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# Malum Umbra



**THE FIRST  
CTHULHU INVICTUS COMPANION**





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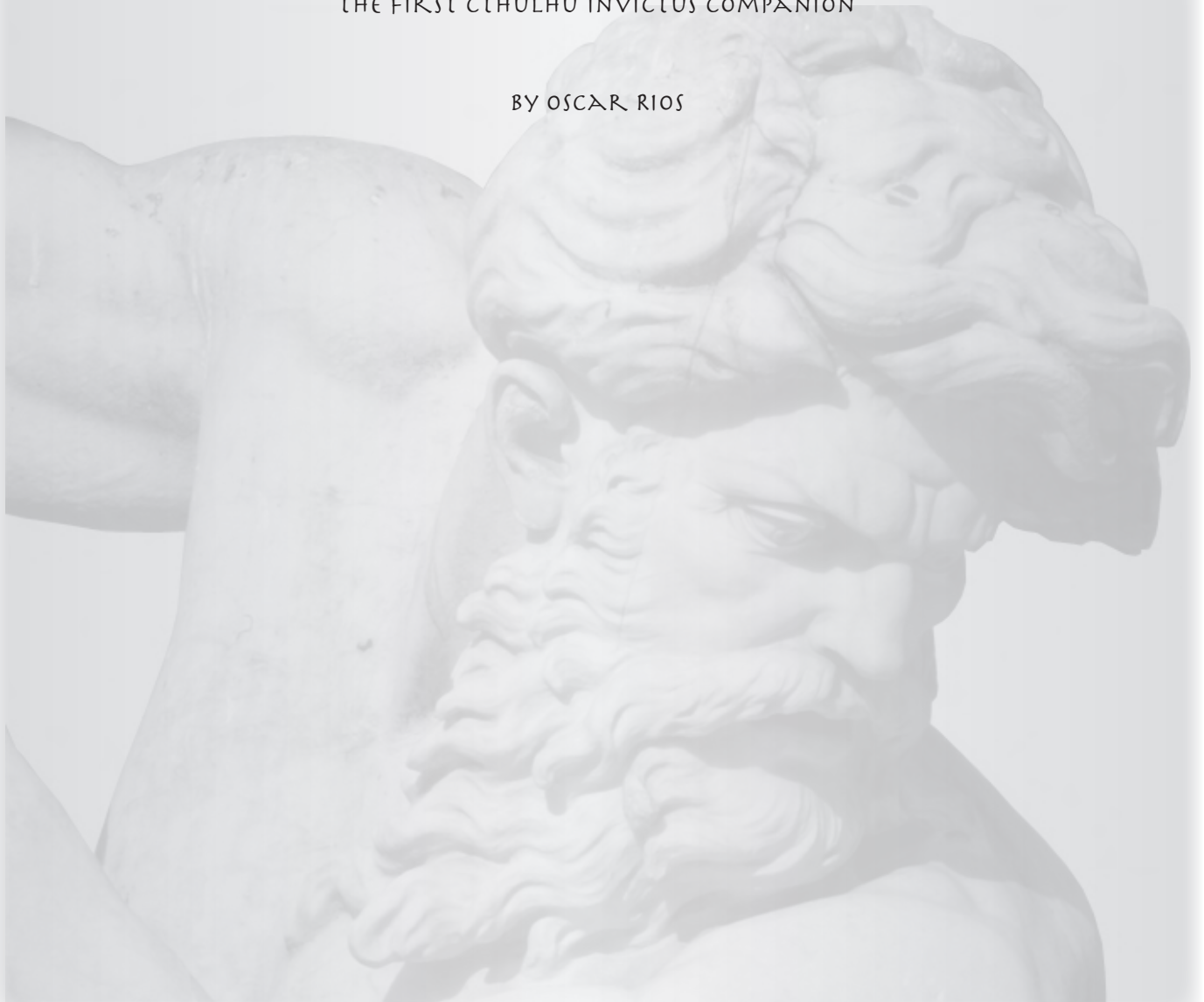
# MALUM UMBRA

- OR -

## SHADOWS OF EVIL

THE FIRST CTHULHU INVICTUS COMPANION

BY OSCAR RIOS



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### ***Playtesters***

Mitzi Rios, Joel Jackel, Walter Attridge, Gibel Attridge, Ryan Roth, Terry Hope Romano, John Stavropoulos, Kev Hickman, Tony Sweeting, Dave Lodge, Mike Grace, Iain-K Peake, Martin Morgan Taylor and all the players who've played Cthulhu Invictus at conventions and Nerdnyc.com events with me over the past few years.

### ***Special Thanks To***

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Dustin Wright, for giving me the idea to put this together in the first place and always being a supporter of my work

### ***Dedication***

To the A-list players I am lucky enough to know, who inspire me to create and push me to always do my best. It all starts with us having a good time in my dining room and ends with something like this. You know who you are and I thank you.

### ***Vado Mihi!***

# IN SUUS DOMUS PROCUL R'LYEH MORTUUS CTHULHU EXPECTO SOMNIUM

– Graffiti found scrawled throughout Pompeii following an earthquake, August 20th, 79AD

The translation of the above graffiti should be well known to most fans of the Cthulhu Mythos. It is “In his house at R’lyeh, dead Cthulhu waits dreaming”. For a time the Roman Empire stretched across most of the “known world” uniting various peoples under its rule. Cultures met, clashed, were conquered and changed one another in the processes. Information traveled along Roman roads along with goods and troops, spreading knowledge and enlightenment throughout the empire. Rome, for some, meant civilization, order and justice. For others it meant enslavement, oppression and occupation. It was the crest of history’s tide, and when it was gone darkness and chaos reigned for nearly a thousand years. But for now the Roman Empire was a light that kept the dark ages at bay, but with every light there are always shadows.

Amid sprawling cities and frontier garrisons, from peaceful country villas to newly constructed catacombs the forces of the Cthulhu Mythos lurked, and thrived. As the Empire spread across the land the Mythos infected it, like an illness, using Rome’s uniting light to spread its own darkness. Isolated covens and cabals of dozens soon became well-organized cults of hundreds, spread across vast stretches of the empire. The accumulated knowledge of the ages was examined, connections made and puzzles solved, sometimes to humanity’s misfortune. The forces of the mythos quickly learned that civilization was as easy to hide in as wastelands but with much more abundant prey.

However, in every age there are always a few who learn the truth. A small handful of people always seem to discover that all is not as it seems and slowly pull back the veil of what mankind tells itself is reality. They see, they learn, and usually they die; but not always. Some take up arms, be it blades or arcane magic, and choose to stand against these shadows. They become mankind’s defenders, fighting to protect others from the truth while

moving to rid the world of these shadows of evil. In every age there are always a few such people, it was no different in the time of the Roman Empire. Here are a few of their stories. Welcome to *Malum Umbra*, Shadows of Evil, The First Cthulhu Invictus Companion.

*Malum Umbra* is a collection of two guide chapters with scenarios interspaced between them. These guide chapters give Keepers and Players alike some additional details on where the scenarios are set. They chapters include NPC’s, notable locations and sinister seeds for continued adventures in the area. The first guide chapter and scenario focus on the province of Dacia, a former bitter enemy of the empire. The second guide chapter and scenario detail and take place in the seaside resort city of Herculaneum, in the province of Italia, the very heart of the empire. The guide chapters give a brief overview to these places and are by no means a comprehensive.

The contents of *Malum Umbra* are as follows –

1. A guide to Dacia (modern day area in and around Romania): A brief look at the province, its history and people.
2. Obsideo Villa (The Haunted Villa): A wealthy patrician purchases a vacation home in Dacia at a very low price. The villa is newly constructed, fully furnished and comes with more than its share of mystery.
3. A guide to the city of Herculaneum: A brief look at the city, its history and citizens.
4. Ultionis Casses (Web of Vengeance): A religious festival is interrupted when a mysterious cult begins assassinating numerous young women who are about to be consecrated priestesses of Minerva.



## Hard History and The Call of Cthulhu

One of the strongest parts of The Cthulhu Mythos has always been that real history and facts are weaved in and out of the cosmic horrors of the Great Old Ones and their fictitious worshippers. The lines between reality and fiction are often blurred. *Malum Umbra* will attempt to carry on that tradition.

The Roman Empire spans several hundred years of history, during which time its borders both expanded and contracted. Citizens of the early Empire lived lives that were much different from those living in its waning decades. *Malum Umbra* doesn't pretend to be hard history. While trying to respectfully portray the period, mistakes, I am sure, have been made in favor of trying to tell a good story.

## New Professions

Below are listed twenty-two new investigator professions for Cthulhu Invictus. Some of these will be better suited to non-Roman born citizens, but Roman citizens nonetheless. These are people who've only recently become part of the Empire, living in places such as the provinces of Aegyotus (Egypt), Dacia (Romania) and Britannia (Britain).

### **Advocate / Jurisconsults**

*Skills: Accounting, Civics, Empire, Fast Talk, Insight, Library Use, Persuade, Status.*

Civilized people have laws to organize their society and these laws need to be debated, defended and at times opposed. Like the Greeks before them the Romans developed professionals (Advocates) and wealthy amateurs (Jurisconsults) whose focus was the law. Your job is to interpret the law, advice people on legal matters and to defend or prosecute cases before judges. You might offer legal counsel to a senator, write up a contract or defend a criminal. Your fees vary widely from gifts of art and books to thousands of sesterces for a single case.  
*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 1300 sesterces.*

### **Apothecary**

*Skills: Accounting, Bargain, Fast Talk, Insight, Natural World, Medicine, Potions.*

If someone wants a tonic for a headache, an elixir to help him or her sleep or something a bit more potent you're the person to come to. You have a deep knowledge of the plants, mushrooms and venomous animals of the natural world and are able to create all manner of drugs. Most of these are helpful and can be sold openly. The more

expensive and exotic items are usually illegal but fetch very high prices. These items are usually lethal, various poisons to be added to food or drink, some to be coated on needles and blades. At times you'll even keep live snakes, scorpions or bees in your shop. You might own a shop, or work out of a hidden workshop and make house calls to wealthy patrons. The authorities might sometimes question you so you've had to develop a quick tongue and become a convincing liar.

*Special: +20% to Potions*

*Money: 1d4 X 50 sesterces +1000 worth of supplies*

*Yearly Income: 600 sesterces*

### **Bath House Attendant**

*Skills: Art-Masseuse, Bargain, Fast Talk, Insight, Listen, Persuade, Swim, +1 other as personal specialty.*

Every Roman town or city worthy of calling itself "civilized" has at least one bath house (with most having more than one). These are places where the rich and powerful mingle and forge alliances. These are places where the working class goes to unwind and clean up after a long day at their trade. They are also places where the poor and attractive can find steady work, which is where you come in. You're an employee to such a place, a lowly bathhouse attendant. Many of your co-workers may be slaves owned by the bathhouse, but you are free. You hand out towels, help people in and out of the pools and saunas, give massages and hopefully make a few tips. You overhear plenty of juicy things every day, as patrons tend to relax when at the bathhouse and maybe say more than they should. You swim well, are attractive (you wouldn't have been hired otherwise) and you certainly are not a prostitute (although anything is negotiable for the right price).

*Special: +15% to Swim, +2 to APP, -2 to EDU*

*Money: 1d4 X 50 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 500 sesterces*

### **Bodyguard**

*Skills: Dodge, Fist/Punch, Grapple, Insight, Listen, Sneak, Spot Hidden, +1 weapon of choice.*

What is it about wealthy people that they always seem to have enemies? They get robbed, kidnapped and held for ransom or have a knife stuck in their back. It's gotten so anyone with a few coins bouncing around in their purse can't even walk the streets without someone watching their back. All this suits you just fine. You make your living shadowing someone, keeping an eye out for danger and dealing with any possible threat to the welfare of your client. You're skilled at moving quietly, blending into a crowd and keeping a sharp eye and keen ear out for anyone suspicious. When a situation does arise you'd rather deal with it with your fists, bloodshed can be messy

business. But if it comes to that, well, you're aren't a stranger to a blade or club. You're tough, well paid to ensure your loyalty and live by your reputation. Slip up just once and your client ends up dead, just try getting hired after that.

*Special: +1 to CON, -1 to EDU*

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 700 sesterces*

### **Charioteer**

*Skills: Animal Training, Dodge, Drive, First Aid, Jump, Repair, Status, Weapon – Whip.*

While gladiatorial matches may be popular they seldom eclipse the excitement of the local chariot races. The teams are run by contractors and divided into the Reds, Greens, Whites and Blues (marked by the color worn by the drivers). Romans were very passionate about the races, with team loyalties breaking friendships and dividing families. Spectators line up before dawn, or pay someone to get a seat for them and betting is common. The races begin with parades, with performers, musicians, public officials and the priesthood carrying likenesses of gods or goddesses. It's big business, a huge social event and part of the very soul of the Roman Empire, and they are all here to see you. You're a charioteer for one of the established teams. You're from the lower classes of Roman society or even a slave because let's face it, who else would take these risks? Death and injury are a constant danger, with drivers cutting themselves free and leaping clear of wrecking chariots a common occurrence. You drive either a two horse or four-horse chariot as you race around the circuit of one of the half dozen circuses in the Empire, as up to a quarter of a million spectators watch. A good day can win you fame and fortune; a bad day means a broken chariot, injured horses and a battered body. A really bad day means you don't get to see tomorrow. But that's the life of a charioteer and fortune favors the bold.

*Special: +2 to Dex, +10 to Drive; -1 to EDU -10 to Status. This profession is available only to lower classes (Commons, Latins, Peregrini, Freedmen and Slaves)*

*Money: 1d4 X 100 sesterces\**

*Yearly Income: 1700 sesterces*

*\* Charioteers with a starting Status of higher than 35% own their own racing chariot and 1d6+1 horses.*

### **Courier**

*Skills: Conceal, Civics, Empire, Fast Talk, Natural World, Ride, Art – Forgery or Status, +1 Weapon skill as personal specialty,*

You make your living delivering messages from place to place, sometimes to the next village, sometimes to the next province and beyond. Racing along the Empire's fine system of roads you can cover between forty and





sixty-five miles per day! Lining most of these routes are relay stations (called *stationes*) where you can get food and lodgings, fresh horses, feed and blacksmith services for your mount. However to use these roads requires you have the proper license from the government, called a diploma. You are either an honest courier who lives by their reputation, or one shrewd enough to realize that a skilled forgery will often work in place of an expensive license. The person sending the message pays you. If you carry good news (ex – a royal wedding or military victory) you'll often wear a laurel but if you carry bad news (ex-the death of a ruler or a military defeat) you'll carry a spear with a feather affixed to it. It's not an easy life, the roads are often unsafe and you mostly travel them alone. Sometimes people don't want your letters to be delivered, forcing you to hide them on your person. If the message doesn't get delivered you likely won't be hired again, or even paid at all.

*Special: +20% to Ride, couriers start with their own horse.*

*Note – Unlicensed courier will need to attempt a Luck roll when attempting to use a *stationes*. If the courier fails they will be asked by officials to present their license. The courier should then present their forged diploma.*

*If the forgery fails they may be fined, detained or even arrested.*

*Money (for licensed courier): 1d3 X 50 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 900 sesterces*

*(for unlicensed courier) : 1d3 X 100 sesterces*

*YearlyIncome:1400 sesterces*

### **Criminal Collegium's Member (Gangster / Thug)**

*Skills – Accounting, Civics, Conceal, Dodge, Hide, Sneak, Fist, Grapple, +1 weapon skill of investigators choosing.*

While a thief may take a persons money from them, what you earn is usually just handed over. You're a member of a criminal collegium (club or association) that controls a territory or an industry. Your organization helps people, like when they need a loan or has a problem that they can't take to the local authorities. You and your fellows protect local businesses from violence and make sure everything keeps moving in the proper directions. Of course, there are fees to be paid, and paid on time especially if everyone knows what's good for them. Your collegium's Curia (headquarters or meeting place) might be a tavern, social club, brothel or even a warehouse. Often the leader of your Collegium is closely connected to

a wealthy patrician, someone who pays well and doesn't want to get his or her hands dirty. You and your fellows have few qualms about dirty hands so long as coin keeps flowing into your pouches.

*Money: 1d4+1 X 100 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 1200 sesterces*

### **Engineer / Builder**

*Skills: Accounting, Civics, Craft, Natural World, Repair, Science – Architecture, Science – Engineering, +1 other as a personal specialty.*

The Roman Empire is connected by roads, receives fresh water via aqueducts; has its waste carried away by sewers and its rivers spanned by bridges. Throughout the Empire are impressive structures; great temples, palaces, baths and arenas. All of these things help make the Empire what it is and stand proudly as a testament to human achievements of the age. All of these things are your work, your vision and your toil. More than a simple stonemason or carpenter, you don't just build houses and walls; you build cities, bridges, roads, military fortifications and aqueducts. Sometimes you are also employed by the Legions to construct siege weapons or advise generals on the best way to destroy an enemy's defenses. Sometimes you are skilled in other areas as well, such as tactics to aid you in building defensive works, art to help you make your works as beautiful as they are functional or how to skillfully operate the siege weapons you are sometimes tasked with constructing.

*Money: 1d4+1 X 100 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 2500 sesterces*

### **Horse Breeder/Trainer**

*Skills: Accounting, Animal Training-Horse, Bargain, Empire, Natural World, Ride, + 2 others as personal specialties.*

Your life is tied to the horse. To you the care, breeding and training of these magnificent animals is an art form. You might raise swift stallions for races, sturdy and fearless mounts for the military or strong powerful animals for chariots. You make your living selling the animals you've bred, raised and trained; helping your customers get the horse best suited to their particular needs. It's a careful pairing, a person and a horse; and if done correctly one that becomes a sacred bond between man and mount. You are also an accomplished rider. You may come from a province that has a tradition of fine horses, trainers and breeders (like Gaul, Dacia or Arabia).

*Special: +20% to Ride or Animal Training-Horse.*

*Money: 1d6 X 50 sesterces + 2-4 (1d3+1) Horses*

*Yearly Income: 2000 sesterces*

### **Hunter**

*Skills: Accounting, Bargain, Other Kingdoms, Track, Throw, Natural World, Spot Hidden, +1 of the following weapons (bow, spear, net).*

You make your living by going out into the wilderness and catching animals. This could be to supply your home, village or local markets with game and pelts. You are also skilled in capturing live animals to be sold as exotic pets to those who can afford it or supply arenas with ferocious beasts for gladiatorial games. You might also be leading a group of wealthy customers on elaborately staged hunts for a good time or as part of a religious ceremony. This part of the profession requires you to haggle with buyers and keep track of your expenses. Surviving in the wilds when going up against dangerous beasts is one thing, surviving in business is quite another.

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces + 500 sesterces in product.*

*Yearly Income: 600 sesterces*

### **Laborer**

*Skills: Drive, Empire, Fast Talk, Hide, +6 skills of investigators choice.*

You are likely a freed slave or are among the Empire's poorest citizens. However, there is always the need for a good worker with a strong back. You aren't fortunate enough to own a shop or have been taught a trade. You move from one job to the next, often traveling far and wide to wherever people are hiring workers. One day you could be unloading a shipment of wine from a river barge, the next hauling lumber into a construction site, carting away stone from a field, helping to bring in a harvest or digging ditches alongside a newly finished road. It doesn't matter what the work is, so long as there is coin at the end of a day you'll take it. This gives you a wide array of skills, none of which you are truly that gifted in. It's not an easy life but at least you're free to live it the best you can.

*Special: +1 to STR, +2 to CON, -2 to EDU, no single skill can ever exceed 75%.*

*Money: 1d4 X 50 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 500 sesterces*

### **Miner**

*Skills: Climb, Craft-Smelting, Listen, Natural World, Repair, Science-Metallurgy, Spot Hidden, One of the following weapons – Maul, Hammer, Pick, Shovel.*

The wheels of the Empire turn on coins of gold and silver. Gold and silver just doesn't grow on trees, it's found deep in the earth and getting it out isn't easy or safe. That's your job. You're a miner. Be it precious metals or rare gemstones, if it's got value and it's found underground you'll bring it to the surface. Thankfully things are much safer than they used to be. Miners now reinforce tunnels and wells with stone columns; this helps limit the risks of

cave-ins. You dig ventilation shafts in order to vent “foul” air and oppressive heat with cooler, fresher surface air. Your profession is not an easy one; you spend time in the dark, doing backbreaking labor while facing deadly risks every day. Mining makes men strong, but it does take its toll on a person. There aren’t many old men working underground. Even worse, you hear stories about miners sometimes breaking into existing chambers where strange inhuman things dwell.

*Special: +2 to STR, Miners suffer the effects of aging faster than normal – for every 5 years over the age of 18 Miners must subtract 1 point from STR, CON, DEX or APP.*

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 600 sesterces*

### Newsreader

*Skills: Bargain, Civics, Dodge, Empire, Fast Talk, Insight, Persuade, Status.*

The citizens of the Empire need to be informed about the latest military victories, the results of recent senatorial elections and how Accius Matho has the finest boots in the Empire with selections for any budget. You make your living by traveling to the center of your community several times daily and shouting out the latest news (supplied by local authorities) to those gathered there. It takes a powerful voice, as well as one skilled in speaking. Sometimes it isn’t what’s said, but how it’s spoken and worded that counts. You also announce messages from local merchants, negotiating your fees with them directly. It’s a good job, a respected one but it does occasionally have its hazards. The crowd sometimes greets bad news

with hurled fruit or rocks, at you! It’s good to know how to read a crowd’s mood and have good reflexes in case that mood turns sour.

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 800 sesterces*

### Overseer

*Skills: Art or Craft, Grapple, Insight, Listen, Other Language, Persuade, Spot Hidden, Weapon – Whip.*

Roman society relies on slave labor to function. Slaves do everything from serving in homes, working in fields and toiling away in shops. Someone has to make sure that these slaves are doing what they are supposed to be doing and not just sitting idle, plotting insurrection or escape. That’s where you come in. With a keen eye and ear as well as being a good judge of people with knowledge of how to motivate them, you make sure the work gets done with as little trouble as possible. If you do your job right, everything will run smoothly and everyone will be happy (mostly so, anyway). If you don’t do your job right you might have a full scale uprising on your hands, and that never turns out well for anyone. You might be watching over hundreds of slaves tending a field or orchard, managing the household slaves of an estate, helping train and tend the newest batch of enslaved gladiators, artists and craftsmen.

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 800 sesterces*

### Priest / Priestess

*Skills – Empire, Fast Talk, Natural World, Occult, Persuade, Science (Augury or Astrology), Status, Write Language*

Whether it’s laboring in a grand temple in Rome or tending a small family shrine, you make your living serving the will of your God or Goddess. In the empire there are plenty of deities to serve. In addition to the traditional Roman pantheon, religion in the empire grew to absorb hundreds of other faiths and deities from wherever it expanded. You could serve Gods that come from Britain, Iberia, Egypt, Persia or India. There is also a possibility in later period campaigns (after 36 AD) that you could be a member of the newly forming cult of Christianity.

*Money: 1d4 X 100 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 900 sesterces.*



## Publican

*Skills: Accounting, Bargain, Civics, Empire, Insight, Library Use, Persuade, Status.*

Everyone wants a strong, well-supplied army, new roads, bridges and aqueducts built. All this takes careful organization, meticulous planning and money (lots and lots of money). That's where you come in. You are a Publican. You oversee and organize public works or handle the logistical needs of the military. You also collect the taxes needed to make all of these things a reality. You bid on contracts to collect taxes of an area or a port, paying the government what they estimate the tax revenues to be. You then go about collecting the taxes to recoup your investment. Your profit comes from collecting more taxes than you paid for the contract so it pays not to miss a single sesterces due to the Empire (because it'll end up coming out of your personal coffers). This doesn't make you a popular figure; everyone wants a smooth running and well maintained Empire but nobody ever seems to like paying their taxes.

*Special: +10% to Accounting.*

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces + 1000 Sesterces in uncollected taxes (collecting may be difficult).*

*Yearly Income: 2000 sesterces*

## Resistance Leader

*Skills: Civics, Conceal, Hide, Insight, Listen, Sneak, Tactics, +1 weapon skill of the investigator's choosing.*

Just because you live under Roman rule doesn't mean you have to like it. It also doesn't mean that it's going to be forever. Your dream is to help your people throw off the bonds of the Empire's oppression and lead them to real independence and freedom. You may be a bandit chieftain, raiding Roman settlements and caravans or you could be a highly placed, local political leader who secretly works to loosen the Empire's hold on your homeland. One day, when the time is right, all the hiding and sneaking around will pay off and you're people will be free. Until then you'll plan, do what you can to hasten that day and make sure you aren't found out.

*Money: 1d6 X 50 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 600 sesterces*

## Sailor

*Skills: Climb, Natural World, Other Kingdoms, Pilot Boat, Repair, Spot Hidden, Swim, Throw.*

The Mediterranean Ocean is the Empire's pool, with provinces surrounding its entire shore. Goods travel across the sea, connecting the Empire with far off markets for goods and much needed supplies of staples for large

metropolitan areas. Often the Empire's might needs to be projected across the sea, transporting troops to the latest uprising or full-scale revolt. This is where you come in. Whether serving as crew for a merchant vessel or a naval warship, carrying a supply of grain to market or a detachment of centurions to the latest hot spot your efforts help keeps the Empire running. You are a man of the sea, more at home on the deck of a ship than a well-paved Roman road. The sea is your mistress and you know well how fickle she could be.

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 700 sesterces*

## Scholar

*Skills: Civics, Empire, Library Use, Science, Status, Write Language, +2 others as personal specialty.*

You spend your days in large libraries and other centers of knowledge and learning. Guardians and caretakers of the wisdom of the ages, you work to keep mankind's greatest achievements and advances from fading away. However some of this knowledge may at times prove to be better off forgotten, as mystic tomes containing terrible secrets are found among these ancient collections. Is the knowledge of such things wrong or only the ways such knowledge is put to use? That is something scholars must decide for themselves. It's likely you are from somewhere such as Aegyotus (Egypt), Arabia or Achaea (Greece).

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 1200 sesterces.*

## Teacher

*Skills: Empire, Library Use, Natural World, Other Language, Other Kingdoms, Science, Write Language, +1 other as a personal specialty.*

You live with a noble family as part of their household and are housed, fed and clothed (as befitting the family's station) by them. Your duties are the education of their children. You receive a modest monetary salary based on the number of children the family has but, otherwise all of your material needs are already met. Once the children are grown you'll move on to a new household and a new set of students. Your personal specialty could be almost anything, allowing you to instruct your charges in medicine, rhetoric (fast talk or persuade), or martial arts (weapon skill or tactics).

*Money: 1d4\* X 50 sesterces.*

*Yearly Income: 1d4\* X 250 sesterces.*

*\* = Number of children currently being instructed. Teachers do not pay for their own housing, food or clothing as their employer automatically provides these things.*

## Vigiles

*Skills: Civics, Climb, First Aid, Insight, Natural World, Spot Hidden, One of the following - Axe or Pick, One of the following - Club or Whip.*

Fire has always been a grave danger to large urban areas, costing countless lives and untold loss of property. Emperor Augustus took this threat so seriously that he created the "Corps of Vigiles", regiments of men whose primary duty was fighting fires. You are stationed in richly appointed barracks complete with shrines, baths and mosaics. You're armed with ropes, picks, saws, axes and buckets, as well as squirts (large syringe like devices that projects a blast of water). When not fighting fires you have a secondary role, that of being a policeman. You have the authority to issue punishments, such as delivering a beating with a rod or cat-of-nine-tails, for minor offenses. This other role makes you rather unpopular with most common citizens, who call those of your professions "sparteoli" or "tarred bucket men". They can call you whatever they like, who are they going to come running to for help when a fire breaks out or their slave's run off. Yep, the nearest Vigiles, that's who.

*Special: +1 to STR & +1 to DEX, +15 points to Climb.*

*Money: 1d3 X 100 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 600 sesterces*

*\* - Housing in the form of a Corps of Vigiles barracks is provided by the state.*

## Writer

*Skills – Art-Writing, Art-Poetry, Bargain, Empire, Library Use, Persuade, Status, Write Language.*

"A room without books is like a body without a soul," wrote Cicero and you couldn't agree more. You make your living, or at least you try to, by putting pen to page. Be they works of poetry or politics,

histories or fiction you're the author of books sold all over the empire (if you're lucky that is). However, just because the bookseller is getting well paid doesn't mean you are. Often you'll read your works publicly in hopes of sparking people's interest in purchasing your work. Sometimes a wealthy supporter of your work will leave you a legacy; a portion of their estate after their death. Even better than that would be securing a living patron, a man of great wealth to support you as you pursued your art, such as Maecenas, a trusted friend of Emperor Augustus. Often such men like to have a writer they support as a member of their inner circle of advisors. However, such generous men are rare and among writers the competition for such patrons is fierce. For many writers is it not coin alone that fuels them to create, but the pursuit of fame or even immortality.

*Special: +10 to Art-Writing or Art-Poetry, +2 to EDU; -1 to STR and -1 to CON*

*Money: 1d8 X 50 sesterces*

*Yearly Income: 4d4 X 100 sesterces rolled annually*



# A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE PROVINCE OF DACIA

In southeastern Europe, framed on the north by the Carpathian Mountains and in the south by the Danube River, lays an ancient land on what was the frontier of the territory controlled by Rome. Unlike other areas to

the kings of Dacia. It was only a matter of time before one would test the other. Dacia would strike first, strike hard and strike often. They proved to be a foe that was not easily subdued by the might of Rome but this was a

contest Rome could not afford to lose. The finest commanders and legions were eventually sent in to conquer the nation, which they did, twice.

