr Flannery swears by all that is holy, he had no idea that accepting this attractive offer would mean standing outside the law.

As it unfolds, still unbeknownst to the chemist, his newfound associates are actually black market representatives. Instead of the agreed sample case, their courier yesterday dropped a clanger and delivered him the valuable octopoid wine by mistake. Realising the error, today several men were sent round to the shop to recover the bottles, but as the proprietor was at this time out seeking a conference with the investigators, so desperate were they to recover the misplaced goods, the thugs broke entry through the side doors of the store.

Two Hired Thugs

STR16	DEX15	INT13
CON14	APP9	POW12
SIZ14	SAN60	EDU19
HPs14		MPs12

Skills Listen74%
Dodge69% First Aid63%
Hide72% Sneak75%
Spot Hidden53% Latin42%

Attacks Fist52%(1D3)
9mm Revolver82%(1D10)

Having discovered one of the six precious bottles missing, a couple of the hoodlums lie in wait for Flannery's return. As their client produces a jangling ring of keys at the shop front—forcing a number of them into the lock before one rattles open the door—a

Spot Hidden roll has the investigators notice something flinch in the shadows within.

A fracas will no doubt unfold and the investigators might well be able to restrain the ruffians, upsetting their plan to ambush the chemist and retrieve the sixth bottle. No measure of persuasion or abuse will sway the ruffians to betray their confidence to the employers; they would sooner die at the hands of the investigators.

Looking around the shop floor, the investigators will notice, with a **Spot Hidden** roll, that on the discarded wrappings of the dubious consignment of wine, Mr Flannery's name is misspelled as 'Flannelly'. They may assume quite rightly the doctor received a consignment meant for another; an individual able to afford a case of black market alcohol, and with, no doubt, a telephone laid on at his home. There is only one entry for 'Flannelly' under the local directory.



Black Tie

The investigators reach the address and witness a package changing hands on the doorstep of an impressive-looking house in one of the city's most prestigious streets. The brief exchange is between five tall men in humourless grey suits and the recipient, a younger man with wet hair and dressed only in a bath robe. The door closes and the company of men walk calmly away

from the residence, without a smile between them. Their pursuit would be unavailing; having passed the recovered bottles on to their intended owner the black market couriers simply move on to other of their villainous chores.

Malcolm Flannelly

STR10	DEX10	INT14
CON11	APP12	POW11
SIZ13	SAN52	EDU19
HPs12		MPs11

Skills Cthulhu Mythos1%
Dodge53% Hide77%
Credit Rating70%
Spot Hidden53% Latin12%
Attacks Fist56%(1D3)

Safe from behind his front door, Malcolm Flannelly will not willingly entertain questions or accusations fired at him by the investigators. If some physical element is introduced to these interrogations, then Mr Flannelly quickly confesses to regular active involvement in ceremonies of the occult.

The discerning Mr Flannelly will have attempted to conceal his delivery before the investigators gained entry to his lounge. The keeper should make a **Conceal** roll to prevent the investigators from seeing him shove the package clumsily into a satchel, and hide it behind the cushions of the settee. If his roll was successful more threats of physical violence or a **Spot Hidden** (-20%) roll is required to uncover it.

Inside the package is one of the unusual bottles of wine presumably just taken from Dr Flannery's shop. But this is not the sole content of the satchel; what gives it its considerable weight is the presence of a large golden mask cast in the hideous and tentacled image of Cthulhu. Keepers may ask for **Cthulhu Mythos** rolls for the investigators to recognise the likeness of the Great Old One. As the mask is pulled free of the tight leather satchel,

an iron key and an envelope fall to the floor. The note in the envelope reads:

*All of the coven agreed that
Wednesday passed too quickly.
The shy is loaded, the mind made
up, and tonight HE takes life.
You will make yourself godlike in
restless tangents of flesh, and
suckle to your Lord and Master
thus...*

The latter passage is written in Latin and Malcolm Flannelly mumbles in explanation that it is what he was expected to chant at this evening's ceremony, and translates:

*It will be dark soon. So wake
and sputter back in life and rise to
tellurian hordes on all shores.
Nevermore formless, soundless,
intangible; bare thy deep, wordless
knowledge and see thy face in
years.*

When asked to explain the full significance of this verse and the golden mask, their prisoner explains that each of the coven adopts the mantle of ancient gods called 'The Great Old Ones' mentioned in certain forbidden tomes of magic. They enter into the spirit of it all about once every month—not so much 'when the stars are right' but when they each have a window in their schedules. As he previously revealed, they hold a ceremony this evening.

The investigators can bully the names of his accomplices but more importantly the location of tonight's venue—merely the address of another of the cultists—and that it is due to start imminently. The iron key fits the front door of the house belonging to one Oswald Edelson. It is he who is responsible for the acquisition of 'props' like the 'bottled octopus' and the golden masks; these are sent on to Flannelly and the others usually a few days once the arrangements for a ceremony have been agreed.

Just before they leave, if in any fit state, Mr Flannelly will beg the potentially daunting question of why the investigators 'can't just mind their own business, and leave him and his friends alone.'

My Goodness

It should be quite evident to the investigators that the 'coven' is no more than a rather naïve syndicate made up by at least five young men from the aristocracy—none of whom having any wholehearted belief in the power of their rituals or the entelechy of the Cthulhu Mythos. That is not to say their ceremonies are altogether meaningless, but are more likely seen by them as a bond of unity and friendship. Investigators may choose to approach the coven with particular caution if they think that the cultists have, perhaps unknowingly, tokens of genuine power.

Oswald Edelson is seen as the founder of the guileless cult; he lives with his aunt at the address given to the investigators by fellow cultist Malcolm Flannelly. The valuable golden masks and a rodent-nibbled copy of *De Vermis Mysteriis* were inherited from his estranged uncle two years past—Edelson knows not whether his uncle had ever practised or taken seriously the spells and ceremonies therein.

The iron key was meant for Flannelly so that he could let himself in discreetly. The key fits the lock to the side door of the two storey building, after several wooden steps under the ivy-ridden veranda. Three identical keys rest on a small table just through the door to the dining room. From the kitchen the investigators, with **Listen** rolls, will be able to hear mumbling voices coming from behind the narrow door to the basement stairs. Walking through the dining room and pantry, investigators will come to the kitchen, where stairs lead into the cloakroom in the basement.

The basement, its floor finished with smooth hydraulic cement, is divided in

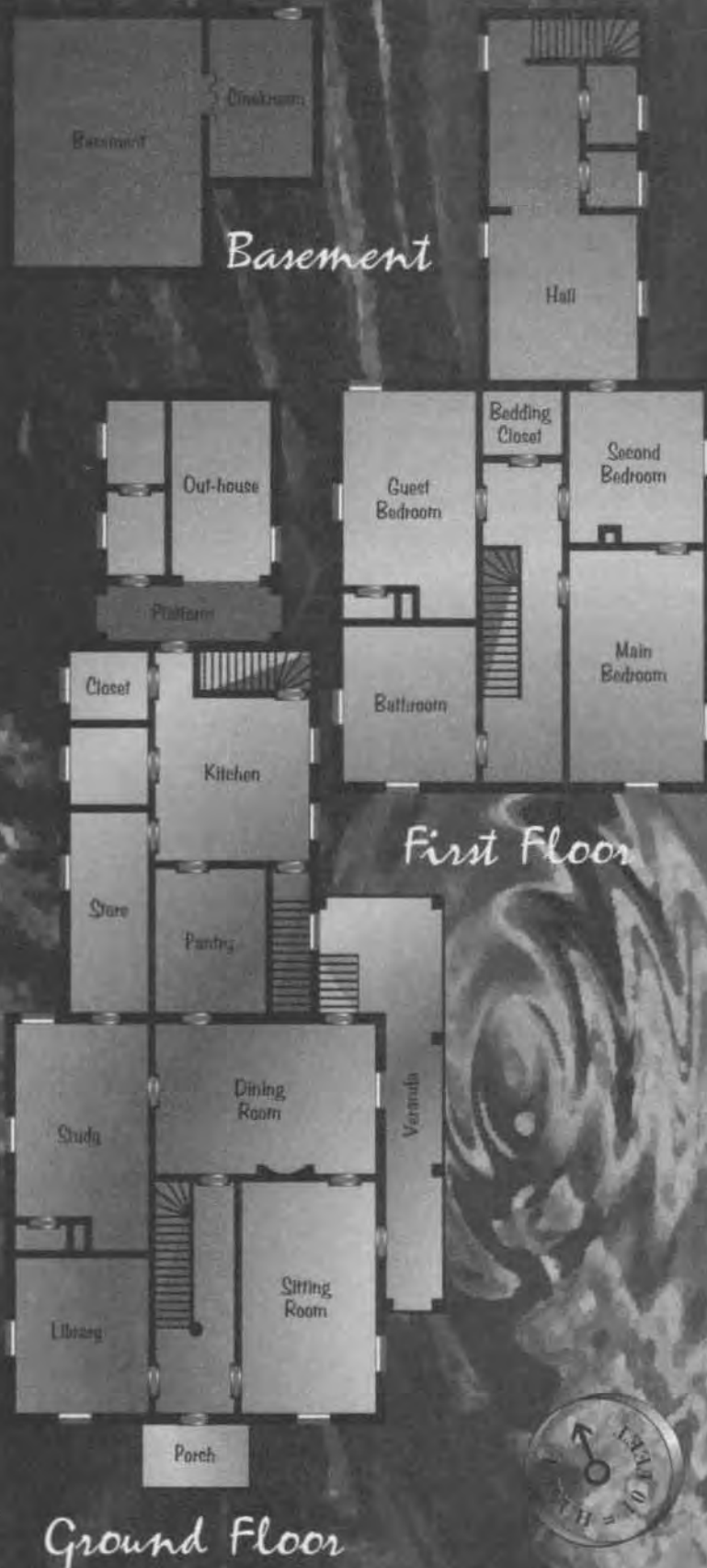
half. The first side appears to be used as a cloakroom; evening-wear is strewn over cane-backed chairs surrounding a circular 'pillars and plinth' dining table, a full five feet in diameter. Atop of this stand a normal-looking Bordeaux, four drained glasses, and a single carefully draped ceremonial robe.

A blanket curtain is pulled across a narrow doorless arch leading into the next room, where the sound of four men's voices can be discerned quite clearly within. Perhaps the best way to proceed is for an investigator to assume Flannelly's role as Cthulhu in this pantomime of a ceremony, by donning the mask and robes, and walk self-assuredly through the curtain and join in with the four cultists' embarrassing chants and awkward, freeform movements round the central brazier of fiery coals.



The rest of the investigators may choose to wait in the cloakroom or survey the rest of the house. There is nothing incriminating or of singular interest except that Oswald's bed-ridden aunt sleeps in the first bedroom on the upper floor. She will not wake easily, but if the investigators were to make an excessive amount of noise, the old lady would panic on catching sight of the prowlers and shout out for her nephew.

Back at the ceremony, the investigators may be having problems keeping up the facade. Although tethered with leather straps, an investigator must have



a minimum **STR** of 11 to properly sustain the weight of the golden mask. Keepers may call for occasional **STRx5** checks to prevent the proceedings coming to a precipitant conclusion with the investigator being forced to betray his true identity. If this happens, the masks fall away from the young men's faces to reveal expressions of embarrassment, surprise, defilement, and outrage.



But events might turn out to be much more cataclysmic. If the ceremony is left to run its course, each of the four, after another few minutes, produces a bottled octopod from beneath his robe and smashes it by casting it into the dying embers. They then all read a passage in broken Latin and remain still and silent for another few moments before casually removing their masks and make frivolous conversation, some of it directed at the disguised investigator—especially if he has not done as they have, and given his bottle to the fire. Inevitably the cultists slowly realise that the investigator is quite loath to unmask.

By their nonchalant behaviour, the cultists evidently expect nothing in return for their worship. If, however, the investigator *did* mix Flannely's bottle with the others, then after **1D6** minutes the pulverised remains amidst the broken glass begin to sputter, swell and quickly come to the boil.

The last bottle was the catalyst that spawned disaster, and all hell is let loose. From the tangled mucilage suddenly erupt thick, sinuous tentacles,

The Callists

STR	12	13	9	10
CON	11	12	13	14
SIZ	12	8	10	13
INT	15	11	13	16
POW	16	10	11	11
DEX	13	14	14	12
APP	11	13	9	12
EDU	16	18	17	15
SAN	79	49	54	53
HPs	12	10	12	14

*Skills Cihulhu Mythos 1% Dodge 53% Spot Hidden 53%
Hide 77% Jump 77% Credit Rating 70% Latin 12%
Attacks Fist 50% (1D3) Spells none properly*

showering the basement with sticky, black endskins. They coil blindly in spirals as the horror expands until, within seconds, the obese incarnation has sated the basement. In minutes it will go on to fill the entire house to capacity. Able-bodied persons may quickly leave the basement without obstruction, so long as they leave at the first sign of trouble.

This may result in a minor injury unless a successful **Jump** roll is made—**1D6** for first and **3D6** for second storey heroics.

Outside, the wooden and brick-work structure of the house is buckling under the heaving gelatinous tonnage. Eyes the size of saucers blink back at onlookers from many of the broken windows, almost testing an investigator's audacity to stand too close.

Keepers may decide the gruesome tenant requires another human soul before it relinquishes its occupancy and falls back from the windows, out of sight. Out of his mind, Oswald Edelson may shout after his doomed aunt and shimmy up the veranda for her bedroom window, only to be lashed in the grip of spouting tentacles and thrown to his death into the waiting maws of the upper-story window. ●



HORSE **H**OLE

STR 55 DEX 18 INT 13
CON 65 SIZ 120 POW 11
HPs 80 MPs 11
SAN Loss 1D6/1D20

*Attacks Tentacle 35%
Swallow 75% Crush 100%
(the thing's tentacles
inflict a negligible amount
of damage, but the helpless
victim is firmly grappled and
in the proceeding round
either swallowed or crushed
to death)*

Anyone currently searching any other room of the house are allowed a **Listen** roll to avoid being literally run into a brick wall. If this roll is missed, he or she must fall back on **Dodge** rolls. There are only seconds for the investigators to flee the house by leaping out of the nearest window.



GhostNet

From *Travelling Without Moving—the unfinished essays of Professor BW Reynolds*

those devilish things Mother Nature should have had banished at the time of Julius Caesar; evil is a very real thing not just the absence of good. At the water's edge the mouth of the Carp broke the still; red eyes misbehaving, shining under the stars as Elishiah's father fell to his knees watching the ripples let out across the milky pool.

Indigenous to the small, family community, carried through to adolescence, this and similar misstatement are a burden that all too often survive and prosper in dreams or visions and cloud development. This can both build character and crush the spirit. In the outcome of severe retentiveness (not to be confused with the beauty of simple innocence) it is commonplace to feel very alone, nursing personal demons, while overwhelmed with unshared and almost tangible fear. We deal with this in a unique but often ineffectual approach depending how the fear manifests itself.

Young Elishiah, at fifteen years, believed witches guarded his neighbour's raspberry bushes from greedy young boys.

Much of the time the response is one of rebelliousness, and the mood swings between aggression and submissive behaviour, easily misdiagnosed as chemical imbalance. One should not be so quick to condone this bad apple consensus; the matter simply will not wear an extremist standpoint; unable to express themselves some of these youngsters are so scared to even close their eyes at night and are even, returning back to our case study, sleeping on the left side after reading somewhere that it could wear the heart out faster.

This necessitates preemptive attention from an early age, or people can become gullible and find it difficult to question, or even recognise the need to question. Adopting this retentive condition of blind concurrence at face value, whether spoiled through befuddlement and naivety or stumped with a schoolteacher mentality, one is not open to change, and is putty in the hands of the aggressor.

When there are the allegories we later find to be very real. My father filled my head with goblins beyond even the imaginings of an empty mind, terrible things poised on doom in a realm out of view to us, in the seeming darkness of space.

Where flutters the Absolute, worming a thread through the dimensions in time, creating temporal/spatial realities, stands Daoloth, the render of the veils, evolving into a formless self, the very shape of change.

Thriving onward through the spheres, forced to adapt and keep ahead of the listless and moping pull of stagnation, the Outer God shifts its restless form, as the permutations of growth and decay rise and bubble to the surface. Of these eruptions are dead threads of skin that Daoloth sheds in darting, furtive movements; the secreted film of white mucus is greedily snatched up to make a supper of change, eaten out of cavities and scabs, for the resident parasites.

That not quickly guzzled by the hungry minions falls away from the body to drift, ghostlike, furled out across miles of silent space, enveloping anything in the blind path; dragging with them tons of debris, and killing all they touch. In huge gulps, millions of species fall victim as planets, and creatures the size of planets, are entangled and ripped to pieces. And insatiably but without purpose the nets are driven on and on, shredding all before them.

(127)

The publishers of the long-winded *Travelling Without Moving—the unfinished essays of Professor BW Reynolds, compiled with denotation by Caroline Reynolds* are very happy, if not a little unprofessional, in giving the investigators personal details about their authors over the telephone.

To gain greater insight into the meaning of the book's Mythos connotation, the investigators will have to take a train, then hire a car to reach the Reynolds' bucolic address. After the

tiresome drive a modest-sized house and outbuilding come into the barren view; grounded between them a light plane sits on a makeshift airstrip.

Ms Reynolds is beneath the aircraft making minor repairs and is likely to catch the investigators off their guards as she slides from under to ask of them their business. There is little need for clandestine behaviour by either party; she concedes her part in the production of the admittedly patchy manuscript a couple of years back, and is

even compelled to follow through by explaining how it was feared putting her father's work through a ghost author would gloss over the crux of many of his related theories and attitudes in that sociological and astrological study.

From a small child Caroline has worked close to her father; everything she knows about science has been learned assisting and observing; she was therefore the best qualified to take on the editorial duties for the book. Professor Reynolds lost the use of his faculties five years past, at the ripe old age of eighty five, before the completion of his manuscript. Many of his secrets were lost.

Caroline Reynolds

STR11	DEX13	INT14
CON12	APP15	POW11
SIZ12	SAN37	EDU10
HPs12		MPs11

Skills Pilot Aircraft38%
 Biology50% Anthropology45%
 Astronomy70% First Aid54%
 Mech. Repair40% Physics50%
 Dodge48% Psychology56%
 Cthulhu Mythos21%
 Attacks Fist25%(1D3)
 Pocket knife20%(1D3+1)

Caroline will share with inquisitive investigators her sincere belief that their world is but hours away from destruction by the meteoric organism hauled blindly at us from across the universe, as implied in a the latter passages of the marvellous reference opposite.

If the investigators want proof to substantiate this uncanny declaration they will be frogmarched through to the study of the house; a large room scattered ankle deep with copious leaves of the finest foolscap comprising scribbled notes and doodles, charts, and plot diagrams. What were obviously once the working chambers of Caroline's father, the Professor, are in so much disarray there is little wonder his recent and only publication read like so much piecemeal.

An **Astronomy** or **Idea** roll determines it would take weeks and



months to catalogue and decipher the papers—and Ms Reynolds wants to leave before the day is out. She has been able to plot and calculate the meteor's point of impact down to the accuracy of the nearest hour and five mile radius, with use of her father's specially customised and calibrated telescopic equipment. Looking through the lens, the investigators can catch sight of a fuzzy image up in the heavens making a collision course for this planet.

