

THE UNSPEAKABLE OATH™

ISSUE 25 • JULY 2018



Drew Racy 8/17

A DIGEST OF ARCANE LORE FOR CTHULHU MYTHOS ROLEPLAYING GAMES



NOT DEAD—LURKING

With strange aeons, even death may die. But *The Unspeakable Oath* never will. This 25th issue brings you artifacts, tomes, and scenario seeds for *Call of Cthulhu*...four *Delta Green* scenarios (three short and sharp, one sprawling and lurid)...*Delta Green* features on privacy (or the lack thereof) and tactics for agents...and gripping explorations of the webs of Atlach-Nacha. We are positively *bloated* with excitement for our return!

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THE DREAD PAGE OF AZATHOTH

BY SHANE IVEY

This is a strange and wonder-filled time to be a Cthulhu Mythos role-player.

The most important development during the *Oath's* recent hiatus must be Chaosium's publication of *Call of Cthulhu* Seventh Edition. The new edition languished a while after a large-scale Kickstarter campaign, until a major shake-up put Chaosium itself under new ownership and management, including founder Greg Stafford and *Call of Cthulhu* creator Sandy Petersen. The new edition has been followed by many supplements and expansions.

The other possibilities for Cthulhu Mythos role-playing have become countless. *Trail of Cthulhu*. *Cthulhu Dark*. *Tremulus*. *Realms of Cthulhu*. *Silent Legions*.^{*} *The Cthulhu Hack*. *Achtung! Cthulhu*, written for many game systems. Not to mention the wide range of *Call of Cthulhu* sourcebooks that Cubicle 7 Entertainment produced under a now-defunct license from Chaosium. Those are just from the top of my head. I am certainly overlooking others, just as interesting.

And there's our own new game, *Delta Green*. Arc Dream Publishing and *Delta Green's* creators relaunched the long-running series of *Call of Cthulhu* sourcebooks as its own, standalone RPG. *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game* features two volumes of core rules, the *Agent's Handbook* and the *Handler's Guide*. A game moderator's screen accompanies a quickstart rulebook called *Need to Know*. In development are campaign books and scenario collections (*Control*

Group, *Impossible Landscapes*, *A Night at the Opera*, *Falling Towers*), and sourcebooks that expand and deepen the setting and add scenarios of their own (*Deep State*, *Operational History*, *PISCES*, *Labyrinth*). We've worked with Pelgrane Press to produce their *Trail of Cthulhu* adaptation set in the Sixties, *The Fall of Delta Green*. We're releasing new scenarios in print and PDF just about every month. We're creating a sublime and eerie King in Yellow tarot deck. And we're creating short stories, short scenarios, previews, an audio series, and more on Dennis Detwiler's and the *Oath's* own patronage programs on Patreon and Drip.

If you've wondered what took this issue of the *Oath* so long, there's your answer.

This strange age is blessed with an astonishing variety of Cthulhu Mythos role-playing games. We encourage you to join us in experimenting with them all. When you do, find us online and tell us about your terrors.

IN THIS ISSUE

You'll see some of the distinctive changes wrought by *Call of Cthulhu* Seventh Edition in this issue of the *Unspeakable Oath*. All scenarios and other articles intended specifically for *Call of Cthulhu* are written for the current edition. By the same token, scenarios and features intended specifically for *Delta Green* use the rules and conventions of *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game*.

Luckily, it is very easy to use *Delta Green* material in *Call of Cthulhu*, or vice versa. *Delta Green's* stats use a 3D6 range rather than a percentile range, so just multiply them by 5 to get their *Call of Cthulhu* Seventh Edition equivalents. The skill lists differ somewhat, but not in any unrecognizable way. The most important to figure out is *Delta Green's* HUMINT (human intelligence) skill. *Call of Cthulhu's* venerable Psychology skill is the nearest stand-in. *Delta Green* uses willpower points (WP) as magic points. You can take nearly any stat block from one game and use it easily in the other.

What's not in this issue is The Eye of Light and Darkness, our usual collection of reviews. With such an irregular production schedule (and such a long hiatus between issues), a reviews column seemed to serve too little purpose. I hope to start publishing reviews on the *Unspeakable Oath's* Patreon and Drip pages, where they can be timely and relevant.

LAST THINGS LAST

I want to thank Bret Kramer for stepping in as co-editor of the *Oath*. Bret has done brilliant work for both *Call of Cthulhu* and *Delta Green*, and he helped keep TUO 25 crawling along despite all my distractions. Go online to find Bret's magazine about folklore and fear in Lovecraft country, the *Arkham Gazette*. ☞

* *Silent Legions*, a d20 game, may mix nicely with Wizards of the Coast's 2001 version of *Call of Cthulhu*, much of which was written by the founders of *The Unspeakable Oath*.



GUARDIAN STATUES OF KOM DAKKA

These statues were first found in ancient Egyptian temples and later used by cults around the world as sentries and spies. The statues themselves were carved out of limestone or sandstone, with a square base, topped with the figure of an animal: a serpent, bird, or cat with ornate, carved red jasper for eyes. Typically the statues measure about six inches along the sides of the base and usually about a foot or less in height. The ancient occult symbols decorating the base are usually the same in each statue. In some, the symbols are the only decoration on the base. Others hide these symbols among other decorations.

Once the statue is carved, and cut gemstones installed for the eyes, it is inscribed with occult symbols along the base around the time of the full moon. After its creation, the creator chants for four hours while the statue is near live animals that it is carved to represent. Alternatively, the creator can kill the appropriate animal over the statue. Each night during the four-hour chant, the statue puts the animal to sleep and absorbs 5 **POW**. If the animal is killed, the statue absorbs 10 **POW** that night. When the statue has absorbed 75 **POW**, it is ready for use.

There are two known methods of using these statues. One uses a similar chant to when the statue was empowered, which directly controls an animal represented by the statue, up to a mile away. The person using the statue falls into a trance. The statue needs 1 **MP** from the user per hour. The user can sense the world through the animal's senses as well as being able to guide the animal's movement while being unaware of the user's own surroundings. Once the chant is broken, the user and animal return to their own senses.

In the other method of use, someone falls asleep near a guardian statue and senses the world through a represented animal nearby. The user has lesser control over the animal's movement. If it is hurt, the user loses control and the animal flees. The statue drains 1 **MP** per hour from the sleeper. The sleeper remembers events that transpired while sleeping only with an **INT** roll. If the animal under control dies, the user (chanting or asleep) loses 1/1D3 **SAN**. If the statue is broken while someone is using it to control an animal, the user loses 1/1D6 **SAN**. The Keeper decides whether the user's mind returns to his or her own body or is stuck inside the animal. ☸

AN ARCANUM
ARTIFACT FOR
CALL OF CTHULHU

BY DARREN T. PRIDDY

THE DEADLY CLAWS OF THE YELLOW EMPEROR

* MYSTERIOUS
MANUSCRIPT FOR
CALL OF CHUUKU

BY COLIN THOMPSON

Among kung-fu movie buffs, many titles are legendary. Some are movies that are rare, and some are known for their impressive martial arts. *The Deadly Claws of the Yellow Emperor* is both. It is also dangerous to watch. The bloody 1992 showcase, going for over \$400 on eBay, is more than rare cinema from the early Eighties. It's a variation on *The King in Yellow*.

The Deadly Claws of the Yellow Emperor appears to be a standard, cheaply-made film by otherwise unknown Action Motion. It focuses around an imperial succession squabble between the agents of three unsavory royal heirs. As the film progresses, the royal agents find themselves battling masked kung-fu masters in yellow, with strange powers. These warriors (listed in the credits only as Yellow Generals) seem

to be part of a larger conspiracy involving magic and ritual sacrifice to summon "Dragons of the Air". To that end, a masked astronomer at the palace predicts the coming of a new emperor. The heirs order the wise man to be tortured and killed after he names the date for the new emperor to ascend. In the end, the court is invaded by Yellow Emperor and his troops. As he turns to announce the fate of the three heirs, but before he speaks, the movie ends.

The title is from the unknown style of kung fu used by the Yellow Generals, referred to as "Air Dragon Style." Investigators knowledgeable about kung fu cannot place the style. Modeled after the movie's dragons, it involves lots of leaping, flying, claw-like attacks and inhuman-sounding screams. Anyone who has encountered a byakhee recog-



nizes the motions being imitated. The realization costs 0/1 **SAN**.

The history of the film is available online at IMDb, Wikipedia, and a few archived forum threads from kung-fu movie fans.

After Action Motion dissolved, each subsequent company to buy the rights to *Deadly Claws* suffered lethal accidents as long as they maintained plans to release the film. In 2003, the rights were bought by Silver Sunset, a small production company. They seemed to have avoided the misfortunes of the other companies, releasing a DVD in 2004. This was followed by Silver Sunset's offices burning down, several executives murdered, and its warehouses, containing the second wave of DVDs, destroyed. No one has reacquired the rights and no one seems to have future plans to release the movie.

An oddity that all viewers of the film note is that the quality of filming and acting weakens as the movie plays out. Towards the middle there are continuity errors, such as tire tracks in the background and a man in a modern T-shirt in a forest. By the end of the movie, the sets show considerable wear and tear and the actors are delivering their lines off cue. Their costumes are dirty and errors in set and continuity become more pronounced. Some people find this charming. Others find it sloppy.

An obsessive watcher looking for a pattern in the errors will find it. Mishaps leave secret messages. Actors' lines suddenly seem different from before. Scenes occur in different orders. Most obsessives want to show others the movie, hosting video nights at home, bringing their DVD on a group vacation, or just leaving it on as background noise when friends are hanging out. The urge to share is personal, but no one has formatted it for a torrent site. Obsessives want to watch people enjoy the movie, and see if new viewers find the same messages they did.

Three scenes stand out. The first is when a Yellow General calls down a "Dragon of the Wind." Any viewer who succeeds at a **Cthulhu Mythos** roll or has seen a byakhee before recognizes the creature that appears. The recognition costs 1/1D4 **SAN**. In the next

scene, the byakhee kills several people. Viewing that costs 0/1D2 **SAN**, or 1/1D6 if the viewer realizes it was real.

The second scene of note is when the heroes arrive at the palace for the last time and the banners of the Yellow Emperor are unfurled. The banners display the Yellow Sign, visible for about ten seconds and costing 0/1 **SAN**. The Yellow Sign is also on screen, though in the background and very tiny, for three minutes during the credits. Pausing the movie during these scenes and studies the sign costs 1/1D3+1 **SAN**, as the Sign continues to move.

The last notable scene is when the masked Yellow Emperor appears before the heirs. The actor playing the emperor seems to stumble through the first half of his lines before he gets back into character. Anyone making a **Psychology** roll notices that his voice has changed slightly and his mannerisms are off. A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll here indicates that this may be an avatar of the King in Yellow possessing the actor. The scene has no special sanity cost, but obsessive viewers have claimed that the Emperor spoke to them, or that his mask warps, moves, or even takes on the appearance of someone they know.

Some unreliable trivia was included in the DVD release and put on the IMDb page. It asserts that the style of kung fu used in the movie came originally from a Tibetan monastery near Shangri La, established during the Han dynasty. This cannot be corroborated.

Most research leads to flamewars on martial-arts message boards. However many people have noted that the style seems consistent enough to be a real style even if it's unknown. Another item claims that the story was adapted from a secret biography of Huangdi, the historical Yellow Emperor of China. This is not even a little true.

More mistakes and strange effects can appear:

- Some DVDs will have a much more extensive number of languages to select from. French seems the most common but some editions have strange symbol-languages. (A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll recognizes Alko and Muvian as choices, costing 0/1 **SAN**.)
- The prognostications of the masked astronomer sometimes change. Sometimes he predicts the future of the viewer or viewers. (Seeing a prediction come true costs 1/1D4 **SAN**.)
- Occasionally the movie resists being paused or otherwise interrupted; only disconnecting the power to the player will stop the film. At other times, the movie only plays when everyone in the room is watching. If someone leaves, the film stops until they return. (Realizing that costs 1/1D4 **SAN**. It may trigger a powerful response in anyone obsessing over the film if the people don't return).

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The Deadly Claws of the Yellow Emperor (1992) Trivia

Showing all 5 items

- The movie was filmed in sequence, an oddity for most films. 54 of 54 found this interesting | Share this
- The first batch of DVDs were accidentally made on rewritable DVDs. 12 of 23 found this interesting | Share this
- The style of kung fu used in the movie came originally from a Tibetan monastery near Shangri La, established during the Han dynasty. 43 of 44 found this interesting | Share this
- A Feng Shui Master was hired by the original company to select locations for the filming. 8 of 12 found this interesting | Share this
- The story was adapted from a secret biography of Huangdi, the historical Yellow Emperor of China. 256 of 256 found this interesting | Share this

The Deadly Trivia Goofs Crazy Credits Quotes



- When Alderbaren is in the night sky, the words used to summon the Dragon of the Wind can be made out clearly. A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll recognizes the spell “Summon Byakhee.”
- The rhythmic pounding of waves can sometimes be heard in the background music.

These effects generally do not show up with a casual viewing, but the movie easily become an object of obsession, especially for someone who has spent months looking for a copy. Similarly, the clips on YouTube don’t seem to be so odd for most people—but some commenters talk about the clips as though they were completely different videos.

Filming a Mythos-infused movie, even before summoning monsters, took a toll on the cast and crew of *Deadly Claws*. After the filming wrapped, several members vanished from the scene while others retired or just dropped out. Suicide was popular with the cast and crew.

A few cast members went on to live normal lives, several of them appearing in other movies. Chen Liqin (agent of the first royal heir) made it to B-list fame, but she doesn’t like to talk about *Deadly Claws*. Lin Wen (second royal heir) would love to talk to you about the movie and how it ruined the world—

but as a crazy homeless person, he finds that no one cares what he has to say. Tsai Hui (producer) joined a possibly Buddhist cult in India. He still has an online presence and could be convinced to talk about the movie, but he couches everything in pseudo-Buddhist imagery, with the movie being a glimpse into a failed world. Lastly, Chang Wen (fight choreographer) vanished into the wilds of Xinjiang in 2004, his last blog post saying he was at last going to learn the “true Dragon Style.”

DEADLY EDITIONS

Deadly Claws has seeped out into the world in many ways.

The Deadly Claws of the Yellow Emperor

DVD and VHS, 98 min. Mandarin with poor English subtitles or dubbing (depending on version).

This is the version described above.

Sanity Loss: 0/1 if watched as a normal movie; 1/1D6 if studied as a source of esoteric lore.

Cthulhu Mythos: +2%

Mythos Rating: 5

Study: Requires four to nine viewings to comprehend.

Deadly Clips

Seven or eight clips of random scenes, scattered around YouTube, Youku and other video sites, totaling 44 min. Cantonese with English and Mandarin Subtitles.

These scenes were put up by obsessed fans. Some wanted to see if others saw what they saw and some wanted to spread the movie. Either way, the comments sections are flaming cesspools. The website experiences more glitches than normal, and if you watch enough, some of the oddness of the full movie comes through. However, these are much weaker and so far none have grown into the full movie.

Cthulhu Mythos: +1% on a failed INT roll

Study: Requires about 50 viewings to comprehend.

The Yellow Emperor

VHS or DVD, 62 min. Cantonese with English subtitles.

This version was never released. According to rumors, if you erase the tape or the DVD, only the kung-fu story of the agents is removed. The story that remains is much closer to the original *King in Yellow*, and this version has the power to effect people like the play. The VHS tape also warps slightly, causing the Yellow Sign to raise under the title sticker. The subtitles become an excellent translation.

Sanity Loss: 1d6/1d8+2

Cthulhu Mythos: +4%

Mythos Rating: 7

Study: Requires two to three viewings to comprehend

Rise of the Yellow Turban Emperor

VHS, 84 min. Cantonese with poor English subtitles.

In this bootleg edit released in 1998, the film was turned into a fantasy *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* story. The heirs’ names have been changed (dubbed in) as Cao Cao, Lui Bei and Lady Sun. The Emperor is referred to as Zhang Jiao. Much of the gore and most of the Mythos content was edited out. The film suffers from some of the adverse effects of the other versions, but the effects take longer to show themselves. The missing scenes were made up for by adding clips of large battles stolen from other movies. This is the most common version of the movie. Anyone looking on eBay or at conventions likely finds it long before they come across the genuine thing. (Watching it as a tome—taking the story at face value and integrating its metaphysics into one’s world view—is a potentially embarrassing way to learn spells and Mythos knowledge. The “best case” and “worst case” are a tossup between genuine Mythos knowledge and shouting nonsense phrases while waving a stick.)

Sanity Loss: 0/1 (1/1D4 if watched as a source of esoteric lore)

Cthulhu Mythos: +1%

Study: Requires four to nine viewings to comprehend. 8



THE WORSHIP OF ATLACH-NACHA

*O Lord Jesus,
do you think I served my time?
The eight legs of the devil
now are crawling up my spine.*

—Diamanda Galas,
“Let My People Go”

TRADITIONS OF
TERROR FOR CALL
OF CTHULHU

BY STEVEN KAYE
AND DANIEL HARMS

The dark form ran toward him with incredible swiftness. When it came near he saw that there was a kind 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. Thin, shrill, piercing as a sting, there spoke to him the voice of the spider-god Atlach-Nacha: “I am duly grateful for the gift. But, since there is no one else to bridge this chasm, and since eternity is required for the task, I can not spend my time in extracting you from those curious shards of metal.”

—Clark Ashton Smith, “The Seven Geases”

The mysterious Old One Atlach-Nacha, called Tleche-Naka in some sources, lurks at the edge of the Cthulhu Mythos pantheon. Few have reported encounters with the Spinner of Webs, and yet it may play an important role in the coming End Times.



MYTHIC ORIGINS AND ALIEN CULTS

The origin of Atlach-Nacha remains a mystery. Some say it was spawned by Abhoth, while others claim Shub-Niggurath as its cousin. Yet others speculate that it was once a human sorcerer. Likewise, reports vary as to the gender of Atlach-Nacha.

According to the *Book of Eibon*, Atlach-Nacha spun a web from Cykranosh (Saturn) to Earth, allowing Tsathoggua and his kin passage to our planet. Atlach-Nacha crossed its own bridge and settled under Mount Voormithadreth in the Eiglophian Mountains of central Hyperborea. Once there, it began the spinning of its vast web across the Great Abyss, attended by the Gray Weavers, whose leader is Tch'tkaa.

The spider god does not seem to be imprisoned, as are other Great Old Ones, but it is reluctant to leave the Great Abyss, or to engage in any activity that takes it away from spinning its web. This task will take until the end of time, with some seeing its completion as a sign of the world's end. One version of the story states that Atlach-Nacha is bridging the Dreamlands and the waking world with its web. When that bridge is complete, all the nightmares of the Dreamlands will enter our world.

It appears that Atlach-Nacha's underground realm might have an interdimensional component. The most famous entrances thereto were the caverns under Voormithadreth in Hyperborea (modern Greenland), but other passages have been found on islands in the Indian Ocean and in the Andes. Doubtless others exist, as Atlach-Nacha's web spans time as well as space.

PRE-HUMAN AND INHUMAN WORSHIP

The Triassic era saw the rise of a species of spider known in the *Book of Eibon* as the "Children of Atlach-Nacha." These creatures, thriving on the southwest shores of Pangaea on the Tethys Ocean, are believed to have been unintelligent, but nonetheless were faithful to the Old One. Chosen priests today are able to call them out of fossil form, using the spider-god's resonance with time, to attack the cult's enemies.

Leng, an extension of the Dreamlands into the waking world (or perhaps vice-versa), is home to intelligent, bloated purple spiders. These seem to be the descendants of the Children of Atlach-Nacha, as spells that summon them also work on Leng Spiders. In ages past, these monsters warred with the men of Leng, who pushed them back to the valleys in the southwest plateau. Some stories tell that the spiders of Leng were the first dwellers in the Dreamlands, and seek to regain their primacy. One wonders if there is more to Nyarlathotep's claim to Randolph Carter that "It is not well that earth's gods leave their thrones for the spider to spin on, and their realm for the Others to sway in the dark manner of Others."

Lelag-Leng, a Tcho-Tcho village in the shadow of the plateau of Leng, trades large quantities of silk with others in the Dreamlands. No mulberry trees for silkworms grow in Lelag-Leng. If spider silk is the key component, then the influence of Atlach-Nacha in the Dreamlands may be stronger than thought.

Moving southward in the Dreamlands, we come to the prehuman city of Ib. The race that came there from the Moon had a spell that transformed foes into spiders of the same size, with

all their legs broken. Whether this indicates an enmity between Atlach-Nacha and their deity Bokrug is uncertain.

Returning to the waking world, the alien sorcerer Haon-Dor, who was allied with the serpent people during the Hyperborean civilization, knew Atlach-Nacha. The prevailing attitude in these interactions seems to have been one of respect and tolerance, rather than of veneration.

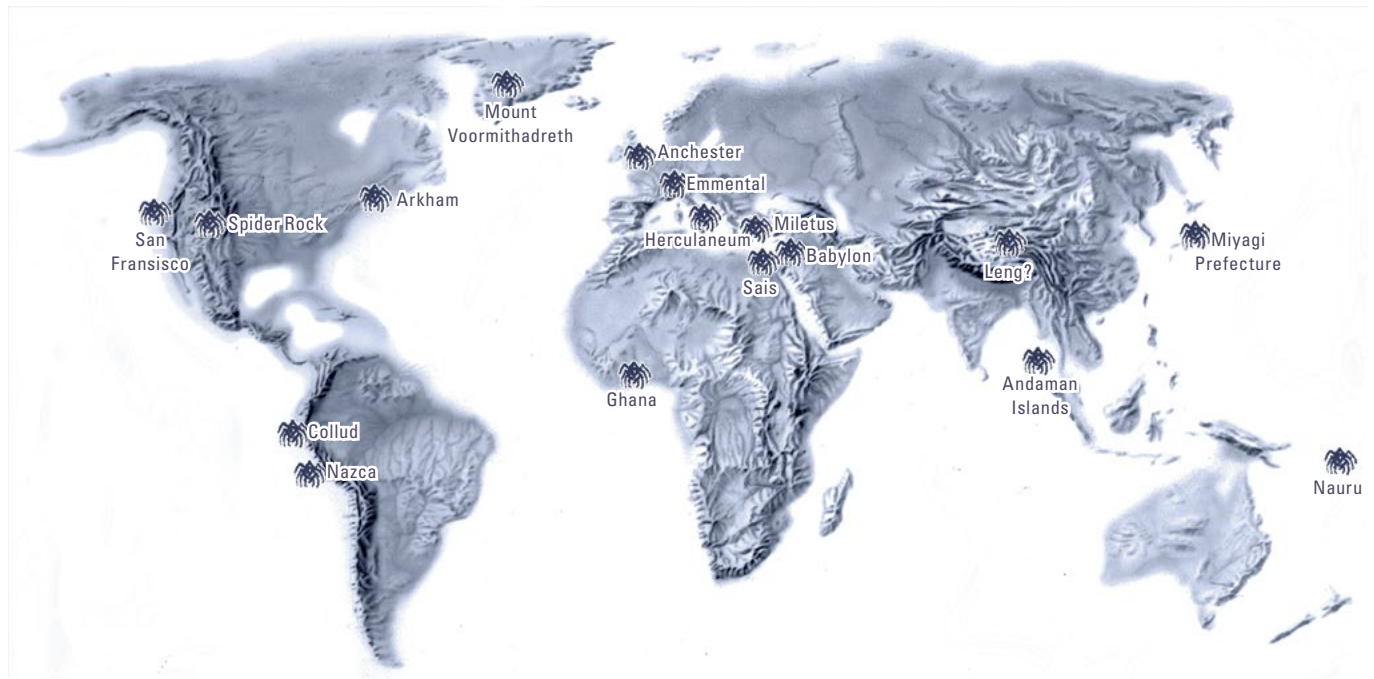
PREHISTORIC HUMAN CIVILIZATIONS

The earliest human civilization, and the one to which Atlach-Nacha was best known, was that of Hyperborea. Both Haon-Dor and Ralibar Vooz, chief magistrate of Commorion, met Atlach-Nacha. Since Ralibar Vooz did not survive his quest, it seems likely that the wizard Ezdagor or some other mystic learned of his fate and preserved the tale. Eibon recorded several hymns of praise to Atlach-Nacha in his *Book* and observed the funerary rites for his friend Yhok-Omi prescribed in the *Papyrus of Atlach-Nacha*, but it is unknown if he had dealings with the spider-god.

Hyperborean folktales also bring us the earliest mention of a Daughter of Atlach-Nacha. According to the story, a Hyperborean woman made a deal with Atlach-Nacha for eternal youth in exchange for bearing its children. Further, it tells us that Atlach-Nacha dwells at the center of the universe, a position normally reserved for Azathoth, and communicates via dreams.

Our next possible appearance of Atlach-Nacha dates to thousands of years later, during the time of Acheron (ca. 13,500 B.C.E.) just before the Hyborian Age. Both the people of Acheron and the Hyborian city of Yezud in Zamora worshipped a giant spider





called Omm, which may have been Atlach-Nacha or one of its children. Omm spawned several other giant spiders, as well as a race of Spider People with six arms and compound eyes. This Omm may be the same as the giant spider Zath slain by the Cimmerian Conan along with its offspring, or Zath may have been one of its children. A former priest of Zath, Harpagus, gained the ability to transform into a spider after Zath's death.

Both Omm and the Spider People held the Serpent People as enemies. Some of the Spider People may have survived to the present day.

ATLACH-NACHA OUTSIDE EUROPE

Little is known of Atlach-Nacha following the Hyborian Age, and much is conjectural. The Egyptian goddess Neith, originally a war goddess, was associated with weaving when her symbol of arrows crossed on a shield was later taken for a loom, and legend had it that she wove the world into existence. As the spinner of destiny and associated with war and hunting, Neith was also said to have woven the bandages and shrouds of the mummified dead—

perhaps a holdover from the funerary practices described in the *Papyrus of Atlach-Nacha*? In the fifth century C.E., Proclus, in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, wrote that her temple at Sais (present-day) bore this inscription:

I am the things that are, that will be, and that have been. No one has ever laid open the garment by which I am concealed. The fruit which I brought forth was the sun.

The Babylonian Ishtar was associated with the weaving of fate, though it is not clear if all weaving deities (e.g., the Fates, the later Norns) should therefore be associated with Atlach-Nacha. The Phoenicians are definitely known to have worshipped Atlach-Nacha, and notably Arachne (see below) was the daughter of a wool dyer specializing in Tyrian purple.

The Greek story of Arachne's weaving contest with Athene was held as reason by a small cult of Atlach-Nacha in Herculaneum to murder several potential priestesses of Minerva, and to kidnap yet another. The cult, based in a cavern in Mount Vesuvius, was destroyed. An earth tremor also destroyed the cult's temple and with it a gate to Atlach-Nacha. Some say the rivalry of Athene and Arachne is the garbled memory of a conflict between the Elder God N'tse-Kaambl,



whose iconography resembles the goddess, and Atlach-Nacha. Seals with images of spiders have been recovered from the former city of Miletus, in present-day Turkey.

ATLACH-NACHA IN EUROPE

Our evidence of Atlach-Nacha in Northern Europe during begins in the Dark Ages. In both Swiss and Swedish, the word *dverg* stands for both "spider" and "dwarf," and various Celtic languages also preserve this identity. Among the Anglo-Saxons, spiders in the form of dwarves were said to ride people at night like witches, leaving them exhausted in the morning. If a passage in the *Al-Azif* is to be believed, the mysterious beings known as Dark

SERVITORS OF ATLACH-NACHA

These terrible creatures are among the spider-spawn that Investigators might encounter.

THE CHILDREN OF ATLACH-NACHA

Unintelligent prehistoric spiders, which can be revived by worshippers of Atlach-Nacha. They are about four inches long, with black and green bodies, and powerful legs that help them jump. They only use silk for their egg sacs and for draglines. Larger and more intelligent versions are rumored to exist in Leng.

CHILD OF ATLACH-NACHA,

Fossil Come to Life

	<i>Small</i>		<i>Large</i>	
STR	10	(1D3×5)	52	([3d6]×5)
CON	10	(1D3×5)	52	([3d6]×5)
SIZ	5	5	70	([4d6]×5)
POW	5	5	17	([1D6]×5)
DEX	72	([3d6+4]×5)	50	([2D6+3]×5)
HP	1		12	
Av. DB	-2		0	
Av. Bld	-2		0	
MP	1		3	
Move	6		6	

Attacks per Round: 1

Fighting attacks: The bite of a child of any size administers a lethal poison.

Bite 80% (40/16), venom

Armor: (Small) None, but its dexterity and small SIZ subtract 30 percentiles from an attacker's chance to hit. (Large) 3 points chitin.

Skills: Defend Spiderlings 45%, Jump 60% (can spring up to six feet), Stay Alert 80%.

Sanity Loss: For the small variety, loss depends on the number of spiders: one might inflict no loss, while thousands of spiders may inflict a SAN loss as high as 1D10. Large varieties may cost 0/1D8 Sanity.

DAUGHTERS OF ATLACH-NACHA

Women transformed by Atlach-Nacha into giant black spiders with green and gold streaks on their abdomens. They may have survived potentially fatal spider bites in their human lives, or been marked in some other fashion such as tattooing.

DAUGHTER OF ATLACH-NACHA,

Human Become Spider

STR	112	([3D6+12]×5)
CON	92	([3D6+8]×5)
SIZ	92	([3D6+8]×5)
INT	52	([3D6]×5)
POW	65	([2D6+6]×5)
DEX	65	([2D6+6]×5)
HP	18	
Av. DB	+1D6	
Av. Bld	2	
Move:	8	

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting attacks: The daughter has a venomous bite; unless an extreme CON roll succeeds, the victim is paralyzed for 1D6 hours.

The daughter feeds upon her paralyzed prey, devouring the flesh of the victim's head and eventually, through the victim's now-empty eye sockets, sucking out the 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. A victim may be rescued by friends if they can stop the spider's feast before their friend's INT reaches 0. A survivor is forever blind, suffers the permanent loss of 2D4 APP, and the permanent loss of whatever INT was devoured.

Bite 75%, 1D10+venom
Feast automatic when paralyzed, 1 INT devoured each round

Armor: 5 points of chitin and fur

Skills: Stealth 35%

Spells: Call/Dismiss Atlach-Nacha, Contact Deity/Atlach-Nacha.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D8, plus an additional 1/1D8 if the human's transformation is witnessed.

THE GRAY WEAVERS

Led by Tch'tkaa, these are bloated, intelligent, huge spiders with stubby legs. They are able to travel between worlds by running through Atlach-Nacha's web. Nominally faithful servants of Atlach-Nacha, they may act upon their own desires at times.

These creatures not only hunt on our world, but can journey to other planes of existence as well.

