

Hypergraphia

Issue 1 - November 2018

IN THIS ISSUE:

- LANGUAGE, WRITING, AND WORDS IN THE CTHULHU MYTHOS
- SAFEGUARDING DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE
- A CALL OF CTHULHU SHORT: REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST
- SCENARIO SEEDS, NPCs, AND ARTIFACTS

CALL of
PTHULHU



HYPERGRAPHIA

Hypergraphia

Issue 1, November 2018

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Submissions

Interested in submitting content for Issue #2? Email us at hypergraphia@weirdworks.org for submission guidelines.

Editor's Welcome

BY SEAN MURPHY

Welcome to Issue #1 of Hypergraphia, the 'zine dedicated to weird works in gaming. The intent of this publication is to provide a place for fans to build upon the works of H.P. Lovecraft and other writers. For those of you who encouraged us after our trial run at the 2017 NecronomiCon Convention in Providence, we appreciate your support.

The theme of this issue is “Language, Writing, and Words in the Cthulhu Mythos”, a topic that would have been close to Lovecraft’s heart. His cast of characters tend to be lonely scholars whose curiosity drives them to read dangerous books. While the *Necronomicon* is the most well-known of his fictional tomes, his imaginary bookshelf also features such grimoires as the *Book of Azathoth*, the *Dhol Chants*, and *The Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan*. Some of his protagonists, such Chief Librarian Henry Armitage and Professor of Classical Languages Warren Rice, use this nightmarish lore to stop the horror, while others such as Randolph Carter suffer the consequences of unlocking forbidden knowledge.

Lovecraft also understood the power of the spoken word to express otherworldliness. He created the Tsath-yo and R’lyehian tongues as well as referenced others such as the serpent men’s Aklo, the Naacal from Mu, and the Atlantean Senzar. The chants of the cultists of Cthulhu become infinitely more horrifying in the guttural tongue of the city beneath the sea: Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl fhtagn.

Why did Lovecraft focus on language and words? Perhaps the best clue comes from his story “The Shadow Out of Time”, where Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee endures a series of dreams where he lives life in the body of a member of the timeless alien race known as the Yith. He recovers from his bouts of amnesia and returns to his normal life until a series of events leads him to the deserts of Australia, where he finds a journal untouched for “a million centuries” that recounts his dreams in his own handwriting. In connecting dreams to his precious books, Lovecraft establishes that language, writing and words are a portal to whole other worlds. We hope you enjoy our little attempts to explore these strange spaces.

*...and told me he had seen
I asked him
I had*

Can Siri Cast?

*...I had
...the
...to the rear. On the way a shell
...the*

BY ANTHONY LEE DUDLEY

THE HIGH PRIEST GLANCED AROUND THE DARKENED CAVERN WITH A FANATIC'S EYES, HIS FACE SOFTENING AS HIS CROOKED SMILE PASSED ALMOST FONDLY OVER THE RED-ROBED CULTISTS AS THEY BUSIED THEMSELVES WITH THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR THIS MOST UNHOLY OF RITUALS. THE HIGH PRIEST HAD TRAVELLED FAR AND WIDE IN HIS SEARCH FOR MINIONS AND INFORMATION; STEAMSHIPS AND AIRCRAFT ALLOWING HIM TO GLEAN HIS FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE, ENCRYPTED TELEGRAMS AND DIVERSE MESSENGERS KEEPING HIS ACQUISITIONS SECRET FROM THE PRYING EYES OF THE BUSYBODIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HOW FORTUNATE THAT THEY DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE POLICE FORCES IN OTHER FAR-FLUNG COUNTRIES KNEW. BUT HOW COULD THEY?

Even now, messengers must be sent to gather the Enlightened. Sacrifices who would not be missed brought to the sanctum, their very essence to be drawn forth to feed his spell!

Perhaps, he mused silently, in

the future there would be an easier way. He watched as the summoning preparations began in earnest, steeling himself for his work ahead. He could not contain a laugh.

If indeed there was any future at all."

When writing horror, it is easy to reach for the clichés. One of the reasons there are clichés is because they are good at evoking a feeling or atmosphere after all.

But what about when the old faithful don't apply?

Modern horror does not always have an easy time of it.

If we relocate our High Priest to the here and now, potentially many aspects of his job become much easier. No need to climb the Mountains of Despair or search out the lost city of D'clin to find a tome of dark, ancient wisdom if it has been digitally scanned in and is available for download. Why travel the world searching for perfect followers when a comprehensive online Mythos training program can do much of the weeding out for you?

ISSUE ONE

Conversely, our High Priest could have a much tougher time keeping his machinations secret from the authorities. Joined-up policing and intelligence shared among agencies around the globe, even a local Sheriff's quick cell phone call to the next town over, mean that you would have to go a long way before your anonymity was even close to being assured.

Ironically, modern surveillance techniques and technology may give some of the old ways more relevance. Burner cell phones and 128-bit encryption aside, if the message doesn't exist except in the mind of the messenger it is fairly secure.

Technology can also make less relevant certain aspects of more

traditional works. Faster transport, better communications and easier access to knowledge, all make it harder to evoke the feelings of isolation and helplessness so important to much traditional horror. It can also be much harder to countenance a threat that cannot be defeated by a modern military, or even well equipped police force.

Saying this, how can we create new horrors out of the very trappings of modern life that make us less fearful?

In games, the cost of spells and incantations is often measured in the life energy of casters or sacrifices. This is clearly a powerful energy source with the source of the energy usually aware, albeit not always willing.



HYPERGRAPHIA

What if a 'Like' on a social media platform also imparts a small amount of energy? A tiny amount that wouldn't be noticed by the clicker. One hundred 'Likes' might not power much, but what about a thousand? A million? A viral spell powered by an unknowing, anonymous mob.

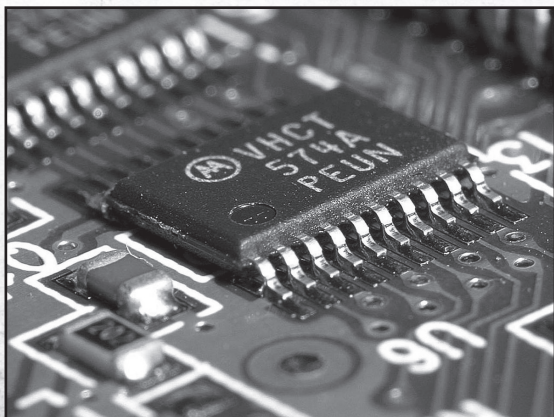
The web can be a dark place, a place where people can give vent to their most deeply hidden feelings with relative impunity. It is much easier to recruit to your cult when you can see everyone's profile page. A simple web search easily reveals like-minded individuals. Swipe left if they're only interested in long walks, vegetable rights, and peace. Swipe right if they also want to feed their neighbor to a ravenous Star Goat. Probably.

Could the echo chamber of an internet forum birth a gestalt entity? Imagine an entity that feeds on the vitriol being posted. As the creature from *Forbidden Planet* is created from the subconscious mind of Dr. Morbius, so this entity could embody the dark urges of internet trolldom made manifest.

Once brought to life, can the digital entity escape its virtual prison? Perhaps it would need to kill all of those that helped call it forth. A thousand deaths around the world, unusual in

that they were all found in front of their computer screens and linked only by their occasional posting on the same forum. Or are the creators linked by an MMORPG? The spell cast by their avatars, more real than even they realised, gave the entity shards of its own existence within their real-life minds? Suddenly a group of gamers, forgetting their everyday lives, are driven by the need to find other hosts. Upon finding another of its ilk, one of the existential shards rips itself free from its host, with all the incidental mental and physical damage that might entail, and combines in the remaining host, which continues on its quest to bring all the shards together. Once all its disparate parts are once more conjoined, the entity is free to manifest in the material world.

The examples above could happen by accident or by something preying on the weaknesses of the masses. Imagine a crowdfunded



ISSUE ONE

variant on the Dark Web. Agreeing to give enough power for the second-tier reward entitles you to a seat by the Dark Lord's side upon his ascendancy. Let's not even think about the stretch goals!

What happens if you run a modern grammar/spell check over *The Book of the Damned*? Can you Google Translate the *Necronomicon*? What if Mythos bots, rather than Russian ones, were rife throughout the internet. Tentacles do not have to be physical. If you got an automated Office Assistant to recite a summoning spell, where would the entity end up?

And what of creatures who exist in different forms?

A Colour Out of Space for example, may be able to exist in the digital world as easily as the physical. High quality digital cameras may do more than simply record an image of an entity like this. Perhaps recording a Colour in this way creates a duplicate of it. Play the recording through an HD monitor and watch in horror as the newborn Colour seeps from the screen into your living room! What if that digital file is streamed or downloaded? What if it's copied? The first thing most people do when confronted by something unusual is to whip out their cell phones and film it. Imagine how fast such a thing could spread if each image recorded became an entity in its own right.

The Lloigor are another race that exist in an immaterial form. If their powers could work over the medium of television, how much energy could they harvest if they infiltrated a soap opera broadcast? Television and other broadcast media are often accused of only reporting the negative, what if that is a side effect of the interference of the Lloigor?

Film, Television, Radio, the Internet, Digital Technology, AI; all are strong potential sources for a modern-day horror game. Look around you, you might be surprised at the number of things in your immediate vicinity that contain a microprocessor.

What, for example, if you woke up each morning and your Fitness Watch had exactly ninety-six more steps registered than when you went to bed? Every. Single. Morning.

Technology has made some things more difficult for The Things That Haunt our Nightmares. Frighteningly however, it has made others far, far easier.

*...said... a night...
today and told me he had seen
a survivor... I asked him
...warlet died...
...of the gun... had his foot
... off and asked the Irish private to car
... to the rear. On the way a shell
... the... he... in*

De Libris Custodiendis

BY MATT PUCCIO

“Books are a uniquely portable magic.”

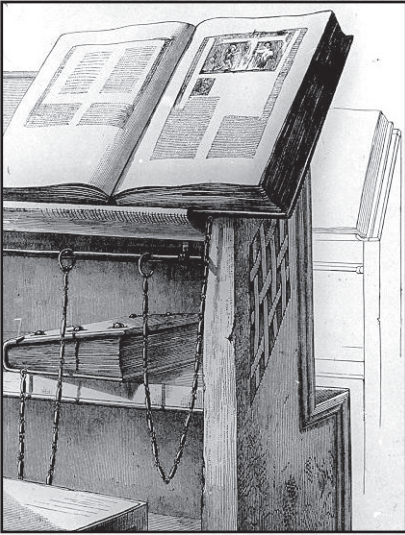
—Stephen King

IN THE WORLD OF INVESTIGATIVE HORROR GAMING, BOOKS ARE OFTEN MORE THAN MERELY A MCGUFFIN, A PROP THE PLAYER CHARACTERS SEEK IN ORDER TO TURN IN FOR SOME REWARD. FREQUENTLY A GRIMOIRE CONTAINS LORE, CLUES, OR A RITUAL THAT IS NECESSARY FOR THEIR QUEST TO SUCCEED. IN GAMES LIKE *CALL OF CTHULHU*, THE VERY ACT OF READING A BOOK CAN HAVE AN IN-GAME MECHANICAL EFFECT (SANITY LOSS, OR THE ABILITY TO LEARN A MAGIC SPELL). IT CERTAINLY FOLLOWS THAT THE AUTHOR OR OWNER OF SUCH A TOME WOULD NOT WANT IT (AND THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT CONTAINS) EASILY ACCESSED BY JUST ANYONE.

Frequently, getting access to the book is treated as the significant in-game challenge for the characters: fight your way past the monster, slip beyond the locked doors, or convince the librarian to let you have access to the restricted collection. Once the book is in hand, the challenge is over

(except for a roll of the dice to see if they can read the text within). Game Masters looking for other obstacles to put in front of their players can look to historical methods for ideas on how to protect, trap or safeguard the books themselves.

Books were precious commodities until the invention of mass printing, and many libraries went to great lengths to protect these valuable vessels of knowledge. “Chain libraries” were not uncommon in medieval times, with each book ensconced within a metal framework or wooden binding and chained to a pole attached to its shelf or lectern. Such a mechanism allowed access to the book, but prevented a miscreant from removing it from the premises. While a chain might not stop a determined investigator from reading a book, it could put a time limit on their ability to access its knowledge, until someone entered the room—forcing them to break the chain, or requiring them to pick the lock binding the chain to the book. The very act of removing a chained book from its shelf and perusing its pages



would certainly create noise, which could be noticed by a passing guard or librarian.