While by no means deprived of her wits, Caroline Reynolds *did* commit euthanasia by poisoning her father just hours before the investigators arrived, thinking to save him from the realisation of his life's consternation. The body remains slurred across the kitchen table with a chequered hand towel draped over it. Even this late in the day she will most likely offer the rather ambiguous explanation: *'he died only this morning.'*

Wearing a thick pullover, Ms Reynolds finishes her final checks on the four seater and starts the engine of the aircraft to set off for the *'centre of the eruption'*, before she is *'swept away with the whitecap'*. If the investigators wish they may join her, but will be unable to verbally dissuade her way; Caroline has seen her father ridiculed for his beliefs so often in the past, and feels now to bring this foregone business to light would only waste everybody's precious time.

Admittedly not the best of pilots, Ms Reynolds, over the last several months has, regardless, made many trial flights out to the supposed impact area, a journey of two hours over a rocky desert where the craggy

mountaintops meet the sea. Circling round to spot the best patch of flat ground where they might put down; the plane is abruptly hit by an unseen force and sent plummeting down for the rocks. Skilled pilots may take the console and pull the aircraft level, with a **Pilot Aircraft** roll, so preventing any casualties; otherwise, each passenger will suffer **1D6** damage in the crash.

The Reynolds' prophecy was accurate in every regard except its magnitude. The investigators can think themselves lucky the meteoric waste did nothing more than clip their aircraft on its decent. Climbing free of the plane and looking down over the cliff-top, they will see that steam is rising up from the shallow waters around a smouldering mound of sludge, a hundred feet across. To those of a nautical persuasion the beached mass brings to mind the wriggling, half-alive debris of a trawler's drift-net.

Seawater soon has a visibly adverse affect on the burnt and rotting filth; bubbling and fizzing, it dissolves quickly causing a slick of dark water. When the festering muck has wasted away to half its original size a revolting beast bursts out from within, squealing as it struggles to fight itself loose of the gelatinous cocoon. In outright agony from the bite of the saltwater the ten feet of menace crawls out from the slime and muck, and begins to scale the rocks. A sable layer of drooping spines stand on end as it slips free from the water. A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll will recognise this as a Parasite of Daoloth. As it nears the investigators they hear a rasping hiss as it congests jelly that leaks out from splits and cracks in a shell-like abdomen. Call for **SAN** rolls; failure results in a **1D6** deduction. *

Parasite of Daoloth

STR23	DEX18	INT9
CON15	SIZ24	POW9
Armor6pt shell		MPs11
HPs24(9)		Move8

Attacks Spiny Claw
 35%(1D10+1D6 poison)



PAINTED IN A CORNER

Pages from 'Still Signs of Life' by Edward R Joplin

Christian emperors and many iconoclasts like Pope Gregory were feverishly concerned that a painted work was the conduit of insubordination and an improper influence on the uneducated. The concern was that the dilettante would not grasp the underlying ambiguity of the many sensitive elements that are sometimes found within a work of art. It was feared that the layman's alleged inability to differentiate between an image at face value and what it represents would lead many viewers to be enamoured by the images, and worship them superstitiously, as if they contained a latent magic. It was not until the year 843 that imagery was accepted for use within a religious sanctum by the Council of Constantinople.

Frivolous warlocks such as Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock turned to Shinto and Zen Buddhism and found ways of giving color and shape an intense meaning with a hypnotic effect; wheels of vigour, delivering their creations life and depth to open doors into other worlds that can award them a deeper understanding. They were wholly aware of the principle formulae of creation; both the acceptance of chaos and a focus on the mightiest elements. I profess their kind to have been solely irresponsible.

Kandinsky's 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' speaks of a great responsibility the artist should accept due to the persuasion from personified bombastic emotions:

'His actions, thoughts and feelings, constitute the spiritual atmosphere, in such a way that they purify or infect the spiritual air; and these actions and thoughts and feelings are the material for his creations, which likewise play a part in constituting the spiritual atmosphere.'

xii

Whilst sifting through the occult listings of the town library, the investigators chance upon these aberrant couple of pages in a fifteen-year-old publication, *Still Signs of Life*, by Edward R Joplin. The volume in its entirety contains no spells, but readers benefit from a +3% **Cthulhu Mythos** and suffer a 1D3 SAN loss.

The book is published through a company in the city by the name of Faithfully-Ross. The investigators will learn that the volume has been out of print for some time. Like many of the manuscripts they accept, the nature of the text is of minor interest,

and no more than a hundred copies were ever produced. A **Fast Talk** roll earns them the address of the insightful author.

Like nearly all the sizable properties off the provincial roads, the Joplin address is walled around and approximately two acres in size. From outside it would appear the estate is entirely wooded, as much of the leafy growth can be seen topping the wall from all sides. An untidy earthen driveway leads through wrought iron gates and under a shadowy tunnel of overhanging branches into the heart of the grounds.

With the Renaissance came more change and the cultivation of classical aspirations. Archaeology had excavated Rome and classical works of art were discovered that, thankfully, led artists away from the devouring, barbaric stimulus of spiritualism and the occult. And with little chance for a revival, as in the unfolding centuries, protests from the Reformers brought on a change in the delivery of Christian messages. Backed by Henry VIII, the written word was extended as being a 'safer' medium; a decision which unquestionably lowered the quality of art in Britain, leaving superior work being attainable only as a luxury for the rich and noble.

I have not come upon a unique element to any composition that will satisfy earthly parameters, preconceived or otherwise. The artist can merely strive for the nature of his creation to be unpaired. However, if we add an extrinsic or alien element, then there is the passive ingredient of genius to make up a chamber for magicks. Masters, including Joseph Beuys, deemed themselves to be alchemists, witch-doctors and shamans working with such 'symbolic materials'. My only explanation for these boasts and their undoubted magisterial achievements is that they have, at sometime, run naked through the burning galleries of Fomalhaut just to glimpse the indescribable, for such an inspiration. I have done just this, as you may presume, all to meagre avail. I can surmise that I lacked the yearning to understand that which I desired; one could only, instead, marvel and cower in a single glance at genius and the lunacy within.

Art in the blood is likely to take the strangest forms.

xiii

A peacock can be seen wandering the grounds, so the investigators will want to get out of the car and close the gates behind them, for, as any zoologist will appreciate, such birds cost a pretty fortune. The magnificent creature folds its plumage and darts amongst the trees as they drive on, the tree branches scraping on either side of their vehicle's paint-work.

An impressive two-floor building comes into view as they break through the woods. A small clearing of long, tangled grass, surrounds the house, separating the building and the trees.

Before the investigators can bring the car to a stop, something huge and black ploughs into the side of the vehicle, rolling it over into a plot of apple trees. Fruit rains down and bounces off the fractured body of the vehicle as the investigators struggle to free themselves from the overturned car. Each suffers **1D6** points of damage for being tossed about inside the vehicle: a successful **DEXx5** roll halves this damage.

Call for **Idea** rolls: those with successes are overwhelmed with the sense of something altogether menacing out in the woods. Any who

make serious effort to venture back through the foliage will be hit from all sides by many beastly, lashing tentacles, as if the trees have taken on wicked and resilient life. The reckless investigator loses **4D6** hit points (a successful **Dodge** roll halves his injuries) and—if still alive—drags himself back into the clearing before suffering yet another assault.

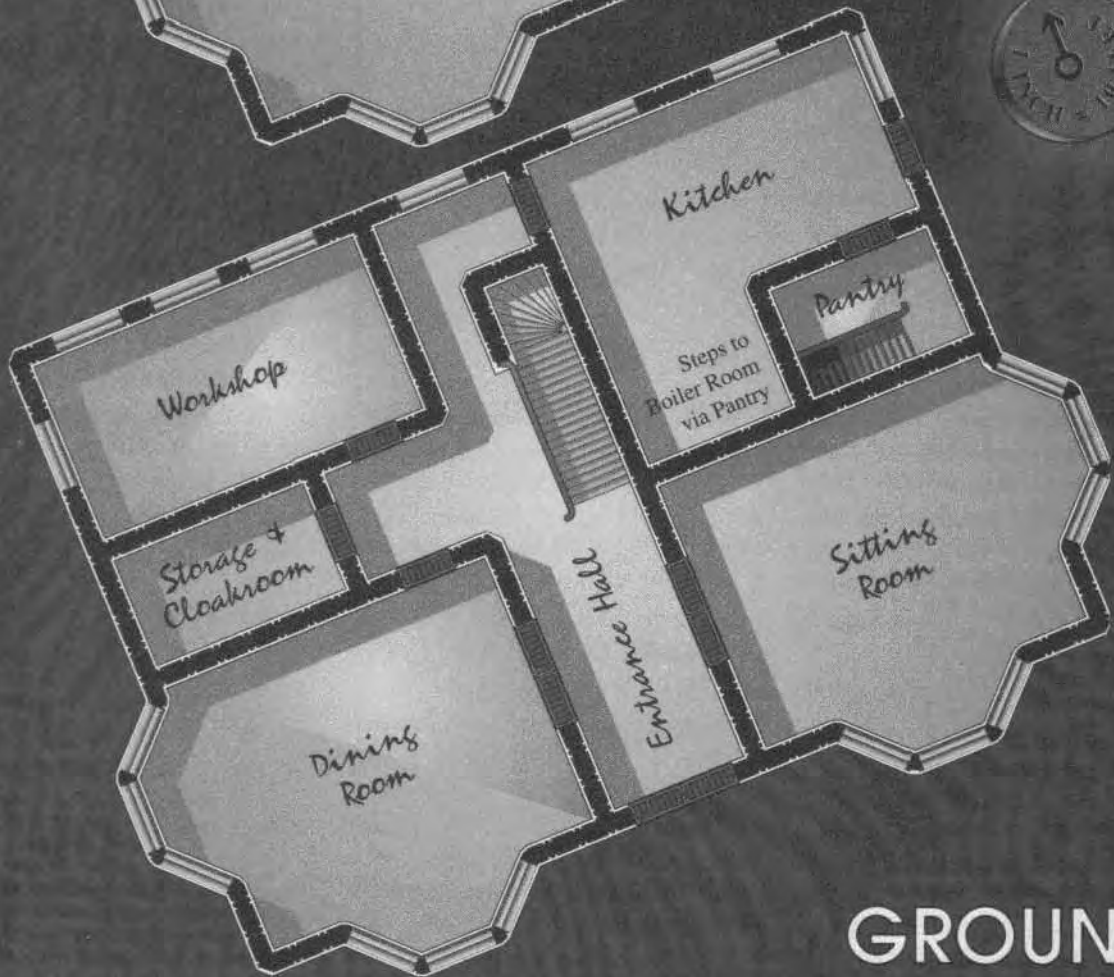
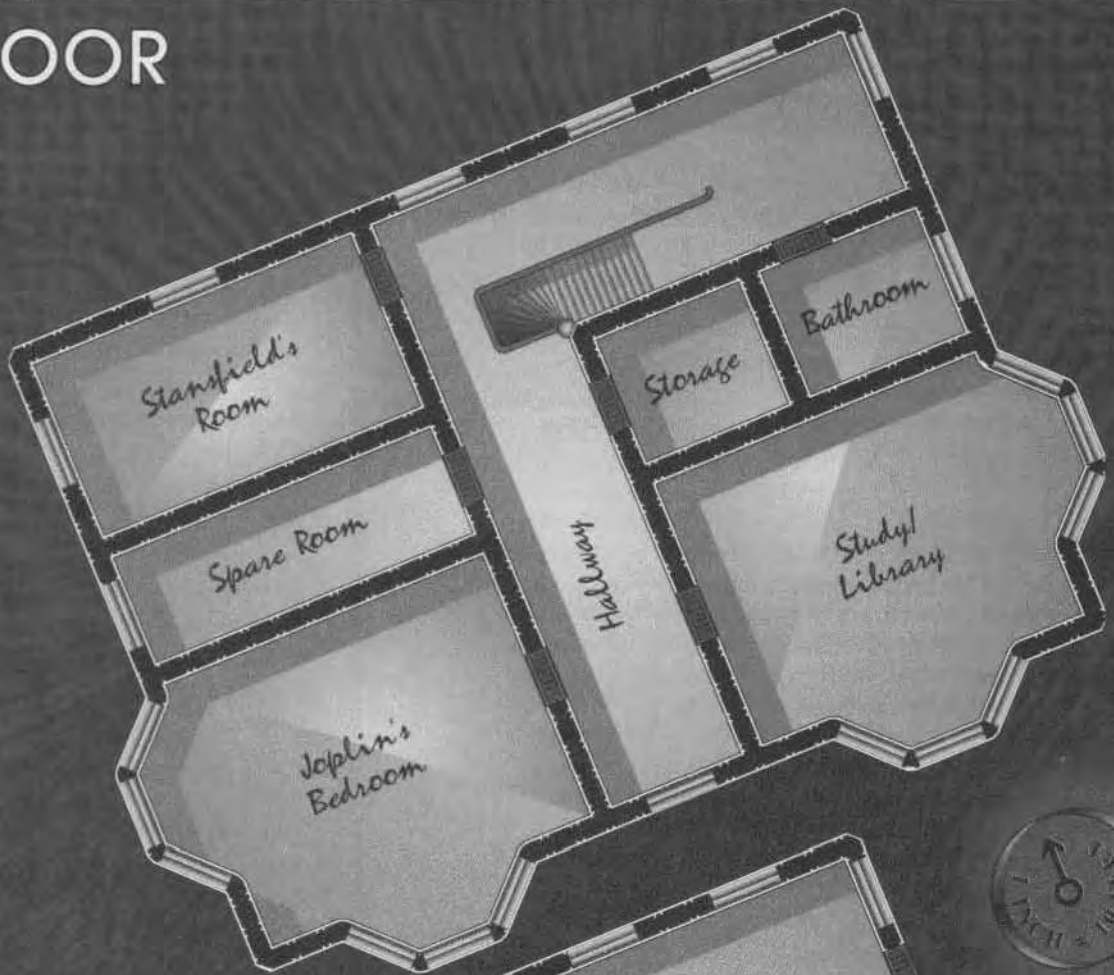
The dead body of a man sprawls in the tall grass at the foot of the building. He is in his mid-fifties and well dressed. A bowler hat has left his head and rolled a few yards amongst a basket of apples spilled up against the side of the house. The investigators can suppose him to have been carrying the apples to the house and struck with a fatal blow from behind by whatever collided with their car.

At the first sign of trouble, seasoned investigators will have been knocking for dear life at the door of the house. They get no immediate response, but there eventually comes the muffled voice of an old man from behind the latched and bolted door. They will need some very coercive dialogue and a successful **Fast Talk** roll before they are permitted into the seeming safety of the house. If any of the investigators openly think to address the old man by name, Edward Joplin, he or she adds a **+30%** to the chance for persuasion. It is quite likely that at least one of the investigators will convince Joplin to finally open up. There is a long pause while he struggles with the door.

If the investigators fail or make no effort to win Joplin over, forcing their way into the building is going to be extremely difficult. Inside, there is furniture up against the entries, and all the windows have heavy shutters with a resistance value of **45**, almost impenetrable to humankind.

On opening up, Joplin shouts for the investigators to quickly collect as many of the dropped apples as they can carry, and bring them inside for him to eat. Edward Joplin looks

FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

Floor-Plan of the Joplin Residence

completely worn out. Once the investigators are inside, Joplin peers out, and wonders out loud that the peacock can wander the grounds unharmed or panicked. He then slams the door tight and struggles to put a bookcase back up against the door.

Clutching a shotgun close to his chest, he peers out between the cracks in the window shutters, wandering from room to room in a military fashion, looking for movement in the darkness of the surrounding trees.

The investigators will, no doubt, require some explanation, but much of what is happening, and what has happened, is unclear to even Joplin himself.

DREAMS OF SHEEP

For three weeks, Joplin has been using a novel blend of opiate given to him by a dark, saturnine member of his club. Joplin is a professional writer turned fine-artist, but his declining fortunes has recently forced him to work for trashy publications of obscure fiction.

By his lofty standards, he has fallen onto hard times and so tried the drug in desperation to reclaim his artistic integrity. The drug was meant to stimulate his subconscious and subpoena tremendous ideas he could put into his work, allowing him to create works of art that might help mend his reputation and pay the bills.

He knows all too well the risks he is taking—having a substantial understanding and experience of the Mythos menace—but regardless, Joplin dilutes the very slightest dose of the magical potion in a glass of milk before retiring to his room each night. To his disappointment, he has not had the out-of-body experience he expected. If there was any recognisable symptoms, it seemed only to be a good night's sleep.

Joplin *did* make a strange discovery, but on the morning *after* first taking the drug. Joplin rose, typically late, to find a canvas in his

workshop sketched-out with the likeness of an extraordinary and forest-like fantasy. Sharing the house only with his servant, Stansfield, Joplin had to assume *he* was responsible for the creation. But, at the same time, he found it very out of character for Stansfield not to ask permission before dabbling around in the workshop.

Loath to admit it, Joplin recognised this painting to be of a much higher quality than he himself was capable. So, with his self-confidence bruised and his ego too fragile to accept his limitations, Joplin made no immediate steps to question his servant. Giving no thought to whether his use of the drug and this miraculous appearance on the canvas were in any way connected, Joplin continued to be perplexed and to abuse the drug.

Under this peculiar bewitchment, Joplin was driven to leave his bed and to work for hours into the night at the canvas in the workshop. He had no memory of these activities on waking each morning.

The days passed and the contents of the painting became more elaborate, taking form in directions Joplin viewed as unhealthy. Joplin feared that Stansfield had surreptitiously drawn some of the principle elements from the wealth of dark lore in his private library. He had dreaded to approach Stansfield and protest the transmission of such unsafe knowledge, when events ran out of his control.

Confused and tired, on the seventh day, it was practically lunchtime before Joplin was dressed and to his work. Stepping into his workshop, he surprised Stansfield at work, not at the easel, but sweeping the workshop floor of broken glass. Each of the tall windows was smashed and the contents of the workshop turned over or broken onto the bare slate floor. Stansfield informed Joplin that he was wakened prematurely that morning and had found the work-

shop in chaos; he had been tidying-up since. It was assumed by both men that this had been an aborted act of burglary; presumably the villains had lost their nerve and scurped. As they had taken nothing of value, Joplin saw no use in getting the police involved.

There were a couple of points that troubled Joplin. Firstly, the majority of the splintered glass was lying *outside* the windows, suggesting the workshop windows were not the point of entry, but the means of escape. Secondly, why break *all* the workshop windows?

Joplin noticed that (what he



thought had been) Stansfield's painting, was the only thing missing from the house. This realisation certainly did nothing for his self-esteem. The work had been of undeniable quality; but if the break-in had been engineered by a professional art thief, how had anyone possibly known of its existence? And it was inexplicable to Joplin that his servant said nothing to openly mourn the loss of his work.

The truth was that Joplin had inadvertently brought a small horde of Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath through his magical, drug-induced painting. After his seven nights of

'sleepworking', they broke into this world through the just-completed painting, out through the windows of the workshop, and into the surrounding trees of the estate.

Joplin and Stansfield have been held captive in the house for two weeks. Each time either of them left the building, the loathsome creatures would close in, forcing them back inside. Without food for the whole of the last week, Stansfield today made a sprint for the apple orchard—and was killed swiftly for his efforts.

The Dark Young are waiting in the trees for Joplin to finish a new piece of work, Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat of the Woods With a Thousand Young. Joplin has failed to notice this new painting taking shape in a dark corner of the workshop. If he continues at his current rate, there are now only another three nights before this work is complete and the Outer God breaks through to this world, and flattens the shell of a house, and this area for a quarter of a mile around.