GRAY WEAVER, Soul-Feasting Horror

STR	100	([4D6+6]×5)
CON	175	(10D6×5)
SIZ	65	([2D6+6]×5)
INT	82	([3D6+6]×5)
POW	70	(4D6×5)
DEX	87	(5D6×5)
HP	24	
Av. DB	+1D6	
Av. Bld	2	
MP	14	
Move	9	

Attacks per Round: 1

Bite: Rather than draining its prey's juice, a Gray Weaver feeds on the essence of its victims. The round after a successful bite attack and in each subsequent round, it drains its victim's POW by 1 point. If rescued, the victim regains POW at a rate of 1 per game-month of bed rest.

Cast Web: Affects one human-sized or smaller target. The person must make a hard STR roll to escape. Such a roll may be made once per round, in place of any other action.

Bite 30% (15/6), damage drain
Cast Web 40%

Armor: 6 points of chitin and fur

Skills: Stealth 35%

Spells: Call/Dismiss Atlach-Nacha, Journey to the Other Side, Mesmerize, Sense Life.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D6



Ones used the “Mimesis of the Gray Weavers,” a ritual provided by the spider-god, to take on arachnid bodies. Having done so, they could drain the life energy they themselves lacked in order to power their mysterious devices.

In the thirteenth century, a Swiss village in the Emmental was said to have made a deal with the Devil in exchange for assistance in fulfilling the tasks of a tyrannical noble. The Devil kissed one of the women of the village

on the cheek and gave her a mark resembling a black spider. Not only did this mark burst and release spiders when the villagers reconsidered their bargain, but the woman herself was transformed into a spider so venomous its slightest touch was death. The spider was imprisoned, but was released in the fifteenth century before being imprisoned once more.

OTHER CIVILIZATIONS

A route to Atlach-Nacha’s web was found somewhere in northwest Peru thousands of years ago, leading to widespread devotion to the spider among the members of the Cupisnique, Chavin, and Moche cultures. A three-thousand-year-old temple at Collud, in the Lambayeque valley, features many images of a spider god with a feline mouth and beak. The spider symbolism remained strong into the Moche

culture of the first millennium. Moche art often depicts the Decapitator, a human-headed spider, typically carrying a knife and a severed head.

Spiders held special significance to the Inca who later inhabited the same region. It was common for diviners to keep clay pots that contained large spiders. The success or failure of a venture could be determined by looking inside the pots to determine if the legs were straight or bent beneath the body.

Some of the colossal Nazca glyphs drawn in the deserts of southern Peru, dating to circa 500 C.E., depict spiders. One controversial theory holds that the Nazca lines were components of giant looms, with the figures having ritualistic importance only. Others believe that they point to particular configurations of constellations, of which we know little.

Several Southwestern Native American tribes venerated Atlach-Nacha, calling it Grandmother Spider or





Spider Woman and claiming it created the world and taught people how to weave. The Navajo only tell stories of her in winter months, when it is safe to do so.

The Ojibwe people of the Midwest used dream catchers, which spread to many other Native American tribes (and the New Age movement) beginning in the Seventies. They were originally developed because Asibikaashi (Spider Woman, their term for Atlach-Nacha) could not reach all the Ojibwe, once they had been scattered across North America, to catch their bad dreams in her net. The Lakota say that bad dreams pass through the holes in the dream catchers while good dreams are trapped and slide down the feathers of the dream catcher to people sleeping under them.

The West African trickster god Anansi, whose worship spread to the Caribbean and folktales in the southern United States, may be a guise of

Atlach-Nacha. He has elements in common with other spider-deities (an association with rain; in some stories he creates the universe). Anansi was trapped by a tar baby in a Jamaican story; if they are the same being, that may suggest a dispute with Tsathoggua or its Formless Spawn, presumably after the journey from Cykranosh.

Biliku is the Andaman Islands spider god or goddess (male in the northern islands, female in the southern islands) who created the world and governs the weather, especially the northeastern monsoons. She throws lightning bolts and raises storms when she is upset. The odor of burning or melting beeswax especially upsets her, as does the killing of spiders. A small group of Tcho-Tchos who live upon the islands revere her in this form.

In Japan, *gorōgumo* are *yōkai* (supernatural creatures), spiders that can assume the forms of beautiful women

and seek to devour people. The name is written in *kanji* (Japanese characters) meaning “binding bride” or “whore spider.” Curiously, a *gorōgumo* is venerated as the goddess of Kashikobuchi in Miyagi Prefecture, and is said to save people from drowning. *Tsuchigumo*, originally clans that did not obey the Emperor, were later said to be mountain *yōkai* with the faces of *oni* (malevolent spirits or ogres), the bodies of tigers, and the arms and legs of spiders. They can assume the forms of young boys or beautiful women, and eat people. *Umigumo* are *yōkai* that dwell on the coast of Kyushu and attack people with string they generate from their mouths.

Across Oceania, various spider spirits are said to have created the universe, including the Kiribati Nareau and Areo-Enap (Old Spider) of Nauru. A Maori legend has a spiderweb showing a hero the way to the realm of his ancestors.

EARLY MODERN TIMES AND BEYOND

Northern Europe continued to harbor Atlach-Nacha worshippers well past the Middle Ages. A sinister northern English family whose name has been lost to us worshipped Atlach-Nacha in the seventeenth century. The site of their house had been settled even earlier than Roman times, possibly acting as a sacred grove for Druids. The family held commerce with the de la Poers of Anchester and with a monastic order of ill repute that dwelt in and about Falstone Castle in Northumberland. While the house was destroyed and the estate taken over by another family, traces of Atlach-Nacha's presence remained. In modern times there were reports of weird shapes on the local roads and trails, and webs between the trees at night, which disappeared by daybreak. Circumstantial evidence suggests survivals of druidic groups in East Anglia may have worshipped Atlach-Nacha. Spiders of unusual size and with extremely strong venom were exterminated in Suffolk in the eighteenth century.

Atlach-Nacha's worship was not limited to Northern Europe. In southern Italy near Apulia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and, in some cases, up until the twentieth), the bites of tarantulas were said to induce a condition known as tarantism. Symptoms of tarantism included headaches, fainting spells, shortness of breath, lethargy, and sexual mania. Such a disorder could only be alleviated by a special dance, known as the tarantella, which would sometimes afflict entire populations. Some of these dances bear similarities to ritual actions described in the *Papyrus of Atlach-Nacha*, possibly indicating a doorway to the Old One's web in that region.

We also have a puzzling account that is said to originate in Spain at Cordoba that might refer to Atlach-Nacha's followers' presence there. According to a ballad of the Argentinian gauchos, hordes of gigantic, man-eating spiders, that could only be frightened off

by massive volleys of cannon fire, once beset the city of Cordoba. If this is the case, all contemporary historical accounts have been suppressed. Perhaps this is a memory of some manner of assault by Leng spiders upon a Dreamlands city?

The American preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) was fascinated with the spider. He wrote an essay on the “flying spider” at the age of 17 and incorporated spiders into his most famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”:

“Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock.”

The reference to a web catching a rock, and its similarity with Eibon's plan to avoid the Earth's destruction by a Seed of Azathoth, is striking.

Spiritualism came into vogue in the mid-nineteenth century. Although it largely became a haven for those seeking solace from grief or cheap thrills, it also opened some unwitting séance participants to the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos. The spirit of Atlach-Nacha possessed some mediums, temporarily manifesting glowing red eyes and fangs.

For much of the twentieth century, Atlach-Nacha and its cults were quiescent. There are rumors of a medium invoking Atlach-Nacha in the 1920s in Arkham, and also of a cultist of Atlach-Nacha operating in San Francisco at some point after World War II.

From 1955 to 1962, London's Nu-Isis Lodge channeled the transmissions of a feminine spider being known as OKBIsh that dwelt in the tunnels between the dimensions. It is possible that this was in fact one of the servants of Atlach-Nacha known as the Grey Weavers.



In 1982, the Barton-Doheny expedition went to the Peruvian Andes in search of Atlach-Nacha. The expedition sought to learn a route to the bottomless chasm of the Great Abyss. Apparently the expedition members' fiberglass-plate armor did not protect them from the spider-god, for they were never heard from again.

More recently, occultists and mystics have sought out wisdom from the Spider that spans the space-time gulfs. An attempt to summon the spider god in Leeds in 1997, following two years of thought-form-building, ended in an attempted exorcism and the destruction of Atlach-Nacha's altar hidden in a basement.

The influence of Atlach-Nacha spans all ages and the globe itself.

THE CULT OF ATLACH-NACHA

Deity: Atlach-Nacha's primary task is to finish the spinning of its Great Web. It tends to react poorly to interruptions, but may grant some sorcerers magic and POW. Spells are typically associated with travel or seeing the future (Create Scrying Window, Create Gate, Create Time Gate, etc.) but may involve control of spiders or the assumption of the form of a spider.

Era: Atlach-Nacha is worshipped in all eras.

Goals: Its worshippers seek to aid it in the completion of its web, whether through the nourishment of sacrifices to keep its strength up or transforming themselves or others into Children of Atlach-Nacha to help their patron.

In return for these services, the Old One may show its worshippers the paths between worlds, including

the Dreamlands. It may also grant visions of the future and, in some cases, the ability to travel into it. It is not uncommon for such followers to consider themselves “were-spiders,” walking on a web that spans worlds and eras. Others seek to be enshrouded in webbing and hung above her vast abyss, the poison that courses through their veins sending their spirits on mystical journeys.

Resources: Resources depend upon the particular cult. The worshipers of the Destroyer in Peru built vast temple complexes in her honor.

RITES, CEREMONIES AND SYMBOLS

Atlach-Nacha often chooses its devotees from those having survived the bite of a venomous spider. Its food is chosen by the same means, so occult investigators should avoid complacency.

To fulfill their “were-spider” doctrine, Atlach-Nacha’s servitors have been known to use the spell Body Warping of Gorgoroth to assume the forms of giant spiders or human-spider hybrids. Some favored servants may gain this ability through the favor of Atlach-Nacha directly.

In ancient Rome, a cult used daggers coated in spider-venom (a strong poison), spider-silk garrotes, and chemically treated spider-silk armor (3 points). Such gifts have not been observed elsewhere, although the evidence would likely not be preserved well.

In modern times, an Indian servant of the spider-god bred large and venomous spiders in a San Francisco mansion and summoned Spiders of Leng from the Dreamlands, feeding them human sacrifices and hunting in their manner in Golden Gate Park.

SACRED TEXTS

The Papyrus of Atlach-Nacha

Tsath-Yo, by Anonymous

This brief text gives instructions on funerary rites, including wrapping the body in a cocoon for its eventual resurrection. The Hyperborean wizard Eibon is known to have read it.

SAN Loss: 1D3

Cthulhu Mythos: +1 percentile

Mythos Rating: 3

Study: 1 week

Suggested Spells: With a successful Cthulhu Mythos roll, a reader may reassemble the Contact Deity/Atlach-Nacha spell out of the prayers within.

The Dream of the Spider, and the Awakening

(Philadelphia, Golden Goblin, 1931)
English, by C.A. Smith

In 1913, a young Clark Ashton Smith visited the Bohemian Grove, brought there by his friend and mentor George Sterling. Smith participated in that year’s Grove Play, “The Fall of Ugg: A Masque of Fear.” The motto of the Bohemian Club is “Weaving Spiders Come Not Here.”

He never went back to the grove, but he published a slender volume of prose poems in 1931 through Philadelphia’s Golden Goblin Press as “C.A. Smith.” The linked poems tell of a spider that weaves a web between the dreamscapes of various inhabited worlds, its mordant observations on the civilizations it witnesses, and its completion of the web and the shattering of those dreamscapes as the dreamers awake to find themselves being devoured alive by their own nightmares. Readers of *The Dream of the Spider* gain +5% to **Dream Lore**.

Sanity Loss: 1D3

Cthulhu Mythos: +1 percentile

Mythos Rating: 3

Study: 2 weeks

Suggested Spells: Contact Deity/Atlach-Nacha

“The Spider, in Four Ancient Texts”

(The Occult Librarian,
March 1934: 39–52)
English, by C. A. Smith

This article discusses the association of spiders with female figures of destiny in several mythologies.

Sanity Loss: None

Cthulhu Mythos: None

Study: 1 week

Suggested Spells: Summon/
Bind Child of Atlach-Nacha

The Widow’s Kiss

German, by Emil Busch

Emil Busch (1860–1905) was a German arachnologist of the early 20th century who initially planned to write a conventional scholarly book on various cultures’ myths about spiders. His final work was very different, claiming that all religions stem from the horrible truth of a creator deity in the shape of a giant spider, who will give birth to a host of ravenous spiderlings when her web between the worlds is complete that will devour everything. Busch shot himself upon completion of his work.

Sanity Loss: 1D6

Cthulhu Mythos: +2

Mythos Rating: 21

Study: 20 weeks

Suggested Spells: Attract Spider,
Ba-Kroth Ritual, Summon/
Bind Spider of Leng

El Glifo de la Araña in el Tiempo (The Spider-Glyph in Time)

Spanish, by Mauricio Santos-Lobos

Santos-Lobos was a Chilean government worker and right-wing pamphleteer. In the Thirties, he became enamored with National Socialist doctrine, along with Theosophy, Tantrism, Busch’s *The Widow’s Kiss*, and a partial mimeographed copy of a purported wizard’s grimoire from Thule. Santos-Lobos commenced a series of “psychic explorations” of these concepts, followed up with trips to Peru, Argentina, and India. His magnum opus describing the results of his journeys and studies, *El Glifo*, was published in Santiago in 1964, followed with an English translation from a New York house in 1975. Santos-Lobos passed away in 1980.

This work is epic in its range, covering everything from Hyperborean mythology to defunct constellations to bizarre sexual practices. In a distant era, the spiritually advanced Aryan people of Thule revered the ideal of the spider’s web as the profound emblem of universal unity. The Thulians fought off assaults by degenerate human-animal hybrids for millennia, until their civilization fell due to the numbers of their foes and the treachery of one of their number. Some of them made their

way to Scandinavia and the west coast of South America, where they formed a second civilization responsible for the region's pre-Columbian temples and the Nazca lines. The "subhumans" that later came to rule the Incan Empire overthrew these latter groups. The surviving Thulians were forced to interbreed with their foes save for a few isolated and genetically pure enclaves. Through meditation, yoga, and other spiritual practices, humanity must strengthen the pure strain of the Aryo-Thulian energy to contact the spider-energy and bring about a new era of cosmic unity after a violent overthrow of the present system.

Sanity Loss: 1D8

Cthulhu Mythos: +3 percentiles

Mythos Rating: 12

Study: 8 weeks

Suggested Spells: Attract Spider, Become Avatar of Atlach-Nacha, Command Spider, Contact Deity: Atlach-Nacha, Walk the Web

NEW SPELLS

These can be found in the tomes sacred to Atlach-Nacha's cult.

BA-KROTH RITUAL (CONTACT DEITY: ATLACH-NACHA)

Cost: 5 POW; 1d6 Sanity points

Casting Time: Keeper's choice

Brings the caster into contact with Atlach-Nacha. The spell can be cast from anywhere a large number of spiders are present, even if the caster is unaware of them. The caster must spend 5 **POW** and 1D6 **Sanity** each time the spell is cast. The chance of success is half of **POW** for the first casting, and **POW** for subsequent castings.

The spell appears to open a portal to the Old One's web, in which the spider god may be seen by all onlookers (**SAN** loss 1/1D10). Atlach-Nacha dislikes leaving its web spinning, so a successful **Fast Talk**, **Persuade**, or **Cthulhu Mythos** skill roll is necessary lest the Old One cut off communication. A suitable offering might also gain its favor.

BECOME AVATAR OF ATLACH-NACHA

Cost: 20 MP; 25 POW; 1D10 Sanity points

Casting Time: Keeper's choice

The caster seeks the favor of Atlach-Nacha to become an avatar of the spider-god (stats below).

STR	as original host +50
CON	as original host +100
SIZ	as original host
INT	100
POW	100
DEX	as original host +100
HP	as per SIZ
DB	and CON
Build	
Move	15

Attacks per Round: 1

Fighting attacks: The bite penetrates any armor and injects a paralytic poison (extreme **CON** check to defeat). It may also strike with one of its arms.

Ensnare in webbing: Webbing engulfs one of the opponents, requiring an opposed **STR** check to escape. One attempt may be made each round.

Bite 70%, penetrates any armor and injects paralyzing poison

Strike 70% 2D6+db

Ensnare in Webbing 60%, tangles victims in webbing.

Armor: 2 points of chitin and fur.

Skills: Dodge 60%, Jump 50%, Sleight of Hand 80%, Stealth 80%, Spot Hidden 75%

Spells: Contact Deity: Atlach-Nacha, Summon/Bind Leng Spider

Sanity Loss: 1D3/1D6+3

CALL/DISMISS ATLACH-NACHA

Cost: Variable, see text

Casting Time: Keeper's choice

Can only be cast near a tunnel to Atlach-Nacha's web. The spell costs a varying number of magic points to the participants, and costs the caster 1D10 magic points. Only those who succeed at a successful **Art/Craft (Dancer)** may contribute **MP** to the spell. All present must pay the **Sanity** cost for viewing the Old One (1/1D10). The spell otherwise conforms to the Call/Dismiss Deity spells in the Keeper's Rulebook.

WALK THE WEB

Cost: Variable, see text

Casting Time: Keeper's choice

Can only be cast near a tunnel leading to the Old One. This spell allows the caster and those who follow travel to other times and places via Atlach-Nacha's web. The trip costs the participants a fifth of the **MP** as a comparable journey via gate or time gate would in **POW**. Each participant must make a **Luck** roll (maximum 95%) to travel successfully, with a failure meaning the web has given way, sending the individual to the gulfs below. A result of 99-00 means that Atlach-Nacha expresses its irritation by eating one or more of the travelers.

ARTIFACTS

RAGNO DEL DIAVOLO (THE DEVIL'S SPIDER)

The earliest report of the *Ragno del Diavolo* comes from fifteenth century Florence, and it may well have originated there. The prelate Varelli wrote in the suppressed sixth volume of his diary of *la bella malmignatta orologio, che conferisce una lunga durata ad un prezzo mostruoso*, "the beautiful clockwork black widow, which bestows long life at a monstrous price." Perhaps two inches long, it appears to be a spider made of brass with *niello* decoration and tiny rubies for eyes. A winding stem is found underneath, near the rear.

If the stem is wound and the spider is released, the mechanism will crawl until it encounters a human. At this point it seek out exposed flesh and latches on with its legs (an opposed contest versus **STR** 90 wrests it loose), then bites (a **Luck** roll avoids being bitten in the process of trying to remove it; **Sanity** loss 0/1D2). After the bite, its victim experiences a painful burning sensation followed by euphoria.

The victim either receives a +15 bonus to **CON** (with **HP** adjustments to match), or, if age 40 or older, has the penalties for aging removed. However, he or she also suffers cannibalistic urges (a contest versus 90 **POW** to resist;

Sanity loss 0/1D4). With every week that passes, the victim's **POW** is effectively -5 to attempt further resistance. Additional Sanity loss may come from attacking and/or killing victims. Over time, the victim becomes hairier, his or her limbs narrow and lengthen, and stranger changes occur until the victim becomes a human-sized spider.

Stage I (first failure to resist): Hairiness, bloodlust (Sanity loss 0/1D4).

Stage II: Limbs lengthen and attenuate (Sanity loss 1/1D6; 0/1D2 to view).

Stage III: Torso swells; ears and nose fall off (Sanity loss 1D4/1D8; 1/1D4 to view).

Stage IV: Multiple sets of eyes, imparting 320-degree vision (Sanity loss 1D4/1D8; 1/1D6 to view).

Stage V: Additional limbs grow, and limbs become more spiderlike. The torso becomes chitinous (2 points of armor), and spinnerets form (Sanity loss 1D6/1D10; 1/1D6 to view; gain ability to ensnare in webbing at 60%; webbing has STR 100).

Stage VI: Chelicerae and venomous fangs form (Sanity loss 1D6/1D10; 1/1D6 to view; gain Bite at 70% with a strong paralyzing poison).

Stage VII: The victim is in all ways a giant spider (lose all remaining Sanity; 1/1D6 to view).

The Devil's Spider can be broken up by a hard blow with a hammer. That reveals an actual spider of a species unknown to science, enmeshed with the elaborate clockwork mechanisms of the automaton (**Sanity** loss 0/1D2).

WATCHFUL GUARDIANS

These magical creations infuse one of Atlach-Nacha's spider spirits into material form—in this case, a stone statue of an eight-legged, one-eyed creature. Creating the guardian requires a week's worth of carving (and a successful **Art (Sculptor)** or equivalent skill check), during which time the caster may only eat spiders. If the skill succeeds, the caster may spend 10 **POW** to bring the creation to life.

Activating the spider from its stone form requires one round and 2 **MP**.

The guardian can show the caster its surroundings and follow simple mental commands. Its death stuns the caster for five rounds.

WATCHFUL GUARDIAN

STR	87	5D6×5
CON	45	2D8×5
SIZ	45	2D8×5
	(set by caster)	
INT	35	2D6×5
POW	17	1D6×5
DEX	87	5D6×5
HP	9	
Av. DB	+1D4	
Av. Bld	+1	
Av. MP	3	
Move	14	

Attacks per round: 1

Fighting attacks: The watchful guardian may either grapple or smash into its victim.

Grapple 65%, damage special
Head butt 42%, damage DB

Armor: 3 points skin

Skills: Dodge 57%, Spot Hidden 87%,
Stealth 74%

Sanity Loss: 1/1D3 to see it in mobile form; 0/1 in addition to watch the transformation.

THE GOD WITHOUT HANDS

“Your wickedness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider’s web would have to stop a falling rock.”

—Jonathan Edwards

If your group of Call of Cthulhu investigators is like many, they have required some sort of inhuman substance to be scientifically tested by some poor, unsuspecting schlub. No good Keeper lets such an opportunity go to waste, as the case of Morton Drake should show.

Morton (or insert another appropriate name) rendered his professional judgment on the sample as requested,

but he became intrigued, then curious, then obsessed. His exploration led him to old ethnographic journals and travelers' accounts, and by correlating details of three separate procedures on two continents, he managed to duplicate a psychoactive drink which could be used to communicate with Atlach-Nacha. Morton saw her, and in the face of her terrifying visage, made her an extravagant promise to bring the Children of Atlach-Nacha back into this world. As he has no means to do so, this has led to great anxiety on his part.

To compound matters, Morton was previously an indifferent Congregationalist who has returned to his faith in this time of trial. He has become particularly taken with Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which he has read obsessively. Having made a deal with a malign otherworldly intelligence, he believes he has abandoned his former god, and will be punished soon, with God causing a gaping chasm to be opened up beneath him so he will fall into eternal fire.

Morton has taken elaborate precautions to avoid this drop into Hell. He rarely leaves his house, and if he does, he remains close to another person, who is likely innocent enough not to inspire God's immediate punishment, or riding public transportation. He has wheedled his supervisors into installing "safety bars" at convenient intervals in his laboratory. He has filled his home with nets, hammocks, ropes, and other hangings strong enough for his body weight. If the floor vanishes by the will of God, he will be ready.

Within a month, Morton's condition will worsen to the point at which he cannot leave the house. Investigators who learn of him being in this state will soon understand that they are responsible for his condition (**Sanity** loss 0/1D2). A **Psychoanalysis** roll by a friend in quiet conversation may convince him to seek help for his condition. This grants back any **Sanity** lost to causing Morton's distress, and allows him to tell the Investigators about the remaining vial of spider essence.



Oddly, Morton's insanity has fastened upon his uncertain relationship with God, not his encounter with the Old One. Atlach-Nacha is focused on web spinning, so if and when it responds to Morton's unfulfilled promise is up to the Keeper. A typical response might be for it to send a few Gray Weavers (see above) to kill Morton.

THE VIAL OF SPIDER ESSENCE

Morton created a backup vial of the spider essence, a vile dark-green liquid which he keeps in the icebox or refrigerator in his home. A **Science (Chemistry or Pharmacy)** roll to test the substance reveals that it is a concoction of all manner of substances, many of which are organic. An Investigator who has access to Morton's notebooks may recreate the recipe, which requires the venom from seven different species of spiders, with two weeks' time and successful rolls of **Science (Biology)**, **Science (Chemistry)**, and **Science**

(Pharmacy). (A **Cthulhu Mythos** roll may substitute for any one of these.) With the recipe, creating more of the essence takes a week and costs \$250 (\$1,000 in modern settings).

A person who drinks the essence falls into a trance from which he or she cannot be awakened. The consciousness of the drinker slowly drifts through more normal dreams into the vast, web-spanned chasm where the Old One spins its web. The walls rise into the distance, and the webs cross haphazardly at all angles (**Sanity** loss 0/1D2). Upon appearing here, the dreamer must immediately make an easy **Climb** roll or a **Dreaming** roll, lest he or she miss the webs and fall helplessly into the abyss (**Sanity** loss 1/1D6).

After a few minutes of terror, the web strands around the dreamer begin to shake with weight. Atlach-Nacha knows its webs well, so it can appear behind any of the characters with ease (**Sanity** loss 1/1D10).

The essence is a special line of communication between Atlach-Nacha and its chosen priests, more specialized than an ordinary Contact spell. Atlach-Nacha has little patience with anyone who asks too many questions (that is, three or more), or who seems intent on wasting its time. It may respond favorably to proposals to make an individual a priest one of its priests, or to perform a major deed for the cult, or to turn over a Mythos artifact (which vanishes in the real world upon awakening). Simple offers to "help spiders" are not enough; Atlach-Nacha has children beyond counting.

The encounter ends when the offer is completed and Atlach-Nacha leaves, or when the Old One becomes annoyed and devours the offending investigators (**Sanity** Loss 1/1D8 **Sanity** to be eaten in the dream). No matter what occurs in the dream, the investigators return to their bodies, having spent less than an hour in Atlach-Nacha's realm.

SOURCES

Recommended items are in **bold**.

FICTION

Atlach-Nacha first appears in Clark Ashton Smith's story "**The Seven Geases**." Chaosium's *The Book of Eibon* includes that story, as well as Lin Carter's "The Descent into the Abyss" (which mentions the Gray Weavers and their leader Tch'tkaa), Laurence J. Cornford's "The Offspring of the Tomb" (which introduces the *Papyrus of Atlach-Nacha*), and Ann K. Schwader's poem "Rede of the Gray Weavers (Fragment)"

Brian Lumley's short story "Recognition" introduces the former British cult of Atlach-Nacha.

Busch's *The Widow's Kiss* comes from James Ambuehl's story "Atlachnaphobia," which is available online at the Temple of Dagon site: <http://www.templeofdagon.com/writers/james-ambuehl/atlachnaphobia/>.

The purple spiders of Leng are from H.P. Lovecraft's "**The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath**," as are Lelag-Leng and Nyarlathotep's remark to Randolph Carter. The idea of the spiders of Leng as the Dreamlands' first inhabitants came from Kevin O'Brien's "Jellied Spiders," available on his site: <http://medbherenn.com/jellied-spiders.html>.

Omm is mentioned in Robert E. Howard's collection *Conan the Adventurer* and appears in Marvel Comics' *Conan the Barbarian* #13 ("Web of the Spider-God," written by Roy Thomas, January 1972) and *Savage Sword of Conan* #197 ("A Night in Messantia," written by Roy Thomas, May 1992). Steve read about him in *The Appendix to the Handbook to the Marvel Universe* <http://www.marvunapp.com/Appendix/omm.htm> though, as well as Zath (<http://www.marvunapp.com/Appendix/zath.htm>) and Harpagus (<http://www.marvunapp.com/Appendix/harpag.htm>). Zath appears in L. Sprague DeCamp's *Conan and the*

Spider God. Harpagus appears in *Savage Sword of Conan* #207–210 (March–June 1993) and in *Conan: Lord of the Spiders* #1–3 (March–May 1998).

The medieval Swiss legend was shamelessly lifted from Jeremias Gotthelf's 19th-century novel *Die Schwarze Spinne* (*The Black Spider*).

The East Anglian reference is to M.R. James' classic story "**The Ash-Tree**," found online at <http://gaslight.mtrooyal.ab.ca/jamesX05.htm>.

Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's story "Shisei" (translated as "The Tattooer" or "The Tattooist") involves a tattoo artist who tattoos a geisha with the image of a spider, and becomes her first victim.

Fritz Leiber's ***Our Lady of Darkness*** introduces Mauricio Santos-Lobos and his book *The Spider-Glyph in Time*. We've expanded on both. A number of Fritz Leiber's stories, science fiction as well as horror, involve spiders, occasionally as symbols for female genitalia.

GAMING

Children of Atlach-Nacha and the Daughters of Atlach-Nacha first appeared in Chaosium's ***Spawn of Azathoth***, created by Keith Herber. The Daughters also appeared in Oscar Rios' "Obsideo Villa (The Haunted Villa)" in *Malum Umbra or Shadows of Evil: The First Cthulhu Invictus Companion*, along with the Roman Atlach-Nacha cult.

Chaosium's *Dreamlands* supplement (in various incarnations and titles) introduced the identity of the Children of Atlach-Nacha as Leng spiders, the spell lost with Ib, the idea of Lelag-Leng being a Tcho-Tcho village, and the sinister source behind Lelag-Leng's silk.

Chaosium's ***S. Petersen's Field Guide to Creatures of the Dreamlands*** introduced the Barton-Doehny expedition and the hypothesis that Atlach-Nacha might have been a human sorcerer at one point. It's also the source for *The Dream of the Spider*, and *the Awakening* and "The Spider, in Four Ancient Texts."

Triad Publications' *Whispers in the Dark* includes Michael Szymanski's scenario "Web of Memory," which involves an Atlach-Nacha cultist, fun with the spell Body Warping of Gorgoroth, the Spawn of Atlach-Nacha, and a Leng Spider.

The spell Mimesis of the Gray Weavers is from *Cthulhu Dark Ages 1st* edition, pages 101–102).

The Watchful Guardian appears first in *Midnight Harvest* by Owen K. C. Stephens, released by Rogue Genius Games.

Tom Lynch's "**Reeling Midnight**" in *New Tales of the Miskatonic Valley*, published by Miskatonic River Press, introduced the Avatar of Atlach-Nacha and its Spawn, along with the idea of Atlach-Nacha sitting at the center of the universe.

OCCULT

The spider-riding charm is from Gay, David E. "Anglo-Saxon Metrical Charm 3 against a Dwarf: A Charm against Witch-Riding?" *Folklore* 99, no. 2 (January 1, 1988): 174–177. doi:10.2307/1260455. In the realm of modern occultism, key texts are Kenneth Grant's *The Ninth Arch*, Michael Bertiaux's *Voudon-Gnostic Workbook*, and *Dyslexicon* issue 8.

FILM AND TV

The clockwork spider is based on the device from Guillermo del Toro's film *Cronos* (1993).

Giant spiders have a long history in film, with the more notable examples including *Tarantula* (1955), *Earth vs. the Spider* (1958), *Beast From Haunted Cave* (1959), *Son of Godzilla* (1967), *The Giant Spider Invasion* (1975), *Kingdom of the Spiders* (1977), and *Eight-Legged Freaks* (2002).

The "Baron Spider" episode (1966) of *Ultra Q* has a giant tarantula.