Eventually, Dacia became a province. With its prosperous farms, marvelous horses, skillful beekeepers and rich deposits of iron, gold and silver Dacia was too good to let go of. The Romans took steps to keep a firm grip on the area, which became one of the furthest borders of their vast Empire. But the Empire got more than it bargained for



the west this land wasn't a wilderness filled with warring tribes, it was a vibrant thriving civilization. This was the land of the Daci; this is Dacia.

Dacia was a land with eyes set upon expansion. As the first emperor of Rome dreamed of Empire, so too did

when it took control of the region, for Dacia was a land with more than its share of mystery. It was a place where dark things lurked in hidden mines, invisible creatures stalked the countryside and ancient evils hungered for human blood.

## History

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The following is a brief timeline of historical events taking place in Dacia with regards to its conflicts with, and being a part of, the Roman Empire. Keepers wishing to know the full details behind these events are encouraged to consult the various historical sources on the matter. This book seeks in no way to be a proper historical recourse but simply an easy reference to the history of the region from the late 2nd Century BC to 129 AD.

Late 2nd Century BC – The Dacian kingdom, lead by King Oroles, becomes weakened after allying itself with others against Rome.

70 BC – King Boerebista takes control of Dacia. He reorganizes the military and extends the borders of his kingdom. Dacia seemed so formidable that Caesar considered military action against them.

44 BC – King Boerebista is murdered (not long after Caesar's murder). Dacia fractures into four or five smaller kingdoms and recognizes Roman superiority but do not respect it. Various Dacian leaders launch military raids into the Roman province of Moesia, ravaging it repeatedly.

54–65 AD – Dacian raids into the province of Moesia become such a serious problem that Emperor Nero commissions Samaritan tribes to help defend the border.

85 AD – King Decebalus, who came to power early in the 1st century and united Dacia under his control, invades the Roman province of Moesia with a considerable army.

87 AD – Roman forces under the command of Cornelius Fuscus are defeated in battle against the forces of Dacia. Cornelius Fuscus is executed by Decebalus.

88 AD – Roman forces, under the command of Tettius Iullianus, invade Dacia. They strike deep into Dacian territory. Unfortunately they are held back from victory by Roman military defeats to the Marcomanni in Germania. Emperor Domitian sues for peace and a treaty is signed. Dacia is made a "Client of Roman". Dacia receives monetary, technical and military aid from Rome but many in the Empire are angered by the terms of this treaty.

101 AD – Emperor Trajan, trying to deal with problems within the Roman economy, seeks to put an end to the treaty agreements of Domitian. He resolves to crush Dacia once and for all, launching a full-scale invasion.

102 BC – Rome captures and occupies the Dacian capital of Sarmizegethusa and surrounding countryside. Emperor Trajan is satisfied the Dacians are defeated and the expedition comes to an end.

105 AD – King Decebalus leads an all out rebellion, recapturing the capital of Sarmizegethusa. He drives Roman forces from Dacia then crosses the border and once again ravages the Roman province of Moesia. Emperor Trajan responds by launching a second military campaign against Dacia.

107 AD – Roman forces recapture the Dacian capital of Sarmizegethusa, destroying the Dacian army in the process. King Decebalus commits suicide. Dacia is now part of the Roman Empire.

129 AD – Emperor Hadrian contemplates abandoning Dacia because of the difficulty holding the territory presents but decides against it due to his concern for the safety of Roman settlers in the area. He instead divides the province into Dacia Superior and Dacia Inferior, to make the area easier to govern.

## Military Forces

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The powerful and aggressive Kingdom of Dacia had been a thorn in the side of Rome for almost a hundred and fifty years before it was finally conquered. Even then it had to be conquered not once but twice! Rome knew their hold on the province would last only as long as it could be enforced. Charged with this task were two of the Empire's finest legions, the V Macedonia and XIII Gemina.

Both these legions had a long history before being sent into Dacia, each being founded in the middle 1st century BC (43 & 57 BC, respectively). The 13th legion was created by Julius Caesar and was the legion he famously crossed the Rubicon with. The 5th legion was one of the original twenty-eight legions raised by Octavian. Both legions were highly respected and decorated, each receiving the official title of "Pia Fidelis" or "Most Faithful". The 13th Gemina and 5th Macedonia legions participated in the Battle of Actium, the final war of the Roman Republic between Octavian and Mark Anthony in 31 BC. It would be one hundred and thirty two years before both armies reunited once again, taking part in the Dacian wars.

After the final defeat of King Decebalus in 107 AD, both the 13th and 5th were permanently garrisoned in Dacia. The 13th was based in the city of Apulum, while the 5th was stationed in the city of Troesmis. It is a sign of just how volatile the Empire considered Dacia that



YEAR	LEGIONS	BASED	EMBLEM
106 AD – 270 AD	13th Gemina	Apulum	Lion
107 AD – 274 AD	5th Macedonica	Troesmis	Bull and Eagle

cavalry mounts, once properly trained. One in every thousand of these fine animals is something quite a bit more special and unique (see below, Child of Epona).

both of these highly respected legions would be kept in the province on a permanent basis.

**Dacian Legionnaires**

While Dacia remained an unstable place for the Empire many of the native Dacian people did, in fact, Romanize. The very name of the region today (Romania) is a testament to this. As for any Roman citizen in the empire military service was a good way to improve one’s standing and many local Dacians did enlist in auxiliary units. Large numbers of auxiliary camps were established all over the province, especially along main roads and the province’s outer border.

**Economy**

The average citizen of Dacia makes their living through agriculture. The province is known for producing various cereal crops. In addition to this, Dacian farmers tend orchards of fruit trees, vineyards and are known for their skills at apiculture (beekeeping), allowing for wax and honey to be produced here. Where the land isn’t ideal for farming herding is the major activity. Citizens of Dacia also keep large herds of cattle, flocks of sheep and the local horses are considered some of the finest in the empire. Dacian horses are well respected and highly sought after, especially by the military. In addition to its crops and animals, the province also exports lumber from its forests.

The true wealth of Dacia isn’t in its farms, forests or fields; it’s in its mines. Salt is mined within the province, as well as iron, silver and gold. The mines of Dacia have been worked since the 8th century BC and are located mainly in the western Carpathian Mountains. Dacian craftsmen are skilled metalworkers, as well as being skilled at producing ceramics.

**Local Product: Dacian Horses**

Merchants and riders from across the empire journey to Dacia hoping to purchase some of the region’s fine horses. The local breed is a strong, hardy animal also known for being nimble in close quarters. They tend to be a bit more spirited and prone to rearing when threatened. These natural traits and tendencies make them ideal for



**Riding Horse, Dacian**

CHAR.	ROLLS	AVERAGES
STR	3D6+20	30-31
CON	2D6+8	15
SIZ	4D6+12	26
POW	4D6	13-15
DEX	3D6+2	11-12
<b>MOVE</b>	<b>HP</b>	<b>AV. DAMAGE BONUS</b>
14	22	+2D6

- Weapons Bite 5%, damage 1d10
- Kick 5%, damage 1d8+db
- Rear/Plunge 10%, damage 2d8+db
- Trample\* 25%, damage 2d6+db

*\*Horse must be trained for this attack*

- Armor 1 points muscle.
- Skills Dodge 45%, Hide 25%.

**Special: Child of Epona**

One in every thousand Dacian horses is born an animal of superior agility, hardiness, and above all intelligence. Most are wild roaming as they are too smart to be easily caught and too stubborn to remain kept against their will for long. These animals cannot be “owned” in the traditional sense. A prospective rider must come to an



understanding with these creatures, partner with it in a relationship based on mutual respect, kindness and in most cases love. These animals are capable of reasoning, often doing things of their own accord that astound even their owners (like dragging a wounded man to safety, retrieving fallen items, warning people of hidden danger, untying knots and opening locked pens). Children of Epona do not mate with others of their kind, being only fertile when breeding with normal horses. The breed seems to instinctually recognize others of its kind and are able communicate quite well with one another. These rare and wondrous animals are called Children of Epona (after the Celtic goddess of horses).

**Origins and History** – In the 5th Century BC, a noble Dacian prince named Lazar waged a campaign to eradicate a dark cult worshipping an entity called “The Green Man”. This entity, one of the many masks of Nyarlathotep, demanded human sacrifices and its servants had kidnapped many local comati (peasants, see below) as offerings. The cult was lead by a high priestess, a witch named Gogna. Gogna was armed with items of power, given to her by the Green Man himself. These were an amulet that rendered her invisible and a wand allowing her to change one sort of creature into another.

Eventually Lazar and his men eradicated the cult, but at a terrible price. During the final battle against Gogna the witch used her wand to transform Lazar into a horse. But Lazar struck out with his hooves, shattering her vile wand. This unleashed its dark energy, stunning Gogna. Lazar then trampled her, nearly to death, before she used her amulet to turn invisible and escape. The cult was destroyed but the valiant prince Lazar was trapped in the body of a horse.

Lazar made the best of it, roaming wild and eventually becoming the top stallion of a group of beautiful mares. However, he soon realized that his offspring weren’t like regular horses, but more like him. They were intelligent, able to reason much more than their mothers and they passed this down to their offspring. The children of Lazar prospered and slowly spread across all of Dacia. Men who came to know of them dubbed them Children of Epona, the divine Celtic Goddess of Horses.

However the breed soon realized that they were in grave danger. Something was specifically hunting them, avoiding normal horses while singling them out for death. These horses would be found dead, as if savaged by some great predator. The Children of Epona learned to be cautious, to avoid revealing themselves easily lest they fall prey to this unseen hunter. Some of the breed realized that the best defense was a good offense, and partnered themselves with powerful nobles, warriors and generals. This way they’d be protected from the creature that seemed to lust after those horses who carried the blood of Lazar, their ancient sire.

### Child of Epona

CHAR.	ROLLS	AVERAGES
STR	3D6+20	30-31
CON	3D6+6	16
SIZ	4D6+12	26
INT	2D6+3	9-11
POW	4D6	13-15
DEX	3D6+4	12-13
MOVE	HP	AV. DAMAGE BONUS
14	22	+2D6

Weapons	Bite 10%, damage 1d10 Kick 10%, damage 1d8+db Rear/Plunge 15%, damage 2d8+db Trample 35%, damage 2d6+db
Armor	2 points muscle and agility.
Skills	Dodge 50%, Hide 45%, Sneak 40%, Spot Hidden 40%.

### Gogna, The Stalker of Horses, Queen of Weasels

STR	22	CON	40	SIZ	20
INT	15	POW	20	DEX	16
APP	0	EDU	15	SAN	0
HP	30	DB	+2D6		

Weapons	Bite 50%, 1d6+db
Armor	3 point of thick muscle and fur, damage by mundane means is only temporary.
Skills	Hide 75%, Listen 60%, Sneak 40%, Spot Hidden 50%, Track 50%.
San. Check	1d6 for seeing Gogna’s form.

**Description** – This creature is usually invisible, appearing only when it physically comes in contact with another living thing and usually that’s far too late. When visible it appears as a massive eight-foot long female weasel, with dark brown fur, red hateful eyes and massive ivory jaws. It occasionally wears a belt with a pouch of simple items and sometimes a simple hooded cloak, especially in winter.

It attacks by delivering a horrific bite and then locking its jaws on its victim. This allows it to do bite damage automatically every round after it bites. Investigators wishing to pry the creature’s jaws off must defeat it in a STR vs. STR check on the resistance table. Even after death the creature’s jaws will remain locked, although at that point its STR is effectively halved. As deadly as the creature is, it seldom attacks people unless they get in the way of its chosen target, which is always a Child of Epona.

The Queen of Weasels is a fearsome opponent, made

even more dangerous by the fact that she is essentially immortal. The creature does not age and any damage dealt to her by non-magical means is only temporary. If reduced to zero hit points the creature vanishes, turning into smoke and drifting away on the wind. Over the next 1d100 days the creature slowly reforms, perfectly restored to full hit points. It usually reforms somewhere secluded, preferably underground within twenty miles of where it was most recently slain. The only way to totally destroy the creature would be to destroy the creature with an enchanted weapon or with the use of magical spells.

**History** – When Prince Lazar destroyed her wand its dark energy flowed into her. She was stunned, fighting to maintain her human form as the wand’s spent magic raced through her. When Prince Lazar’s hooves began landing blows on her, she lost that struggle. To save her life she used her amulet to escape, unable to focus her concentration on retaining her form. Gogna was nearly dead. She dragged her now invisible and almost crippled form into a cave and stayed there for many months. Slowly she recovered from her wounds, but her human form was lost.

The witch discovered she was now trapped in the body of an enormous weasel. This form kept her from casting any of the spells she’d known. Gogna then prayed long and hard to the Green Man, who told her when the one who destroyed the wand was dead he’d



restore her human form. For years she searched until she discovered that the stallion, which Prince Lazar had become, was long dead. She then realized that her master would not restore her until all of the prince’s line was dead. Gogna then began hunting the Children of Epona and will continue to do so until the last one is dead. Once the breed is extinct she’ll be restored to human form.

**Local Product: The Dacian Falx**

With abundant iron deposits and skilled metalworkers Dacian produced fine weapons and armor. One such weapon was a drastically curved sword called the Falx. The blade, related to the scythe curved gradually until the very tip of the blade pointed at a 90-degree angle to the hilt. It was created in both a single-handed version called a Sica and double-handed version called the Greater Falx that was more of a pole arm than a sword. The weapon was traditionally used on a routed and fleeing enemy, after their ranks had been broken by sustained missile fire.

WEAPON	BASE%	DAMAGE	HANDS	LENGTH	IMPALE/PARRY	STR/DEX	COST
Sica Falx	20%	1d8+1	1	Long	Yes/Yes	8/10	225
Greater Falx	15%	1d10+1	2	Long	Yes/Yes	11/11	60

**Native Peoples**

The people of Dacia are a mix of Thracian, Germanic, Sarmatians and later, Roman stock. Migratory groups of Goths and Roloxani also populate the province. They speak an Indo-European language whose characteristics are still disputed and debated by modern historians due to a lack of archaeological information. For our purposes we’ll refer to this language as Dacian, which would be related to modern day Albanian. The Romanization of the province gave rise to the modern Romanian language, which is one of the families of Latin tongues such as Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Dacian society is organized into a multi level caste system (see below), ruled over by a monarch. Its people came from a variety of different tribes as well. Some notes on the Dacian caste system can be found below. A brief listing of Dacian Kings and Tribes of Dacia can also be found below in Table One and Two respectively.

**The Dacian Caste System**

The Dacian Caste system is divided into two main levels,

an upper and lower class. The upper class is called the Tarabostes. They control much of the wealth as well as hold most positions of leadership and authority. Having the right to cover their heads marks the Tarabostes class. A felt hat, which the Romans call a pileati, is the headgear of choice.

The lower class, which comprises the bulk of the population, is called the Comati. They are commonly peasants, artisans and craftsmen. They also make up the bulk of the rank and file of the area's soldiers, while a member of the Tarabostes would be its officers and generals.

#### DACIAN KINGS

Oroles	2nd Century BC
Dicomes	1st Century BC
Costio	1st Century BC
Burebista	70 BC – 44 BC
Comosicus	44 BC – 28 BC
Duras	68 AD – 87 AD
Decebakus	87 AD – 106 AD

#### TRIBES OF DACIA

Albocensi, Anarti, Apuli, Biefi, Biesi, Britolagi, Buridavensi, Carpians, Caucoensi, Cobrizi, Cotensi, Dimensi, Obulensi, Peucini, Piefigi, Potulatensi, Predavensi, Racatai, Ratacensi, Sapuni, Siensi, Suci, Tagri, Trizi, Tyragetae

### Dacian Religion

The Dacian people believe in the immortality of the soul. Death is only a change of state, with the soul traveling on to a new country and becoming immortal. This new country was the home of their one true god, whom they called Zamolxis. Zamolxis is considered to be a god of healing, the arts, magical powers and death. Many stories identify him as once being a living human who ascended into divinity after death. The chief priest of Zamolxis is a position of great importance and is traditionally the king's chief advisor.

### Dacian Names

Keepers wishing to expand play in Dacia as well as players wishing to have native born Dacus investigators will likely need a good supply of local names. Included below are good selections of suitable Dacus names.

#### MALE NAMES

Adorjian	Decebal	Kazmer	Patrik
Akos	Dezso	Kelemen	Pista
Alin	Donat	Kornel	Radu
Almos	Doru	Laci	Sandor
Ambrus	Dracul	Laszlo	Sandu
Andor	Dragomir	Lazar	Sebastyen
Andrei	Dragos	Lecso	Serciu
Antal	Egyed	Levente	Skender
Anton	Elek	Levi	Sorin
Arpad	Emilian	Lorinc	Stelian
Attila	Fane	Marcell	Szilard
Aurel	Flaviu	Mihaita	Tiberiu
Balint	Gavril	Miksa	Tibor
Bandi	Gexa	Mircea	Toma
Barna	Gyorgy	Mitica	Tomi
Bela	Gyozo	Nandor	Valeriu
Bertok	Hihai	Nandru	Vali
Bogdan	Ignac	Nelu	Valorn
Catalin	Imre	Nicu	Vencel
Ciprian	Ionel	Nicusor	Vida
Claudiu	Iulian	Nikola	Viorel
Cornel	Jenci	Odi	Virag
Cosmin	Joska	Orban	Wadim
Costel	Kalman	Oszkar	Zoltan
Danut	Karcsi	Ovidiu	Zsigmond

#### FEMALE NAMES

Agota	Dorkia	Istvan	Narcisa
Alexandreina	Duci	Iulia	Natalia
Alida	Ecaterina	Iuliana	Nicoleta
Alin	Elisabeta	Jola	Nikolett
Aliz	Emese	Jolanka	Oana
Anca	Eniko	Juli	Panni
Andreea	Etel	Kamilla	Piri
Aniko	Felicia	Karola	Piroska
Annuska	Franci	Kata	Rodica
Aranka	Frida	Kati	Roza
Beata	Fruzsina	Kinga	Rozalia
Bianka	Georgeta	Kitti	Ruxandra
Bogdana	Gizi	Klara	Sandra
Borbala	Gogna	Korenlia	Sorina
Bozsi	Hajna	Lenuta	Stefania
Camelia	Hajnalka	Licia	Stela
Cili	Ildi	Lujza	Teca
Constanta	Ildiko	Luminita	Terez
Cosmina	Ildo	Madalina	Timea
Crina	Ileana	Marta	Tunde
Daciana	Ilca	Matild	Vilma
Dana	Ilonka	Mihaela	Violeta
Doina	Ioana	Mirela	Viorica
Dora	Ionela	Miruna	Zsoka
Dorina	Iren	Monika	Zsuzsa



## Personalities of Dacia

Below are a selection of six non-player characters keepers can use and investigators can meet while traveling in Dacia. Some are loosely based on actual historical figures while others are completely fictitious.

### Decimus Terentius Scaurianus

*Roman Governor*

*Skills: Civics 85%, Empire 85%, Other Language-Dacian 60%, Persuade 70%, Status 75%, Tactics 55%.*

Terentius Scaurianus is a veteran politician as well as a distinguished military man. He served in the 5th legion, as well as spending some time as a senator. Well known for his keen mind, dry wit and persuasive manner he was selected as governor of Dacia. After campaigning in the region for the last few years, he's learned the local language in an effort to better understand his Dacian counterparts. He's even started courting a highly placed Tarabostes woman from the Demensi tribe named Ildiko. While outwardly seeming to be reasonable and ready for compromise, Terentius is actually completely ruthless about keeping Dacia a secure part of the Empire. If diplomacy should fail he is ready and willing to send in the troops to do whatever is necessary.

### King Decebalus

*Dacian Monarch and Resistance Leader*

*Skills: Accounting 60%, Persuade 65%, Insight 70%, Status 85%, Tactics 80%*

Decebalus, King of the Dacians, is a crafty ruler. Able to play the political game as well as the military one King Decebalus managed to thwart the might of Rome on various occasions. Even after being apparently beaten he was able to return to power, drive Rome from his homeland and even launch an attack into Roman territory. However his skill and luck could only carry him so far. In the end Rome proved too great and he took his own life rather than be humiliated before his people.

### Tullius Ligus

*Legionnaire of XIII Legion*

*Skills: Pilum 80%, Punch 80%, Ride 75%, Shield Parry 65%, Spot Hidden 75%, Sneak 70%, Sword - Gladius 85%.*

Tullius Ligus would be one of the most highly decorated soldiers in the 13th legion if he weren't constantly being disciplined and demoted. In battle he is the perfect warrior, fearless, skilled and able to sniff out an ambush as if he were a hunting dog. When off duty he enjoys drinking, dice, brawling and women far too much for his

own good. If it weren't for his remarkable luck (85%) he'd have been executed long ago. He's currently been made a mounted courier attached to the 13th, delivering important messages between Apulum and Ulpia Traiana, due to his skill on horseback. While he tries to follow his orders, should he see someone in trouble while riding by his first instinct will be to help, especially if there's going to be fighting involved.

### Cornelius Thermus

*Roman Settler*

*Skills: Animal Training 70%, Bargain 60%, Drive 55%, Fast Talk 65%, Insight 65%*

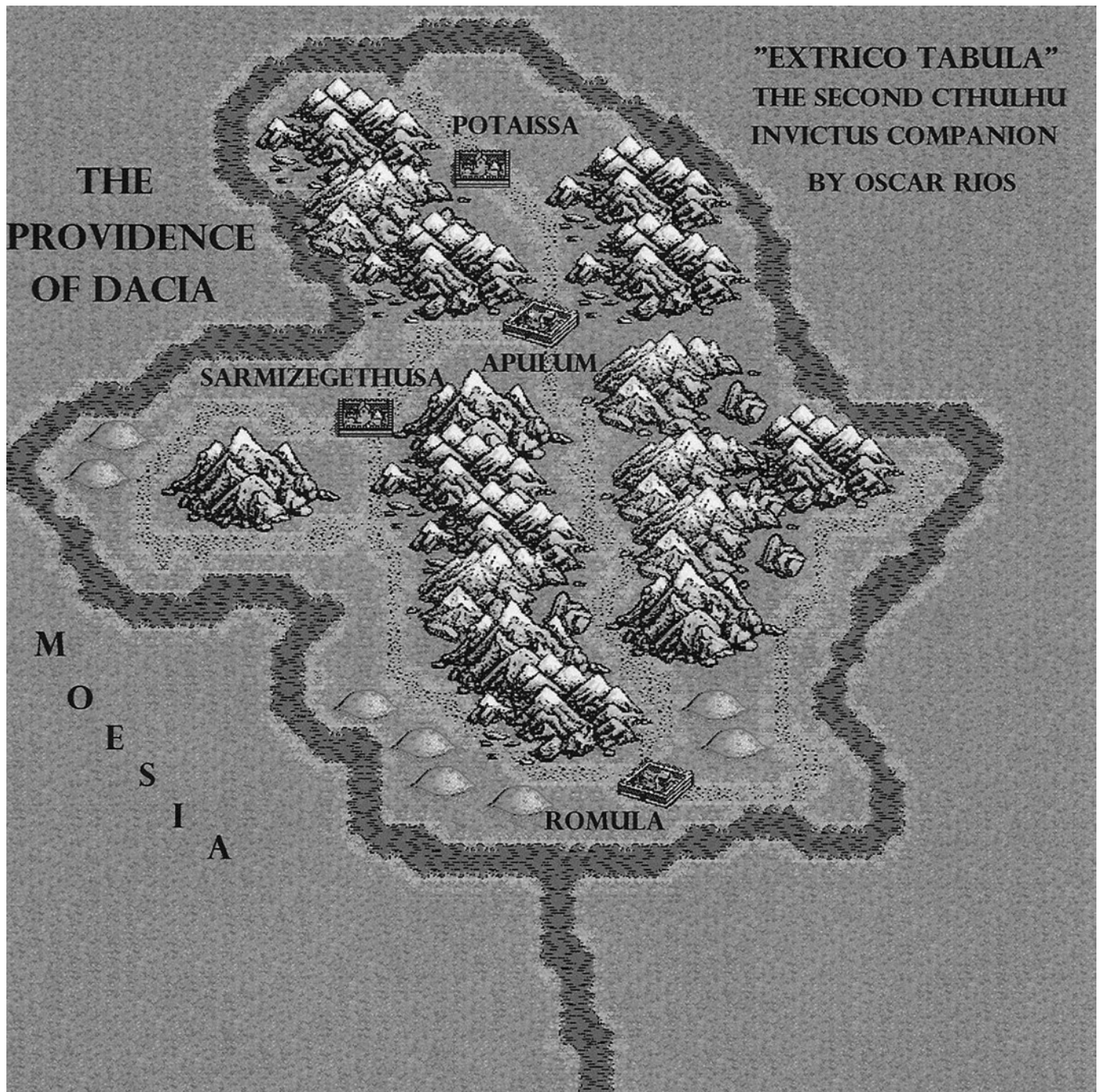
After spending twenty-five years as a cavalry officer Cornelius retired to Dacia with his rather large family (a wife and six children between the ages of 15 and 5). He purchased land and began breeding and training fine Dacian horses, passing his skills onto his sons. While at first the family struggled in this new land today they are thriving, doing a good business selling fine mounts to wealthy buyers. Unfortunately some of the family's Dacian neighbors would like nothing better than to see the Roman family pack up and go elsewhere. While there's been no open hostility, Cornelius knows this is only because his ranch is a short distance from the local Roman military garrison.

### Akos of the Tagri

*Dacian Auxiliary*

*Natural World 60%, Ride 60%, Sica Falx 75%, Status 35%, Track 70%.*

Akos was born into a Tarabostes family, one that had a long tradition of military service. During his youth he trained at arms and horsemanship, waiting for the day that he would join his countrymen in crossing the frozen Danube on a glorious raid against Rome. Unfortunately by the time Akos came of age such days were long gone, Dacia had been conquered. His family lost most of their wealth and lands during the conflicts with and occupation by Rome. Akos found himself at a loss as to how to feed and clothe himself as all he knew was soldiering. Eventually, he learned of a Roman Auxiliary unit being formed that put out a call for cavalry troops. Despite immense reservations Akos joined up and since then has had a rather comfortable life. Sometimes he hates himself, thinking that his dead relatives who fell to Roman swords must be cursing him from beyond the grave. Other times he is proud of his military career and finds many of his Roman colleagues not too different than men he grew up with. While often deeply conflicted as to his place in the world, Akos is a very professional soldier who seems to have been born into the saddle.



## Important Locations In Dacia

### Sarmizegethusa

This city was once the capital of the kingdom of Dacia, built on a high crag. It was the most important military, political and religious site in the entire country. The city was a fortress with ten-foot thick defensive walls, the cornerstone to the Dacian defensive strategy and one of six fortified citadels. It was a very modern city, with running water carried by ceramic pipes and a very high

standard of living for its peoples. Most citizens lived on the five cut out terraces that comprised the city.

The Romans first conquered the city in 102 AD but were driven out in 105 AD when King Decebalus led an uprising and retook the capital. The Romans were forced to attack the city again, retaking it in 107 AD. After being forced to conquer the city for a second time, the Romans made sure they'd never need to do it again. Sarmizegethusa was destroyed and a new city sharing the same name built nearby. Today the city is mostly in ruins

with a Roman military garrison being stationed here. Just what ancient secrets and restless spirits might lie in these ruins, especially the city's old religious district and temples, one can only imagine.

### **Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa**

This newly constructed city is the "new" capital of the Roman province of Dacia. The city had the strategic advantage of having mountains both to its north (Poiana Ruscai Mountains) and its south (Retezat Mountains), making it rather difficult for an enemy to approach in force. Ulpia Traiana was walled with two main roads intersecting a main public forum in the city's center. The large city stretched beyond its defensive fortifications, with shops, homes, temples and the city's burial ground all forming outside of Ulpia Traiana's wall. The city is home to nearly thirty thousand people and is located about 40 km from Dacia's old capital.

### **Apulum**

This city, located on the Mures Rivier, is one of the most important political, socially and economic centers in all of Dacia. Situated at the meeting place of three roads, Apulum is one of the province's largest urban centers. The city is also the permanent home base of the 13th Gemina Legion.

### **Potaissa**

Located in northern Dacia on the Aries River Potaissa lies along a road linking it with both Apulum and Sarmizegetusa (both to the south). The city is the permanent home to the 5th Macedonica legion. Potaissa is an economic center in the region, especially with regards to the salt trade. The salt mines of Potaissa have been in operation since prehistoric times.

### **Romula**

This city is near the province's southern border with Moesia and sits at the juncture of three roads. To protect this strategic position Romula has been well fortified. Protecting the urban center of the city are two fortified rings of fortifications reinforced with a pair of military strongholds. Units of legionaries occasionally from the 7th Claudia and the 22nd Primigenia legions along with a permanent garrison of Syrian archers defend Romula.

## **Sinister Seeds**

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### **The Mine of Madness**

Recent patrols in the Carpathian Mountains uncovers

the ruins of some sort of large keep, many decades old. No one in the area seems to know anything about the structure but upon investigation the ruins conceal the entrance to an old mine. Initial exploration uncovers something amazing. The mine contains a rich vein of silver! The ruined house must have been some sort of smelting facility to support the mine. As no one has any idea who owned the house or the land investors are rushing into the area in order to rebuild the facility and reopen the mines. Unfortunately these efforts are not going smoothly. Workers are beginning to sleepwalk, falling to their deaths as they stroll off cliffs in the night. Some have killed themselves while others have attacked their fellow workers without provocation. People are afraid, whispering that dark things in the mine are whispering vile secrets to them, secrets men should never know. It's beginning to look as if the mines may never be reopened.