With the arrival of the investigators at the house, it is unlikely Joplin will get to finish the painting. They will probably post a watch at nights and catch him sleepwalking from his room into the workshop, or working at the canvas. Joplin will, of course, be as surprised by his actions as the investigators.

Asking Joplin about his general involvement with the Cthulhu Mythos brings on, quite unexpectedly, a sober and philosophical disposition:

'Once experienced or forced to endure certain knowledge, one can see the world through different eyes; as if there is stripped away this blanket of an ignorant and conditioning society. But, as a concept, no matter how appalling it may seem, this ignorance is our 'magical shield' against some of the things that are out there. Do you ever ask yourselves 'why do these things keep happening to me?' I put it to you, that it is your deeper understanding of this

world's peril—the horrors beyond the eye—and you bring these things upon yourselves. For example, what led you here today?'

He will go on to explain how, in the daytime, he thumbs through his substantial collection of Mythos books, but not for recreation, rather in hope of finding some cantrap that might befuddle his ghastly keepers. The exact content of Joplin's Mythos library is left open to the keeper.

The Scapegoat

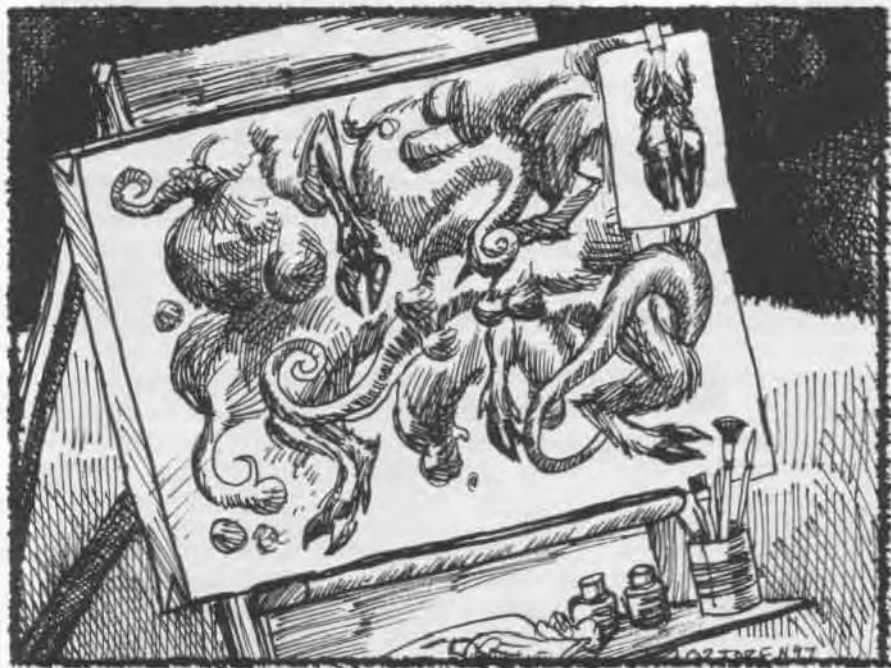
The investigators are as trapped as the old man; if they try to cut through the wood to reach the main road, they will be attacked and, no doubt, killed. Joplin and his now-deceased manservant being keen hunters, there is a sizable supply of guns and am-

munition mounted on walls and locked away inside cabinets. Again, keepers will have to decide how generous they are with the magnitude of this armoury.

There is also an impressive collection of malt whiskies in a display case that Joplin has given proud position in the sitting room. He will be loathed to waste them, but the investigators may recognise their potential as incendiary grenades. A burning rag in the top of a bottle has a chance to hit equal to an investigator's **Throw** score, dealing **2D6** points of damage for another **1D6** rounds thereafter. Keepers should encourage any similar schemes the investigators conceive, whether to destroy the Dark Young or to engineer some other means of escape. To help

<i>Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath</i>						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
<i>STR</i>	44	46	44	42	43	40
<i>CON</i>	16	17	13	14	16	16
<i>SIZ</i>	44	44	42	43	46	40
<i>INT</i>	15	12	13	16	14	15
<i>POW</i>	16	18	17	15	17	16
<i>DEX</i>	16	17	16	17	16	17
<i>Armor</i>						(see rulebook for details)
<i>HPs</i>	44	45	43	42	44	40
<i>Tentacle</i>	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
<i>Damage</i>						4D6+STR drain (see rulebook)
	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	#12
<i>STR</i>	39	47	44	43	45	41
<i>CON</i>	15	17	16	16	15	16
<i>SIZ</i>	44	43	44	45	46	47
<i>INT</i>	13	15	14	14	14	16
<i>POW</i>	16	17	18	17	16	17
<i>DEX</i>	17	16	15	16	18	16
<i>Armor</i>						(see rulebook for details)
<i>HPs</i>	41	45	44	44	45	44
<i>Tentacle</i>	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
<i>Damage</i>						4D6+STR drain (see rulebook)

*Skills Sneak60% Hide80% SAN Loss 1D20/1D3
Spells from an impressive reserve, they are only likely to need Create Gate to affect an escape*



put their ideas into practice, give the players a percentage chance of finding items they need.

The furnace will burn low in the next twenty-four hours. Already without food, the investigators will soon discover the house becoming cold and damp.

Investigators may notice that the Dark Young broke in through the outside entry of the boiler room a couple of days ago and Joplin was forced to place an Elder Sign over the door. Perhaps with the help and **POW** of the investigators, he can secure the whole building this way?

Examining the workshop, the investigators discover the partially completed painting of Shub-Niggurath. The paint is still very wet, suggesting it is fresh today. On the palette, the paints are an uncomfortable mix, as if the artist has tried to mix together both oil and water-based products.

After the painting is destroyed—and the drug taken from a very reluctant Joplin—he will stop his nocturnal wanderings and the Dark Young's patience will be all but exhausted. That next night, the investigators will hear the sound of branches scratching up against the window shutters. An investigator

daring enough to jar open a shuttered window will see, what looks like a ring of trees with a small column of fire rising and falling in the dead centre. A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll recognises these as Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath.

Later into the night, the twelve constituents from the Greater Servitor Race surround the building. Tentacles will burst through the shutters and doors of the ground floor, forcing anyone there up the stairs to the first floor. This will instantly separate the investigators from possessions left in the rooms below. Bells ring out around the house, as the tentacles worm through the lower rooms, agitating the service ropes, warning the investigators to the extent of their activity.

From here on, for every long night the old man is forced to spend in these conditions, Joplin must receive a successful **POWx3** roll or have his spirit finally crushed, and fall back on suicide as release. Once Joplin dies, the Dark Young have no reason to siege the building, now that any chance of receiving their mistress is ended. They will be seen to back away from the house, scuttle off into the woods, and perhaps off to the vastness of space. ●



Where Satan Fell

Chronica

Whole Field of Cattle Slaughtered by 'Act of God'

Reporter: Jim Bradshaw

Early this week, shortly after our last edition hit the stands, we had information come in of our local farmer, Patrick Billman, who, rising Thursday morning found his choice stock of Frisian cattle, dead.

Shaken, Billman, with help from three burly farm-hands, spent all that morning lugging the lifeless beasts onto the back of a truck. Catching wind of the incident, we arrived at the scene later that afternoon, as the four men struggled with the last carcass, amid a cloud of flies.

But tension was high, and Billman was quite unapproachable for questioning. For soon after the truck was ready to go, it was found to be so weighed down and encumbered that the wheels spun and became trapped in the mud of the water-logged field.

Stopping by at the farmhouse, a casual

labourer—earlier called in to help milk and look after the surviving livestock—helped us shed some light onto the grizzly episode. She spoke candidly of how she understood the fore-said cattle to have

especially in atrocious weather like this; unfortunately the single oak, around which they huddled that night, took a bolt of lightning and cooked them in a heap.

Billman's urgency to dispose of the animals was no more than a businesslike attempt to salvage something from the disaster. A spokesman from the abattoir told us of their policy only to accept cattle proven to be no



been fried by lightning amidst the heavy storms of Wednesday last. (Half of town will have bags under their eyes still, for being kept awake by the thunder that followed on through the night).

We understand it is not unusual for cattle to gather in shelter and share body heat,

older than twenty-four hours deceased. It has been difficult to determine whether the farmer's efforts were successful.

If his struggle did turn out to be in vein, the loss could well amount to anything as much as \$5,000. Our thoughts are right with you, Pat ♦

Newspaper Article

Asking around, anyone can direct the investigators to the Billman Farm. It surrounds a dense vein of forest that runs for eight miles up along the road into town. There is a need to leave the car and walk for about a mile of farmland. Once at the scene, nothing can be found except evidence of what was reported; the ground around the base of the burnt and blasted tree,

trampled flat, nothing more. It starts to rain while the investigators walk back along the border of the forest. Beneath a covering of since-brittle and skeletal leaf fall, the grounds all around—even now sprinkled with rainwater—are set like compact cement under the previous days and weeks of sunshine. The teasing drizzle beads on the drooping ferns, richly discharging their

sweet brackenseed into the freshening air. Brushing past, the bowed, leaven branches spill down showers of captured water.

The investigators should have been treading with no thought given to better caution nor stealth, until, that is, there comes a scent onto the gentle breeze that makes each of them, all except those with the strongest constitution, wince. Parting the sagging, spindly branches of blackberry bushes, the unfocused smell heightens and becomes reminiscent of rotting meat. Although the investigators have failed to find anything mysterious about the death of the cattle, they are about to encounter a new and different horror.

The first investigator to fail a **Luck** roll feels his foot fall heavily through a crust of earth. The sound of more than a thousand flies rise up from the hole, as the full length of the leg slides, slurping, into a pocket of sludge, to as far up as the thigh. **ID3** points of damage are sustained if he fails a **DEXx3** roll.

To defeat the momentous shock of this sudden fall requires a **CONx3** roll. Otherwise the investigator will be stunned, not so much from the pain, but more dumbfounded by the brevity of the assault. In a vapid stupor, he can do little more than limply swat into the black and foul air at bugs that fly blindly everywhere.

Sooner or later his head stops swimming and his senses focus. Lifting himself up onto an elbow and looking down to where his leg has pieced the surface of the ground, in the darkness, the land looks to shimmer and move around the reeking cavity. As the numbness that affected his mind leaves his body, it is then that he will know a fresh horror. It is not a pain from the fall, for that will have quickly dulled. It is a grotesque sensation around the buried limb, as if it were surrounded with an unsettled jelly, moving and responding to the involuntary trembles and spasms of the leg muscles.

Panicking, the investigator can try and withdraw his leg urgently from the quivering ground, but the loathsome quagmire will just yank back at it, like an old man sucking on the bones of chicken.

The ground seems to have life; he can feel its creeping hunger between the meat of his leg and the fabric of his trouser. Its warm life continues to devour every nook and space inside the shoe, against the flesh of his foot, until soon the wriggling maul is between his toes.

With all his effort, and a **STRx2** roll, the investigator can wildly yank the leg free. The mighty retrieval sends him plunging back, prostrate, onto the leaven floor. When he or any other of the team allow themselves a tentative look down at the still-tingling and twitching limb, they are appalled. The trouser leg is covered and swollen fat with a thousand wriggling maggots. The unfortunate recipient of this ordeal needs to make a **SAN** roll or suffer a **1/ID6** loss.

If he misses this check and sustains a temporary **SAN** loss; swearing and through gritted teeth, the investigator will feel compelled and tear viciously to remove the infested clothing. He will then scamper aghast, faltering ungracefully once or twice onto his hands, to a wary distance from the seething puddle of ground. Practically naked, the investigator then thoroughly flogs his shoes, socks, and trousers against the trunk of a tree, and turn them through, to be wholly assured the clothes are free of every last creeping maggot.

An investigator affected thus must abandon all nauseous curiosity in the fetid pit. Shaken and confused—just wanting to be as far away from the reeking aberration as possible—he will turn and stride into the thick of the woods. He walks with a new caution, so to avoid more outlandish pitfalls, and partly due to the mild pain brought back by putting weight down onto his wounded leg. After the duration of dementia, the investigator can allow himself to stop off and catch his breath; feverishly scratching at his hair and scalp. Even with his thoughts equitably clear, the whole of the investigator's body will still be shaking involuntary in repercussion of the terrifying exposure. It will be difficult for him to think of what he has experienced as, in the least part, natural.

Returning back down the road, peering through the smudged glass of the car

window, the investigators can discern rushing past through the night, a sparkling wash of luminescence from what can only be the farmhouse. In front and to its side, is the bland silhouette of at least two hulking barns. Caged up in their lofts are thousands of lop-eared rabbits farmer Billman breeds for the table. Three parts of them are eventually packed off to France and the remainder sent out to local restaurants and butcher's shops.

If the investigators interview farmer Billman, he freely provides them with a rational explanation for what happened to them in the forest—in exchange for their reasons for trespassing over his land.

The mortality rate of his rabbits is very unstable, since the creatures are so prone to disease in close company. Once every few months, the tiny carcasses of waste have to be bagged and loaded onto a tractor and trailer, a couple of hundred at a time. Holes are drilled into the floor of the forest up near the top field, and the rabbits are dropped in, and left to rot. Billman is quite blasé about the matter, and certainly accepts no responsibility for any injuries incurred by an investigator.

Patrick Billman

STR16	DEX10	INT9
CON15	APP8	POW11
SIZ12	SAN55	EDU10
HPs14		MPs11

Skills Debate55% Listen70%
Track65% Drive Tractor80%

Attacks Fist65%(1D3+1d6)
Shotgun70%(1D6+2)

The farmer will try hard to impress his perspective on rural values if the investigators show signs of being sympathetic with him: *The wife, for example, doesn't like me trapping crows an' that. But to work the land—to put food on such as your table—I have to do somethin' to keep the pests and scavengers down. They're carrion, as simple as that; stealing from nests an' worse. If you'd seen a young lamb's eyes plucked out by those devils, as the poor bugger falls, unset, from its mother's womb; you'd know about cruelty.* ●

10

Mouthbreathers

THE ROUTE OF ALL Evil?

LANCASHIRE police are to make a comprehensive inquiry into the safety of many of our county's provincial 'highways'. This initiative follows last Tuesday's incident where Garstang man, Tom Collier, who, having lost control of his dairy truck along the Glasson Road—between Garstang and Rudheath—was hospitalised for three days.

Mr Collier swears the accident was through no fault of his own and the police have had no reason to distrust his vivid recounting of events: "I was making my milk run, headed for Lancaster just as normal—it must have been half past three, easy. Then all at once came these lights from off out in the distance. Still dark at that time, it spooks you for a little while, then you get to thinking of the other early morning traffic like the coal wagons and the bread vans.

"With roads like that, it's in the dark you can see the traffic coming best; but with Glasson Road being so twisted, its course makes the light of oncoming vehicles pale and strengthen in and out of view. It plays with your head, the pulsing headlights as they're obscured through the net of

tree branches and weaving seemingly without direction, rising and falling and dashing from left to right, as you negotiate every rise and ditch in the road ahead. You can usually give way or at least brake before they're on you—but not this time. And the last thing I remember was fighting with the wheel."

There is kept a register of similar traffic incidents that have come about along the Lancashire back-roads during the last eighteen months, but it has to be said none of the inclusions are as intriguing as those that have taken place at night along the Glasson Road.

A school mistress claims that after her negotiating a notably tight bend she was forced to ditch her Buick due to cattle in the road. But this could not have been as all the livestock is collected in by dusk. Another

man reported to the police a rather extraordinary sighting of three or more 'glitter people' that forced him to slow as they crossed the road in a ponderous single file. There are a half dozen other entries in the police register concerning individuals who could or chose not to elaborate on the cause of their troubles. Most admitted to being 'a little tipsy' at the time, others said they were merely stunned by the headlights from approaching traffic.

Any volitional action on behalf of our authorities to make the roads less hazardous is, I'm sure, welcomed by all. Governmental experts forecast that motor traffic will more than double in the coming five years. Something needs surely be done to address the fact that this is too quickly becoming an affordable and sometimes indispensable commodity for today's modern, working man.

BAD CIRCULATION?

Get a piece of wood about three inches long and two inches wide. A piece of plywood will do, or a shingle. Near one end, drill a hole about a half-inch in diameter. Make a pad of wet cloth or absorbent cotton about five by ten inches. Gently wrap a live goldfish in this pad, so that only its tail sticks out. Put the fish on the board in such a position that the tail-fin is directly over the hole. Place a handkerchief over the upper part of the fish and fix the handkerchief to the board with thumbtacks. Place two other thumbtacks at the edges of the hole so that the edges of the tacks press on the two outer points of the fish's tail. As you examine the tail, wet it from time to time with a little water from your fingers.

You will see large blood vessels that run parallel to the tail. Note how these large vessels divide into smaller branches, and these branches into capillaries. If you follow the flow of blood back to the fish's heart the distance falls dramatically back past vessels

The above article is a recent clipping from a leading British newspaper and could come to the attention of the investigators whilst they are sorting through a reference library, or perhaps could be posted to them by a friend as 'the sort of thing that'd interest you.' It is not imperative they act on this immediately; whether it is after a week or a month, the events of this scenario will unfold at the investigators' direct intervention.

The offending road is a vicious stretch, the length of three miles, separating Rudheath, a small inland village, from the relatively sizable Lancashire town of Garstang. The roads being desolate and without satisfactory signposting, it is not the easiest of places for travellers to find. Before they can be sure they are at the site for concern, the day is long past its prime. There is no view for immediate study.

So poor are the conditions, that the investigators will have to do their best to avoid crushing underfoot a hatch of frogs, spawned from a roadside pond, as they hop across the road in their tens and dozens.

The Stork is Rudheath's only public house and the one good place for the investigators to stop over. The distance from their present position to the inn is deceptive; the roads are severely narrow and winding with passing places every half mile for traffic. Their road eventually runs through a cluster of small two storey cottages that make up the village of Rudheath, then dips right past and beyond the illuminated tavern.

The building is set beside a lake of still water. Following the road around, the investigators pass five small boats that are moored to a token jetty, and bob gently on the waters that lap up from beneath. Gordon Jewell, an accomplished cook and landlord of three years, along with the several or so local drinkers, will make their American guests very comfortable by accommodating any reasonable needs or requests.

By chatting with the countrymen, a number of topics present them-

selves for conversation: at times during the rainy seasons the inn has to be visited by a rowing boat as there is usually two weeks of flooding, so that the main road through to Garstang is quite impassible. As well as this, the investigators learn that the pub has been serving the community for seven hundred years, having been rebuilt on the foundations of the original building in 1652.

A number of trinkets and curiosities mounted up over the bar give a diary of the centuries the establishment has endured. Assembled are pots, brasses, well-polished tools and weapons, all worth a mint to a museum or a private collector.

GOD AND RUN

If the investigators ask around the bar for views on the treacherous segment of road towards Garstang, they will learn from Jewell that there are some with very firm ideas. The landlord will jump at the prospect of delighting his foreign guests with a telling of a legend that haunts the locality. Although it seems to address other issues at first, in the end it comes to the mystery of the road.

'In early centuries this place was a prevalent haunt for the undesirables of the time; murderers, thieves, and some religious coterie. A new priesthood, twelve warrior devotees of the Mohammedanism faith back 'fresh' from the Crusades, came to the village ridden with plague and not a word of English between them. The journey from the Middle East had punished the Saracen into fragile men; their bodies were bloated with sores and their voices hoarse from fever, leaving the once-knightly Order with neither the need nor want to move on into land.

'Two previously staunch young villagers fell sick and died in the first week of their coming. In the eyes of the boys' family, the cause of the untimely deaths was clear, and so, they roused their neighbour folk into a state of retribution and fearing for

their lives. Since their arrival, the pestilence had taken a firm hold on the Saracen troupe and pummelled them into spiritless husks with hardly the strength to draw a sword.