Curse of the Black Widow (1977) is the only were-spider TV movie we are aware of. 🕷



THE SPAWN OF TLECHE-NAKA

Discovered in 2009 on the Bonn-Grant Expedition to the *Serranía de los Yarigués* in Colombia, in the vast, unexplored regions of the the Yarigués Mountains, *Acanthogonatus comis* is a first for a spider-species in that it lives in a hive-like community.

Dr. Steffen Bonn named the spider *comis* (“friendly”) due to its cooperative nature, but this title is misleading. Despite being small the spiders readily bite, and secrete a paralyzing poison that can be deadly in large doses.

This odd, small, purple-green spider lives and works in colonies of up to a thousand, assembling huge webs across gaps up to 30 feet wide amidst the thin trees on the mountainside. The spiders build a strange structure Bonn dubbed the *web hive* beneath each of these nets, by spinning piles of webs and shaping them into networks of tunnels. This hive is used to store food captured in the communal web, lowered to spiders who work below.

Young are bred and hatched within the web hive, but most individuals in the community work the web. When the web hive is threatened, the spiders retreat to it. Larger specimens defend it by leaping or dropping from above to sting and poison.

The spiders’ webs are extremely strong and the creatures are prolific spinners. Uniquely, they can group-spin, forming shapes and webs together in complex weaves that take on unusual patterns.

Usually, a newly discovered species is a slight change from its genus, and is difficult to identify with certainty. *Acanthogonatus comis* was obviously novel. Bonn collected dozens of samples (stung twice and made ill once) to transport back to Columbia University in New York, many more were pinned and stored for later examination.

Pinned samples of the spiders were also sent upon request to the Bishop Museum in Hawaii, the Smithsonian

A NEW THREAT FOR DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

By DENNIS DETWILLER

Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., the Australian Museum in Sydney, and the Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Live samples were sent at request to Duke University and University at Berkeley.

DR. STEFFEN BONN

Dr. Steffen Bonn is professor of entomology (specializing in arachnology). He taught insect biology at Columbia University in New York from 2003 until his mental collapse and disappearance in 2010. He now lives on the streets of New York, quite mad. His homeless colleagues call him the "Spider Man."

Before his rapid mental breakdown, Bonn was a respected member of the entomology community. He was considered an up-and-coming star due to his discovery of *Acanthogonatus comis*, a dramatic new spider species.

In 2007, several papers concerning the so-called "spider mountains" in Colombia caught Bonn's attention. In these areas, largely unexplored, seven independent spider species had been identified in a 34-year period. Still, no one had gone very deep into the area. Bonn hoped to change that. He spent almost a year attempting to find a sponsor for an expedition before he was approached by Grant Industries, a materials science company interested in bio-materials derived from spider silk. A modest budget was set aside and Bonn assembled a team of four.

They found *Acanthogonatus comis* and it seemed Bonn's fame within the entomological community was assured. That was when the voices started.

To his friends, Steffen Bonn underwent a dramatic psychotic episode in May 2010, from which he never recovered. Usually jovial, he became sullen and withdrawn. He failed to appear either socially or at class for several weeks. Finally the biology department head, Dr. Lillian Tish, confronted him on the steps of the Butler Library. A fight ensued.

Bonn was arrested for assault after repeatedly striking Tish with a stick which turned out to be the handle of a

mop, sawn in half. Bonn was incoherent and filthy, and as police moved him off campus he began to struggle and fling garbage from his jacket, screaming, "I AM STAYING HERE."

The police finally subdued him. He was summarily fired, and after several attempts by the HR department to set up psychological assistance, written off.

Bonn was released from the local lock-up after a friend bailed him out, but the friend quickly found that Bonn was "not himself." Bonn's contemporaries last saw him five years ago, as he wandered down Broadway from the midtown lockup. He never returned to the university or his apartment.

Since that time Bonn has lived on the streets of New York city. But he's not alone. He hasn't been alone in years.

DR. BONN'S CONDITION. OBSESSION AND GOALS

Bonn is a madman, infected by a spider-god that he knows as Tleche-Naka. It has gone by many names. He is covered in boils and sores from the numerous bites from his "kiddies," the spiders which call his body home.

Bonn has a web hive in his coat. He keeps stuffed stacks of rotting garbage (which draws flies readily) and various other "edible" rotting bits in his clothing. The spiders see him as a movable feast. When there is not enough food, they eat Bonn. He doesn't mind.

At first glance, Bonn looks unremarkable among the homeless of the city. He is filthy, he stinks, and he wears a huge army-surplus jacket covered in

stains. His hair is grey and wild, matted with dirt and other fluids, long dried.

Those stripping him of his coat (at his screaming protest) will see hundreds of tiny, glistening purple spiders rush out of the light down his body to the safety of the shadows beneath him (**SAN** loss: 0/1). Such an assault is likely to cause an attack by the Spawn.

Something is wrong with Bonn's right arm. He keeps it beneath his coat and seems overly protective of it. Occasionally, as he uses his clumsy left hand, he seems pained by his right. Those exposing and examining it find it green and black, the skin sloughing off from poison, and the muscle tissue beneath pregnant with huge fluid-filled tumors as big as a fist (**SAN** loss: 0/1D4). If the arm is lit with a flashlight, inside can be seen the sleeping, twitching bodies of spiders the size of a ferret (**SAN** loss: 1/1D6).

If Bonn is ever cornered or forced to expose his arm, he will dig his fingers into it, suffering 2 **HP** damage but freeing three Heralds of Tleche-Naka, who fight to defend him.

Bonn makes his home beneath a bridge overpass near Riverbank State Park in northern New York City. This bridge has long been avoided by the local homeless population, who know it is covered in webs and spiders. The "entrance" is a darkened hole through a metal support girder into a black expanse about the size of a baseball diamond, with a low, sloping ceiling that thrums with traffic.

The influence of the spider-god has drawn every spider in a twenty block

DR. STEFFEN BONN, Gateway for the Spider-God

STR 11 **CON** 11 **DEX** 6 **INT** 14 **POW** 15 **CHA** 6
HP 11 **WP** 15 **SAN** 0

SKILLS Accounting 22%, Anthropology 41%, Art (Sketching) 30%, Drive Auto 24%, History 51%, Melee Weapons 30%, Science (Arachnology) 76%, Science (Biology) 55%, Stealth 45%

WEAPONS Syringe (Melee Weapons skill), damage 1D4-2; see INJECTION. Spawn of Tleche-Naka Swarm (see below). Heralds of Tleche-Naka Release (see below).

INJECTION Bonn's syringe contains a thick, greenish-purple liquid which is pulped spawn of Tleche-Naka. On injection, this guarantees the victim a *hune* infestation.

radius to the overpass, where they spin prolifically, coating Bonn's hide-out in vast sheets of webbing. Anyone attempting to enter must make three **Luck** or **DEX** test, whichever is better, or step into webbing. That means 1 **HP** damage and loss of 0/1 **SAN** from being swarmed by conventional spiders. (The *comis* stay exclusively with Bonn.)

Bonn walks without concern around the webs, which he seems to understand on a level not obvious to anyone else.

Agents making their way to Bonn's "home" find a pile of bones—small animals such as dogs and cats and rats—as well as a heavily marked expanse of cement covered in often-erased and redrawn chalk patterns. Here Bonn works on the problem of the "door for the mother." The spiders show him patterns and he spends much of his day attempting to make the shapes "work" within the circle.

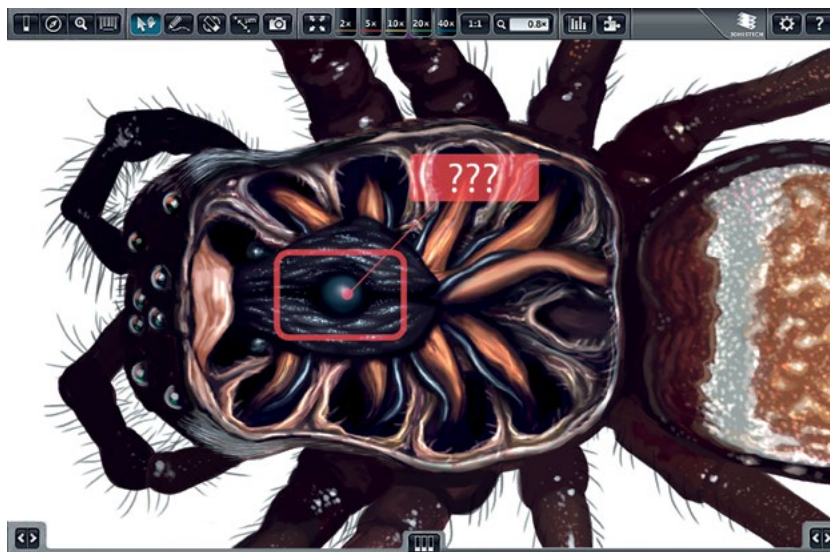
THE SPAWN OF TLECHE-NAKA

The spiders Bonn discovered are not normal. They are creatures spat from the womb of Tleche-Naka, the spider-god, a Great Old One who exists beyond the limits of our dimension. In areas where the dimensional membrane is thin, this being can protrude her influence into our world, but only in tiny amounts, and then at great cost. These spiders mark the earliest stages of such a dimensional bleed.

These beings weave patterned webs to mark spaces for more of their kind to come through. But their true purpose is to find and infect conscious beings in our world, and influence their behavior for the good of the spider-god. Only through humans can the spider-god breach through into our world.

FOLKLORE AND HISTORY

These spiders are well known by the people of Colombia as *las arañas malignas* ("evil spiders"). Most backwater people who know this legend consider it a fact and actively guard against small purple spiders, while those few



who know of it in civilized areas consider it simple folklore. Still, almost all Colombians know stories of spider bites leading to madness and obsessions with patterns. There have even been Colombian horror movies based on the idea (such as *Los filamentos de la locura*, or "*Webs of Insanity*," 1999, produced by Film Pavo).

BIOLOGY

The tiny spiders appear natural, if unusual and perhaps unique, in color and build. But deeper examination reveals oddities in their physiology. The brain is much larger than usual and split into two sections, and the heart and carapace are much larger than other spiders of that size.

Dissection by an Agent or ally with **Science (Biology)** 30% or better finds another oddity: in the center of the brain sits an odd, minuscule, black, glass-like fleck. This unique item defies conventional examination. (An Agent who has **Unnatural** 15% or better can learn that in some "hypergeometrical" texts such a structure is called a *hune* and is thought to have psychic properties.) Through this dangerous, non-terrene material a creature may be controlled by Tleche-Naka. Touching this item with bare skin incurs a **Luck** roll. If it fails the agent is "infected" and is subject to the **INFLUENCE OF TLECHE-NAKA**; see page 22.

The spiders' toxin is also unique in that it is both neurotoxic and cytotoxic. It causes both paralysis and tissue destruction in every kind of animal. This venom is highly unusual in chemical structure and is still not fully understood. However, the effect is well understood, though dependent on the amount of venom injected.

A single spider bite leaves a small ulcer and causes numbness. With a dozen or so the situation becomes much more dire. Suffering more than 100 can easily mean a horrific death.

BEHAVIOR

Acanthogonatus comis is unlike any other spider species in its behavior. It clusters in groups and moves in organized patterns more like an ant than a spider. When a member of a group is threatened, the group acts in force.

Likewise, construction of webbing is done in groups with concerted actions seemingly organized to some unknowable plan. The geometric patterns they create in their webs are unique and incredibly complex.

When left for a time in a new location, *Acanthogonatus comis* set upon the construction of a web and then a web hive, in that order. If there is a ready food supply, the group begins to breed and spread out as far as possible. If not, the group remains small and waits.

ATTACKS

When threatened, or driven to act by Tleche-Naka, the spiders' methodology is always the same. They swarm and sting. During the attack, one or more of the spiders burrows *into* a bite, where it dies and then rots.

Dozens of such "breaches" can occur in a large attack, but eventually—after the spiders achieve their appalling goal—the attack ceases. Once a spider insinuated beneath the skin rot, it exposes its *hune*, the non-terrene matter that is a conduit to the Great Old One. This opens a connection between the victim and Tleche-Naka, warping the victim's perceptions to become more in line with the spider-god.

An Agent attacked by the Spawn of Tleche-Naka must roll a **CON** test every minute or suffer 1 **HP** damage and make a **Luck** roll. This continues until the Agent clears the spiders off, either by being submerged in water or making *three* **DEX** tests in a row (two if assisted by others).

An Agent who loses more than 4 **HP** in this manner must make a **CON** test at -20%. If it fails, ulcerating wounds cause an additional 1D6+2 damage and the Agent is paralyzed for 2D20 minutes, awake and breathing but unable to move or act. Once the victim is paralyzed, the Spawn of Tleche-Naka enter the nose and mouth to burrow closer to the brain. Since the agent is conscious, this costs 2/1D6+1 **SAN**.

The spiders attack until the victim fails a **Luck** roll. That means the *hune* has been implanted.

HERALDS OF TLECHE-NAKA

Grown in humans infected by *hunes*, these are the next step in the Spawn of Tleche-Naka. They are *huge spiders*, obviously non-terrene, approximately nearly a kilogram to nearly two kilograms in mass. Just seeing one costs 1/1D4 **SAN**. Each contains up to a dozen *hunes* which are the source of their size and power, and which manage to make them defy earthly physics by sim-

HERALD OF TLECHE-NAKA, Death on Eight Legs

STR 2 **CON** 6 **DEX** 18 **INT** 12 **POW** 12 **CHA** n/a
HP 4 **WP** 12

ARMOR 1

SKILLS Athletics 99%, Dodge 85%, Stealth 35%

ATTACKS Leap and Bite 45%, damage 1D6+1+poison (see **POISON**)

Attach and Burrow* 25%, damage 1D6 per turn (see **BURROWING**)

POISON Poison triggers a **CON** test at a -20% penalty. If it fails, the victim is paralyzed for 1D4 turns. If it fumbles, paralysis lasts 2D20 minutes.

BURROWING Attaching and burrowing is possible only following a successful Leap and Bite attack. On the second turn of this attack, the Herald has a chance to inject a *hune* in the victim. The victim must make a **Luck** roll. If it fails, the victim is infected.

SANITY LOSS 1/1D4

ply *existing*. Spiders of their scale should not exist, much less be able to *breathe*.

They are aggressive, and have multiple, intelligent looking eyes which seem to plot and plan. They *always* split up. If a group is found, the vanguard of the group attempts to distract the victims, followed by a wave of the tiny Spawn of Tleche-Naka, while another Herald escapes to continue its mission.

THE INFLUENCE OF TLECHE-NAKA

A human infested with an alien *hune* falls under the influence of Tleche-Naka. Each step of this process causes the victim to fall further and further under the influence of the Great Old One. The only way to stop this process is to find and remove the embedded *hune*; otherwise, eventual mental collapse is guaranteed.

Finding and removing the *hune* requires a **Surgery** roll. If the spiders managed to embed it in the victim's brain, the roll is at -20%. If the roll fails, either the *hune* remains in place or the victim suffers 1D10 damage and loses the same amount from any one stat of the Handler's choice. If the roll fumbles, the *hune* remains in place and the victim takes that damage; or else the *hune* may be removed but the victim suffers 2D10 damage and loses the same amount from a single stat.

If at any time the victim drops to 0 **SAN**, skip immediately to Step 4 of the process.

VOICES (STEP 1)

Every time the victim is left alone somewhere quiet, he or she begins to hear ghostly, whispering voices (**SAN** loss: 0/1). Victims quickly learn to turn on radios or televisions or to stay in busy areas to avoid the voices. Sleep also seems to calm them, though a victim must make a **Sanity** roll to get a good night's sleep despite the voices.

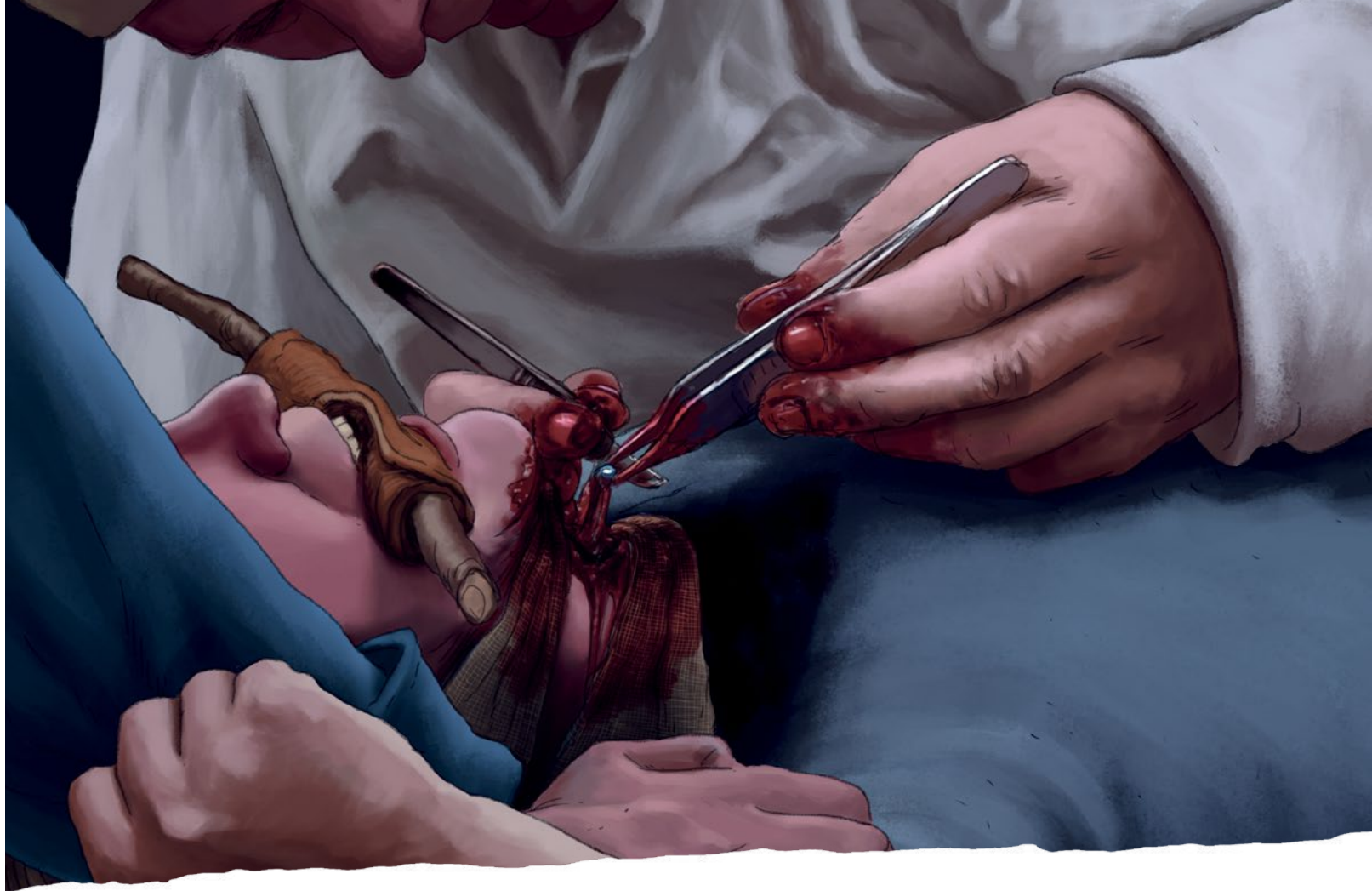
Anyone with **Psychotherapy** 30% recognizes the symptoms of schizophrenia.

What the voices say is unintelligible at first, but after the second failed **Sanity** roll (which moves the victim on to Step 2) the victim hears them clearly chanting: "Across the black gulf, the spinner moves ever closer. Sing for its freedom, serve it, and live forever."

DREAMS (STEP 2)

By now the victim hears the chant constantly, but soon it becomes an interminable drone that the victim hardly even notices. Even sleep does not help. In dreams the victim sees a black expanse hung with ghostly green-white webs the size of steel bridge supports. A repetitive noise, liquid and clicking, is heard.

On the third night of these dreams, the victim sees *it*: a huge spider, the



size of a dump truck, spinning a vast web across the endless black (**SAN** loss: 1/1D6). The victim wakes, screaming. This happens night after night until the victim either goes either temporarily insane, permanently insane, or develops an indefinite insanity. Then the victim moves on to Step 3.

SPIDERS (STEP 3)

At this point the victim begins to seek out spiders and collect them. Strangely, the spiders seem compliant, even *drawn* to the victim. Some victims *eat* said spiders, which do not struggle or sting when consumed.

The victim begins to draw patterns, circles marked with odd geometric shapes, each taking 1D6 days to complete. After finishing each pattern the victim must make a **Luck** roll while

considering his or her handiwork. If it fails, the victim loses 1/1D8 **SAN**, seeing *through* the wall of this dimension into the black gulf beyond. This keeps happening until the victim goes permanently insane and moves on to Step 4.

COLLAPSE (STEP 4)

At this stage the victim is at 0 **SAN** and is fully under the sway of Tleche-Naka. Boils begin to sprout near the *hune* infection site. Soon they burst with a half a dozen Spawn of Tleche-Naka (**SAN** loss: 1/1D6), who then breed normally, quickly forming a colony.


Anyone in this state is beyond recovery. Infected thoroughly by the *hune*, the victim serves the Great Old One forever.

OTHER LEADS

The mystery need not begin and end with Bonn.

GRANT INDUSTRIES: Who knows what horrors Grant Industries, the sponsors for the discovery of the new spider species, have perpetuated with their live samples?

THE OTHER SAMPLES: Many other samples of this lethal spider, including live ones, were sent all over the globe, making the possibility of outbreak simply a spider bite away.

THE MOUNTAINS OF COLOMBIA: The initial infection of alien spiders continues unabated on the slopes of the Yariguíes Mountains. How far has that infection gone towards opening a gate to the black gulf in which the weaver spins its web? 

THE VORTIRON

A MYSTERIOUS
MANUSCRIPT FOR
CALL OF CTHULHU

By AARON VANEK



This large volume, roughly 16 inches wide and 18 inches tall, contains at least 300 sheets. The binding appears anthropomorphic: human skin. The worn, yellowed pages are handwritten in tight, fine black ink with complex symbolic illustrations. It lacks an index, table of contents, and page numbers. Everything besides the title is written as a cryptogram.

This book, *The Vortiron*, can be found in a typical *Call of Cthulhu* location: a dusty, dilapidated bookstore, Miskatonic University Library's Special Collections, lying open on a table inside a "repellent wooden building which blinked with bleared windows from between two huge leafless elms near the foot of a rocky hill."

The original text is in Latin. Cracking the code requires a hard Idea roll or a hard **Latin** roll, whichever is lower, attempted once every 24 hours.

After solving the cipher, the decoder must completely decode the book. This takes 50 hours minus 1/5 the decoder's **INT**; halve the time if the decoder has 25% or more skill in **Latin**. A Latin translator need not break the code; once the trick is revealed (a relatively simple transposition), others can work with it.

The Vortiron outlines spells for summoning, commanding, and banishing half a dozen monsters of the Cthulhu Mythos, at the Keeper's discretion. Each spell is long, complicated, and *al-*

ways requires a blood sacrifice: human beings or parts of human beings. Many magical formulae emphasize the need for virgin blood, and the prose goes into great detail about the estrus and menstrual cycles of different mammals, primarily humans. One ritual, "Walk Unseen to the Outer Lords," purports to render someone temporarily invisible to extra-dimensional beings if the caster's face is powdered with the crushed bone-dust of a sacrificial victim. The lengthy process of learning any spell from the Vortiron is the same as that detailed in the *Call of Cthulhu Keeper's Rulebook*.

Except it's all fake. The entire book is a hoax. The cover is really sheepskin, and chemical analysis of the ink and paper indicates it was created in the late 1800s. The Vortiron is not referenced in any occult literature. None of the spells work. This realization will likely occur at a very inopportune moment.

If Investigators attempt to cast anything from the Vortiron, the Keeper should secretly roll dice and describe, in gripping detail, the charge in the air and the prickling of hairs on arms, the smell of fear from the victim, and the power throbbing through their veins. Furthermore, the greater the **Sanity** loss from murdering a victim to catalyze any spell, the more the casters should *believe* it almost worked. Desperate for validation after investing so much effort—perhaps even permanent

Power—it simply *must* work! Maybe one of the others in the circle was unfaithful, or more sacrifices are needed. If driven insane, the individual is convinced the spell only lacks one more thing or one more victim.

The Vortiron was written by a forgotten accountant in the late 19th century. He fancied himself a poet and liked to study ancient texts. He thought he was guided in dreams by the Crawling Chaos. It doesn't matter. He thought he could achieve power through service to beings only vaguely described in other books. He spent years creating his magnum opus: a unique item that, to any casual bystander or low-**Sanity** investigator, resembles a key to unlocking Secrets Man Was Not Meant to Know.

Cosmic horror does not always require a glimpse into another dimension or an encounter with an indescribable entity. Sometimes merely revealing humanity's desperation for control is enough.

THE VORTIRON

Sanity Loss: 1D3 (3D6+3 if gruesome rituals were cast and the book is then revealed as a fraud)

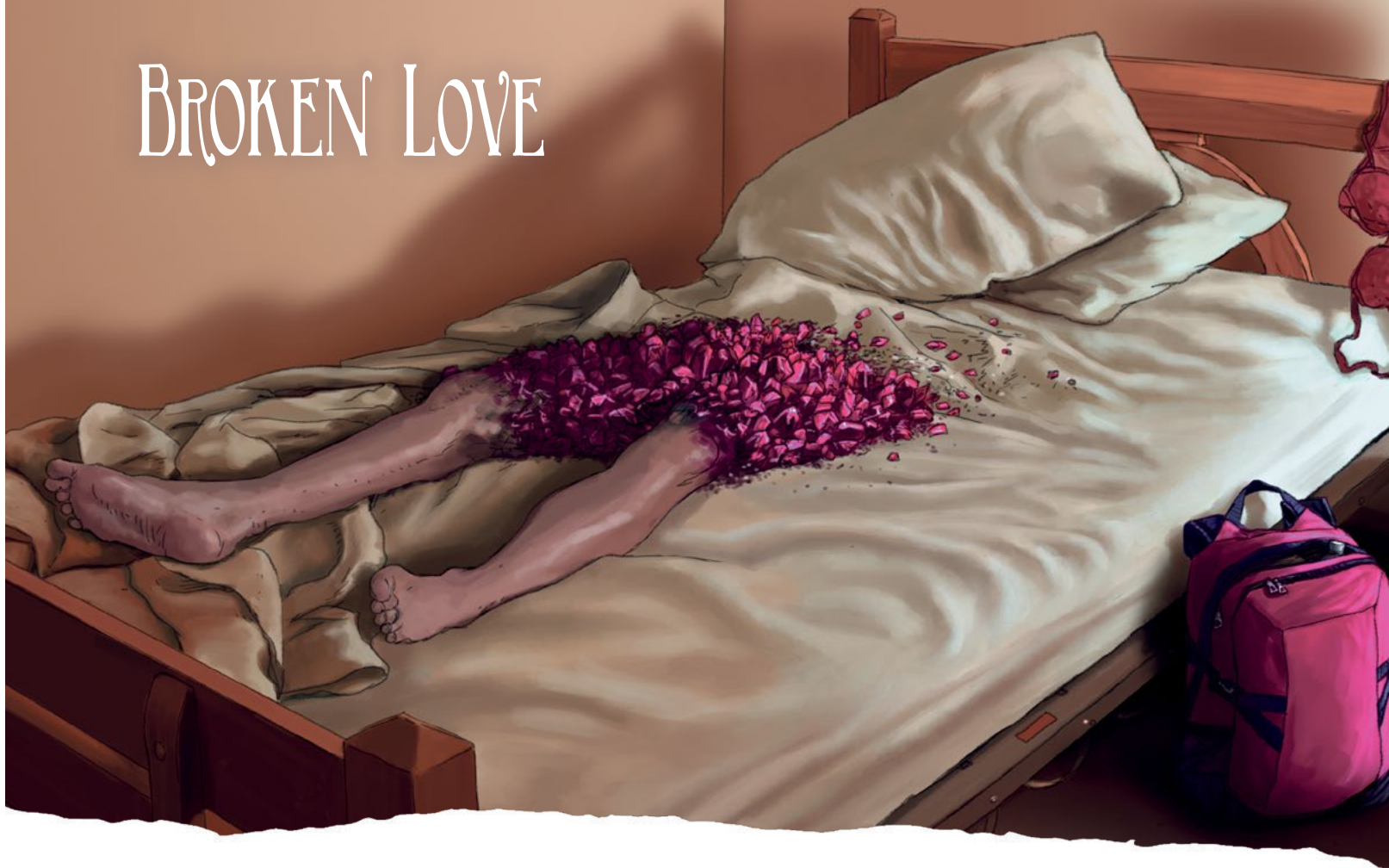
Cthulhu Mythos: +1 percentile

Mythos Rating: 6

Study: 2 weeks after decoding

Suggested Spells: Whatever the Keeper desires, all fake ☹️

BROKEN LOVE



“The victim has been tentatively identified by the caregiver, relation unknown, as Joshua Henry, male, 17. A neighbour reported being awakened by screaming in the house and then the sound of someone leaving via the back door.”

Outside the house, a paramedic leans over the sewer grate, vomiting. Another is just exiting the front door with scrubbed hands, and angles right for the ambulance’s supply of heavy-duty antiseptic. The victim’s inconsolable caregiver—too old to be a mother—is on the lawn, yelling at the ambulance. The paramedic with the antiseptic recommends that whoever goes in has gloves and a facemask, at least. “Shouldn’t we get some Hazmat suits? In case?”

The house is a single-story home, proudly middle-class before the neigh-

bourhood rusted and dried up. Inside, the path to the stairs down and the back door winds between teetering structures of books and boxes and kitsch. There’s an overwhelming cloud of dust throughout.

What has been found of the victim is in a basement bedroom. Among the detritus of a masculine teenager’s room is a pink-and-black backpack, a bra, and a small woman’s t-shirt. Inside the backpack is a soda bottle filled with gin and student ID for one Keele, Rebecca.

Two bare legs lie on the disheveled bed. They become a pile of crystalline chunks starting at mid-thigh. The smaller bits and pieces can be reassembled like a 3D jigsaw into ectomorphic male hips and torso, ending at the waist. The upper half is missing.

A FALD OF FERROR
FOR CALL OF
CFALUHU

BY CHRIS HUTH

POSSIBILITY 1: TRAP

Somehow, Henry and a group of his friends got hold of a real, live, working grimoire. The grimoire could be connected to a cult in your campaign, or maybe they stumbled upon the remains of a cult neutralized by other Investigators. Last weekend, they tried a spell from the tome and sealed their fate. The spell included a magical trap, a defense against other sorcerers, which slowly “infects” the caster’s **POW**. Using **MP** or making **POW** or **Luck** rolls—beginning with casting the trap-spell—triggers the effect. When triggered, the victim must make an extreme **POW** roll or lose 2D10+10 **POW** to the “infection.” If all the victim’s **POW** is “infected,” then the victim dies as Henry did—crystallized flesh exploding outward from overloaded chakras. The Investigators are breathing in the vaporized remains of Henry’s torso.