Unbeknownst to anyone, the deepest levels of the mines are the home to a number of mythos entities called Tunnelers Below. They are the ones who destroyed the former mining facility as well as being the source of the insanity spreading into the people dwelling too close to the mines. Unless these dangerous and mysterious creatures can be destroyed or driven from the area, the silver mine can never be reopened.

### **Horseflesh**

An investigator visiting Dacia purchases a horse after hearing of the superior native stock. They end up buying one of the rare Children of Epona, a horse of surpassing intelligence. The horse slowly reveals some of these qualities, trying to impress the investigator. The animal was not owned by the horse dealer but rather broke into the pens overnight. It did this hoping to escape the creature that it suspects (correctly) is hunting it. Its plan was to confuse the creature among so many other horses and possibly become "owned" by someone able to offer protection from the "stalker of horses". Little does it know that the witch Gogna searched the ranch while invisible and overheard the horse merchants saying something about "an extra horse" in the sale pen. She already has a good idea just which horse she's looking for. Soon the investigators will find themselves swept up in a deadly game of a cat and mouse, played out between "their" new horse and "The Queen of Weasels".

### **The Forsaken**

In the Carpathian Mountains two groups have gathered from all over Dacia. They are at odds as to what their true destiny is but mankind will suffer no matter which side

wins. Both groups are vampires. One group considers themselves “Children of Lamia” and their forms are hideous to behold. The Children of Lamia are unaffected by sunlight and have long snake-like fangs which are hollow for draining the blood of the living. They wear long hooded robes when in public. The other group appears completely human, but cannot exist in sunlight. This group calls themselves “The Children of the Night” and believe themselves to be without souls.

Both groups have known of the other’s existence for some time and both feel they are somehow related. This meeting is to determine if the two groups should merge, be affiliated or avoid one another completely. Neither group really understands the other but they do have two things in common, a desire to feast on the blood of the living and a belief that the gods have forsaken them. So, they have converged in the mountains for several weeks of meeting not far from a ready supply of food, the remote mountain town of Karsidaua. Soon stories of sudden disappearances, corpses found drained of blood, unholy looking creatures and seductive mysterious strangers reach the investigators. Can the people of Karsidaua be saved in time?

# OBSIDEO VILLA

("THE HAUNTED VILLA")

A CTHULHU INVICTUS SCENARIO

BY OSCAR "OSK" RIOS

## Introduction

As the miles drift away you all become more and more convinced that this isn't going to turn out well. Dacia is far from Rome and was, until ten years ago, a bitter enemy of the empire. Today it's the frontier, the very eastern edge of lands controlled by Caesar. It's said to be a fertile land, a place of great green beauty and opportunity. That is what you've been told anyway, it was your first trip to

the region. You'd see for yourself soon enough.

The countryside looked pleasant enough. A decade of Roman control was already showing through from the region's new roads and architectural styling. Troops were abundant, some of the empire's best in fact, stationed in the province to maintain law and order as well as discourage local rebellion. So why were you still so uneasy? Twenty thousand sesterces, that's why.





That was the amount your patron, Appius Clodius Cerco has paid for his new property. He'd told you it was supposed to hold fine peach orchards and a working vineyard. Cerco boasted of the vineyard's dark grapes that produced potent, delicious wine. He also mentioned the property came with thirty slaves to work the estate. You were told there is a slave's house, an overseer's house and a villa. The villa was supposedly a fine, new roman style home, less than five years old. This is what you were told but not what you believed. Twenty thousand sesterces shouldn't even pay for the slaves!

As your wagons began to descend into a valley, you spied two estates sprawled out below you. Both were large, containing vineyards and orchards; both had large well laid out villas. One seemed just a bit nicer than the other, its wall's brighter and its gardens more luxurious. Your guide then directs your attention to the more eye-catching of the two saying, "Master Cerco, that is the property you've purchased. We'll be there in about an hour." You expected some broken down hovel with the roof falling in, definitely not all this. Maybe Dacia wouldn't be so bad after all.

## Keepers Information

The investigators accompany the new owner of a beautiful three-year-old villa, located at the frontier territory of Dacia (modern day Romania). The villa sits on fertile lands surrounded by orchards and vineyards. A wealthy patrician named Appius Clodius Cerco purchased the property, site unseen via an agent, at what he considered a steal. The reason for the low price being that locals consider the place haunted.

The villa's builder was Iulius Pansa, a half insane Roman born scholar and architect who dabbled in magic. Pansa was also an avid dreamer, who managed to create the perfect companion in the dreamlands. His greatest wish was to find a way to bring his beloved creation, which he married in the dreamlands, into the waking world. The architect tricked his employer into funding this grand effort. One room of the villa, the baths, was especially constructed for this purpose.

Using shards of a strange stone imbued with magical properties, which he discovered in the dreamlands, he created a physical doorway bridging the waking world and the dreamlands. Painstakingly cutting the "dream stone" into one thousand tiles Pansa incorporated the stones into

the bath's mosaic. Now anyone falling asleep inside the baths activates this doorway into the dreamlands. His plan was the physically enter the dreamlands, retrieve his wife and pass back into the waking world with her. It almost worked.

Pansa intentionally fell asleep in the villa's bath, opening the doorway into the Dreamlands. He had no control over where the doorway opened and suddenly found himself in a dark, subterranean tunnel. He followed the passage into a chamber containing a bottomless chasm. Unfortunately for Pansa this was the lair of one of the dreamlands most deadly entities, The Thing Hanging in the Void. The architect was quickly killed, his soul torn from his body and devoured.

Since then anyone falling asleep in the baths has suddenly found themselves in the dreamland lair of The Thing Hanging in the Void. The Thing spared a victim, possessing them in order for this person to provide a steadier supply of victims. This person was Mihaela, an attractive slave owned by the estate often tasked with running the home's baths. Eventually the villa's original owners sold the property, after several of them vanished mysteriously. Later a second family purchased the villa and, with Mihaela's help, began falling prey to The Thing Hanging In The Void as well. This family moved out of the main house and took up residence in a smaller house built for the estate's overseer. This building was also once the residence of the villa's designer, Iulius Pansa.

As Mihaela traveled between the waking world and the dreamlands, the barrier between the two realities became weaker and easier to penetrate. Soon various creatures native to the dreamlands began forcing their way into the waking world, usually looking for prey. The vanishings continued and coupled with attacks from fantastic, totally alien creatures the second owners abandoned the property. They eventually sold the property at great loss to Papirius Vulso, working on the behalf of Appius Clodius Cerco.

Today locals know of the villa's dark history. As the vanishing and attacks usually only happen to the Roman occupants they haven't been overly concerned. Before long Mihaela, once again tending to the estate's baths, will resume her service to The Thing Hanging In The Void. Soon residents, and possibly investigators, will find themselves drugged and falling unconscious in the villa's bath. These unfortunate victims will mean only one thing to the horror waiting for them in the dreamlands, fresh souls to be devoured. Investigators arriving at the villa need to unravel the mystery of just what is causing these vanishings, where these mysterious creatures are coming from and how to put an end to this evil once and for all.



## The Cast

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This scenario has a large number of NPC's who the investigators will be interacting with. Some of these may become allies while others are already their enemies. Below, divided into categories, is a quick listing of the cast of "Obsideo Villa", meant to assist Keepers with keeping track of them all.

### Past Romans Associated with the Property

Iulius Pansa	Half insane scholar, architect, magician and the Villa's builder (dead).
Porcius Decula	1st owner of Villa (missing).
Annuis Ligus	2nd owner of the Villa (left Dacia over a year ago)
Sergius Regulius	Famous Roman finder and the last person murdered in the Villa.

### Current Villa Residents

Appius Clodius Cerco	Patron and master of the Villa.
Papirius Vulso	Agent who brokered deal, due to be overseer.
Claudia Deculia	Unmarried sister of Clodius Cerco who looks after his children
Servius Clodius Decula (13) & Manius Clodius Scipio (10)	Sons of Clodius Cerco
Claudia Cercia (7)	Daughter of Clodius Cerco <i>Note – Clodius Cerco's wife, Salva Frontelia, died five years ago after a long illness.</i>

Roman Villa Servants

### Dacus Villa Slaves & Servants

Varro, Sura & Geta	Male servants
Alin & Gavril	Male servants
Nigera	Female servant
Ilinca	Female servant
Mihaela	Female slave, possessed by the Thing Hanging in the Void

### Local Dacus

Dorin	Male orchard tender, family has lived in area for generations, freeman worker.
Cosmina	Female slave working on

property vineyard, area mystic with arrested son.

Fane	Son of Cosmina who is currently imprisoned.
Bogdan	Freeman worker, local rebel leader, former Dacus noblemen.
Catalin, Dragos, Marku & Nicu	Bogdan's men, a combination of male freedmen and slaves.

### Roman Neighbors

Hirtius Silanus	Head of household and owner of property.
Catalinia	Wife of Silanus who enjoys socializing and gossip.
Flaminia	Sister of Catalinia who's unmarried and enjoys gossip.
Silania	Daughter of Catalinia and Silanus who enjoys gossip who's of marriageable age.
Cotta	Young son of Silanus.
Calpurnius Nerva	Business partner of Hirtius Silanus.
Galabria	Wife of Nerva and good friend of Catalinia, Flaminia and Silania.

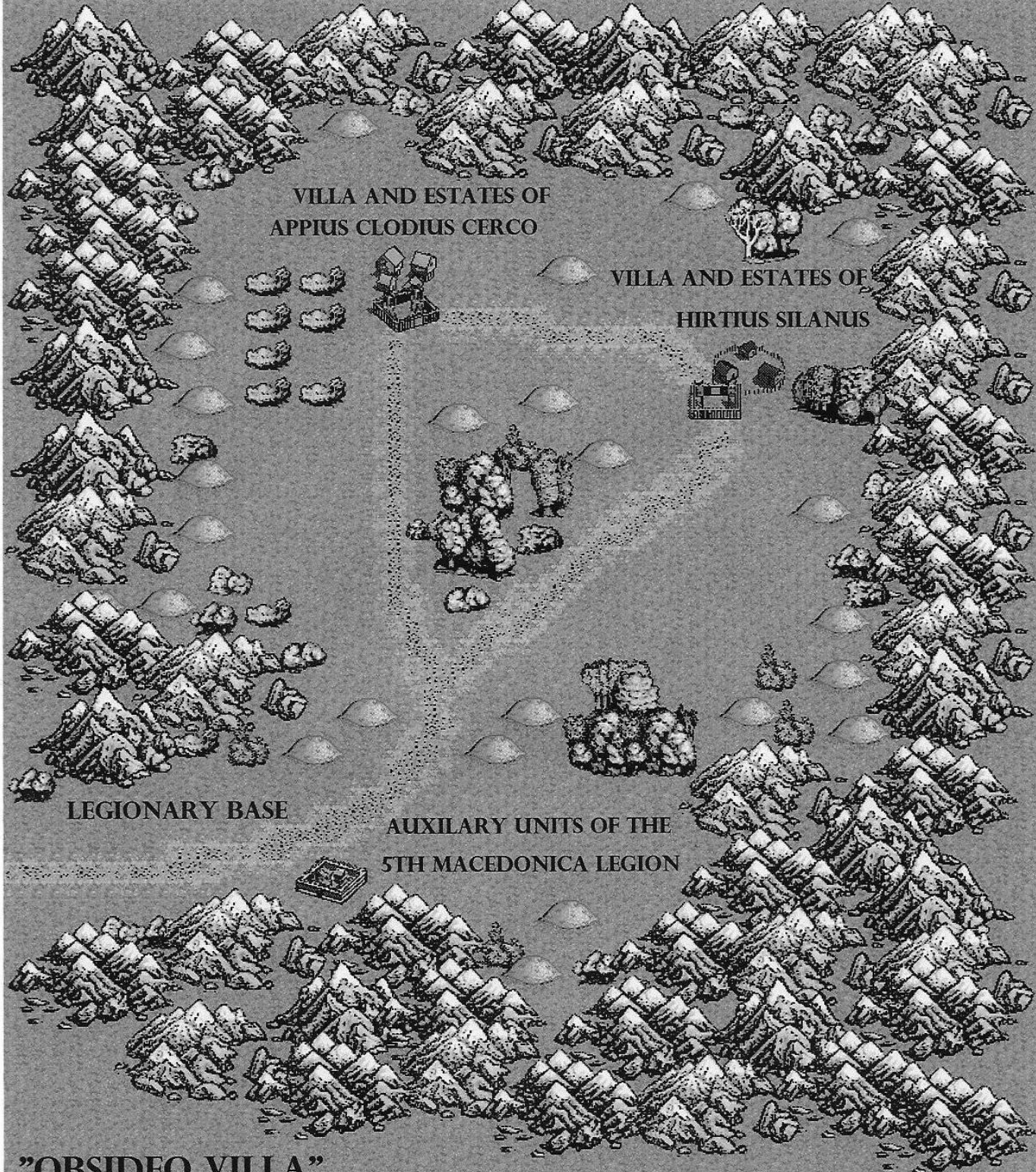
### Roman Centurions (Detachment of the 5th Macedonica Legion)

Gellius Porcino	Commander (prefect) of the legionary base and seasoned veteran.
Domitius Hardalio	Older centurion who's in charge of records at legionary base
Nautius Metellus	Commander of the 10th cohort, 5th legion, in charge of this area's security.
Caudex, Sophus, Geta & Blasio	some of the soldiers of the 10th cohort, 5th legion.

## Part One – The Arrival

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Papirius Vulso, the family's agent in the area, will meet the investigators about two miles from their new villa. He'll be on horseback and happily tell them about the estate as they ride up. As Clodius Cerco and the investigators arrive they will see that the slaves and free workers of the



**"OBSIDEO VILLA"  
AREA MAP**

AN ORIGINAL SCENARIO FOR  
CTHULHU INVICTUS  
BY OSCAR RIOS

**"EXTRICO TABULA"  
THE SECOND CTHULHU  
INVICTUS COMPANION**

estate have lined up to meet and be inspected by their new master. There are a total of thirty slaves and twenty freemen workers, all local Dacus. Cerco will say a few words to everyone, trying to sound noble and important but keepers should make him sound foolish. Clodius Cerco is not the wisest of men in the empire.

### Staff Inspection

Investigators looking closely over the staff can make two spot hidden rolls. Success meaning they notice a very beautiful woman making seductive eyes (Mihaela) and a handsome man whose trying hard to hide his scorn (Bogdan). Investigators will be able to speak to anyone they wish. Most of the people gathered here are orchard and vineyard workers, with seven being household staff.

### Estate Tour (Villa Rustica)

Ligus will then give the investigators a tour of the estates, which consist of the vineyards, orchards, the slave's quarters and the overseer's house. Both the vineyards and orchards have a work building for processing the products grown here. At each locally the workers will offer samples (glasses of wine or fresh peaches) as they try to seem friendly and helpful.

The slave house is a large two-story structure where the estate's slaves retire for the evening. Hired free workers tend the estate's lands from just after dawn until just before sunset. The other building is a large two-story house of fine stone built for the estate's overseer (the direct manager of the orchards and vineyards). Investigators making a successful Idea roll will realize that the overseer's house looks much finer than one would expect. If investigators ask about it, one of the slaves or workers will explain "Master Ligus and his family lived her for a time" (meaning Annus Ligus, the estates 2nd owner).

### Touring the Villa (Villa Urbana)

– After touring the estate Cerco, his family and the investigators will retire to the villa. Cerco's children will rush inside and begin eagerly exploring it. The villa is beautifully decorated with murals, mosaics and sculptures. The furniture is mostly new and very fine. Investigators will be allowed to choose from among the various bedrooms.

### The Villa

*1-8) Bedrooms* – Each bedroom is spacious and comfortable, dedicated to a different roman god or goddess (murals, statues and mosaics). They are as follows: Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Minerva, Neptune, Diana, and Mercury & Venus.

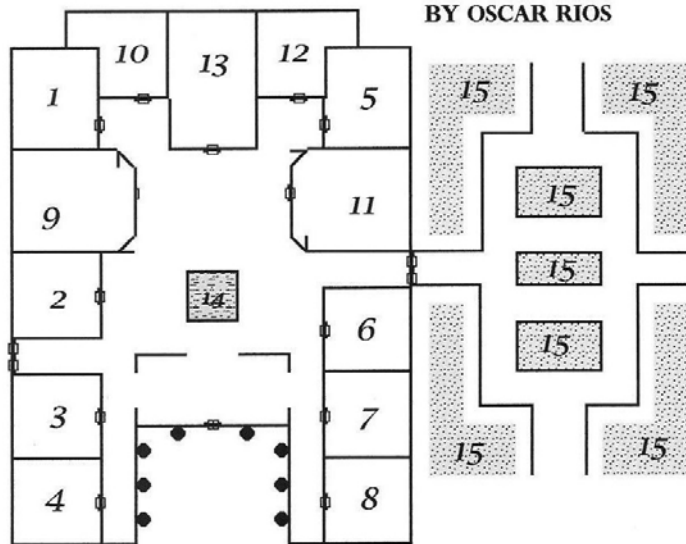
Strangely the rooms still have personal items (brushes, cosmetics, books, etc..) of the former occupants and the closets are filled with multiple sets of expensive clothing. Investigators wishing to supplement their own wardrobe should make Luck Rolls for

# OBSIDEO VILLA

## A CTHULHU INVICTUS SCENARIO

### VILLA MAP

BY OSCAR RIOS



### KEY TO THE HOUSE

- |                       |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 - "JUPITER" BEDROOM | 6 - "DIANA" BEDROOM   | 11- DINING ROOM    |
| 2 - "MARS" BEDROOM    | 7 - "MERCURY" BEDROOM | 12 - KITCHEN       |
| 3 - "JUNO" BEDROOM    | 8 - "VENUS" BEDROOM   | 13 - BATHS         |
| 4 - "MINERVA" BEDROOM | 9 - HOUSE TEMPLE      | 14 - OPEN POOL     |
| 5 - "NEPTUNE" BEDROOM | 10 - OFFICE           | 15 - HOUSE GARDENS |

each room, to see if the last occupant was of a similar size. This should be a clear sign that last people living here left in a hurry.

9) *Temple* – This room has six small shrines to various Roman gods and the Lararium (the personal shrine of a family’s ancestors and protective spirits) of Annuis Ligus (the villa’s last owner). Investigators making a successful Know Roll will realize that Lararium are usually never left behind when a family moves, as it is the shrine dedicated to the family’s personal guardian spirits. To do so is a grave taboo.

10) *Office* – This room has no records or papers within it whatsoever. All the chests, shelves and drawers are empty. Papirius Vulso personally destroyed all the material stored here. This was done in an attempt to hide the fact that the property is supposed to be haunted and that he embezzled thousands of sesterces from Appius Clorius Cerco. He didn’t bother reading any of it, has no idea what the paperwork stated and any possible clues they might have contained have been destroyed.

11) *Dining Room* – Here is space for over twenty diners with an open area for performers, dancers and actors. The dozen or so couches are arranged in a semi-circle.

12) *Kitchen* – This is a well-stocked kitchen with ovens for baking.

13) *Baths* – Here can be found a vast sunken bath. It has clean running water, which can be heated, and plumbing for draining away bathwater. The chamber is very luxurious with recessed alcove shelves for candles, oils and towels. A single, stunning mural decorates the walls and the sunken bath is lined with a beautiful mosaic. Both depict scenes from the story of Pygmalion & Galatea. The mural depicts the sculpting of Galatea, and the baths shows the scene of Venus breathing life into the sculpture.

Investigators making a careful search of this room may attempt a Spot Hidden roll. A success allows them to notice there are unusual beautiful blue tiles in the mosaic that seem cool to the touch. The stones defy all attempts at identification.

14) *Gardens* – These well-tended gardens are a showcase of the local flowering trees and plants, with a lovely fountain of a dragon spitting water onto an open oyster. There are many benches here and wonderful views of the setting sun at dusk.

## The Warning

If investigators treat the local Dacus house servants with exceptional kindness they’ll receive a warning “to lock their doors at night”. If they specifically ask why the villa was for sale so cheaply, why there are no records in the office or what happened to the former owner, the servants will reply “It’s not our place to say master/mistress”. Successful Insight rolls will reveal to investigators that the servants are too afraid to speak (especially if Papirius Vulso is around, they’ve been warned NOT to speak about this).

If the investigators make a successful Fast Talk, Persuade or Status roll the staff member will then answer questions truthfully. Keepers should refer to the Rumors table, under the Dacus section. The servants will say, “The last owners left because they were afraid” and if asked why they’ll reply, “because of the vanishing and the monsters.” After uttering this they realize that they’ve said too much and rush away.

## The Invitation

That first evening at the villa, during dinner, a messenger will arrive. The messenger is a well-dressed Greek who identifies himself as Fotious, a servant in the employ of Hirtius Silanus. He’ll explain that his master owns the property on the other side of the valley. Fotious is a masterful entertainer and will perform two songs, singing and playing upon a lyre, before delivering the message. His message is an invitation to dinner tomorrow evening, at the home of his master Fotius will say his master welcomes his new neighbors and hopes that there will be fellowship between his family and theirs. It would obviously be bad manners to refuse the invitation. After getting an answer of yes from Clodius Cerco, Fotios departs.

## Part Two – The Party

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The following day passes peacefully at the villa. Nothing strange or mysterious occurs and investigators can use this time to become accustomed to the property. The local Dacus slaves and free workers will also use this time to take a measure of the Investigators. If they judge the investigators as unworthy of help they’ll simply wait for the “evil spirits” to begin praying upon them. If the investigators are deemed to be people of quality, some of the Dacus will issue discreet warnings (see Rumors, Dacus section).

## The Party

At dusk the investigators (along with Appius Clodius Cerco & Papirius Vulso) will travel to the dinner party at the property of their nearest Roman neighbor, Hirtius Silanus. Silanus is a businessman (importing and exporting, as well as raising olives at his villa) who lives at this estate with his family and business partner. His home is very fine, well staffed and tastefully decorated. Silanus will have local Dacus dancers; a musician (Fotios) and juggler perform for his guests. Investigators will be served several courses of fine food, a mix of traditional Roman fare and regional dishes. There will be plenty of conversation. Wine will flow freely and slowly loosen tongues.

S i l a n u s and his partner Calpurnius Nerva will be happy to see good Roman stock moving in to the long vacant villa. They'll refrain from spreading wild rumors about ghosts, monsters or kidnapers. The pair will warn Cerco, Vulso and the investigators that the locals will try to scare them off as they did the last owners. The businessmen will tell them to be on guard, as local anti-Roman outlaws in the area may have kidnapped some of the last owners. However, their wives and daughter living here will be more than happy to entertain their guests with strange and exciting tales of the mysterious history of the property. Keepers should refer to the *Rumors – Neighbors* section. Investigators may need to make successful Fast Talk or Persuade rolls to gain such items of information.

## The After Party

After the party investigators will return to the villa, arriving there quite late. Vulso will be invited to remain

in the villa as a quest by Cerco, as he is rather drunk by then. He currently lives at the overseer's house. During the night Vulso will be lured into the villa's baths by Mihaela, the seductive slave possessed by the Thing Hanging in the Void.

Vulso falls asleep in the baths, being plied with drugged wine, and suddenly finds himself in the underworld of the Dreamland. This is the lair of the Thing



Hanging in the Void and Vulso will never be seen again. As Mihaela returns to the waking world, a dreamlands creature will follow her back into the Waking World.

This creature, a brightly colored Magah Bird, will begin exploring the villa. It will eventually awaken a random investigator. The bird is harmless, but obviously not native to the area (or the waking world, should someone make a successful Cthulhu Mythos or Natural world roll). It escapes through the open hole in the ceiling above the household's well. It does shed a few feathers, which fade from reality after a few hours. As the household rouses someone realizes that Papirius Vulso is missing from his room. This has grave repercussions.

## Part Three – Escalation

With the sighting of the mysterious bird and the disappearance of Vulso investigators should spring into action. If they don't conduct a careful search for clues and question the slaves and laborers on their own they'll be ordered to do so by their patron. Cerco will be furious, sending a messenger to inform the local garrison of the disappearance. He likes his new property and is outraged by the idea of the "locals trying to drive him off of it". Cerco is also concerned for Vulso's safety, considering him "one of my closest friends and confidants".

### The Search For Papirius Vulso

The investigators will find no trace of Vulso. If investigators search the room where he was staying it appears that his bed wasn't slept in. There is also no sign that he returned to the overseer's house. Investigators will only have a short time to look for clues and gather information before a detachment of local legionaries arrives.

### The Overseer's House

Investigators searching Vulso's bedroom back at the overseer's house will find an important document with a successful Spot Hidden roll. In a scroll case hidden under the bed is the deed of sale for the property. Investigators examining it will realize that the sales price listed as being sixteen thousand sesterces. Those making a Know roll will recall Clodius Cerco bragging about the property costing twenty thousand sesterces.

A second bit of information can be found hidden in the overseer's private bath. Investigators searching here, and making a successful Spot Hidden roll will uncover a small locked box. The box can be opened by force (beat a STR 12 on the resistance table) and contains three thousand four hundred and thirty six sesterces. Investigators should be able to realize that this is some of the money Vulso stole from Cerco, by overstating the price of the property.

### Interrogating the Locals

Cerco will order all the slaves and free workers to line up in front of the villa for questioning. Investigators questioning those gathered will do much better if they remain calm and compassionate. Using this approach they will be told several of the items listed under the Rumors- Dacus section. Everyone will deny seeing Vulso after the investigators returned from the party and truthfully claim that they had nothing to do with his disappearance. Even if investigators question Mihaela she will honestly say she did nothing, as the possession by the

Thing Hanging in the Void prevents her from recalling many of her actions.

If investigators use more brutal methods of interrogation, such as violence or intimidation, this backfires. The locals will state, "this place is guarded by powerful spirits who oppose the Roman's presence here and that Romans will continue to die as long as they stay here". They'll warn Cerco's family and the investigators to leave the area before their presence attracts "demons". Several of the slaves, mainly Bogdan and his men, will appear to lead the Anti-Roman rhetoric. If things get out of hand, Bogdan makes his move and attacks (see The Dacus Revolt).

### Dacus Rebels

Bogdan and his men are former soldiers, plotting resistance to what they consider Roman occupation. They have been living here because no Roman family was present, allowing them to operate unnoticed. Their headquarters is in one of the orchard's work sheds (a small house containing harvesting tools) where they have stored weapons, armor, poison (Pot 15 sleeping draughts) and various documents and maps. It is from these men that Mahaela gets her supply of sleeping poison, claiming she needs it to avoid being raped by her Roman masters (which is a lie).

### The Dacus Revolt

Bogdan and his men are ready to "make their move", especially if the investigators seem to be planning to torture anyone. They'll have leather braces and work jerkins on under their clothing as makeshift armor and have weapons hidden nearby. Should combat break out Bogdan's rebels will retrieve their weapons rushing to them to arm themselves.

### Dacus Rebels: Bogdan, Catalin, Dragos, Marku & Nicu

STR	16	CON	15	SIZ	15
INT	12	POW	11	DEX	11
HP	15, 15, 15, 15, 15, 15	DB	+1D4		

Weapons	Fist (70%, 1d3+db), Grapple (50%) Kick (40%, 1d6+db) Knife*2 (50%, 1d4+db) Club*2 (45%, 1d8+db) Spear*1 (50%, 1d6+db) Short Sword*1 (65%, 1d8+db).
Armor	Leather Jerkins -1 Point.
Spells	None.
Skills	Hide 75%, Sneak 65%, Listen 55%.

### **The Guard Patrol**

About midday after the alert goes out five centurions, led by Nautius Metellus, will arrive in full battle gear ready for anything. Nautius is a professional soldier; having one of his men record the names and statements of everyone they speak to. The men are part of the 10th cohort of the 5th Macedonica legion, operating out of the auxiliary base at the southern end of the valley.

It will soon be obvious that Metellus doesn't like coming to this villa and is rather frustrated to be returning here. The soldiers conduct a search of the property but find nothing, again. They'll mention to the investigators that this property has a dark history, stating that they have been here more than a dozen times looking into vanishings and murders. Investigators have an opportunity to obtain the information detailed in "Rumors Guards" section, by speaking to Metellus and his men as they conduct their investigation.

### **Metellus's Records**

If investigators ask Metellus about the records of his previous investigation he'll tell them they are on file back at the outpost. He'll agree to let them review the records, inviting investigators to visit the local outpost sometime. Metellus will say, "Tell the men at the gate that I sent you to speak to Domitius Sophus. He's a good man, a veteran who's in charge of records." Should investigators wish to do this Keepers should go to "The Official Record" in Part Four – A Closer Look.

### **Drastic Solution**

Metellus and his men do have what they think is a perfect solution to this situation. They'll recommend that the orchard and vineyard be burned down and all the slaves and workers on the property be crucified, as some of them must have been involved. He'll state this openly, in front of a number of local Dacus and ask Clodius Cerco for permission to call in more troops to begin. Metellus will also state that "The Empire will compensate you fairly for the loss of property, it'll be worth it to root out this problem once and for all". Clodius Cerco will be unsure, asking the investigator's opinion and going along with whatever they suggest.