'Suffice to say, the dozen were easily overcome by the vengeful gathering, imprisoned in a wicker cage, and put to death by burning. Under the heat of the fires the holy men squealed like crabs in a pot as their tainted blood fizzled out of the flesh, and their bodies were soon roasted down to the armour and 'disjecta membra'.'

The telling is conspicuously tongue-in-cheek, it is clear that the landlord set out only to jeer with the locals over their superstitions. By standing on a stool Gordon Jewell is able to lift from the wall a broadsword and, after dusting it off with a towel, proffer the four feet of cold, nobbled steel for an investigator to handle. He briefly explains that the weapon is meant to have been taken from the leprous Saracen seven hundred years ago, before again picking up the tale:



'A handful of my regulars—mainly, it has to be said, from among the senior members of our community—believe the evil spirits released from this last pitiful harvest have found form in the bones of our friends, the priesthood, who have now come to life so to make their terrible revenge on us poor country folk by

sitting by the side of the road, frightening passing motorists.'

The bar fills with rumbustious approval. Even those who are the object of the landlord's cruel banter take it in good humour. An old man holds up and shakes a corn dolly from his table by the open fire at the far corner of the room and, with a sunken grin, yells out to the investigators that it was made by his wife with the last of this year's harvest, and that it protects him from the Devil. Disbelievingly, another man sniggers and explains that the old man's ancestors hanged a monkey in the seventeenth century thinking it to have been a Frenchman.

As the evening draws to an end, none of the drinkers can be tempted to elaborate or speculate on what has already been said. As the establishment gradually starts to empty and the local men make for their homes, a **Spot Hidden** roll made for an investigator who has not yet retired up to their rooms, has him or her glance out of the window and catch briefly the sight of several slouched shapes up on the dark horizon. Against a sky the colour of stained copper, the several sinister figures fall regularly onto their forearms, involuntary, as if from the burden of fatigue.

Jumping the Lights

After seeing the mysterious figures up on the hilltop and listening to a tale of devilry and disease, any investigator—on making a successful **Cthulhu Mythos** roll—will recall a passage from one of the great books, that he or she feels might in some way be relevant to this case.

The investigator will be able to explain that provocative antics on behalf of Father Dagon and Mother Hydra once instigated adverse repercussions that were felt by the supposedly tolerant Elder God, Nodens. In revenge, the Lord of the Great Abyss dispersed a venomous hail of plague, in a temper. It pelted the obese couple with such force that it left one side of our planet puckered



with craters that still to this day rest like abscesses festering in pockets below the seas and hundreds of feet beneath the surface of the Earth. This segment of lore has more weight than one might care to suppose. For numerous centuries, Mother Hydra has had many of her minions scattered wide, seeking and curing the malignant zones before they can flare up and seep dangerously into 'her' envi-

ronment. The majority of Mother Hydra's minions are of course the Deep Ones.

The legend of the Saracen priesthood, as understood by the villager people today, is by no means accurate. The truth, which has been lost through the centuries is that the group of twelve was ambushed by some of the villagers and then callously slaughtered merely on account of their illness.

This was hardly an isolated occurrence for that time, but perhaps the true events would today be less bleary, and the legend a tad more colourful, had the villagers of old realised the true horror beneath the foreigners' robes and armour.

With little bare flesh exposed to the angry mob their victims' appearance held all the outer symptoms of leprosy, where bloating occurs and silver scales grow in patches on the skin. However, the priests were not human, but rather Deep Ones disguised as lepers. This was part of a scheme devised by human cultists of Mother Hydra to diffuse the potential eruption of the feared space-born chemical virus known to exist under the ground nearby.

Had the Deep Ones not been disposed of by the villagers so consummately, they would have in any case failed their charge (the reasons for which are explained below). Mother Hydra has designed untold attempts at purging this particular area of land, but till this day her strategies have always met with failure.

Overfaced

Venturing out into the dark towards where the dim silhouettes marched out from sight, the investigators may not be surprised to find themselves headed toward the perilous road that attracted them to Rudheath to begin with.

Approached by car, the investigators will stop at hearing a yell as an elderly man staggers from out of the roadside copse and patters hard on the car windows for them to stop and open the door. Once inside, the grisly bearded man refuses to leave the safety of the vehicle and whispers breathlessly for them to flee, and escape the 'terrible frog men'.

The terrified gentleman is Jim Barber, a local farmer. He has recently had a good many of his animals go missing; whilst out looking to shoot foxes or poachers, he was met by a small group of prowling Deep Ones. With a **Spot Hidden** roll the

investigators can find his shotgun where it was dropped, lying in the wet grass, still-loaded, at the side of the road. They are less likely to recover the farmer's dog, as they will discover on parting the thicket.

As the investigators enter the clearing they perceive the Deep Ones, wheezing and squatted together like whopping toads. Under the light of the stars little of their scabrous hides are visible, as all three of the gilled horrors are clothed in tattered rusty links of chain mail armour draped wildly over their turgid shoulders.

Jim Barber

STR18	DEX11	INT13
CON17	APP11	POW10
SIZ15	SAN44	EDU19
HPs16		MPs10

Skills Dodge65%
Persuade62% Listen78%
Fast Talk35% First Aid64%
Hide66% Mechanical
Repair85% Medicine57%
Sneak35% Track75%
Swim75% Spot Hidden75%
Natural History67%
Drive Automobile85%

Attacks Fist72%(1D3+1D6)
Pocket Knife52%(1D4+1D6)
Shotgun62%(1D6+2)

With a single huge paw, one of the three is seen to scoop the farmer's whimpering spaniel up from the ground and cram the terrified animal greedily past its mouth of split and twisted fangs. With its forearms pushing away from its fishlike face, the Deep One scrapes the dangling leash from in between its teeth and peels back, in fleshy rolls, the extraneous fur from the dog.

The skinned carcass is then crushed by the monster's thick, black tongue to break the prey down into manageable parts against the roof of its mouth. The Deep One then swallows in gulping spasms, with its eyeballs drawn in to the roof of its gaping mouth to push the food easily down the gullet.

The others slouch close to the first, in anticipation of a leftover morsel. If surprised the Deep Ones are likely to retreat into the marshland. If pursued, after several yards the creatures will stop at the brim of a deep cleft in the mire and assume a defensive stance, inflating themselves with air, so as to increase their apparent size, whilst making butting movements with their heads. The heels come together, the legs bow, and the creatures seem to tremble uncontrollably prior to their attack. Use the stats on the next page.

If the investigators try to seize one or more of the Deep Ones they will give out a release cry—useful, had there been others to alert.

GONE TO GROUND

The Deep Ones can not put up much of fight as they have been out of the ocean for some time and long mostly for death. This is a fresh group again bound by Mother Hydra to dig out and rid Rudheath of its archaic plague; but unexpected difficulties have been encountered even before hitting the underground malignance. Unaccustomed to a fresh water environment, the creatures' skin first became acrid and their general health fell into a very poor way.

After several weeks in this unfamiliar climate they have entered into a dramatic state of metamorphosis, by which half of the band has already perished. Those that are managing to slowly adapt are certainly still in no condition to cast a spell and call for assistance.

The armour they wear was found whilst digging for the disease. Buried away from the village hundreds of years ago, the armour is all that remains of their twelfth century predecessors. In their fragile state it gives them protection from the elements and the irritated areas of their exposed flesh.

During metamorphosis, the Deep Ones are weak, particularly bad tempered, and in a lot of pain, but also sexually fervent. This allows them all

the energy needed to hunt and forage. The listless survived first by eating algae; but once out of the change, the new strain took moving food, utilizing an excellent newfound sense of direction. Usually more active at night and in stormy weather, they have been feeding off duck, heron, swan, and many land mammals.

A hole in the ground marks the entrance to an underground cavern that the Deep Ones have as their lair. They only need to venture out of the cavern in daytime, to bask in the sun, which increases their vitality and assuages the now sickly golden yellow of their skin. A **Spot Hidden** roll in this area will turn up unctuous rags of slough, shedded by Deep Ones, and rubbed off against the rugged bark of a tree.

With a **Geology** roll an investigator is able to ascertain, just by examining the entrance to the cave, that it has been formed from an enormous organic substance carbonising from decay, and leaving an imprint of the body behind. This, backed up with a

Cthulhu Mythos roll, suggests the entire cavern is one gigantic fossil of a fourth instar Chthonian. The giant worm was instrumental in another erstwhile failure to cure the underground disease; the Chthonian was overwhelmed by its potency and burrowed away, up towards the surface, in the mad throes of death.

Climbing down twenty or thirty feet, the cavern is dark and, in parts, flooded ankle deep; its curvilinear walls are moist to the touch, and also rather unstable. Earth lies in heaps where the sodden tunnel has come plunging down, marking the grave of many a Deep One. As well as the convenience of being directly over the pocket of disease, the cavern offers the frail creatures the now necessary damp and sheltered conditions for their survival.

Every half hour the investigators spend in the cavern, is spent in danger of losing their lives under a mass of collapsing sludge. The investigators can avoid this **2D10-2** of damage with **Luck** and **Dodge** rolls.

Nine Deep Ones, not yet through their metamorphosis, and in various states of health, sleep at nighttime in the cavern under pools of mud. More than anything, the creatures will be distressed by the beam from a high intensity flashlight. As the investigators near, some will rise from the mud and try to edge timidly past. If this is not made possible, and they are forced back into the dark recesses, they will be heard scampering on ahead, where the tunnel spirals round, gradually narrows, and ends half as wide.

Deep Ones			
	#1	#2	#3
STR	9	11	10
CON	9	7	9
SIZ	14	15	15
INT	15	12	13
POW	8	8	7
DEX	11	11	9
Armor	2	2	2
HPs	8	8	9
MPs	0	0	0
SAN Loss 1D6+2			
Skills Dodge 35%			
Swim 25% Climb 33%			
Attacks Claw 72% (1D6)			



Cavern Formed from a Chthonian's Fossilized Remains

At this central point, a ten foot diameter hole has been dug out of the floor by the Deep Ones; this is the extent of their aborted efforts to burrow out the star-spawned disease. The chasm's fifty-foot depth is concealed as it has filled with water, in which, the broken body of a Deep One floats face down. In a desperate measure to stay alive, others have experimented with cannibalism and taken raw bites out of their dead.

The virus remains another hundred feet beneath the earth, so its threat is unlikely to surface. If the investigators feel the Deep Ones represent a threat, an **Idea** roll has them reason that their skin must now be permeable to water. Therefore, they may readily be disposed if a soluble toxic substance is introduced into their water supply. ●



HORROR MAN

eggs and young that the hundreds of bass that then dropped sharply.

Horror of Man in Mindless Assault

Thirty-year-old bank clerk Anthony Coburn is recovering in a private ward at the Caspan Street Hospital today, after a senseless, unprovoked and potentially lethal attack on his person.

While Mr Coburn slept peacefully with his wife, an assailant broke in through the bedroom window of his fourth-floor apartment, in the early hours of the morning. The intruder is then known to have taken a fistful of Coburn's hair, dragged him dumbstruck across the room, from the arms of his terrified wife and into the bathroom.

Over the pleading screams of Mrs Coburn, the preposterous assault continued with the silent interloper tumbling the bath-taps, then waiting with sickening composure for the bathtub to fill. The distraught woman lost consciousness in the long minutes the now unconscious body of her husband was held like a limp carcass of game in the ragging jaws of a dog.

Fortunately for the Coburn family, this reporter—only recently a resident to the O'Reilly building—was returning home from a late night assignment. On hearing her wailing carry on down through the corridors and die into subdued sobbing, I hurried better up the staircase to investigate.

Shoulder-charging the door to the Coburn apartment—although there was only the moonlight to see by—I saw straight through to the open bathroom. I was startled to witness a tall, gaunt man in a long, dark coat effortlessly holding the convulsing body of a man I now know to have been Anthony Co-

burn, under the water of the bathtub. In the other hand he held an instrument, not dissimilar to an elaborate pocket-watch, up to the light. His analysis of the device was so intense that even my dramatic entrance did nothing to unhinge his calm. The fiend's arrogance was impenetrable.

Recoiling blindly to the scene with dismay, I took grip of my camera, still idly slung over my shoulder from that night's photo-shoot, and dazzled him with my flashgun, causing the brute to stop whatever he was doing, and drop his victim.

Although the maniac's features were mostly obscured beneath a wide-brimmed hat, as he ran past me rubbing his eyes, to escape into the open corridor, I made his face out to be long, drawn and creased like that of an old man. But contrary to this, his hair was thick and shoulder-length, and in addition, charged past me with all the virility of an athlete.

Seeing that Mrs Coburn was unharmed and moaning as she regained consciousness, I picked myself up from the floor and, wasting no time, pulled her husband's then lifeless body from out of the water and administered artificial respiration. To my relief, he was soon coughing the water out of lungs, and later whisked off to care.

Police are doing all they can, despite a lack of clues as to the assailant's identity or motive for the hideous crime. Residents of the neighbouring apartments have commented that the couple were often arguing into the late hours of the morning, and so, regrettably, the only thing they did to interfere was to hammer on the walls and shout for them to 'keep it down'.

We urge anyone who thinks they recognise the man in the nearby photograph to contact their nearest Police Station. Be warned; this man is dangerous, and should on no account be approached. More news on this exclusive, as it breaks.

Nick Merritt.



Newspaper Article

tries find the best pos to swa a st bac the sma fish spir how ever mal pric mov ful t any ang stic bac hav num of ene incl ing pike eels king fish and grel

F The flut mot is a long mer of the corr fish fam that live in the Ind and Oce It us its l thin sha that inn Pac ann give mac how

The article opposite is the leading story from the front page of an upstanding daily newspaper. If the investigators are going to act on the report, it will need to come to their attention the morning of its publication.

There are only a sparse number of workable leads with which the investigators might gain more insight into the bizarre incident.

No further facts can be earned, however, from disturbing Nick Merritt, author of the article, at his work in the Press Office. He gladly sees the investigators, but insists that he has recorded all the facts to the best of his ability, and has really nothing else to add on the matter.

He will be interested in buying, on behalf of the newspaper, any information the investigators might come up with on the hideous incident. But in view of the lack of prospective clues, he has no time or desire to get directly involved in any loose leads the investigators might present.

If the investigators choose to look over the scene of the crime, at the O'Reilly residential building, they find the door to the Coburn residence locked and boarded. Provided they show some discretion, getting inside should not present a problem. Within, the small four-roomed apartment is dark and sepulchral; the investigators may draw attention to themselves if they were to hit a light-switch or disturb any of the curtains for better light.

The window of the bedroom is boarded-up in the same arbitrary fashion as the front door. Removing the few knotted planks of wood reveals a perfect circle, four feet across, taken out of the glass with all the skill of a jewel thief. A **Spot Hidden** roll will discover the rim of the hole is sealed and smooth to the touch as if melted by some unimaginable device.

Beside the window ledge, outside, is a drainpipe which could quite easily be shimmed from the street by anyone of ordinary agility. The water in the bathtub is discoloured. On the tainted iron taps are traces of clotted blood and hair that betray the likelihood of Coburn smashing his scalp as he was recently forced beneath the water. Any of the neighbours can tell the investigators that Mrs Coburn has gone away for a few days to stay with her sister in New York city.

An interview with Anthony Coburn at Caspan Street Hospital is quite worthwhile. But before they can interview him, the investigators will have to beat, bluff, or bribe their way past the single police officer guarding the door to the victim's private room.

Once inside, with the door closed behind them, the investigators find the poor man the butt of a subsequent attack from his terrible assailant. Apart from a blooded nose and a frightful expression, Coburn appears, this time, unharmed. The room's single window is melted in exactly the same way as that in Coburn's apartment. It will take a successful **Psychoanalysis** roll to calm the man down long enough for him to give an intelligible account and the humiliating details of this second prescription of torture.

Still holding the bedclothes up to his face with a white-knuckled grip, in hoarse whispers he will tell of how the attacker must have silently entered through the window; on waking, the gaunt face of the 'horror man' was peering closely over and examining him. A further **Oratory** roll is required to assure Coburn that it is in his

best interests to disclose the details of how he was stripped of his honours.

Without shame, the fiend inserted probing wires and rods he pulled from his deep coat pockets, into all the orifices of Coburn's body. Although there is little evidence left behind to support this claim, logic should suggest that Coburn would not falsely boast of such an indignity.

In those few long minutes, the villain continually consulted a strange, telescopic device that Coburn remembers was used the night before to examine the bath-water, which he was then bludgeoned senseless beneath. Being too weak to struggle, Coburn speaks of his efforts at feigning unconsciousness through the whole ordeal, thinking it would be less painful that way. He was wrong. He can tell the investigators nothing more.

Further, Coburn has no notable enemies, and there is no other line of inquiry worthy of the investigators' perseverance. If they stay around long enough for the police to hear Coburn's discomfort, they will be asked a lot of stupid questions, but eventually turned loose. *



12

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Newspaper Article and its Continuation

Quarry worker decapitated by 'jaw crusher'

There has been yet another scandalous act of brutality by that evil devil whom the public, the press, and the police alike have dubbed 'Horror Man'.

This latest attack was as casual and preposterous as that before, only all the more tragic, for now someone has died at the cold hands of this madman.

Oliver Guest was yesterday murdered at Tegg's Quarry—his place of work—in the full light of day, in open ground, and with two dozen fellow labourers not fifty feet distant.

Business at the quarry is undertaken by a mostly British workforce; Briton Charles Damp, the Site-Foreman, is the lead witness:

"As we sat eating a packed lunch, me and some of the lads spotted this chap, no more than a pinprick up the dusty road, but surely headed our way. It's a hell of a trek off the bus route—we have special transport laid on for us, taking us back and to the city every day—so, anyway, I got into the works' truck, picked him up, and drove back up to the site.

"I can't say he was much grateful; he said nothing for my troubles, and just got out of the truck and walked over to our office cabins. I'd have said something there and then, but figured he was most likely someone important, and I didn't much welcome the idea of charges of insubordination brought against me, so I buttoned my lip.

"We got back to work, fifteen or twenty minutes later, to find poor Ollie in the claw of the Stone Shifter and dangling headfirst in the vice of our Jaw Crusher [a piece of machinery used to crush rock, pictured nearby] his head and ribcage crushed empty over the gravel. It



was a bloody mess—I'd like to know how this monster sleeps at night."

Guest was divorced, and is survived only by his infant daughter, Joanna, who is safely in the care of her grandparents, back in Liverpool, England.

Damp's quite comprehensive description of their ill-mannered visitor at the quarry did, of course, jell perfectly with that given to the police by Mr Coburn of his 'Horror Man'.

The quarry workers are contracted in six month periods, and with this particular shift only reaching these shores this week, the men can be excused for not being so mindful to our media alert surrounding the exposure of these recent criminal atrocities.

After the former attack on Mr Coburn, police from this and neighbouring States have come together and opened a special office of investigation to help find this criminal of singularly horrific proportions. The Special Intelligence

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

HORROR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Team (SIT) comprises 'the force's top, secret and crack operatives'.

Since there has been little joy in establishing the criminal's identity—despite a very striking and distinctive appearance—SIT have set about realising a motive. A spokesman told us earlier today:

"To start, monetary gain has to be ruled out completely, so, although there has been no intelligence of recent escapes from local prisons or sanitariums, an irrational psychotic disorder is favoured at the moment.

"Due to the delicate nature of our enquiries, I am not yet at liberty to divulge the facts around our exact activities, for operational security. Rest assured, we are acting on some very encouraging comeback from our mettlesome investigations."