In some cases these tethered books had a chain built directly into the binding. In other cases, a lock on the cover might be used simply to protect a book from being opened, or the book itself might have been kept in a locked wooden chest, as with the books in the Merton College library in England. Alternately, metal bands fastened around the book with a small lock attached to a hasp would keep a book shut away from prying eyes. Without the key, a reader would be forced to damage the book in order to get at the contents. For an old, fragile copy of *Cultes des Ghoules*, this could result in the tome falling to useless dust in the hands of an over-eager investigator.

Curses were another means that medieval authors and illuminators

used to protect a book. Appealing to the thief's probable religious beliefs, such warnings often threatened excommunication from the church. Or worse, as in one case from a book in a monastery in Barcelona:

“For him that stealeth, or borroweth and returneth not, this book from its owner, let it change into a serpent in his hand & rend him. Let him be struck with palsy & all his members blasted. Let him languish in pain crying aloud for mercy, & let there be no surcease to his agony till he sing in dissolution. Let bookworms gnaw his entrails in token of the Worm that dieth not, & when at last he goeth to his final punishment, let the flames of Hell consume him for ever.”¹

While such warnings might not dissuade an intrepid adventurer, we can take inspiration from such mundane curses and give them actual magical effects in game. The author of an occult grimoire could certainly be expected to protect such knowledge from the uninitiated, perhaps triggering a spell or curse with some game effect if the reader fails to say a specific incantation or pass-phrase before reading it.

Looking further afield to more worldly traps, a scenario designer could take inspiration from a

¹From Marc Drogin's *Anathema! Medieval Scribes and the History of Book Curses* (Allanheld & Schram, 1983).

HYPERGRAPHIA

means of protecting books from more mundane pests: into the 19th century, some book covers were painted with a green pigment laced heavily with arsenic. While not intentionally done to poison the reader, it is theorized that the dark green paint was meant to keep vermin and insects at bay. While the book-binders knew it was toxic if ingested, they did not know that the paint off-gassed the toxic metal and endangered the reader himself.

While such a safeguard would have far too slow an effect to prevent unintended readers from reading the *Book of Eibon*, a particularly nefarious NPC might well coat a book in a more quick-acting contact poison. And woe betide the unwary investigator who licks his fingertip when turning the pages...

Of course, a resourceful GM might also look to more supernatural protections for their library of tomes. Perhaps the spirit of the

monk or occultist who penned a tome might haunt someone who steals it, either adding to the Sanity loss resulting from reading it, or triggering an entire side-adventure to rid the hapless investigator of the specter's enmity.

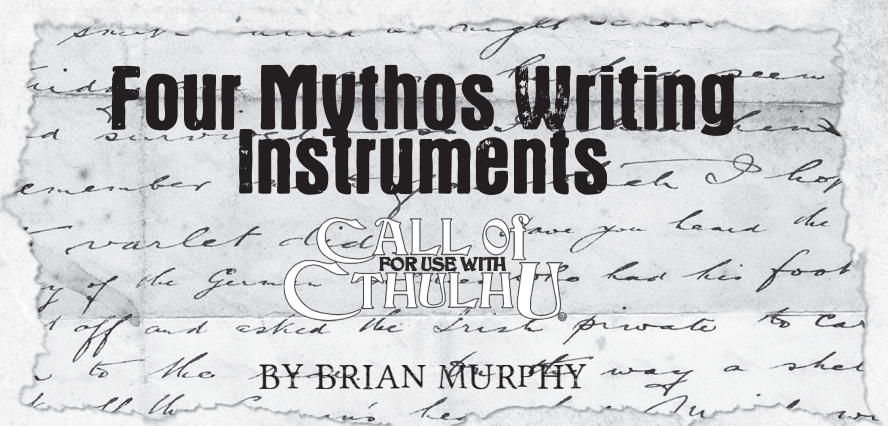
Fantasy games are replete with magical wards inscribed on the cover of books; a particularly effective security measure could blind the thief, making the book useless to him. Runes might be inscribed on the edges of the pages that trigger an explosion when touched, rendering the book unusable by an incautious reader, but which might be noticed by an observant player who examines the book before opening it. A more subtle effect might simply be an undetectable curse, which causes the reader to begin withering away days or weeks after opening the cover.

In a modern game, an online or electronic text could be protected by



malware or viruses. These could be either mundane in nature, infecting and corrupting the user's computer or cell phone; or they could have some magical effect, traversing the boundary between the digital and real worlds and influencing the mind or body of the hacker.

Ultimately it's up to the GM to determine if the value of the text merits an additional penalty for the players to overcome, but a flavorful curse or effect might make unwary investigators a bit more cautious the next time they recklessly skim through that thousand-year-old copy of *Al Azif*.



WHAT FOLLOWS ARE FOUR SIMPLE ITEMS USED FOR WRITING THAT CAN BE USED AS HOOKS OR ARTIFACTS WITHIN YOUR NEXT *CALL OF CTHULHU* OR OTHER INVESTIGATIVE HORROR GAME.

Once the pen is dipped in ink and put to paper, the lines drawn with it rearrange themselves and morph into the writing of the mad sorcerer Abdul Alhazred. Regardless of the language the user tries to write, the

Alhazred's Quill

Alhazred's Quill seems to be made from a normal raven feather, plucked and hardened. The feather is eight inches long, the fronds unusually dark, but otherwise unremarkable. The nib-end is stained black from iron gall ink.



HYP ERGR APHIA

ink always shifts back to ancient Arabic and the writer will always understand the words that the pen writes.

It is unclear who created the quill originally, but it is rumored to have been used in the creation of the eighth fragment of the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* in the 15th century, and possibly other works. If the user can stay sane long enough, or have enough sacrificial scribes on hand, Alhazred's Quill could create a disjointed copy of the *Necronomicon*. And therefore it is in high demand by any potential cult leaders or mythos sorcerers.

Using Alhazred's Quill costs five Magic Points and allows the writer to learn one random Mythos spell from the GM's spell list and produces one page of text. The writer will suffer a SAN loss for learning the spell equal to 1D6+1 and will be able to cast once or copy the spell down in another book after which it fades from the writer's mind. Any spells cast still follow normal casting rules.

Never-ending Ink Well

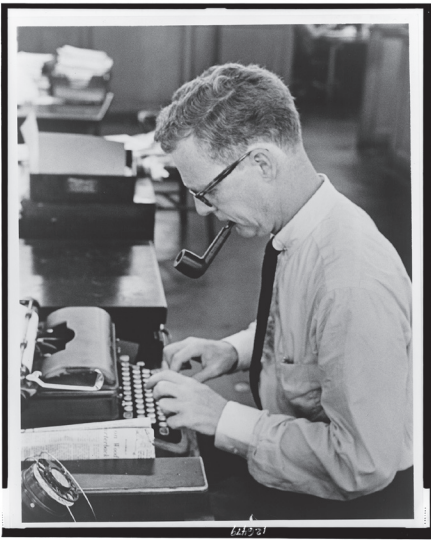
A rather ingenious sorcerer's scribe, annoyed by the tedium of mixing ink, created this small glass inkwell designed to never run out of the sepia-toned walnut ink within. There is a catch. Each time the bottle is uncorked, the user will lose one POW point permanently.

This item should be used with great caution. It is thought that many of the scribes that rotated out of the scriptoria at Malmesbury in the 11th century pre-conquest England departed due to the "exhaustion" brought on by this inkwell.



Wilcox's Royal KMM Typewriter

This Royal KMM typewriter from 1941 was refitted by sometimes cultist, newspaper journalist, and autodidact Richard Wilcox to have a Do Not Disturb mode. Once activated the typist will be invisible to any others and will be insulated from any outside distractions as they are phase-shifted to the Dreaming along with the room that he is in. This made him unreachable by any normal means and others entering the office would see an empty room but could hear the sound of distant typing, if they pass a Hard Listen roll for example, but will not be able to perceive the typist. The typist will be able to see anyone coming into the room as if through a fog, but no



sound would ever reach them.

Enabling the Do Not Disturb mode of the KMM will cost the typist two Magic Points and can only be activated once per day. It is possible that shifting in and out of the Dreaming in such a manner would attract the attention of something undesirable, however. In fact Wilcox himself never returned from his last use of the typewriter, only his partially finished page was found set in the KMM.

Item #1286B7.35-A (Fountain Pen)

During the opening salvos of the cold war, Britain's MI6 created a fountain pen for an agent sneaking inside East Germany. Item #1286B7.35-A by outward appearances was a Conway Stewart Model 27 fountain pen in blue herringbone

with gold nib and accents.

When the pen's nib is placed against a piece of paper containing ink and the fill lever is drawn back, the ink from the page will be sucked inside the pen itself leaving only a blank page behind. The nib can then be placed on a blank piece of paper, and when the lever is pulled back, the inked words spray back out onto the paper duplicating the original. The pen requires the user to burn two Magic Points for each use and can only hold one page's worth of ink at a time, although the amount of ink or the size of the original page does not matter.

As a tool for MI6, the one page limit meant that it was not put into



the field very often, and was eventually forgotten and sold off at an estate sale for a former agent in the 1970s. The new owner put the pen to great use in stealing paintings across the world, sucking the paint straight from the canvas hanging on the wall of a gallery and then regurgitating it later onto a ready canvas.

Abigail Merritt, Linguist

CALL OF
FOR USE WITH
CTHULHU

BY BADGER MCINNES

ABIGAIL MERRITT RUNS A SMALL BUSINESS IN ARKHAM, SPECIALIZING IN LANGUAGE TUTORING FOR STUDENTS, TRANSLATING ANCIENT AND DEAD LANGUAGES, AND GIVING SCHOLARLY ADVICE ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF WORDS AND SYMBOLS USED THROUGHOUT HISTORY. MS. MERRITT'S OFFICE IS LOCATED AT 261 1/2 W. MAIN STREET, ABOVE CURIOS & ANTIQUES IN THE MERCHANT DISTRICT (SEE LOCATION ENTRY 418 ON PAGE 78 OF *HP LOVECRAFT'S ARKHAM UNVEILED* FOR MORE INFORMATION).

She and George Tillinghast, proprietor of Curios & Antiques, will occasionally refer business to each other. Her hours are 12pm-7pm, Monday through Saturday, or by appointment. Abigail often ends up working odd hours, due to her clientele often being made up of students from Miskatonic University. Abigail charges about \$2 per thousand words for translating works, or \$4 for short messages. Tutoring services run \$5 per half hour.

Abigail was born and raised in

Brattleboro, Vermont, the only child of Ernest and Mary Merritt. Her mother died at a young age, leaving Ernest to care for Abigail by his lonesome. Already an alcoholic by nature, Ernest fell headlong into the bottle after his wife's death; Abigail thus ran from home quite frequently to escape her father's belt.

When she was but about twelve years old, while exploring the wild woods of Vermont during sunset, Abigail found a cave system she had never explored previously. At first excited, she became fearful as the young girl began to hear a chorus of buzzing, accompanied by the flickering of lights in the sky, and... other thoughts in her mind. Abigail soon realized that the buzzing and the invading thoughts were both from the source of the lights, and that they were speaking to her. The lights grew closer, and to her horror, Abigail saw that these were a flock of some sort of creatures, flying about in the woods. She ran in terror back to her father's house, all the while the beings' buzzing reverberating in her mind.

ISSUE ONE

She never spoke of the event to anyone.

Despite her limited education as a youth, Abigail discovered in her formative years that she was a polyglot, and fell in love with languages both modern and ancient. As a young adult, she graduated near the top of her class from Middlebury College in Vermont, then moved to Arkham to pursue her Ph.D in Ancient Languages. Under the tutelage of Dr. Warren Rice (whom she later developed a brief relationship with), acting chair of Classical Languages, she was on track to complete her doctorate a year early. However, a chance meeting with Albert Wilmarth after his visit to the farmhouse outside Townshend, Vermont, awakened forgotten memories of that night in the woods, many years ago. When

she overheard Wilmarth telling Dr. Rice of his experiences, she had a nervous breakdown, and was committed to Arkham Sanitarium.