If investigators refuse to allow Metellus to enact this rather brutal plan he'll then ask, "How about we just crucify half of them? This will send a powerful message to the ones responsible. We might even be lucky enough to nail up a few of the real culprits." Metellus will seem

quite eager to do this. At the same time the overheard conversation makes many of the locals quite afraid. Investigators will see a few of the more terrified women start crying.

### **Refusing Metellus**

If the investigators still refuse Metellus begins withdrawing his men. He'll tell investigators that they should cut their losses, sell the property and "Go back to Rome, for your own sakes". Metellus will explain that he and his men have been through this many times before and that there's little they can do to protect anyone choosing to live here. Metellus and his men will then depart.

### **Accepting the Offer**

Should investigators grant Metellus permission to enact his plan the scenario ends in an atrocity. Within hours a hundred and twenty Roman soldiers (centurions, cavalry and auxiliaries) surround the property. They move in rounding up the servants and workers as they put the orchards and vineyards to the torch. A dozen Dacus are killed as they attempt to flee; the other thirty-eight are crucified on the property. Clodius Cerco is paid ten thousand sesterces in damages and moves back to Italia. Among the dead are potential allies (Cosmina and Dorin) and enemies (Mihaela and Bogdan) but the central problem still remains. The Thing Hanging in the Void remains unharmed and active. Eventually someone falls asleep in the baths and become possessed by the vile fiend. The nightmare starts anew and the investigation has ended in failure.

### **A Good Deed Returned**

If investigators don't allow Metellus to implement his rather brutal plan two Dacus will quietly ask to speak to the investigators. They will say that they might have some information helpful to the Romans but they cannot meet with them openly (for fear of reprisals from their own people – meaning Bogdan's men if they are still at large). They'll ask investigators to meet them in one of the vineyard's work shacks two hours after sundown. If investigators attend this clandestine meeting keepers should go to "Dacus Allies" in Part Four- A Closer Look. The two individuals are:

- 1) Dorin - an old freeman worker who manages the villa's orchards. His family originally owned the orchard and has been living here for seven generations. He's well respected and hard working, uninterested in politics
- 2) Cosmina - a matronly slave woman who works helping tend the vineyard. She is also well respected and has a reputation as a mystic and folk healer.



## Part Four – A Closer Look

With the crisis of Part Three passed investigators have bought themselves a bit of time. They can now take a deeper look at the mysterious events and history concerning the villa. There are several lines of research that may provide investigators with the information and tools necessary for putting a stop to these inexplicable happenings once and for all. If investigators gather enough information they should be able to unravel the mystery of what's happened here and more importantly how to put a stop to it. All of these paths of exploration lead to one place, a confrontation in the underworld of the dreamlands with the Thing Hanging in the Void.

The available paths of investigation are:

1. The Meeting Dorin & Cosmina – See *Dacus Allies*.
2. A Review of Nautius Metellus's Investigation Records – See *The Garrison*.
3. A thorough search of the Overseer's House – See *The Dreamer's Workshop*.

### Dacus Allies: Dorin

While investigators may be expecting this to be a trap, it is in fact an honest offer of assistance. Dorin, who's lived in this area all his life, knows that all these mysterious events started with the construction of the villa. Before the villa was here there were no baffling murders, strange creatures and definitely no unexplained disappearances. However, he confirms that all these are happening now; he has even seen one of these "demons" himself. Dorin will tell a tale of seeing a strange floating creature that looked like a slug with wings. He says the creature (a Wenellian) exited the villa and floated across the garden on the night of Annuis Porcino's murder.

Dorin also met the building's Roman architect, a man called Iulius Pansa. Investigators making a successful Know Roll will have heard of the man (see common knowledge). The man made a distinct impression on Dorin and has some strong opinions of him to relate (see Dorin's Opinion).

*Common Knowledge of Iulius Pansa:* He was a skilled artist and architect whose mind became unhinged a decade ago. Pansa vanished from public life after people stopped hiring him due to his erratic behavior.

*Dorin's Opinion of Iulius Pansa:* He felt the man was deeply disturbed. Pansa said that he was married but no wife was ever seen. Pansa worked frantically from mid morning until dusk but spend the other hours of the day asleep.

### Dacus Allies: Cosmina

This aged woman is a mystic of sorts, who has a bit of mythos knowledge. Cosmina will say, "These demons of the underworld cannot be harmed by mundane weapons, magic is the only protection and weapon against them". She'll offer to make the investigators magical talismans of protection and instruction on how to unleash their "inner energy". These "talismans of protection" are nothing more than bits of leather, bone and colored cord having no sort of magical effect whatsoever. However the ability to "unleash your inner energy" is actually a spell, called Bluefire, and has been passed down within her family for countless generations.

Her assistance comes with a price. Her son, Fane, has been arrested for brawling with an off duty Roman centurion. He's recently been sentenced to ten years of hard labor in a salt mine. Realistically such a sentence usually lasts only five years, until the prisoner dies of exhaustion. She'll say "If you can free him and return him to me I will make each of you an amulet and teach each of you how to unleash the Bluefire energy within yourselves. He is my only son, he's a good boy and he doesn't deserve to die. It was a fair fight, he never used a weapon, just his fists." Fane is currently being held at the military garrison at the south end of the valley waiting to be transported to the mines. Should investigators seek a way to free Fane, Keepers should turn to "Freeing Fane" in The Garrison section (below).

*Spell - Bluefire:* This spell allows casters to conjure a ball of blue energy able to strike a target up to 50 yards away. The spell costs 6 MP and 1d4 Sanity points to cast. It does 1d4 points of damage but can be strengthened by feeding additional MP to it, up to a maximum of 12 MP. For every MP added to the spell it will do an extra point of damage, but half of this additional damage will also be inflicted on the caster. Ex – An investigator casts a Bluefire spell for 6 MP, and feeds another 4 MP points into it. The spell will now cost 10 MP, deal 1d4+4 points of damage to it's target and scorch its caster for 2 points of damage.

### The Garrison

Investigators approaching the Roman garrison post will be stopped at the gate and asked what their business there is. If investigators use the name of centurion Nautius Metellus or Domitius Hardalio and the reasons for their visit the outer guard will inform them that they are expected. Geta, one of Metellus's men, will be summoned to the gate and act as the investigator's escort and guide.

Geta will be able to lead the investigators to the building where the record offices are kept.

Once there, Domitius Hordalio, a much older centurion in charge of keeping records for the Roman base, assists them. Unfortunately, he's currently in the middle of an annual inventory of supplies and won't be able to retrieve the records himself. Hordalio will explain the basic filing system he uses to the investigators and allow them to peruse the records themselves. Investigators must make two successful Library Use rolls in order to find the correct pair of scrolls (see Handout One & Handout Two).

These scrolls will tell investigators that a total of eight people have gone missing from the villa (Handout One) while another six were found dead (Handout Two). The bodies of the deceased were discovered both in and around the villa (one was found in the gardens). All such victims appear to have been the victims of an animal attacks (one is described as being totally drained of blood).

The clue here is that four of the six victims were women, just about even numbers of genders. Investigators making a successful Know Roll will recognize the last name, Sergius Regulus. Regulus was a well-known Roman Finder (private detective) who was often hired to recover lost property, locate missing persons and

uncover conspiracies. He was a seasoned investigator with a reputation for being able to handle himself in any situation. Sergius Regulus was hired by a desperate Annius Ligus in a final and failed attempt to solve the mystery of the villa.

### A list of Dacus suspects

Nautius Metellus has unknowingly come close to solving the villa's mystery already. He has the names of every Dacus who was either in or had access to the villa on the night of each vanishing recorded. This comes to eight different lists of names detailed under Handout Three (see below).

Investigators will get this handout only if they are specifically attempting to compare the names on those interviewed during each vanishing. Keepers can allow investigators to gain this information with a successful Idea roll if they witnessed Metellus taking down the names of those questioned at the villa after Vulso's disappearance. These lists comprise Handout Three (see below).

Staff changes in the household were common so only a few names appear more than once. Four people were in the villa for two or three of the vanishings but this was just coincidence. Only a single person has been present for ALL but the first disappearance, including Papirius Vulso's. The person is the Dacus slave, Mahaela.

#### HANDOUT #1 – A LIST OF THOSE WHO HAVE VANISHED:

*The clue in this information is that seven of the eight missing persons were male. It is also noteworthy that Iulius Pansa is the first person recorded missing.*

IULIUS PANSA – EMPLOYEE OF PORCIUS DECULA, VANISHED MAY 2ND, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

LIVIUS AFER – ROMAN FREEBORN SERVANT, VANISHED MAY 21ST, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

PORCIUS BRUTIS - SON OF PORCIUS DECULA, VANISHED JUNE 10TH, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

FABIUS RUFINUS - VISITING ROMAN MERCHANT, VANISHED JULY 28TH, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

IULINIA CATRIA – ROMAN FREEBORN SERVANT, VANISHED AUGUST 5TH, 12TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

ANNIUS SERGIUS - SON OF ANNIUS LIGUS, VANISHED MARCH 19TH, 14TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

ANNIUS TAPPULUS– COUSIN OF ANNIUS LIGUS, VANISHED APRIL 11TH, 14TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

VATINUS CINNA– ROMAN FREEBORN SERVANT, VANISHED APRIL 20TH, 14TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

HANDOUT #2 – THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN THE VILLA ARE LISTED AS FOLLOWS:

The clue here is that four of the six victims were women, just about even numbers of genders. Investigators making a successful Know Roll will recognize the last name, Sergius Regulus. Regulus was a well-known Roman Finder (private detective) who was often hired to recover lost property, locate missing persons and uncover conspiracies. He was a seasoned investigator with a reputation for being able to handle himself in any situation. Sergius Regulus was hired by a desperate Annuis Ligus in a final and failed attempt to solve the mystery of the villa.

SERGIA PERINA – WIFE OF PORCIUS DECULA, MURDERED MAY 28TH, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

PORCIA DECULLIA – DAUGHTER OF PORCIUS DECULA, MURDERED JUNE 17TH, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

ATILLIA LENTULIA – ROMAN FREEBORN SERVANT, MURDERED JULY 5TH, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

ANNUIS PORCINO – SON OF ANNUIS LIGUS, MURDERED MARCH 1ST, 11TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

VALERIA FLACCILLIA – ROMAN FREEBORN SERVANT, MURDERED APRIL 22ND, 14TH YEAR OF TRAJAN

SERGIUS REGULIUS – VISITING ROMAN, MURDERED MAY 6TH, 14TH, YEAR OF TRAJAN

HANDOUT #3 – LIST OF EVERY LOCAL DACUS, SLAVE OR FREE, PRESENT WITHIN THE VILLA DURING A KIDNAPPING

IULIUS PANSA KIDNAPPING

CIPRIAN  
DANUT  
SANDA  
IONEL

IULINIA CATRIA KIDNAPPING

ALIN  
MAHAELA  
FLAVIUS  
TELA

LIVIUS AFER KIDNAPPING

ACNA  
CIPRIAN  
MAHAELA  
VIORICA

ANNUIS SERGIUS KIDNAPPING

VIOLET  
ALIN  
MAHAELA

PORCIUS BRUTIS KIDNAPPING

MAHAELA  
CIPRIA  
NACNA

ANNUIS TAPPULUS KIDNAPPING

VIOREL  
HENRIC  
OANA  
MAHAELA

FABIUS RUFINUS KIDNAPPING

CRISTI  
MAHAELA  
DRAGOS  
SORINA

VATINUS CINNA KIDNAPPING

MAHAELA  
VIOREL  
RODICA

## Freeing Fane

Investigators inquiring about possibly freeing the Dacus prisoner Fane will be directed to the local commander, Gellius Porcino. He's an older career soldier who's fought his way up through the ranks in the 5th legion. In that time he's learned that life in the real world sometimes means that some rules need to be bent so that everything runs smoothly.

Porcino will welcome the investigators into his office after a short wait, always happy to meet with local Roman settlers. He'll have wine brought in and take this as a break from his duties and an opportunity to mingle with other Romans. Eventually, Porcino will ask the investigators what he can do for them. Investigators can then attempt a Persuade or Fast Talk roll to get him with regards to freeing Fane, but it isn't necessary.

Commander Porcino will simply smile; inquire as to why the investigators wish this man freed. He'll then explain, "It's really only a small matter of getting his accuser to drop the matter and paying a small fee. If someone vouches for his good behavior and pays the fine of 300 sesterces, I'm sure I can get the man who filed the complaint against this man to drop the charges."

If the investigators agree to pay the fine and vouch for Fane's good behavior, Porcino will have the prisoner freed at dawn the following day. By midday he'll be home with his mother and the investigators will gain her full cooperation (teaching them the Bluefire spell and making them useless amulets of protection). Should investigators refuse these two conditions, Porcino doesn't free the young man. Fane will be on his way to a salt mine in less than a week and his mother, Cosmina, refuses to assist the investigators.

## The Dreamer's Workshop

Investigators searching the overseer's house for clues will need to find the hidden study of Iulius Pansa. Pansa kept all of his private notes, tools and artwork in a secret room on the top level of the overseer's house. Investigators making an Idea roll may notice from the outside that there seems to be a third level over the north corner of the roof. However, there is no obvious way into what must be a hidden room.

Investigators making a successful Spot Hidden roll inside the room on the north corner of the second floor (a storeroom) will find a concealed trap door in the ceiling. When opened a wooden ladder gently descends into the room. The ladder leads up into a secret room where the half insane architect and dreamer Iulius Pansa unlocked the secrets better left unanswered. He discovered a way

to bridge the gap between the Waking World and the Dreamlands.

## Pansa's Study

It's obvious that no one has entered this room in many years (the night of Iulius Pansa's disappearance actually). The room is a combination bedroom, office and workshop. There are two prominently placed shrines, one to Venus and the other to Hypnos. Decorating the walls are two-dozen sketches of the same beautiful woman hanging in this room. Several of them have the same phrase written on them in Latin. It reads "A dream come true, a dream made real."

Investigators carefully examining the workshop will find many clues inside this room. On a worktable are all the tools necessary for cutting and shaping mosaic tiles. There is also a box filled with tiny discarded shards, chips and shavings of same mysterious blue stone. Investigators may realize that this is the same type of stone used in the mosaic of Pygmalion & Galatea found in the villa's bathroom.

In the office area corner of the room is a desk covered with papers. Here investigators will find plans that seem to focus on the careful placement of specific stones within a mosaic. These stones form a strange geometric pattern hidden within the mosaic. On these plans the author has scribbled various words. Some of the words that can be deciphered are "Bridge", "Passage" and "Dreamstone".

Also in this area investigator find a bookcase filled with about a hundred scrolls. Three of these hold important clues the investigators would find useful. These are all fragments of Iulius Pansa's personal journals. Investigators will need to make three successful Library Use rolls to locate these three specific scrolls, which are listed as Handouts Four, Five and Six. Investigators can also obtain these handouts by systematically searching each and every scroll in the bookcase, a task that takes thirty hours of research (multiple investigators can work on this at the same time).

## Sapientia Magorum

The last thing of use to investigators can be found in the bedroom portion of the room. Investigators making a successful Spot Hidden roll will find a collection of scrolls located under the bed. Also here are fifteen empty bottles that still contain the sweet smelling residue of sleeping tonics. This collection of six scrolls is Pansa's Greek translation of the Sapientia Magorum. It's an incomplete version of the text - Sanity loss 1/1d3, +2 Cthulhu Mythos, +4 Occult, 6 weeks to study and contains only one spell, Shriveling (see below).

HANDOUT #4 – SCROLL ONE

IT WAS IN MY YOUTH THAT I FIRST CAME INTO THE LANDS BEYOND THE VEIL OF SLEEP, MY MIND OPENING TO THE LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES THERE. MANY HAPPY MONTHS COULD I SPEND THERE ALL WHILE I SLEPT A SINGLE NIGHT. BUT IT WAS NOT A PERFECT WORLD FOR THERE TOO, I WAS ALONE.

BUT I REALIZED IN THE DREAMLANDS I DID NOT HAVE TO BE. THERE THE POWER OF IMAGINATION WAS ALL-POWERFUL, ABLE TO SHAPE THE VERY CLAY THAT CONSTRUCTED REALITY.

I TRAINED MY MIND AND SLOWLY LEARNED HOW TO CREATE MORE DETAILED AND DIFFICULT OBJECTS. FINALLY I WAS ABLE TO ALTER A LIVING CREATURE INTO A NEW SHAPE, I EVEN GAVE IT A NEW MIND. SO LIKE PYGMALION I MADE HER, SLOWLY SHAPING HER BIT BY BIT. SHE WAS THE PERFECT LOVER, WIFE AND FRIEND. I NAMED HER GALLINA. OUR LOVE IS LIKE NOTHING THIS WORLD COULD EVER OFFER BUT EACH MORNING, AS I AWAKEN, I AM FORCED TO ABANDON HER

AS I RETURN TO THIS WORLD.

IT IS NOT THAT I HATE THIS WORLD; I LOVE IT AS MUCH AS THAT OTHER PLACE I SHARE WITH GALLINA. IF ONLY THERE WAS A WAY TO BRING HER BACK WITH ME.

HANDOUT #5 – SCROLL TWO

MY EFFORTS TO CARRY ITEMS BACK TO THE WAKING WORLD HAVE ALL FAILED. I'VE MANAGED TO BRING BACK VARIOUS THINGS BUT THEY ALL FADE INTO UNREALITY SOON AFTER ENTERING THIS WORLD. IF I DID THIS WITH GALLINA SHE WOULD NOT LIVE LONG AFTER HER ARRIVAL. THE ONE THING I DID MANAGE TO BRING BACK WITH ME WAS A STRANGE, BLUE STONE. THE STONE NOT ONLY REMAINED, BUT WHEN NEXT I SLEPT I RETURNED TO A PLACE I HAD NEVER BEEN BEFORE.

AS I LOOKED AROUND TO GET MY BEARINGS I NOTICED YET ANOTHER OF THESE BLUE STONES. IT IS INTERESTING; IT SEEMS THE STONES ARE SOMEHOW ATTRACTED TO ONE ANOTHER ACROSS THE BRIDGE OF SLEEP. I MUST WORK ON THIS RIDDLE AND EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES IT OFFERS.

IT IS DONE. I HAVE LAID THE LAST OF THE DREAMSTONES INTO THE CONDUIT PATTERN WEAKENING THE BARRIERS BETWEEN REAL AND DREAM, BETWEEN OUR REALITY AND THAT OTHER EXISTENCE. SOON I'LL ATTEMPT TO OPEN A PHYSICAL DOORWAY BETWEEN THE TWO REALMS. I HAVE GATHERED ALL THE DREAMSTONES I COULD FIND, THE DOORWAY SHOULD BE LARGE ENOUGH TO SAFELY PASS THROUGH AND BACK AGAIN WITH GALLINA.

TONIGHT I WILL ENTER THE BATHS AND TRIGGER THE GATEWAY BY ALLOWING MYSELF TO FALL ASLEEP INSIDE THE BATH MOSAIC. THIS SHOULD EASILY PUSH OPEN WITH THE POWER OF MY DREAMING MIND. ONCE OPEN, I MUST ACT QUICKLY TO ORIENT MYSELF. I'LL RETRIEVE GALLINA WITH ALL HASTE AND RETURN WITH HER THROUGH THE DOORWAY BEFORE MY ABSENCE FROM THE BATHS IS DISCOVERED. I WILL LIKELY ARRIVE SOMEWHERE WHERE THERE IS A LARGE CONCENTRATION OF DREAMSTONES BUT JUST WHERE THAT IS I CANNOT GUESS. I'VE ALREADY GATHERED ALL THE STONES I COULD FIND. I WILL BE READY TO DEFEND MYSELF, WITH CONJURED GUARDIANS AND THE MYSTIC SKILLS I HAVE LEARNED FROM THE SAPIENTIA MAGORUM. I MUST ALSO MAKE SURE TO BRING WHATEVER DREAMSTONES I FIND ON THE OPPOSITE END OF THE BRIDGE BACK WITH ME. THE DOORWAY HAS CREATED A WEAK POINT BETWEEN THE WORLDS AND ONLY BY GATHERING TOGETHER THE STONES ON BOTH SIDES CAN I CLOSE IT FULLY. I MAY ALSO NEED TO DESTROY THESE STONES AFTERWARDS, TO ENSURE THAT GALLINA CANNOT TO RETURN TO HER HOME REALM, SHOULD SHE FIND THE WAKING WORLD NOT TO HER LIKING. THEN IF ASKED I COULD HONESTLY SAY THERE IS NO WAY SHE CAN RETURN TO THE DREAMLANDS ONCE SHE IS HERE.

### Shriveling

Investigators wishing to learn this spell can ignore reading most of the other material in the Sapiaentia Magorum. If their focus is solely on learning how to cast this spell investigators can learn it in as little as 20 Days -1 day for every point of INT that investigator has.

### Meanwhile back at the Villa...

The situation at the Villa will continue to deteriorate. Mahaela will continue her efforts to supply The Thing Hanging in the Void human souls. Also, each night while people are sleeping within the villa there is a chance (see below) that some Dreamlands predator will force open the weakened barrier and enter the villa, searching for prey (see *Demons of the Underworld*).



## Demons from the Underworld

Sensing a weakened barrier between the Waking World and the Dreamlands various predators will attempt to enter the villa in search of easy prey. Keepers should roll each night that living beings sleep in the villa, with a predator invading the building 50% of the time. Every time a predator pushes its way into the waking world from the dreamlands it causes a psychic disturbance. This disturbance causes those sleeping within the villa to suffer horrible nightmares and be drained of 1 MP.

Once inside the solitary predator begins stalking the villa looking for a victim. However after several hours such creatures vanish, their dreamlands matter unraveling in our reality. This is why no trace of these "Demons" could ever be found by authorities. After the gate is forced open from the dreamlands in this way it cannot again be forced opened again for a period of two nights. This is because it takes time for the barrier to weaken enough to be opened once again. A few likely Dreamlands predators who may invade the villa are a Haemophore, Wenellian or a Zoog.

### Heamophore, Blood-sucking Parasites

STR	7	CON	10	SIZ	5
INT	10	POW	10	DEX	17
HP	8	DB	N/A		

Weapons	Bite 30% (1d3 + blood drain)
Armor	None
SAN loss	0/1d6 Sanity points for seeing a Heamophore

See page 106 of "H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands".

### Wenellian, Dream Pirate-Thing.

STR	7	CON	14	SIZ	10
INT	13	POW	10	DEX	10
HP	13	DB	+0		

Weapons	Darts 35% (1d6), Vapor 100% damage special.
Armor	None
SAN loss	0/1d6 Sanity points for seeing a Wenellian

See page 128 of "H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands".

### Zoog, Curious Carnivore

STR	3	CON	7	SIZ	17
INT	13	POW	10	DEX	20
HP	5	DB	-1d6		

Weapons	Bite 30% (1d4-db), Knife 25% (1d3+db) Dart 20% (1d6+1/2 db)
Armor	None
Skills	Climb 60%, Dodge 50% Dream Lore 75%, Hide 70% Sneak 70%, Track 50%
SAN loss	0/1d3 points to see a Zoog.

See page 132 of "H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands".

### The Continued Vanishing

Mihaela, being quite beautiful and ruthless, will be able to provide her master with a victim every three to six (1d4+2) days. She will continue seducing men by offering to bathe them. Her victims will all be Roman residents of the villa, either servants or members of the Cerco family. Her primary targets will be, in this order, Varro, Sura, Geta & Servius Clodius Decula (see *Villa servants and Residents*). She may also set her sights on one of the investigators.

Once Mihaela's lured someone into the baths she will drug them either by serving poisoned wine or using one of two hidden poisoned coated pins. If she cannot lure someone into the baths, she may become desperate enough to drug someone near the baths and carry (or drag) them the rest of the way. Once a sleeping victim crosses into the mosaic pattern lining the baths, they activate the gateway between The Waking World and the Dreamlands. Unfortunately, this leads straight to the lair of the Thing Hanging in the Void (see *Part Five*).

### Mihaela, Slave possessed by the Thing Hanging in the Void

STR	12	CON	15	SIZ	11
INT	13	POW	7	DEX	14
APP	15	EDU	9	SAN	12
HP	13	DB	+0		

Weapons	Poisoned Hair Pin and Toga Pin 65% (1 point + Pot 15 Sleeping Poison)
Armor	None
Skills	Conceal (75%), Dodge (65%) Fast Talk (55%), Hide (60%) Sneak (70%).

Items- Mihaela wears a ring with a hidden compartment filled with a single dose of sleeping poison of Pot 15 potency. Her high Conceal skill allows her to use the ring to poison any beverage she serves without being seen. Failing this, she'll rely on either of her two poisoned pins hidden on her person. Mihaela's most useful weapons are her high Sneak, Fast Talk and Hide skills, used in combination with her high Appearance score.

## Confronting Mihaela

Mihaela has no real memory of what she is doing or why, enabling her to truthfully answer that she is innocent. She suffers from horrible nightmares, both from the creatures using the gate and the repressed memories that occasionally surface as she slumbers. Subconsciously, she feels that she may have something to do with everything that is going on. What little hold she has on sanity hangs by a thread.

If confronted or captured Mihaela will snap, her fragile sanity shattering at last. She'll try to end her life unless physically restrained (bash head into tile floor). Mihaela will babble about nightmares, "that other place in the dark", "the doorway to Hades", "the Soul Sucker" and "The Hanged Master". Investigators may kill her themselves, allow her to kill herself, or easily restrain her until they resolve the issue with the gate.

Mihaela is not responsible for any of her actions, being possessed by the Thing Hanging in the Void. If investigators destroy the gate and defeat the Thing Hanging in the Void, the malignant being loses its hold over the slave's mind. Mihaela does eventually make enough of a recovery to function in society but she'll never be the same. Her years of helpless servitude and possession combined with the knowledge of her role in horrifying events at the villa wear heavily on her soul.

## Failure to Solve the Mystery

Investigators have a limited amount of time to solve this mystery, as Clodius Cerco will only put up with so much. After a combination of six vanishings and/or monster attacks he'll pack up his family and leave the property for good. He'll then head straight to the nearby military outpost and seek out Nautius Metellus. The patrician will then grant him permission to have the villa, orchards and vineyards burned down as well as the crucifixion of the estates slaves and workers. Metellus will arrive later that day with a detachment of the 10th cohort and do just that.

The burning of the villa closes the gate as the mosaic pattern of Dreamstones in the bath is destroyed. While this does halt the mysterious vanishings once and for all it does so with great loss of innocent lives. The solution to this problem is the cause of another as the local Dacus peoples rise up and riot against their Roman overlords. More than a thousand die before order is restored. If this occurs, the scenario ends in failure and the Investigators receive no Sanity awards.

## Part Five – Dreams of the Underworld

Once Investigators have gathered enough information they should be able to solve the mystery of what is going on in the Villa. To permanently close the gate in the baths investigators will need to enter the Dreamlands, recover the twenty-pound Dreamstone on the other side and carry it back into the Walking World. Once back in the Walking World the Dreamstones (the one recovered and those placed in the tiles) can easily be destroyed (with hand and sledgehammers). This permanently disables the gateway. There are three challenges to overcome in order to accomplishing this:

1. The Thing Hanging in the Void – Once the investigators enter the Dreamlands they quickly attract the attention of this terrifying entity.
2. Getting the Dreamstone – 80% of the Dreamstone is buried and will need to be excavated. After that the twenty-pound stone will need to be hauled through the doorway back into the Waking World. This will require more time than the Thing Hanging in the Void will allow investigators.
3. Escaping the Underworld – Once in the Dreamlands, investigators will need to locate the doorway leading back into the waking world.

### Arriving in the Dreamlands

While the Dreamlands has many places of great beauty and wonder this gate doesn't lead to any of those. This particular gate leads to the Underworld of the Dreamlands, specifically the current lair of the Thing Hanging in the Void. Investigators passing through the gate exit twenty feet in the air, falling onto the dirt covered cavern floor below. They awaken upon impact after suffering 2d4 points of damage from the fall.

### Lair of the Thing Hanging in the Void

Investigators find themselves in a darkened subterranean chamber. The walls are slightly curved, as the entire chamber is one large circle, one hundred yards in diameter. The ceiling of the chamber rises upwards thousands of feet into darkness. The ground the investigators are standing on is only ten yards wide, being part of a ledge that circles a bottomless pit eighty yards in diameter. There are no human remains in the area, as Mihaela pushes such waste over the side of the bottomless pit. The pit itself is crisscrossed with a latticework of filthy rags and moldy tattered strands. Investigators won't have much time to explore the area because a few rounds (1d3+1) after their arrival the Thing Hanging in the Pit arrives.



## The Thing Hanging in the Void, Living Nightmare

STR	25	CON	29	SIZ	VARIES
INT	21	POW	22	DEX	31
HP	29	DB	N/A		

Weapons	Soul Drain, overcome magic points to eat a target's soul.
Armor	None, but physical weapons cannot harm it.
Spells	Any spells which affect the mind, as well as any others desired by the keepers.
SAN loss	1d6/1d20 Sanity points to see the Thing Hanging in the Void.

See page 124 of "H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands".