As always, more news as it breaks.

To finish, many will be delighted to hear that Anthony Coburn is making a full recovery of his physical injuries, and is also receiving the best available support for the psychological violation. Mr Coburn has asked for this chance to offer his most sincere thanks to all who sent him messages of their concern. Nick Merritt.

This scenario should be run after first playing through the 'Horror Man' module; the nearby newspaper article needs to appear about a week after the satisfactory conclusion of that encounter.

The investigator's first port of call will most likely be Tegg's Quarry: with the isolated location of the quarry, the investigators will have to drive there, or engage a taxi. Assuming they

act immediately on seeing the morning newspaper, the investigators can be at the scene within twenty-four hours of the murder.

At the scene, there are no workers, and all is quiet and still. The quarry is a five-hundred-yard dip in the mountainscape with three buildings dead centre. The larger two are filled with tools, explosives, and all other digging equipment. Charles Damp can be found at a desk in the third, smaller building; the noise of a car will prompt him to step out of the office door and meet the investigators.

Tegg's Quarry is officially closed today, in a gesture of respect for the loss of a valued worker. The Project Manager is presently on her way over to England, with the unenviable task of consoling Guest's close friends and relatives. In her absence, Site-Foreman Damp has the lonely responsibility of seeing to the daily administrative formalities. He will not mind answering a few questions, but as well as keeping the office, there are other important duties that require his attention, so he asks if the investigators can follow him around as they talk.

To supplement his published account of events, on reflection Damp thinks it curious that Oliver Guest's murderer was able to flee the scene so promptly:

'Consider the sequestered position of the quarry—of any quarry, come to that—for more than half a mile around, the terrain is faceless and bland, offering not a nook nor a bump big enough to hide a man. That got me to thinking, driving in to work this morning: what if this Horror Man, as you call him, had simply hidden himself away, perhaps in one of the stores? No one had checked. Well, you should have seen me, first thing this morning, prowling the stores—a bloody big piece of four-by-six in both hands. All a lot of worry about nothing, of course.'

Yesterday, the police told Damp to expect further questions from some of their colleagues. Unless they point out otherwise, he will assume the investi-

gators are plain-clothes detectives. However, they will find Damp much more cooperative after announcing their true identity. This, or a successful **Fast Talk**, and he surrenders the following chatter:

'Guest worked all the hours God sent, for the love of his little girl and the purse of that ex-wife of his. But he has been known to overdo it, on occasion. Like the best of us, he was capable of becoming a little careless; dropping spanners, forgetting the odd security procedure, that sort of thing. Only, last week he almost lost an eye for not wearing safety goggles; he struck at the rock with his pick and got a face full of flint. I didn't mention this to the police because, if your lot are anything like ours, those bundlers would have this down as an accidental death. Believe me when I tell you—I saw the body—nobody gets quite that careless.'

Charles Damp		
STR16	DEX12	INT14
CON15	APP14	POW10
SIZ13	SAN50	EDU14
HPs14		MPs10
Skills Electrical Repair84%		
Operate Hvy Machinery79%		
First Aid60% Spot Hidden45%		
Listen73% Medicine60%		
Mechanical Repair89%		
Attacks Fist54%(1D3+1D6)		
Pickaxe79%(1D6+1D6+Impale)		

While they are talking this through, Damp will be in one of the stores, jacking a large crate onto a trolley and wheeling it outside. He then breaks the crate open with a crowbar and unpacks an assortment of machine parts, which he assembles with great skill into the company's recently patented apparatus, the Swing Saw; used to cut stone into slabs for the building industry.

After he is finished, Damp stands back from the Swing Saw with unashamed glee and asks the investigators to keep a safe distance as he makes necessary tests.

One pull of a motor-lever sends six spinning blades plunging down into a readied trolley of solid rock beneath the frame of the machine. Sparks fly through the dust and smoke, from the engine, and bounce off the gravel as the gyrating teeth cut steadily through the granite slab. Damp is more than pleased:

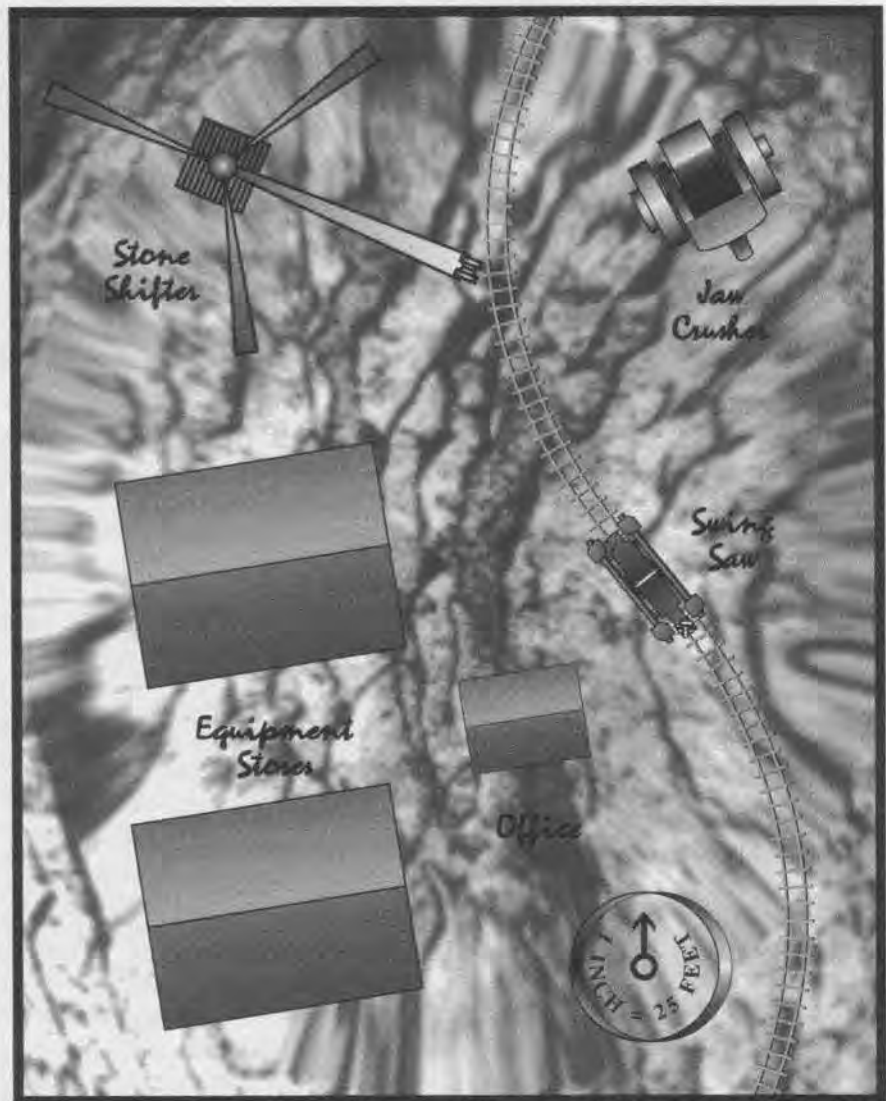
The Swing Saw cuts into stone several inches per hour, a lot faster than by hand. It's a very exciting and labour-saving addition to the industry. The built-in weights and gauges make for machinery of almost clinical precision, adjustable to the narrowest increment, to measure and compensate for the tensile density of different rock-types or any similar industrial target.'

If the interview is directed towards the machinery by which Guest was killed, Damp first walks them over to a tripod-like crane with a tall central mast and a vice-like claw, known in the industry as the Stone Shifter. The model at this quarry is comparatively small, with a wooden frame so it can be easily moved to wherever it is needed.

Pulling at a waxen sheet covering something the size of a small car, Damp then unveils the Jaw Crusher. This is a device developed to crush excess debris to custom-sized gravel; approximately five truckloads per day are collected by companies from across three States, and are used to lay paths and roads.

The investigators will find Damp more than capable of dealing out the pro-company spiel at the most alarming rate, and that should soon have them reaching for the car door:

The parts for all the machinery are imported from England, together with teams of men to assemble and calibrate. Some workers stay over as labourers or instructors, but most will leave for home just as soon as their project is up and working. Tegg's is by no means the largest of quarries; but is already as productive as any comparable operation three times its size.



Map of Tegg's Quarry

Our strength lies in our advanced machinery and innovative mining techniques. All of the precision machinery is designed and built in the northwest of England, where the company was founded near-on fifty years past.'

As the investigators are leaving Tegg's Quarry, a **Spot Hidden** or **Listen** roll has them notice a small pocket of dust and pebbles, disturbed at the very summit of the surrounding cliff-edge, showering down into the valley. Scrambling in all vigilance, up or around the ledge, the investigators will still find no suggestion of anything there suspicious.

IRREGULAR HOURS

The Special Intelligence Team (SIT) are without one firm lead. The 'very encouraging comeback' promised in

the press was misinformation fed to assure an increasingly fearful public of an imminent arrest. The capacious third floor of the police headquarters is occupied with ten or twelve smartly dressed men.

The SIT is comprised of some of the finest plain-clothes detectives, psychologists and specialists of one variety or another. They are busy sticking coloured pins into several large city maps—campaign style, chalking methods of triangulation onto blackboards, and shuffling impatiently in seats, waiting for their telephones to ring.

Getting to meet the SIT controller, Inspector Rupert Glover, will not be difficult; he is desperate for information that might help lead to an arrest, and, of course, there is really nothing better for him to do.

Inspector Glover

STR13 DEX11 INT13
CON10 APP13 POW13
SIZ11 SAN65 EDU14
HPs11 MPs13

Skills Dodge75% Listen72%

Spot Hidden52% Law30%

Attacks Fist65%(1D3)

Handgun72%(1D10)

Inspector Glover will be happy to look into the most preposterous notion the investigators should care to volunteer. If they somehow prove themselves valuable in accumulating fresh evidence that points one step further to catching their Horror Man, Glover will offer to deputise one or more of them into SIT, to operate in a consultancy capacity. There would be a modest payment for their contribution; and thereon any fresh information that comes to light will be made wholeheartedly available.



For now, in addition to what the investigators already understand, Glover can reveal certain details of Oliver Guest's mutilation that were not handed over to the press. The left arm of the quarter-pulverised body was severed clean at the shoulder and the flesh was stunched, with significant carbon traces found around the area of wounding. This is very suggestive of an amputation by a hot wire, or similar method. The arm has still not been recovered. The investigators will have to trust that there were no other suspicious medical details surrounding the body, as already it has been dispatched to England for a full funeral.

If they choose not to approach Glover and his cronies, it is possible the investigators will still come to SIT's attention if their activities earn them a particularly high profile. Inspector Glover should make important contributions to all of those close enquiries.

Perishables

The investigators may have reason to expect Horror Man will return to Tegg's Quarry. They would be right. As night falls, a tall, long-coated figure will be seen to skulk down the steep bank of rock, into the quarry, and directly over to the Swing Saw.

His bony fingers move over the gauges and levers, as if to quickly discover the principle of the machine. The petrol motor lets out a burst of smoke, and comes to life, sending the rotary blades whizzing. The stranger holds a single human arm—pulled out from the deep pockets of his coat—under the blades. Sparks fly through the dark, and there is a squeal and hiss of metal on bone, as the teeth of the Swing Saw cut deep into the appendage.

Left to his devices, this fiend of abominable merit will continue to hold the severed limb under the blades, in a viselike grip, making analogous gorges along the arm, while his other hand is playing over the dials and gauges. A **Mechanical Repair** or **Operate Heavy Machinery** roll, will perceive him to be increasing the intensity of the saw, an

increment or two, before making the next incision. If still undisturbed after a couple of minutes, the saw will be set to such a speed that the blades sink freely through the sinew and bone, like a hot knife through butter.

Before leaving the grizzly appendage and the chugging apparatus, the man looks studiously over the dials, and is seen to enter notes into what looks to be a small pocketbook. His casual departure is then made up the slope, where he disappears, inexplicably, from sight.

If the investigators step in to bar his escape, Horror Man looks first to consider bolting through their ranks; then, as easily as one might change a radio channel, an expression of irritation washes over his long, gaunt face, and he abruptly adopts a defensive posture. There is no reasoning to be done; this will be a fight to the death. Horror Man will try to marshal his aggression against one single investigator.

Through wiry, grey hair, dropped over a wrinkled brow, his ample, glassy eyes fix them an expression of curiosity that is as venomous as any show of menace. In any recess of hostilities, the stranger may coolly step back and enter further notes into the palm of his skeletal hand.

If Horror Man is killed, the investigators can watch in disbelief as his body disintegrates in seconds, before their eyes. Clothes and all, the remains seem to glisten softly and accelerate an outright decay; as if the very night air rejects its molecular integrity. The investigators may think their lack of tangible evidence all too convenient. ●

Horror Man

STR20 DEX18 INTna
CON18 APP4 POW10
SIZ18 SANna EDU1a
HPs18 MPs10

Skills Dodge90% Climb90%

Electrical Repair90%

Mechanical Repair90%

Attacks Claw90%(1D3+2+1D6)



CRAB CANON

'Face the Music' with Tristan Whitehead

During the first performance of Berg's 'Altenberg Leider' in March 1913, the audience became restless and broke out in violent scuffles. I recount the evening's events so vividly, as a dear uncle of mine attended that infamous Paris venue.

It is believed the orchestra played every note laid down by the young composer with such passion that truly conceptualised a tangible fusion of fiery expression from the icy construction of his score, that the police had to be called in to stop the concert, so to brake a crowd laced with disorder.

Merely an isolated incident, you may declare. But when the piece was recreated recently at a festival in Chicago, inside Zemlinsky and Schoenberg's 'First Chamber Symphony' the subliminal sensuality of the twin orchestral arrangement was recaptured with remarkable accuracy. So much so, that it prompted an equally violent reaction from the audience, like that my uncle was caught up in, more than a decade before.

So then, this is not among the shrewdest nor most accessible of arrangements one would use, to say, mark the reopening of a small concert hall just in business under new management. Yet that is precisely what the populace can expect from the orchestra of The New Vallantine Theatre House, which opens its doors this coming Tuesday for the first time in a little under four years.

The premises have sat hallow in disrepair for so long that I, for one, thought the eyesore more befitting a demolition, not this supposedly lavish restoration. In its heyday the establishment had all the elegance of some of those old Music Hall attractions the British subjected us to in the decades before the turn of the century. No one was surprised or concerned when The [old] Vallantine Theatre House closed after becoming unprofitable in the hands of its notorious manager, Magnus Vallantine.

They often say, the brightest light casts the darkest shadow, and, although a high-profile businessman, Vallantine wears a patchwork reputation; a professional track record frosted with rumours and hearsay of double-dealing and philanthropic exploitation.

Subsequent to details released through the press, purporting the business 'under new management', none were as dumbfounded as I to learn Magnus Vallantine was the proprietor in this reopening. Just where he found the necessary and considerable backing for this latest 'brainchild' venture is perplexing.

We are forced to assume his funding was raised on the stock market during his reprieve; throughout his fifteen years contribution to the business, Vallantine has earned himself quite an unenviable reputation. It is widely understood how his 'mismanagerial' skills in a sizable tally of comparable pursuits have lost investors thousands of dollars in capital. Former business partner, turned thespian, turned light entertainer, Bobby 'just call me Bobby' Bamber, had scarcely any word of admiration for Vallantine when interviewed recently by our financial supplement, as part of our 'all or nothing' feature, in November of last year. "He [Vallantine] reappears, invariably, sphinx-like, irreproachably groomed and waxed, with always some confiding creature ready to back him."

Forever criticised for being more of an accountant than the devoted public figure normally affiliated to a directorship, not surprisingly, Vallantine was not available to discuss the reopening of his self-titled theatre house. To our offer of a generous publicity feature, came back the bewildering reply, "I'm sorry, Mr Vallantine has had a tiring day of gout".

Never being one for direct contact with artists or musicians, he leaves this to his clerks and secretaries—although it has to be said, the customary waves of disgruntlement usually caused by his ruthless, underhand poaching of choice and popular Acts have not been felt by rival establishments and booking agencies that I know of. His budget can, perhaps, not sustain the services of any reputable orchestra?

Despite his reputation, I am honestly loath to continue in this negative manner, however, someone, somewhere down the line, has decided that admission prices for the pit be merely one quarter the asking price for a box or gallery seat. Reasonable rates, in hope to attract a wider geographical and sociological clientele, perhaps? Nice politics, Magnus, but in reality many of the respected members of the community will not cherish rubbing shoulders with a preponderance of the shadier elements of society—smaller halls do, generally, attract disreputable people.

With this whole endeavour I detect the glimmer of audience manipulation and circus-like gimmickry behind all this heavy-handed buff and deadpan polish, built almost entirely on controversy. The New Vallantine Theatre House should be very careful about controlling the people just to realise their profits—although, I admit to being quite intrigued. Mr Vallantine shall have my attention next Tuesday 15th; whether it is for the entire evening, I will let the music decide—which, hopefully, will not be recreated too authentically.

This is the third part in the 'Horror Man' series of encounters, and can be played with any reasonable duration of recess, having completed the 'Stone Shifter' scenario.

Perhaps an investigator who holds some professional fascination or private appeal for the world of music can chance across the nearby concert preview in the music press, or printed on the entertainments section of his or her regular newspaper a couple of days before the performance. Any of the investigators with time to spare may be intrigued enough by the report to give up a few hours and attend the venue.

The New Vallantine Theatre House sits detached from the surrounding blocks, with an ample border of parking space separating the large, but otherwise unremarkable, building from the lively evening traffic of the rain-soaked city. The day's thunder has settled in for the night. If the investigators arrive by car they must park it themselves and will be drenched covering the distance to the main entrance.

This is a portentous establishment and the doorkeeper will refuse entry to any persons carrying themselves in a drunken manner. Unaccompanied women as well as those deemed inadequately groomed will not be sold a ticket or let past to the main hall. There should be no need for a reservation. The turnout is modest but not overwhelming and investigators should have no difficulties purchasing a ticket on the door.

In the foyer are the pay-box and a couple of specially commissioned paintings of the theatre hall, hung to make up a small display along the short corridor. They end at a single stone step up to a velvet curtain and, just left of this, a series of steps winding up to the gallery.

Members of the audience are either ushered through the curtain or up the steps by a man in exactly the same styled dress worn by the doorkeeper and the cashier: a black, broadcloth, cut-away coat, grey waistcoat and straight, grey-striped trousers. The attire draws unnecessary emphasis to

the men's already stork-like builds. This amounts to all their cosmetic similarities, because, just between these three members of staff are sported: a thick walrus moustache; ginger, wax-tipped whiskers; and a preposterous woolly beard.

The main hall is a breathtaking and, for most, quite unexpected sight. Well over two hundred feet deep, and easily half as much high, the theatre is brilliantly lit with crystal chandeliers and hundreds of gas burners painted with many-a-coloured gelatine. They filter a lavish and gentle radiance over the house. Spindly iron columns on three sides support a heavy balcony facing the stage. The walls of the hall under the balcony are lined with rococo-framed, cut, and acid-etched mirrors. Investigators choosing to afford the balcony seats above will see here walls painted with stencilled ornaments.

A couple of things the investigators may notice at this point: an **Idea** roll has them observe how no provision has been given for rapid escape in case of a fire; the room is without windows and the entrance by which they came doubles as the exit. A **Psychology** roll should bring to their attention the poor seating arrangement for the ground floor. The seats are clustered in tight rows, providing hardly-sufficient legroom, and bolted firmly to the floor; yet there lies a full fifty feet from the front row to the stage—few will consciously appreciate this as a deliberate misuse of available space to manipulate the mood of the audience.