After six months of treatment, Abigail was released. Consumed with shame and embarrassment, she stopped taking her doctorate courses as Miskatonic, having only about a year left to complete her Ph.D. Abigail became an alcoholic herself, sadly following in her father's footsteps (though more-or-less a high-functioning one). Despite all of this, she was (with Dr. Rice's help) able to set up her own business as a linguist and private tutor. Her addiction to alcohol, unfortunately, has run her afoul of the O'Bannion gang, to whom she owes several hundred dollars.

Description

Abigail has short, dark hair that she likes to keep in a finger wave, and hazel eyes. She stands at about 5' 6", and is a tad overweight, due to her frequent drinking. Abigail is of keen mind and a sharp wit, and does not suffer fools gladly. Investigators meeting her will find Abigail strong-willed and matter-of-fact, but loyal if they are honest and forthright when interacting with her. She lives alone, occasionally going out to see the occasional musical, or performing the odd bit of research at the Orne Library.

Her place of business is cramped, stuffed to the rafters with book-



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shelves that overflow with books, manuscripts, and periodicals. Many of her resources pertain to ancient and dead languages. Maps adorn what wall space is left; a small window behind her desk looks out into the building across the alley. The lingering scent of cigarette smoke clings to the air. Investigators will find little of interest here connected to the Mythos, although with a keen eye, they may spot some ancient writings half-covered on her desk next to other materials written in Aklo.

Investigator Hooks

- 1) First and foremost, Abigail can serve as a translator of outré and ancient texts that the investigators may need assistance with. She rarely asks questions about the sources of such materials, but can (for an extra fee) utilize her standing and contacts at Miskatonic University to delve into the history of any documents if the investigators choose to request it. Her reputation, while tarnished due to her breakdown, is still held in high regard.
- 2) She may approach the investigators to look into an ancient text that, after translating, causes her to fear for her safety, or the well-being of the individual who brought it to her in the first place (who has now gone missing and has not remit payment for services rendered).
- 3) Abigail may also contact the investigators after the O'Bannion gang has given her an ultimatum—pay the gang for what she owes them, or bear witness to her shop being set ablaze. She will have 48 hours to come up with the money, or face dire consequences.
- 4) While she never talks about it openly, it is known to some in the criminal underworld that Mr. Merritt is an accomplished document forger (O'Bannion has “requested” her forgery skills from time to time, for example). The investigators may catch wind of this, and have need of those particular talents.
- 5) Finally, if the investigators need an expert guide into the untamed forests of Vermont, Abigail knows the land better than most anyone.

ISSUE ONE

ABIGAIL MERRITT, linguistic expert, age 29

STR 40 CON 60 SIZ 45 INT 80 POW 45
DEX 55 APP 60 EDU 82 SAN 40 HP 10

Damage bonus: none

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

None above base.

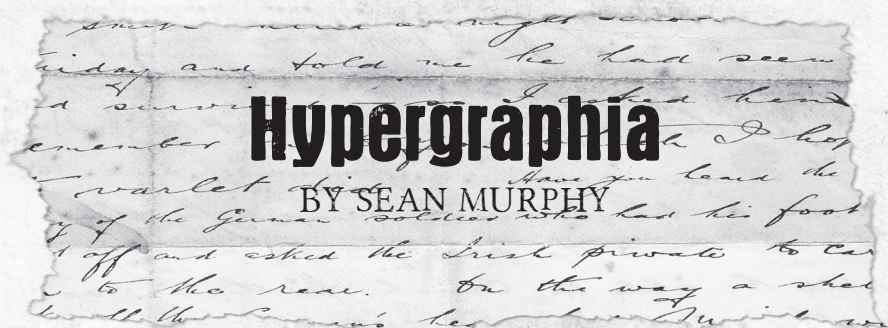
Dodge 35% (17/7)

Skills: Art and Craft (Forgery) 65%, Chain Smoke 80%, History 70%, Imbibe Alcohol 85%, Own Language (English) 90%, Other Language (Aklo) 50%, Other Language (Arabic) 60%, Other Language (French) 70%, Other Language (German) 70%, Other Language (Greek) 77%, Other Language (Italian) 50%, Other Language (Hyperborean) 55%, Other Language (Latin) 80%, Credit Rating 45%, Law 40%, Library Use 80%, Listen 60%, Persuade 65%, Psychology 50%, Sarcastic Quip 68%, Spot Hidden 55%, other languages as the Keeper deems fit.

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American

Spells: none.



Hypergraphia

BY SEAN MURPHY

“Hypergraphia is abnormal, but it’s not necessarily bad. For us it is mostly pleasurable. You only suffer when you think you’re writing badly.”

—Flaherty, author of
The Midnight Disease

SHE SCRIBBLED ON THE PAD AS THE SUBWAY JERKED BACK AND FORTH ALONG

THE TRACKS AND FLUORESCENT LIGHTS FLICKERED. HER HAND MOVED FURIOUSLY, WITH SEEMINGLY NO GAP BETWEEN THE IDEA AND ITS CONSECRATION ON THE PAGE. THE ELDERLY PASSENGER SITTING NEXT TO HER LOOKED DOWN ON THE PAGE AND, SEEING A DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF, STIFFENED WHILE BRUSHING OFF PREVIOUSLY UNNOTICED TOAST

HYPERGRAPHIA

CRUMBS FROM HIS SHIRT. BUT SHE NEVER LOOKED UP, NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED HIM, SEEMINGLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE SOCIALLY AWKWARD SITUATION. EVEN TWO TEXTS FROM HER EVER PATIENT PARTNER WENT UNNOTICED. ONLY THE WORDS MATTERED.

Hypergraphia is generally defined as an overwhelming compulsion to write, although it is sometimes used to describe an intense desire to draw as well. It can be viewed as the mirror image of writer's block—rather than being unable to start the writing process, someone with hypergraphia feels compelled to put word after word on the page. One patient who suffered from this compulsion mused that “once I start, I can't stop,” and other patients reported feeling severe anxiety when forced to stop writing. Dr. Alice Flaherty, a Harvard neurologist who experienced hypergraphia after the deaths of her prematurely born twins, wrote that on good days seeing the words on a computer screen at wee hours of the morning gave her the same high she imagined a drug junkie might feel. Her book is entitled the *Midnight Disease*. Hypergraphia is often associated with insomnia and sleep deprivation due to late night scribbblings.

She sat at her desk, attached her employee card and pulled out her work notepad. She kept a pad of paper of some sort at every location where she regularly spent time, in addition to her traveling pad. She didn't fear that someone would steal her work—it would be painful to lose past renditions of The Words but she could always generate new ones. No, she dreaded finding herself trapped at a location with nothing upon which to write. She lost one job that way, having left in the middle of a staff meeting to walk ten blocks until she found a store with stationary. She didn't mind being dismissed, but not being able to write for those ten minutes threw her into a dark place for days afterwards.

The cause of the Midnight Disease is still unknown, although advances in neurology have offered clues. In the 1970s, neurologists reported that hypergraphia manifests often in patients with temporal lobe epilepsy, particularly those with hyperreligiosity (strong affiliation with the divine) and emotional mood swings. Psychiatrists have found it linked to manic depression and bipolar disorder, although it can be hard to differentiate between them because of overlap in symptoms for these disorders. Recent studies indicate decreased activity in the temporal lobe, the section of the brain which assigns meaning, may result in increased activity

ISSUE ONE

in the frontal lobe, so that speech becomes unfettered by critical analysis. But it is important to note that some proliferate writers bristle at the idea that their desire to write is a curse or even abnormal. In a 1987 *Rolling Stone* interview, Joyce Carol Oates responded when asked if her writing could be considered compulsive with the “creative impulse is natural in all human beings” and it disturbed her that “a natural human inclination should, by some Freudian turn of phrase, be considered compulsive—perhaps even pathological.”

She sat on the barstool as her blonde friend and accountant friend talked excitedly about some new actor on some new television show. Or maybe a new singer's song—she found it difficult to follow any conversation these days. Truthfully, she did not see the point of these social gatherings as she did not share their interests or want to share The Words with them. But her partner listened eagerly to their chattering and so she knew from past lectures it would be rude to pull out her pad and start writing. Instead, she began to trace out The Words softly on her pant leg under the table. Once

she pulled the table cloth accidentally and her partner turned to her with accusing eyes. But she simply kept looking at accountant friend and her partner slowly slipped back into the conversation.

The first historical reference to hypergraphia is by the Roman poet Juvenal (author of such phrases as “Who will watch the watchers?” and “bread and circuses”), who wrote “many suffer from the incurable disease of writing, and it becomes chronic in their sick minds.” Throughout history, several notable figures experienced the consuming drive to create. At his peak, Vincent Van Gogh created a new painting every other day while also sending



HYPERTYPING

three detailed letters to his brother daily. The notebooks of Dostoevsky showed signs of compulsive writing, with dense wording covering a page and illustrations (see page 19) and in his *Notes from the Underground* he shared his hope that he might “perhaps obtain actual relief from writing”, as a way of extracting painful memories. Other famous authors thought to have the Midnight Disease include Sylvia Plath, Edgar Allan Poe, Isaac Asimov, and Stephen King. Hypertyping does not seem to lead to an increased quality of work, although the constant practice of writing may improve a writer’s skills.

They arrived home and her partner headed to their bedroom. She knew she should follow but The Words... it was so important that she preserve them. She locked herself in the bathroom and pulled out the pad hidden in the cabinet. She knew the partner suspected that she was doing just this, but for the moment she didn't care as she furiously jotted down every memory of the evening's outing. Later there would be sharp accusations from the partner as they laid down in bed. She would protest that she enjoyed the night. She would promise to be more attentive in the future. But for now, the only thing that mattered to her was watching her pen dance across the page and feeling that sense of relief as she exhaled The Words.

A player character suffering from hypertyping offers several opportunities for enhancing game play, due to its connection with creativity. Investigators who fail to spot an important clue at the scene of a crime might be given a second chance if the missed detail is written about later that night. If a party finds itself unsure of how to proceed, perhaps a perusal of breakfast scribbles might spark an idea that previously escaped them. Perhaps an extended writing session might be restorative for an investigator who underwent a severe shock. In addition, the notebook of a character with hypertyping would be a treasure trove of information should there be an unfortunate situation where none of the party survive an encounter early in a campaign. However, any character taking advantage of these “gifts” must also accept the needs of the condition. As one patient lamented “everything else more or less ceases to exist when I’m writing—friends and family become cardboard cut-outs”. If a player pushes back their writing time for too long, they may find that the only thing that matters is the pleasure of writing during a particularly stressful moment.

She listened until her partner's breathing became regular and slipped softly out of bed to her waiting computer. Turning it on, she began to type and type and type at

an increasingly frantic pace, trying her best to keep the noise as soft as possible. On the screen, the pixels described the alley from yet another perspective, this time including the coolness of the fog against her cheek, the laughing cry of her sister running ahead of her. Then they tried to capture the unshakeable stillness, the wavering tone in her cries to her sister

to stop playing this game, it isn't funny. And then she emerged from the cover and saw.... She stopped and started writing about the colors of the bricks that made up the alley, the barometric conditions leading to the fog. Some day she would finish. Some day she would be able to describe the monstrosity that devoured her sister in front of her. But until then she needed to keep searching among the wreckage of *The Words*.



The Faiyum Palimpsest

BY ED POSSING

MISTER TANNISH HELD OUT A HEAVY TOME WITH BOTH HANDS, OFFERING IT TO DR. ASHCOTT, ONE OF THE FOUR SCIENTISTS WHO HAD ASSEMBLED AT THE CRUMBLING ARKHAM ESTATE. THE BOOK WAS WRAPPED LOOSELY IN BLACK CLOTH AND SECURED WITH A YELLOW RIBBON. TANNISH, THE DETACHED BUTLER OF ECCENTRIC COLLECTOR FREDERICK BELANGER, HAD FOLLOWED HIS EMPLOYER'S INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

Belanger's peculiar requirements mystified Dr. Ashcott. The so-called *Faiyum Palimpsest* was only to travel at night, and no less than four able

adults must accompany the tome at all times. Dr. Ashcott was still quite happy to honor the donor's requests for the chance to bring this rare book to high-tech laboratories at Miskatonic University for testing. The secret words hidden in the pages of this book would soon be revealed.