The means of identifying the specific trapped spell, curing the still-living victims, using the crystalline remains as a source of extra **MP**, or applying the a similar trap to other spells are left to the Keeper’s discretion.

POSSIBILITY 2: RESURRECTION

Henry died two years ago, the victim of a hit-and-run just outside his front door. His grandmother, a shut-in and hoarder unable to conceive of life without him, dug out the books and alembics she had been taught to use in her strange youth and attempted to restore Henry to life. It didn’t quite stick.

School records show regular absences due to illness, as the Resurrection effect broke down and his grandmother had to reprocess his “essential saltes” before resurrecting him again. The cycle has grown shorter each time. Henry’s memories of this whole process are fuzzy, and this time he hid the symptoms from his grandmother because he was concerned about getting laid.

He broke in half mid-coitus, his midsection reverting to “saltes.” His girlfriend fled into the night with a blanket, his awfully lively torso crawling after her.

His grandmother will stop at nothing to get all his remains back and attempt to restore him again. The torso-thing stalks the neighbourhood, mad and ravenous for the rich protein that keeps its cells from reverting.

POSSIBILITY 3: CONTAGION

The paramedic was right to worry about contamination. Henry died from exposure to an alien virus, one that crystallizes terrene organic matter. Anyone handling the crystallized remains suffers 2D10 poisoning damage, and becomes infected unless the victim makes a hard **CON** roll. An infected victim suffers 1D10 poisoning damage every day, becoming dehydrated, then desiccated, and finally crumbling into powder.

Earlier that week, a group of Investigators pacified a small local cult guarding a subterranean prehuman laboratory. These Investigators accidentally infected themselves with the virus. As they fled in search of medical help, it overcame one of them in transit. The stricken Investigator died and ended up in a local pond, where Henry and his friends picked up the virus during a nighttime drinking jaunt.

The matter in Henry’s upper half became a fine powder which his girlfriend accidentally scattered through the room. Keele, having fled in shock from Henry’s sudden disintegration, may spread the virus to anyone she comes in contact with. A cure, or at least a more selective means of sterilization, may be found in the original laboratory if the Investigators’ tracks are reconstructed. ☸



SECONDARY INFECTIONS

“Secondary Infections” can be played as a one-shot scenario, or as the opening installment of a campaign that will eventually lead Delta Green agents to the Tcho-Tcho community based in Chicago and detailed in *Delta Green: Countdown* and the *Handler’s Guide for Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game*. Though nominally set in New York City, it could easily be transplanted to any other U.S. city with a sizable Southeast Asian population and where the role of the Tcho-Tchos has not yet been explored—in other words, *not* Chicago itself.

This scenario specifically addresses themes of immigration, assimilation and race, and the Handler is encouraged to approach those themes with some sensitivity. As Cthulhu Mythos villains, the Tcho-Tcho hew pretty close to ugly racial stereotypes; but handled carefully, they can serve as a distorted reflection of America’s troubled history of racism and anti-immigrant prejudice.

AGENTS' INFORMATION

The Agents are alerted to a strange occurrence at Manhattan’s Lincoln Center, during a performance of the New York Philharmonic. It was opening night of Zacharie Trembel’s Third Symphony (nicknamed “Indochina”), two days ago. A few minutes into the symphony’s second movement, a short, elderly Asian man in the audience began shouting angrily and had to be forcibly removed. His outburst was in an unknown language, but his face (recorded by a music blogger with a video camera and posted to radio station WQZR’s website) triggered facial-recognition software used by Delta Green. The man looks identical to a prominent cultist photographed on a failed operation in Cambodia in 1969, but does not seem to have aged a day since that time. Facial-recognition software is never 100% reliable, but it was enough

A SCENARIO FOR DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

BY PAT HARRIGAN

OPTIONAL: THE GREEN BOX

If the Handler desires, the Agents' case officer or cell leader sends them the key to a Queens storage facility: a so-called "Green Box" with the detritus of past operations. It is a 12 ft square room (nearly four meters on a side) with a large number of plastic containers draped with dusty sheets. A burnt-out light bulb hangs overhead in a wire cage.

An unopened bottle of whiskey sits in the middle of the room, facing the door. Two cots with crumpled blankets are arranged along two walls. A space heater, unopened in its box, sits near the cots. In a corner stand six empty 10-gallon tubs that smell of gasoline.

Three of the plastic containers contain items of interest:

CONTAINER 1: A dashboard-mountable police scanner.

CONTAINER 2: One pump-action shotgun, one .45 handgun, and one .22 handgun (all unfired), as well

as boxes of ammo for all of these and for the guns in container three. Also, eight disposable cellphones (circa 2009) still in the packaging, and 22 eight-hour top-up cell phone cards from a company that went out of business three years ago.

CONTAINER 3: About \$46,000 in cash, some in loose bills but most of it in stacks of \$1,000, wrapped with paper bands from Chase Manhattan bank. This money is traceable to a New York bank robbery six or seven years ago. If the Agents start spending it, the serial numbers might trigger alerts among various law enforcement agencies. This container also holds three compact pistols, Taurus .380 ACP semi-automatics (unloaded and in need of a good cleaning); two Uzi submachine guns (loaded but unfired and clean); and one Mossberg pump-action shotgun (partly loaded, fired without cleaning afterward, very dirty).

to warrant investigation. The Agents are sent to discover the identity of the man, determine whether he poses or indicates an unnatural threat to the public, neutralize it if so, and cover up the threat and any crimes they may have committed to neutralize it.

HANDLER'S INFORMATION

French composer Zacharie Trembel was a student of Debussy and Ravel, and highly influenced by Bartok's ethnomusicology. In 1924, Trembel traveled to French Indochina (modern Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) to study indigenous Southeast Asian music. He documented several hundred songs, folk tunes and musical techniques in a series of notebooks. Unknown to him, one of the melodies was actually a Tcho-Tcho ritual in worship to the Great Old Ones. In 1936, Trembel incorporated elements of this ritualistic chant into his Third Symphony. Trembel died of natural causes in 1937, before the symphony could be published or performed. The symphony and all of Trembel's post-1930 output was believed lost during World War II when the Germans invaded France and looted

his work, along with much else, from the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Trembel's notebooks, and the manuscript of the Third Symphony, were recently rediscovered in a Quebec archive by the French Canadian composer-conductor Brian Schielle, an artist with a long association with the New York Philharmonic. It turned out Trembel's manuscripts, along with musical material from other composers, had been smuggled out before the German invasion by a French Canadian music lover, Francis Armand.

Schielle premiered the symphony at the New York Philharmonic as an offshoot of Philharmonic Music Director Alan Gilbert's recent New Music series *Contact!* Further performances are scheduled throughout the next three weeks, paired with contemporaneous works by Bartok and Stravinsky.

Because of the "Indochina" subtitle, the premiere was reported in a local Vietnamese-language newspaper, accompanied by a photograph of Trembel from the 1920s. One reader was immediately concerned: an ancient Tcho-Tcho sorcerer named Aleka, who remembered Trembel from the composer's tour of Indochina. Aleka knew Trembel had documented Tcho-Tcho

music, although he assumed the documents had long since been lost.

Attending the performance, Aleka was dismayed at the beginning of the second movement, when clearly recognizable Tcho-Tcho melodies began to appear. Unable to restrain his temper, Aleka stood and harangued the orchestra and audience in the direst terms, but in an incomprehensible language. This outburst was witnessed by Alex Vosman, a music blogger documenting the premiere, and by Le Van Bao, astagehand who, to his horror, knew exactly who and what Aleka was.

Vosman followed Aleka to the lobby as he was being evicted and tried to speak to him, but was unable to understand a word. He sent some of the footage of the old man's tirade to WQXR radio, who posted it on their website under the title, "A Differing Opinion?" Aleka took a taxi back to his apartment.

Le Van Bao was a childhood survivor of atrocities perpetrated by Aleka during the Vietnam war, including the slaughter of his family. When Le saw the old man alive and well, something snapped. He left his post and followed Aleka's cab.

Aleka began preparing a magical revenge, but found that his mind was no longer up to such rigors. All of his

rituals failed. A day later, Le Van Bao enacted a revenge of his own by murdering Aleka in his apartment. The day after that, the Agents arrive.

STRUCTURE

The scenario will likely follow a four-movement structure. Like a symphony, it can have many possible variations.

MOVEMENT 1 (RONDO): Day 1. The Agents begin their investigation and discover Aleka's body.

MOVEMENT 2 (SCHERZO): The next few days. The Agents may learn much about the Tcho-Tchos and about Aleka. Ji-hi-ma, an ancient sorcerer in league with Aleka, blames younger Tcho-Tcho for Aleka's murder and launches a campaign of terror against them. ZaaJ Cai, the gang leader, attempts to placate the mad wizard but to no avail. The Agents may see loathsome Dark Ones (described on page 45) lurking in shadows, and find Chinatown exploding around them as Ji-hi-ma turns his unnatural powers against the Tcho-Tcho street gang.

MOVEMENT 3 (ADAGIETTO): Investigating Aleka and Ji-hi-ma thoroughly enough, the Agents may find themselves in the Plateau of Leng.

MOVEMENT 4 (SONATA) AND CODA: The Agents confront Ji-hi-ma, perhaps at his lair or perhaps in a cataclysmic attack at Lincoln Center. The Master whom Ji-hi-ma serves arrives on Earth. Dénouement and exeunt.

THE POLICE

Depending on how the Agents interact with them, the police could be a hindrance or a valuable resource. Delta Green agents may not care much about search warrants, probable cause and due process, but obtaining fingerprint analysis and arrest records is substantially easier if they can work with the cops, perhaps by impersonating social services or even Centers for Disease Control investigators. But every interaction with police raises the Agents' profile and

Sometime around 1600 CE, in the mountains of Nguyen Dynasty Vietnam, two young Tcho-Tcho tribesmen named Aleka and Ji-hi-ma became apprenticed to the centuries-old Chinese sorcerer Ban Lun. Through blasphemous and bloody sexual rites, Ban Lun initiated the two young men into the worship of the Great Old Ones. Over centuries, Aleka and Ji-hi-ma grew into fearsome sorcerers in their own right, terrorizing large swaths of Southeast Asia.

Unfortunately for all concerned, Ban Lun had unknowingly contracted syphilis from one of his earlier victims, and he passed the bacterium on to Aleka and Ji-hi-ma. The magic that unnaturally extend the sorcerers' lives also slowed the progress of the disease, and it was more than two centuries before the first lesions began to appear on Ban Lun. The untreated disease spread slowly but steadily throughout Ban Lun's body, causing hideous deformities and eroding his mind. By the early 19th century, Ban Lun was a literally drooling idiot, and his uncontrolled magical abilities proved a danger to himself and everyone around him.

Eventually, Aleka and Ji-hi-ma removed their beloved Master from Earth altogether, installing him in a monkish cell on the plateau of Leng. Because natural laws operate differently on the plateau, the Master can remain there theoretically forever, without growing any worse or any better.

Aleka and Ji-hi-ma refused to admit to themselves or to each other that they too were infected, and as a result, they soon began to exhibit the same degradations that had befallen their Master. By 1974, when they immigrated to America along with dozens of other Tcho-Tcho, their minds had begun to suffer severely.

risks exposing their actions. Try to remain flexible, and have the police to respond in realistic ways, always remembering that this scenario is ultimately about the Chaucha, not the NYPD.

LINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION

Either during their briefing or during the operation, the Agents' case officer or cell leader recommends they contact linguist Felix Trinh (see **FELIX TRINH** on page 46) at Columbia University.

Trinh can report that Aleka's recorded speech (from WQXR or Vosman) is a confused mixture of Vietnamese, weird forms of other southeast Asian tribal languages, and outright gibberish. He can make only the most hesitant of translations. Perhaps Aleka was saying: "[inaudible] skinless people hate [incomprehensible]. Song of our

teacher is for the student. Time [?] will destroy the present year. Bless the children of [Zhao Na Fan?]. The [sex/gender] of [Cha Ba Na Gu Ra?]. Iä! Iä!"

Agents with **HUMINT** at 50% or higher or **Psychotherapy** at 30% or higher may detect a slurring in Aleka's speech, suggesting drunkenness or perhaps the effect of a stroke.

ATTENDING THE SYMPHONY

Agents who attend the next Trembel performances find nothing unusual about the score. It was mildly innovative in the early 20th century but sounds conventional today. The "Asian" elements are innocuous. Importantly, there is nothing supernatural about the music at all. Aleka's objection to the score is solely because he considers it blasphemous.



The symphony is scheduled to run for several more performances over the next few weeks; arrange the performance schedule in the most dramatically interesting way. Conductor Brian Schielle hosts hour-long question-and-answer sessions before each performance, at which he may answer in broad terms questions about the score and Zacharie Trembel. If the Agents request a one-on-one interviews with Schielle—he’s busy; this requires either a **Charisma** test or flashing a badge—he may give them access to Trembel’s notebooks. (See **BRIAN SCHIELLE** below.)

Performances of Trembel’s symphony will be notable by the presence of increasing numbers of young Chaucha men, intrigued by the hype. First only two or three attend at a time, but eventually their numbers grow into the dozens. This does not go unnoticed by the press or concertgoers. The Philharmonic’s usual attendees stop coming

at the same time that local news agencies report a classical music fad among young Asian New Yorkers.

Anyone attending the performance can tell the young men have no real interest in the music per se. They are mildly disruptive before and after the performance—though not enough to get thrown out—and are visibly bored throughout most of the 45-minute symphony. Only the opening ten minutes of movement two (the scherzo), which contains the Chaucha ritual music, catches their interest. They become completely attentive during that period and remain so for some while afterward, waiting for a recurrence of the music. Only at the very end of the fourth movement, during a very brief reprise of the Chaucha melody in the coda, do they seem to jump to attention again. At the end, they applaud enthusiastically.

Eavesdropping on the Chaucha conversations, before or after the performance, can reveal the reason behind

their interest in the performance. (See **THE TCHO-TCHO GENERATION GAP** opposite.) The young Chaucha think it a source of ethnic pride that “their music” is being used in such a high-cultural way. Certainly they intend to tell their friends about it.

Soon, bootleg recordings of the symphony begin surfacing in the Chaucha community. The Agents may start to hear it coming from car windows or as background music in Song Ma Jasmine Beauty.

BRIAN SCHIELLE

Little information on Zacharie Trembel is available online. Fortunately for the Agents, French Canadian composer/conductor Brian Schielle is the world’s leading authority. Schielle is a mildly handsome man in his late 50s, with thinning blonde hair and glasses. He speaks French and English fluently.

He is artist-in-residence at the Philharmonic, and has brought copies of many of Trembel's notebooks and manuscripts with him (all written in French). Shown the proper credentials, Schielle allows Agents to examine the papers, although it would be quicker to simply ask him.

Schielle knows nearly all the information about Trembel outlined in **HANDLER'S INFORMATION**, on page 28. Crucially, he does not know anything about the specific ethnic music upon which Trembel drew for the Third Symphony. Trembel's diaries do not give a specific ethnic identification.

(Trembel calls the Tcho-Tcho "the Sognafan people," and seems to be rather titillated by the sexual rituals they perform to appease their earthquake gods). An Agent with **Unnatural** at 20% or higher recognizes them as Tcho-Tcho.

Schielle knows Le Van Bao by sight and can identify him from the security footage (see **FINDING LE VAN BAO** on page 37). With a **Persuade** test or the proper credentials, Schielle will work with the Lincoln Center's business offices to grant Agents access to Le Van Bao's employment records, which include his current address.

FINDING ALEKA

Several paths can lead the Agents to Aleka's apartment:

Searching for his fingerprints at the Philharmonic is a waste of time. Hundreds of people pass through every day. Even if the Agents confirm a print is the old man's, it has no matches in any database.

No member of the Philharmonic staff had ever seen Aleka before. He paid for his Family Circle seat with cash at the box office. An usher remembers that he was slightly smelly, like swamp water.

THE TCHO-TCHO GENERATION GAP

Known in some circles as the "Chaucha," the Tcho-Tcho community never found a strong foothold in New York. The other Asian communities in the city, long established, hated the Tcho-Tcho and did everything they could to drive them out. The Tcho-Tcho who stayed were inclined to keep their heads down and assimilate. They first settled near Chinatown in Manhattan, where their ethnic ambiguity helped them blend in among the majority Chinese and minority Vietnamese, Burmese, Malaysian and other Asian populations. Some even gave up the old ways of worship entirely.

Today, Chinatown's middle-aged and elderly Chaucha are low-income workers, living in extended family groups. Priced out of lower Manhattan in recent years, they mostly live in the outer boroughs, except for a few who still run Chinatown businesses. Many suffer from aberrations represented by low Sanity scores, and they will fight to protect their family, but they are generally not trained killers. Devious Agents might find a rationale for arresting or deporting large groups of middle-aged and elderly Chaucha, although this may draw unwanted media attention. That's the context in which the Chaucha live; but these older, more stable Chaucha do not figure much in this scenario.

Today's younger Tcho-Tchos are more of a threat. Many embrace the worship of the Great Old Ones, though more as cultural identifiers than a living religion. They have more passionate, immediate interests in guns, drugs and money. Crime is endemic among Chinatown's young Chaucha, who run in criminal gangs. A handful, embracing the old ways, utilize unnatural rituals for untraceable murders and other crimes too difficult for mundane means. Some of the younger members have

never even tasted human flesh, and even the most senior members of the Chaucha mafia, like ZaaJ Cai, have done so only in moderation, fearing that they will turn into old-fashioned religious zealots.

To the young Chaucha gangsters, Aleka and Ji-hi-ma are quaint relics. Aleka in particular is seen as a sort of amusing mascot, fed and clothed by the community and tolerated when he goes on his periodic rants about the corruptions of the modern day. The Chaucha keep him out of trouble as best they can, and bring him meals from the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant, although his intake of human meat is strictly limited to monthly visits to the restaurant. No one except the Chaucha gang leader ZaaJ Cai takes Aleka and Ji-hi-ma at all seriously.

New York's Chaucha gangsters have no interest in Western music besides hip-hop, so Aleka's trip to the Philharmonic remains unknown to them until the Agents start asking questions. At that point, young Asian men start to attend Trembel's symphony in greater and greater numbers. (See **ATTENDING THE SYMPHONY** on page 29.)

Chaucha gangsters dress like other Asian street gangs, with blue jeans and white shirts being common. They bear many distinctive tattoos: Chinese and Vietnamese written characters, dragons, skulls, mouths of sharp teeth, elephants and phallic elephant trunks. They dress to cover up most of the tattoos when they attend the symphony, but they still stand out from a mile away.

Agents can discover much of this information via Google and by interviews with police, Felix Trinh, non-Chaucha neighbors and, if he really starts running his mouth, Mua Tong (see **NPCs** on page 46).



The footage of Aleka's tirade was shown on radio station WQXR's website. It was shot by music blogger Alex Vosman, who maintains the blog "Unresolved Dissonance," on which the footage was originally posted. This information is easily discoverable with a few minutes on the Web. Agents who contact Vosman can see the complete footage, in which the security guard escorting Aleka says he will walk him down the block to get a taxi. Talking to that Philharmonic guard can confirm that Aleka entered a Yellow Cab, which drove him away.

Security camera footage from outside Lincoln Center shows Aleka being escorted out of the building but does not give coverage of the taxi rank. However, Agents notice a casually-dressed, middle-aged Asian man (Le Van Bao) exit the building a few moments after Aleka and the guard and follow them.

The Yellow Cab driver who drove Aleka from the Philharmonic can lead

the Agents to Aleka's building in Chinatown, though not to his exact apartment. The driver remembers that a middle-aged Vietnamese man found him the day after the incident, asking what the driver knew about the old man, which was nothing. The driver recognizes photos of Aleka and Le Van Bao. He says Aleka stank.

Dashcam footage of Aleka can be obtained from the cab company with official credentials or a **Persuade** roll.

Showing Aleka's photo around Chinatown eventually leads to his apartment. Some older Chinese and Vietnamese residents refuse to talk to the Agents at first. If pressed, they say Aleka is one of the disgusting "Chaucha" people. They say everyone knows the Chaucha are cannibals and aren't even fully human. They have no further details to offer, unless you think it's time to introduce Su Miao (see page 35).

Other residents, particularly business people, are more helpful. Unwashed and eccentric, Aleka is a familiar neighborhood figure. Neighbors frequently saw him wander obliviously into traffic, and sometimes stand alone on the street, shouting gibberish to no one in particular. They can also tell the Agents that Aleka is often seen playing *xiangqi* (Chinese chess) in Columbus Park with another old man. (See **JI-HI-MA IN THE PARK** on page 37.)

Aleka is well-known at a local newsstand where he buys pornography. A local grocery delivers to him twice a week; the delivery boy can show Agents where he lives.

THE CRIME SCENE

Aleka lives on a third-floor walkup near the intersection of Mosco and Mott streets in Chinatown. There is a foot-massage parlor on the ground

floor. A security door with buzzers and an easily-pickable lock leads to a narrow stairway and apartments on the second through fourth floors.

Aleka's apartment consists of one bedroom/living area, a tiny bathroom, and a kitchenette. Aleka's body lies near the kitchenette entrance in a pool of congealed blood that stretches across the entryway. Agents must step over it to investigate.

Le Van Bao knocked at the door like any other visitor. When Aleka opened it, Le pushed in and stabbed the old man half a dozen times in the chest and neck with a utility knife. Le dragged the body inside only far enough so that it would not block the door. Aleka passed out almost immediately and died within minutes. Le Van Bao did not search the apartment, so his fingerprints are not on any surfaces—but they are on the exterior door frame, if the Agents think to look. (Or if they ask the NYPD homicide detective assigned to the case, and give her a reason to cooperate.)

Aleka wears dark slacks and a long-sleeved dark shirt. In his pockets the Agents can find only a small wad of crumpled ten- and twenty-dollar bills, half a pack of cigarettes, and a key ring with three keys. (The keys fit the security door downstairs, Aleka's apartment door, and the storage area downstairs—see **THE STORAGE AREA** on page 34). He has no identification of any kind. Agents who examine the body should be given the appropriate information from **THE AUTOPSY** (page 34), with corresponding **SAN** rolls.

The apartment is small and unclean. Clothes both clean and dirty lie scattered. Overflowing ashtrays sit everywhere, and much of the wooden furniture is scarred by cigarette burns. The kitchen garbage can is filled with empty food packages, many of them takeout containers from the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant. Everything smells dank and somewhat fecal. Vietnamese-language newspapers are scattered about. Sifting through them deliberately, Agents can find the short article about Trembel's symphony that started this whole business.

In Tcho-Tcho, using Vietnamese characters.

Study time: days. Unnatural +4%, SAN loss 1D6.

This thick, leather-bound notebook is battered, stained, water-damaged and generally ill-used. The text concerns abstract and disturbing theology, mad ravings and magical rituals, mixed with obscure designs and symbols, all written in a shaky, smeared handwriting and frequently illegible.

Aleka used the Vietnamese alphabet to transliterate the Tcho-Tcho language, which initially makes the notebook appear to be utter nonsense. An authority such as Felix Trinh (see **NPCs** on page 46) can eventually translate it.

Aleka wrote a sort of autobiography, obscurely describing some of the information listed in **THE THREE SORCERERS** on page 29, in however much detail the Handler chooses. The more recent text discusses Aleka's disgust with America and all of its "skinless people" (Caucasians). He spews invective against the younger generation of Chaucha, who are no longer religiously observant and who are only interested in low pursuits such as money, drugs and sex. He wishes that they would all be eaten by the Vua Sâu ("King Worm"), but laments that Vua Sâu no longer answers his call. A translator like Felix Trinh assumes "King Worm" is a metaphor for spiritual power over death and decay.

In his prime, Aleka was an accomplished sorcerer, and the notebook describes many sacred rituals and promises terrifying potency for working them correctly. Most are unusably or fatally inaccurate, but they hint at the terrible abilities that Aleka once possessed.

RECOMMENDED RITUALS: A great many, but they contain errors, are incorrectly notated, or lack vital information: Awaken the Worm, Beget the Dark Ones, Consume Spirit, Create Gate, Dominate Body and Mind, The Leng Road, Obscure Memory, Withering. The confused instructions are no less mysterious than their names.

MASTERING THE LENG ROAD

At the Handler's discretion, one ritual may be scrupulously correct: The Leng Road, a ritual to utilize a gate to the otherworldly Plateau of Leng. Aleka travelled to Leng frequently and could not risk forgetting the technique. (See **OPTIONAL: THE GATE TO LENG** on page 40.)

A reader making a real effort to study the notebook can master the Leng Road ritual by succeeding at a roll of **Foreign Language (Vietnamese)** at a -20% penalty, and then *failing* a **Sanity** test. The attempt takes about four hours. The ritual may be studied with a translator to make the skill test, in which case both translator and pupil must attempt the **Sanity** test. Failing the **Sanity** test gives the student the ability to work the Leng Road ritual, and costs 1D6 **SAN** as the student's mind opens awfully to the certainty of other realities approachable by psychically opening holes in space-time. (See **THE LENG ROAD** on page 47.)

Once learned, this method of travel can be taught to others within a few hours. Each student must fail a **Sanity** test to master the ritual, and loses 1D6 **SAN** when the method comes clear. A gate to Leng lurks in Aleka's storage room. (See **THE STORAGE AREA** on page 34.)

If the Handler does not wish to allow travel to Leng, of course, the Leng Road ritual is as defective as the rest.

CHINATOWN

- A Ji-Hi-Ma's Building
- B Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant
- C Columbus Park
- D Aleka's Apartment (The Crime Scene)

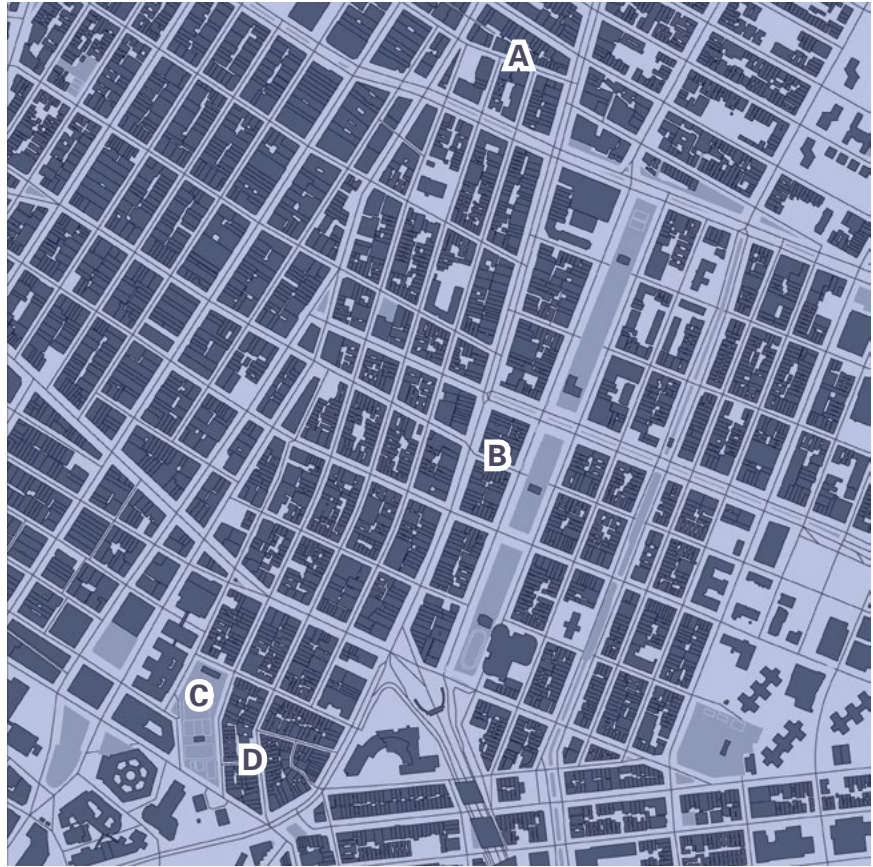
On a card table that takes up much of the kitchen space, Aleka spread his magical paraphernalia: small clay humanoid figurines, twists of hair, and pieces of paper with strange symbols. A small brass bowl and knife set, engraved with Vietnamese words of worship to the Great Old Ones, hold a foul-smelling burnt residue.

On the cluttered kitchen counter, a half-finished cup of take-out coffee sits on Aleka's notebook (see **ALEKA'S NOTEBOOK** on page 33).

The grimy refrigerator holds simple groceries as well as takeout containers filled with half-eaten, often spoiled, pork dishes. There is also a severed human foot in plastic wrap, which Aleka stole from Song Ma Jasmine Beauty. Bite marks on the foot match Aleka's dentition. With access to police records, the foot itself can eventually be traced to 16-year-old Vietnamese-American runaway Nguyen Anh Dung, who was reported missing by his parents in Connecticut three weeks ago.

A careful search by an Agent with **Search** 50% or better finds a small leather bag stuffed forgetfully behind a container of weevil-infested flour. The bag holds ancient brittle hair, yellowed fingernail clippings, and bloodstained old scraps of leather and parchment, and has a long, leather loop as if for wearing around the neck. This was Aleka's protective Self-Warding bag (see page 44).

There are no books, no television, entertainment system, or any other kind of electronic entertainment. However, there are a great number of Asian pornographic magazines, both gay and straight, in the closet and on the nightstand and floor. Most of it inclines toward the violent end of BDSM, al-



though all of it is legally obtainable on the streets of Chinatown. It has all seen much use by the vigorous old man, and many pages are spattered with Aleka's blood.

An expensive *xiangqi* set sits on a low table near the door, obviously out of place. This was a gift from Ji-hi-ma.

Blood stains the bedclothes, identifiable as Aleka's with a DNA test.

STORAGE AREA

In the basement of Aleka's apartment building he kept a padlocked storage closet, the key to which can be found in his pockets. The storage area, three meters deep by two wide, is strangely empty except for a strange geometric pattern drawn in black ink on the far wall. This is a gate to Leng (see page 40), and is recognizable as such by anyone who has deciphered and studied Aleka's notebook or learned the Leng Road ritual.

THE AUTOPSY

If the city authorities learn of Aleka's murder, they will take possession of the corpse and perform an autopsy within twelve hours. This is what they discover—or what the Agents discover, if they open the old man up first.

The first incision releases an overpoweringly foul stench, like feces and rotting flesh. Anyone in the room not wearing some sort of respirator must make a **Constitution** test to avoid vomiting.

Aleka was an elderly man of Southeast Asian (possibly Hmong) descent, apparently 80 or 90 years old. Nearly 75% of his body is covered in raised white lesions characteristic of advanced syphilis, and much of the rest—especially the groin and armpits—exhibit seeping, open chancres. His genitals are almost completely eaten away—urinating must have been excruciating. **SAN** loss, so far, is 0/1 for all witnesses.