Having been asked to stay seated in anticipation of the forthcoming performance, there is little else to do other than sit back and wait for the concert to start.

Influential People

A good many people come in and go to the promenade spaces at the rear and sides of the hall to meet up with friends. On the whole, they seem the informed and critical audience one might expect on any opening night; the investigators can snatch from the muttering crowd a mixed lot of praise and grumbles. The latter seem sympathetic with the cyni-



cism of the recently published concert preview. The attendees are aware that this evening represents merely an opening where to test the quality of the entertainment on a live audience before the cowardly establishment commit themselves to offering their artistes a proper deal.

Due to the gas and the enclosed arrangement, the auditorium soon becomes very stuffy and malodorous; tobacco smoke casts a haze that gives yet another sector of the crowd something to whine on about. Soon, wherever they turn, the investigators meet with an aggravated face from the crowd; one elderly man is appalled by the omission of a programme for the price of his ticket; a pretty girl is fidgeting with her tip-up seat as though it were a nest of splinters. No one is seen to challenge any of the half dozen members of staff, who stand tall and authoritative in the periphery, with their criticism.

The dissatisfaction is whittled down to a murmur of bewilderment at a violation of protocol. Unannounced, the house lights start to slowly dim. A row of floodlights and four multi-branched standard lamps then light up the proscenium; the whole far wall arches the stage with ornamented Corinthian pilasters that marry up to the gentle curve of the high ceiling. Without any forewarning, the curtains are pulled back revealing an architectural backdrop in the form of a triumphal arch relief, and more gas lamps are shuttered by the members of eerie staff. The crowd are still murmuring on at the management's want of etiquette, as the musicians take to their instruments.

Sinister Undertones

The orchestra, like the staff on the floor, are all dressed in crisp and immaculate evening-wear. Along with this and their height, of the twenty musicians there are not two sharing any resemblance, as if made up in the same crass and heavily contrived dissimilarity of beards, spectacles, hair styles and the like over each man's ruddy complexion.

Even in the absence of a conductor, without their eyes leaving the bridge of their instruments, the small orchestra fall confidently into a tight and faultless performance. During the music the stage lights look to flash a cycle of colour as if in cue to suit the mood and dynamics of the composition; reds light the house for the very dramatic sections; blues for the serene; green for the abstract; and sometimes all at once in a collective, bleary mix of pandemonium and spellbinding psychedelia.

A **Spot Hidden** roll has the investigators notice, from out of the bare boards beneath the feet of the orchestra, a trapdoor rise several inches and after only a few moments gently fall back again, but the light is not good enough to make out by whom. The investigators may think this something or nothing; cure their concern with an **Idea** roll to have them understand that because this is a relatively small building, during the production of a theatrical drama the only way for the players to access the stage without notice would be via a trapdoor such as this, probably from stairs leading down to a cellar, and through to the back of the theatre house.

Almost from the start, the audience is finding the music quite a challenge; men start loosening their ties, people aggravate others with their heckling over the music, and it is not too long before small skirmishes break out. Of this, the staff do very little; each seem calmly preoccupied with scratching notes into pocketbooks taken from their jackets, and ignoring any pleas for assistance. From each corner of the auditorium each look blankly over the boiling crowd as if only for some

inspiration, before returning again to their covert texts.

From a damaged gas lamp a billow of smoke and fire engulfs a small area near the stage, close enough to its neighbour to spark a domino-effect, and within the space of a minute a raging fire has flared out across the stage and started along the walls. A terrible panic breaks out; people rise from their seats 'en masse' and rush for the single exit. The people in the galleries seem to be getting out comparatively easily and quietly, but on the floor, women shriek and swoon, and men half-mad with excitement rush and stumble over their prostrate bodies in fearful confusion, crushing them underfoot and bringing blood.

As the block ensues around the rear of the auditorium the music continues. Inside is an artificial, subliminal and repetitive back-beat—the primary cause of the mass dementia. To detect this anomaly requires a successful **Listen** roll. Call for **SAN** rolls: investigators who miss the roll must lose **1D6 SAN**; if this results in a member of the team becoming temporarily unsound, he or she will be overwhelmed with panic and can do nothing but join the flock for the exit. Having presumed the source of the trouble, investigators can partially defend themselves from the hypnotic rhythm by plugging their ears with cloth; in this case, modify their **SAN** roll by **+20%**.

Investigators not mad with the crowd will notice the nearest member of the theatre house staff start to sweat heavily under the heat of the fires. So little as a second glance will see the man has taken on a far more demanding complexion as traces of what looks to be grease-paint makeup melts in gooey beads, running down his long face into blemishes—the colour of flesh—onto a crisp-white collar.

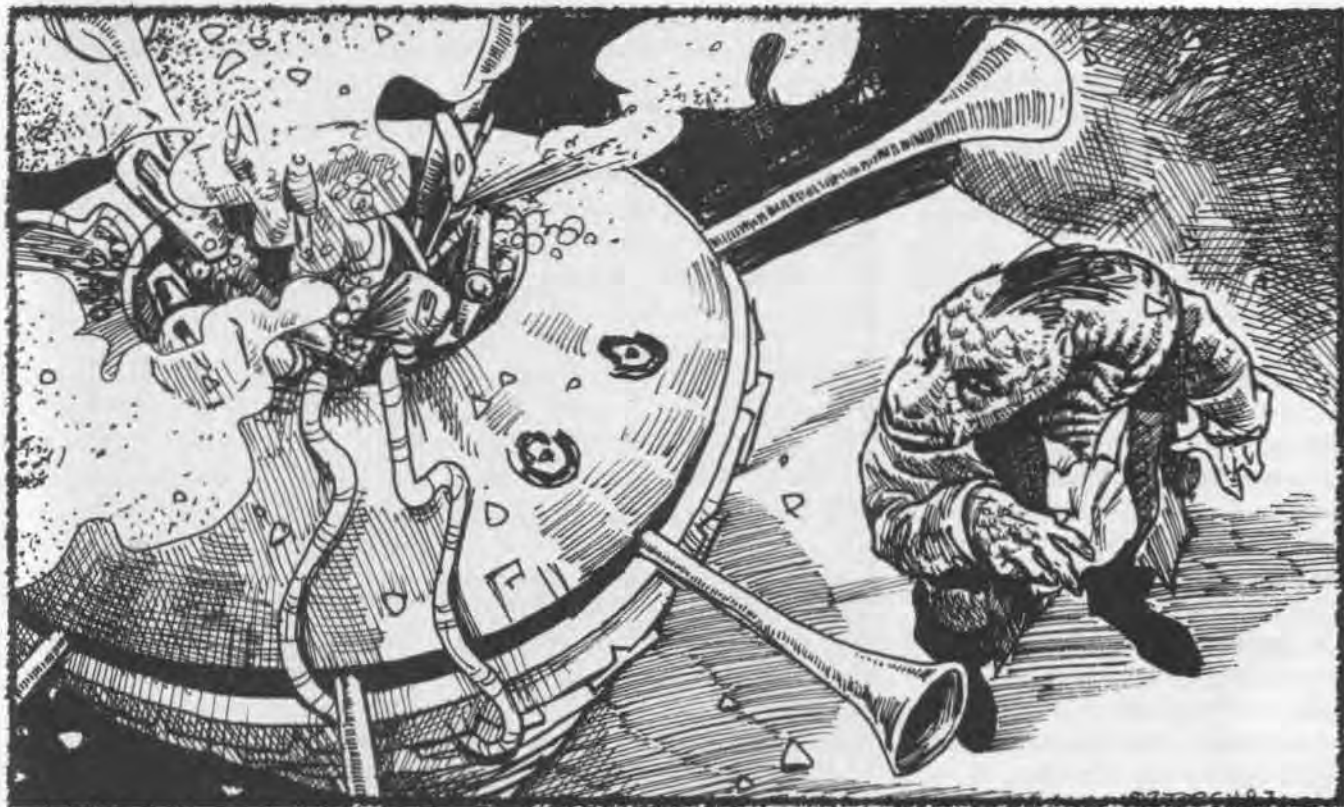
In just the space of a minute the investigators will notice this of all the staff—both the studious staff with them on the floor, and those that make up the orchestra. Spectacles and monocles, false beards, moustaches, wigs and toupees all fall from each of the mens'

faces exposing underneath, a horribly familiar, pallid and bony complexion. Bare of their clumsy facades, they appear identical to each other and to the Horror Man encountered recently at Tegg's quarry.

As with the other of their kind, these Horror Men continue their function unless confronted with brutality; the usher staff are spread around the crowd making written notes while those of the orchestra play on even as their instruments catch fire and fall to ashes between their spindly fingers. The Horror Men seem quite undeterred by the fire. That is not to say they show any indication of immunity; being nearest the flames the garments of some of the orchestra smoulder and threaten to soon burst into flames.

Apart from the investigators, others unaffected by the panic will catch sight of the Horror Men. These are a mix of clear headed people, and others that stand red-eyed and sobbing on the brink of despair. In the eventuality of a fight, some of these people may help the investigators overcome the Horror Men. If an attempt is made to try and reach the trapdoor in the stage, a Horror Man for each member of the investigator party will intervene to try and prevent them access. Again, like at the quarry, the bodies of these adversaries will utterly disintegrate with a brief and soft sparkle of light at their moment of death.

Horror Men		
STR20	DEX18	INTna
CON18	APP4	POW10
SIZ18	SANna	EDUna
MPs10		HPs
False beard		18
Monocle		18
Unconvincing toupee		18
Ginger whiskers		18
Walrus moustache		18
Shamelessly bald		18
Skills Dodge90% Climb90%		
Electrical Repair90%		
Mechanical Repair90%		
Attacks Claw90%(1D3+2+1D6)		



Hidden Depths

When there are no Horror Men left to inhibit them, investigators may open the trapdoor leading beneath the stage—presumably out of curiosity or in hope of finding some alternative means of escaping the blaze. If common sense fails them, an **Idea** roll may be necessary to alert the investigators to the very real prospect of being tombed-up beneath the stage if the auditorium was to collapse from fire.

Should they chose to ignore the trapdoor at this point, there will still be time to go with the crowd and get out of the building to safety. This would not make for an especially riveting adventure.

With the orchestra now defunct, the tedious and bewitching back-beat still goes on, seeming to come from all around. Once standing on the wooden boards of the stage, the investigators can feel the vibrations emanating from directly beneath their feet. The trapdoor is big and sturdy, but its hinges are well oiled and will lift easily enough if both hands are used to grip ahold on the heated iron pull.

Two dozen or more wooden steps snake down safely through and under

the choking vapours of smoke into a small passageway of subdued and flickering half-light. Everywhere is damp. Sparks and embers fall in through the open trapdoor from the burning ceiling overhead, and rest with a loud hiss at the investigators' feet. The ceiling's heavy cross-beams could soon quite readily drop down across the trapdoor, blocking any return and creating a need to venture forth in hope of finding an outlet in these subterranean passageways.

Standing in the passageway at the bottom of the steps the investigators can see the booming pulse radiating from behind a single, sturdy, oaken door; the mortar between the ancient, surrounding redbrick wall has begun to shake free and falls repeatedly to the slippery, concrete floor.

Remember, the investigators should still be making rolls and taking precautions against the influence of the bad vibes. The lock on the door has not seen a key in years, but its mechanism has unlatched due to corrosion. Cracking the door ajar, without the filter of brick and wood between them, the full weight of the thumping rhythm at close range is like a body blow.

Occupying most of the room is the maker of the pounding assault; something closely resembling a child's spinning-top, but oversized and surrounded by a cluster of bellowing and trumpet-like pipes. The outlandish contraption seems driven by an assemblage of pistons that bubble and jet out steam at their joints with a likeness to a huge huddle of boiling saucepans. The amplification system bellows a succession of enchanting, low frequency, primarily non-directional sounds to penetrate the ceiling. They are sufficient to manufacture a riot like that in the auditorium above.

Directing fifty or more points of damage at its workings will disable the strange apparatus; the central component spins off its axis and the whole thing soon comes to rest, silent, and now perfectly harmless. Inflicting this destruction will cost the investigators one point of damage for every round spent inside the room—or outside with the door left open—unless each make a **CONx3** roll against the massive sonic vibrations. Suffering successive rounds of damage will cause an investigator's ears and nose to bleed; if this takes them down to two or less hit points remaining,

he or she will fall unconscious, but will not receive the further critical points of damage hereafter. Providing it is agreed to destroy the amplification device, it should be done quickly by a number of investigators at once—gunshots doing only minimum possible damage to the tarnished metal.

A few rounds after the machine is down, the investigators will be surprised by a couple of frightful creatures—half lizard, half man—rushing effortlessly at them after passing through the far wall of the dimly-lit corridor. They are dressed in white robes and shouldering a long bundle of strange metal piping. A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll identifies these as degenerate Serpent People. Seemingly intangible, the wall remains thoroughly intact behind them aside from blue, crackling spiders of flame that dance briefly over where they passed. In the same action, between them, the little monsters target the barrels of their weapon at the closest investigator and let loose a dizzy, shining bolt of lightning.

It is almost impossible to miss the startled investigator at this close range. He or she can only hope to make a

	Degenerate Serpent People Scientists					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	9	8	8	6	8	9
CON	8	9	8	7	9	8
SIZ	7	9	8	8	9	7
INT	18	17	16	18	17	19
POW	10	10	10	11	11	10
DEX	16	17	16	17	16	17
Armor	1	1	1	1	1	1
HPs	8	9	8	8	9	8
Move	8	8	8	8	8	8
SAN Loss	(2/1D6 collectively)					
Bite Damage	35%	32%	37%	35%	33%	35%
	(1D8+poison—see rulebook)					

successful **Dodge** roll and half the **4D6** of electrical burn damage. There will be no time to reach for holstered firearms in retaliation; whether intentional or not, the recoil from the single blast of the bazooka thingumajig kicks it and the reptiles, head over tail, back through the same wall they came. The blue sparks of illumination marking their point of exit swiftly dwindle, with the wall left intact and the passageway back in gloom.

Before a better inspection of the estranged wall—detailed below—a peek through the remaining door of the passageway sees it as some entrance to a glacial valley of snow and ice; yet the air is as warm as can be. Given time to adjust, the investigators will realise the opposite wall is merely a moving, two-dimensional picture, like a cinema screen. Oddly, the room is bare of a projector or projection beam; as they walk up to the image the investigators cast no shadow over the picture. There is one tangible piece of apparatus, telescopic in design, but a **Mechanical Repair** roll suggests this to be some kind of specialist measuring tool—perhaps an instrument similar to a thermometer.

Examining the colourless, wintry backdrop with a **Spot Hidden** roll detects a naked man, lying motionless, dead centre of the picture, nearly buried by a drifted blanket of snow. This hapless reporter, while sniffing round the theatre house earlier today, looking for a scoop, was seized and restrained by the Serpent People. Rather than immediately kill the man in cold blood, the fiends have dropped him thousands of miles away for use in their experiments—details of which are given nearby. A **Geology** roll recognises what the investigators are seeing as deepest Antarctica. By use of advanced magics and science the Serpent People have secured a 'real time' transmission to monitor his resistance

For the Keeper's amusement: the earliest strategy was to have been a discreet intelligence mission involving the abduction of one single human specimen, taking that specimen back to their laboratory, and manufacturing genetic duplicates, so giving the Serpent People an unlimited reserve of 'raw material' on which to conduct their experiments. In theory each 'copy' would be an isomorphism preserving all the information on an original theme. In practice, limitations were found in their technology that meant reviewing this plan (deciding data obtained from testing the defective clones as unacceptable and not trustworthy).

For all its genius, their science and magic was unable to accurately simulate human tissue; the abnormalities formed in the subjects' muscular density resulted in the clones' physical strength being overdeveloped at the expense of severe cranial derangement. Instead of using the 'Horror Men' as human guinea pigs, each of the reticent clones are being programmed with unique assignments and, with their disagreeable features thinly disguised, let into the community to practice on suitable human test subjects.

From measuring a resistance to immersion in fluids, to the maximum intensity to pressure on the human breast cage, having completed their experiment each clone submits their collected data to the Serpent People at the laboratory here beneath the theatre house to complete their fallibility studies. To protect their interests, if the Horror Men are killed 'in the field', the Serpent People have rigged them to self-destruct.

against subzero temperatures. There is no easy way of reaching the poor man in time, short of using some personal cache of magics and travelling halfway round the world.

The Secret

A syndicate of Serpent People is conducting some reconnaissance work using The New Vallantine Theatre House as a base of operations. This is made easy by the true identity of the theatre manager, Magnus Vallantine, who is the governor of the alien terrorists. The creature calling itself Magnus Vallantine is a prime example of its race, able to use incantations to take on human form, so to mingle with and observe our human society. With caustic opportunism and sagacity, these studies help this creature take advantage of anything in the community useful to its mission—securing wealth on the stock market and such.

The Serpent People dream of a reconquest of Earth; the survey team is here to assess human limitations. The results of this research may some day be exploited by the Serpent forces. The Horror Men are a series of human clones produced using the progressive science and magic of the Serpent People. Their purpose is to witness and record human resistance and reactions.

Shock Value

The texture of the far wall is smooth and coloured the oily grey of gunmetal but is as cold and lifeless to the touch as a side of granite. Investigators striking or shooting at the wall cause fleeting spiders of electrical fire around the point of impact, but the surface remains undamaged. A single blow somehow inflicting 40 or more points of damage punctures a hole, creating a web of splits and hairline fractures which spreads out across the whole eight hundred square foot partition.

The final fragment of wall falls like the last shard of glass from a broken window-frame and smatters into fine needles over the coarse, concrete floor. Lined up on both sides of the hundred foot chamber, rows of glass canisters each contain a perceivably underde-

veloped Horror Man, floating tranquilly, immersed in a simmering fluid, fed via a loop of luminous piping converging at the centre of the room.

Here, four Serpent People look to be working around an outlandish bank of machinery shaped like one giant industrial cog. Out of this, separate glowing panels, seemingly at random, gently rise, rotate, and fall back into place. Spouting out from the core, a black fountain of spindly tentacles lick over the console, obviously serving some strange function, as the Serpent People seem completely unperturbed by tentacles worming between their scaly hands and fingers.



Catching sight of the investigators breaking through to their laboratory does cause perturbation; the dramatic arrival throws the Serpent People into a real state of panic. Like lizards running for the safety of a pond the four quickly scamper over their machinery, parting the tentacled column like pampas grass, wherein, they fall from sight as though taken by some unseen void. Should they wish, the investigators have the opportunity to fire a couple of shots at the fleeing creatures in the few moments it takes for them to escape, but are only likely to delay them at best.