Frederick Belanger's great-great grandfather, Arthur, discovered the palimpsest in Faiyum, Egypt, in 1824. After paying the right people, Arthur Belanger left the country with the book in hand and transported it back to his home in

HYPERGRAPHIA



Arkham, Massachusetts. The tome has stayed with the family since then, never exposed to daylight. On rare occasions, and by invitation only, academics had been allowed to inspect the book, but only by candle light, and only in the darkest recesses of the family home. But, like all the Belanger men before him, Frederick's mental faculties have rapidly declined in his winter years. Having no heirs upon which to bestow his vast collection of books, Frederick gifted the palimpsest to MU with a warning: never let its pages see the sun.

Like all palimpsests, the original text of the *Faiyum Palimpsest* has been erased—in this case washed off with milk—and reused. Scholars suggest this washing was done in the early Middle Ages and was rewritten as a Christian prayer book.

Interestingly, and unique among other palimpsests, the handwritten words of the prayer book devolve into a single phrase written over and over again in Greek, “Thou shalt not kill,” leading those who inspected it to guess that the author, or authors, may have lost their wits during the act of writing.

The original creation of the book itself may go back as far as the 3rd or 4th century, but more accurate estimates can only be determined in a lab. Much of the undertext of the tome is discernible and some faint symbols are also observable, but modern means must now be deployed in order to fully decipher the codex.

Scenario Seeds

Classic 1920s

The Belanger family line is cursed. The Faiyum tomb belonged to the head priest of the Cult of the Bloody Tongue. Ever since Arthur Belanger robbed the tomb in 1824, the males of the Belanger family fall to madness late in life. The vile book whispers the terrible truths of the universe to them day and night until it frays their sanity beyond the breaking point. Frederick Belanger was attempting to free himself from his fate by passing the book on to others. However, removing the book from the estate breaks a powerful ward that was protecting the Belangers from the vengeful mummy of the late head priest who then manifests in the Belanger estate and kills Frederick. The investigators are hired to investigate the strange attack. Their investigation reveals the true history of the tome and its curse. They also learn of the thing that is now stalking the palimpsest in an attempt to reclaim it and take it back to his tomb.

Pulp 30s

Dr. Ashcott hires the heroes to safely deliver the manuscript to Miskatonic University. Beginning *In Media Res*, a nefarious criminal organization calling themselves The Void Company interrupts the nighttime delivery. The Void Company set a trap for the unsuspecting heroes that sends their vehicle careening down the side of a cliff. The tome is likely taken during the chaos. The heroes must either protect the palimpsest through the night as they fall under siege from the deranged criminal agents or track the palimpsest back to the lair of The Void Company where they face mooks, deadly traps, and the gang's spellcasting boss. In either case, the heroes must eventually deal with an enraged fire vampire that bursts from the pages of the book when it is exposed to the sunlight of the approaching dawn.

Modern

Unknown to the researchers, the palimpsest is a mythos spellbook containing numerous summoning rituals and dark rites. Back at the laboratories of Miskatonic University, scientists use multi-spectral imaging to recover the undertext. The codex is written in a unknown alphabet consisting of at least 40 unique characters, containing a scattering of bizarre illustrations

and symbols. The digitized text is run through analysis algorithms and their computer's artificial intelligence attempts to complete all the summoning rituals hidden within the pages of the palimpsest. Investigators become involved when mythos creatures begin appearing throughout the university's campus. Interviews with witnesses and researchers lead the investiga-

tors to the source of the problem, an artificial intelligence gone mad. Destroying the book or even powering down the university's computers does no good. The AI is now directing its spellcasting from a computing cloud. The investigators must enter a virtual reality world in order to stop the machinations of an insane AI.



Beyond Elder Signs

ENHANCING SCENARIOS
WITH ICONOGRAPHY

BY ELIZABETH MURPHY

AS THE INVESTIGATORS ENTERED THE CAVE, THEIR LANTERNS REVEALED SYMBOLS ON THE WALL. "WAIT A MOMENT," SAID THE LIBRARIAN, "BRING THAT LIGHT OVER HERE FOR A MOMENT." SHE STARED INTENTLY AT THE SMALL CHARCOAL SKETCHES, SOME ALMOST INDECIPHERABLE FROM AGE. "I THINK THIS IS IMPORTANT. SOMEONE TOOK THE TIME TO PUT THIS HERE. WHY? WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO TELL US...?"

"Hurry up," muttered the detective, keeping his pistol at the ready. "We don't have time to mess around with someone's doodles." The cultist

was already several steps ahead of them down the corridor, eager to find the tome hidden below.

But the professor crouched down next to the librarian, squinting through his spectacles in the murky light. "Can you read them?"

"I might..." She looks up at the Keeper. "I have mad occult skills. Can I read them?"

After a successful roll, the Keeper smiles. "The signs speak of fire and death" she says, "and down ahead you hear a roaring sound followed by the smell of burnt meat..."

Iconography is a great way to tell

part of a scenario's backstory, introduce mood (usually dread, naturally), add an air of mystery or uncertainty, and empower some nerdier characters when the large guy with the 70 CON and the tommy gun is getting unbearably bossy. They can tell as little or as much as you like, depending on what the narrative requires and how well the characters roll.

Some scenarios lend themselves to specific types of historical images. *Cthulhu Dark Ages* might feature ancient Celtic symbols. The shield knot, thought to predate the Celts, conferred protection. Not the worst idea when tracking a shoggoth. Going back even further the Pictish "V-rod," a broken arrow superimposed on a crescent, is believed to symbolize death. A suitably ominous warning when found carved on the side of a cave.



Cthulhu Invictus offers a range of potential sources. Rome was a teeming metropolis, bringing together peoples from far-flung lands and vastly different religions. Symbols found at a murder scene could be a clue pointing investigators to a neighborhood settled by a specific tribe or sect. A Roman general, recently returned from a bloody

campaign in Britannia, might be unnerved to find druidic symbols carved into the walls of his house on the Palatine.



Ancient Egypt was all the rage in Victorian England. The empire was expanding, and travel to exotic places was increasingly not just possible but comfortable. It would be entirely appropriate for a *Gaslight* scenario to reference Egyptian iconography or hieroglyphics. A couple of generations later the discovery of King Tut in 1922 prompted a resurgence of interest in all things Egyptian throughout Europe and the US. Hieroglyphs and reproductions were everywhere, including women's clothing and home decorations. It would not be at all anachronistic for someone from either time period to have learned the symbology of the

HYP ERGR APHIA



ancient Egyptians, and decipher the meaning of a message scrawled on a cave wall or carved into a hidden door.

The Egyptian obsession with death and the afterlife suggests all kinds of possibilities. The “was” is a scepter with an animal head at the top, which symbolizes domination and power. The scarab represents rebirth or resurrection. The amenta, which looks like an umbrella with



an extra handle, signifies the underworld itself. Anubis, the jackal-headed god was associated with mummification and the afterlife. By the middle kingdom he was replaced by Osiris, the green-skinned god of the underworld. Either could reference death, or something brought back from the dead.

Another option is to make up your own iconography, or to use a blend of icons from history. There is a great deal of shared meaning in

symbols from all around the world. Columns represent order and stability, so broken columns could indicate the opposite. Fingers, particularly those of monsters, link the underworld to the Earthly one. Fire both purifies and destroys. In the middle ages, a fox represented the devil. In ancient Egypt, Anubis had the head of a jackal. Red is blood – both creation and death. Black is darkness and despair. Green is life, but when paired with black can be decay and rot. Snakes can represent evil, or immortality. Many symbols have multiple meanings, or different meanings in different cultures, so context is key to ensuring that your symbols tell an appropriately ominous message.

It’s worth noting that historically most symbology, like most religions, reflect a universe more or less in balance, or striving toward balance. When symbols have dual meanings, they are often linked. Destruction is also renewal, for example. The Lovecraftian universe of horror disturbs us in part because there is no balance. The destruction wrought by the Deep Ones will not result in renewal, at least not for us. Their evil is so overwhelming as to defy the balance of the universe. Architecture is based on patterns of geometry, which are inherently balanced and therefore comforting. Non-Euclidian geometry then, by its very nature, is profoundly disturbing. Colors are found in nature.

They fit into patterns, and often have multiple meanings according to their context. Lovecraft's *Colour Out of Space* does not fit in the visible spectrum of light. We have no way to classify or understand it,

so it preys upon the soul in deeply disturbing ways. Symbolic messages which underscore that imbalance will help to unhinge your players in deeply satisfying ways.

Finding Mythos Tomes in Literature

THE CONJURE WIFE

BY ADAM ALEXANDER

THE WALLS OF THE DUSTY ROOM ARE LINED WITH SHELVES CONTAINING ANCIENT TOMES. YOU MOVE ANXIOUSLY ACROSS THE ROOM TO SEE WHAT NEW TREASURES YOU CAN ADD TO YOUR LIBRARY OF OCCULT LORE. THERE ON THE SHELF BEFORE YOU LIES THE DREAD NECRONOMICON. "DAMN," YOU SAY TO YOUR COMPANION. "THIS IS THE THIRD COPY I'VE FOUND IN THE LAST YEAR."

Weird fiction and horror RPGs present the same tomes of mythos and magic again and again. These names strike a chord with the reader and gamer; helping them know that they are in familiar territory, but they lose their special nature when they become too familiar. Fiction and gaming are replete with

examples of spell books, mythos tomes, and other sources that the writer or game master can include in their tales and adventures. This article provides examples from the 1953 Fritz Lieber novella, *The Conjure Wife*. The descriptions do not provide rules but provide enough information to include them in a variety of games. The novel was also made into the film *Burn, Witch Burn*, not to be confused with the A. Merritt novel by the same name. Please be warned that spoilers abound.

Conjure Wife is set post-World War II on the campus of Hempnell, a small college in New England. The thrust of the novel is that unbeknownst to men, most women use magic to varying degrees to protect themselves and their families. Nor-

HYPERGRAPHIA

man Saylor and his wife Tansy Saylor are the main characters in the novella. Norman is a professor of sociology at Hempnell and specializes in ethnology and superstition. The novella provides several examples of books that could be included in horror or contemporary fantasy games as mythos or magical tomes.

Tansy's Diary

Tansy Saylor keeps a diary where she records formulas for what she calls *The Easy Way to Do Things* and *The Ways to Get and Guard*. She learned many of these secrets while assisting her husband in conducting research on Southern African-American communities. Tansy believes her use of magic is benevolent but understands that others are not as restrained. She uses magic to benefit Norman's

career and to protect both of them from the hostile magic of other faculty wives trying to promote and protect their husband's careers

Description

The diary is a small, brown, leather book approximately one inch thick.

Contents

The diary includes conjuration formulas that Tansy has experimented with to protect herself and her husband from malign influences. The formulas include lists of items used to bring about desired effects. Components of the formulas include items like bits of metal, witch bags, grave dirt, and an assortment of odds and ends associated with the workings of magic. While the framework of magic is the same from caster to caster, many of the components are personal and



changing. The diary provides the formulation behind spells and theories about powerful extra-dimensional beings. A character can piece together enough information from the diary to develop the spells Good Fortune and Protection from Hostile Magic and gain information about extra-dimensional beings. Learning this information may require a skill test for success and may increase the character's occult skill.

Spells

Good Fortune

This spell brings fortune to the target and can be cast multiple times to layer the Good Fortune. The effect of the spell is that things just go the recipient's way. From the outside, they live a charmed life and things just tend to work out in their favor. This does not mean that things never go wrong, but that they are able to go through life unworried about the mundane things that trouble most people. In game terms, the recipient is lucky. Depending on the system, the character may have bonuses to a luck score, get the benefit of re-rolls in situations where luck could come into play, or similar in game benefits.

Protection from Hostile Magic

Much of Tansy's efforts go to placing charms around the house and on Norman's person to protect them from hostile magic from other prac-

tioners. Protection spells work in conjunction with Good Fortune to prevent harm from happening to the recipient of the magic. In game terms, Protection from Hostile Magic provides the recipient with resistance to hostile magic directed at them. Like Good Fortune, it is possible to stack the benefits of Protection from Hostile Magic. It is possible to break through or bring down the protections as discussed below in How the Magic Works.

How the Magic Works

Most magic in *Conjure Wife* works using hands. A hand is a small pouch containing material components assembled in a manner specific to the desired outcome. The hands are then placed where needed including on a person, within clothing, furniture, and elsewhere.

There are other examples in *Conjure Wife* of practitioners using sketches, sound and photographs to enact spells, so the method may be personal to the practitioner.

Norman's Notes

The events of the novel require that Norman gain knowledge of the workings of magic. To gain understanding, he tries to figure out a way to simplify Tansy's formulas and identify an underlying logic.