Still visible on the chest is a complex network of geometric scarring, colored a faded blue, apparently the

result of deliberate and careful cutting and dyeing of the skin. Much of the pattern is distorted or eaten away by lesions, so that the overall pattern is not reproducible. Agents who have encountered a gate to Leng or read about them in Akela's notebook see similarities.

Inside the body it is even worse. The brain, skull, and internal organs are riddled with syphilitic caries. It is by far the most advanced case of syphilis any examiner has ever heard about, and there is no natural explanation for how it could have advanced this far without killing Aleka long ago. **SAN** loss: 0/1.

Microscopic tissue examination finds that the syphilitic bacterium is still active; the *Treponema pallidum pallidum* spirochetes are still reproducing and deforming Aleka's dead cells. **SAN** loss: 0/1D4.

Left alone, the corpse will continue to deform, until in a few days it is an unrecognizable mass of hard yellowish protrusions and seeping, bubble-like lesions. (**SAN** loss at that point: 0/1D4.) One hopes it will be incinerated as a health hazard long before then.

The cause of death was not the disease, but the result of a windpipe perforated by a puncture wound consistent with a medium-sized knife of moderate sharpness. The old man drowned in his own blood.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

Aleka had been growing increasingly forgetful lately, and no longer regularly wore his Self-Warding bag. As a result, his syphilitic infection grew worse, to the point where it became dangerously infectious. Many people who came into close contact with Aleka over the past few weeks became infected, although few of them are aware of it yet. The security guard who escorted Aleka from the Philharmonic is certainly infected, as are several patrons who sat next to Aleka. Local grocery and newsstand employees, Ji-hi-ma's apartment runners, and Chaucha gang members may also be infected. Any Agents (or anyone else) handling the corpse without wear-

ing personal protection must make a **Constitution** test or become infected.

The infection manifests in 2D4 days as one or two small, painless sores or a non-itchy rash at the site of the infection, which disappears within two days. If left untreated, secondary symptoms will show up within a week, and require immediate treatment. It acts as a disease with a **Speed** of 1D6 days, no penalty to the **Constitution** test, and damage of 1D6.

It is plausible that over the course of the investigation, Agents begin to hear about a new strain of fast-moving syphilis moving through the city. Events progress even faster once Ji-hi-ma creates his infectious Dark Ones (see page 45), who may well infect Chaucha victims with syphilis during their attacks.

Despite its speed, the disease can be treated normally by antibiotics and is not further spread by touch. But the outbreak should serve to worry the Agents, especially if they themselves are infected.

OTHER ANOMALIES

A search of city housing records reveals that Aleka's apartment is described as a storage area. No one is listed as living there, and there is no record of rent paid or taxes collected, nor of a kitchenette or bathroom being installed. This is housing fraud, and the landlord could potentially be investigated for it, but this will be a tedious and difficult process. Much of the information is not online, requiring multiple visits to the Office of the City Registrar at the City Clerk's Office (conveniently located just west of Columbus Park). But if the Agents persist and have **Accounting** and **Bureaucracy** skills at 40% or better, they should be rewarded with the information that the building is owned by "Billy Wong," whose place of business is a six-story tenement building on Bleecker. (See **Ji-HI-MA'S HOME** on page 37.)

In Aleka's building, the supervisor's apartment is empty and has not had a resident for years, if ever. Ji-hi-ma, posing as Billy Wong, employs

undocumented Chinese immigrants to maintain and collect rent at Aleka's apartment building. That is also how Ji-hi-ma delivered spending money to Aleka. Agents who investigate ownership records of Aleka's building, or who follow workers doing maintenance on it, could be led back to Ji-hi-ma's building on Bleecker Street. (See **Ji-HI-MA'S HOME** on page 37).

SU MIAO

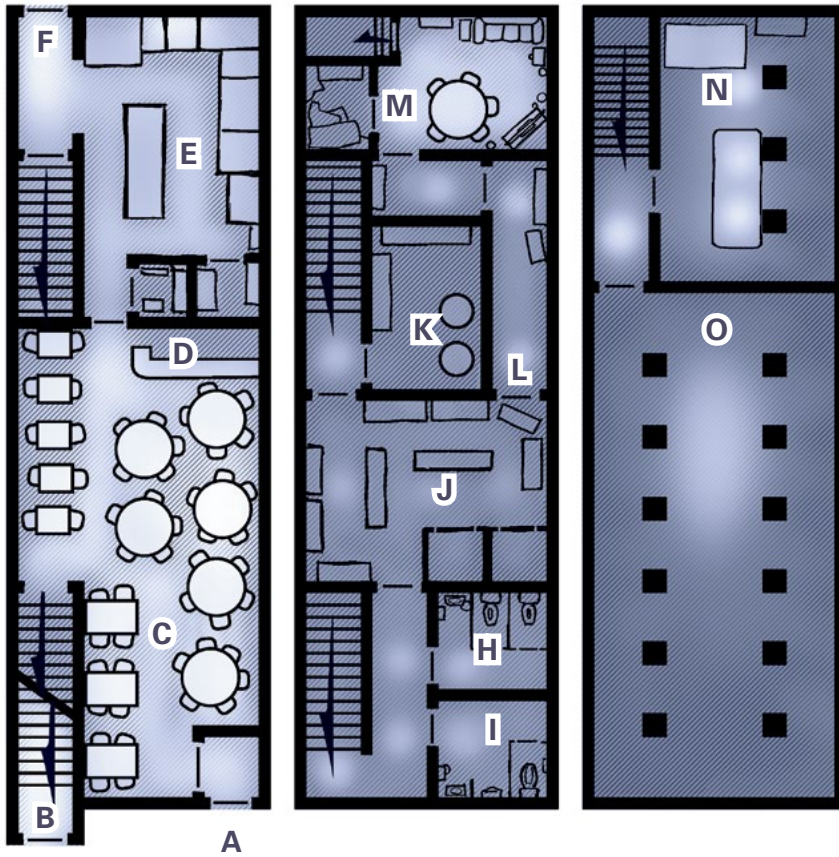
Su Miao is a Chinese woman around 80 years old, who has lived in Chinatown since she immigrated to the U.S. with her family in 1947. She is retired, having worked as a home health care worker for her entire adult life. She has outlived two husbands and has five middle-aged children, plus many more grandchildren and great-grandchildren, in all walks of life. Still in robust health, she spends much of her day walking through the neighborhood, shopping and drinking tea with neighbors.

Su Miao never encountered the Tcho-Tcho personally while in China, but she remembers older family members' stories about cannibalism and murder. During the small wave of Chaucha immigration in the 1970s, Su, working on the instructions of more elderly residents, organized a campaign to keep the Chaucha from settling in the neighborhood. This was largely successful, although not enough for Su's taste.

She despises the new wave of young Chaucha gangsters, and misses no opportunity to dish dirt on them to the Agents. Her distaste is centered only on the Chaucha—she views young Chinese, Vietnamese and other Asian criminal elements much more indulgently.

Su Miao is well known among Chinatown residents. Agents may encounter her on their own, or be referred to her in the course of their inquiries. She is at ease among all ethnic groups except Chaucha, and speaks English and several Chinese dialects fluently. She is reserved but not unfriendly, and does not engage very strongly with the Agents unless they convince her that they are seriously

SONG MA JASMINE BEAUTY RESTAURANT



- A Front Entrance
- B Stairs to Upper Floors
- C Dining Room
- D Cash
- E Kitchen
- F Back Entrance
- G Closets
- H Women's Restroom
- I Men's Restroom
- J Storage Room
- K Boiler Room
- L Concealed Door
- M Back Room
- N Freezer Room
- O Ritual Area

attempting to do something about the Tcho-Tcho problem.

Once convinced, she enthusiastically helps in any reasonable way. She may ask the Agents to do things beyond their remit, such as having large numbers of innocuous Chaucha family members evicted and relocated. Su Miao will push the Agents to move against the Chaucha as far as she thinks she can, short of recommending actual violence.

Still, she can be a valuable resource for the Agents if approached properly. She is intelligent, resourceful and thoroughly plugged into the Chinatown community. Su can provide crucial leads to the Agents, especially if they seem to be stuck or confused. If the Agents need a way to track down Ji-hi-ma or to get Le Van Bao to safety, for example, Su Miao may have heard a thing or two that can help. Even better, she is essentially unknown to the Chaucha community, and so is not in any real danger from them unless the Agents draw her to their attention.

SONG MA JASMINE BEAUTY RESTAURANT

Song Ma Jasmine Beauty is located a few blocks from Aleka's apartment in Chinatown, near the intersection of Chrystie and Broome streets. The restaurant is open at all hours, even on religious holidays, which makes it very difficult to scout surreptitiously. What's more, the signage outside and inside, as well as the menus, are entirely in Vietnamese. Only Chaucha and adventurous, ill-informed outsiders dine here. Vietnamese and other Asian neighbors regard it with the same racist disdain as anything related to the Chaucha.

Asian Agents have some chance of blending in visually, but the Chaucha are an insular community and they know their own. Regardless, visitors are treated with bland courtesy by staff and customers. The food is primarily Vietnamese, with some other Southeast Asian dishes, and is mediocre but inoffensive. Everything in the restaurant and kitchen is proper and above board,

and clean enough to pass inspection with the health service.

Unknown to health inspectors, a concealed door in a back storeroom leads to a basement where Chaucha criminal business is conducted. A few (2d4) Chaucha gangsters are present in the basement at any given time. Zaaj Cai (see page 46) may be present if the Handler wishes.

From the basement, a locked (but not concealed) door leads to a further sub-basement, where the Chaucha perform magical rituals. A table holds magical paraphernalia and a freezer is full of dismembered human meat. Except for ritual nights, there is generally no one in the sub-basement.

All Chaucha conversations within the basement and sub-basement are conducted in a slangy form of Vietnamese; a native speaker can follow along, but any other listener must roll **Foreign Language (Vietnamese)** at a 20% penalty. Electronic surveillance of Chaucha gangsters uncovers much evidence of criminally actionable offenses, especially if the Agents manage to get a recording of the periodic blasphemous rituals in the sub-basement. (Listening to those rituals costs 0/1D4 **SAN**—it's hard to tell exactly what's going on, but it's enough.)

Recordings illegally obtained in this way are no good for prosecu-

tion and are looked on poorly by law enforcement, but they can allow the Agents to learn about the quarrel with Ji-hi-ma. (See **Ji-HI-MA'S TACTICS** on page 38.) At the Handler's discretion, some discussion of Trembel's symphony might occur. One of the Chaucha might even play a bootleg recording of it, secretly taken at the most recent performance.

FINDING LE VAN BAO

After killing Aleka, Le Van Bao fled in panic. He ditched the bloody knife in a garbage can a block away from the crime scene, and the Agents can find it there if they search the neighborhood garbage cans before the next garbage pickup in two days. The knife has been inadequately cleaned and several of Le Van Bao's fingerprints can be found on it. Le Van Bao has a minor police record for drunk and disorderly violations, and is listed in the police database at his current address in Brooklyn.

Agents reviewing Lincoln Center's security camera footage from the night of Aleka's outburst can spot Le Van Bao following Aleka out of the building. Brian Schielle and other Philharmonic employees can confirm that Le is employed there, although he has not been seen since the night of the incident. Le's current address can be obtained from Philharmonic's business offices.

Le can also be spotted on footage from Chinatown business security cameras and, with a **Luck** roll, on police traffic cameras, going in and out of Aleka's apartment building. Le does not live in Chinatown, so local residents do not know him, but with a **Luck** roll, someone in the neighborhood remembers an almost-hysterical man of Le's description hailing a taxi the day of the murder. From this clue the agents might track down the taxi driver, who can lead them to Le Van Bao's apartment in Brooklyn. Dashcam footage from this cab can also provide Le's picture.

If the Agents do not track down Le, and assuming they do not take pains to obscure evidence at and around the crime scene, New York police will

find and arrest Le within a few days of the body's discovery. Hours after that, word of the arrest will filter through the Chaucha community, and Chaucha gang leader Zaaj Cai will make plans to abduct Le from his cell and offer him to Ji-hi-ma as a peace offering.

The Agents might choose to hide Le or spirit him away, perhaps by enlisting the help of Su Miao (see **SU MIAO** on page 35); the Handler can adjudicate their effectiveness.

LE VAN BAO

Le Van Bao is a Vietnamese man in his late 40s, a sad, quiet man who has worked in various service jobs for most of his life. He was married briefly in his early 20s, but the marriage did not work out, and he has no children. Except for a few drunken incidents over the years, he's avoided police attention. For the last year he has been working at a well-paying Stagehands Union job at Lincoln Center. He is a dependable employee but has no close friends among the staff.

Le has fond childhood memories of his parents listening to concert music, especially by French composers such as Berlioz, Debussy and Ravel. All his life, he has maintained a casual interest in the music his parents loved. Much stronger, however, is the memory of how his parents died. Christian evangelists to rural Vietnam, Le's parents were prepared to deal with unexpected religious beliefs, even those of little-known ethnic groups. Nothing prepared them for the Tcho-Tchos.

Before the eyes of their terrified and traumatized son, Le's parents were ritually slaughtered, cooked and devoured by a Tcho-Tcho tribe under the direction of their high priest, Aleka. Only the sudden arrival of a (CIA-briefed, Delta Green-infiltrated) platoon of American soldiers spared the boy from the same fate.

After a spell in various internment camps, Le was repatriated to the United States, and he has lived his life quietly in New York ever since—until the day he poked his head out from the wings to investigate a disturbance

in the audience. He saw Aleka in the lobby, ranting like a fool in a nonsense language and looking not a day older than the day he killed Le's parents. Le stuck a utility knife in his knapsack and followed Aleka. The next day, he killed the old man, and he has not returned to his job since.

If confronted with Aleka's murder, Le confesses at once. He is eager to tell his story to the Agents, and does not resist or object to arrest. Le feels completely justified in killing Aleka, but cannot help but feel ashamed and guilty nonetheless.

Once in the justice system, Le is completely defenseless. Unless the Agents take steps to protect him, he will be in Zaaj Cai's hands in days.

Ji-HI-MA IN THE PARK

If the Agents seek Ji-hi-ma in the park near the concrete chess boards, they may spot him and even question him. Ji-hi-ma answers all questions, pretending to be an innocent old man who only knows Aleka from their games. He claims that they formed a bond because they were from adjacent Vietnamese villages. If the questioning takes a nasty turn, Ji-hi-ma enacts the Obscure Memory ritual and tries to slip away; if that succeeds, the Agents no longer remember his face or any details of the conversation. If cornered, Ji-hi-ma uses the Escape ritual to vanish to his home. (Witnessing this costs 0/1 **SAN**.)

Ji-HI-MA'S HOME

Ji-hi-ma's mind is less damaged than Aleka's was, and he has taken more precautions to hide his whereabouts. In addition to Aleka's building, he owns, under the name "Billy Wong," an entire six-story tenement building on Bleeker Street. All of the units are empty except the caretaker's unit on the first floor, where Ji-hi-ma lives. The other units are well-maintained but empty except for the occasional kidnap victim. On a basement wall is drawn a gate to Leng, like that in Aleka's storage locker. Inside a wall in Ji-hi-ma's apartment is



hidden the fetish that is keyed to his Escape ritual. When he performs the ritual, he appears near that wall. If he ever has to flee, first he breaks open the wall to retrieve this fetish. (See **ESCAPE** on page 47 for details.)

When the Agents come calling, Ji-hi-ma is home only if the Handler is prepared to end the scenario at that point. With nowhere else to go with his Escape ritual, Ji-hi-ma could easily be killed if cornered at home. If he is not present, Dark Ones (see page 45) lurking in the cellars and closets soon tell him of the intrusion. In this case, Ji-hi-ma will not return home, and instead will move up his plans, sleeping rough somewhere in the city for a night or two, protected by Dark Ones and preparing his tactics.

Ji-HI-MA'S TACTICS

Unless the Agents make a specific effort to hide Aleka's body, it will soon be discovered, and the police will begin investigating. Within hours, news of Aleka's death reaches the ears of Ji-hi-ma. Even if the Agents hide the body, Ji-hi-ma soon notices Aleka's absence and assumes the worst: that the upstart, unfaithful young Chaucha are to blame. Ji-hi-ma commences a campaign of terror against the young Chaucha. The Agents and many innocent bystanders may be caught in the crossfire.

As soon as Ji-hi-ma becomes aware of Aleka's murder, he performs a ritual called "Awaken the Worm." (See **AWAKEN THE WORM** on page 47.) A subterranean monstrosity moves into the area. Agents begin hearing reports of unusual (but mild) seismic activity in New York and New Jersey, and may even feel a tremor or two.

Nothing sways Ji-hi-ma from his conviction that the younger Chaucha killed Aleka. His syphilis-addled brain cannot be reasoned with. And while the disease has left him as ruthless as ever, it has also damaged his sense of time—Ji-hi-ma is bent on revenge, but may spend hours or days performing inessential tasks, such as preparing dinner, before he chooses to strike again. In his right mind, he prefers to attack at night, but the Handler can calibrate his actions with the Agents' progress and time events for dramatic impact.

Ji-hi-ma begins his campaign of terror by spawning a large number of Dark Ones each night. (See **BEGET THE DARK ONES** on page 47.) He deploys them as spies almost immediately, but the first batch will not be fully grown for several days.

In the meantime, Ji-hi-ma personally abducts a member of the Chaucha gang and interrogates him using torture and unnatural rituals. When fin-

DARK ONES EVERYWHERE

As soon as Ji-hi-ma learns of Aleka's death, he starts to spawn Dark Ones, using them to spy on the Chaucha. Within a few days, half a dozen fully or partly-grown creatures are under his control, and within a week there could be as many as 20 or 30. More and more every day, they may be present anywhere there are Chaucha, hiding in dark corners, watching and listening. As the Dark Ones mature, they may appear to be lumpy children lurking in the alleys at night, wearing stolen clothing poorly. The Agents should feel that unseen eyes watch them wherever they go. A movement in a dark alleyway was probably a rat—but was it, really?

The smaller, second-stage Dark Ones should be everywhere, slithering their way beneath doors and into ventilation ducts to gather information for Ji-hi-ma. Lone Chaucha might be set upon by a group of adult Dark Ones and kidnapped or murdered.

Attempts to confront a Dark One should be met with initial failure. The second-stage Dark Ones in particular are adept at slipping down storm drains, leaving behind only a faint, rotting smell like brackish water. Persistence should be rewarded, however. The Agents may eventually succeed in cornering a third-stage, humanoid Dark One. The thing fights with sudden savagery until it escapes or is destroyed. For well-prepared Agents, a Dark One should be unnerving, but not a serious threat.

Confronting any Dark One in this way will certainly alert Ji-hi-ma to the Agents' involvement, with consequences left to the Handler's discretion. He may assume they're ordinary "skinless" police, and ignore them in favor of his vendetta against his own kind. Or he may decide they are somehow in league with Zaaj Cai. That would be very bad for the Agents.

ished, he ties the victim up and locks him in one of his empty apartments for later use, or slits his throat and dismembers the body, storing the meat in his freezer. Each next night, he does the same to another.

From his victims, Ji-hi-ma learns of Zaaj Cai's leadership of the Chaucha gang and ties to the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant. But he does not know the extent of Zaaj Cai's power, and cannot be sure that he is at the restaurant at any given time. For at least the next couple of days, he strikes low-level gang members.

Ji-hi-ma's tactics evolve each night:

- While the Dark Ones are in the small, second stage, he uses them only as spies. He abducts a Chaucha gangster himself, using the Fascination and Dominate Body and Mind rituals to compel the victim.

- When the Dark Ones mature to the humanoid third stage, he sends a gang of them to kidnap or assault solitary Chaucha gang members. This technique becomes less effective after the Chacha realize their danger and begin to travel in larger groups.
- He magically commands a kidnapped gang member to enter a Chaucha hideout and shoot the place up, blow it up, or burn it down, then commit suicide if no one kills the gangster. A note will be found on the killer's body, written in Vietnamese: "Zaaj Cai for Aleka, Ji-hi-ma says." Ji-hi-ma scrupulously avoids targeting the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant, hoping to drive Zaaj Cai to take refuge there.

Alone with a victim, Ji-hi-ma uses rituals to keep his victim docile and drain the victim's **WP**. If he wishes to kill someone, he does it through a proxy—a controlled gangster or a mature Dark One—if possible. If the victim is restrained or has no way of telling where Ji-hi-ma is, he may use his Withering ritual. But if any opponent confronts him, he uses the Escape ritual to flee home.

Ji-hi-ma is a powerful and relentless adversary. But several things work in the Agents' favor:

- Ji-hi-ma's **INT** has deteriorated over the long, diseased years. That has not left him any less cunning, but he is no longer capable of higher reasoning. He does not make complicated plans or recognize any but the most obvious traps. He returns to the same techniques over and over.
- Ji-hi-ma is focused on revenge against Zaaj Cai for Aleka's death. Unless his syphilis-addled brain decides that the Agents are connected to that, they are not his primary targets. However, innocent bystanders are very likely to be harmed by his indiscriminate nightly attacks.
- He is physically frail and not very mobile. Many of his unnatural rituals require him to be nearby, at least at the beginning. He always tries to leave immediately afterward, either by walking, hailing a cab, or using the Escape ritual. Agents may have several chances to notice him at the scenes of the attacks. If they trace him back to his home, he has nowhere else to run.
- Most of his techniques are effective on only one person at a time. Groups of Agents stand a better chance. (The Obscure Memory ritual is a notable exception.)
- His Self-Warding Bag reduces the damage of each attack against him by 10, which is formidable, but his hit points are low. Any damage that overcomes the Self-Warding Bag can easily cripple or kill him. Of course, that lures the Master to Earth. (See **THE MASTER ON EARTH** on page 43.)

OPTIONAL: THE GATE TO LENG

In Aleka's notebook, Agents may learn of the Leng gates which Aleka and Ji-hi-ma use to commune with their Master. Active Agents may even master the Leng Road ritual and use it to enter Aleka's gate themselves.

Once through, the Agents find themselves somewhere very cold and completely black. If they brought light, they see a large, open chamber, carved from natural stone, perhaps granite. They emerged from a permanent gate carved into the stone of the wall behind them.

They are deep in the caves below the uninviting Plateau of Leng. Some strange combination of the power of the gate and the unnatural properties of this place protect the Agents from harm; they take minimum damage from terrestrial weapons. Nor do they need to eat, sleep or defecate. Only when they return to Earth do their natural functions reassert themselves.

As Handler, however, you must secretly keep track of any harm or disease that an Agent would have suffered but for the protections of Leng. An Agent who suffered harm in Leng must make a **Luck** roll when returning to Earth. If it fails, the agent immediately suffers any damage that would have been lost in Leng but for the place's strange protections. Any infection caused by encountering the Master will start to be felt instantly.

The immediate chamber is roughly fifteen meters in diameter. Directly across from Aleka's gate is another one, carved into the opposite wall and subtly different in design. This gate leads to Ji-hi-ma's basement, and is an excellent way for the Agents to find out where he lives.

Everything is dusty and has a general feeling of death and sterility. Tunnels lead off in all directions, most of them collapsed. In the arrival chamber, footprints in the dust can be easily followed down one of the passageways. More on that in a moment.

Niches along the walls contain mummified bodies. Most are identifiable as very small Asian men, centuries dead, but some are not identifiable as human at all (costing 0/1 **SAN**). Rotted wood shelving lines the chamber walls, filled with ancient junk of all kinds, including incense burners, bowls, knives and other paraphernalia similar to that found in Aleka's apartment.

Everywhere in the cave system, the Agents will see thousands of small dried husks heaped at the bases of walls. They look more or less like dead mice unless examined closely, but are actually dead larval Dark Ones. The supernatural sterility of Leng is not a livable environment for them.

A long, stone stairway with shallow steps leads up, up, up to emerge on a snowy, windswept plateau. It is bitterly cold. The air is crystal clear. It is nighttime and everything is lit by an enormous full moon that sheds a corpse-white light over everything. There are no stars and no sound. Seemingly endless mountains surround the plateau and recede into the distance until lost to the eye. A low retaining wall is the only thing between the Agents and a drop into black nothingness. It costs 1/1D4 **SAN** for the Agents to realize that they are no longer on Earth.

In the arrival chamber, following the dusty footprints eventually leads the Agents to one of a number of small, monk-like cells. In one corner, a low table stands with an ancient pitcher of water and a clay bowl. In another corner, a wooden altar holds a clay image of a bloated monstrosity with a tentacle or trunk extending from its face, as well as incense and many matchbooks marked with the characters for the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant.

On a cot against the far wall, a figure stirs slightly under a thin blanket. A few moments after the Agents enter, the Master sits up and stares at them with half-blind eyes.

THE MASTER ON LENG

When on Leng, left alone, and not touched, the Master is relatively harmless. He barely seems to notice the Agents, merely rudely shooing them out of the way as he makes his way around the room, first to wash his face and hands, then to kneel and burn incense to his idol, and finally to walk up the steps to the roof of the plateau to gaze at the moon. Even if attacked, the Master soon reverts to this usual routine once the immediate danger is past.

He mutters to himself all the while, the occasional Dark One larva spontaneously forming in his drool and dropping from his mouth.

Listening to the Master for a minimum of a half an hour will give a Chinese speaker a trickle of information: The dialect he is speaking is indecipherably old. No real sense can be made of it, but the Master repeats a small number of words frequently as part of his ramblings: Asatot, Atu, Angka. When he speaks these words he makes a gesture of worship, folding his hands in front of his eyes and bowing slightly.



Attacking the Master is tricky; see **THE MASTER** on page 44. Bringing him back through a gate will precipitate his rampage (see **THE MASTER ON EARTH**, on page 43). Restraining him in any way probably requires touching him, with potentially disastrous effects. Dismembering him is possible, but if the Master's individual body parts ever find their way into the real world (and Ji-hi-ma would be happy to bring them there), the rampage would occur as normal, except that the Master's various parts will all act independently.

Although it also probably requires touching him, tossing the Master off the plateau (to his death? who knows?) will effectively remove the threat. Ji-hi-ma instantly decays into dust (as he does if the Master dies in any other way), and now the Master cannot manifest through Ji-hi-ma's death. If the Agents attempt to inflict this indignity upon the Master, the Handler is encouraged to have Ji-hi-ma and a few Dark Ones show up at that moment to provide a suitable climax to the scenario.

COMMUNITY REACTIONS

Once Ji-hi-ma begins his campaign of terror against the Chaucha gangs, life in Chinatown becomes very dangerous. Innocent bystanders are bound to be hurt or killed as Ji-hi-ma, the Dark Ones, and the Chaucha gangs run amok.

The young Chaucha do not want to sit idle while Ji-hi-ma murders his way through their ranks, but Zaaj Cai keeps them in check. Zaaj is far too fearful of Ji-hi-ma's power to risk antagonizing him further. But if Zaaj is killed or leaves town, the leaderless gangs attack the Dark Ones, each other (some being under Ji-hi-ma's control), and Ji-hi-ma's house. Ji-hi-ma has enough warning from his spies to never be where his enemies think. This is an opportunity for creative improvisation on the part of the Handler. Ratchet up the chaos as much as dramatically possible.

The escalating violence is of immediate concern to the Asian-American community and the police. Police presence increases. The police form a special gang unit. Community activists call meetings and plan marches. Social workers hit the streets, trying to quell tensions.

A few elderly Chinese and Vietnamese residents indulge in appalling anti-Chaucha racism. Incorrect ethnic groups are blamed and the wrong people arrested. Tabloid newspapers and cable news get details egregiously wrong. Right-wing bigots blame immigration in general and call for crack-downs. The Department of Homeland Security may send Immigration and Customs Enforcement teams to work with local police and round up immigrants who lack documentation or are suspected of crimes.

If the Agents have earned any sort of trust in the neighborhood, they may find themselves directed to Su Miao. (See **SU MIAO** on page 35.)

THE ABDUCTION

Zaaj Cai fears a war with Ji-hi-ma. Instead, he tries to appease the old wizard by offering up Aleka's killer, Le Van Bao.

The night Le Van Bao is arrested—assuming he's taken into police custody and not hidden by the Agents—Zaaj Cai finds out where he is being held and uses the Dominate Body and Mind ritual to force a guard to free him. How well that succeeds is up to the Handler.

If the first abduction fails, Zaaj sends a gang of Chaucha gangsters to abduct Le from police custody while he is being transferred to the courthouse. That will inevitably be a bloody fiasco, whether it succeeds or not.

If that all fails, Zaaj conveys Le's location to Ji-hi-ma with a message that Le murdered Aleka. This delays Ji-hi-ma's attack on the restaurant by one night, as Ji-hi-ma sends a few Dark Ones to kill Le, just to be on the safe side, before returning his attention to Zaaj Cai.

If he abducts Le, Zaaj sends a message to Ji-hi-ma, arranging to hand over Le at the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant the following night. Unfortunately for Zaaj Cai, Ji-hi-ma is too insane to respond to any peace overture.

JI-HI-MA ATTACKS ZAAJ CAI

A few nights into the chaos, and once he is sure that Zaaj Cai is at the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant (possibly because Zaaj Cai has offered up Le Van Bao), Ji-hi-ma pull out his biggest gun. He asks the unnatural monster that he summoned with his Awaken the Worm ritual (see **JI-HI-MA'S TACTICS** on page 38) to destroy the restaurant and everyone in it. Normally the solid bedrock, nearby rivers and complicated network of sewers and water mains of Manhattan would keep even a monstrous entity at bay, but out of deference to Ji-hi-ma's great power and influence, the creature agrees to the attack.

Unless the Agents have conducted clever enough surveillance to know when the attack is due, they are likely to respond after the fact. Emergency crews swarm the area as water mains gush and bystanders scream from the rubble. The city, grasping for an explanation, concocts a combination of burst pipes and exploding gas lines.

The restaurant is a hole filled with wreckage and bodies. The dead include 3D6 Chaucha gangsters, 3D6 restaurant staff and diners, and Le Van Bao, if he was there. The gangsters and Le Van Bao are found in the deep rubble of the sub-basement, their bodies crushed, drained of blood, and chewed up as if by grinding fangs.

A few restaurant staff and diners survive. One of those, still conscious, screams in panic, in a mix of Tcho-Tcho and Vietnamese. Agents who deciphered Aleka's journal recognize one phrase: the victim says "Vua Sâu," the King Worm, came to devour them all. A recording of the screams could also be translated by Felix Trinh afterward. Questioning that victim is nearly useless. The only other coherent thing the Agents can get out of her, if they can communicate, is a weeping confession that her people are paying the price for abandoning the One Who Hungers and kowtowing to the "skinless people." If the Agents studied Aleka's journal, they may recognize "skinless" as a euphemism for Caucasians. The Chaucha victim is too badly damaged, mentally and physically, to explain further.

If the Agents are unfortunate enough to be on hand when the entity strikes, they may see it first-hand. We leave the details and its exact nature to the Handler (see **AWAKEN THE WORM** on page 47), but the **SAN** loss for seeing the creature should be at least 1/1D10, and the Agents' most powerful weapons and methods should pose it no more than a moment's irritation. If they are within reach, turn-by-turn attacks of 1D10 damage are likely, unless the Agents make **Dodge** rolls to escape grasping tendrils, collapsing rubble, or blasts from gas catching fire and high-pressure water pipes bursting. Witnessing the slaughter costs another 1/1D6 **SAN** due to violence.