The laboratory is lit only by a synthetic radiance from the pipes and glass vessels of the cloning canisters, but from the back of the dimly lit chamber a man's raring voice brings to the investigators' attention another three humanoid shapes. Two Serpent People struggle to mount hefty weaponry—used on the investigators ear-

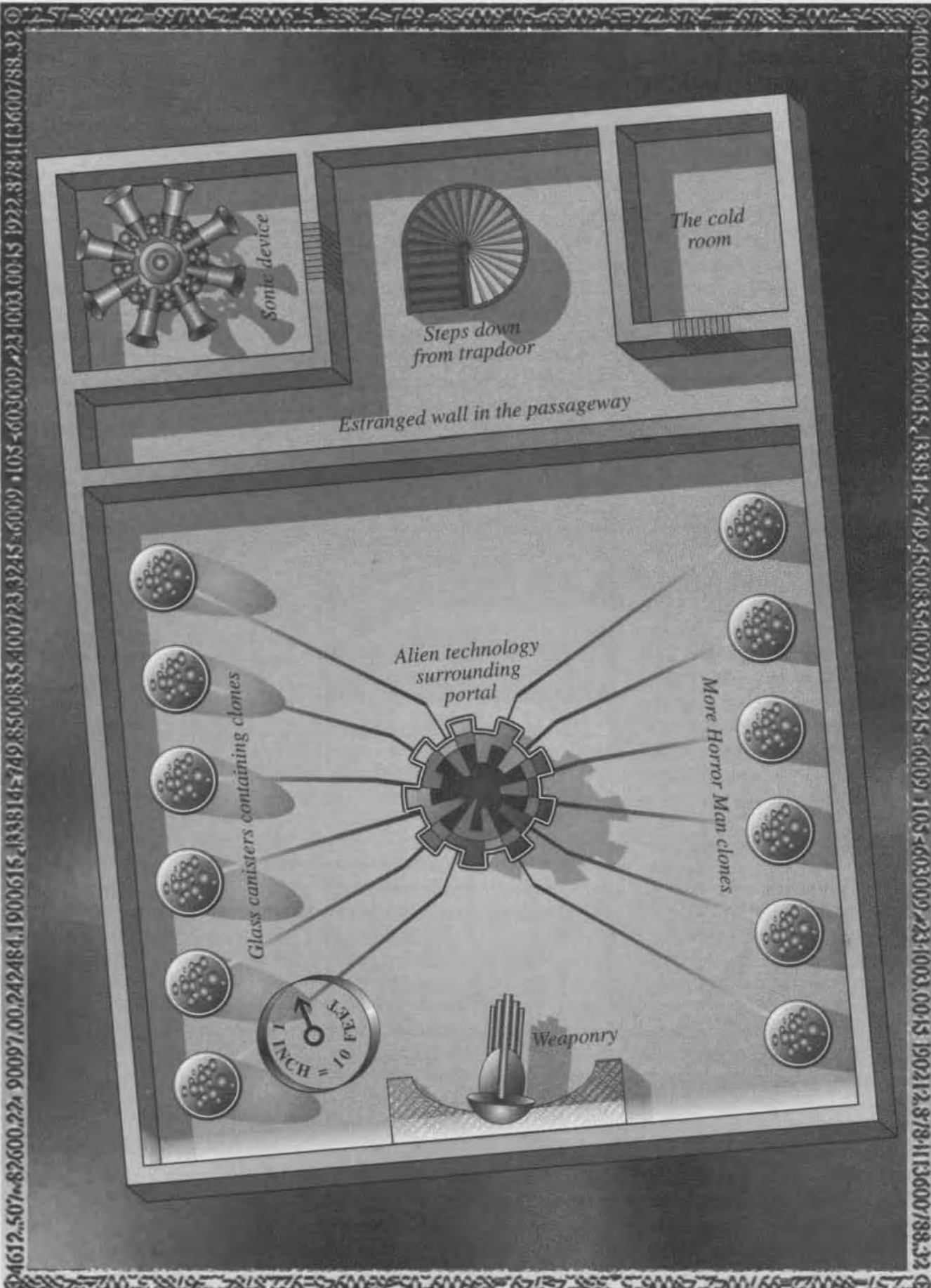
lier in the passageway—high on the wall at rear of the laboratory. Investigators who troubled themselves with preparatory research surrounding the theatre house might recognise the man seated beneath the serpentine labourers as the left-handed proprietor, Magnus Vallantine.

Dressed in plain evening-wear he sits in a high-backed chair barking fierce, hissing whispers up at the two Serpent People overhead. As they finish, the serpentine creatures scurry to the centre of the shadowy chamber, over to the portal, and disappear like their brethren before them.

With his helpers gone, Vallantine fixes the investigators with a furious gaze across the room. In the tips of his fingers Vallantine daintily lifts a metal skullcap and rests it gently over his head. Streams of coppery wire stem from the headgear and trail over his shoulders and end attached to a benchtop beside him along the back wall. Vallantine's chair swiftly spins round and—with his back now to the investigators and the chamber—the man's fingers begin to dance lightly over the worktop, a lineup of knobs and dials resembling a neglected stack of old typewriters.

The whole of the far wall suddenly crackles with life and at first seems to fall away—like the other—revealing an identical laboratory beyond. In retrospect after a moment or two's hesitance the investigators will realise, catching sight of their own reflection, the wall has in fact become more like a mirror the size of several dozen cinema screens. Only then, nothing like an enormous mirror, a cross-hair comes up over the picture, locking over the position of a random investigator, and abruptly magnifying their image up on the wall by gigantic proportions.

A **Spot Hidden roll** will notice the recently mounted weapon point itself in the precise direction of the area displayed up on wall. From the bank of machinery around where Vallantine sits tapping away there comes a rumbling sound that quickly builds up to an intense whistle, the machine shakes, and a concentrated ray of magical light lashes out from the weaponry, down at



the appointed investigator. Since the area of the laboratory is not so confined, the investigator will be able to jump away from the point of impact sufficient to avoid being hurt—assuming his or her attention has been drawn to the impending danger. By the pitch of the reverberations issuing throughout the laboratory it should be possible for the investigators to anticipate the exact moment the magical ray lets loose and attempt to **Dodge** their way from some **4D6** points of damage. Perhaps a more perceptive investigator, in a selfless act, could risk his or her safety and hurl fellow team member out of the sights of destruction.

The controls at Vallantine's workshop allow him to steer the weaponry after the investigator, remaining constantly trained on one single target until someone offers themselves as a greater diversion. The weaponry requires several moments to ready itself, therefore Vallantine can only fire a shot once every subsequent round. This, while not giving the investigators quite enough time to cover the full distance of the laboratory, does allow them a chance to retaliate with a gunshot or to find some cover. All ranged attacks on Vallantine, who sits with his back to the room in his metal, high-backed chair, should be made at **-30%**.

When he is hit for the first time, in the blink of an eye, Vallantine's true identity will be revealed to the investigators, as the shock of the injury causes the creature to lose use of the spell that shields its serpentine persona. There should be no uncertainty on who the weaponry is pointed at any given time; as Vallantine keeps frantically tapping away like a manic organ player to keep it under its deploy, seeking and zeroing-in on its antagonists dotted about the laboratory, their inflated image is projected up over all the far wall.

Stray bolts of magical light successfully dodged by the investigators will lash blindly about the laboratory, destroying machinery, and smashing the glass canisters, spilling embryonic Horror Men onto the cold floor and over the broken glass. One rogue bolt

of energy pulls down part of the wall, revealing a sewer system, and a means of escape.

It is difficult to presume the outcome of this fracas; a long-term stalemate between the serpent man and the investigators is not likely to arise, as the fiery wreckage of The New Vallantine Theatre House rests precariously over the laboratory and the basement level, injecting some station of urgency against the investigators being crushed alive.

Magnus Vallantine

STR14	DEX16	INT18
CON13	APP8	POW15
SIZ13	MP15	Move8
HP13		
Armor1	SANLoss0/1D6	

Skills Dodge35% Biology80%
Sneak91% Chemistry93%
Spot Hidden71% Jump45%
Electrical Repair88%
Mechanical Repair75%
Psychology82%
Physics77%

Attacks Alien Weaponry90%(4D6)
Bite40%(1D8+Poison—see rulebook for details)

Spells in addition to the magic of assuming a human appearance are: Create Gate, Shrivelling, Voorish Sign & Contact Yig

Surveying any of the laboratory's alien banks of machinery is of little use—except of course to hide behind. Its telekinetic nature is finely tuned to respond to use by the Serpent People alone. As the investigators might presume, the degenerate Serpent People scientists were able to make their escape, through the portal, which is a Magical Gate back to their subterranean domain. Jumping after them is not recommended (as clearly indicated by the presence of said tentacles).

For all the searching, the body of the 'Magnus Vallantine' creature should not be recovered from the wreckage of the laboratory or from under the fallen debris. ●



LAZY EYE

Message, a quarter past three, this afternoon (Wednesday).

One Mrs Potter called by. I gave her the line about you being on important business and said you would be free by the end of today and in a position to help however you could. It was her idea you call by on her and her husband later this evening, as she could best explain her 'disturbing matter' there.

74a Brewery Pavilion, no telephone.

I think you should look into this; she seemed more than a little shaken. And paid in advance! I locked her twenty bucks in your desk drawer.

For the Attention of an Investigator

This, the fourth 'Horror Man' encounter, follows on about one game week after the fireballing of The New Vallantine Theatre House; the outcome of the previous 'Crab Canon'.

The note is left on the desk by a colleague or secretary of a player character whose occupation might have them regularly live and fight other people's nightmares for them; that of a private eye or parapsychologist.

After an introduction, Mrs Potter will make the investigators very welcome and beckon them into her commodious rooms in the residential building just this other side of town. The apartment block houses several other tenants and as the investigators make for the Potters's residence a bespectacled young man snaps angrily at them from across hallway to ask whether they are here to sort out the 'infernal racket'. Over the last week the Potters have become a nuisance to many of their neighbours, due to airing their music at inconsiderate levels and at all hours of the day and night.

Indeed, from the lobby the investigators can hear the radio broadcast of a political debate emanating from behind the first door to their left; Mrs Potter asks if they can go directly through to the lounge while she makes the tea. Mr Potter sits calmly on a

spindeleg chair next to a large, rumbling wireless which sits in the far corner of the gloomy room. The old man gives nothing more than a feeble smile and a docile hand gesture to acknowledge the investigators, then turns his head back to the luminous dial of the wireless, facing the music, and rocks gently on the legs of the seat, as though swaying back under the resonance.

After less than a minute, Mrs Potter enters the room carrying a tray of tea and biscuits. As shue does, her husband lifts himself out of his seat, saunters out into lobby, lifting a coat from the hook, and leaves the apartment without a single word of regret. Perhaps in some way of an explanation, as she places the tray down onto a low table, the old lady looks up at the carriage clock on the mantelpiece, and mutters under her breath about it being time for the evening papers. Fidgety, she sits, taking only one sip from her cup before springing back to her feet to turn down the volume on the wireless, revealing her cause for concern.

A sound made by string instruments rises to the investigators' attention from under the boards of the floor. It would not be strictly accurate to call this 'music' for there is little in the way of arrangement, none of the confidence

HORROR MEN

the scorched and mindless clones floundered through the city sewers following each other's lead, and at their shoulder all scraping at the bridge of their instruments with the frayed edge of a bow, all except one who holds out tarnished cymbals in anticipation of a cue that never comes.

Needless to say, these four survivors stumbled their way into the Potters' basement through a portion of the wall that was weak with dampness and made even less stable by Mr Potter loosening the cement to hide his case of black market whiskey. For a week the mindless clones have bounced from all four walls, clenching their instruments with a white knuckled grip.

Horror Zombies		
STR20	DEX18	INTna
CON18	APPI	POW10
SIZ14	SANna	EDUna
MPs10		HPs
#1 Cymbals		8
#2 Stage-struck		10
#3 Scatterbrain		12
#4 Sockets		9
Skills Dodge90% Climb90%		
Attacks Claw90%(1D3+2)		
Violin/Cymbal90%(1D6)		

If the door to the basement is left open for long enough they will stagger up the steps, into the apartment, and then out into the street. Keepers can decide whether the zombies are altogether passive and ignore any threat made by the investigators, or retaliate and use violins against them. As always, once deceased, the remains of the Horror Men will glitter and vanish.

Should the investigators take it in their minds to investigate the sight of the theatre house across the way, it will still appear from all sides as collapsed and devastated as they remember, and just as impassable from the sewers. As a sideline, keepers can feel free to devise similar encounters to this where Horror Men, having fled the theatre house fires, are found wandering around scaring the humans. ●

required for an attempt at an improvisation, and not even the competence to signal it as the din of a musicians' tuning session. A pandemonium devoid of rhythm or harmony, like sounds broken into fragments by a tempestuous wind, each instrument starts, only to tear abruptly to a halt. An investigator can put his ear to the floor and, with a successful Listen roll, reckon there to be no more than four violins in play at any given time.

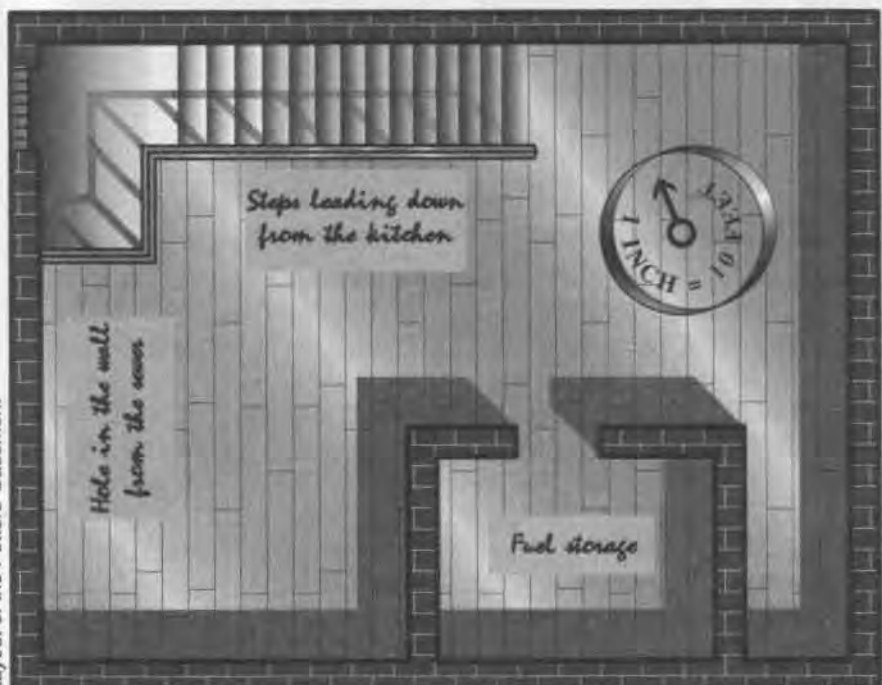
If asked, Mrs Potter, overcome with emotion, can be very specific about the night this was first heard; a morning late last week following the theatre house fire. The New Vallantine Theatre House is but one street's distance away. Mrs Potter has the notion that the troubled souls of the 'poor musicians' who lost their lives are locked up in her cellar. Mr Potter has said nothing to discourage this idea. Quite the contrary, it was he who suggested they secure the services of a private agency.

There are two reasons for this. For one, he does not want the constabulary finding his bolt-hole of bootleg liquor badly hidden behind a section of loose brickwork in the basement wall. Most importantly, Mr Potter believes his wife's fancy; a few days previous, and quite naturally, he took it unto himself—after complaints from the

neighbours—and made an investigation of the mysterious cacophony. What he discovered, the old man could not bare to share; it resulted in such a shock to his fragile constitution.

The investigators are given access to the basement, shown into the kitchen, and left to their devices. Pushing back the heavy bolt on the door releases the full clout of the fervid strain. By flicking the power switch or shining any light down the steps into the basement, the investigators behold the cruel and twisted sight of members from the ill-fated 'Vallantine orchestra', all with as much direction to their movements as their music.

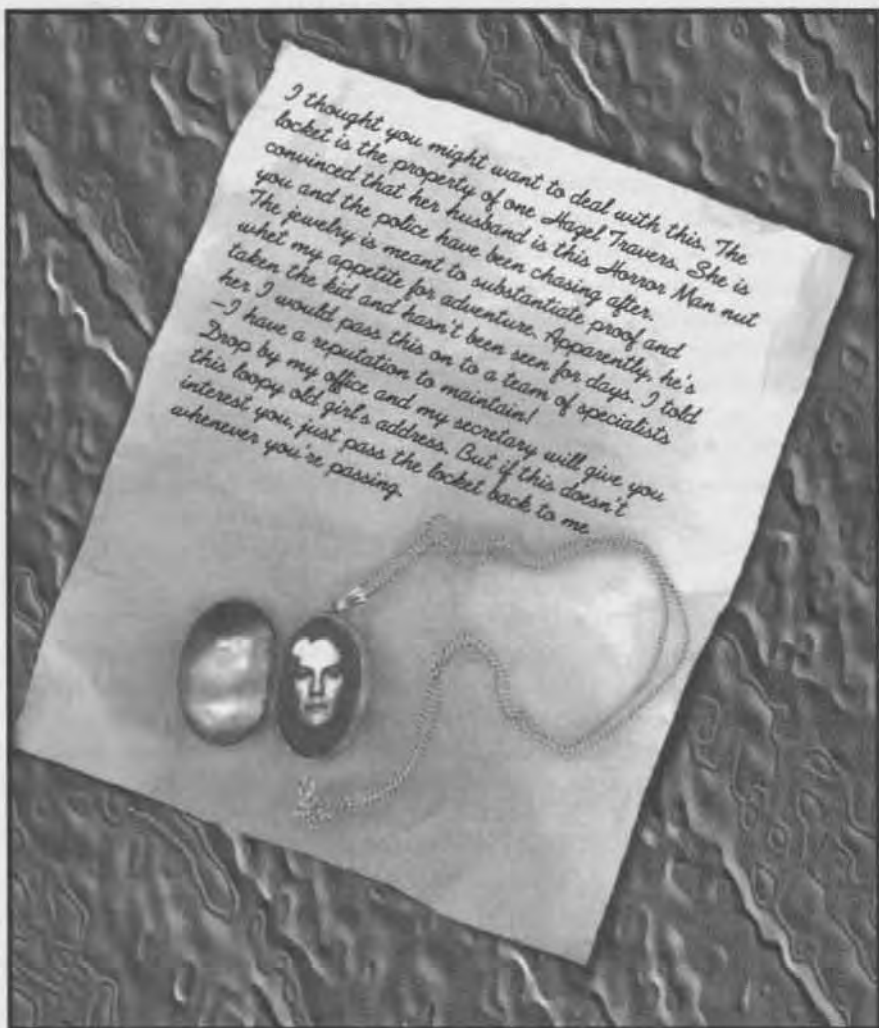
These brainless zombies are Horror Men who escaped their demise after plunging with burning rubble to the belly of The New Vallantine Theatre House a week ago. Under the streets



Layout of the Potters' Basement

15

Watering Hole



This is the fifth and final installment of short concept adventures in the 'Horror Man' series. For full effect, play this out several game months after the preceding 'Lazy Eye' encounter.

As the recipient of the small strengthened envelope, the investigator may perceive from its written inclusion that the accompanying fine silver locket and chain is sent by a close friend and associate of theirs in the detective trade. By the tone of his letter, the conceited bequeather clearly believes Mrs Travers' case to be nonviable. The investigators may decide that the handsome devil in the faded portrait photograph framed in the elegant locket—given another thirty years, a shock of white hair, and a vacuous expression—bears an uncomfortable resemblance to their continually elusive Horror Man.

Subsequent to collecting the address of Mrs Hazel Travers, the investigators find themselves outside the gate of a framed wooden cottage, quite devoid of exterior adornment or any signs of maintenance. The roof is a patchwork of missing shingles, and the base of the structure is not visible from the road, past the block of verdurous shrubberies choked by creeping thistles and rootstock.