**Combat** – The Thing Hanging in the Void will slowly coalesce about thirty yards beyond the lip of the ledge, about five yards above the investigator's heads. While it can use spells it will try to save its MP for overcoming victims MP in order to feed upon their souls. It will feed upon souls until its MPs are expended (5 MP drained per soul). After this it will withdraw for 24 hours, returning with a full compliment of MP and a renewed appetite. If need be The Thing Hanging in the Void knows the following spells: Bait Humans, Dominate, Enthral Victim and Implant Suggestion.

Investigators cannot harm the Thing Hanging in the Void by physical means. If the investigators know a few spells or have recently learned the Bluefire and/or Shriveling spells they have a good chance of defeating their adversary. Should investigators manage to destroy the Thing Hanging in the Void it withers away and vanishes, along with all of its tatters, strands and tendrils. It slowly reforms somewhere else in the underworld, never manifesting in this specific area again. The nightmare plaguing the villa is over.

### Finding the Dreamstone

Investigators need to find the Dreamstone hidden somewhere in the area. Investigators making two Spot Hidden rolls in the immediate area of their arrival will locate two important items. The first is a fully filled Dacus style oil lamp, with a strip of flint and steel attached to it with a cord. This will allow investigators to illuminate the area to enable them to locate the Dreamstone. The second thing investigators can find is a concealed rope ladder leading twenty feet up to the gate's entrance (see below).

Armed with the lamp, or another light source, investigators need only to walk around the circumference of the pit following the ledge. The Dreamstone will be clearly visible in the illuminated chamber about a

third of the way around the pit. Without a light source investigators will need to make a successful Spot Hidden roll. After finding the stone it must be dug out of the soil, as more than two thirds of it is buried in the dirt. Once excavated, the stone must be carried into the Waking World.

### Escaping the Underworld

Any attempt to climb out of the pit, whether they go upwards or downwards will be met with failure. Investigators could climb for a lifetime and never reach the top or the bottom. There is, however, a safe way to reach the gateway leading from the Dreamlands Underworld back into the Waking World.

Investigators making a successful Spot Hidden roll in the area of their arrival will be able to find the rope ladder (see above) enabling them to physically return from whence they came. This ladder, which has been carefully concealed, leads twenty feet up the side of the pit. It ends at a pair of iron spikes driven into the bare stone rock. Investigators reaching around in the air above the top of the ladder will notice that their hand vanishes into apparently thin air. On the other side investigators can feel the water (if the baths were filled) and smooth mosaic stone tiles of the villa's bath.

Investigators discovering the mid-air gateway can climb through it, emerging back into the waking world at the bottom of the villa's baths. Once all investigators have climbed out of the Dreamlands, with the twenty-pound Dreamstone recovered from the other side, the doorway permanently closes. The mysterious vanishings and terrifying invasions of strange Dreamlands creatures come to an end. The scenario ends in success.



## Aftermath

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As life returns to normal the dark stories slowly fade away. The villa becomes prosperous. The Dacus rebels continue to plot. Centurion Nautius Metellus and the men of the 10th cohort, 5th legion continue to hunt them down. Mihaela, if she still lives, spends the next year slowly regaining her sanity. She begs to be sold or allowed to purchase her freedom, intent on leaving the area for good. Appius Clodius Cerco is eternally grateful for the investigator's assistance and grants them a 20% of the Villa's profits (in coin or goods) for the next five years which comes to 1000 sesterces a year.

## Sanity Awards

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For befriending Dorin & Cosmina	1 point
For refusing to allow Nautius Metellus to crucify anyone	1 point
For managing to purchase the freedom of Fane	1 point
For each Dreamland creature defeated	1d6 points (1d3 for Zoog)
For destroying the gate permanently	1d4 points
For defeating the Thing Hanging in the Void	1d20 points
For sparing and saving Mihaela	1d6 points

## Rumors

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### Rumors from the Dacus

- 1) An evil spirit lives in the house and is preying upon the Romans (*true, sort of*).
- 2) This spirit who lives in the villa is not evil, but a protector of the Daci people. It was awakened by a curse lain on this land by Anca, wife of the Dacus patriot Marku. Anca is said to have powers over the spirit world. The spirit haunting the house is only dangerous to Romans. (*False*)
- 3) This land was always peaceful and beautiful. Nothing strange ever happened here until the villa was built. There have been orchards, vineyards and people living here for generations and they never experienced anything remotely like this. (*True*)
- 4) The monsters that have appeared in the villa are really the Romans who've gone missing. They were taken to the underworld where they were changed into demons and then set loose back into our world to sow chaos and destruction. (*False*)

- 5) The man who built this place was a lunatic, whose infected mind tainted all he constructed. He was the first taken by the vengeful spirits who protect this place. (*True*)

### Rumors from the Neighbors

- 1) Porcius Decula, the villa's first owner, owed a lot of money from bad gambling debts. That's the reason someone kidnapped him. He supposedly vanished from the villa six months after moving in. (*False, he was taken by the Thing Hanging in the Void*)
- 2) The builder and architect was insane, a failed artist from Rome who poured his soul into the villa. Many said he did little but sleep excessively and obsessively attend to every small detail of the estate. His name was Pansa and he was the first person to vanish from the estate. (*True*)
- 3) The villa's second owner was so terrified by something he saw in the villa that he moved his entire family into the overseer's house. He eventually turned his back on the property; packing up his family and suddenly leaving for Athens after his brother vanished one night. (*True*)
- 4) The property has a curse laid on it by one of the local Dacus. Decula raped and killed one of his Dacus chambermaids. This caused her father, some sort of wizard, to summon a doorway to Hades located somewhere on the property. (*Partially true, there is a working physical gateway between the Underworld of the Dreamlands and the Waking World within the villa. However it has nothing to do with a rape and murder as nothing of the sort ever occurred.*)

- 5) The local captain of the guards wants to destroy the villa and crucify all of its servants and slaves. He's convinced it's a center for local Dacus resistance. He's searched for many of those who've vanished from the villa, as well as the so-called monsters that have been spotted around the property, but never found a trace of either. (*True*)

### Rumors from the Guards

- 1) This is the area where a Dacus general named Marku is said to have sent his wife and children into hiding. He refused to surrender and was eventually killed in battle. Some say his son is still in the area and organizing rebellion. (*True*)

2) A dozen people have vanished from this property since the house was built five years ago. (*False, it is only 8 people*)

3) Six others have been found murdered here. (True)

4) Reports of monsters, demons and ghosts are lies spread by the locals. The patrols have gone on several so called monster-hunts and never found a shred of evidence to support such outrageous claims. (*False*)

5) The only monsters are the murderous Dacus criminals that operate in this area. They are the ones responsible for the vanishings. (*False*)

6) Metellus requested the authority to burn down the orchard, vineyard and villa two years ago, but was denied. (*true*)

## Creatures of “Obsideo Villa”

### Wenelians, Lesser Independent Race

*That is was no native of Mnar was certain. In the sickly green glow, it appeared all the more bizarre, its boneless tubular body, pulsating in the verdant light. The fishermen begun to panic, screaming that the monsters from the moon had come down to the earth. However, it was not a moon beast, but rather something much worse.*

-The Brick Cylinders of Kadatheron

Wenelians are bizarre beings who sometimes visit the Dreamlands. They float on the air, writing their way along. Their bodies are bloated and sausage-like, but beautifully patterned in subtle shades of golden yellow, mouse-gray, ocher, and emerald. At one end of their limacine bodies is a wrinkled tubular proboscis. Just above the proboscis sprouts a pair of fin-like appendages somewhat reminiscent of ears and just behind these a pair of long stalks wave, tipped with shiny black globes-evidently eyes. A wenelian can extend or contract it's boneless body an appreciable amount.

The wenelians are pirate-things from the planet of Yundu- They fly thought Dream space riding horrible green gliding things and raid other worlds aplenty.

In combat, the wenelians emit a grainy blue-black vapor which clogs the eyes and ears of their prey. This vapor fills an area ten yards in diameter, and all skills requiring the use of the senses are reduced by half when inside. They can also fire tiny calcite darts from their proboscises, once per round at a range of up to twenty yards. Neither the darts nor the vapor are poisonous.

### Wenelians, Dream Pirate Things

CHAR.	ROLLS	AVERAGES
STR	2D6	7
CON	4D6	14
SIZ	3D6	10-11
INT	2D6+6	13
POW	3D6	10-11
DEX	3D6	10-11

MOVE	HP	AV. DAMAGE BONUS
6*	13	+0

Weapons Darts 35% (1d8)  
Vapor 100%, (special)

Armor none

Spells Wenelians know 1d4 spells if their INT or less is rolled on 1d100.

SAN Loss 0/1d6 Sanity points for seeing a Wenelian

\* while floating in air

### Zoogs, Lesser Independent Race

*Over the nearer parts of the dream world they pass freely, flitting small and brown and unseen...one can see their weird eyes long before one can discern their small, slippery brown outlines.*

- H.P. Lovecraft, “Quest of Unknown Kadath”

Zoogs are small and brown, with a rodent-like body outline. Small tentacles dangle from their snouts, concealing their small sharp teeth. There are several prominent zoog villages in their domain. Though they live mostly on fungi, zoogs have a taste for either spiritual or physical meat as well, for many dreamers have entered their wood and failed to return.

### Zoogs, Curious Carnivors

CHAR.	ROLLS	AVERAGES
STR	1D6	3-4
CON	2D6	7
SIZ	1D3	2
INT	2D6+6	13
POW	3D6	10-11
DEX	4D6+6	20

MOVE	HP	AV. DAMAGE BONUS
5	1D6	-1D6

Weapons Bite 30% (1d4 + db)  
Knife 25% (1d6 + db)  
Dart 20% (1d6 + 1/2 db)

Armor none

Skills Climb 60%, Dodge 50%,

Spells Dream Lore 75%, Hide 70%  
 Sneak 70%, Track 50%.  
 Sanity Loss with POW 14 it knows at least 1d4.  
 a Zoog causes 0/1d3 Sanity loss  
 when viewed.

### Haemophores, Lesser Independent Race.

*Having drunk its fill, the swollen haemophone drags itself to a nearby hiding place to sprawl there saddened and satiated. So bloated, this creature may not begin a new hunt until 3-4 months have passed.*

-Peterson, Field Guide to Creatures of the Dreamlands

Haemophores are small humanoid beings with webbed hands and feet, and curious W shaped mouths. A haemophone subsists on blood and is attracted to bright and shiny objects. It will suck blood from a victim until the haemophone is so monstrously bloated that it is completely distorted and bulging, incapable of movement. Their name comes from their habit of filling up on blood before migrating.

Once a haemophone has bitten a target, the creature remains attached on subsequent rounds, sucking blood and draining 1D3 points of the victim's STR each round until the victim dies. If the victim survives, the STR returns at the rate of 1 point per day.

### Haemophores, Blood-sucking Parasites

CHAR	ROLLS	AVERAGES
STR	2D6	7
CON	3D6	10-11
SIZ	1D6+2	5-6
INT	2D6+3	10
POW	3D6	10-11
DEX	5D6	17-18
MOVE	HP	Av. DAMAGE BONUS
7	8	N/A

Weapons Bite 30% (1d3+blood drain)  
 Armor none  
 Skills Hide 90%, Sneak 90%  
 Spells none  
 Sanity Loss It costs 0/1d6 SAN  
 to see a haemophone

### Thing Hanging in the Void

*Unique Greater Independent*

*Maddened ever by the fear of unknown things and the lure of the dead faces.*

-H.P. Lovecraft-“What the Moon Brings”

The Thing Hanging in the Void is a thin, mummified humanoid figure with murky features. It is wrapped in filthy swaddling and hangs suspended by its moldering wrappings in a bottomless chasm somewhere in the Dreamlands, probably the Underworld. Closer inspection reveals the Thing to be composed of a mass of twisted, tortured, screaming faces.

This strange and malign being is mentioned in a few mythos tomes. A dweller in the Dreamlands, the Thing feasts upon, and is composed of, human souls. This entity feeds upon human souls by overcoming its victim's magic points with its own on the Resistance Table. Once overcome, the victim's soul is drawn into the Thing and he or she is lost forever. Each time the Thing sucks up a soul it must expend five of its own magic points. The insatiable Thing continues to feed until it has run out of victims or magic points.

If the Thing encounters a lone dreamer it may choose to possess the luckless person instead of devouring his or her soul. The Thing then uses the possessed individual to lead other dreamers to it so that it can glut its wicked appetite. When the possessed dreamer is no longer of use to the Thing, it thanklessly devours his soul as well. To possess a dreamer the Thing Hanging in the Void must overcome the target's POW with its own on the Resistance Table.

Possessed dreamers do not remember their encounter with the Thing although they suffer from strange dreams and nightmares. The keeper should make a POW vs. POW roll each day to see if the Thing loses control of the dreamer.

Reduced to zero or fewer hit points, the Thing's essence is banished from its current body, which then dries and crumples to dust. Eventually the disembodied spirit of the Thing possesses a new human and devours his or her soul. This new body is suspended in some dank and black cavern of chasm of the Dreamlands. With a new body, the thing can once again feast on the souls of humans.

### The Thing Hanging in the Void, Living Nightmare

STR	25	CON	29	SIZ	VARIES
INT	21	POW	22	DEX	31
MOVE	N/A	HP	29	DB	N/A

Weapons Soul Drain: Overcome magic points to eat soul  
 Armor None, but physical weapons cannot harm it  
 Spells any spell which affects the mind, as well as any others desired by the keeper.  
 Sanity Loss 1d6/1d20 Sanity points for seeing the Thing

# A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE CITY OF HERCULANEUM

This beautiful, seaside city of about five thousand people on the Gulf of Naples is a jewel in the crown of the empire. Its smaller and less bustling than its neighbor Pompeii, lying just nine miles to the south. That city is home to about twenty thousand people and a major economic center. Herculaneum is a more quiet, elegant and peaceful city, one of restful relaxation among the stunning ocean views.

Herculaneum is also a place of learning, knowledge, and scholarly pursuits. Many patrons of the arts live or own homes in the city with many of them amassing impressive private libraries. Some of the greatest scholars, historians and philosophers of the ages were frequent visitors to the city. The knowledge amassed in Herculaneum rivals that of any other city on earth.

However Herculaneum has its secrets. Just what lurks hidden behind the veil of serenity? Just what mysterious facts lie in the scrolls of the city's private collections? It is a city where secret societies gather, some meaning to bring about mankind's downfall, others intent on defending it against the shadows of the Mythos. Unknown to everyone is one deadly fact, one terrible truth. The hourglass has been turned on Herculaneum and soon its time will run out.

## **The History of Herculaneum**

The first settlement on the site of Herculaneum was created by the Samnite tribes of the Italian peninsula sometime in the late 6th Century BC. The town quickly fell under Greek control. The Greeks turned the town into a trading post, taking advantage of its location near the Gulf of Naples. It was the Greeks who gave the city

its name. Greek influence waned in the 4th century and the Samnites retook control of the city.

However, the Samnites of Herculaneum sided with the allies against Rome during the Social Wars (91 BC – 88BC). During this conflict various city-states of the Italian peninsula sought to free themselves from Roman control. Rome was able to retake these rebellious cities, including Herculaneum. Tutus Didius, a Legate of Sulla, conquered the city in 89 BC. Titus Didius was a celebrated military tactician, who'd earn Triumphs for his



service in Macedon and Spain. He died in battle shortly after taking Herculaneum.

After become a Roman municipium (the second highest class of Roman city) Herculaneum the city underwent a change. It stopped being a trading center and became a

resort town. Romans flocked to Herculaneum to “get away from it all”. They built beautiful villas, enjoyed the ocean side views and sipped local wines. Visitors and residents alike are entertained by poets, sporting events and generally relax. Herculaneum was soon home to some



of the wealthiest citizens in the empire, even if many of them only lived in the city part time. The city became a seat of knowledge as many of the greatest minds of their era, such as Virgil and Horace, visited the Herculaneum to study. The city’s future seemed bright, until August 24th, 79 AD.

## **The Myth of Herculaneum**

The founding of Herculaneum is told in a myth, passed down from the Greeks when they named the city (see below). It is as follows::

*Hercules was traveling and stopped to pasture his cattle in a field. Unfortunately this was near the mouth of a cave, in which the creature Cacus laired. Cacus was a fire-breathing monster, the son of Hepaestus. He also favored the taste of human flesh.*

*Cacus spied the cows near his lair. He crept out and stole eight of them, dragging them backwards by their tails so there would be no tracks leading into his cave. However, when Hercules awoke he noticed that some of his animals were missing. When he heard them calling from inside the cave, he rushed towards the entrance in anger.*

*Cacus blocked the entrance with a huge bolder, so Hercules tore the top of the mountain off to reach him. Cacus breathed fire and smoke at Hercules. Hercules responded by hurling branches and boulders at Cacus. Finally Hercules became so angry that he leapt at Cacus, aiming for where the smoke and fire were thickest. He grappled with Cacus, getting a hold over his throat and strangling the creature.*

*Hercules was celebrated as a hero, for Cacus had terrorized the people of the region for some time. Hercules, to commemorate his great victory, built a city where he defeated the fire-breathing monster Cacus. This city he named after himself, calling it Herculaneum.*

## **Economy**

Herculaneum does have a few industries. It is primarily a center for fishing, with local vessels heading out daily to ply the waters of the Gulf of Naples. The city also serves as a naval port for the Roman military. The rich soil of the region supports many vineyards and many wonderful local wines are produced here. The major source of revenue to the city is tourism. Herculaneum is first and foremost a resort city, with elegant baths, taverns, restaurants and beautiful vacation homes. The city has much to offer visitors in ways to relax and entertain themselves.

## Activities in Herculaneum

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Investigators can find all manner of relaxing activities in the city. There are many fine taverns and restaurants in the city, as well as temples and theatres. Herculaneum has not one, but two bathhouses, as well as a large sports arena (Palestra). Swimming is a popular pastime in Herculaneum, both in the Palestra's pool and the natural ocean. Other activities investigators can enjoy are public debates, poetry readings and musical performances held in various establishments and outdoor public venues almost daily.

## Regaining Sanity In Herculaneum

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According to the Cthulhu Invictus rulebook under the rules for recovering Sanity a stay in Herculaneum is good treatment for both temporary and indefinite insanity. More than one visitor to Herculaneum has the haunted eyes and nervousness of one who has seen things man was not meant to see. With time, such men and woman can heal the wounds inflicted upon their minds.

Investigators wishing to recover from temporary insanity can recover 1d3 lost sanity points per week of relaxing activities such as going to the baths, swimming, attending poetry readings, dining at fine restaurants and generally allowing their minds to relax and recover from the trauma it suffered. Investigators can spend up to three weeks on such a vacation, regaining a maximum of 3d3 (3-9) sanity points.

Those unfortunate investigators who arrive in the Herculaneum indefinitely insane must pursue their recovery with a bit more commitment. They must remain confined to one of the dozens of resort villas in the city, venturing out no further than the villa's gardens. Poets, musicians and philosophers may visit the investigator at the villa, in order to entertain them and stimulate their minds. Investigators sticking to this program of rest and recovery can regain 1d4 lost sanity points per week. Up to three weeks can be spent in this manner, allowing for up to 3d4 (3-12) recovered sanity points.

***Occultus Contego Congregatio (The Hidden Shield Society)*** – About forty years ago a group of scholars began to make connections between some of the stranger stories in their collections. Some of the most haunting and incredible tales recorded from all over the empire seemed to have some commonality to them. People from different provinces, speaking different languages and having different cultures, were all describing similar creatures, sinister cults and names of dark, hidden gods. A legionnaire in Britannia and a merchant in

Macedonia both reported being attacked by a huge tree like creature with tentacles... A messenger from Gaul and a finder working in Greece both told stories about people worshipping some sea god called Cthulhu... Surely there had to be something to it.

So these men, scholars, scribes and historians from all over the empire gathered to compare their findings. This meeting took place in the vacation home of a well-known patron of the arts, a man named Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus (see below). He was wealthy and well respected, a former consul of the Roman Republic. More importantly he shared their belief that there was something dark and sinister going on in the empire. Piso felt that more information was needed but also that secrecy was needed as well. He began to fund secret fact-finding missions to look into some of these stories.

These first teams found much more than they wanted to. Many of these stories were far too real and they did not take kindly to being the center of anyone's attention. Many of these team members vanished, never to be seen again. Others survived, learning from their mistakes, recruiting new members into their ranks to replace the fallen or the insane. Investigation soon turned into opposition as the aims and goals of some of these forces were simply too sinister to allow to bear fruit. They learned that there always seemed to be lives hanging in the balance, lives that needed to be protected.

The founding members gathered again five years after that first meeting. They had amassed a small library of scrolls containing eyewitness accounts, mission logs, captured spells and scriptures of the dark cults they opposed. Piso Caesoninus once again hosted the gathering at his villa in Herculaneum and proposed a radical restructuring of the group. It was not enough just to investigate these things; mankind needed a protector not only to look after their lives but also to keep the nightmarish truth from tainting their minds. The others agreed and The Hidden Shield Society was born.

For the last thirty-five years teams of shield members have quietly looked into cases of mysterious happenings. When they encountered the forces of the mythos, they opposed it with whatever tools they had at their disposal. The society has over three hundred members across the empire, from Senators to Bath House girls, from centurions to pick pockets. Slave or free, man or woman it matters not, so long as someone can be of use to the society and is willing to take on in the commitment to defend mankind there is a place for them in the Occultus Contego Congregatio (The Hidden Shield Society).

Members are organized into teams numbering between three and six members. Some teams are assigned



to specific locations (there are two teams in Rome), while others are sent to wherever they are needed. Teams are given money, travel papers, letters of introduction, forged identities; whatever they might need from the society. They also have access to the vast library of information gathered by the society, which is located inside the Villa of Piso, in Herculaneum. All members of the society wear a signet ring emblazoned with a shield. They swear to never betray their team, the society, or mankind and to keep their activities a secret from outsiders. They also keep an eye out for others who are also fighting the same war they are, teams of people standing against the myths on their own. Sometimes such “independents” are offered a place within the society itself (there is a rather in-depth screening process).

Keepers may use *Occultus Contego Congregatio* as a way to direct investigators to specific missions, as a mysterious third part looking into the same mystery as they are or as possible source of rescue. Unfortunately for mankind the society is dealt a severe blow when Herculaneum is destroyed (see *The Death of Herculaneum*). It never fully recovers. The society struggles on trying to continue it’s work, floundering in confusion for the next hundred and fifty years. It then fractures into semi-independent groups, with some lasting into the Dark Ages, and at least one cell still operating into the 1920’s.

### **Personalities of Herculaneum**

Below are a selection of six non-player characters keepers can use and investigators can meet while visiting Herculaneum. Some are loosely based on actual historical figures while others are completely fictitious.

#### **Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus**

*Consul (retired), Patron of the Arts, Founder of The Hidden Shield Society*

*Skills: Civics 90%, Empire 90%, Library Use 60%, Occult 70%, Status 85%, Cthulhu Mythos 20%.*

Governor, Senator and consul of the Republic, Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus has held nearly every post of power and importance in Roman society. He is father in law to Julius Caesar, a political rival of Cicero and one of the architects behind the temporary reconciliation between Octavian and Mark Anthony. Later in his life the well renowned man appeared to have settled down in Herculaneum, becoming a patron of the arts and amassing an immense library. In truth he was as busy as every, founding the secret society *Occultus Contego Congregatio* (The Hidden Shield Society) and helping it develop into a formidable adversary to the forces of the Cthulhu Mythos.

#### **Publius Virgilius Maro (“Virgil”)**

*Poet*

*Skills: Art-Poetry 85%, Fast Talk 65%, Medicine 45%, Science-Astronomy 50%, Persuade 70%, Status 75%.*

Description: One of the most famous and celebrated Roman poets of his time (in all times after as well) is Virgil. Author of epic poems designed to rival the great works of ancient Greece, Virgil wrote *Georgics*, *Bucolics* and his masterpiece *Aeneid*. He was a frequent visitor to Herculaneum, to which he would visit when writing. Investigators could find him performing his latest works, relaxing in the city’s restaurants or bathhouses or doing research at the Villa of Piso. Tales in the Dark and Middle ages will label Virgil as a Magus (a wizard with mystical powers) and even an early Christian (even though some of his works were erotic with both hetero and homosexual characters).

#### **Quintus Horatius Flaccus, (“Horace”)**

*Retired Centurion, Poet*

*Skills: Art- Poetry, Art- Satire, Empire 55%, Gladius 65%, Status 75%, Tactics 55%, Write Language – Latin 80%.*

Description: Son of a freed slave Horace was educated as a philosopher in Athens. This all changed when he joined the army of Marcus Brutus, where he gained the rank of tribune. After the defeat of Brutus, he returned home to find his property had been confiscated. Sad and destitute he took a post as a scribe and began writing satires in his spare time to earn extra money. His works, some of which attacked social abuses, became wildly popular and he soon took to writing full time. The phrase *Carpe Diem* (“seize the day”) is from one of his books of *Odes*. Later in life Horace would be offered the post of personal secretary by Augustus, which he declined. Like his close friend Virgil (see above), Horace frequently visited Herculaneum and was often a guest at the Villa of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus.

#### **Genucius Russus**

*Vigiles, member of the Hidden Shield Society*

*Skills: Axe 55%, Civics 65%, Climb 80%, First Aid 75%, Insight 70%, Spot Hidden 55%,*

Well known in Herculaneum as a commander of the Corps of *Vigiles*, Russus fights fires, hunts criminals and keeps the peace. Most people know and respect him while at the same time disliking his no-nonsense attitude and the annoying habit of refusing every bribe ever offered. Russus is a fearless man, routinely risking his life to save others during fires. He leads a double life as a team leader for The Hidden Shield Society based in Herculaneum. Currently, his team has diminished to just three members; he’d like to get that number up to



five, at least. Recruiting is always difficult, as he doesn't like to bring anyone into the fight against the mythos. Rather, Russus waits to encounter someone who's already discovered the secret war being waged against mankind. This was how he recruited his other two team members. Personally Russus is a very private person. He's in love with his fellow team member Fannia, knowing this to be a very foolish thing. It is made even worse because Russus is certain she's in love with Afer (see below). He's afraid that his feelings for her might jeopardize the team's safety one day and is thinking of asking the society to arrange his transfer to another city. Such a transfer is very unlikely to happen, as Russus knows Herculaneum like the back of his hand and is far too valuable an agent for the society to lose.

### **Afer the Caledonian or Afer Magnus**

*Gladiator, member of the Hidden Shield Society*

*Skills: Grapple 85%, Conceal 70%, Insight 60%, Sneak 70%, Throw 70%, Long Sword 75%.*

Son of a Caledonian (Scottish) and Roman slaves, Afer gained his freedom the hard way, through years of victories and performances in various arenas around the empire. Today he is semi-retired, occasionally performing as a wrestler in the Palestra. His large size, many scars, tattoos, reddish hair and beard make him quite striking to the crowd (and popular with older, wealthy ladies). In non-lethal performances he is often set in the role of "savage villain", which suits him just fine. At this stage of his career it's more theatre than actual combat. Three years ago The Hidden Shield Society recruited him, after he barely survived an encounter with a Byakhee just outside of Herculaneum. Since then he's been working with Russus and Fannia as part of their team. Afer is totally clueless concerning the romantic triangle currently at play in the team. He views Fannia as sort of a little sister and his taste in women runs to older wealthy widows.

### **Pompella Fannia**

*Bathhouse attendant, member of The Hidden Shield Society*

*Skills: Art-Masseuse 75%, Fast Talk 80%, Listen 60%, Persuade 70%, Sneak 55%, Swim 75%.*

Born with the good fortune of being rather beautiful but the misfortune of being bitterly poor, young Fannia didn't have many options. The owner of the newly built Thermae Suburban spotted her swimming in the ocean one day and immediately offered her a job. She was trained as a masseuse and quickly realized she had a gift for rhetoric. Fannia quickly became one of the more popular girls in the establishment. Everything was going fine until some men kidnapped her after leaving work. She found herself hours later strapped to an altar, surrounded by masked robed figures, in a basement in the city. Before

they could offer her as a sacrifice she was rescued by a Hidden Shield Society team lead by Russus the Vigiles. Since then she's been a member Society, funneling them valuable intelligence from conversations she overhears in the bathhouse. She is secretly in love with Afer Magnus but is put off by his many female companions (most of whom are rather wealthy).

## **Sinister Seeds**

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### **The Demon's Hand**

A group arrives in Herculaneum in search of something. They are worshipers of the Great Old One Yegg-Ha, a headless winged terror who has terrorized many Roman citizens in the past. Just ten years ago the beast was destroyed and its body buried in the lonely Britannia countryside. That is except for one piece that is, which is what has brought them to the city.

One of the roman soldiers who survived the battle that finally destroyed Yegg-Ha decided to take a trophy. He severed the enormous creature's hand, placing it in a clay jar filled with salt. Eventually the man, named Valerius Cinna, sold his strange keepsake to members of The Hidden Shield Society. They recorded his story and attempted to study the now mummified artifact. They failed to discover anything about the mysterious hand and soon their attention was focused elsewhere.

The cultists will stop at nothing to recover the hand. They are smart, well funded, and know a number of spells, which make them rather dangerous opponents. They also know the arcane chant that will allow their master, the Great Old One Yegg-Ha, to be reborn. All the cult needs is a small part of their master's remains. They've given up finding his body in Britannia (about half of them are from that area, both of Roman and Briton descent). They are slowly closing in on the location of the hand, and once they get close enough they plan to speak the chant.