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Description

The notes are two packets of paper. The first packet is comprised of seven loose sheets of writing paper. The second packet is comprised of four scraps of paper with sloppy handwriting on them.

Contents of packet 1

The first five pages are covered in hand-written symbolic logic equations representing classes of spell components. Each sheet includes a master equation at the bottom of each page that is the simplified form of the other equations. The sixth page is a key to the meaning of the symbols with each symbol correlating to either a spell component or action that is part of casting the spell. Successful comprehension of the notes helps the user figure out how to simplify spell casting and increase the likelihood of success. In game terms this may result in a bonus to casting rolls or to the base ability of the caster which may require a skill or ability check testing the character's knowledge of logics or mathematics and the occult to decipher the pages. The final page of the packet provides the formula for a powerful spell.

Spell

Transfer the Soul

This spell allows the caster to transfer the soul of another creature including animals into another creature, including the caster, or inanimate object. Souls transferred to inanimate objects can animate the object. For example, in the novel, a hostile practitioner inhabits a statue of a dragon with the spirit of a dog and sends it to attack the Saylor.

Encountering a person without a soul is disconcerting at the least and may be sanity shattering for some. The effect seems to affect most those who have knowledge that such a thing is possible. In game terms, an encounter with a soulless person may result in checks for mental stability for those who have even passing familiarity with the occult.

Contents of packet 2

The scraps of paper in combination reveal the formula to summon the extra-dimensional being known as the Agent from Tansy's diary.

Spell

Summon the Agent

This spell allows the caster to summon an extra-dimensional being called the agent to carry out the casters will.

Creature Feature

Extra-dimensional beings

The Agent and He Who Walks Behind are extra-dimensional beings from the novella. Anyone who knows the right ritual can summon one of these beings to complete a task. The being completes the task exactly as ordered and follows the literal interpretation of the summoner's command. The story provides limited details about the attributes of the Agent, but the reader learns that the Agent and He Who Walks Behind communicate and negotiate, implying that they may consider one another on equal terms.



If summoned to kill someone, He Who Walks Behind will accompany the victim and kill them at a time and location specified by the summoner. The manifestation begins with the victim getting a sense

that they are being followed or that there is something just out of view when looking in the mirror or in their peripheral vision. The being exerts a constant negative influence on the victim. Nights are filled with nightmares about dying. Waking hours are filled with a sense of dread that the victim cannot shake. The effect of this influence magnifies as the appointed time of death draws closer until at the end, the victim causes their own death.

Victims with stronger wills may shake off the influence of He Who Walks Behind for brief periods, but the being is quick to reassert itself. From a game perspective the character may be able to resist this effect for a short time using an appropriate state or attribute. Success allows them to break free for a moment to try to warn someone of what is happening to them. The constant sense of dread erodes the victim's sanity until they succumb to death.

Conclusion

This is the first in what is intended to be an ongoing look at taking books within books and converting them for use in gaming. Please let us know if you found this article useful and how you fit it into your game.



Adjectival Magic

BY CHARLES GERARD

WORDS ARE MAGICAL THINGS. THEY SUMMON NEW PHENOMENA. THEY MAKE THE UNSEEN SEEN. THEY SOW DOUBT AND SPARK WILDFIRES. THEY BUILD FACADES AND DRESS THE SETS OF OUR REALITY. THEY OCCLUDE WHAT WE WISH TO FORGET.

By monkeying with syntax and grammar, creators can unlock powerful chambers of the imagination. To explore magic in a Lovecraftian world, let's unleash the power of a particularly Lovecraftian part of speech: the adjective.

Many role playing games have explored the link between words and magic. *Ars Magica*, a game set in a mythic version of medieval Europe, uses a system known as Verb-Noun Magic. Nouns are the building blocks of the world, and verbs are the effects on them. Each verb, called a "Technique," represents a whole school of magic—create, perceive, control, and so on. The nouns, called "Forms," are categories of things those Techniques can target—create fire, perceive

minerals, control weather, and so on. The *Ars Magica* creators went on to make a similar magic system for *World of Darkness*, and games like *GURPS* adopted what creators called Syntactic Verb-Noun Magic, where magic is made up of Noun Skills and Verb Skills. To cast a spell, the player describes the effect they want, and both skills have to succeed. The GM determines limitations like duration and range and a target's resistance to the effects.

In a Lovecraftian setting, it's fitting to look at the power of adjectives. Adjectives, also known as modifiers, bend and alter the nouns to which they are attached. A wilted red flower. A broken pencil. One of the best newspaper typos I've ever seen described an attack by a *viscous* dog. One small adjectival change summoned a new Mythos-corrupted canine that flows like molasses! Such is the power of words.

Let's consider how adjectival magic might be used in a traditional skill-based role playing game like *Call of Cthulhu*. The following is just one example of how to justify

ISSUE ONE

an adjectival magic system in your games. The story frame and the specifics could easily be altered to fit the flavor and details of another campaign.

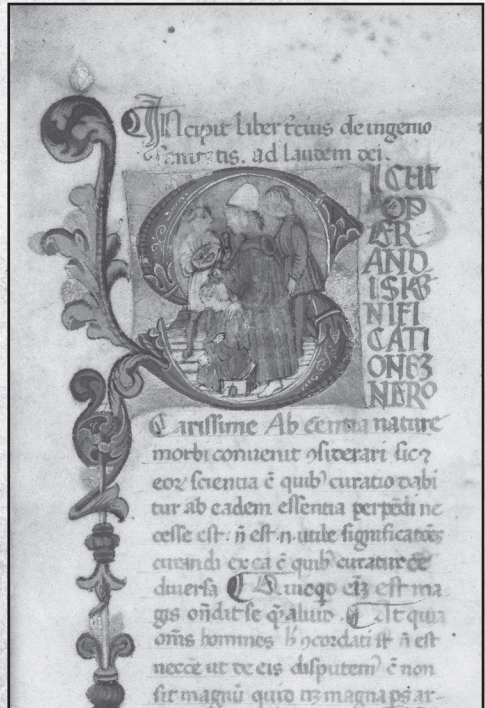
Chaoud the Syntactic, a powerful sorcerer from the lost Atlantean-era civilization of Asmaidas, delved deeply into forbidden transformative arts. Thankfully, his works were mostly destroyed by shadow forces during the Second Cataclysm. But occult scholars speak in whispered tones about lost pages of an infamous illuminated tome they have named *The Cadex of Chaoud*. In the early 18th Century, a secret order of Portuguese occultists scattered the pages of this treacherous book across the globe. Upon the recent discovery of a Table of Contents page, collectors are now furiously searching old archives to recover and translate lost pages. Each page contains a heavily ornamented letter at the beginning of the first paragraph, and the symbols and designs surrounding this encoded drop-cap represents a magic word with the power to modify reality. The following words represent only a handful of the pages known to be currently in circulation, and only represent approximate English translations. (To add more Lovecraftian words, see page 421 of the *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition Keeper Rulebook*. Most

Batrachian
Faceless
Fetid
Furtive
Hircine
Illogical
Malignant

Muculent
Obsequious
Ranine
Ravenous
Rugose
Squamous

of them are adjectives.) Adjectives formed from verb roots are excluded from the list below.

When investigators obtain one of the codex pages—or a high-quality copy—they can spend a week of study to create its meaning (no INT check) and gain 10% as a “skill” in that word. Gaining this knowledge results in a SAN loss of 0/1D4 for each word learned, and adds +1% Cthulhu Mythos skill.



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Since this is a Lovecraft-inspired system, the more adjectives casters can incorporate into spells, the better. And the easier they are to cast. This is because spells from the *Codex of Chaoud* gain power when they become more specific. Adjectives specify. So the more you add, the more narrow the scope.

Spell Effect

The caster can choose a target (noun) and combine two or more of the adjectives to concoct a spell. This process requires a 48-hour session of uninterrupted and obsessive study.

1. The caster must first describe a target that the spell is meant to affect. The more narrow and specific the target, the better the chances for success. Only the adjectives count as skills, not words used to identify the targets.
2. The caster must combine two or more of the magic adjectives they have learned and describe the intended outcome of this spell.

The effect should be based on the way the adjectives modify the target. As a guide, look at the words used in the spell. A spell employing “ravenous illogical Bessie the cow” could drive Bessie into a cannibalistic rampage, while also giving the animal the ability to walk up walls and across ceilings. This

system will force players to invent some absurd effects and use creative problem solving. The Keeper can suggest ways to use word combinations if a player gets stuck on how to represent an effect.

3. Add the percentages the PC has in each of the word-skills used to arrive at a single Spell Creation target number (e.g. adding Ravenous 15% and Illogical 10%, the Spell Creation number would be 25%).
4. Based on the scope and specificity of the target the caster names, in secret the Keeper decides the difficulty of the spell creation (Extreme, Hard, or Regular). If the target is a broad class of things, like “mammal,” the difficulty should be Extreme. More narrow subclasses, like “cow” should be Hard. If the target is one specific animal, like “Bessie” or “Farmer Fran’s Cow,” the difficulty should be Regular. Keepers can add bonus or penalty dice for additional challenges or extra efforts to make the spell work.
5. The player rolls for spell creation, and the Keeper determines the effects and parameters based on the results. Use existing spell examples for guidelines if needed.

ISSUE ONE

If the player rolls above the spell creation number (the sum of all skill points from magic words, no matter what difficulty level the Keeper determines), the result is a fizzled attempt. The spell does not form. The PC may try to create a spell with the same effect again with another 48-hour session, but this constitutes a Pushed roll, and this time failure will be catastrophic. As always, the player must describe potentially risky actions to “double down” on the spell creation attempt for the Pushed second attempt. The Keeper may allow the difficulty to change the second time if the player downgrades the scope of the intended effect.

If the player rolls under the spell creation number, but exceeds the difficulty level, the Keeper may add a corrupting side effect to the spell. For example, a Codex scholar tries to create a “Squamous Fetid Meat” spell. The Keeper sets the difficulty at “Hard,” because of the broad scope of the target. The scholar has 20% in Squamous and 13% in Fetid, for a Spell Creation target number of 33%. They must roll half of that total or under (16) to create the spell with no side effects. They roll a 24. So the spell is created (under 33%), but includes a side effect: the Keeper decides that each time this spell is cast, the caster takes 1D2 Hit Points of damage from a scaly, stinky gangrene wound. For other corrupting side effects, see examples of failed

Push rolls and Deeper Magic in the *Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook* or *The Grand Grimoire of Cthulhu Mythos Magic*.

On a successful attempt to create a new spell, only one of the magic adjective skills may be given a “check” to possible skill advancement during the investigator development stage or the end of a scenario.

If the spell is cast, the investigator will spend Magic Points and roll for Sanity losses just as with any spell. To simplify these parameters, try a default of 5 Magic Points for each casting, and a Sanity loss of 1D4 per adjective used in the spell. Casting time can be instantaneous with a duration of up to one hour. Since the spell creation time is front-loaded, there could be time between game sessions for the Keeper to come up with more tailored parameters.

Targets that are sentient beings can resist spell effects with an opposed POW roll.



Remembrance of Things Past

CALL OF
FOR USE WITH
STHULHU

BY SEAN MURPHY

THE INVESTIGATORS ARE DRAWN INTO THE MYSTERY OF A DISAPPEARANCE OF AN AGING PROFESSOR OF HISTORY. HIS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL FACULTIES HAVE DIMINISHED OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS AND HE APPEARS TO HAVE WANDERED OFF WITHOUT LETTING ANYONE KNOW HIS WHEREABOUTS. INVESTIGATORS LEARN THAT ALL IS NOT AS IT SEEMS AS THEY FOLLOW THE CLUES TO HIS STRANGE FATE.

The scenario takes place in modern times in a New England college, although with a little work the Keeper could relocate the scenario or set it in a different era. It is designed for a single session, about three to four of game time, and could easily be run one-on-one. The clues are all meant to lead to the location of the missing professor with limited distractions.

Keeper's Background

Professor Jere Grier spent his entire career at Dyer College, a small institution located in Hobart, New Hampshire about thirty minutes from the coast. He is old-fashioned in many ways—his house has not been renovated since it was purchased in the 1990s, and he does not own a cell phone. Students flocked to his class on regional history and he is a beloved figure in the community. His wife, who he married right out of high school, died two years ago in an automobile accident. He is estranged from his only child, Mary, who is in her early thirties. The reasons for their distance are not important to the plot but the Keeper is welcome to offer any reason that fits best into their game.