The face of the women at the door is drawn and haggard, and looks well beyond her age of fifty years. Overwhelmed that her case is being given such keen attention, Mrs Travers literally quivers with appreciation and will endeavour to be as illuminating for the investigators as possible. Her answers to the simplest of questions, however, are laboured, and the words are delivered in slurred and broken sentences. One might correctly sur-

mise, with a **INTx4** roll, that Mrs Travers has a serious drinking problem. An investigator who was to successfully practice his or her skill in **Psychology** would be sure the frail old lady's fondness for the bottle does not detract credibility from her mournful statement.

'It has taken me a week or more to pluck up the courage to come out and say these things. You must all understand that I've been devoted to my husband nearly all the thirty years of our marriage, but now I'm not sure what to think. As your colleagues will have no doubt informed you, I believe Jake has abducted our son, and he bears a striking resemblance to the man the police think responsible for all of these grim and bizarre murders we read about in the newspapers.'



'We had lockets made for one another while we were still courting back in the summer of 1885. Although ours was not exactly a marriage made in heaven, just as I, my husband wore his locket at all times. At all times, that is, until after his disappearance and miraculous return five years back. He arrived back on the doorstep as large as life, after being missing for ninety days, with a story about losing some money to the 'wrong people', and being hounded out of town but with every intention of coming back once his debts were cleared. I had started to drink heavily in his absence and so hung firmly on his every word, accepting the explanation as casually as if he had been away for only hours not months.'

'During the weeks after his return we nursed each other back to health. While he had been away my husband had contracted a wasting sickness brought on by stress and drudgery, for which he informed me the doctors had no cure. Although it had impaired his physical aspect, Jake soon grew as strong as ever. With my husband back at my side I too became invigorated, and felt compelled to try and take control of my insobriety.'

'This was just as well, because within a year I fell pregnant and gave Jake a son. My husband arranged a number of appointments at private clinics to preempt any complications that may have occurred due to my maturity. I must admit to being more than a little surprised after being told that there was nothing for me to worry about, but Jake was rightfully assured by the diagnosis, as Benjamin was in due cause born without incident.'

'My husband offered the child all his love and attention, and was in nearly every way the model father. Jake was never a man of many words—even with me—but ever so much a man of books, and saw to it personally that Ben received a thorough education. Jake cared for the child immensely, I felt sometimes almost to the point of obsession.'

'To give you an example, Benjamin had barely reached the age of four when my husband began to take him on regular fishing trips around the coast, regardless to my insistence that Ben was still not strong enough for that kind of pursuit. He would even take him to bars! But the more I objected about anything the further I was ostracised by Jake and the child both.'

'Only after I raised the question of how he was able to provide for us, having lost his job at the shipyard, did Jake inform me that during his time away he had fallen into company with a successful entrepreneur and had secured wealth that meant we needn't ever go wanting. I don't think I will ever really know what happened to my husband in those darkest ninety days.'

A **Psychology** roll detects Mrs Travers to have suddenly become particularly emotional. Investigators can explore this, given a little tact and a **Persuade** roll, with all female investigators receiving +20% modifier to the chance of success. Mrs Travers will reveal to the investigators her life's biggest regret: her inability to recall actually giving birth to her son, not to mention the possible moment of conception. She has always directly attributed this deep-down trauma and repressed memory syndrome to her frequent blackouts due to her period of severe alcohol abuse.

Questioning Hazel Travers further will make her even more upset, but reminds her of something Benjamin said once that she thought very peculiar. It was something along the lines of his daddy rewarding him with bright coloured lights inside his head. She tried to talk to her husband about this at the time, but Jake dismissed her concerns and said that Benjamin was just going through a phase.

All is normal around the house, except that all of Jake Travers' personal belongings have seen little or no use in the last months and years. An extensive search coupled with an **Idea** roll and the investigators will notice, amongst other things, that his comprehensive library is as dusty and unused as his fishing hooks and face razors are rusty.

Pull Back the Covers

A fifteen-minute walk from the Travers house, on the basement floor of the eminent Portobello Restaurant, is the nameless, second-rate speakeasy sometimes frequented by Hazel Travers' husband. There are two comparable establishments the investigators may pursue in vain before the name Jake Travers wins them some response. The barman has no peculiar loyalties to Travers but is suspicious of strangers. The investigators will have to earn the information he has to offer with a bribe of fifteen dollars, or a **Fast Talk** roll.



'Jake Travers used to get in here. He was irreproachable old goat with an unconvincing beard who used to work the docks. He'd sometimes spend all evening reading at his table; he'd come in and order a drink that would sometimes last him as long as his book. I can't remember the details, but a buddy of his singled him out to me only last week and said how it had been five years since he had clapped eyes on his old co-worker, ever since Jake had turned in to work one morning and quit there and then.

'But I fear now we'll see no more of him. Last week I think it was, your Mr Travers walked in accompanied by who I assumed was his young grandson. I had no objection to him bringing the kid and, for the first time in all the months he'd frequented this establishment, I made an attempt at conversation. I fooled with him while he was paying for his whisky as to whether his wife thought them to be out visiting the fun fair. He just grunted an obligatory but equivocal return, counted out his coins on the bar, and turned his back on me to go and sit at that table nearest the door.

'Further into the evening, as is quite usual, a small party tottered down from the restaurant to make merry in the bar. They were celebrating the birthday of a young gentleman whose

cigar smoke caused the since-composed Mr Travers some offense. I really couldn't see the harm he was doing, but after the gentleman refused to put out his cabana, Jake marched over and punched this guy clear through that wall, then took his kid by the arm and left. The old man has made an enemy of the wrong people, if you get my meaning, and I think you'll find that's the reason for his disappearance: self-preservation.'

If they probe some more with a **Fast Talk** roll, the investigators may pick up on what the barman dismisses as being merely 'nonsense rumours'. A couple of his regular drinkers who claim to have long ago worked alongside their man on the docks have each recently caught their kids spreading cock-eyed tales of Jake Travers hanging out at 'the wreck', burning turtles with the 'bums and low-life'. 'The wreck' is the name given by the local children to the decimated rubble that was once 'The New Vallantine Theatre House'.

Body Clock

Where once stood the notorious theatre house there is now three hundred square yards of scorched rubble. Walking over it is especially arduous by night. The ochreous flicker of a small bonfire in the dead centre of the grounds

is visible from the surrounding city roads and it must appear to passing motorists as though the months-old debris is still partially ablaze.

Minding their step the investigators cover the open space in minutes and, as they do, they discern several pitiable looking figures huddled for warmth in a circle round a makeshift incinerator. Walking nearer to the large steel barrel, and into the vicinity of its thick, smoky emissions, provokes a bilious attack upon an investigator who fails a **CONx5** check, as the monstrous reek fills their lungs.

The source of the odour is what the twelve bearded fellows burn to keep from feeling the night's bitter cold. Half of the fallen men acknowledge the investigators, with a less than cursory glance, but pay little more attention, pulling their tattered coats tightly around their frail selves, and turning back to face the heat. To properly inspect the contents of the barrel will mean breaking into the ring, and while the vagrants do nothing to physically resist this infringement they will treat the investigators to a number of unsettling snarls and penetrating glares.

Sizzling fat drips down onto the concrete and forms like wax stalagmites beneath the incinerator. If the investigators are able to find something to stoke the red ashes amid the surrounding heaps of red brick and concrete blocks, they can discover that it is fuelled by what appears to be a sizable chunk of coal. As they watch, cracks appear in the boulder's leathery exterior, opening and closing to the thing's steady palpitations before releasing dribbles of hot grease. There is also an audible hiss as a jet of black vapour escapes from the fracture that is no doubt the source of the repulsive odour.

None of the grimy gents could be described as having the gift of the gab, but if the investigators were to try and communicate the eldest might offer to share a few words, so long as it was made worth his while. Due, perhaps,

to an adverse condition brought on by a long exposure to the incinerator's unpleasant fumes, the old man breaths heavily as he whispers his words. Regrettably, all he declares is that one of his number 'wuz chuckin' up fer days after takin' a belly full.' With an unsteady finger and his eyes agog he points down at the glowing ashes, and keeps it there for warmth.

LANTERN-JAWED

After a ten minute search with a flashlight in the general proximity of where the twelve men are gathered, the investigators may turn up as many as twenty more leathery lumps similar to the one that the vagrants burn. All have a hard surface and gelatinous contents, but differ ever so slightly in size and solidity. Some of the charred egg-like globules have evidently made better winter fuel than others, for many

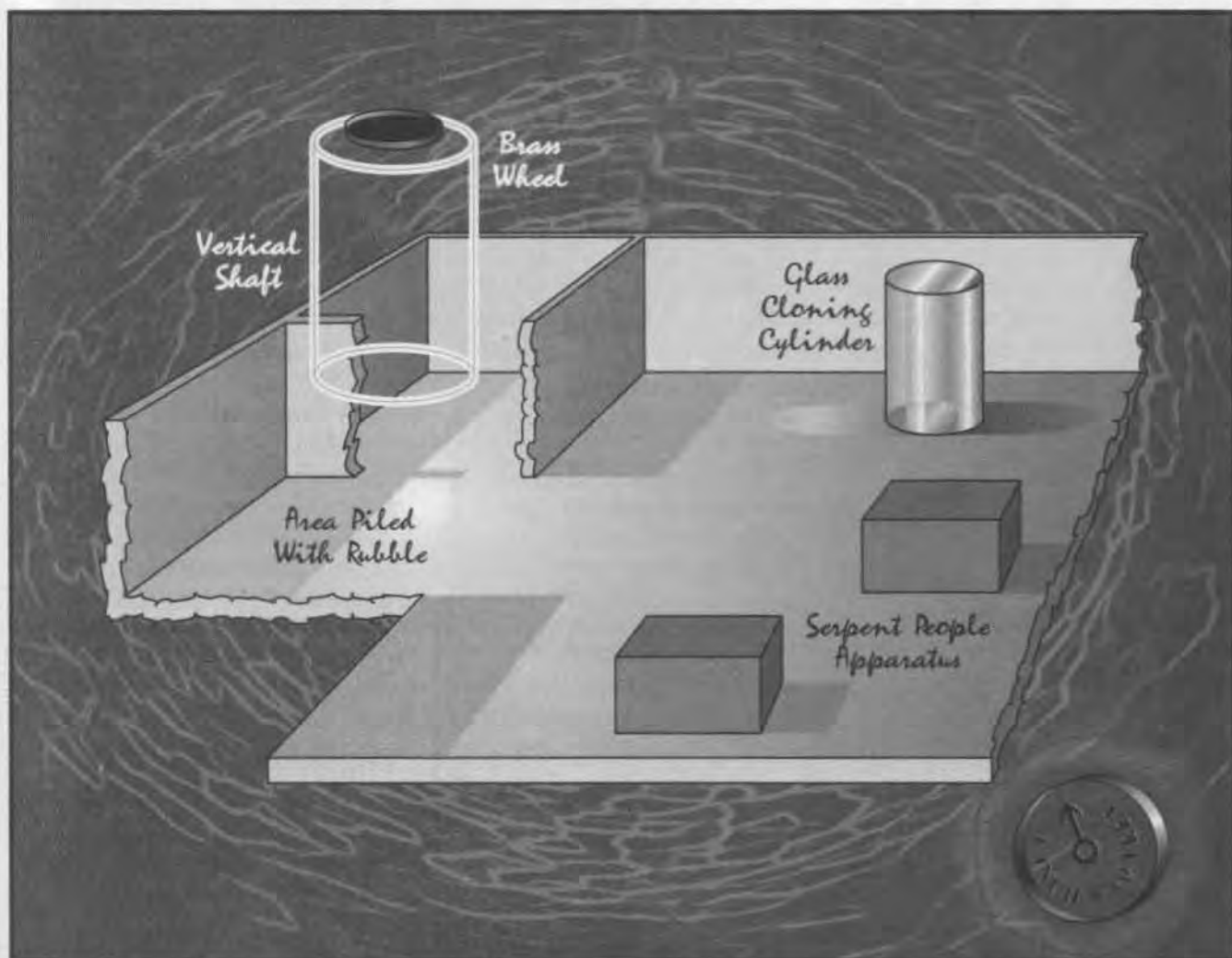
are discarded and cracked open with their liquid centres poured out over the concrete gravel. In and around this curdled soup, cats, birds, rodents, and a host of other small scavenging animals lie dead.

An extended search of the area, united with a successful **Spot Hidden** roll, and the investigators will happen upon a three foot by three slab of yellowed, waxen stone locked secure to the ground by a heavy brass wheel. The wheel is warm to the touch and perhaps cross-threaded as it is anomalously tight, requiring a **STRx2** roll from one person just to edge the wheel round by half a rotation. It requires five full rotations for the investigator to feel the deadbolt tumble, enabling the team to heave open the trapdoor.

Alternatively, if after **5D6** rounds the investigators are still having trouble with the lock mechanism, they will

jolt in surprise as the stiff wheel begins to turn slowly by itself. For any investigators who felt that the trapdoor was of no immediate consequence, a **Listen** roll soon brings it sharply back to their attention as the brass wheel self-revolves with a torturous squeal.

After a moment's pause, the stone slab is punched open by a pair of scrawny hands that proceed by groping for a grip around the lip of the hole. The man who hauls himself up from below is without an ounce of flesh to spare and, for the investigators, an all too familiar sight. Reaching back down into the opening, the clone of Jake Travers lifts out, with bony arms, another of the obscure oily eggs. It exudes a vapour trail as it is tossed through the cold night air, then lands with a dull thud and rolls close to the feet of the wayfarers. Insensible and used to the Horror Man's wraith-like appear-



ance, two of the men lift the steaming object and feed it to their incinerator. To this, out billows a cloud of flame and lamp-black smoke that causes the twelve to momentarily recoil and cover their eyes from the radiant flare.

The emaciated creature is a Horror Man—the worn shadow of Jake Travers. The Serpent People took the hapless dock worker several years ago and cloned him numerous times, but with a limited success which resulted in the production of a bastard subspecies of humanity, known to the investigators as 'horror men'. Over the last few years this particular Horror Man has had orders to be the model husband for the credulous Mrs Travers and the custodian of their child.

Familiar Solutions

Beneath the trapdoor is a wide open shaft where the theatre's wooden stairwell once descended from the stage down to the basement level. Several brass rungs have been hammered deep into the brickwork every three feet apart, down both sides of the wall. From up above, the tunnel's craggy floor is barely discernible beyond the thirty feet of darkness. Edging their way down, the investigators will realise there is a flickering subterranean light source, together with the mild scent of gunpowder and a lingering high-pitched whistle in the air.

Down at the bottom of the shaft, the investigators will have to stoop down low and mind their heads, as the splinted wood and rubble on the floor is piled nearly as high as the ceiling of the adjoining chamber. This cavernous space is thick with dust, enmeshed by cobwebs, and carpeted with a chalky gravel and broken glass.

The laboratory of the Serpent People was not altogether glutted during that fateful fiery evening many months back. This surviving cavity, comprising a portion of the basement's main room and some of the connected corridor, is still intact. From large dishevelled stacks of recondite apparatus positioned all about the floor fly heavy

bolts of super-natural fire. This should suggest to onlookers that, even in view of the contraption's obscure design and obvious otherworldly origins, it is either broken or badly damaged.

Remarkably, one of the fragile cloning cabinets conceived by the Serpent People has survived the theatre building's ruinous fires. The investigators will see that, behind the glass, the canister has a thankless occupant. Immersed in a semipellucid fluid is an abomination of such proportions that an investigator failing a SAN check must lose **1D10** points after looking into the creature's eyes and at its other buoyant parts. What used to be the child of Hazel Travers is now barely recognisable as flesh and bone.

This beastliness is due to the inexact science of the fallacious snake in grass, Magnus Vallantine. With its former plans thwarted, Vallantine initiated an unprecedented experiment involving the mating of one of its clones with a human female. The hope was to forge a violent new breed which could be set loose on humanity to condition the planet for the return to its people. The fruits of this—Ben Travers—may well have matured into a regular, well adjusted human being, had Vallantine not proceeded by subjecting the child to multifarious experiments and pumped him with many alien solutions in order to affect its dangerous prodigy.

Forsaken by its species, wholly deranged, and left wanting in physical and mental prowess by injuries received in the fires, the esoteric scientist perseveres with the work as best it

Final Horror Man

STR20	DEX18	INTna
CON18	APP4	POW10
SIZ18	SANna	EDUna
HPs18		MPs10

Skills Dodge90% Climb90%
Electrical Repair90%
Mechanical Repair90%

Attacks Claw90%(1D3+2+1D6)

Magnus Vallantine

STR18	DEX11	INT10
CON10	APP3	POW10
SIZ13	MPs10	Move4
HPs10		

Armor1 *SAN Loss0/1*

Skills Dodge35% Biology80%
Sneak41% Chemistry43%
Spot Hidden51% Jump25%
Electrical Repair40%
Mechanical Repair40%
Psychology40% Physics35%

Attacks Claw30%(1D6+1D3)
Bite40%(1D8+Poison
—see rulebook for details)
Throw Egg25%(1D6)

Spells lost use of all its
powers due to injuries received
in the theatre house fires

can. At this critical stage the Vallantine creature has realised that the chemical and celestial bombardment has virtually broken the body of its subject down into liquids, and is attempting now to clone this silt in order to restore its integrity before the child can regress even further. After running a battery of tests that have repeatedly fallen short of success, the results—the curate's eggs—are always then efficiently disposed of by the Jake Travers replica.

Through half-shadows, from across the chamber, the investigators will find it extremely difficult to focus on Vallantine; it is no trick of the light how the aspect of this maladjusted evildoer seems to shift recurrently between man and serpent. It mops the cloning canister with a white cloth where the terrible mutation has begun to seep out through hairline fractures in the glass. Stumbling over to a number of demijohns lined up on a heap of smoking apparatus, it scrapes a sample from the cloth. The creature mutters incessantly to itself as it works, all of which is mostly incoherent or completely nonsensical: *'...miscarried, taking shape with a resurrection under glass, I am one death away from perfect deformity.'*

After only moments, the demijohns begin to tremble and then splinter apart, one after another, revealing their swollen contents—yet more of the fallow, orbicular remains. Vallantine calmly takes one in both hands and seems to first examine the results by bringing it curiously up to its twitching serpent nostrils, before sending it in a scream of anger and repulsion across the darkened room in the direction of the hatchet-faced retainer.

As soon as the serpent man catches sight of the investigators the creature will become mad with rage, commanding the last clone of Jake Travers to 'smash the life out of them.' Investigators sentimental enough to entertain the idea of a possible collaboration between them and the Horror Man by pleading in any way to its last remnants of humanity probably deserve all they get.

While the Horror Man lurches forward to carry out its charge, in a desperate frenzy, Vallantine hurls the products of its abortive tests at the investigators to help make short work of their demise. Only a couple of the missiles come close to the mark, the others spin harmlessly overhead, splitting open on impact and spattering their soupy contents down the red-brick wall.

With its back to the wall, Vallantine will expeditiously address the investigators, *'if I were to say I had learned anything from your kind, it would be that death is the ultimate test of character,'* then injects itself with a lethal dose of its own probative solution. Snorting lustily, the serpentine creature lunges wildly after the investigators, berserk. Its muscles have soon expanded to double their size and the veins have become so prominent that the spoiled blood threatens to rupture the mottled skin. After **1D10** rounds the mutated Vallantine suddenly grows somnolent, becomes victim to an attack of convulsions, and slumps dead.

Reward the investigators with a **1D10 SAN** bonus for finally putting Vallantine's monkey business to rest. ♦



Mouthbreathers
 Lost property
 Six foot plot
 The Last of Joy
 Circle of Friends
 Painted in a Corner

Serendipity
 Terriblehead

Crab Canon
 Horror Man
 Watering Hole

Horror Man

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