Should this happen, the Great Old One will be fully restored to life. It will then go on a ferocious killing spree, slaying everyone within reach as it goes on a rampage. This will all start inside the Villa of Piso, the headquarters of The Hidden Shield Society. Unless prevented hundreds of innocent people will die, the society's headquarters will be destroyed and the dark and savage god will be reborn. Statistics for the Great Old One Yegg-Ha can be found on page 239 of the Malleus Monstrorum.

### **The Essence of Hercules**

A handful of public sports celebrities across Herculaneum have all died suddenly. Each appeared to be in perfect

health and had just won impressive victories in the Palestra. They seem to have succumbed to some sort of brain fever. These athletes each went berserk, injuring and even killing a number of people with their bare hands before someone was forced to kill them. The city is stunned and officials are contemplating shutting down the Palestra until the situation is resolved.

What these athletes all had in common was that each had purchased and imbibed a tonic from a mysterious apothecary named Fabiana. The tonic, called Essence of Hercules, boosted their strength, agility and endurance. This allowed them to perform far beyond their normal abilities, but with a cost. Unknown to them the tonic also causes madness, death and worse. Soon the bodies of those who have died will rise up, still filled with unspeakable rage and a desire to destroy everything around them. It is unknown how many doses of "Essence of Hercules" Fabiana sold in Herculaneum or how many more people will suffer the same fate.

Fabiana is planning to leave the city as soon as possible. The woman knows that death and chaos could soon engulf the city and she isn't planning to be here when it does. This was her plan all along, the will of the dark deity she worships. Fabiana is an apothecary second but a sorcerer and cultist first. The secret ingredient for this remarkable tonic is the essence of her god and master, the Great Old One Sammanus, the Terror that Walks In Darkness. Just what the malevolent entity's plan for Herculaneum is cannot be guessed at, but it certainly might be something investigators wish to thwart before it's too late.

### **Matters of Inheritance**

Four sons return to their birthplace in Herculaneum for the reading of their wealthy father's will. The property is divided evenly but there is a rather severe condition, the sons forfeit their inheritance should they ever have children. The sons are contesting the will, as several of them are already married. As they return to their childhood home they find an even deeper mystery.

All evidence of their mother, who died when they were children, has been removed from the house as if she never existed. They remember she was a beautiful Greek woman and was their father's third wife (he had no other children with his first two). The sons remember their parents as being deeply in love. Why their late father should do this is beyond comprehension. The boys are all successful men, with lives tied to the sea (naval officer, merchant shipping, fishermen, and shipwright) but they do want to know what made their father take these actions (the will, the house, sending them away as teenagers).

What the sons don't know is that their mother was a Deep One Hybrid, and so are they. When her change began their father locked her away and sent the boys to travel and be educated far from the city. He became a recluse, tending to his wife as she became more and more inhuman. In her debilitated state he contemplated killing her several times, but he loved her and had given him four sons. In the end he released her into the sea, as she cursed him for cutting her off from her children. She could not bring herself to kill him for the same reason. Now he is dead and their sons have returned home, traveling back to the place of their birth as mature fish.

Their mother, now a full Deep One, has been waiting for them. She knew they'd be drawn back to the city, by fate or the dreams and call of the deep all of their kind experience. Heavily cloaked she'll move about the city at night, trying to make contact with them. Soon her four sons will begin getting mysterious letters from "Their Mother", saying she loves them and wishes to explain things to them. Their mother knows that eventually the change will begin for them, as it did for her. She fears that without a guide the painful, confusing process could shatter their minds unless they are prepared. She'll also say in the letter to fight their father's will, that their mother and her family want them to know the joys of fatherhood.

## **Places of Interest in Herculaneum**

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### **The Basilica**

This large ornate building serves as Herculaneum's courthouse and town hall. Here legal matters are discussed, cases tried and verdicts handed down, often before an assembly. Public records are also stored here, but investigators will need to make Status rolls to get into those areas and even then will need a good reason (or possibly a successful Fast Talk or Persuade roll).

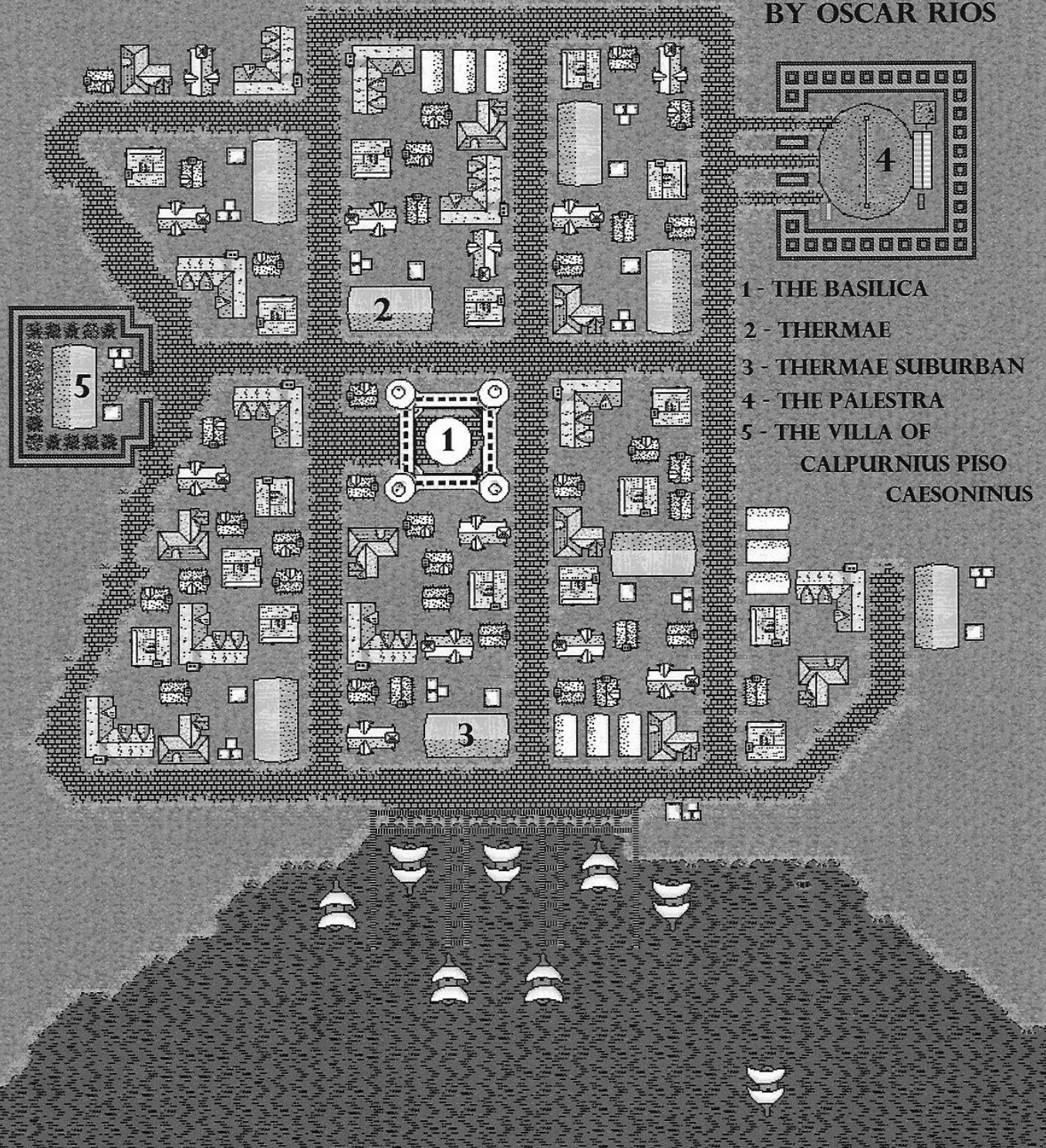
The building itself is quite similar to the Basilica in Rome. It is ornately designed and decorated with stunningly beautiful frescos and a bronze statue (a god-like emperor on a chariot pulled by four horses) over the main entrance. The building was destroyed in an earthquake and rebuilt by Proconsul Marcus Nonius Balbus. This newer Basilica has a great deal of artwork honoring him, his sons and his extended family.

### **Thermae**

This, the larger and older of Herculaneum's two bathhouses, is located near the center of town. The

# THE CITY OF HERCULANEUM

FOR "MALUM UMBRA"  
THE FIRST CTHULHU  
INVICTUS COMPANION  
BY OSCAR RIOS



- 1 - THE BASILICA
- 2 - THERMAE
- 3 - THERMAE SUBURBAN
- 4 - THE PALESTRA
- 5 - THE VILLA OF  
CALPURNIUS PISO  
CAESONINUS

bathhouse is divided into male and female areas. It contains large swimming pools, a huge gymnasium and dressing rooms. It is beautifully decorated with mosaic floor tiles. The atmosphere here is much more traditional (maybe stuffy) than the newer suburban bathhouse (see below).

### **Thermae Suburban**

The prestigious Balbus family constructed this newer and smaller bathhouse as a gift to the city. They do have a private entrance to the Thermae Suburban, as their estate is just next-door. Visitors will be welcomed by a statue of Apollo, in the center of a fountain decorating the main atrium. The family spared no expense as the bathhouse has everything one might wish for: a large swimming pool, sauna, changing rooms as well as hot and cold

baths. One major difference between this bathhouse and the older one is that Thermae Suburban has no division based on sex. The bathhouse even has private dining rooms and lounges.

### **The Palestra**

The sports arena of the city, the Palestra occupies an entire city block. The arena is open aired with Corinthian pillars on three sides, the fourth side being a covered hall with a viewing gallery for spectators. The interior of this space measures two hundred and thirty feet by one hundred and sixty feet. Inside stands a huge statue of the city's patron hero, Hercules. The center of the Palestra is dominated by an enormous cross-shaped swimming pool, with the longest arm reaching one hundred and sixty feet. The smaller arm of the pool was deeper than the longer one.

Inside the pool is a beautiful bronze statue of a five-headed serpent whose heads spray water into the air. The snakes are crested and bearded, depictions of Agathodemons, spirits of god fortune, health and luck. They are usually depicted as servants of Bona Dea, a Roman goddess of healing, fertility and freedom. There is ample room remaining inside the Palestra for all manner of sporting events and competitions, events and exhibitions are held almost daily.

Flanking the playing fields are temples to Hermes (God of Swiftness) and Hygenia (Goddess of Health). Also, in the outer areas are meeting rooms and semi-private viewing galleries reserved for the upper class. One can also rent one of a number of discreet bedrooms for other sorts of exercise.

### **The Villa of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus (Villa of the Piso)**

This gorgeous villa overlooking the sea is the home of Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus. It is filled with art and one of the finest private libraries in the city (and possibly the empire). There are always a number of guest here, friends of Piso or scholars making use of his library. Despite the constant visitors security is high here, what one would expect in the home of a former



consul of the republic.

What most who come here don't realize is that there is a second library hidden underground. In this lower level of the villa are training gyms, meeting rooms, armories and the archives of the Hidden Shield Society. This place is always guarded and only members of the society are ever allowed inside. Nowhere will one find a complete list of the society's membership. Even founding members are unsure how many teams and agents are operating in the empire, which is exactly how they set the society up. No one person could ever compromise everyone.

## **The Death of Herculaneum**

For 800 years Mount Vesuvius had been quiet, so no one even realized it was a volcano. At 1PM on August 24th, in the year 79 AD those living in the shadow of Vesuvius would come to realize the true nature of the mountain. Tremors rocked the streets of the city and the mountaintop exploded. Vesuvius erupted, spewing a cloud of ash and stone high into the sky. At this point most people stayed in their homes, unsure of just what to do. The winds were falling towards Pompeii, whose streets and rooftops were

being filled with hot falling stones. In Herculaneum, there was only a layer of powdery ash falling over the city.

By late afternoon the plume hit the stratosphere and flattened out, forming a mushroom cloud that blocked out the sun. By now some of Herculaneum's citizens began to evacuate but many did not. Little did they know that time was running out. By 1AM, only twelve hours from the start of the eruptions, life in Herculaneum ended. At this point the vast column of gas, ash and volcanic stone collapsed in on itself, sending a wave of superheated vapor down the slopes of the mountain. The surge, which was in excess of 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, reached Herculaneum in minutes. Whatever this cloud touched died, being encased in a quickly cooling cast of volcanic ash. This was followed by a rain of ash and rock that covered Herculaneum in 1 – 2 feet of volcanic material. By the end of the day, a total of four surges would wash over Herculaneum and when it was over the city was gone. The grand city was now buried underneath more than seventy-five feet of ash and volcanic rock. It would remain buried, lost and forgotten until the late 18th century.



# OBSIDEO VILLA

("THE HAUNTED VILLA")

## A CTHULHU INVICTUS SCENARIO

BY OSCAR "OSK" RIOS

### **Information and Involving the Characters**

Investigators will be invited to the home of Servius Vibius Casmino, a wealthy senator who lives in the City of Herculaneum. Herculaneum rests south of Rome on the Mediterranean coasts, just west of Pompeii. It will be destroyed, along with Pompeii, when Mount Vesuvius erupts in August of 79AD. For our purposes this scenario takes place well before that (as it certainly wouldn't be happening after).

The exact year the scenario takes place in is not important but the date is. Events of this scenario unfold in late March during the Quinquatria festival. Quinquatria commemorates the birth of the Goddess Minerva and is celebrated with feasts, fortune telling, gladiatorial matches, poetry, hunts and oratory contests. While there is some historic debate between the duration of the festival, in this scenario the festival begins on March 19th and lasts for five days, ending on the 24th.

Investigators receive the invitation from Senator Servius Casmino in a variety of ways. They can be friends, business associates, or distant relatives to him. They might also be friends of his daughter Casmina, or his son Pelliis (who is unable to be with his family for whatever reason Keeper's wish to create). Perhaps investigators are worshipers of Minerva and patrons to her temple in Herculaneum, meeting the senator and his daughter there. For whatever reason Keepers invent, the investigators are guests in the senator's home for the Quinquatria festival, where the family has an even greater reason to celebrate this year. Casmina has recently come of age and is to be consecrated as a priestess of Minerva on the final day of the festival.

### **Introduction**

In the shadow of Mount Vesuvius lays the lovely port city of Herculaneum, just west of the much larger Pompeii.

Herculaneum is famous across the empire for its beautiful views, its luxurious estates, its many fine artisans and the relaxed nature of its people. It's a popular vacation spot and many wealthy families own property here. While the ground shakes from time to time and the mountain smokes every so often, nobody pays it much mind. The rhythm of life and commerce goes on while the future seems nothing but bright.

It is this bright future that brings you all to Herculaneum to enjoy the festival of Quinquatria. It is late March and the five-day celebration commemorating the birth of the Goddess Minerva is about to begin. It will be a time of much festivity as various feasts; recitation of poetry and telling of fortunes will take place. Debates and competitions of oration will be held, as well as scenic hunts in the countryside and non-lethal matches between well-trained gladiators. This year there'll be even more reason to celebrate, as Vibella Casmina was coming of age.

Vibella Casmina is the daughter of Senator Servius Casmino, a well-respected political figure. She was beautiful, intelligent and a skilled poetess known for her devotion to the Goddess Minerva. Casmina, along with eleven other young women across Herculaneum, are to indoctrinate into Minerva's temple as initiates at the end of the festival. It's a proud time for the House of Casmino, as it is for each of these other young ladies families. These twelve families will each be hosting parties to celebrate this momentous occasion with family, friends and well-wishers flooding into the city from all across the Empire. The weather, which had been rainy and gray for most of the past week, has finally cleared up. The sun is shining and blue skies smile down upon Herculaneum. It looks as if nothing could mar this joyous spiritual celebration or the rights of passages these dozen young women are about to undertake.

## Keeper's Information

A cult dedicated to Arachne has been recently moved into Herculaneum (see below, The Cult of Arachne). For several months now they have carefully plotted the mass assassination of a dozen young women. Their targets come from many different walks of life but have one important thing in common; they are all about to be consecrated as priestesses of Minerva. The reason for this is simple, to their twisted minds anyway. They are doing this as an act of revenge.

Minerva is the Romanized version of the Greek Goddess, Athena. In Greek mythology Athena is said to have cursed the mortal weaver Arachne due to her prideful boasts that her skills at weaving were as great as the Goddess's. Athena and Arachne had a weaving contest after which the Athena cursed her mortal opponent in punishment. The curse filled Arachne with a shame so deep she hung herself. The goddess was taken by surprise by this and took pity on her mortal rival. She returned Arachne to life, transforming her into a spider. Legend states that Arachne and her descendents continue to weave threads and hang from them to this day.

The Cult of Arachne actually worships the Great Old One Atlach-Nacha, combining the Greek and Roman myths with their dark knowledge of the mythos. The cult of Arachne's murderous plan is to place very poisonous spiders into anonymous gifts and send them to the young initiates. These spiders will then be enchanted with a spell that will cause them to seek out a specific target to bite, namely the dozen prospective priestesses. Investigators will have an opportunity to save several of the targeted women before they are bitten. Of the six women who will definitely be bitten (likely more than that), all but one will die. This lone survivor, none other than Vibella Casmia, will then take on a very special significance to the Cult of Arachne.

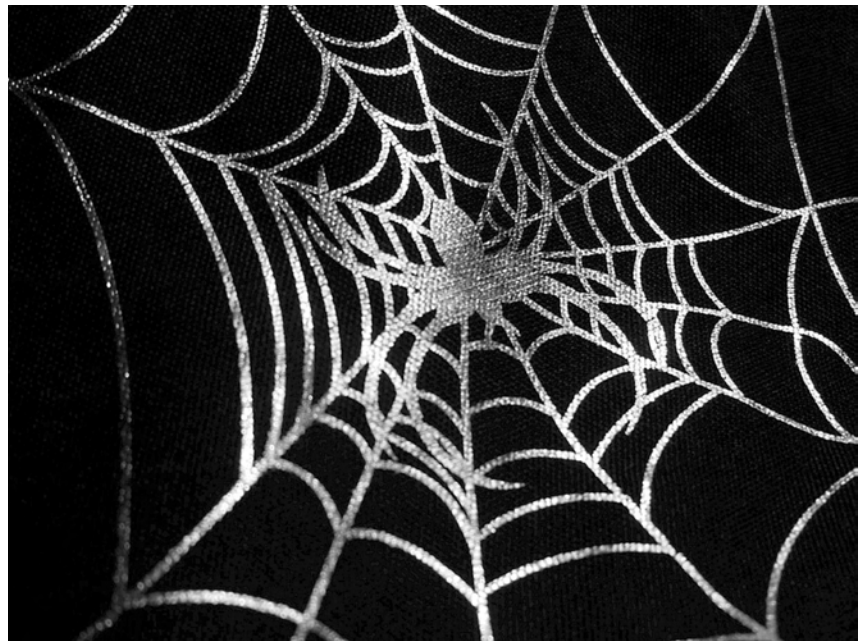
Anyone who survives a bite from a poisonous spider is considered "Blessed" by the Cult of Arachne. Such people are said to be in the favor by the spider goddess, worthy to serve her as a priest or a priestess. That anyone survived one of the spider bites comes as a total shock to the cult. It is also a golden opportunity that they simply cannot ignore; a chance for the cult to increase their number. As soon as it becomes

known that Lady Casmia survived her attack, the Cult of Arachne moves to kidnap her.

Casmia will be taken to the cult's hidden temple and every effort made to coerce her into joining its ranks. The captive, who was about to take vows as a priestess of Minerva, resists these attempts for several days. At the end of that time she will be broken by the cult and join it, becoming a Priestess of Arachne (Atlach-Nacha). Once indoctrinated into 'the Cult Casmia will be released and returned to her family, now a loyal and dedicated member of the sinister cult. Investigators have only a few days to follow the trail of clues, rescue Casmia and destroy the Cult of Arachne. Unfortunately, the prisoner is guarded not only by the cult but also by its founding member, a once-human woman now transformed into an enormous spider creature called a Daughter of Atlach-Nacha.

## The Cult of Arachne (Atlach-Nacha)

The Cult of Arachne arrived in Herculaneum from the city of Lydia, in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey). There a beautiful woman named Nolia



married a rich merchant named Hortensius Crassus. Hortensius was a successful silk importer and Nolia was a gifted weaver. What Hortensius didn't know was that his young, new wife was also a vile cultist of Arachne.

Slowly, Nolia took control of everything. In little time she was running the business and the household as

her husband slowly diminished in health. This was due in no small part to Nolia's slow and careful poisoning of him. She gave birth to three daughters, Crusina, Fannia and Mettellia and trained them all in both weaving and worship of Arachne. Eventually, the cult became well established and Nolia took the last step in her long, faithful path of service to her dark spider goddess; she murdered and cannibalized her husband.

This changed Nolia; transforming her into something inhuman, an enormous creature called a "Daughter of Atlach-Nacha". With the sudden public loss of both parents the sisters thought it better to move away from Lydia in order to avoid questions. The trio packed up everything they needed and resettled in Herculaneum. That was four years ago. They resumed the family business of importing silk and producing fine woven fabrics and artwork, naming their shop "Hortensius Fine Silks and Tapestries". The trio continued with their worship of Arachne, turning a natural cavern inside Mount Vesuvius into a subterranean temple. They also moved their mother to this new temple from her hiding place back in Lydia. The sisters then linked their home and temple with a Gate spell and began to slowly expand the cult.

All three sisters are very skilled artisans of surpassing beauty as well as rather powerful sorceresses. Each has a good knowledge of potions, allowing them to arm their minions with deadly poisons. The cult is also made up of a half dozen male members, each a skilled and well-equipped assassin. The cult's cover, that of a legitimate silk and tapestry shop, is quite successful and building a decent reputation as well. Unfortunately, the daughters of Nolia didn't inherit their mother's judgment or patience and have launched a very risky attack against the temple of Minerva. However, depending on investigators, this brash action could well prove to be the Cult of Arachne's undoing.

### The Cast of Web of Vengeance

here are a fair number of NPC's in this scenario, so keepers may have a bit of difficulty keeping track of them all. This quick reference table lists the important NPC's for Web of Vengeance.

Servius Vibius Casmينو	Wealthy Senator and investigator's host.
Attius Maso	Vibius Casmينو's Bodyguard
Vibella Casmina	Initiate Priestess of Minerva, Daughter of Casmينو
Crusa	Slave of Vibella Casmina, healer

Decius Lepidus	Local scholar who specializes in rare animals
Duilius Celer	Animal importer and unwitting accomplice
Temula	Apocathary and Scapegoat
Hortensia Crusina	Arachne cultist, usually found in the silk shop
Hortensia Mettellia & Hortensia Fannia	Arachne cultists, usually found in hidden temple.
Nolia	Mother of Hortensia sisters & daughter of Atlach-Nacha
Other Initiate priestess	Lutania Liga Porcia Cera Decia Varra Annia Scippina Catalia Ruffina Rutella Pollia Coelia Silana Gellia Curella Fulvia Caudexia Hirtia Thermina Valerina Albina

### Part One – The Festival

Investigators arriving in Herculaneum will notice a general mood of excitement and anticipation. The Quinquatria festival, while not celebrated with raucous activities and wild parties is still an enjoyable holiday. Herculaneum is a wealthy city, an old city and a place whose people take pride in being patrons of the arts. The festival gives them a perfect opportunity to show visitors just what the city has to offer in the way of the arts. Before the festival begins many in the city will be tending to their property, doing last minute cleaning or hanging banners, flowers or otherwise decorating the outsides of their homes and shops.

Investigators can arrive in the city by road or by sea, or if keepers are starting their Cthulhu Invictus campaign, may have their investigators be natives of the city. Either way they will eventually arrive in the home of Vibius Casmينو sometime before the start of Quinquatria. Even if investigators own property in the city, the invitation of someone as well placed and wealthy as Casmينو will not be easy to refuse without such actions being taken for a social insult. Casmينو, joyous over the imminent consecration of his youngest daughter into the priesthood of Minerva, is in the mood to celebrate, to show his generosity and to connect with his "friends".



## The House of Vibius Casmino

The villa of Vibius Casmino is a stunningly beautiful property, tastefully done in an older Greek style. It's an old building, in the center of the city, yet it can feel as if it is away in the country. Its gardens are well tended and beautiful; its slaves are well trained and respectful. The property also offers wonderful views of the surrounding city from almost every window as the villa sits at the top of a gentle rise. Of all the properties the wealthy Casmino owns this one is his favorite. Keepers can use the villa map from page 8 in the Cthulhu Invictus Monograph as a template for this property.

Upon arrival, the investigators will notice that the villa has a large ornate brazier of burning oil and a shrine to Minerva placed outside the front door. Many other villas across the city have similar braziers displayed before their entrances. If asked the reason for this the investigators will be told, "This marks the residence of an initiate for the temple of Minerva". This will assist investigators greatly in Part Two (see below). Once at their destination investigators will be ushered into the house's Ala (an alcove area where guests wait to be received). There investigators are greeted by Vibius Casmino, Vibella Casmina (shadowed by her slave Crusa) or both father and daughter together. The greetings will be warm and friendly. Investigators will be taken to various guestrooms to unpack and possibly rest before being given a tour of the house and invited to have a meal with the family.

Investigators making a successful Know roll will realize that many of Casmino's older children have not come to Herculaneum for the festival. This is a mild slight to their father and younger sister, who must obviously be smarting over it. This is the main reason the investigators have been invited to be guests at the family's villa here. Investigators are encouraged to make themselves at home and the servants have been informed to treat their master's guests as they would his children.

### Vibius Casmino, Wealthy Roman Patrician

STR	12	CON	11	SIZ	14
INT	15	POW	13	DEX	12
APP	12	EDU	17	SAN	65
HP	12	DB	+1D4		

Weapons	None
Armor	None
Skills	Civics (75%), Empire (75%) Insight (50%), Persuade (55%) Status (70%).

Vibius Casmino is an older man in his early fifties, sturdy and fit despite his gray hair and creased face. His mind is as sharp as ever, well disciplined by many years of scholarly training. He is a good judge of character and a brilliant orator. Currently, he is a little upset over his children's respectful refusal of his invitation to join him and Vibella for the Quinquatria festival. When out and about Vibius usually travels with a bodyguard, a retired soldier named Attius Maso, who does an excellent job of not getting in the way while closely watching over his employer.

### Vibella Casmina, Initiate Priestess of Minerva

STR	10	CON	12	SIZ	09
INT	15	POW	15	DEX	10
APP	16	EDU	16	SAN	75
HP	10	DB	+0		

Weapons	None
Armor	None
Skills	Art-Poetry (70%), Empire (55%) Persuade (75%), Occult (60%) Status (65%).

Vibella Casmina is the youngest (seventeen) of six children. She was spoiled as a child and allowed to spend most of her time in her studies. As such she gained a good education but became something of a dreamer. Vibella soon discovered a natural gift for poetry and seems to have inherited her father's talents at oration. However, what people notice most about Casmina isn't her wit, her keen mind or well-crafted mind; it's her stunning beauty. She is the loveliest of Casmino's four daughters, which may be why her sisters aren't in attendance for her initiation ceremonies. Casmina is seldom seen without her slave, an elderly and overly protective woman named Crusa.

### The Other Initiates

Eleven other young women in Herculaneum have also been training to become priestess of Minerva. They will also be initiated into the temple of Minerva along with Casmina. They come from a broad spectrum of the city's families but share three things in common. Each one is young and unmarried; each possesses a strong spirit (POW of 14 or greater) and outstanding beauty (APP of 14 or greater). They are as follows:

Lutania Liga – A beautiful blond sculptress, from a well-respected family of artists. She has a beauty mark on her cheek and very strong hands. She was selected as a candidate for the temple when she sculpted a magnificent bust of Minerva at the age of fourteen.

Porcia Cera – A lovely, willowy tall and shy girl who is brilliant musician (lyre). Her mother is a courtesan; her father is rumored to be an unnamed member of the imperial family. She is charming and a flirt, like her mother.

Decia Varra – Decia is the youngest of all the initiates, only fourteen years old. She has a boyish look to her, and rather short hair being a slow bloomer. Her father is a surgeon who has trained her in the arts of medicine. Decia is already a very skilled healer.

Annia Scippina – A dark haired beauty that's the daughter of common entertainers. Her selection by the temple was a bit of a scandal until people began hearing her play flute. Her skill with the instrument is said to be enough to "charm a satyr into chastity".

Catalia Ruffina – The daughter of a wealthy and successful merchant, she is a skilled accountant with exceedingly beautiful green eyes. It is rumored she's going to become the assistant of the temple's treasurer. She is the most introverted of all the candidates.

Rutella Pollia – Daughter of a well-known scholar and a bathhouse girl, she is as well read, as she is lovely. Like Casmia, she is a brilliant poet although her works tend to be historic in nature. The two girls have a friendly rivalry despite their difference in status.

Coelia Silana – The only girl who could be called plump in the group, she is also the most curvaceous of the initiates. Her family owns the most successful bakery in the city. She is highly skilled in the arts of Oration and debate in addition to being a gossip.

Gellia Curella – This tall, red haired woman is the fittest girl in the group. Her family can trace its military history back five generations. She is the daughter of a retired general and well known for her skills in archery. She enjoys besting men in competition.

Fulvia Caudexia – This slender and graceful woman

was born to a family of tailors and seamstresses. Clothing made by her is in high demand due to her exceptional skill with the needle and thread. Most of her clothing designs go on to become local fashion trends.

Hirtia Thermina – This lovely woman with large eyes and thick blond curls is the most controversial choice by the temple as she is the fatherless daughter of freed slave. It is said she possesses wisdom far beyond her years and a gift for foretelling the future.