Three months ago, Professor Grier confided in a few friends and colleagues that he experienced a decline in his mental faculties, most noticeably his ability to write. He

jauntily attributes his struggles to old age (“looks like my warranty is up”). In fact, his difficulties started six months when a graduate student in the college found strange carvings in the walls of a cave and shared photos and rubbings with the professor.

As he slowly uncovered that the symbols represented the ancient writings of a long-lost civilization, the language itself began to reorganize his neurological connections. He felt a compulsion to study it, to ignore others, to doodle it on spare pieces of paper. His fascination with the language resulted in a physical altercation with a student last month, as he thought the student was trying to steal the language. He left the photos in his office to try to escape the situation but he kept hearing the language “speaking” to him, telling him to bring its gift to the world no matter who tried to stop them. He resisted but when the department chair announced his firing his resistance collapsed and so Grier has pressured the graduate student to bring him to the caves where the symbols are carved into the walls.

Reading the Language

The language requires a period of intense study to fully integrate into a human and affect its host at the level it reached with the professor (e.g. obsession with spreading the language, inability to communicate,

change in brain physiology). Still, even a cursory examination gives the language a hook. Investigators who try to understand the meaning of the symbols or stare at the papers should make a single **POW** roll for each period of study. At the first failure, they will begin to see the patterns in natural objects—the rainfall on a car window, the veins of a leaf. After two **POW** failed rolls, the investigators feel a pull to learn more about the language (which they can resist if they wish) and have a general feeling that this could be the most important thing with which they will ever be involved. They could also experience other manifestations such as unconsciously tracing lines on hard surfaces with their fingers, humming in a way that they say represents the patterns, or drawing with a writing implement on any nearby piece of paper. The Keeper should play out the effects of this condition in a way that makes sense within their group – take the player aside, pass a note or simply tell the player directly and rely on good roleplaying.

How the Investigators Become Involved

The easiest starting point is a phone call to one of the investigators from a relative such as a cousin asking them to look in on a favorite uncle from the other side of her family.

HYPERTYPING

They aren't particularly worried—they just received a strange message from him last night (“I tried to... I am sorry”) and now he isn't picking up his phone. They could also receive a call from an acquaintance (perhaps someone they met in a past investigation) who asks them to swing by the home of their colleague or relative because they received a similar strange message. As far as anyone knows, Grier is suffering the ravages of age and perhaps depression over his deceased wife but continues to be lucid.

A Note on Medical Privacy

In the United States and many other countries, privacy laws prohibit health providers from discussing “protected health information” with anyone without the patient's explicit approval. Most of these protections allow for the following exceptions:

- ✧ Obtain permission from someone with power of authority (e.g. potentially his nephew or professional colleague); and
- ✧ Request from law enforcement (e.g. police detective or officer) in relation to specific case, including missing persons.

The investigators might also try impersonating the professor in order to convince the health care provider that the “professor” gives permission for his doctor to discuss his case. If none of these options

pan out, the Keeper could allow for other means such as breaking into the doctor's office or gaining an employee's sympathy.

Note to Keepers

While descriptions of dramatis personae are provided, Keepers are encouraged to draw upon the mannerisms and habits of similar people in their lives to make them more personal to you when interacting with the investigators. You could use the given description of a kindly neighbor but there will likely be more warmth in your voice if you describe the “Mrs. Goode” from your childhood who gave the kids in your neighborhood two pieces of candy on Halloween. Similarly, Keepers should feel free to change the gender provided to better match the person they have in their mind's eye as the model. The missing professor, Jere Grier, is described using the masculine pronoun in this scenario but has a name that easily be used for a female or non-binary character if the Keeper would prefer. A similar effort has been made for other non-player characters (NPCs).

The House

Exterior of House

Professor Grier's house, located at 21 Jay Lane in Hobart, is a well-kept, two story cottage-style home with a small lawn in front of it.

The house appears to be in good shape, although it has been some a few years since its sidings received a painting. A successful **Spot Hidden** roll reveals that the grass for this house is the same length as the neighboring property and mower tracks connect the two lawns, suggesting that the neighbor may be mowing both lawns. It looks to be slab-on-grade, meaning there is no basement.

No one answers if the doorbell is rung. If someone contacted the investigators to look in on the professor, they may know that the next-door neighbor (23 Jay Lane) has a spare key. There is also a locked back door connecting to the kitchen that

could be picked or broken into and the Keeper should feel free to have a key under the mat—such is life in a small college town. If the investigators spend a lot of time outside the house talking, Mrs. Martin will peek her head outside of her front door and smile in a friendly fashion.

The Neighbor

The mailbox for the neighboring house is labeled "The Martins". The doorbell for the neighboring house does not work but a knock on the door results in a short elderly woman opening the door. Her hair is neatly curled and she is wearing a comfortable nylon pant suit. She looks at the group with a welcoming smile and asks if she can help.

Mrs. Martin is a widow of ten years and has lived next to "Doctor Grier" since he moved in thirty years ago ("such a shame about his wife, dying in an auto accident like that"). Mrs. Martin is aware of her neighbor's health concerns, which she believes is due dementia as due to his increasingly antisocial behavior. Her grandson mows her lawn and she has him take care of Doctor Grier's at the same time.

If asked about anything unusual, she will note he does



HYPERGRAPHIA

not leave the house very often since he left the college although she noticed his cute Volkswagen Beetle has not been in front of his house since yesterday. With a successful **Persuade** or **Charm** roll, she will also reveal that she used to bring over a pie if she was baking and would find him asleep on the chair. However, a little while ago he told her in an angry voice he didn't want her pity so she stopped.

Interior of House

The front door of the small house opens into a long hallway that ends in the kitchen. To the right is a small living room that connects to a dining room in the far corner of the house. Immediately to the left is a set of narrow wooden stairs leading upward.

Kitchen

The narrow kitchen looks like it has not been renovated in decades. The contents of the refrigerator are condiments, a half-finished jar of plain spaghetti sauce and milk with a recently passed expiration date. In the cupboards are boxes of pasta, mac and cheese, rice cereal, and other dry goods as well as canned vegetables and fruits. The Keeper might suggest (either independently or with an **Idea** roll) that it looks like it has been some time since the professor made a meal from scratch.

Living Room

The living room contains a television and couch with a rolltop desk in the corner. On the couch is a pillow and a blanket. Inside the desk are piles of mail, most of which are unopened bank statements and bills. If the investigator sorts through the letters, with a successful **Spot Hidden** or **Library Use** roll they will find an envelope with the Dyer College Department of History address on the return label. Inside is a letter with a date from two days ago:

Dear Professor Grier,

Regretfully the Disciplinary Committee has elected to remove you from the faculty. While sympathetic to your condition, we cannot ignore the violation of the college code of conduct. Please clean out any personal items from your office. Any materials found will become the property of the college. I regret we have reached this point, but your unfortunate actions have left us no other options.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dana Peterson

Chair, Department of History

A successful **Spot Hidden** roll also reveals a small fireproof lockbox tucked underneath the desk, its keys taped to the top. It contains various official documents like the deed to the house, insurance policies, and tax records. There is also a letter granting power of attorney to

whoever the Keeper deems appropriate—this would ideally be whoever contacted the investigators but could also be Professor Val Reyes (see below). There is also a folder labelled “Personal items” that holds his US passport, birth certificate, and social security card. There is also a will leaving his entire estate to “Mary Grier.”

Dining Room

The dining room is dominated by sturdy oak furniture: a round table with six heavy chairs and a buffet table. On the end of the buffet is an older looking answering machine with a flashing light labelled “messages.” If the “Play Answering Message” button is pushed, a young girl’s voice happily calls out “We aren’t here but please leave your name and number. Bye!” If investigators hit the “Play Messages” button they hear the following messages:

Beep: *Hi Jere, this is Drew. I’ll meet you in front of Dyer Hall.*

Beep: *Hi, Jere, this is Val. Val Reyes. Oh, I don’t know why I said my full name... these machines make me nervous. Anyways, this morning your office door was open and that bag of yours was missing. I thought maybe someone stole it but then I found what I think are your keys on the desk. Let me know what is going on.*

Beep: *This is Doctor Taylor Finn’s office at the Healthy Aging Clinic. You missed your appointment yesterday to discuss your treatment options and it is very important that we re-schedule at your earliest convenience. Please call us at 555-1245.*

The answering machine is too old to store numbers or the time/date of the call. With a successful **Library Use** roll, the investigators can identify Val Reyes as an adjunct history professor at the college. With an internet search the investigators can also learn that the clinic is located slightly out of town.

The table is covered by scattered sheets of white paper covered in scrawling of squiggly and straight lines, dots, and crescent shapes. Keepers interested in developing handouts are encouraged to start with the Cuneiform language but remove any sense of organization. Investigators who try to understand the meaning or stare at the papers should make a **POW** roll. Those who pass feel the sense that whoever wrote these symbols down was trying to communicate something, with a hard or extreme success revealing that there is a sense of frustration in the strokes. Keepers should keep track of anyone who fails their roll, as this represents the first step toward the language establishing a hook. Once investigators discover the drawings, they will notice that smaller versions of

these symbols have been scribbled on other pieces of paper downstairs (but not upstairs).

Upstairs

Upstairs are two bedrooms and a bathroom (of which there is nothing unique other than a claw-footed tub).

One bedroom has a worn paper sign with the words “Mary’s Room” in childlike handwriting taped to the door. The room is painted a light pink with a twin bed and dresser. There is a bookshelf in the corner with well-worn books of varying ages and reading levels. On the dresser is a framed photo of a middle-aged man (the professor, if the investigators know him) and a teenage girl standing in front of an orange Volkswagen Bug, the girl proudly holding what appears to be a driver’s license.

The other bedroom has a queen-sized bed, bedside table, and bureau. On one wall, someone has written “Is it suicide if it is not me?” over and over, covering the entire space. The room has a stale feel to it, as if it has not been used in some time. Anyone searching under the bed (no **Spot Hidden** roll needed) will find an open gun case for a revolver – there is no gun inside and the space for holding an ammo box is also empty.

The Healthy Aging Clinic

The Healthy Aging Clinic is a two-story brick building next to a river that looks to be a converted from some prior industrial use, with a crisp white paintjob and large windows. Entering the lobby, the directory indicates that Doctor Taylor Finn’s office is on the second floor, along with two other doctors. The glass doors of this space open into a small waiting room and a smiling man sitting behind a desk. A triangular “receptionist” sign sits in front of him.

The receptionist is Bobby Chase. He is pleasant, but the investigators must succeed on a **Persuade** or **Fast Talk** roll to convince him that they are there on urgent business. Otherwise, he will tell them that Dr. Finn will be available an hour after they arrive. Muzak plays continually as patients enter and leave.

Once they are ushered in, Dr. Finn will meet them in her office. She is dressed in business clothes with a bright pressed lab jacket and her hair tied back. A **Psychology** roll will confirm she is very concerned about the professor but the investigators must find some way around existing medical privacy restrictions to gain information.

She will relate to the investigators that she originally thought Greir’s symptoms resulted from a stroke, as there are cases where brain damage affects the part of the

brain that controls writing but not speech, but tests for this came back negative. Grier also did not present the normal symptoms for dementia or other age-related illness. She sent him to a large hospital that had a Functional MRI and the results were perplexing. As far as they can tell, Professor Grier is now regularly accessing parts of the brain that are infrequently utilized by a normal patient. Moreover, since the initial MRI there have been physiological changes to the brain with some areas atrophying and new, previously unidentified structures forming.

She talked to Professor Grier three days ago and explained that they needed to do more tests. While he had always been one of her most cheerful patients, at one point he sadly murmured "I think I've always known it was too late". They eventually set up an appointment for this morning, but he never showed up.

The College

The college is an aesthetically pleasant setting, with stately buildings spreading out from the quad at the center of the campus. An internet search or passing student can direct the investigators to the history department which is housed in

Kelley Hall. The directory near the front door provides room numbers for the department chair as well as professors Grier and Reyes. If the investigators are on campus during the day, there will be faculty and staff walking the hallways as part of their daily routine. They will not be interested in the strangers in the hallway but will intervene if they see the investigators try to pick a lock or break open a door.

Office of Chair Dana Peterson - Room 300, Kelley Hall

The door to the History Department office opens into a small room with a single desk surrounded by office equipment (e.g. copier, file drawers). Beyond the desk is an open doorway to another room upon which "Chair of the Department" has been stenciled on the glass. The woman sitting at the front desk does not even look up as she stares at her computer screen.