Zaaj Cai himself escapes to Chicago, pledges his allegiance to Cho Chu-tsao (see *Delta Green: Handler's Guide*), and lets Ji-hi-ma tear New York apart. The remaining Chaucha gangsters panic, committing many robberies and crimes of violence to gather money and guns in their attempts to

escape New York or defend themselves against Ji-hi-ma.

Ji-hi-ma at the Symphony

Away from the chaos of Chinatown, the Philharmonic plays on. With the Chau-cha gangsters chastened, Ji-hi-ma turns his vengeance upon the place where the trouble began. Unless the Agents stop him first, he intends to punish the musicians and conductors—and any audience members who get in the way—for their blasphemy.

As the symphony begins, two dozen third-stage Dark Ones enter the Philharmonic, sliding up drainpipes into toilets, sneaking through air vents, and silently murdering backstage staff. They lock all exits inside and out.

Sometime during the scherzo, Ji-hi-ma steps onto the stage to the surprise of the crowd and launches his attack.

Ji-hi-ma performs his Consume Spirit ritual, meaning to draw power from the entire audience below and offer that power to the monster that attacked the Song Ma Jasmine Beauty Restaurant, asking it to destroy the Philharmonic now. But Ji-hi-ma's control is not what it was, and his ambition undoes itself. The ritual drains hundreds of **WP** from the crowd, far too much for Ji-hi-ma to handle. The overload of power courses through the facility and through Ji-hi-ma in sparks and electrical arcs. Transformers and breakers shatter and melt. Lights explode. Batteries burst aflame in emergency lights and in the phone in every purse and pocket. The place plunges instantly into absolute darkness except for lone flickering flames, filled with screams of disorientation, pain, and terror.

Ji-hi-ma collapses, kept alive only by luck and his Self-Warding Bag. The Dark Ones, undeterred by darkness, slither among the musicians, drinking their blood. They soon move out among the rampaging crowd for new victims.

Unless the Agents have followed the movements of Ji-hi-ma or the Dark Ones expertly, they may learn of the

attack only after it has begun, when police and emergency crews begin to race to the area. The entire block around Lincoln Center has suffered a blackout, but no other building has seen its emergency batteries die so unnaturally.

How it plays out depends on the urgency of the Agents' response. By the time they arrive, a few police officers have probably already gone in to investigate, breaking open a padlocked door and letting hundreds of screaming concert-goers run and stumble out, eyes wild.

If the Agents dawdle, the police set up a staging area and send a tactical team in (heavily-armed officers of the NYPD Emergency Services Unit), suspecting a terror attack. The Dark Ones are no more than indistinct smudges in their night-vision goggles. After three officers go down, one discovers his flashlight works and sees a flash of a small, black, wet shape moving in the wreckage.

And so on.

The Agents are supposed to keep ordinary citizens and first-responders safe from such unnatural threats. They could persuade the NYPD to pull back and maintain a perimeter while the Agents themselves go in as part of, let's say, a federal counterterrorism task force. Or something along those lines. The details depend on the Agents and how things have gone before. If the Agents are clever and decisive, they have a better chance of keeping outsiders away from the horror.

Ji-hi-ma stirs after a while, perhaps a few minutes after the Agents have gone in and seen the gory carnage wrought by the Dark Ones. His Self-Warding Bag still protects him, but he has been reduced to 3 **HP** by scorching energies, and he now has a vast reserve of 60 **WP** to power his rituals. He is more incoherent than ever. Rather than fleeing, he uses his Dominate Body and Mind ritual to force one Agent to attack another, and then again, laughing at the chaos until some bullet or blast brings him down, or until (in the Handler's estimation) he is satisfied and uses his Escape ritual to vanish for good.

If he dies, the Master appears.

THE MASTER ON EARTH

If Ji-hi-ma is killed, the Master (see **THE MASTER** on page 44) manifests through the gate on Ji-hi-ma's chest, clawing his way out of it and into the Agents' world. Deeply confused, the Master stumbles toward the nearest moving things that his almost-blind eyes can see. He moves at a fast shuffle and can easily be outrun.

As the Master manifests, all Earthly matter in the immediate area starts to register his unnatural infection. The walls and street around the Master, even the air itself, begin to erupt into pustules. The effect spreads out from the Master in multiple spiral patterns, weakening as it gets further away. Tiny Dark Ones spontaneously spawn in the pools of foulness left by the Master's steps, but they immediately perish. Anyone within six meters of the Master must make a **Dexterity** test. Success means the character escapes the worst of the effect and takes only 1D4 damage each to hit points and Constitution, and contract the same virulent disease that afflicted Aleka and Ji-hi-ma. Failure means immediate and hideous death. Seeing the Master's effects on the world costs 1/1D10 **SAN**.

The Master survives on Earth for 4D4 turns, mindlessly lurching forward and attempting to grasp any living thing in his path. If this happens in the center of Manhattan—Lincoln Center, for instance—the Master's infection causes much infrastructure damage, as the rot spreads through streets, water and sewage lines, and building foundations. Many innocent bystanders may be harmed and killed.

The Master visibly disintegrates by the second. His skin sloughs away in slimy chunks, fingers and toes rot off, and eventually he collapses in a hideous swamp of toxic putrescence. The Agents might hurry this process if they can somehow penetrate his 20 points of armor; speeding cars or falling stage lights might do him some harm. But the Agents can do the most good by keeping bystanders away.

LOOSE ENDS

Containment is likely to be a major challenge for the Agents. It's very possible that New York first-responders shot up Lincoln Center facing Dark Ones, or that dozens of witnesses saw the Master manifest and turn reality around him to disease and rot. The more outré the exposure, the wilder the public stories become. Most are reduced to ridicule by news reporters and Internet commenters. Everyone looks for an explanation that makes sense. But too much exposure may lead to closer investigation of the Chaucha in New York, bringing ordinary people into contact with the forces Delta Green strives to keep secret. How that plays out depends on the scenario's events and is up to the Handler.

If Ji-hi-ma attacks the Philharmonic, all concerts are cancelled for the foreseeable future. If the Master appears there, it is unlikely that Lincoln Center will ever reopen.

Aleka's notebook can provide as much information as the Handler wishes about the history, culture and worship practices of the Tcho-Tcho people.

If ZaaJ Cai escaped to Chicago, a search for him may eventually turn up his location and lead to further encounters with the Tcho-Tcho.

Zacharie Trembel's symphony may become be the subject of much notoriety. ("That's the one where all those people were killed!") Bootleg recordings of the symphony surface. YouTube clips go viral. The grapevine certainly brings it to the attention of other Chaucha nationwide, and there are bound to be Chaucha in attendance at future performances elsewhere. This may actually suit Delta Green, as an easy way to locate Chaucha communities. Of course, there's always a chance that things will get out of hand again. Brian Schielle, if he still lives, may soon find himself in fear for his life. The Handler should feel free to use the symphony as a recurring motif, as it were, in further Tcho-Tcho-centered scenarios.

Finally, the Agents may have a working gate to Leng. What adventures they may find there, and what other

gates, are left to the imagination of the Handler.

SANITY REWARDS

- For eliminating Ji-hi-ma:** 2D6 SAN
- For each adult Dark One destroyed:** 1 SAN, to a maximum of 4
- For eliminating the Master before his rampage:** 1d10 SAN
- For each civilian saved from the Master's rampage:** 1 SAN point, to a maximum of 4

CHARACTERS

Characters are listed alphabetically by surname. Vietnamese and Chinese surnames come before personal names.

CHAUCHA GANGSTERS

Most have stats and skills similar to Mua Tong's on page 46. Many of them are missing a finger or two (eaten by themselves at ZaaJ Cai's orders).

JI-HI-MA

Even older and more diseased than he seems.

SELF-WARDING BAGS

Ji-hi-ma and Aleka both own small leather bags filled with fetish material—clippings of hair and fingernails, and scraps of parchment and the operator's own flesh, dried and inked with blood in strange characters—meant to be worn around the neck. This Self-Warding Bag slows the aging pro-

cess to one year for every ten. Further, it grants 10 points of damage deflection per attack, protection that is not reduced by armor-piercing weapons. And it treats any Lethality attack (even from poison) as if the wearer were a huge entity, inflicting the Lethality rating as ordinary damage rather than rolling. (For example, a heavy weapon with Lethality 15% and Armor Piercing 10 would instead inflict 15 damage, but have that damage reduced by 10, regardless of its Armor Piercing quality. Ji-hi-ma would take 5 damage.) Aleka in his absent-mindedness often forgot his, but Ji-hi-ma wears his at all times.

Note that the Master constructed these bags, and since the Master still lives, Aleka's body has not been subject to rapid aging even though he has died. If Aleka's bag is destroyed, his body will quickly decay into dust. If the Master is killed, Ji-hi-ma will also be instantly destroyed. A Self-Warding Bag has no effect on anyone except the one for whom it was created.

THE MASTER

The Master is an ancient, tiny Chinese man, not a meter and a half tall. His nose, mouth and jaw, barely visible under his long yellow beard, have twisted and deformed into a stumpy, trunk-like protrusion. His cataracted eyes are caked with pus. His fingers are webbed. His long, long nails are yellowed, hooked and hard as stone. He is naked except for tatters of a filthy, colorless robe, sticking in patches to his limbs. Every inch of his skin is covered in seeping chancres or hard, yellowed lesions. His bare feet leave damp pools

JI-HI-MA

STR 7 CON 6 DEX 9 INT 7 POW 30 CHA 9
HP 7 WP 30 SAN 0

ARMOR 10

SKILLS Alertness 60%, Foreign Language (English) 20%, Stealth 90%.

ATTACKS Bite 30%, damage 1.

RITUALS Awaken the Worm, Beget the Dark Ones, Call the Master, Consume Spirit, Create Gate, Dominate Body and Mind, Escape, Fascination, Healing Balm, Obscure Memory, The Voorish Sign, Withering. (See *Rituals* on page 46.)

THE MASTER

STR 11 **CON** 50 **DEX** 5 **INT** n/a **POW** n/a **CHA** n/a
HP 31 **WP** 0

ARMOR 20

ATTACKS Grapple 50%, damage special.
Claw 30%, damage 1D4.

wherever he steps, in which larval Dark Ones swarm. He drips.

The Master exudes a permanent magical leakage, which spontaneously creates larval Dark Ones from his open sores. Every so often, a larva struggles out from underneath the Master's corrupted skin and falls to the floor, where it slithers away. In Leng, they desiccate and die within hours.

On Leng, the Master's highly contagious strain of syphilis can be transmitted by touch. If he grapples and pins a victim who is not wearing thorough protection such as a hazmat suit, the victim takes 2 damage in each turn of contact after the first. A victim who takes damage in this way must make a **CON** test at -20% after 1D6 days. If it fails, the victim loses 1 **CON** and 1 **HP**, and must repeat the test in another 1D6 days, and continue repeating it until the victim recovers naturally, is cured, or dies. The infection manifests itself as skin rashes, chancres and lesions, easily diagnosable as secondary syphilis. This damage can be halved and eventually restored if treated in a timely manner with strong antibiotics and other medical care.

The Master takes minimum damage from terrestrial weapons while in Leng. Gunshots merely poke bloodless holes in his body, and even chopped into pieces, the Master's various limbs will wander around aimlessly with a life of their own.

On Earth, the Master's infection eats right through hazmat protection and reality itself; see **THE MASTER ON EARTH**, on page 43.

THE DARK ONES

Some say the Dark Ones were formed or spawned by the Great Old Ones. And some say they were the precu-

sors or ancestors of the Tcho-Tchos, a notion that any Tcho-Tcho or modern anthropologist finds irredeemably reprehensible. Ji-hi-ma uses foul rituals learned from the Master to spawn Dark Ones from his own infected semen. The Dark Ones begin their life cycle as oily larvae—their first stage—that quickly become sexually mature and reproduce. A body of water, such as a pond or rainwater in an overturned garbage-can lid, can soon swarm with thousands of the things. Only a handful of these will survive.

A first-stage Dark One, no more than ten centimeters long, crawls from the water after a few hours and grows to its second stage in a dark, damp place. It looks like an elongated, almost flat, black toad.

Within days, the Dark One grows to its third stage, one or one and a half meters in height. It takes on more humanoid characteristics, perhaps thanks to the nature of the sorcerer that spawned it. It wraps itself in rags and poses as a homeless person. To an inattentive observer, it looks like a human dwarf or child. Only by looking closely does one notice the droopy gray flesh, the bulging, horizontally-pupilled eyes, the boneless-seeming limbs, and the wide mouth with its long tongue.

All Dark Ones created by Ji-hi-ma show distinct signs of syphilitic infection, including hard yellow lesions and seeping chancres. Anyone touched by one of these Dark Ones must make a **Luck** roll at +20% or be exposed to the disease, with results as in **EPIDEMIOLOGY** on page 35. The disease shortens the Dark Ones' lifespan considerably; the creatures deteriorate to the point of uselessness within a week and dissolve into semi-liquid filth shortly thereafter.

Chaucha with **SAN** above 0 have a deep-seated aversion to the Dark Ones, stemming from an atavistic horror at the unnatural origin that they both sup-

SECOND-STAGE DARK ONE

STR 1 **CON** 1 **DEX** 15 **INT** 3 **POW** 5
HP 1

SKILLS Alertness 90%, Stealth 90%, Swim 90%.

ATTACKS None.

SAN LOSS 0/1.

THIRD-STAGE DARK ONE

STR 5 **CON** 6 **DEX** 12 **INT** 6 **POW** 10
HP 6

SKILLS Alertness 90%, Stealth 70%, Swim 75%.

ARMOR 2 points of tough, slimy skin.

ATTACK Bite 60% (see FEEDING).

FEEDING If the Dark One's bite latches onto prey, it drains blood rapidly.

The victim loses 1D4 HP and the same amount in STR each turn, until the Dark One is forcibly removed by an opposed STR test.

UNFORMED The Dark Ones' internal organs would make no sense to any student of anatomy. Critical hits inflict normal damage on them, not double damage.

WATERBORNE A third-stage Dark One runs as swiftly as a grown human, and swims as swiftly as it runs.

SANITY LOSS 0/1.

posedly share. Chaucha with zero **SAN** have no such aversion, and have been known to mate with the Dark Ones.

Third-stage Dark Ones prefer to attack in packs of three or four. Second-stage Dark Ones do not attack at all.

MUA TONG ("TALON")

The Agents might meet Mua Tong, a 19-year-old tough, at a symphony performance or during other investigations around Chinatown. Mua Tong prefers to call himself "Talon." He is a hotshot up-and-comer in the Chaucha gang, and if the Agents talk to him he immediately senses an opportunity to get ahead. He knows about Ji-hi-ma, Aleka and their relationship to the rest of the Chaucha, and cheerfully helps the Agents find Ji-hi-ma, intending to take credit for everything once the Agents and Ji-hi-ma kill each other.

Unfortunately, this sort of cooperation with non-Chaucha is strictly forbidden. The instant ZaaJ Cai discovers it, Mua Tong will be targeted for death. He may turn up as a corpse, or as a panicky but helpful fugitive from ZaaJ Cai.

FELIX TRINH

Felix Trinh is a 40-year-old Vietnamese-American professor at the University of Minnesota, currently on a two-year visiting professorship at Columbia University. Trinh first encountered Delta Green during a series of grisly murders among North Minneapolis' Hmong population three years ago, and has helped Delta Green with translations and analysis of Southeast Asian cultural details a few times since then.

FELIX TRINH

STR 9 **CON** 12 **DEX** 9 **INT** 18 **POW** 16 **CHA** 13
HP 11 **WP** 16 **SAN** 80 **Breaking Point** 64

SKILLS Anthropology 45%, Archaeology 45%, Computer Science 75%, Foreign Language (Cantonese) 10%, Foreign Language (Fuzhou) 10%, Foreign Language (Mandarin) 10%, Foreign Language (Vietnamese) 99%, Foreign Language (Other Southeast Asian) 70%, Foreign Language (Other Southeast Asian) 30%, History 50%, HUMINT 60%, Law 40%, Persuade 80%, Search 55%.

MUA TONG

STR 11 **CON** 13 **DEX** 12 **INT** 13 **POW** 7 **CHA** 13
HP 12 **WP** 7 **SAN** 20 **Breaking Point** 14

SKILLS Alertness 60%, Firearms 30%, Melee Weapons 40%, Stealth 50%, Unnatural 5%.

ATTACKS Knife 40%, damage 1D4 (Armor Piercing 3).
9 mm pistol 30%, damage 1D10.

ZAAJ CAI

STR 9 **CON** 12 **DEX** 15 **INT** 14 **POW** 15 **CHA** 14
HP 11 **WP** 15 **SAN** 5 **Breaking Point** 0

SKILLS Alertness 80%, HUMINT 30%, Law 30%, Firearms 60%, Foreign Language (Chaucha) 40%, Melee Weapons 70%, Persuade 70%, Stealth 40%, Unarmed Combat 60%, Unnatural 30%

ATTACKS Knife 70%, damage 1D4 (Armor Piercing 3).
9 mm handgun 60%, damage 1D10.

RITUALS Dominate Body and Mind, Healing Balm, Release Life, The Voorish Sign.

Trinh is familiar with the Chaucha only as an ethnic group indigenous to certain isolated mountainous regions in Southeast Asia, who began to emigrate to the U.S. in small numbers in the 1970s. He says the Chaucha have no alphabet of their own, and even their oral language is linguistically elusive, relying heavily on loan words from Vietnamese, Hmong and other nearby languages, but layering these onto a specifically Chaucha grammar of unknown derivation. Even Chaucha proper names seem to be mostly of Vietnamese, Cambodian or Hmong origin.

ZAAJ CAI

A Tcho-Tcho gangster in his 20s, ZaaJ Cai is young and ambitious, and has risen to head the major Chaucha gang in NYC because he has a certain

amount of respect for the magical traditions of his ancestors. He is a survivor, and he didn't get this far in the Chaucha hierarchy by taking chances. He commands a strong, fear-based loyalty in his followers and does not tolerate mistakes. His usual punishment for failure is to make the unfortunate gang member cut off and eat one of his own fingers. If things get too hot, he will not hesitate to abandon his followers and skip town.

Any Agent who carries on a conversation with ZaaJ Cai and who has **HUMINT** 40% or better, and who is not adapted to violence, finds him instinctively frightening. ZaaJ takes joy in torture and murder, and he is a knife's edge away from permanent, psychopathic madness.

RITUALS

New or significantly customized unnatural rituals are detailed in this section. Others are described in the *Handler's Guide*. Ji-hi-ma and ZaaJ Cai know as many others as the Handler thinks appropriate.

AWAKEN THE WORM

Complex ritual. Study time: days; 1D8 SAN.
Activation: 1 POW, 1D6 SAN.

A three-hour chanted meditation upon prehuman phrases and utterly inhuman concepts opens the operator's mind to contact with that of an unnatural, subterranean monstrosity. The exact nature of the monster is not germane to this scenario, as the Agents encounter only the aftermath of its activity. The operator has no power over the Worm, but may ask it to perform some action in return for the gift of **POW** represented by the ritual's costs. The Handler decides whether the Worm understands or agrees.

BEGET THE DARK ONES

Complex ritual. Study time: days; 1D8 SAN.
Activation: 8 WP, 1D4 SAN.

This loathsome ritual requires about an hour of preparation with bizarre implements. It creates a swarm of first-stage Dark Ones from the essence—usually the blood, semen, or brain matter—of a Tcho-Tcho.

CALL THE MASTER

Elaborate ritual. Study time: months; +1 Unnatural, 1D20 SAN. **Activation:** 4 POW.

During hours and days of prayer to the Great Old Ones, the operator carves and tattoos the lines of a gate to Leng upon his or her own torso. If successful, it takes effect only when the operator is reduced to zero **HP**. At that point, the Master manifests through the operator's flesh and bones to consume the operator's fleeting energy and work horrors on any living thing nearby.

CONSUME SPIRIT

Simple ritual. Study time: days; 1D6 SAN.
Activation: 12 WP; 1D6 SAN.

The operator performs an incantation in some alien tongue. The ritual affects as many targets as the operator desires, as long as each is in plain sight and within about 50 meters. The operator must roll a **POW** test. If it fumbles, the operator loses 1 **POW** and nothing else

happens. If it fails without fumbling, there is no effect. If it succeeds, each victim must roll a **POW** test opposing the operator's roll. Overcoming the operator's **POW** with a critical success costs the operator 1D6 **WP**. Opposing it with an ordinary success has no effect. Failure to resist means the victim loses 1D6 **WP**. A fumble means the victim loses 1D6 **WP**, as well as 1 **POW** permanently.

The operator gains victims' lost **WP**, up to double his or her current score. If the operator used some other ritual to establish a psychic connection with another sorcerer or unnatural entity, the stolen **WP** may be shared, up to double their combined current scores.

If the operator consumes more **WP** than can be gained, there is a backlash. The excess energy manifests as an electrical surge between the victims and the operator. For each excess 10 **WP**, the operator suffers 1 **HP** damage and a random victim suffers 1D6 **HP** damage. A sufficiently large backlash could destroy electrical devices in a wide area.

ESCAPE

Simple ritual. Study time: days; 1D6 SAN.
Activation: 2 WP, 1 SAN.

This ritual requires only uttering a brief phrase, which takes an action in a combat turn. The operator vanishes from sight and reappears near a special fetish, which may be up to hundreds of kilometers away. Creating the fetish requires further, earlier effort, costing 2 **POW** and 1D8 **SAN**. The fetish may be a doll, box, pouch, or anything else, as long as it holds long-lasting traces of the operator's DNA, such as clippings of hair or fingernails.

GATE TO LENG

Elaborate ritual. Study time: weeks; +1 Unnatural, 1D4 SAN. **Activation:** days; 5 POW, 30 WP, 120 HP, 1D10 SAN.

This lengthy work inscribes an unnatural gateway to the Plateau of Leng in geometric shapes drawn into a surface such as a wall. The gate may be utilized with the ritual The Leng Road.

THE LENG ROAD

Simple ritual. Study time: hours; 1D6 SAN.
Activation: one minute; 1D4 WP, 1D4 SAN.

This minute-long chant blends a Tcho-Tcho dialect and even less recognizable phrases. It allows the operator to pass through an existing gate to the Plateau of Leng. Anyone who knows the Leng Road ritual instinctively recognizes any unnatural Gate to Leng on sight, without having to roll **Sanity** or spend **WP**.

RELEASE LIFE

Simple ritual. Study time: days; 1D4 SAN.
Activation: one turn; 2 WP per turn, 1D4 SAN.

Requiring a brief, alien incantation and a strange gesture, all of which takes only a single action, this ritual opens a target's skin and veins, causing deep lacerations that bleed profusely. The effect lasts 1D4 turns and causes 1D6 damage per turn. The target must be no more than about 10 meters away when the ritual takes effect, but it continues for its duration even if the target moves away. The operator suffers the usual **SAN** loss for the attack's violence.

PLAYTESTERS

Jon Cazares, Matthew Kessen, Dawn Krosnowski, Amanda Kudalis, Joseph Scrimshaw and Tim Uren; Brennan Bishop with Lyndsey Bishop and Alex Gaiger; Aaron Carsten with Ethan Cordray, Raymond Cox, Micah King, Ben Meiklejohn, Thomas Piekarski, and Harry Rhodes; Stuart Dollar with Alex Dollar, Grant Dollar and Suzette Dollar; Chris Huth; Andy Lilly with Peter Darton, Ross Darton Robert Friskney and Sarah Lilly; Christopher Malone with Justin Alexander, John Becker, Steve Derosier, Mark Dipasquale, Preethi Gupton, Seth Gupton, Sarah Holmberg, Tony Mike Kuehn, David Lanham and Colleen Riley; Sean Whittaker with Cem Ozbay, Kevin Reed and Ken Watts. ☞

ARMED



AT THE OPERA

TACTICAL ADVICE FOR DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

By HANS-CHRISTIAN VORTISCH

Marty Hart: Holy shit. You visit a lot of gun shows?

Rust Cohle: Ah, it's just some stuff I kept in case work came back to me.

— *True Detective* #1.4

The following hints and suggestions for armed investigators are aimed at DELTA GREEN agents planning a “Night at the Opera,” but most are universally applicable—whether you investigate the Mythos in the 1890s, the 1920s, the 1940s, or *now*.

For more hints, including game-mechanical solutions to character action, as well as stats and descriptions for all of the mentioned tools and accessories, see Sixtystone Press’ *Investigator Weapons 2: Modern Day*.

REPertoire

The perpetuation of the one-shot drop by movies and television programs has no place in the real world of violent criminals bent on their destructive missions. Officers must realize that they have to continually hone their survival skills, always expect the unexpected, and never give up....

—Edward Davis, Harry Kern, and Anthony Pinizzotto, “One-Shot Drops: Surviving the Myth” (2004)

A successful armed Agent doesn’t just need a reasonable **Firearms** score and possibly even skill in **Heavy Weapons**. **Military Science (Land)** is invaluable in fights and the shenanigans that precede and follow it. **Alertness** is useful to locate a target or to notice the tell-tale signs that a ruckus is about to begin. Use **Stealth** to avoid being noticed yourself or to conceal that you are armed. **Dodge** represents realistic behavior such as moving from cover to cover, standing and moving in a “combat crouch” that presents a slighter smaller target, stepping to the side to dodge the attacker’s presentation (not his bullets!), etc. Close-combat skills such as **Unarmed Combat** and **Melee Weapons** are also valuable. **Athletics** are required when you are running away, scrambling out of pit, or trying to

lob throwable ordnance like hand grenades. A dedicated shooter can make good use of **Craft (Gunsmith)** to repair and modify weapons and ammunition. **First Aid** is essential to deal with the consequences of weapon use. Finally, **Law** might come in handy in today's regulated societies.

Practice, practice, practice. Many of these are perishable skills that need to be exercised regularly to maintain, preferably under the tutelage of a maestro. Go to the shooting range, even when it's not required by your agency. Join a dancing school for your favourite brand of brawling. Stay in shape. You want to be able to run like hell and still keep reasonably steady hands to shoot. And to afterwards run even faster, if required. Learn how to apply a haemostatic compression bandage and a chest seal. Drill small-unit tactics. Assaulting a compound looks easy on TV., but skimp on the training and one of your mates will shoot you accidentally in the back.

Which means you also have to be careful when selecting your ensemble. Don't just pick partners for their willingness to tango, but for their particular skill sets.

SCORE

[Surviving agents] said the ATF raid suffered from lack of firepower, intelligence and operational security and no contingency plan for getting out if it went wrong.

—Reuters (2013)

Learn as much about the opposition as possible to exploit their weaknesses and deal with their strengths. This may include hitting the library, the Internet, your agency's files, or any other database. **HUMINT** could unearth something useful, such as that the cultists always wear armor vests, necessitating heavy or armor-piercing weapons. **Persuade** might coax a contact or Friendly, or even a captured cultist, to reveal something as well. If you know you're dealing with an unnatural threat, then **Occult** or even **Unnatural** might give you valuable pointers.

Four of the ATF agents raiding a real-world cult compound in Texas as part of Operation TROJAN HORSE

(1993) were killed after coming under fire from powerful weapons against which their body armour was of no use, including .50-calibre Barrett Model 82A1 anti-materiel rifles. They should have anticipated this, as they were executing a federal warrant for weapons offenses. The agents were also caught unawares by structural fortifications of the compound, which weren't in their mission briefing. To face the stiff resistance, the FBI had to bring in FMC M2A1 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles loaned from the U.S. Army, which were capable of shrugging off such threats.

DRESS REHEARSAL

The only black hole in the practice compound was the interiors. We had no idea what the inside of the house looked like. It wasn't a big concern. We had years of combat experience, and we could apply it to this problem.... After we rehearsed the best-case scenario, we started running through the contingencies.

—“Mark Owen,” *No Easy Day* (2012)

Be prepared. Plan every “Night at the Opera” as diligently and in as detail as possible. Things *will* go wrong, but the better you're prepared, the better are your chances to pull it off and live past the curtain call.

Be prepared to deviate from your plans, as some things are unforeseeable. In 2011, the CIA sent a squadron of U.S. Navy SEALs from DEVGRU to execute Operation NEPTUNE SPEAR in Pakistan. Although one of their two modified Sikorsky MH-60 Black Hawk choppers made a “soft” crash landing at the site, dashing their original plans, the SEALs still reached their objective, killed the cult leader and his entourage with H&K HK-416D10RS assault carbines, and disappeared unharmed, scooped up by a backup bird that had been held on station nearby.

However, some plays just can't be salvaged. Shut it down if things have deteriorated so badly that you can't bring it to a successful finalé. When French DGSE *Service Action* agents attempted to liberate a fellow agent held hostage by cultists in Somalia in 2013, they thought of everything to ensure a silent

approach: Their Eurocopter EC725 Caracal helos landed in the middle of nowhere, too far away for anybody to hear the engines and rotors; the night was moonless and every man wore night-vision goggles; they affixed sound suppressors to their Glock 19 pistols, SIG SG550 assault rifles, and H&K MP7A1 personal defense weapons. Yet they were betrayed by a cultist who slept outside the objective. The cultist awoke with a scream when an agent accidentally stepped on him because he couldn't be seen under a blanket in a dark corner. The agents had to retreat under heavy fire, leaving two of their own dead in the sand in the confusion.

If you can't stop the fat lady from singing, it's just as important to leave the opera house as fast and as safely as possible. Have a getaway vehicle nearby, stolen or otherwise impossible to track back to you.

GRAND OPERA

You're kidding yourself if you follow the old canard of leaving the chamber empty until the moment of confrontation, so you can pump the gun and freeze the bad guy with the terrifying racking sound. A really hard guy will realize he's up against someone so dumb, it just occurred to him he needed a loaded gun.

—Massad Ayoob, “The Self-Defense Shotgun” (1993)

Go in heavy unless special circumstances suggest otherwise. It's likely you will be dealing with armed and crazed cultists who won't be cowed by waving your badge around. Innocent bystanders are easier to encourage to leave the scene if a gun is shoved into their faces, as might be nosey journalists or conspiracy theorists. Theoretically neutral but effectively hostile forces—on account of their ignorance of what's actually at stake—may also require high-velocity persuasion, although you may want to aim over their heads.

All but the whitest operations require sterile props that can't be traced back to you. Never go on a black op with your issued personal sidearm or a registered sporting gun. Deniable hardware can be acquired in a variety of ways: bought on the black mar-

ket, stolen from the evidence locker or a military depot, lifted off a criminal without reporting it, etc.

Once you've got the hardware, learn how to use it. Note that it makes sense to use a weapon similar to your issue arm, so that the familiarity with your work gun trades over, but you can't control availability and have to work with what you can get. Go to a range, even just an improvised one in the woods. Zero in the sights, even if you've had the weapon for a long time. Check all magazines for lame springs and bent feeding lips. Practice immediate action drills to clear malfunctions, because you can be certain that something will go wrong with the things when you need them.