Valerina Albina - This very beautiful woman constantly fusses with her clothing and fidgets in public. She's a craftsman of great skill who only seems comfortable behind a potter's wheel. She is uncomfortable with being put in the spotlight.



## Opening of the Festival

The festival will begin at the temple of Minerva, just after dawn on the 19th of March. The high priestess of Minerva, Lady Lepedia, will open the ceremonies, giving thanks to those in attendance. She will talk about serving Minerva and the gifts the goddess has given mortal men. She'll go on to say the candidates have all shown the blessings of Minerva before introducing each of them. Afterwards, each girl will come forward one by one. They will then perform a piece of music, recite a poem, give an

oration (speech) or present an original work of art to the temple. Hirtia Thermina will then read the augury with Lady Lepedia. After she watches the passage of twenty released doves she pauses, as if confused. She then says "All shall be well and Minerva will watch over us always". Anyone watching her and making a successful Insight roll will realize the woman is lying and hiding something.

Curella, Ruffina & Varra will not perform or present anything (being an archer, accountant and healer, respectively). Fulvia Caudexia will not step forward either, but has already presented her works of art. She has designed and crafted all the clothing the initiates and the presiding high priestess are wearing for the ceremony. Lady Lepedia will then speak of these five women, telling the assembly why they were chosen and what their gifts from Minerva are.

At the close of this section of the ceremony there is an informal reception. Many people from the city come and present gifts to the candidates. Some, the very wealthy ones, make a show of giving all twelve gifts. By the time the reception is over each initiate will be going home with literally dozens of gifts. This starts their last day as an initiate, as at sundown on the following day each will take their vows and start their life as a priestess of Minerva.

However, unseen assassins are riding home with each of these women hidden in their gifts. For some of them the sun will never rise again.

### **Festival Activities**

After the opening ceremonies (which last until about noon) the initiates spread out across the city, attending various events. A local newsreader has been hired to make announcements concerning the festival. He'll loudly recite the list of today's activities, complete with their locations and starting times. Investigators can attend whichever events they like, probably spotting one or more of the initiates in attendance. These events are scheduled to be going on all week and are as follows:

*Hunting* – Investigators will be able to join a hunting party to set out from Herculaneum for several hours. Hunters will all be on horseback (investigators without horses can borrow a mount from Cosmino) and armed with bows. The quarry will be deer and the candidate Gellia Curella is not only in attendance but will score the first kill of the hunt.

*Poetry and Oration* – This event will take place in the gardens of the scholar Rutelio Pollo, father of Rutella Pollia. His villa will be opened to the public, although he will have a few Vigilies (local fire fighters/policemen) on hand to watch over things. The hosting family offers modest refreshments during the event (wine, bread and fruit). A dozen local poets will be reciting verses or giving speeches, including three of the initiate priestess (Coelia Silana, Rutella Pollia & Vibella Casmina).

*Gladiators* – A local promoter will be presenting four short matches in honor of the festival. While there is no charge for admission wine and food vendors will be operating normally. None of these matches are to the death, being until first blood, pin or submission. The first will feature two large and powerful men wrestling; the next will feature two female gladiators fighting with daggers and shields; the third match will feature two male gladiators fighting with net & trident against sword and shield; the final match will be two lovely, powerfully built women wrestling. The crowd goes wild for the rare double bill of female gladiators. The initiates Catalia Ruffina and Decia Varra are in attendance with their families.

*Plays* - Three plays will be going on across Herculaneum staggered throughout the first day of the festival. The two musician initiates, Porcia Cera and Annia Scippina, will make it a point to attend all three. Each time they will



be invited to provide music for the players, each time they will politely refuse several times before happily stepping forward and playing their flute and lyre. The women are very skilled musicians and their music inspires the actors to better performances.

**Fortune Telling**—Quinquatria is a time for telling fortunes and the city’s augurs are quite busy. Many have set up booths or decorated their shops and are offering their services to the festival attendees. One of the most modest of these booths (little more than a crude tent tossed over a single table) also seems to be the busiest, with a line of at least four people waiting at all times. The initiate Hirtia Thermina eventually serves investigators waiting on this line, as this is her booth. She is pleasant, always with a smile, soft spoken and modest. Keepers may wish to use Thermina to deliver some foreshadowing - i.e.: “I see you fighting in a cavern against a fearsome opponent” or “Don’t feel bad if you can’t save everyone, if you save even one then you have done your part”.

**Parties and Gifts** – As night falls there are a number of parties being thrown throughout the city. The investigators, along with Vibius Casmino and his daughter, are invited to three different parties during the day. These are at the homes of three of the initiates, Valerina Albina, Fulvia Caudexia and Lutania Liga. These parties will have food, music, some formal dancing, and hired entertainers, each being quite enjoyable affairs for guests. Should investigators attend any of these parties, or more than one of them, all celebrations end well before midnight. The initiates are supposed to have a busy day tomorrow with many appearances at the temple and across the city. What they don’t know is that it’s going to be a very long night.

## Part Two – The Attacks

As full night comes to Herculaneum the city settles down to sleep, resting up for another busy day of the Quinquatria festival. As lamps are blown out, and the initiates lay down to sleep their assassins emerge and seek them out. Many will not survive; a few might be lucky enough to be saved by the investigators or others.

### Tiny Assassins

Earlier today each initiate was given many gifts by local merchants and family friends. Among these were gifts of

silk (mostly cloth and beautifully decorated scarves) from “Hortensius Fine Silks and Tapestries”. These gifts will be unmarked, in lovely but nondescript baskets. Within each gift basket is also a single spider.

These spiders are rare, having been imported from Africa. They are very poisonous and normally quite docile. Unfortunately, these have also been enchanted, making them highly aggressive and focused on their mission. Their task is to wait until their target is asleep, then sneak over to her and deliver numerous bites. After that the spiders will simply remain in the area, attacking anyone else who disturbs them.

In combat the spiders are hard to strike, being small, nimble and alarmingly quick. If molested they will try to attack the nearest living thing. The spiders do this ONLY if their target has already been bitten. If their target is being protected they will attack her defenders until they can get to the initiate. The enchantment keeps them focused on their primary task, killing the initiates of Minerva.

### “Assassin” Spiders

STR	4	CON	5	SIZ	1
INT	4	POW	15	DEX	13
HP	3	DB0			

Weapons	Bite 35% (1d2 + Pot 15)
Armor	1 point of hard exoskeleton
Skills	Dodge (65%), Hide (70%) Sneak (70%), Jump (40%) Track (95%, their selected target).

These spiders are long-legged, well fanged and highly poisonous. Their marking are quite distinctive, being black with orange stripes with an abdomen shaped into three odd spiky crests. No investigator will be familiar with such an odd looking animal, as they are very rare and not native to the region.

The spider’s poison is a neurotoxin, causing its victims to stiffen up and lose total muscular control. Initially, the poison causes extreme pain as it courses through a victim’s bloodstream. Within moments victims are completely paralyzed. If enough of the toxin is injected into a victim this paralysis affects their diaphragm and heart causing death within minutes.

These animals are stealthy, able to remain hidden as well as stalking prey unseen. Assassin spiders are able to leap up to three feet, launching themselves at a target and attempting to deliver a bite in the same round. If attacked they will attempt to Dodge, rushing under objects and trying to hide themselves in order to attempt another attack.

### **Vibella Cosmina is bitten**

Sometime just after midnight investigators will be awoken to a sudden, very loud scream coming from Casmina's room. On the following round the young woman leaves her room, one hand clamped hard over the opposite wrist. If investigators question her during the two rounds after she's screamed, Casmina will still be able to communicate. She'll say "I was bitten by something, I spider I think. It's really hurting me." After two rounds she'll begin screaming, saying her arms is cramping up and that she can't breathe. On the fourth round she falls to the floor completely paralyzed.

Her nurse, the slave Crusa, leaps into action. She rushes to Casmina and shoves her slipper into her mouth to keep her from shattering her teeth. She'll ask an investigator to carry the girl to her room, where she has her medicinal supplies. It's clear that the older woman is a very competent healer. From this moment on Crusa will do nothing but care for her mistress as she hovers near death from the spider's venom.

At about the same time Vibius Casmino will rush to his daughter's room. He'll tell investigators to "find what did this to my daughter" as he follows his dying child to Crusa's room. He'll order his bodyguard, Attius, to "Stay with them and guard them with your life." Investigators must then enter Casmina's room where her would be assassin is still at large.

### **The Tiny Terrors**

Investigators entering Casmina's room, or those of any of the other initiates (see below), will have to deal with a single enchanted "assassin" spider. These spiders are cunning, aggressive and patient. They will try to get within striking range of an investigator, jumping at them if possible. Bitten investigators will be in for a hard time; as such spiders are very poisonous. If the spider has already delivered a bite to its target it will be content to remain near the site of the attack. It will attempt to bite anyone who gets within striking distance. If it has not yet accomplished its mission and investigators are trying to rescue its target it will make every effort to score a bite to its assigned.

### **A Wider Conspiracy**

After investigators have successfully dealt with the spider in Casmina's room they will receive some good news. Crusa will inform them that Casmina still lives and the poison seems to have done what damage it was going to do. Currently, the young initiate priestess is unconscious and fighting for her life. Crusa will say that she will stay with her until her fight is over, explaining that "She'll either

wake up from this sleep or drift off into a deeper one. I've done all I can, it's up to her and Minerva now."

Suddenly, there will be a frantic knock at the door. Servants will announce a messenger. The man will rush in, sweating and panting, delivering his message. "I bring terrible news from my master Valerio Albinis, his daughter (Valerina Albina) is dead. Albiana was bitten by a spider." The villa of Valerio Albinis is the closer to that of Vibius Casmino than any other initiate residence. Investigators should now realize that it seems the attack on Casmina was only part of a much wider conspiracy, one to assassinate ALL the initiates of Minerva.

Vibius Casmino then takes up a parchment and paper, quickly jotting down some notes and pressing his seal to it. He'll give this to investigators while explaining, "This is my seal and authorization to act on my behalf. Go, take horses from the stable, and check on the other initiates. Get them out of their homes and bring them to safety, here if you like. I don't care if you have to kick in their doors, just get to those girls. I'll sort everything out later but for now just get this done. Mercury speed your way!" As investigators set out, Casmino will begin rousing his entire household and summoning the vigilies.

### **To The Rescue**

At this point investigators will have a very limited amount of time to possibly save a number of the remaining ten initiates. By the time investigators set out, half of the women will already be dead. The remaining five will all be bitten within the next hour. Investigators setting out with haste will be able to check on one (or two with a successful luck check) of these women before the remaining initiates will have been bitten. Anyone else attempting to warn these families (such as messengers or the local vigilies) will find these women already dead. Investigators who spilt up to try and rescue several initiates at once will have a better chance of actually saving someone.

Investigators setting out will remember the location of 1d4 houses with a braziers and shrine to Minerva beside the front door, the home of an initiate. Those making a successful INT check \*3 will remember 1d4+3 locations. Upon arrival at one of these homes Investigators will find the following:

### **Initiate Rescue Attempt Results (1d6)**

- 1: Mourning – The initiate is dead along with 1d4 other family members, the house is already roused, the spider has been killed. Neighbors have begun to arrive and a crowd surrounds the house.
- 2: Too Late – The initiate is dead as are 1d3 other family

members are either dead or dying as well. The household is already roused and the spider is dead. Investigators are the first outsiders to arrive on the scene.

- 3: In Progress – The initiate is dying along with 1d2 other family members. The house has not been alerted and the spider is still at large.
- 4: No! – The investigators arrive moments after the spider has bitten an initiate or even witness the bit delivered. The initiate is able to say which gift the spider was hiding in before she dies (giving a useful clue for their later investigation). The spider is still at large and attacks investigators.
- 5: Unsafely in bed – The initiate is in bed with the assassin spider stalking towards her. The spider will attack anyone trying to rescue its target. Investigators have a good chance of saving the initiate.
- 6: Naughty girl – The initiate is safe and not even in bed yet! The girl is celebrating with their families (or a romantic companion) long into the night. The spider will still be in the gift it was hidden in, waiting for the target to settle down for the night. Investigators have an excellent chance of saving the initiate.

As Keepers can see, investigators have only a little time and a slim chance of saving anyone. They must act quickly and be lucky. Keepers should have any girl bitten die from her wounds within moments, regardless of any first aid or medical care they receive. Keepers should also limit the number of women successfully rescued to no more than three of the remaining ten initiates.

### **Morning Comes**

After a frantic night the city awakens to the horrible news. The newsreaders relate what has happened, saying that local authorities have postponed the rest of the Quinquatria festival until this crisis is resolved. The dead initiates are brought to the temple of Minerva under an honor guard. Any initiates rescued by the investigators are put on a boat and taken out to sea under guard. They will remain just off shore until they receive word that the conspirators in their assassination are no longer at large. It is the only ship to leave, as all travel into and out of the city is prevented until the assassins are apprehended. Herculaneum is under lock down.

Vibella Casmina remains in her home, under guard, as she is too weak to be moved. Currently, she hovers between life and death under the constant care of her slave. Cosmino keeps everyone but the investigators away from

her, as he trusts no one. He is very upset that his youngest daughter could well be dying and that someone would have planned such a heinous attack on these innocent women. He will then assign the investigators a task.

### **Casmino's Mission**

Casmino will take the investigators into his study and close the door. He'll explain the following, while pacing, and handing the investigators his seal and a bag of coins.

"Herculaneum will only remain closed for a day or so, at most. A city this size cannot remain shut to travel for long, no matter what the tragedy. The people behind these attacks must be found before the gates and harbor re-open. The vigilies and local authorities will be searching the city, but I have little hope they will find anything. Most likely they will knock down a few doors and beat up a few people, while the assassins just lay low. I know how these things work.

I need you to find them, find them and bring them to justice. You'll need to act fast while the trail is still hot and before they can slip away, if they haven't already. I can't leave the villa, not with my daughter...well.. I need to be here when she wakes up to tell her everything is going to be okay. Take my seal. This should get you into most places. It marks you as my official emissaries, operating in my name. Here's a thousand sesterces, it's all I have in the house at the time. I can get you more if you need it. Use it however you need to, I don't need to know where it goes. I only want results. I also pride myself on being a generous man; have no fear that your efforts will be well rewarded. Will you do this?"

## **Part Three – Investigation**

Investigators agreeing to investigate this matter for Vibius Cosmino should begin shortly after their meeting. They do have a number of clues to investigate, which can lead them to the cultists. The initial clues are all found at the sites of the attacks upon the initiates. There is also a connection between spiders and the goddess Minerva, which investigators may also be aware of (see below, Clue Three).

### **Clue One – The Spiders**

The spiders are quite striking in appearance (see description) and unfamiliar to investigators. No one they question has ever seen a spider like this; it is obviously not from this part of the world. Investigators will remember,

with a successful Know roll, that a famous scholar who specializes in animals lives in Herculaneum. This man, Decius Lepidus, might be able to shed light on just where this animal came from. Investigators making a Spot Hidden roll near where any of the spiders were killed will be able to recover the remains of one of these murderous creatures. The scholar Decius Lepidus is Lead #1.

### **Clue Two – The Gifts**

Investigators searching the piles of gifts the initiates received will make a discovery with a successful Spot Hidden roll. One gift, an unmarked basket, will have newly spun spider webs inside of it. These baskets all hold articles of silk (scarves or sashes mostly). The basket could have come from anywhere, as it is a rather common item. The silk items however, are not quite so easy to find. There are only three places in the city that such items could have been obtained in these quantities (a dozen). These are “Silks of the Goddess”, “The House of Nautius Silk Shop” and “Hortensius Fine Silks and Tapestries”. The silk shops are Lead #2.

### **Clue Three – Mythological Connections**

Investigators may realize that there is a connection between the goddess Minerva and spiders. This being the story of Arachne, a brief synopsis is detailed below. Investigators may realize this on their own, learn it by making a successful Know or Occult roll:

### **The Story of Arachne**

Arachne was a young princess and craftswomen from Lydia, a weaver without a mortal equal. She was proud of her work, and people would say Athena herself must have trained her. Arachne boasted that her skills were equal to Athena's. The goddess heard her and became upset, but decided to give Arachne an opportunity to redeem herself.

Athena went to Arachne in the guise of an old woman, and warned her not to offend the gods with such blasphemy. But still she boasted saying that she would gladly pit her weaving against Athena's in a contest to prove her artistry was equal or superior to the goddess's. Athena showed her true form to Arachne and accepted her challenge.

The goddess and the mortal sat down to weaving. Athena made a tapestry showing her contest with Poseidon, a flawless work of art. Arachne made works depicting the various infidelities of Athena's husband, Zeus. The goddess marveled at Arachne's skill but her subject choice was an insult the goddess could not let pass.

Athena touched Arachne, filling her with a deep and profound shame for her actions. However, this shame

was far greater than the mortal woman could endure; it shattered her mind sending her into a deep depression. Arachne hung herself and died. Athena took pity on the Arachne, as she only wished to teach the artisan humility and respect, not claim her life. She restored the mortal woman to life, but not in human form. She turned her into a spider, so that she and all her descendants would always be weaving, and always be hanging down from their own silken cords. Minerva is the Roman version of Athena.

### **Lead #1 – the Scholar**

Decius Lepidus is an older man who lives in a comfortable house in Herculaneum. He makes a living teaching lessons and writing books on the animals of the world. Other than a trio of slaves (a man, a young woman and her daughter) he lives alone. The male slave will say that his master cannot be disturbed, as he is working on a book. Investigators making a Status, Fast Talk or Persuade roll will be admitted into the house, as will anyone showing the seal of Vibius Cosmino.

The scholar himself will meet investigators who gain admittance, explaining that now is not a good time as he is busy writing. Investigators asking him to identify a specimen will get his attention, and he'll explain that there is a standard fee of 100 sesterces for his expert consultation. Once paid Decius Lepidus will examine the specimen and become very interested. He'll identify it as a very rare “African Assassin Spider”, claiming to have never actually seen one before.

The Scholar Decius Lepidus will tell investigators the following –

1. These spiders are very poisons and thankfully very passive and reclusive.
2. Their bite can kill a man, but they only attack if cornered.
3. Some assassins use them to make a deadly poison.
4. The process for milking the venom from these animals is a closely guarded secret known only to master killer and poison merchants.
5. The animals are dangerous to handle and don't do well in captivity.
6. The only man he knows of skilled enough to obtain and transport these animals to Herculaneum would be a local man named Duilius Celer (Lead #3).

### **Lead #2 – The Silk District**

Investigators will find three shops that deal in silks all on the same street, sort of a silk district. All three shops are within walking distance of one another. Investigators

may visit each one.

**A. “Silks of the Goddess”** – A portly, well-dressed man named Aelius Fundulus owns this shop. He’s a shrewd businessman who will claim to know nothing about plots or assassins, explaining that he did not make any gifts to the initiate priestess. He’ll say, “I make a donation at the temple on the anniversary of my shop’s opening”. If shown the scarf he’ll look it over and admire it, then say, “No, this isn’t one of ours thought I wish I could say it was. The workmanship is excellent. It’s likely one of the Hortensius sisters.”

**B. “The House of Nautius”** – A lovely patrician woman named Hurtia Sulania runs this shop. She will be dressed in very fine clothing, and offer investigators seats, wine and bread as soon as they enter, thinking them prospective clients. If asked about the scarves she’ll say, “We only make fine garments here, not silly little trinkets like scarves and wraps.” If shown one of the gifts she’ll look over it and say, “This must be from Hortensius’s shop, those girls are always cranking out things like this. I honestly don’t know how they stay in business with such shoddy drivel, but you didn’t hear that from me.” Her distain for the work is obviously one coming from jealousy.

**C. “Hortensius Fine Silks and Tapestries”** – Investigators visiting here will be met by Hortensia Crusina, eldest of the three sisters. She’ll play things completely cool; using her high Insight score to mask any lies she’s forced to tell. If confronted with the scarf she’ll admit to having sold a dozen similar items earlier this week to a cloaked woman. “She was not terribly well dressed and had poor teeth, but was somehow able to pay our prices for the items. We don’t ask for references when people have the coin to pay for our merchandise. Later our servants told us who the woman was and it became clear how she could pay. Her name is Temula, an herbalist and apocathary, but her true profession is a brewer of poisons.”

Investigators should be fooled by Crusina’s story or at least mislead into seeking out Temula (who owns a shop in town). Investigators making a successful Know roll will know that it’s long been rumored that a master poison merchant lives and works in Herculaneum. Those making a critical success will even have heard of Temula, the poison maker. Crusina will wish the investigators well and then summon some of her henchmen as soon as they depart. Her orders will be to kill the investigators as soon as possible. She will also instruct them to kill Duilius Celer (who obtained the spiders for the cult) and Temula (who had nothing to do with the cult). She will

instruct them to make the herbalist’s death appear to be a suicide while planting a spare sacrificial dagger in her home, hopeful framing the woman for the attacks on the initiates.

### Cultists of Arachne

There are two types of Arachne cultists operating in Herculaneum, priestesses and assassins. The Hortensia sisters are the cult’s three priestesses and they command a dozen assassin/worshiper cultists. These assassins are highly skilled killers, loyal to the sisters and the cult to a fanatical degree. Most were simple thugs, wandering mad men or aimless drifters before coming to the cult, but they’ve now been trained, equipped and molded into a formidable fighting force. These men will not surrender or allow themselves to be captured, even to the point of suicide.

The cultists/assassins will have several tasks during this scenario. First they will be ordered to stalk and kill the investigators. They will also be told to tie up the loose end of Duilius Celer (the animal importer) and frame a scapegoat for the attacks (Temula the herbalist). Later, they will be tasked with attacking the villa of Vibius Casmino, abducting Vibella Casmina and then guarding the temple of Arachne. There are only a dozen of these men, so keepers should use them carefully.

The assassins will be dressed in black silks, wrapped around their bodies, held in place by belts, ties and pins. Only their eyes will be visible. This silk has been woven from spider silk, specially treated to preserve it. As such it offers the cultists the same protection as a suit of chain mail (7 points). The cultists are also equipped with grappling hooks, spider silk ropes, spider silk garrotes and poison coated daggers. If one of the cultists is killed and undressed, investigators will find their heads are all shaven and decorated with six tattoos of eyes.

### Cultists of Arachne, Assassins (\*12)

STR	15	CON	15	SIZ	13
INT	12	POW	15	DEX	10
APP	7	EDU	12	SAN	0
HP	14	DB	+1D4		

Weapons	Dagger 55% (1d4+1+db) <i>daggers are poisoned for the first attack</i> Poison POT 12 strength poison, three more uses in jar on belt. Spider Silk Garrote (does 1 point +db per round with a successful Grapple roll Fist/Punch 60% (1d3+db) Grapple 55%
Armor	Black treated spider silk armor (3 points)



against blade weapons).

Skills           Climb (70%), Conceal (65%)  
                  Hide (75%), Listen (60%)  
                  Sneak (55%), Spot Hidden (60%)  
                  Throw (65%).

Equipment     30' of silk rope, two daggers, garrote,  
                  grappling hook, vial of poison, suit of  
                  black spider silk armor.

**Spider Silk Armor** – The armor used by the cultists is a special item created and maintained by the cult. The fabric is exceedingly strong and offers the same protection as boiled leather (3 points of deflection). The spider silk armor works very well against cutting, slashing or piercing weapons (such as axes, swords, spears and arrows). The armor however does have an additional weakness. It offers no protection against blunt force trauma (punches, clubs, sling stones, etc.).

To keep the armor functioning it must be soaked in a special chemical bath nightly. The formula for this chemical bath is a secret known only to the Hortensia sisters, who will not share this with investigators. Investigators who dispatch a cultist assassin can steal their spider silk armor, using it as their own (to a great advantage). However, the armor soon starts to unravel when not returned to the chemical bath, falling completely apart within 1d3 days.

### Lead #3, The Animal Importer

The well-known and respected animal dealer Duilius Celer will by now know he is in trouble. He's heard of the spider attacks and realizes his part in this. He's fearful of being apprehended by authorities, or of being killed by those he supplied the spiders to. At the moment, Duilius Celer is packing a few things and planning to get out of town as soon as the city reopens. Although he had no knowledge of these attacks beforehand, he knows his involvement will be hard to explain.

When investigators arrive he'll pretend not to be home. Investigators making a successful Listen roll will hear him moving about inside his apartments. If they manage to speak with him he's deny any involvement. If convinced to tell his story, with a successful Persuade roll, he'll confess that he imported the spiders for the Hortensia sisters, local artisans working in the silk district. He'll deny any knowledge of what these animals were going to be used for.

At about this time a number of the cult's assassins will attack, eager to silence Duilius Celer once and for all. As a precaution they'll also try to kill anyone he might have spoken to. Celer will defend himself but will be the cultist's primary target. If investigators save him he'll

agree to tell his story to the authorities, so long as they testify on his behalf.

### Duilius Celer, Animal Dealer and unwitting cult accomplice

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STR	14	CON	15	SIZ	15
INT	13	POW	12	DEX	14
APP	10	EDU	13	SAN	60
HP	14	DB	+1D4		

Weapons       Gladius 75% (1d6+1+db)  
                  Fist/Punch 70% (1d3+db)

Armor         Leather Jerkin (1 point)

Skill          Bargain (75%), Listen (60%)  
                  Navigate (70%), Natural World (65%)  
                  Sneak (50%), Spot Hidden (60%)  
                  Throw (65%), Track (70%).

Equipment     Gladius, baldric, scabbard, bag of maps,  
                  bag of coins (100 sesterces).

### False Lead #1, The Poison Merchant

Investigators will find the shop of Temula the apocathary to be located in the worst area of Herculaneum. It's a run down looking place, which doubles as her home. Temula herself is a freed slave, old but very fit, with a keen mind and sharp business sense. She is used to being questioned about her possible involvement in crimes and knows the law well enough to have remained free and in business for decades. She will speak with confidence and honesty, as she has played absolutely no role in the attacks against the initiate priestesses of Minerva.

By the time investigators arrive, members of the Corps of Vigiles have already come and gone, questioning her about her possible involvement last night's tragedy. She'll say, "I'll tell them what I told you. I had nothing to do with what happened to those poor women. First, I have no reason to want to harm anyone. Second, I don't deal in live animals, I don't sell them and I don't keep them in my shop. I'm an apocathary. I make elixirs and potions, mainly for medicinal reasons. Yes, in the past I may have brewed something for someone that was later used in an unsavory way, but that has nothing to do with me. I'm just a poor woman trying to make a living. So please, you can tell your friend in black to stop watching my house. I'm not the person you're looking for."

At with point the "friend in black" attacks, along with three others. Four of the Assassin Cultists will rush the place, entering through the door and windows. They will attempt to kill everyone in the room, knocking Temula unconscious in order to make her death later look like a suicide. The elderly woman will try to defend herself, wielding a ring with a small spike on the end coated in POT 20 poison. However she is no match for



the attackers and will need the investigator's protection in order to survive. After the battle, if Temula still lives, she will stick to her story. She'll explain that she has no idea who these people are or why they'd want her dead. Temula will then ask investigators to escort her to a place of safety, as she now fears for her life.

### Temula, Apocathary and Scapegoat for the Cult of Arachne

STR	8	CON	12	SIZ	10
INT	15	POW	14	DEX	10
APP	9	EDU	15	SAN	70
HP	11	DB	0		
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Weapons	Poisoned Ring 60% (1+Pot 20 Poison, two uses).				
Armor	None				
Skills	Bargain (75%), Fast Talk (50%) Insight (65%), Law (60%) Natural World (70%), Persuade (60%) Potions (65%), Spot Hidden (70%).				
Equipment	Ring with spike coated with POT 14 poison.				

### The Newsreader's Joyous News

At some point in the afternoon the local newsreader will make an announcement. "Joyous news citizens! A miracle has happened in the home of Servius Vibius Casmino. His daughter, Vibella Casmina, initiate priestess of Minerva was bitten last night by a poisonous spider. She has lingered near death all this day. It is my pleasure to say that She Is Out Of Danger! The vile poison has worked it way through her system and she has regained consciousness. She is expected to make a full recovery. Minerva is praised for her divine mercy."

Unfortunately members of the Arachne cult hear this announcement as well. To them this is also a miraculous event, a divine sign that Vibella is destined to join them in the worship of Arachne. At this moment the Hortensia sisters focus their full efforts on abducting Vibella. By the time investigators hear the newsreader's message it will be too late, even if they rush back to Vibius Casmino's villa at once.

### Part Four – The Cult of Arachne

This section of the scenario begins once investigators have investigated the leads in Herculaneum. At this point investigators should fully realize that the true culprits are the Hortensia sisters and the mysterious silk wearing

assassins. Unfortunately by now the cult has also made its next move. While the investigators were tracking down leads the cult was kidnapping Vibella Cosmina.

### Details of the Attack

The attack on the villa of Vibius Casmino was daring, brutal and ultimately successful. Should any investigators have remained behind at the villa keepers should allow them to play out the attack and but ultimately fail in preventing abduction. Kindhearted keepers can allow these investigators to survive and rejoin the other investigators, by knocking them unconscious. Less kind hearted keepers may have these investigators found among the dead after the attack.

The attack is launched when a pair of cultist/ assassins sneaks into the villa, moving from room to room, silently killing the servants. Once this is done they signal two more of their number and the four of them attack the room of Crusa the slave, where Cosmina lies slowly recovering. The four of them manage to kill Crusa, the bodyguard Attius Maso and critically injure Servius Vibius Casmino.