The secretary of the department,



HYP ER G R A P H I A

Bobbie Green, gives off the aura of someone who no longer cares about her job. The investigators only need to make cursory conversation to gain a disinterested shrug toward the back office.

Dana Peterson is dressed in casual business attire, enough to make it clear she is in a management role but not enough to isolate her from the fashion style of her colleagues. She will invite the investigators to make themselves comfortable but there are only three chairs. She will express sympathy for Professor Grier's medical condition, which she assumes is early dementia, though if asked how she reached that conclusion she will admit it is just something she heard. She will also note that "Professor Grier was one of their most popular lecturers and a favorite of local historical societies and civic groups." If the investigators fail to catch it, a successful Idea roll will point out that she used the past tense.

If asked, she will state that as of two days ago the Disciplinary Board cancelled the professor's contract due to an altercation with a student. It is a matter of public record that about a month ago a student came into the professor's office unannounced and started to remove a satchel resting on a chair so he could sit down. Multiple witnesses heard Professor Grier fly into a rage, berating the student for interfering with important research

and shoving the student while grabbing back the bag. The student filed a formal complaint and during the hearing the professor gave off an aura of belligerence. When asked if he wanted to make a statement, "I could say so much but none of you would understand the words." She sniffs that, while it did not make the official report, she personally believes the professor reacted badly to marijuana or some other non-traditional drug to treat his condition.

If asked about the satchel or the professor's research, she will dismissively say he is working with a graduate student in the geography department on something to do with pre-contact indigenous people in the region. When she asked him about it, he refused to go into details but said "it had something to do with written languages during the pre-contact period of the region." She did try follow up at a department meeting held just before the incident, but he snapped he would tell her when he was ready and not before. She suggests that Professor Val Reyes may know more, as she thinks they stay in contact.

How the investigators behaved during this conversation will determine her willingness to give them a key to Grier's office. If they have been respectful and courteous, she will hand it over without hesitation. If they have been difficult, she will exact petty revenge by saying she'll want to check into their story

(which she will never do). However, if the investigators think to ask Bobbie Green, she will hand them a key without a second thought.

Office of Val Reyes - Room 310, Kelley Hall

Sharing a wall with Professor Grier's office is the office of Val Reyes. Professor Reyes will be in her office during normal business hours. Otherwise her door is unlocked. The long, narrow office is dominated by a bookshelf to the left and a desk next to the window on the right. A sharp-eyed investigator will notice that she has a set of keys sitting on the corner of the table next to her desk, which are the ones Professor Grier left behind.

If she is in, a knock on the door results in a crisp "come in." Sitting at the desk is a Hispanic woman in her mid to late thirties with straight black hair wearing a turquoise dress. She has an easy smile and her eyes indicate a clear intelligence. If asked about Professor Grier, she will eagerly share information if the investigators convince her that they are working for her friend's well-being.

She will make it clear that she greatly admires Professor Grier—he mentored her and countless other junior faculty when tenured faculty ignored them—and believes that this sentiment is shared with most of the campus faculty. When

his wife died, the entire community grieved with and for him. He became more solitary after that, particularly as his daughter stopped visiting. She knows the two had a fight but nothing more. She has no idea what is afflicting him. He told her that it looked like a stroke, but that testing hadn't supported it

However, she is troubled by the "project" that he started about six months ago with a geography graduate student (Drew something). When she asked about it, he jovially replied, "As Charlemagne said, to have another language is to possess a second soul" and changed the subject. But over time he became more and more solitary, working more and more at home. One day she wandered into his office to invite him to lunch and she noticed some pictures on his desk. At this point she will become noticeably distracted while speaking: "The photos showed a cave wall with strange symbols on them. I felt...connected to them for a minute, like you might when you see a moving piece of art or hear a particularly stirring song. But it felt darker. I heard him at the door and instinctively turned away but one look at my face must have told him what I saw. He growled menacingly that I should leave, while sliding the photos in his satchel." As she talked, she shrinks a bit in her seat and glances around the room nervously before saying in a low voice "I swear I sometimes see

HYP ER G R A P H I A

those patterns in my dreams”.

She has not seen Grier since Chair Peterson put him on administrative leave that same day. She tried calling and swung by his house a couple of times but he never responded even though she could see him through a window. She will happily give the investigators the key for Grier's office (the ones he left on his desk the other night) provided they agree to not remove anything without clearing it with her first.

If the investigators pass a social roll (e.g. **Charm, Persuade**), she will share that sometime after the incident with the study she left the office late and on impulse opened the door to his office, which was unlocked. In one corner sat his satchel. It struck her as unusual as over the previous months he never let it leave his sight and she will sheepishly admit that “couldn't escape the feeling that it called to her, that it wanted her to look inside.” She quickly closed the door and walked away, feeling like she had avoided something terrible. She is terribly nervous that Grier apparently came back last night to reclaim it.

Office of Jere Grier - Room 312, Kelley Hall

Professor Grier's office is spacious with a wide desk, as is befitting of senior faculty. Bookcases line the right wall while on the left wall are

framed photos and various papers.

The wall decorations primarily consist of pictures of Professor Grier with colleagues in front of different historical buildings and settings in the region. Intermixed is thirty years of letters of appreciation from historical societies, non-profits and elementary schools for his contributions.

The phone on the desk is blinking. Hitting the “Voice Messages” button results in a recording: “Please enter your four digit password and hit star.” If the investigators spell out “MARY” using the letters on the numbers, there is a single message: “Professor, I know I said I would go with you but I don't think it is a good idea. It isn't safe for either of us.” The message is from this morning and calling the number results in the same “The number you have called is not in service right now. Please call back at another time.”

On one corner of the desk is a pile of papers and books which all relate to folk tales of the indigenous tribes in the region, with sticky notes scattered through the pages. After an hour of study, a successful Idea roll indicates that these stories collectively suggest that there may have been an incursion of malevolent beings from the north who, by some reports, “stole away the minds of tribespeople” until the local people banded together to destroy them. Folded on top of the books is a topographic map and the only

ISSUE ONE

sign of human habitation is the village of Hookcrest, New Hampshire. An internet search for Hookcrest indicates it is a rural village located about an hour and a half north of the college. A successful **Library Use** roll finds newspaper articles from five years ago talking about the impact of a local paper mill shutting down on the local economy but otherwise there are only announcements of foreclosures.

In one of the drawers is a rolled-up piece of paper which, when opened, appears to be a rubbing of a stone that has the same strange collection of shapes. Another drawer has pages covered in symbols. Investigators should make a separate **POW** roll for each and the Keeper should record failures.

If the investigators sift through the recycling bin they find a large folded box from a well-known sporting goods company. The shipping invoice inside indicates that it contained a pair of hiking boots, a helmet with a light, and leather gloves. Another box contains the shipping materials and manual for a very expensive camera.

Office of Drew Liddick – Room 201, Dyer Hall

Drew Liddick shares an office with two other graduate students, Morgan Parker and Pat Segal. They will willingly share that Drew made some kind of archeological find while caving up north, which led to a collaboration with a professor in



HYP ER G R A P H I A

the History Department. She started happy with their “secret project”, traveling back to the site a couple of times to complete more research but over time her mood became darker. She became distracted and irritable, snapping at her colleagues for minor matters. One day she threatened to throw hot coffee at Morgan when some horseplay in the office resulted in her papers being disturbed. She apologized and flew out the next day to spend a couple of weeks with her family.

After that she went back to normal but she discontinued her work with the professor. Last night Drew told them that she had been planning on going with the professor to the site of her discovery (they confirm that the name “Hookcrest” sounds familiar) but she decided to cancel the trip. However, she must have reconsidered because Pat saw her get into an orange Volkswagen bug with an older man early this morning. A **Spot Hidden** of Drew’s desk space will reveal that under her desk mat is a single piece of paper covered with squiggly and straight lines, dots, and crescent shapes.

Hookcrest

Investigators leave the college town and travel by state and local roads to the north. As they approach Hookcrest, the countryside starts to feel old, with thick forests intermittently mixed between overgrown

agricultural fields. The homes are spread apart, some seen only in glimpses, tucked far back from the road. Investigators who have grappled with the language may have varying reactions as they approach Hookcrest. Some may feel restless and uneasy, others may feel strangely invigorated or excited, and others may find themselves running their hands along the windows of the vehicle, imitating the symbols.

The village of Hookcrest has seen better years. The paint on the old white church is faded and many of the houses along the main road appear to be empty and in various stages of decay. Only a few people can be seen on the streets. There are no children playing. The center of town appears to be an island of normalcy, featuring Peck’s general store and filling-station.

Hookcrest is a very small town and has a population of around 30. There are just over twenty houses in the town, about half of which are occupied. The inhabitants of Hookcrest are mostly older people who retired or worked at the nearby sawmill before it closed five years ago. The convenience store is now the main industry in town, though most locals supplement their food stores with hunting and fishing.

Peck's Gas Station/ Convenience Store

Ned Peck owns the convenience store. He is a tall, hard man of few words. Peck did his undergraduate work at a state university, but otherwise has always lived in this town. In addition to serving as the head of the local select board, he is also the town sheriff. He does not know the Professor but has talked to Drew Liddick during her visits. He understands she is an amateur cave crawler ("what you would call a spelunker, I guess") and she asked a lot of questions about the history of the area. He thought he saw her in an orange Volkswagen this morning being driven older fella ("maybe that is your guy") and she looked real unhappy. There is an old road ("more of a loggin' trail") that starts at the far end of town and leads to the mountain.

Town Hall/Historical Society

Mrs. Sattler, an elderly and lively lady, is the town clerk and historian. She is knowledgeable about who founded the town, what families joined when, and who lives here now. She remembers speaking to Drew Liddick, who asked her questions about the Native American tribes in the area. However, her interests do not include anyone who might have lived in the area before the first Europeans arrived. She will, in a somewhat embarrassed tone,

admit that her ancestors did not treat those people in a particularly respectful way. She will know the professor's name ("Oh, he gave a talk at a historical society convention I attended") and, if prompted will recall that she is sure that he was driving a Volkswagen Bug through the center of town this morning, heading to the old logging road.

The Cave

At the edge of town, the paved road transitions to dirt and begins its sinewy wind through the forest. No matter what kind of car or truck the investigators drive, the bumps and potholes will leave their mark on the undercarriage of vehicles. After about 20 minutes, a parked orange Volkswagen appears on the road ahead.

The doors are not locked and the vehicle is registered to a Jere Grier. In the back seat are two sledge hammers, a rock hammer, and heavy-duty chisels. From this point, the characters see a faint trail heading north. Above the trees they can see exposed rough rock on the side of a hill. An investigator searching the car will, with a successful **Spot Hidden** roll, find a single page from a book stuck beneath the driver's seat, covered in the strange language. Investigators looking at this page should make a **POW** roll.

The Graduate Student

The forest seems normal as you walk down the trail, with small woodland creatures scampering around the ground and local bird species flying by. After a quarter mile, the investigators will spot a young woman walking down the trail with a severe limp. She will identify herself as Drew Liddick and in a nearly panicked tone, she will beg the investigators to stop Professor Grier.

She will answer any questions they have but always with a sense of urgency. She came to this area because Professor Grier promised her that they would destroy the carvings in the wall—he even presented a pair of sledgehammers as a gesture of good faith. However, as they approached the town she began to doubt his sincerity, as his tone became more and more excited. Her heart sunk when they reached the end of the logging trail and he started walking without the sledgehammers. She started to turn away, but he grabbed her arm and told her things would go bad for her unless she cooperated with “them.” She tried to delay, feigning confusion over the location of the cave but eventually led him to there. Once inside, he became so focused on setting up his photography equipment that she decided to make a desperate escape. She twisted her ankle in the attempt and she will ruefully note that “he must

have heard me cry out in pain, but he didn’t care.”

She tells the investigators it is critical that he not succeed in his plan to distribute the language, which he calls The Whisper. Anyone who studies it for a prolonged period begins to experience strange symptoms—feelings of being watched, quick movements out of the corner of her eyes, doodling the symbols. At the same time, it starts to take over one’s mind, replacing happy memories with its symbolology. She will tearfully relate that “it would have taken over me if I hadn’t escaped to the love of my family” and “who knows how strong it will get once it is embraced by all the isolated people on the internet.”