Have your weapons ready to use. That means guns should be loaded and, depending on exact type, cocked. Most shootouts are over in mere seconds, and are often decided by how they begin. An unready gun is a distinct disadvantage. If you're fretful about carrying a fully loaded weapon, learn how to carry it safely. If you're still apprehensive, opt for a different line of work. Safety is important, but is mainly a training issue. Well-trained shooters are safe regardless how they carry their gun; badly-trained folks really have no business holding a weapon, as even the most mechanically safe guns can be fired unintentionally.

Bring ammunition, and plenty of it. Few people are capable of rationing their supply once the firing starts, and fewer still have the presence of mind or special forces-type training to count their bullets during a firefight. This means you'll rapidly deplete the ready ammunition in your weapon, and *will* be surprised by the action locking open. Carry spares and carry them where you can quickly get at them. Don't stuff them in your pockets or your backpack; use magazine holders

or even a chest rig. Practice reloading. Again and again.

Since the FBI started issuing the Glock 22 pistol as its standard sidearm in 1998, special agents have been mandated to carry at least three magazines (45 shots). That sounds like a lot of firepower, and ordinarily it probably is. But most shooters can cap those off in less than 20 seconds, including reloading. Depending on the number of acts in your opera piece, that will likely be far too little. And you never know whether you won't be called out for an encore.

Even if you don't plan a hot operation with a frontal assault, stepping back behind the curtain often requires lots of bullets as well. In 1991, the eight-man British Army SAS patrol Bravo Two Zero in Iraq used up most of its ammunition in only two contacts from which they broke off. The four machine gunners each fired more than 600 belted rounds through their FN MINIMI light machine guns, while the four grenadiers each emptied most of the ten 30-round magazines for their Colt M16A2 assault rifles.

Accessorise. Get all necessary secondary props such as holsters, slings, spare magazines, magazine holders, targeting aids, etc. You don't want to drop your pistol from your waistband like an inner-city gangster as soon as you have to break into a run.

Bring a melee weapon like a tactical knife or telescopic baton. Guns jam or run out of ammo at the most inconvenient moments. You can always use the extra edge in a fight, even if you're an accomplished brawler, and you *really* don't want to come into physical contact with some of your audience.

By definition, a "Night at the Opera" plays out during darkness, and most fights occur in conditions of reduced light. You don't want to be caught blind if you're spelunking below the stage or operating under other conditions of reduced visibility. Bring

at least a handheld tactical light, plus possibly a weapon light, night-vision sight, and/or night-vision goggles. Disposable chemical lights have numerous applications, and a handful are easily carried. During Operation GOTHIC SERPENT (1993) in Somalia, the U.S. Army Rangers sorely missed the AN/PVS-7 night vision goggles they had intentionally left behind because the operation was planned to end before sundown.

Wear body armor—at least a ballistic vest, possibly with plates, as well as sensible footwear, gloves, and eye protection. A helmet may be unfeasible, as it is rather conspicuous, but your head is your most important body part, so you better wear one when possible. Modern armor vests are far more comfortable than even a few years ago, and many are reasonably concealable. Even a light vest will stop most handgun bullets and ordnance fragments; bring a full tactical vest if you expect to face rifle-toting adversaries. A pair of broken-in boots that are oil-, acid-, and waterproof will protect your feet, including when you have to kick in doors and stomp on fingers. They will also give you a better grip when you have to take a tactical retreat. Sturdy gloves protect your hands from cuts and abrasions when you're manipulating guns and slugging skulls. They'll also prevent you from leaving fingerprints or DNA. Goggles or ballistic glasses protect your vulnerable eyes from flying cases and debris, as well as from small projectiles and acid splash. Many are stylish enough to serve as shades.

Finally, bring tools for the fête after the curtain call, regardless of the operation's outcome. A can of oven spray to destroy DNA, a body bag to dispose of the remains of an adversary or even a fellow cast member, an entrenching tool to bury the bag or the guns, a six-pack of Molotov cocktails for a cleansing arson job.... ☹



OPERATION STOP REPO

Airport long-term parking is a good place to lose a car. With budgets tight, they are rarely cleared out. This makes an ideal temporary location for a Green Box.

Agent Saffir, a recently retired Delta Green Agent, was using Boston Logan International Airport's long-term lot for just that purpose. Unfortunately, his retirement was more sudden than expected, and his notes are not as detailed as the Program would have hoped. At the same time, a shakeup at Logan among the lackadaisical parking staff, an overzealous government auditor, and a panicking airport administration in full-blown ass-covering mode mean the lots have been rapidly cleared of abandoned cars.

MASSPORT (Logan's operating authority) towed the abandoned cars to a central lot for cataloging. Cars that were too far gone were loaded onto carriers and junked in a salvage yard

along Route 1A, somewhere in Revere, Massachusetts. The rest are being auctioned off to the public.

There's a good chance some of Saffir's mobile Green Boxes are already in civilian hands.

OBJECTIVE

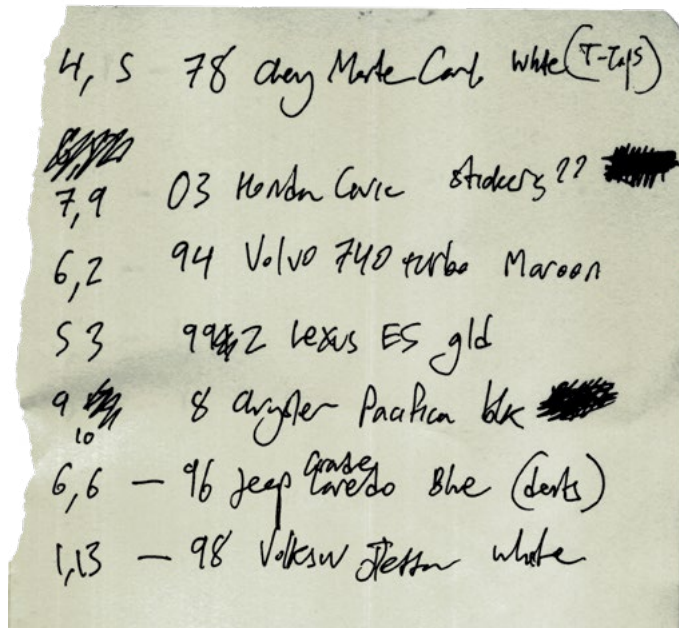
The Agents are told to determine which vehicles were used as Green Boxes, reacquire the contents, and clean up any contact between the contents and civilians as required. Their only lead is the address of a safehouse that Agent Saffir kept near Boston.

The scenario works best when the Agents' challenges are less finding the cars and more securing things or dealing with fallout from S-cell. Don't let a failed **Search** roll defeat the Agents. If the Agents get to a car, they should find the Green Box items.

A SHOTGUN SCENARIO FOR DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

By KEVIN HAM





THE SAFEHOUSE

Agent Saffir kept a safehouse in a beachfront, seasonal rental home along the water in Scituate, Massachusetts.

Hidden inside the false bottom of a filing cabinet is a list of the cars used as mobile Green Boxes. Unfortunately, they were listed in “X,Y” coordinates (row 4, space 15), with only vague notes such as “green hatchback.”

The Handler should decide how many compromised cars there are, and how much detail Agent Saffir’s notes convey. Some may be easier to find than others.

THE LIST

Three or four of these cars should have Green Box items.

- 1978 Chevy Monte Carlo, White, with factory T-tops
- 2003 Honda Civic, Silver, plastered with anime bumper stickers
- 1994 Volvo 740 Turbo, Was once maroon, 5-speed manual
- 1992 Lexus ES, Gold, actually an imported Toyota Windom, no oil
- 2018 Chrysler Pacifica, Black, with every option, even the undercoat
- 1996 Jeep Grand Laredo, Blue, appears to have been rolled completely at least once

- 1988 Volkswagen Jetta TDI, Mostly white, incomprehensible gas mileage, leaky sunroof

SAFFIR'S CELL

Agents who search Saffir’s safehouse may find Saffir’s e-mail on his network. They may also tip off S-cell that there’s an intruder at the safehouse.

Agent Saffir was a rarity, a long-time Delta Green agent before his retirement, and his team, S-cell shared a lot of trauma together. Those that remain would do anything for Saffir. Before his retirement he maintained a deadman’s switch, a coded e-mail that would automatically send a request to Saffir’s team. The e-mail contains a copy of Saffir’s manifest with the request that the cars be sanitized, along with Saffir’s safehouse.

The remaining members of S-cell can be encountered at almost any point in the scenario. Their actions, and how they complicate things for the Agents, are up to the Handler. They’re damaged, and care a lot less about containing the problem than about carrying out Saffir’s effective last will and testament. While the players’ Agents might take great care to sneak into a garage and abscond with the contents of a car’s trunk, S-cell is content to whip

a couple molotov cocktails through the rear window.

THE AUCTION

By the time the Agents arrive at the auction, it’s likely some of the mobile Green Boxes are already both in the salvage yard and in the hands of locals who got deals the first day of the auction. The auction will run for several days. The Handler should decide how many have already been sent away.

Pick items from **SAMPLE ITEMS FROM A GREEN BOX** opposite, or use your own creations. You can also use the fantastic Green Box generator found at www.palinola.com/projects/lab/greenbox.

There should be a good mix of mundane items, which don’t really need to be picked up by the Agents, and items that really shouldn’t be handled by civilians. The idea is to frantically split the agents time between trying to buy cars still on auction, breaking into cars in a secure auction lot, and/or running around the city hunting down the car some teenager got for a graduation present.

SAMPLE BUYERS AND LOCATIONS

- A person working three jobs and deep in debt. Taking this car will probably ruin them.
- The first car for a young kid on his way to college. Dad bought the car without consulting mom, who believes it’s a death trap.
- A car repair shop, already converting the car into parts
- A bunch of twenty-somethings who are towing the car to a remote shooting range in Nashua, New Hampshire, for target practice.
- Police looking for a cheap stakeout car. (Alternatively, corrupt police looking for a car to stuff full of drugs and plant on someone.)
- A criminal who owns a towing company, planning to use the truck to tow a car full of contraband. He resists attempts to be stopped and plays dumb: “Guys, I just tow ’em. I don’t know what’s in ’em.”



- An eccentric collector with a high-security garage, who won't part with the car for any reason.

SUGGESTED COMPLICATIONS

- Several locations are on opposite ends of Boston. Traffic is a brutal obstacle when time is of the essence. Boston Logan airport has a digital toll system that will either ping a drivers EZ-Pass, or mail a bill to the address on the registration. Agents using their own vehicles, or company vehicles, may have to explain repeated trips to the airport.
- With the administrative shakeup at Logan, everyone is doubling down on doing a good job. That makes sneaking around or badging through things harder. Pushy Agents who fail **Charisma**, **Bureaucracy**, or **Persuasion** tests may get calls from their day-job supervisors demanding explanations for the airport's complaints.
- Cars taken to the salvage yard may already be crushed into scrap metal, making access and retrieval harder (or releasing things that should stay locked away).

SUGGESTED LUCKY BREAKS

- MASSPORT is a large organization, covering the airport and the whole Port of Boston. There's bound to be a Delta Green friendly in there somewhere. The Handler can invent the details to suit the Agents' interests and approach.
- The Agents may find a car and simply buy it at auction. Such auctioned cars are cheap. If you use the purchase rules from the Agent's Handbook, an auctioned car is priced as if it were junk.
- If Agents are short on funds, their case officer might send an envelope of cash—or, better, the address of a local criminal they can rob.

SAMPLE ITEMS FROM A GREEN BOX

- Two bullet-riddled FBI tactical vests wrapped around a kilo of pure cocaine
- \$25,000, in twenty-dollar bills, still with intact U.S. Mint seal
- Four burner cell phones which call only each other, a disconnected number, and one of the Agent's personal phones

- A complete collection of first editions by Hemingway, with a hastily scrawled post-it note that simply says "True". Agents who take the time to read the books find that these all have different, darker, endings.
- A dot-matrix printout containing the entire 2017 Equifax data breach
- Two opened and re-sealed five-gallon drums labeled Part A and Part B, and a full quart container labeled "DO NOT SHAKE." The quart container contains a mixed, binary explosive which is triggered by shock. If shaken, it explodes with 15% Lethality in a 10-meter Kill Radius.
- The wild, insane ramblings of a madman sketched into the margins of several phone books. They detail a number of Delta Green operations—preferably ones your Agents were on—with vivid detail.
- A 78 rpm record sleeve, yellow with age. The label reads, "All You Are Going to Want to Do Is Get Back There," by Leyland Kirby, Caretaker of the Imperial Conservatory, from the year 1911. If the well-worn shellac disc inside is played, its gentle wind instruments and lively brass suffuse listeners with a sense of aching nostalgia and loss. The record gets stuck several times, requiring corrective action. At the end of the full song, listeners find themselves in Carcosa. Playing the record backwards returns them to reality, but why would they want to leave?

BLOWBACK

The longer the Agents take, the more likely one or more nasty artifacts start causing problems in the city. But there should be only one or two like that. A tense standoff with a guy who bought a used pickup, demanding to know why an Agent is poking around his garage, works better when what's at stake is just a shot-up FBI tactical vest rather than yet another *Necronomicon*.

There's a chance that civilians will go to the police finding many of these items. There's an equal chance that they try to use or comprehend the items

themselves. The results in either case are up to the Handler.

CHARACTERS: S-CELL

Involve enough of Saffir's old teammates to challenge your players. If their true names and personal lives come into play, invent them.

AGENT SAMPSON

A CIA program manager, always connected, always on.


AGENT SANDOVAL

An off-the-grid retired SEAL who says he was on the Bin Laden raid.

AGENT SMITH

A Massachusetts State Police motorcycle cop with a chip on his shoulder.

AGENT SHEMETS

A bookish old professor who's on his third teaching assistant-turned-wife. 

AGENT SAMPSON

STR 11 **CON** 12 **DEX** 13 **INT** 12 **POW** 11 **CHA** 13
HP 12 **WP** 11 **SAN** 45 **Breaking Point** 44

DISORDERS Totemic Compulsion (laptop)

SKILLS Accounting 60%, Alertness 60%, Anthropology 30%, Bureaucracy 60%, Computer Science 50%, Criminology 30%, Disguise 30%, Drive 40%, Firearms 40%, Foreign Language (Spanish) 70%, History 40%, Law 40%, Navigate 30%, Persuade 70%, Psychotherapy 30%, Survival 30%, Unarmed Combat 60%

ATTACKS Hi-Point C9 pistol, 9mm, 40%, damage 1D10

AGENT SANDOVAL

STR 14 **CON** 8 **DEX** 14 **INT** 16 **POW** 13 **CHA** 7
HP 11 **WP** 13 **SAN** 31 **Breaking Point** 26

DISORDERS Intermittent Explosive Disorder; adapted to violence

SKILLS Alertness 80%, Archaeology 20%, Art (Pornography) 20%, Athletics 60%, Demolitions 40%, Dodge 50%, Firearms 80%, Foreign Language (Pashto) 20%, Heavy Weapons 50%, Melee Weapons 50%, Ride 30%, Stealth 50%, Survival 70%, Swim 50%, Unarmed Combat 60%

ATTACKS FN FAL rifle 80%, damage 1D12+2

Underbarrel 40mm grenade launcher 50% (70% including the bonus for an area attack), damage varies

Four 40mm tear-gas grenades, damage stun, Stun Radius 10 m.

Since tear gas doesn't kill people, Sandoval considers it essentially harm-free and uses it liberally.

One 40mm high explosive grenade, Lethality 15%, Kill Radius 10 m.

AGENT SMITH

STR 10 **CON** 14 **DEX** 11 **INT** 10 **POW** 12 **CHA** 15
HP 12 **WP** 12 **SAN** 41 **Breaking Point** 36

DISORDERS Addiction (Alcohol); Addiction (Painkillers)

SKILLS Alertness 60%, Artillery 20%, Bureaucracy 60%, Criminology 50%, Dodge 50%, Drive 50%, Firearms 40%, First Aid 30%, HUMINT 50%, Law 50%, Melee Weapons 50%, Navigate 60%, Occult 30%, Persuade 40%, Ride 60%, Search 50%, Surgery 20%, Survival 30%, Unarmed Combat 60%

ATTACKS SIG Sauer P229 DAK pistol, .40 caliber, 40%, damage 1D10

AGENT SHEMETS

STR 10 **CON** 10 **DEX** 13 **INT** 14 **POW** 17 **CHA** 8
HP 10 **WP** 17 **SAN** 50 **Breaking Point** 34

DISORDERS Depression; Ligyrophobia

SKILLS Anthropology 40%, Art (Brutalist) 20%, Bureaucracy 40%, Dodge 50%, First Aid 30%, Foreign Language (Greek) 30%, Foreign Language (Russian) 70%, History 60%, HUMINT 50%, Navigate 30%, Occult 40%, Persuade 40%, Pharmacy 20%, SIGINT 20%, Swim 40%, Unnatural 25%

INVENTORY A dog-eared copy of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and a UV penlight

RITUALS Finding and Infallible Suggestion.



THE THIRD-MAN FACTOR

*Who is the third who walks
always beside you?*

*When I count, there are only
you and I together*

*But when I look ahead up the
white road*

*There is always another one
walking beside you*

*There is always another one
walking beside you*

*Gliding wrapt in a brown
mantle, hooded*

*I do not know whether a man or
a woman*

*—But who is that on the other
side of you?*

—T.S. Elliot,
“The Waste Land”

BRIEFING

Some suit from God knows what department has pulled you from your regular assignment to be a courier for an evidence package. They pulled rank, and your boss is spooked. It's hush-hush. What's weird is that they gave you the address of a biomedical storage company and a note: “Cylinder. Do not open.” On the back are what you figure must be GPS coordinates for the delivery. What the hell?

THE TRUTH

This contemporary scenario for *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game* is an introduction for one or two Agents not yet part of Delta Green. The mission is designed as a road trip through Delta Green country, where the Agents will confront the unnatural or, in this case, share a seat right next to it.

A SHOTGUN SCENARIO FOR DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

By WILLIAM SCHAR

We begin as the Agents take possession of the cylinder. It's a metal canister, about 30 cm tall and 15 cm in diameter, made of some strange alloy. Its chemical composition defies even an expert geologist. Its design—whether it's new or ancient, and where it might have been made and why—is beyond the most astute archeologist.

Inside is the brain of a former Delta Green operative, code-named Agent Shackleton, reported deceased on an operation in 1996. After the botched mission, his brain was scooped out by the Mi-Go and placed in the container to be taken to the stars, but a Delta Green raid canceled that trip. The canister was recovered by MAJESTIC agents, only to go missing during the confusion of MAJESTIC's merger with Delta Green. Shackleton was left on the shelf, as it were.

A few days ago, the canister's whereabouts crossed the desk of a case officer within the Program. We'll call him Frank. For reasons of his own—perhaps he wanted to avoid faction politics, or perhaps he wanted to see the cylinder for himself before he turned it over to the Program—Frank activated two potential Agents with no knowledge of Delta Green.

After collecting the canister (and contending with the competition, if any; see **THE COMPETITION** opposite), agents must drive night and day to return it to a Program research group.

Unfortunately for our unsuspecting agents, they also have to contend with “the Third Man.”



THE THIRD MAN

What no one knows is that Shackleton is perfectly alive and aware, inside the cylinder. He yearns for freedom, but can never have it. And he has undergone a transformation, developing unnatural powers of telepathy and mental projection.

When the Agents retrieve the canister, they receive a static shock, making contact with Shackleton.

Shackleton can interact only through mental contact and visions. He becomes a ghostly presence, both hindering and helping.

Shackleton is unnatural and dangerous, but should be sympathetic. Build empathy by playing up his fear,

and his desperate relief at making contact, any kind of contact, with another human being. Have Shackleton ask about the Agents' lives. He tries to subtly use his Manipulation abilities to form a Bond with the Agents.

If they engage with him, Shackleton shares that he hasn't really “been anywhere for quite some time.” He yearns to travel; the Agent in contact finds himself or herself looking wistfully into the night sky.

Shackleton suspects that the Agents, ignorant though they are, have been sent to turn him over to scientists with a ruthlessly secret government project. He has no intention of being handed over for study. He uses his powers to convince the Agents to not turn

THE THIRD MAN

STR n/a **CON** n/a **DEX** n/a **POW** 19 **INT** 11 **CHA** 15
HP 1 **WP** 19 **SAN** 0

ARMOR Shackleton is a brain in a can. He's not hard to hit. The canister is bulletproof (equivalent to Armor 20), but can be opened with only a few minutes' effort. If his WP are reduced to zero, his consciousness becomes inert until his WP recover.

SKILLS Bureaucracy 40%, Persuade 50%, HUMINT 67%, Unnatural 50%.

ATTACKS See MANIPULATION and PROJECTION.

PROJECTION By spending 1D4 WP, Shackleton can mentally project himself to be sensed by a nearby character, allowing conversation and even the sensation of physical contact. To the target, Shackleton suddenly seems to appear nearby, with the strange feeling that he had always been there. This lasts up to a minute at a time, but is impossible in combat or if the target is suffering temporary insanity. The target must make a Sanity test. Success costs 0 SAN; the Agent ignores Shackleton as a passing figment, or normalizes his presence, pushing his “otherness” out of mind. Failure costs 1D6 SAN due to the shock of the unnatural, but each failure after the first costs only 1 SAN.

MANIPULATION With an opposed test of Shackleton's CHA against a nearby Agent's POW, Shackleton can briefly control the Agent's senses and motor functions. Shackleton can make the Agent do anything except self-harm. The effect lasts 1D4 turns and costs Shackleton 1 WP per turn. When it succeeds, the target gains an unwanted Bond with Shackleton; its score grows by 1 for each turn Shackleton spends manipulating that Agent, up to the Agent's CHA score. Once Shackleton establishes a Bond with an Agent, Shackleton's CHA test is at +20% to manipulate that agent again; and if the Bond equals the Agent's CHA, the Agent suffers a -20% penalty to resist. The Bond affects the Agent's memories, forming a false history of interactions and trust with Shackleton that grows with the Bond. No other Bonds are affected. If harm comes to Shackleton, the Agent suffers all the penalties that come with harm to a Bond.

SANITY LOSS The revelation that Shackleton is inside the canister costs 1/1D6+1 SAN.

him over. If he becomes desperate, he tries to control an Agent and escape. But he prefers to befriend the Agents and make them willing partners. If all seems hopeless, he may plead for the mercy of death.

THE MI-GO

The mi-go become alerted as Shackleton expends psychic energy. They intend to recover their lost passenger and take him on his long overdue voyage, beyond the stars.

They first try to collect him by sending a protomatter construct—a human-looking thing built and given life by the technology of the mi-go—calling itself *Mr. Noyes*. Noyes appears to be a friendly, thin man wearing a dark business suit.

If Noyes fails, the mi-go sooner or later must come for Shackleton themselves. They will destroy anyone in their way. They view the cylinder as their property and responsibility. They must take Shackleton someplace where only they can care for him. The nature of that care is beyond the scope of this scenario. When they close in—whether it's immediate or only after Shackleton has lived under the Agents' protection for a time—is up to the Handler. Draw the stats for the mi-go from *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game* or from a past edition of *Call of Cthulhu*.

THE COMPETITION (OPTIONAL)

The Agents may not be the only ones looking for the canister. These optional antagonists could intercept them at the storage facility, on the highway, or at any stop along the road trip.

DR. PLUMBER

As the intel came in, "Frank" quietly looked into the matter. Inadvertently, he tipped off Dr. Plumber, a former MAJESTIC scientist now working in the private sector. Plumber sees an opportunity to extract profitable technology from the canister. He sends a

MR. NOYES, smiling construct

STR 18 **CON** 12 **DEX** 10 **INT** 8 **POW** 12 **CHA** 8
HP 16 **WP** 12

ARMOR See PLASTIC.

SKILLS Alertness 60%, Athletics 50%, Swim 90%, Unarmed Combat 55%.

ATTACKS Grapple 55%.

Bash 55%, damage 1D8.

FEEDING If damaged, the protomatter construct can absorb flesh, energy and nutrients from a living target that it has pinned. This drains 1D6 HP from the victim (ignoring body armor) and restores the same amount to the construct. The construct cannot move or attack while feeding.

INHUMAN AFFECT The protomatter construct's Charisma score applies only in the most cursory, superficial interactions. It avoids conversation. To any human who is looking for signs of strangeness, Mr. Noyes' speech patterns and behavior are obviously and increasingly bizarre.

PLASTIC The protomatter construct can ooze, grow, shift, or change its plastic form to fit through almost any gap. Any attack against the construct inflicts only 1 HP damage, except for fire, hypergeometry, or an explosive with Lethality of 40% or more.

SANITY LOSS 1/1D6

team of four mercenaries to acquire it and bring it to a house he's rented for the week. Plumber's history and former role in MAJESTIC are up to the Handler. He could make a worthy nemesis in future operas.

THE INSECTS

A psychic "Talent" under the influence of the insects from Shaggai senses Shackleton's surge of awareness, activity, and hope. The insects want Shackleton as a new slave. If they realize that Shackleton may reveal informa-

tion about Delta Green, they become implacably dedicated to seizing him. They send an operative to intercept and retrieve the object. They do not want to draw attention, so their operative, a South African named Agent Kent, claims to be pursuing the unnatural Mr. Noyes for another intelligence service, the details about which she is not authorized to divulge. Kent offers valuable help, perhaps revealing a weakness (fire!) in Noyes; but as soon as the Agents let their guard down and think all is well, she absconds with the canister. Should Kent get hold of the

AGENT KENT OR A MERCENARY, dangerous professional

STR 13 **CON** 12 **DEX** 10 **INT** 11 **POW** 13 **CHA** 13
HP 13 **WP** 13 **SAN** 60 (30 for Kent) **Breaking Point** 52 (26)

DISORDERS Adapted to violence; adapted to helplessness (Kent only).

ARMOR Kevlar vest (Armor 3; it's reinforced if they expect combat, with Armor 6).

SKILLS Alertness 40%, Athletics 40%, Dodge 50%, Drive 40%, Firearms 40%, First Aid 30%, Heavy Weapons 40%, HUMINT 30% (60% for Kent), Melee Weapons 50%, Military Science (Land) 40%, Persuade 70% (Kent only), Search 40%, Stealth 50%, Survival 50%, Swim 40%, Unarmed Combat 60%.

ATTACKS AR15 carbine 40%, damage 1D12, Armor Piercing 3. 9mm pistol 40%, damage 1D10. Combat knife 50%, damage 1D6, Armor Piercing 3. Unarmed 60%, damage 1D4-1.

CONCLUSIONS



canister, Shackleton drives the agents to fight for it.

If you like, Agent Kent could be host to an insect from Shaggai herself. In that case, Shackleton's telepathy sooner or later detects the alien puppeteer and Shackleton warns the Agents of the danger. If Kent is killed, then the insect attempts to possess an Agent. But if the possessed Agent already has a Bond with Shackleton, the insect becomes strangely vulnerable. Shackleton can use his psychic powers to drain the insect's Willpower points along with those of its host Agent. Reducing the insect to 0 **WP** expels it from the Agent's brain and leaves it incapacitated for hours. Draw the stats for the insect from *Delta Green: The Role-Playing Game* or from a past edition of *Call of Cthulhu*.

Shackleton does everything he can to avoid going to the mi-go, to the Program, or to any of the "Competition." He is rightly terrified of the mi-go. They did this to him and their intentions are alien. But if it looks inevitable, he could resign himself to this fate. Attempting to run away from all parties is impossible. The mi-go will eventually find him, and without the protection of Delta Green they will take him—and anyone with him—to some unthinkable fate beyond the stars.

He is quicker to resign himself to returning to Delta Green's custody. But he has no idea that Delta Green merged with parts of MAJESTIC to become the Program. His mental state and his reaction on realizing how things have changed are up to the Handler.

Losing Shackleton alive to the mi-go or to any of the Competition costs 1D4 **SAN**.

Handing him over to the Program for study gains each Agent 1D4 **SAN**, except for those who have established Bonds with Shackleton; those lose 1D4 instead.

Looking inside the canister to find a human brain—which also kills Shackleton—costs 0/1D4 **SAN**. Shackleton panics and unleashes mental attacks to prevent that from happening.

Destroying Shackleton after realizing the truth of his situation calls for a Sanity test by each Agent. Success gains the Agent 1D4 **SAN**. Failure costs 1D4 **SAN**. ☹



Richmond Corby, formerly of Delta Green, is a dying man. Faced with a creeping end in palliative care, and seeing himself dying, stripped of dignity and pride, through his estranged daughter's eyes, he has decided on a drastic measure. He means to return to the site of a previous investigation into an unusual religious sect, contact the cannibalistic subterranean humanoids the sect worships, and allow them to devour him. This, he believes, will grant him a form of immortality and free his daughter from the burden of caring for him.

Most of his contacts from the old days are dead or insane, and the ones that aren't would kill him if they knew what he wanted to do. He has to reach further into the network of Delta Green to find someone to help him: the Agents.

INVOLVING THE AGENTS

Corby seeks the Agents' help through his contacts in Delta Green. Use whichever Delta Green NPC you think would be willing to pass on a request from a dying ex-agent, bypassing A-Cell or the Program in the process.

Corby's request comes through whatever channels the intermediary uses. They relay:

- The name, cellphone number and address of Richmond Corby.
- Corby's status as a former agent.
- That Corby needs help completing a Delta Green-related task.

All Corby really needs from the Agents is transportation. The symptoms of his late-stage cancer preclude him from driving.

Corby could be introduced in an earlier scenario as an ailing source of information on past investigations

A SHOTGUN SCENARIO FOR DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

BY CHRIS HUTH

(or on Delta Green itself). If questions about ghouls somehow come up, he would opine that unless actively killing people, they're mostly harmless and should be respected, regardless of their physical monstrosity.

THE TARGET

Richmond Corby is a white male, 71 years old, who served Delta Green during the Nineties and 2000s. (Whether he remained in the Outlaws or joined the Program during the 2000s is up to you.) He worked for a federal agency that mirrors one of the Agents' day jobs. He underwent mandatory retirement at 57, and just a few years later was downgraded to "Friendly" status in Delta Green. By the time he was diagnosed with aggressive lung cancer, he only provided operational support to the conspiracy, and hadn't been a direct part of an investigation in a decade.

He lives in hospice care with his daughter, Denise Stovall (white female, 36, fast-food restaurant manager). Her house is a small bungalow in a run-down suburb of Fort Wayne, Indiana. His son, George Corby (white male, 41, bank teller), lives in Chicago, Illinois. Denise's and George's mother, Tammy Guinn (white female, 66, inpatient treatment for alcoholism), divorced Corby in 1999.

A nurse, Monica Truman (black female, 39), visits the Stovall home for a few hours every weekday to attend to Corby's physical care. She is well versed in scams targeting the aged, and keeps Denise up to date with anything odd that happens with Corby or the house.