Once they have the girl secured the priestess Hotensia Fannia enters the villa and moves to Crusa's room. She picks up the now bound and gagged Cosmina, who is too weak from the effects of the near fatal spider bite to offer much resistance. The priestess Fannia then casts the spell Vanish, disappearing in a puff of smoke and reappearing back in "Hortensius Fine Silks and Tapestries" shop. Her men then do what they do best, melt away into the shadows and make their way slowly back to the shop.

### Discovering the Aftermath

Investigators arriving back at the villa of Vibius Casmino will find the doors ajar and no one answering their calls. Soon they will begin finding dead servants scattered here and there. Inside Crusa's room they find the following:

1. The body of the slave Crusa. There is a dagger wound in her back and a handprint bruise over her throat, apparently grabbed from behind.
2. The corpse of the bodyguard Attius Maso. His throat has been cut open from behind by a silk garrote. He apparently resisted and his knuckles are bloody. His gladius is missing.
3. Vibius Casmino is dying. He has several dagger wounds (one to his chest, to on his right arms and one to his stomach). Investigators finding him must immediately make a successful medicine roll to save his life. Casmino gasps for breath and mutters the

following words to investigators “She’s alive, save her.” At which point he either passes out from pain or loss of blood (if investigators roll Medicine successfully) or dies (investigators fail to successfully make a Medicine roll). Even if stabilized, Vibius Casmino lapses into a coma until after the investigation is resolved.

4. A message written in blood on the tile floor beside where Casmino is found. It reads, “They took her, four men, one woman, in black”.
5. OPTIONAL – The unconscious or dead body of any investigator(s) who remained here to guard Casmina will also be found here or elsewhere in the villa.

Investigators discovering the crime scene at the villa have few options. They can depart with haste to follow the trail of Vibella Casmina without alerting anyone. If there are survivors in need of medical care, they can leave these with Licinius Tremulus, the friendly neighbor to Vibius Casmino. Investigators may also alert the Corps of Vigiles.

### The Corps of Vigiles

Investigators who alert the local police force are soon joined by a half dozen officers of the Corps of Vigiles. They guard the house, remove the bodies and possibly bring medical care for any survivors. Investigators hoping to gain help from the Vigiles soon realize that this is not a good idea. They begin to slowly question everyone, gathering as much information as possible. It should soon become obvious that while the Vigiles are gathering evidence the trail of the cultists and the abducted Casmina is growing cold. Keepers should keep this up until investigators realize that if Casmina is going to be saved in time it will be up to them, not the Corps of Vigiles, to do so. Investigators making successful Status, Persuade or Fast Talk rolls will be able to get out of this lengthy questioning. Failing this they can show the Corpse of Vigiles captain the seal of Vibus Casmino, and claim to still be acting upon his orders. This will allow them to depart without being delayed. Some truths are universal to all eras in Call of Cthulhu; the police are seldom going to be of any help to investigators.

### The Cult of Arachne After the Abduction

By now the cultist foolishly think that everything is going their way. They have killed many of the initiate priestesses, possibly driven others into hiding and their actions have disrupted the Quinquatria festival. Even better, one of the initiates of Minerva has been favored by Arachne. demonstrated by her surviving a poisonous

spider bite. This woman has been abducted and is now a captive in their underground temple. They have hopes that this women can soon be persuaded to join their cult as a forth priestess.

What they fail to realize is that any sort of secrecy they might have once enjoyed is ended. The investigators should now realize exactly who and what they are. The investigators will decide whether their plot is successful or if they’ve severely overplayed their hand. The playing pieces are now all out of the box.

### Back to Hortensius Fine Silks and Tapestries

Investigators going back to the silk shop will find the business to now be “closed” for the day. Those knocking on the door, or otherwise entering on their own, will find there are three people inside. These are Hortensia Crusina and two male associates (assassin cultists). Her sisters, whatever assassins remain and their captive Vibella Casmina are currently in the Temple of Arachne (see below).

Crusina will attempt to talk her way out of this if possible. She’ll offer the investigators wine (laced with POT 10 poison) and puts all of her considerable beauty and charm to work. Crusina will also make up any lie that seems believable. If she feels threatened Crusina and her associates will attack.

### The Battle at the Silk Shop

Crusina, along with her sisters, possesses several spells and is skilled in fighting with two poisoned daggers. She will fight until she seems overmatched; at which point she’ll attempt to escape through the Gate (see below). The assassin cultists will fight until killed or incapacitated, giving the priestess enough time to escape, if possible.

### Hortensia Crusina, Priestess of Arachne (Atlach-Nacha)

STR	14	CON	12	SIZ	13
INT	14	POW	15	DEX	17
APP	15	EDU	13	SAN	0
HP	13	DB	+1D4		

Weapons	Two small daggers 60% (1d4+db) <i>daggers are poisoned for the first attack with a POT 10 strength poison</i>
Armor	Treated spider silk palla (shawl) and toga (3 points).
Skills	Art-Weaving (60%), Fast Talk (85%) Hide (65%), Insight (70%), Listen (55%), Persuade (75%) Potions (80%) Sneak (65%), Spot Hidden (50%) Status (40%), Cthulhu Mythos (25%)

Equipment Two daggers strapped to back of thighs, garments of treated spider silk

### Cultists of Arachne, Assassins (\*2)

STR 15 CON 15 SIZ 13  
INT 12 POW 15 DEX 10  
APP 7 EDU 12 SAN 0  
HP 14 DB +1D4

Weapons Two daggers 55% (1d4+1+db)  
*daggers are poisoned for the first attack*  
Poison (POT 12 strength poison, three more uses in jar on belt)  
Spider Silk Garrote (does 1 point +db per round with a successful Grapple roll  
Fist/Punch 60% (1d3+db)  
Grapple (55%)

Armor Black treated spider silk armor 3 points

Skills Climb (70%), Conceal (65%)  
Hide (75%), Listen (60%)  
Sneak (55%), Spot Hidden (60%)  
Throw (65%).

Equipment 30' of silk rope, two daggers, garrote, grappling hook, vial of poison  
suit of black spider silk armor

### Searching the Shop

Investigators searching the shop will find a trail of blood smears on the tiles here and there across the shop, leading into the workshop area with a successful Spot Hidden roll. One of the cultists stepped into a pool of Vibius Casmino's blood back at the man's villa, this trail being the result. The trail leads into the weaver's workshop, where looms and silks are spun, dyed and worked into garments and tapestry pieces. The blood smears lead directly to a beautifully woven tapestry depicting Arachne and Minerva competing at weaving. This is the location of the cultist's gate and where Crusina will be trying to escape to should investigators force her into retreat.

### The Gate

Investigators can activate the gate simply by walking into the tapestry. The gate the cult uses transports them to and from the underground temple of Arachne, located in a natural cavern deep in nearby Mount Vesuvius. The distance is under 100 miles, so using the gate drains travelers 1 MP and 1 Sanity Point. To use the gate requires a command word to be spoken while touching the likeness of Arachne. The command word is, of all things, the word "Arachne".

Investigators using this gate find themselves in a hot, dark environment surrounded by stone. They soon

realize that they are in a cavern of some sort. Investigators will also notice that although they are aware that the cavern is cloaked in total darkness they can see perfectly well, and that their field of vision is suddenly a 300-degree arch. Should investigators examine themselves or one another they discover that anyone traveling through the gate is given eight eyes! Experiencing this for oneself and witnessing it in one's companions' causes investigators to make a Sanity Check for 1/1d3. The effects are reversed when traveling back through the gate into the silk shop.

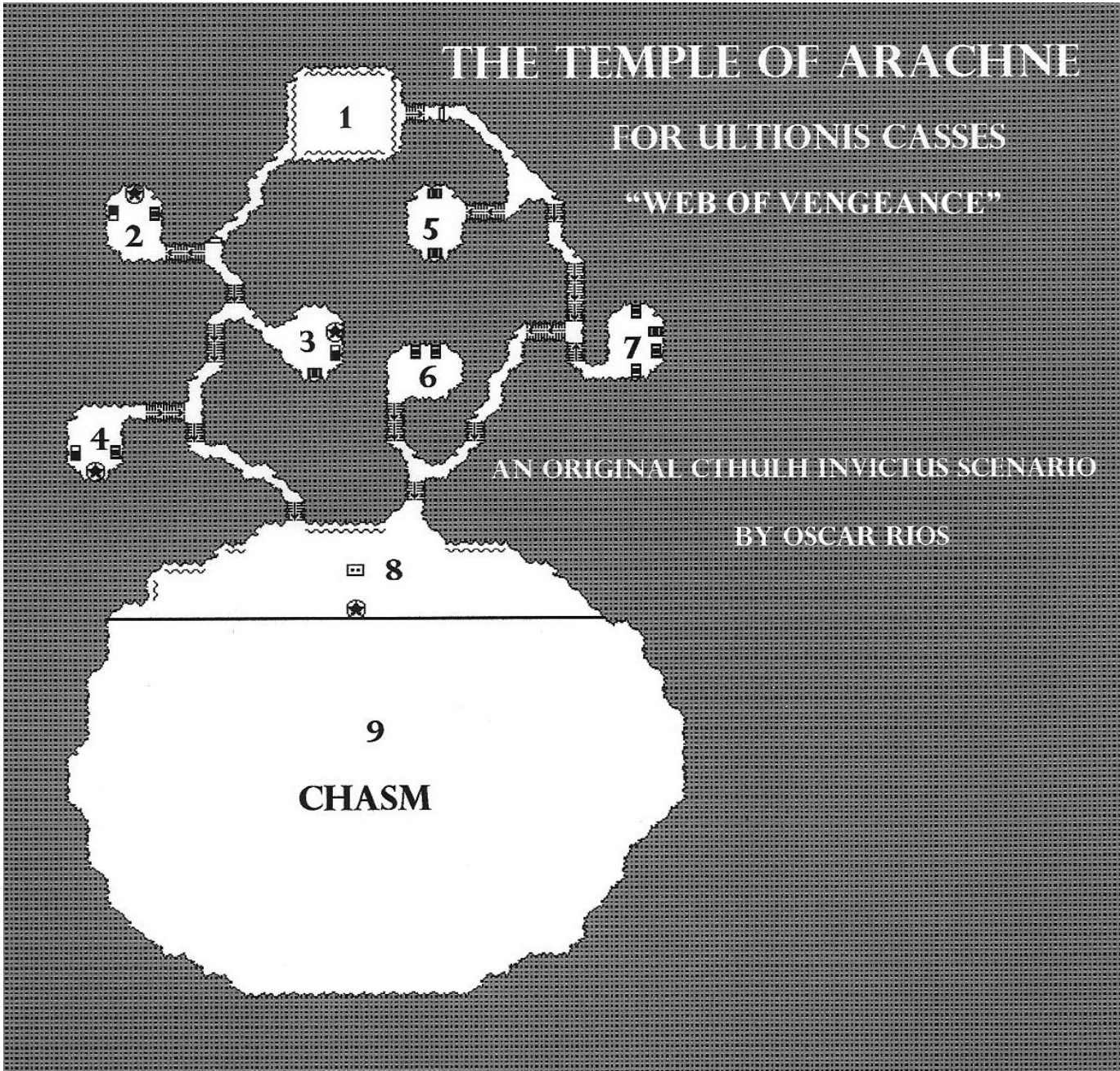
### Part Five – The Temple of Atlach-Nacha

Investigators arriving in the Temple of Arachne (or Atlach-Nacha) will likely have the element of surprise, unless Crusina made an escape here. The temple is a collection of eight natural chambers; old lava tubes deep within Mouth Vesuvius. None of these chambers currently leads to the surface. The gate is the only way in or out of the temple complex.

### Denizens of the Temple

Living here are a half dozen assassin spiders, like the ones sent to slay the initiate priestess of Minerva (see chamber 1). There are, however, many of the remaining dozen assassin/cultists. A number of them are likely to have already been dispatched by the investigators. The captive initiate priestess Vibella Casmina is also here





(see chamber 8), watched over by the sisters, Hortensia Mettellia and Hortensia Fannia (Priestesses of Arachne). There is one other thing living here, the Hortensia sister’s mother, Nolia, who is currently an inhuman monstrosity called a Daughter of Atlach-Nacha. Investigators will have to face and defeat what remains of the cult in order to successfully rescue Casmina.

**The Temple of Arachne**

1) *The Entrance* – Investigators will arrive here after they travel through the gate. This end of the gate has a large woven rug depicting a spider’s web laid on the

floor. Those stepping off the rug must utter the words “I am a spider, not a fly” lest they trigger a defensive magic. This magic will drop a single assassin spider onto each intruder. The spell is triggered when investigators step off the tile mosaic.

As investigators have no idea there is a trap in place, and the cultist certainly won’t mention it to them, they automatically trigger it. The spiders attack until destroyed, or until the person they land on is killed. They are identical to the spiders sent to attack the initiate priestesses of Minerva.

## "Assassin" Spiders

STR	4	CON	5	SIZ	1
INT	4	POW	15	DEX	13
HP	3	DB	0		

Weapons	Bite 35% (1d2 + Pot 15)
Armor	1 points of hard exoskeleton
Skills	Dodge (75%), Hide (80%) Sneak (80%), Jump (50%) Track (95%, their selected target).

2) *Crusina's Chamber* – This is the bedroom of the eldest of the sister priestesses. She is not likely here, either having been killed in the silk shop or will be raising the alarm. There is a bed, some tapestries, and a chest with some personal effects. The room is decorated with a stature of Arachne and a large woven rug.

3) *Fannia's Chamber* – This is the bedroom of the youngest of the three priestesses. It is identical to her older sister's room (see above). There is a 25% chance that Fannia is here consorting with one of the male cultists, or simply sleeping in her bed beside him. If Fannia is here, her sister Mettella will definitely be in the Altar room.

4) *Mettella's Chamber* – The last of the three sister's bedrooms, Mettella can be found here 25% of the time. Like Fannia, she will either be asleep or enjoying the company of one of the male cultists. If Mettella is here Fannia will be in the Altar room, watching over their captive (see chamber 8, the Altar room).

5) *Treasury and Storage* – This room, filled with chests, is the treasury and storage room for the cult of Arachne. Here investigators can find bolts of silk, dyes, dried food stuffs, fresh water, spare clothing, back-up looms, finished tapestries and garments, a bag of 4000 sesterces, a dozen amber gemstones (200 sesterces each), six bottles of wine and anything else keepers might wish investigators to find here.

6) *Apocathry & Weaver's Workshop* – This room is filled with silk looms, chemicals, jars, large iron tubs, vials, mortar and pestle. The sisters brew poison here, as well as chemically treat spider's webs to preserve it and create cloth with the strength of iron. There are no notes here to betray the secret of this process to the investigators, nor have any of the chemical baths been pre-made. There are also sixty jars, each with a single poisonous spider kept within. These animals are kept so the cultists can milk their venom and harvest their silk.

7) *Assassin's Quarters* – This room has a dozen cots in it, with a half dozen chests filled with various personal effects. There is a table, chairs and food here. Unless the alarm is raised there will be a number of cultists here.

### Cultists of Arachne, Assassins (however many remain alive and at large)

STR	15	CON	15	SIZ	13
INT	12	POW	15	DEX	10
APP	7	EDU	12	SAN	0
HP	14	DB	+1D4		

Weapons	Two daggers 55% (1d4+1+db) <i>daggers are poisoned for the first attack</i> Poison (POT 12 strength poison, three more uses in jar on belt) Spider Silk Garrote (does 1 point +db per round with a successful Grapple roll Fist/Punch 60% (1d3+db) Grapple (55%)
Armor	Black treated spider silk armor 3 points
Skills	Climb (70%), Conceal (65%) Hide (75%), Listen (60%) Sneak (55%), Spot Hidden (60%) Throw (65%).
Equipment	30' of silk rope, two daggers, garrote, grappling hook, vial of poison suit of black spider silk armor

8) *The Altar of Arachne* – This area is actually a large ledge overlooking the Vast Chasm (see below). At the edge of the ledge there is a small, three foot raised wall, which prevents items dropped here from sliding over the side. The area is hot and smells foul, with noxious vapors rising up out of the depths of the chasm. At the edge of the railing is a beautifully carved statue of a woman with fangs, eight eyes, and two extra pairs of arms.

Just before this statue is an altar, a raised, stone platform where offerings are made. There are metal locking shackles, for wrists and ankles, drilled deeply into the stone. A person locked into these would need to win a STR vs. STR check on the resistance table, the shackles are STR 40.

At the moment there will be four padded armchairs between the sacrificial table and the altar. One will be placed facing the other three. Securely tied into this chair is Vibella Casmira, still weakened from the spider venom. The silken ropes used to secure her to the chair are chemically treated spider silk, making them as hard as chains. It will take three rounds and a DEX check \*3 to untie the young patrician or the ropes can be cut by

inflicting 10 points of damage with a small sized blade (knife or dagger).

The other three chairs will be for the Priestesses of Arachne to use and at least one of them (75% or two or more) will be here at any time. The Arachne priestesses will be constantly preaching to Casmina, teaching her about their faith and why she should embrace it. The sisters will not allow her to sleep, taking shifts with her indoctrination. They know that with enough time this will shatter the young woman's mind and remove all resistance. This was how some of the cultists/assassins "joined" the cult.

### **Hortensia Mettella and Hortensia Fannia, Priestesses of Arachne (Atlach-Nacha)**

STR	14	CON	12	SIZ	13
INT	14	POW	15	DEX	17
APP	15	EDU	13	SAN	0
HP	13	DB	+1D4		

**Weapons** Two small daggers 60% (1d4+db)  
*daggers are poisoned for the first attack with a POT 10 strength poison*

**Armor** Treated spider silk palla (shawl) and toga (3 points).

**Skills** Art-Weaving (60%), Fast Talk (85%)  
Hide (65%), Insight (70%), Listen (55%),  
Persuade (75%) Potions (80%)  
Sneak (65%), Spot Hidden (50%)  
Status (40%), Cthulhu Mythos (25%)

**Equipment** Two daggers strapped to back of thighs, garments of treated spider silk

If attacked here the Priestesses will scream out for help, bringing any cultists within the complex running here in 1d3 rounds. They will also call out to their goddess Arachne, they will use her "proper" name of "Atlach-Nacha" and scream out to something called "Nolia" or "Mother". This attracts the horrific creature their mother has become, rising up from the depths of The Vast Chasm in 3-6 (1d4+2) rounds. Should investigators make it this far, the enraged cultists will fight to the death. Under no circumstances will the cultists harm Casmina, as she is in the favor of Arachne and seen as "one of them" even if she doesn't know it yet.

**9) The Vast Chasm** – This chamber is a semi-active lava tube in the volcano, venting fumes and heat from its depths. The tube extends upwards into darkness and downwards into a dim orange glow. In the area near the altar balcony is an enormous spiders web, across the entire reach of the Chasm. In this web are various human

skeletons, partially cocooned and completely drained of blood.

This is the lair of Nolia, the mother of the three Hortensia sisters. She has made her full transformation into a Daughter of Atlach-Nacha, living here happily as an enormous spider. She hopes one day that the web will also be home to her daughters, when they make the transformation, and that her granddaughters (as yet unborn) will continue the traditions she began. Investigators may have other plans for their future.

She is a fearsome opponent, and will launch herself at any "non-believer" who has desecrated the temple of Atlach-Nacha. Those whom she witnesses attacking her daughters will receive special attention. It will deliver poisonous bites, which will render those succumbing to the venom helpless. Once all the invaders are incapacitated, Nolia will haul them into her web, cocoon them and drain them of blood in a macabre victory feast. Otherwise she will fight to the death; her final act will be to call up Atlach-Nacha to wreck vengeance on those who have defiled her temple (see *The Spider God Comes*).

### **Nolia, Daughter of Atlach-Nacha**

STR	23	CON	19	SIZ	19
INT	11	POW	13	DEX	13
HP	19	DB	+2D6		

**Weapons** Bite 75%  
(1d10 + Pot 20 paralytic poison)

**Armor** 5-points of shell

**Skills** Sneak 35%.

**Spells** Contact Atlach-Nacha  
Call Atlach-Nacha.

### **Daughters of Atlach-Nacha**

Lesser Servitor Race

*As the priest chants, her body sways in rhythm to the Tcho-Tcho's song. She then slowly bends forward and any witness can see that the woman's body has swelled up incredibly. Suddenly, the skin along her spine splits wide open, revealing a shiny black surface that pulses horribly. From this opening, a wet, slimy form begins to emerge... As the wrinkling, empty skin [of a metamorphosing daughter] is pushed forward, multiple legs spill out from the discarded molt, waving feebly, as the huge spider-thing its way clear.*

-Keith Herber, "The Andaman Islands".

The daughters of Atlach-Nacha are enormous, venomous spiders. They are almost completely black except for the

swollen, pulsing abdomen that is streaked with green and gold.

The daughters of Atlach-Nacha begin as normal humans who have been chosen by the Great Old One to become one of his giant spider companions. These are all women who have survived the bite of some venomous spider. Such women are left with a scar known as “the mark of the spider” by priests and followers of Atlach-Nacha. The Great Old One’s servants kidnap or otherwise coerce a chosen woman into service of the Spider God. Eventually, the chosen undergoes a horrific transformation, shedding her human skin and changing into an enormous spider. Once transformed, a daughter of Atlach-Nacha joins his side in his underground lair where she helps him weave his great web.

**ATTACKS:** A daughter of Atlach-Nacha attacks with a single venomous bite each round. Her venom is a paralyzing toxin with a POT of 20. If the venom overcomes the victim’s CON, he is immediately numbed and remains so for 1D6 hours.

They feed upon their paralyzed prey, devouring the flesh of the victim’s head and eventually, through the victims now empty eye sockets, sucking out the person’s brain. This gruesome feast takes 1 minute per INT of the victim. Once reduced to 0 INT, the victim’s brain has been completely devoured and he or she dies. Victims may be rescued by friends if they can stop the spider’s feast before their friend’s INT reaches 0. Survivors, however, are forever blind, suffer the permanent loss of 2d4 APP, and the permanent loss of whatever INT was devoured.

### Daughter of Atlach-Nacha

*Weavers of the Great Web*

CHAR.	ROLLS	AVERAGES
STR	3D6+12	22 - 23
CON	3D6+8	18 - 19
SIZ	3D6+8	18 - 19
INT	3D6	10 - 11
POW	2D6+6	13
DEX	2D6+6	13
MOVE	HP	AVG. DAMAGE BONUS
5	18-19	+2D6
Weapons	Bite 75% (1D10 + Venom (see above)) Feast (automatic when paralyzed, damage 1 INT devoured each round)	
Armor	5-points hard shell	
Spells	Contact and Call Atlach-Nacha <i>Daughters with INT scores of 15 or higher know 1d3 additional spells</i>	
Skills	Sneak 35%	
Sanity Loss	1/1d8 Sanity points to see a	

daughter of Atlach-Nacha

*Seeing a human molt into a daughter*

*costs an additional 1/1d8 points of Sanity*

### The Spider God Comes

Should investigators defeat the cultists and Nolia, the Daughter of Atlach-Nacha’s last act will be to call up its god, the Great Old One Atlach-Nacha. From the depths of the chasm will blow a cold blast of wind followed by an inhuman screech of pure hatred. Investigators who linger will hear something moving within the webs, climbing up from the bottom of the chasm. Wise investigators should be fleeing at this point and will manage to make a clean escape. Atlach-Nacha is too massive a creature to fit into the passages of the temple complex, being confined to the temple balcony and the vast chasm.

Should investigators peer down over the edge they will view the approach of the Great Old One Atlach-Nacha, rushing up from far below. Seeing the god approach will force investigators to make a Sanity check for 1/1d10. If any investigators are still on the platform four rounds after the Great Old One was summoned they will see Atlach-Nacha move onto the platform, attacking everyone it sees instantly with a spray of webs. It is unlikely that any investigators so foolish as to stand against the Spider God survive.

### Atlach-Nacha, Great Old One

*A darksome form, big as a crouching man but with long spider like members...He saw that there was a king of face on the squat ebon body, low down amid the several jointed legs. The face peered up with a weird expression of doubt and inquiry; and terror crawled through the veins of the bold huntsman as he met the small, crafty eyes that were circled about with hair.*

-Clark Aston Smith, “The Seven Geases”

Atlach-Nacha superficially resembles a huge and hideous black hairy spider with a strange, remotely human face and little red eyes rimmed with hair. It lives underground, eternally spinning a fantastic web, bridging an unguessably deep chasm for unknown purposes. Old books cite the belief that when the web is completed, the end of the world will come. In the remote past Atlach-Nacha’s dwelling was far beneath the continent of Hyperborea (modern Greenland). Now it may dwell beneath South America. Some of its tunnels lead into the Dreamlands.

**CULT:** Atlach-Nacha is superstitiously believed to rule all spiders, perhaps because of its body form. It has no cult among humans (not true in this case), but gives some sorcerers spells and POW. Sorcerers sometimes summon Atlach-Nacha via various elder spells – a dangerous



approach, however, for the spider god hates leaving its eternal work of spinning, The Children of Atlach-Nacha in the Dreamlands, called the Leng Spiders, are known to worship Atlach-Nacha.

**ATTACKS AND SPECIAL EFFECTS:** Whoever stumbles into Atlach-Nacha’s web are trapped. To escape, the victim must match STR against the web’s STR 30 on the Resistance Table. Friends may add their strengths to pull free the victim – roll against the total. In an hour or a day, Atlach-Nacha appears to dispose of the captive.

The spider god can first fling strands over the victim and then bite, or it can bite at once. When it bites, it injects a paralyzing poison, leaving the victim incapable of action or defense. Its bite penetrates any armor, natural or man-made. Atlach-Nacha then sucks the victim’s body juices at the rate of 1D6 STR per combat round. If uncared for, the husk soon dies. If rescued, the victim’s STR returns at the rate of 1D4 points per game month of bed rest. During this time the victim’s hit points can never exceed his or her STR.

### Atlach-Nacha, The Spider God

STR	30	CON	75	SIZ	15
INT	15	POW	30	DEX	25
HP	50	DB	+2D6		

Weapons	Bite 60% (POT 35 paralyzing poison + 1d6 STR drain per round) Cast Web 80% (entanglement with STR 30 web)
Armor	12-point chitin and fur. If hit points reach zero, it flees across its complex web to a secret lair where it heals.
Spells	All contact spells
Sanity Loss	1/1D10 San to see Atlach-Nacha

### Escape back to Herculaneum

Ideally investigators will be able to return through the gate with the rescued Vibella Casmina. As they arrive back in the silk shop the entire city will be rocked by a mild tremor. The minor earthquake causes no damage, but does completely collapse the chambers containing the temple of Atlach-Nacha. It also destroys the woven rug of Minerva and Arachne, which serves as the focal point for the gate. The gate, of course, no longer functions.

### Success and Rewards

If investigators have defeated the cult and rescued Vibella Casmina the scenario ends in success. Investigators may also have managed to save the life of her father Vibius Casmino. As the crisis ends, any rescued initiate priestesses evacuated to the sea will return to the city. These women

join Vibella at the temple of Minerva, where they take their vows as priestesses. The city is reopened and the Quinquatria festival resumes.

After the festival, Vibius Casmino (if he lives) or Vibius Pelliis (his son) pulls some strings and makes a sizable donation to the temple of Minerva. Within a week his daughter is transferred to the temple of Minerva in Rome. He also follows up on his promise to reward the investigators. Investigators gain a powerful ally in Casmino or his son Pelliis. Investigators are given a thousand sesterces each and allowed to keep whatever monies they’ve already been given.

The final part of his reward is the villa; the entire property is handed over to investigators as a gift. “I doubt I’ll ever visit Herculaneum again. It’s a shame really, it’s a beautiful place, but it’s been ruined for me. Keep the property, sell it; do as you wish. I’m happy to give it to you; it’s meager reward for saving the life of my daughter.”

Investigators who chose to keep the property gain a beautiful villa in Herculaneum. Keeping the villa and living here (even part time) grants the investigators a bonus of 5% to their Status scores. Investigators wishing to sell the property can easily find a buyer, as the property is very desirable. In less than a month investigators can sell the villa for twelve thousand sesterces.

### Failure

If investigators fail to rescue Vibella Casmina and survive the scenarios they’ll be in for a difficult time. Once her “indoctrination” is complete she’s released, now a loyal and devoted priestess of Atlach-Nacha. Casmina returns to society and begins working on tying up any loose ends to her former life. Chief among these loose ends is anyone who opposes the cult she now serves, chief among these being the investigators. With her status, her deep coffers and knowledge of the investigators Vibella Casmina becomes a powerful and dangerous adversary. Investigators can expect periodic attempts on their lives until they destroy the cult of Arachne once and for all or one of those attempts finally succeeds.

### Sanity Awards

For every Initiate priestess of Minerva saved	1 point
For saving the life of Vibius Casmino	1 point
For every cult assassin defeated	1 point
<i>(total divided among party)</i>	
For each cult priestess defeated	1 point
For defeating the Daughter of Atlach-Nacha	1d10 points
For rescuing Vibella Casmina from the cult	2 points



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# Worlds of Adventure

**CHAOSIUM MONOGRAPHS** have proven remarkable popular with fans of *Call of Cthulhu* and *Cthulhu Dark Ages*. More importantly, they're a lot of fun. Here is a selection chosen from the fifty currently available.

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