Her knowledge of what is going on is limited. She knows the professor believes that some type of alien beings came into the area, spreading the language. After the tribes realized that the symbols corrupted people, they banded together to wipe out these beings. However, they must have not known about one hidden temple, which she regretfully discovered.

She will suggest that the investigators give her the keys to their car but under no circumstances will she agree to any arrangement that splits the party as that would weaken their chances of stopping the professor. If asked, she will volunteer that the professor has a gun but otherwise she will hide the knowledge as she

does not want to deter the investigators from stopping the professor. Investigators with a successful **Psychology** roll observe that she is focusing on investigators that have failed the least number of **POW** rolls, with distrustful looks at those who are more under the language's spell.

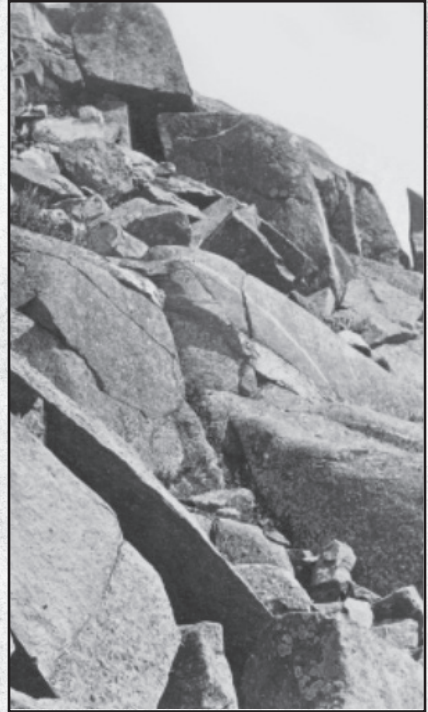
The Cave

As you reach the base of the hillside, you can see about 50 yards above the ground there is the opening of some sort in the rock wall with a light coming out of it. There is a fissure in the side of the rock with sufficient handholds up to the opening. The investigators must make a successful **Climb** roll or otherwise engineer a way up to the crevice using other characteristics (e.g. **STR**, **DEX**). Keepers are encouraged to reward ingenuity – remember that a man in his early 60s apparently made the climb.

Investigators who slide through the crevice will find themselves in a small cave. The walls are unnaturally smooth, as if modern technology had been employed. In the back of this cavity is a narrow bending passageway that leads further into the hillside.

Investigators going through the passageway find themselves in a 30-foot long cavern. On the floor is a series of small battery-driven lanterns, which illuminate the area poorly. In the back of the room

there is a computer on a table with a cable that connects to a camera on a tripod. Professor Grier, wearing a headlamp, is hunched over the camera. Every few seconds a bright flash goes off—investigators should make an **INT** roll to avoid crying out the first time this happens.



What happens next will depend on the investigators. He is ultra-aware of his surroundings and it will take an Extreme **Stealth** roll to cross the entire room without being heard. If engaged, the professor will calmly admit that the Whisper (as he calls it) is the written language of an ancient alien race who occupied this region long before the

HYPERGRAPHIA

Europeans arrived. He believes that reading the language has opened his eyes to a new world. At first he started noticing little details that others would ignore. Over time, he saw “tiny cracks in the world out of the corner of his eye. You find yourself straddling this world and the alien one that overlaps this one, unsure of which one to embrace.” He believes the phenomenon is evidence to support the theory that “language determines how you view the world.” He will ask the investigators to assist him in bringing the world up the next step of mankind’s spiritual evolution, as he knows in his heart that the more people who embrace the language the stronger it will be.

At some point in the discussion, he will shine his light along the walls and the investigators will see markings similar to those that they saw earlier; however, these appear to crawl and move across the surface of the wall (**SAN** 1/1D6). All investigators should also make a hard **POW** roll (as resistance is much harder when faced with the actual writings). Investigators who have failed their **POW** rolls in the cave should feel a strong urge to assist the professor in his mission to spread the language.

If they attack the Professor, he will draw the gun he has tucked in his pants and fire without hesitation. His head lamp will give anyone firing a gun a one-round penalty

die and it will take at least a round to cross the room. If he fires at the investigators, he will be doing so at point-blank range. Investigators who previously failed their **POW** roll in the cave need to pass a **SAN** roll to not attack their fellows.

If the professor is reduced to 5 or fewer hit points or the investigators are able to trigger memories of his wife or child through extreme social skill rolls, his shoulders slump and his face takes on a kindly countenance. He will gravely look at the investigators and say “I tried to fight its pull, but it was too strong. Even if you take away the photos, I’m going to keep trying...” He will take the gun by the barrel, hold it out to the investigator who seems least impacted by the Whisper, and say “If you tell the police you found me dead, everyone will believe it is a suicide...that’s why I wrote all over the bedroom walls. But I can’t do it myself.”

The Aftermath

If the investigators carry out the professor’s final wish, events unfold as he thought they would. The college will pressure police to close the investigation as quickly as possible and suicide is the easiest answer for all concerned. While investigators may be questioned (depending their interactions with others in the town or at the college), nothing will come of it.

ISSUE ONE

If the investigators leave the professor in the cave, a short time after they leave, the Whisper will take hold of him again. A few days later the news will be filled with a report that a graduate student killed a professor and destroyed his home. The investigators may again be called in for questioning, but the case will close when the District Attorney reports that Drew committed suicide. No note was left. If the investigators follow up, they can discover with **Library Use** and **Computer Use** rolls that some of the professor's collection made its way onto the internet.

If the investigators destroyed the computer, camera and drawings, that is the end of the Whisper. However, if they saved any of these images all the investigators will find themselves frequently thinking about them. Keepers should ask the players whether their characters are able to resist the urge to scratch this psychic itch. Whether they ever view the drawing again or not, investigators who failed any **POW** rolls will occasionally see a jagged line out of the corner of their eye. The professor's face will be gravely staring at them from just behind the crack but when they turn, it will be all gone.

PROFESSOR JERE GRIER, Possessed by the Whisper, age 65

STR 80 CON 60 SIZ 45 INT 80 POW 45
DEX 55 APP 60 EDU 82 SAN 40 HP 10

Damage bonus: 1D4

Build: 0

Move: 8

ATTACKS

Fighting (Handgun) 50% (25/5) .32 Revolver, damage 1D8, 15 yards, 1(3) shots per round, misfire on 100

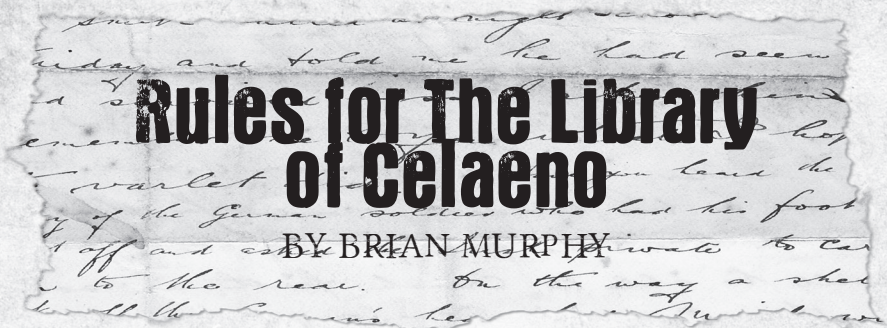
Dodge 80% (40/16)

Skills: Computer Use 20%, Credit Rating 45%, First Aid 40%, History 70%, Other Language (Latin) 25%, Own Language (English) 80%, Listen 80%, Persuade 75%, Spot Hidden 80%.

Defenses: None above base.

Nationality: American

Spells: none.



Rules for The Library of Celaeno

BY BRIAN MURPHY

...THEY SET OUT FOR CELAENO, WHERE THEY HAD RESUMED THEIR STUDIES IN THE LIBRARY OF MONOLITHIC STONES WITH BOOKS AND HIEROGLYPHS STOLEN FROM THE ELDER GODS BY THE GREAT OLD ONES AT, AND SUBSEQUENT TO, THE TIME OF THE REVOLT FROM THE BENEVOLENT AUTHORITY OF THOSE GODS.”

—August Derleth,
The Trail of Cthulhu

Four hundred and thirty light years from Earth, on the fourth planet of the Celaeno system, resides the great Library of Celaeno. Constructed of towering monoliths of unknown stone and containing miles of book, scroll, and tablet-lined stacks, it is the preeminent repository of occult knowledge. The history of the library is unknown to me because the academic and monk-like librarians rarely speak outside their known fields of study. But the last time I visited I did copy down the Library’s Rules of Conduct, of which each Reader is required to follow and keep on their person lest they suffer the wrath of those same

librarians. And as anyone from academia will no doubt tell you, never upset a librarian. Upsetting a librarian in Celaeno, however, is more akin to misplacing your toothbrush one morning and accidentally summoning Bugg-Shash. In other words, don’t do it. Ever. With this in mind, I thought I would share some of the more memorable rules for the library.

For reasons that I dare not ponder too long, before entry to the library each researcher must swear an oath. The small ritual concludes with the ceremonial Presentation of the Rules, in which a librarian silently gives the applicant a copy of the rules with their scaly tentacles, and samples of blood and hair are taken. Hardbound in some unidentifiable leather, and nearly 400 pages, the quarto covers every minutia of life in the Library, a small section of which is provided here.

Some of the Library of Celaeno Rules of Conduct:

ISSUE ONE

- ✘ A valid blood and hair sample is required to enter the Library.
- ✘ First-time readers arriving via byakhee from the shores of Lake Hali who are not in possession of their physical body must send samples of blood and hair prior to arrival to gain access to the Library. If no physical body exists due to the prior death of the reader, then a sample of their essential saltes will suffice.
- ✘ Should your name, place of residence, or DNA samples change, or if your body is lost or stolen, you must inform the Library immediately.
- ✘ You must observe all rules and instructions relating to the deposit, and inspection of bags and cases, this includes sub-dimensional pockets which will be searched in their entirety upon exit.
- ✘ You may not bring animals into a library, with the exception of those whose current permanent sentient form is that of an animal. Assistance dogs are permitted.
- ✘ You must follow all emergency and evacuation procedures. Guests must participate in all drills for fire, summoning, invasion, or dimensional-shift. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- ✘ If you observe breaches or attempted breaches of these rules of conduct you are asked to report them to library staff and not intervene yourself. Librarians are always near. Librarians are always watching.
- ✘ You must not summon any being within the confines of the Library. Conversely you may not banish a Reader from the Library. If you think a Reader has entered without following the proper guidelines then please notify a Librarian. Librarians are always near. Librarians are always watching.
- ✘ You must not speak while you read. Does this need to be explained?
- ✘ No brain canisters or other partially biologic sentient slave will be allowed in the Library. If you can't work without one, then please notify a Librarian so you can be summarily banished.
- ✘ Please do not leave the door open on the fifth floor terrace. Byakhees have been getting into the powdered sugar for Tcho-Tchurros in the cafeteria.
- ✘ You must show due regard for your own safety and that of other readers and staff. You must not endanger the safety or well-being of any other reader, or member of library staff by engaging in disorderly, threatening or offensive behavior.

HYPERGRAPHIA

ior. And because we realize that many different cultures may be present inside the Library walls with many different standards of acceptable behavior, a copy of the Celaeno Policy and Procedure on Harassment is available upon request.

- ✘ Never leave, or attempt to leave the Library with materials belonging to the Library. The foyer is not called Roungm'fsh Hall for nothing.
- ✘ You may only make copies of library material by pen and ink on paper. No other form of facsimiles will be allowed.
- ✘ You must not share items checked out to you with another person. Neither should you use items issued to another reader. Librarians are always near. Librarians are always watching.

✘ The Library of Celaeno has an obligation to preserve its collection for the users of today, tomorrow, and yesterday. Theft or deliberate or reckless damage of Library material are unpardonable offences and will result in termination of family line past, present and future.

✘ You must not engage in conduct which infringes the Statutes and Regulations of Celaeno governing the use of the property of or in the possession or custody of the Library, or the facilities and services provided by or on behalf of the Library, including the regulations relating to the Use of Trans-Dimensional Needlecasts.

✘ You are responsible for all damage to or loss of materials, including administrative and replacement costs. If you are terminated while in the library these costs will cede to your next most prosperous kin, alive or dead.

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Four Mythos Writing

Instruments

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Abigail Merritt, Linguist

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Finding Mythos Tomes in

Literature

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Remembrance of Things Past

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Adjectival Magic

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