Meeting Corby is the first challenge in this scenario. Talking in person risks the Agents being seen by his daughter or his nurse. Contact by phone leaves records that later investigators could follow.

Once Corby is in conversation with the Agents, he tells them the following:

- He has one final task. It's related to Delta Green, and it's important.
- He can't put his family or friends at risk by asking for their help.
- All he wants is transportation to a place where the Agents can leave

him, alone. The estimated total driving time is a little under four hours.

- It won't be dangerous if everyone follows his instructions.
- He can't tell them what the task is, but knows and has everything he needs to to complete it.

If pressed for details he may hint that it's more personal than professional: "I've given my life to the group. All I ask is that you give me this one thing back."

If you want, Corby can bargain his knowledge of past Delta Green operations for the Agents' assistance. He offers to fill them in on details (right or wrong) of unnatural phenomena they haven't learned themselves, or on the recent history of Delta Green itself. This scenario could begin with the Agents seeking out Corby for this very reason.

GETTING HIM OUT

Corby's mobility is seriously impaired, and has to take his portable oxygen tank and a walker along with him. He's secreted a small go-bag behind the headboard of his bed in preparation for this final trip. It contains a Glock-17 pistol with four full magazines, a flashlight, a change of clothes (with extra underwear), sealed and stamped goodbye letters to his children, and a notebook.

The notebook is his retirement's work, a collation of everything he remembers about his investigations as part of Delta Green (see **CORBY'S NOTEBOOK** opposite). He tries to hide this notebook from the Agents. Before they 'extract' him, he removes it from the go-bag and conceals it on his person.

Denise leaves for work at 6:45 every morning of the work-week, and returns between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., depending on whether she's gone to see her boyfriend, Tom Baccani (white male, 41, auto shop manager). Denise is not on speaking terms with her ex-husband, Daniel Stovall (white male, 38, unemployed).

Denise regards her father as an unreflective asshole. She's convinced herself that taking care of him is supposed

to help them come to a rapprochement before he dies, but he hates feeling like a burden and displaying weakness in front of his children, and that makes him sullen and uncommunicative.

It's up to the Agents and Corby to work out a plan to get him out of the house and on the road. Demand skill tests as appropriate for their plan during both the extraction and the journey.

ON THE WAY

Denise Stovall reports her father missing the minute she realizes he's not at home. Any details she might have about the abductors (the Agents) she passes on to the Fort Wayne police, who act on the information as appropriate.

Once he's out the house, Corby tries to bum cigarettes off of any Agents who smoke. He also needs to use the bathroom frequently, takes antacids often, and suffers carsickness half a dozen times during the journey.

When he's close to the final destination, Corby cajoles the Agents to stop at a pizza place. While visiting the bathroom, he rips the pages with the Charnel Meditation ritual out of his notebook, and burns the rest in a sink or garbage can.

His last act on the road is to mail the goodbye letters to his children.

WHERE HE'S GOING

Corby's destination is a cemetery near Bethel, Ohio, specifically the space in front of three old mausolea: vandalized relics of families now all dead or dispersed. This is a sacred place to the a ghoul cult, *die Nachtbrüder*. In his notebook, Corby has a rough map pointing to the cemetery, though the map is sketchy enough that Agents can't tell what it means until they are close to Clermont County or if they are familiar with the area.

The ghoul cult is made up of a small handful of ghouls (equal to the number of Agents) and a penumbra of humans whose devotion consists of providing their bodies, and the bodies

CORBY'S NOTEBOOK

In English. Study time: 40 hours. Unnatural +3%, SAN loss 1d6.

A battered spiral-bound notebook filled with dense handwriting, diagrams, and pasted-in photos and clippings, organized by operation. Here, Corby has correlated the contents of his time in Delta Green, detailing past investigations including the Bethel ghoul cult. A **Bureaucracy** test after studying it identifies the real identities of two other members of Delta Green (four on a critical success).

RECOMMENDED RITUALS: Charnel Meditation, and two other spells of your choice that put the operators in contact with unnatural entities.

of their family members, to the ghouls upon death.

The ghouls usually take the appearance of past cult elders when receiving the bodies, which they devour out of sight of the human cultists. The cultists's creed tells them that their deceased relatives are made immortal through these rites. The ghouls allow them to believe that, and may believe it themselves in a way. It is immaterial.

CONCLUSIONS

Agents can bring matters to a head by either demanding full disclosure from Corby before cooperating, by figuring out his plan, or by following his instructions.

If the Agents refuse to cooperate without disclosure of Corby's plan, he euphemistically describes what he wants to do: he knows a "secret group" who, if he gives up his current life, will allow him to "live forever, in a way," with them.

- Threatening him with death means nothing. He defies the Agents to kill him. If he is threatened, a **HUMINT** test (with a 20% bonus) reveals that he's eager for a

violent confrontation that will end in his death.

- He rationalizes objections to feeding himself to a ghoul by declaring that it's not ultimately any stranger than embalming, the Tibetan practice of *chöd*, or contemporary euthanasia. If any Agent has expressed opinions to Corby about an existential outlook on life or the falsity of human beliefs, Corby brings that up while making this argument.

Once Corby is at the cemetery, alone, at night, he casts Charnel Meditation

and waits. The ghouls arrive within an hour. Their leader wears the body of a tiny, ancient woman in Eisenhower-era clothes. The others, in their monstrous, native forms, lurk in the shadows at the edge of vision. They try to outflank anyone watching Corby.

Once the ghouls arrive, Corby tells them what he wants. The lead ghoul interviews him about his sincerity and understanding. After ten minutes, the ghouls are convinced and lead him into one of the decrepit mausolea, and then into the ghoul tunnels where the ceremony is consummated.

If the Agents threaten or act against the ghouls in Corby's presence, he tries to interpose himself between the Agents and the ghouls to let the ghouls escape and get himself killed.

REWARDS AND PENALTIES

Discovering Corby's plan beforehand costs each Agent 0/1 **SAN**. Realizing Corby's plan while it's happening or piecing it together afterward costs 0/1D4 **SAN**. Preventing Corby from being consumed by ghouls gains each Agent 1 **SAN**. ☹

RICHMOND CORBY, everything hurts, age 71

STR 3 **CON** 5 **DEX** 3 **INT** 13 **POW** 12 **CHA** 11
HP 4 **WP** 12 **SAN** 26 **Breaking Point** 24

SKILLS (Agency-related skill)80%, (Agency-related skill)70%, Driving30%, Firearms 20%, Occult 70%, Stealth 20%, Unnatural 15%

ATTACKS Glock-17 20%, damage 1D10.

DISORDERS Totemic Compulsion (Notebook), Depression

BONDS Denise Stovall, daughter (3)

ADVANCED LUNG CANCER Corby is incapable of moving faster than a meter or two every turn. Each turn that he engages in strenuous activity, he must succeed at a CON test or be stunned.



A SHOTGUN SCENARIO FOR DELTA GREEN: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

BY VIKTOR EIKMAN

In 1981, a third electronic game is installed at the only arcade in Gresham, Oregon. The young flock to see the new title while the Iranian hostage crisis comes to a close in the world beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Polybius has a plain black cabinet. The graphics are a single, glowing shade of green. The only movement is the player's cursor drawing lines to close irregular polygons, and the level clock counting down from 30 seconds. It feels more like school than a game. Most customers soon go back to playing *Asteroids*.

A couple of the kids have grown into patience, but the game tests them. The first to get past level six is Eutimio Rodriguez, the 13-year-old son of a bricklayer. He's the one who under-

stands that the shape on level six needs to be rotated with the second stick for the gap to appear. It's not a triangle. It's a pyramid.

In the last hours of January 29th, while the clerk sweeps the candy wrappers into a pile on the brightly checkered floor of the Campground Arcade, Eutimio and his friends are stuck at level 16. Three times in a row, the clock hits zero and the game is over. The players groan and curse the name of Royal Road Entertainment, the only name on the splash screen.

An adult, playing *Space Invaders* in a suit and tie, makes an offhand remark. He seems to know the clerk and says he played the game in New York. He tells the kids to "lift the stick." They hit level 24 over Super Bowl Sunday, mes-

merized by the four-dimensional levels. They never see the man again.

There is progress all through February. Only school and money hold the players back. New kids tune in briefly, but they cannot follow the action into five dimensions, or even comprehend what the players are getting from the experience. The dedicated ones are quiet now, reverent, repeating familiar levels as though each move contains the next, pushing deeper into unknown territory. Jenny Alexander, a girl of 11, gives up *Polybius*. She complains of dizziness and headaches.

On March 1st, Jenny's brother Brian and his friend Gabriela Urbina run out of coins and call it a night, leaving Eutimio playing alone. A day later, strangers roll *Polybius* past Eutimio's mother while she's raising her voice at the clerk. He swears he doesn't know where Eutimio might have gone if he didn't go home.

Two hours after the cabinet is moved out of Gresham on March 2nd, Gabriela Urbina is having an argument with her mother, Julieta. It is about breaking curfew, wasting her allowance on *Polybius*, and spending too much time with boys. Without a sound, Gabriela disappears in front of her mother.

BACKGROUND

Polybius is an experiment in computer-assisted poristic instruction techniques inspired by the study of the Roswell craft. Prolonged exposure to the "game" causes structural changes in the right parietal lobe and, to a lesser extent, the left prefrontal cortex. The effect resembles that of the bacterium causing leprosy, insofar as the first affected cells become migratory and reproduce as stem cells, gradually forming abnormal attachments to the central nervous system in a highly coordinated manner.

The research project is named after the anecdote where Ptolemy Soter asked for a simple way to learn geometry. Euclid told the ruler that there was no royal road to the subject. Indeed, adult students in Project ROY-

AL ROAD did not have the necessary brain plasticity to navigate in higher dimensions. A child, orphaned in one of MJ-6's purges, showed more promise, but the project lost her in another purge. Eutimio and Gabriela are the best yet. The two children each took a step at an angle perpendicular to everything they'd known before.

HOOK

Sergeant Linda Meyers at the Gresham Police Department sends out a plea for state or federal assistance in profiling the four parents of Eutimio and Gabriela, on the suspicion that these working-class Hispanics are confining or murdering their children for reasons unknown.

An old boys' network in the military and federal law enforcement notices the plea. Delta Green Agents who take the overt approach as federal investigators can arrive in Gresham March 3. Sergeant Meyers will take them through main suspect Julieta Urbina's testimony to Gabriela's miraculous disappearance.

INVESTIGATION

Jenny Alexander still plays pinball at Campground, bothered by local reporters angling for a backlash against the videogame industry, nearing its \$3.2 billion peak before a coming crash. Jenny doesn't know how her friends disappeared. She's worried about her brother, Brian. He isn't feeling well. He never gave up on *Polybius*.

Meanwhile, men in USPS uniforms are installing *Polybius* at the Crackatoo, a bigger arcade in downtown Portland. The men have wiped the leaderboard. They proceed from the arcade to their hotel, change into dark suits, take sidearms and FBI badges from their suitcases, and head back to the suburb of Gresham to bad-jacket the Urbina family. The men are wary. On February 6, President Reagan authorized the Accord. MJ-6 is being reorganized. Any complication at this

time may put Project ROYAL ROAD on ice, but only for a few decades.

There will be complications. Soon, Brian Alexander clings white-knuckled to his mathematics textbook while EMTs roll him into the local hospital. As much as he used to hate it, the book's margins are now full of complex geometries. He is cold and shaking, terribly nauseous. Shapes turning in his mind are turning his body inside out. The Agents and the other government men will want to keep his autopsy from going down in history. If they fail, or disagree spectacularly on the repetitive use of lethal force, it may take the attempted assassination of the President on March 30 to push the story from the news.

JOHNNY AND MAX

Johnny Odine, the clerk at the Campground Arcade, is a Vietnam veteran from a family of carnies. His memories are all bad but his popcorn is excellent. For himself, he prefers the morphine he got from "Max" Thomson, an old army buddy who recently came back into town with a sweet deal on a short lease. In reality, Thompson is a trouble-shooter for MAJESTIC. (See his description on page 64.)

Thompson said nothing to Odine, letting him think the game was stolen. That got things rolling while the back office for Project ROYAL ROAD, set up the true operation. For Thompson this includes taking the identity of Samuel B. Kremsky, FBI. In Portland he is otherwise Cliff Steiner, a Business Semcon salesman. That local electronics firm closed down in 1979. It has quietly reopened under new management, its phone number routed to Maryland, its office unfurnished.

Thompson told the kids how to crack level 16. Now he's cleaning up again. He can arm his team well, but his first strategy will be to misdirect the Agents while his men fabricate evidence against Urbina. His superiors will maneuver to have Kremsky officially assigned to the investigation, in the absence of prior paperwork. Thompson will not be curious about the clerical er-

MAX THOMSON

STR 11 **DEX** 11 **CON** 13 **INT** 11 **POW** 7 **CHA** 8
HP 12 **WP** 7 **SAN** 31 **Breaking Point** 28

DISORDERS Adapted to violence.

SKILLS Alertness 60%, Athletics 50%, Firearms 60%, Heavy Weapons 45%, HUMINT 50%, Melee Weapons 45%, Persuade 50%, Stealth 55%, Survival 60%, Swim 60%, Unarmed Combat 50%, Unnatural 3%.

ATTACKS .45 pistol 60%, damage 1D10
Knife 45%, damage 1D4
Unarmed combat 50%, damage 1D4-1

ror at first, but if the Agents persist, the gloves come off.

Eutimio's parents Chaco and Febe Rodriguez have lost their only son. They half expect him back at any moment. "He moves as he pleases," they say, stapling their flyers to telephone poles. When Eutimio was grounded for spending borrowed money at the arcade, he would find a way out of the house. He had a knack for the unexpected approach. A clever kid.

Alejandro and Julieta Urbina believe that God has taken their daughter, Gabriela, as punishment for their refusal to trust her. They have five other children, two of whom shared a room with the missing girl. On her nightstand, untouched, stands a slim origami star. Touch it the wrong way and it unravels, meters of graph paper snaking impossibly out of hidden inner dimensions.

Polybius weighs 209 kg. Disassembling the cabinet reveals military-grade ROLM electronics. A DARPA safe box

holds a 50 MB disk drive with complete usage data and a Betamax VCR hooked up to the user-facing camera. The hidden camera records every attempt to beat every level, until it's beaten for the first time. Children on the tape stare intently into the monochrome glow, as if into a coming world.

ADAPTATION

This scenario supports a purist style of play. The Agents are not likely to learn the fate of the children. The attempt to do so is just a backdrop for their meeting their MAJESTIC counterparts, members of another clandestine government faction with similar cover stories. This makes for a game heavy on deception and espionage, light on closure and spectacle. To shift that balance, make any of the following changes:

Add a monster. A dimensional shambler slips in through Brian Alexander's mental spasms. The hospital erupts.

Bring in Delta Green at a later stage, when people have begun to disappear in Portland. The cause will be relatively obvious, reducing investigation time.

Make Gabriela a poltergeist. Her handwriting extrudes from curved surfaces, leading children to the glowing screen. She cannot return, in the same way that a piece of paper cannot be perfectly flattened after it is folded. She needs help, she writes. She needs an army. Something in her terrifying new existence ate Eutimio, and it will eat her too.

BACKGROUND

Read about *Polybius* here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polybius_%28video_game%29

CHARACTERS

"MAX" THOMSON

On paper, Maxwell Thomson was killed in action in Vietnam. In reality, he did some of the cleaning after Operation OBSIDIAN. He never made it all the way through special operations training, but policing the eggheads back home is better than he expected out of life. He will much rather kill than risk this job. ☹

It was during the late 1970s and early '80s that I was first exposed to conspiracy theories revolving around the Biblical apocalypse described in the Revelation of Saint John the Divine. I got my first dose from Hal Lindsey's classic yarn of Millennialist conspiracy nonsense, *The Late, Great Planet Earth*. Obviously Lindsey's end of the world proved no more accurate than the Mill-erite "Great Disappointment" of 1844. But Lindsey's tale of the rise of the Antichrist popularized a number of enduring bits of conspiracy lore. One of them is the so-called Mark or Number of the Beast, the sign worn by those who abandon God that ensures their ability to participate in the society and economy during the Tribulation. In the world of Delta Green, there may be more sense to the nonsense than we would like.

Lindsey pushed early ideas that the Mark would be something like an identity card, possibly a credit card, or even (for Americans, anyway) the Social Security number. During the 1980s the Mark got a technological upgrade and was often interpreted as a subcutaneously implanted radio frequency identification (RFID) chip that would hold all of a citizen's data, including criminal history, medical history and credit rating. This chip, easily scanned by the authorities, would determine who receives shelter, food and the protection of the state. These chips would be just one part of a state surveillance system heavily inspired by Orwell's *1984*, with cameras seeing everything, microphones hearing everything, and informants eagerly analyzing every phrase, action or facial expression for a sign of disloyalty.

As popular as it was to speculate about the eminent arrival of this totalitarian surveillance state, almost no one ever discussed the massive expense of creating such a system. There's a massive amount of infrastructure required to surgically implant the chips into every man, woman and child in the country. Who would perform this surgery? How many implants could they do per day? What would be the estimated cost of wiring up the United States with the kind of camera surveillance coverage that London currently has? And even if the time, manpower and

money existed to create such a system, no matter how well distributed it might be, there would always be blind spots and uncovered areas in the surveillance net. Could rural Wyoming ever be as well-surveilled as lower Manhattan?

The thing about imagining the future is that it is almost always informed by biased expectations. Thirty years ago, at the dawn of the Digital Revolution, the technology of the Mark of the Beast was easily imagined but no one could conceive that it would be a commercial success. No one thought that the perfect device for monitoring every word, deed, personal contact, physical location, commercial and intellectual activity of the population would be highly sought after by consumers, who would pay for the privilege of ensuring that the technology used to track them is kept as up to date as possible.

Now, we all have smartphones.

Combining the power of a mobile phone, a camera, a GPS positioning system, and a web browser, the smartphone allows customers to engage in limitless commercial, political and social activity that renders them, for all intents and purposes, complete transparent to anyone who cares to apply the time and technology to look.

Having OK Google on your phone means the microphone is always hot and connected to a global communications system. Just like tracer rounds, that shit works both ways. You can always reach everyone, and everyone can always reach you. It doesn't take much technical know-how. Local and city police can perform tracking and monitoring functions that were once reserved for national intelligence agencies. Even non-state actors and private citizens can get into the game. Any number of commercial devices for monitoring cell phones are marketed as means to catch cheating spouses. If someone wants to see where you are, know who you're with and what you are doing, they almost certainly can.

DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

If you think that the public has failed to truly understand the implications of



DIRECTIVE 112:

MARK OF THE BEAST

DIRECTIVES FROM A-CALL

BY ADAM SCOTT GLANCY

this situation, don't worry. The CIA hasn't figured it out yet, either. Or at least, considering that former CIA Director John Brennan's AOL mail account was hacked and distributed to WikiLeaks in 2015, I'm going to have to conclude that there hasn't been much of an improvement in the CIA's data security since 2003.

On Feb. 17, 2003, a CIA team abducted Egyptian cleric and suspected terrorist Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, known as Abu Omar, in Milan, Italy. They smuggled him to Egypt, where security forces subjected him to four years of detention, interrogation and torture before finally releasing him for lack of evidence. The abduction became a scandal in Italy, with the Italian government first denying involvement and later being implicated. Most significantly for our purposes, it was revealed that the CIA agents had conducted the operation while carrying their personal cell phones around and had made personal and operational calls while in the field. Milan police tracked their movements by their proximity to cell towers. Indictments were issued for twenty-six Americans and nine Italians connected to the abduction. Most were convicted in absentia. All because these supposed intelligence professionals couldn't put their cell phones down for the nine days it took to execute the operation.

Of course, just putting the smartphone down doesn't solve the problem. You know who don't have Facebook accounts? Spooks. Special forces operators. Counter-intelligence officers. If you're a technologically savvy professional in government service, steering clear of social media applications and smartphone technology immediately identifies you as either a Luddite or a member of that rarified community of intelligence professionals. And there are only so many Luddites whose mailing address is in the suburbs of the District of Columbia.

Being a digital black hole with no online footprint is even more revealing than any loose-lipped social media presence, because you immediately stand out as an anomaly. The KGB did an excellent job during the Cold War of identifying CIA officers under dip-

lomatic cover by comparing the work and living patterns of the State Department and military personnel assigned to embassies and bases. Too often, CIA officers working under diplomatic and military cover did not live by the rules and regulations that governed the lives of foreign service officers. They chose to enjoy their immunity from and lack of accountability to the rules of their cover agencies, so they were embarrassingly easy to identify. The KGB simply looked for anything bureaucratically anomalous. Who has more money to spend? Who can travel at a moment's notice? Who seems to have more time on their hands? Whenever the KGB identified someone who did not fit the proper patters, they were one step closer to identifying their opposition. Of critical importance here is the fact that the KGB gathered their criteria for proper Foreign Service procedures by analyzing non-classified U.S. government documents governing overseas postings.

OPEN SOURCES

Over the years, those of us with amateur interest in the world of intelligence have heard many variations the -INT abbreviation to describe sources of data. SIGINT, IMINT, HUMINT, even fanciful sources like ARCHINT, you've seen them all. One of the most important, and most easily forgotten, is open-source intelligence or OSINT—data gathered from unclassified, public sources. There are millions of them. Governments, businesses, educational and scientific institutions, various non-state actors, and private individuals constantly generate reports on environmental, economic and political conditions in every corner of the earth. The vast majority of these reports are intended for public consumption and are not closely held or confidential. In our games, it's worth remembering that all the clues and plot hooks for Investigators in the 1920s and 1930s were OSINT: publically available, unclassified data harvested using the vaunted "Library Use" skill. Investigators didn't need security clearances to find what they were looking for. Neither do

today's intelligence agencies. All those agencies need is the algorithms and analysts to churn through the mountains of OSINT readily available via the Internet.

Think of all the personal data that is deliberately shared online via social media and professional employment sites. Think of the millions of political blogs operating on any given day, churning out amateur interviews and analysis. Political blogs tell us more about what the blogger thinks about the world than it does about the world, which might be a first step towards a recruiting pass. Think of the thousands of hours of video uploaded to the Internet during the upheavals of the Arab Spring or the protests following the 2009 Iranian elections. If the Chinese ever try another military crackdown like they did in 1989, foreign intelligence agencies, NGOs and journalists would be overwhelmed by the amount of smartphone footage pouring out of the People's Republic—despite its gargantuan efforts to control what the population can see, say and do online. Most of the footage shown by news sites isn't collected by camera teams but by folks with smartphones, either making the video freely available or selling it to the news services. Everyone's a potential AP stringer.

Massively available OSINT also lowers the bar for entry for non-state actors engaging in cyber-espionage. Los Zetas, a Mexican drug cartel, monitored social media to identify critics, kill them, and then distribute proof of the killings in order to intimidate others. The victims provided all the details required to find them. No hacking required.

Not only does everyone spy on themselves with their smartphones, but they also provide surveillance of everyone else, including their neighbors, natural events which might otherwise go unrecorded, and even the agents of state power. A fair number of American law enforcement officers have found themselves embarrassed or even indicted for crimes because of data collected by private citizens with smartphones. There's an app that allows video to be uploaded immediately to the ACLU,

ensuring that it won't be lost with the destruction of the phone. The Mark of the Beast cuts both ways.

COVER YOUR TRACKS

This can lead to any number of complications for Delta Green Agents attempting to conduct an investigation, whether interviewing a witness or attempting to resolve a mission via less-than-legal means. What happens if the witness whips out a smartphone to record the interview for a blog or podcast? What happens if a gun-battle is caught on video and the Agents can't spin the story to keep out of trouble? What if some supernatural event is recorded and shared? How do you keep Delta Green and its mission hidden if there are all these eyes out there just waiting to capture the next YouTube sensation?

Part of the answer to this problem lies in the difference between *Clandestine* and *Covert* operations. The Clandestine operation takes place without anyone seeing it. The Covert operation is seen but its true purpose, why it's being done, and who has ordered it remain secret. The best Covert operation is never recognized as an intelligence operation. The same strictures apply to Delta Green. Deception and misdirection are key in any Night at the Opera, like a stage magician performing in front of an audience. There may be hundreds of eyes watching but, with enough misdirection, the magician still gets away with the trick.

Agents should always take steps to ensure that even if they are under surveillance, nothing about their true agenda or identities can be learned. Nothing should be as it appears. Just because the Agents have badges doesn't mean that they should flash them. Agents should always have cover stories and a false identities ready when making public enquiries.

In an age of ubiquitous digital surveillance and codebreaking, Agents should always assume that anything they say on a phone, or send by text or email, will wind up in a database somewhere. They can't say, write, pho-

tograph or record anything that could lead some unsuspecting NSA employee to stumble across the unnatural horrors Delta Green is trying to conceal. Use burner phones to communicate, and make those communications as innocuous and vague as possible. The Moscow rules aren't enough. Delta Green Agents need to think like the criminals they are.

The good news is, not every revelation is a disaster. Any noteworthy video or audio uploaded to the Internet is going to be shared and copied far quicker than it can be deleted or corrupted. Protecting Delta Green's mission is less about covering up the evidence than muddying the evidence. Internet videos are buried in an impenetrable jungle of pranks, special-effects resumé pieces, hoaxes, propaganda and urban myth-making. Maybe a video of a byakhee turns up on YouTube. What does it prove? That someone is gifted in creating a prosthetic monster or CGI effects? What has all the footage of UFOs done to prove the existence of aliens? There are hundreds of hours of video of chemtrails, yet not everyone is convinced of their threat.

Even when reality appears before us, we don't always accept it. What have the film and photos taken during the Apollo missions done to convince those who believe the Moon landings were a hoax? What has the footage of the 9/11 attacks done to convince Truthers that the attacks weren't an inside job? Or to persuade those who insist planes never hit the buildings? We live in an age where mass shootings are discounted as "false flag operations" and the grieving parents of the victims are discounted as "crisis actors" trying to manipulate the public. You don't have to look much further than the vaccine-autism hoax to see that no amount of evidence will move believers from the truths they hold most dear. If reality can be so easily dismissed when it conflicts with comfortable beliefs, why would any evidence of the existence of the Cthulhu Mythos be accepted?

It's not that Delta Green Agents couldn't go online and confuse the facts. But they often need not bother. The confusion will be done for them by

millions of bored know-it-alls, happy to weigh in with their ignorance and presumptions to ensure that there is no such thing as indisputable proof. Delta Green Agents might be better served by ensuring that the evidence gets picked up by the right online community to ensure maximum confusion. Attaching the name of a particularly odious messenger to an otherwise accurate message can be the most effective way of discrediting a story. Would you take a news story seriously if *The Daily Sturmer* first reported it? Would you trust anything else said by those who would take it seriously?

NEVER ALONE

In terms of running a Night at the Opera, the Handler should present these complications of the Information Age at whatever level is going to provide the most atmosphere and entertainment. Some players might find themselves paralyzed by the hard choices provided by this world of near total surveillance, while others might find creative ways to game the system to their operational advantage. Encourage players to use every tool at their Agents' disposal. Then use those tools yourself to enhance their paranoia and fear.

One thing should be undeniable: Access to smartphones does not "ruin" the mood and atmosphere of Delta Green. Instant communications are supposed to mean that rescue, reinforcements and research are always just a phone call away, and some players worry that smartphones undermine the sense of isolation that is so important to horror. This is an unwarranted complaint. Smartphones can be lost or damaged. They can roam out of coverage and even be electromagnetically interfered-with by the supernatural. But even worse than a cell phone failing at a critical moment is the prospect of one working exactly as designed. Communication of horrors makes those horrors even harder to stop. The modern smartphone makes the potential for terror and trouble greater than ever in the espionage-laced background of Delta Green. ☞

KISS THE WORLD, KISS THE SKY

MESSAGE
IN A BOTTLE

BY BRET KRAMER

*In the sleepy west
of the woody east
Lives a valley full
Full of pioneers
They're not just kids
To say the least*

— The Pixies,
“Umass”

Christ Doug, oh Christ

She pulled this with you too then? I knew it! It didn't add up. No texts, no calls...

I knew she was trouble... no worse than half the other lunatics at Miskatonic. The Trustifarians, the legacies, the suicidal poets... But Noelle was different — the weird Goth yet Amish clothes — but so damn smart. She knew chemistry, astronomy, theology. Her feud with those dipshits at Miskatonic Pagans was gold in my book.

I remember that night when I first saw her, even before you dated her. She was smoking outside Orne. Offered my lighter — Christ I thought I was smooth. I knew of her, how many albinos were there at MU? I tried to get her number when I ran into her at a party where those guys made bad wine... before those two girls hanged themselves in Pierce Hall?

What's with Miskatonic, Doug? Number two in student suicides? Shit, if it wasn't for Binghamton... What did Barron's say? “The Poison Ivy?”

Jesus, I'm still feeling whatever she dosed me with.

You don't care, haven't had company since the summer. I knew Alaska was bullshit! Before you, there was Neil, then that German dickbag, then Andre... Reed my ass... Didn't her frosh roommate disappear? All those flyers and cops... Oh Jesus, how did I miss it?

You're right Doug, it was the tits. And the way she would always put on The Pogues when we were fucking. I never liked that album, but Jesus... I felt bad, she was your ex and all, but you were gone and she was always right there...

I should have wondered why she never mentioned you... or her family. Did you see them?

Christ, “You can meet my folks” should have been a red goddamn flag, you know? “It's just a quick drive up Route 2”, a “traditional Holiday”, “my only family obligation” blah blah. Oh fuck, man. I could be in Michigan Doug. Not here, with you. The way

they watched us... And that pregnant girl — no way she's eighteen...

I was happy to go for a walk.

“Whateleys've been here generations” she told me, climbing that hill. She showed me those stones... I wanted to run when I saw them. Big, but no snow... humming.

We went to a spot out of the wind, where she went to think when she was little. “I didn't want to be some breed cow,” she said. “So I studied, I fought with the Family to go to school. They beat me, called me wicked, ungrateful. I would never back down, so they made a deal.” And I get it, I understand. Don't we all want to get away from home? See the world? We are her ticket out Doug.

We'd talked to me about magic before. She would lay there next to me in the dark, watching headlights track across the ceiling of her room, her mangy cat's silhouette. “The mind, the will, can remake the world, so long as you want it,” she told me. The world won't always be the same. It'll all come crashing down, leaving only the strong... I figured she was high, and her ancient gods just a gimmick, a pose.

I was fucked when I met her. Even if I run, where can I go? It's all state park and deserted farms.

She said I could help her with a little magic. I saw something up there. I felt the drug as she gestured and, for a second, I saw it... tried to scream.

What lie will she tell about me, Doug?

I'd like to think she doesn't take any joy in it. Only... shit Doug, they're coming. Time's up.

Up by the stones, I fell when I saw it. She knelt down next to me, pushing aside that lock of hair. I tried to ask why. She smiled and said, “Everybody make sacrifices, honey.”

Tell me, Doug, did it hurt? I could barely recognize you without the... well, they left your face. Please, I have to know... do they kill you before or after? ☹