

Hypergraphia

Special NecronomiCon Providence Edition



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Hypergraphia

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Submissions

Interested in submitting content for Issue #1? Email us at hypergraphia@weirdworks.org.

Behind the Mask

BY MATT PUCCIO

We write. Some of us are compelled to share our thoughts, to distribute them far and wide. Others are satisfied only if they can get their ideas on paper, for posterity. Some have wisdom to transmit, others dark visions, shadows which only fully take shape as they flow from the pen. Psychiatric patients who suffer from hypergraphia feel such a compulsion. Some: scribbled, repetitive, manic. Others: creative, meticulous, visionary. For us, Hypergraphia represents both the need to write and the subject of our writings: horror games, which often explore the descent into madness resulting from things that should not be known but must be described.

Perhaps the awful scribbblings in this slim pamphlet will inspire you to write a scenario of your own, or run a game based on one of the shadows found within. Whatever it brings to life for you, for us it has been a work of frantic, frenzied creative action, put together in a few weeks by a group of friends, investigators, fellow creatives. We felt the need. We were compelled. We had to do it.

I am grateful to friends from the NecronomiConnection for ideas and support in this endeavor. In particular, Ed Possing gets credit for the generative idea of this 'zine, the seed that was planted and quickly sprouted. Special thanks to Graham Walmsley for his permission to publish Cthulhu Dark material. And, finally, gratitude to Niels Hobbs and the staff of NecronomiCon Providence for bringing us together in 2015 and creating a venue for our shared interests.

Many of this issue's contributors will be at NecronomiCon Providence 2017, running games, speaking at panels, or drinking at The Red Fez. All have generously agreed to donate profits from Issue #0 to the Miracle Network Children's Hospitals through the Extra Life charity. If you're at the Con, we hope you'll join us on Saturday, August 19th for the Extra Life event!

Night Business

THREE SCENARIO HOOKS FOR CTHULHU DARK'S LONDON 1851 SETTING

BY CHARLES GERARD

Link-Boys

In the darkest corners of London, wealthy pedestrians hire waifs known as Link-Boys to light their ways home. In recent years, more and more gas lamps have been spilling light onto the city's inky streets. The young torch carriers have retreated to corners of the city where darkness still clings, like the alleys around London Docks. Shops that teem with life in daytime - sail-makers and cobblers and vendors of shiny brass compasses - are shut tight as mausolea after nightfall. Stately customs offices and tobacco warehouses loom. Masts of ships nod like silent accomplices. Only a few pubs wink flickers of dubious light.

The eager little nocturnal guides crouch along the wharfs and scrum for fares from passengers arriving late from ships.

Many tales in penny dreadfuls have warned that these Link-Boys are not to be trusted. They collude with thieves, stories say, trapping patrons in dead-end alleys where confederates are ready to ambush.

Lately, there are even darker rumors than this. Little demons disguised as Link-Boys have been seen skulking in the darkest hours. They perch among the barrels and bales, rows of sharp teeth tucked into cherub cheeks. They'll cheerfully take your farthing only to lead you, flames guttering with fat and tar. Down a maze of alleys, you'll go, until you reach the very gates of Hell.

Each telling of the legend, it seems, offers a different folk ward or treatment. Wonder if your guide is hellspawn? A spray of lavender on the creatures' backs, perfumers say, will reveal their shadowy black wings. Worried about Black Cupid's bite? Wear a duck's liver around the neck, butchers say, as a protective charm against razor teeth. Read your scriptures, the dock-preachers say, because they only have one cure for everything. Beware any flickers at the corner of your eye, the lamp-lighters say. Do not turn toward them. Because they never forget a face. And God help you if you hire them to light your way home.



A LINK-BOY AND CUSTOMER BY GALEN PEJEAU

Rat-Catchers

An arcane blood sport still thrives in the beer-stale cellars of Cambridge Circus. Down rotten stairs, terriers tangle with throngs of rats. There in the old rat-baiting pits, like miniature Roman arenas, the little bodies pile up. The kills are counted, the dogs lick their wounds, and wagerers squander fortunes. All the while, the cunning rat-catchers of London fatten on profits.

Most have heard of the dandy Jack Black, who earned his place in history atop mountains of whiskered carcasses. Some say he alone is responsible for the breeding of “fancy rats,” now renowned among high-born ladies who brush and pamper vermin like bald-tailed children. Envied are those society folk who keep obtain variations of

cinnamon, fawn, and agouti.

But Mr. Black is not the only one who harvests rodents in the night. Nor is he the only dabbler in the arts of husbandry. Old Cuthbert Groves, a vulturous figure who boards at the corner of Lichfield and Crown Streets, was an accomplished supplier of bait rats. In volume alone, only Black himself overshadowed Groves’ work. But in another way, Groves far exceeds all competition. It’s known in some circles that Groves produces blasphemous creatures from street stock, which he corrupts and transforms into familiars for the hex-wielding elite. Somewhere down in the sewer tunnels, he keeps his secret menagerie, it’s said. There are particular groups of clients - let’s call them covens - who’ll pay plenty for the fruits of this strange cultivation, and double

for his discretion.

So when the first rat-bait referees and bookies turned up dead, their bodies gnawed down to gristle and guts, many fingers were quick to point toward Old Groves. He'd been wronged. He had motive. Everyone knows that Jack offered a better price for bait rats, and squeezed him out of the market. All the dead buyers and ring leaders had been customers of Old Groves.

And in the misty dawn hours when street lamplighters found the heads of a dozen champion terriers neatly lined up like sentries along Castle Street, a mob gathered quickly and marched to the corner of Lichfield and Crown. But when police burst into his boarding house room, they found Groves himself had been decimated in the night. Something toothy had gotten revenge.

Resurrectionists

Until recently, the entrepreneurial cadaver industry of the 1830s had now all but vanished. Your Burkes and Hares, your London Burkers Gang - those sinister trades seemed



GUSTAVE DORÉ/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

to be a relic of the past. Old St. Barts Hospital can buy its bodies fresh and legal from workhouses nowadays. No dirt required. And that put the spadesmen out of business.

But lately there's something amiss. On one hand, the hospital anatomists say there's been a sudden shortage of flesh to play with. On the other, workhouses claim they've got a bumper crop of dead, owing to an early measles season. And the middlemen, the brokers who take their generous cut, claim workhouse masters are lying about this year's boon. They claim the masters must be dumping surplus just to gouge for better prices. Sto-

ISSUE ZERO

ries of supply and demand do not reconcile.

And suddenly those old resurrectionists seem to be coming back from retirement. Passing along potter's field at midnight, you can see so many silhouettes of fresh dirt piles, you'd think there'd been a plague of giant moles or badgers. Suspicious stuff. The docs in their smocks usually prefer to poke around in meat that's not so seasoned.

Then where's all those damned dead gone off to? Somebody is selling that flesh to new customers. Strange meetings have been seen in churchyards. Misshapen figures

gathering, conspiring in packs and cowed in woolen capes. Banknotes changing hands. At any given public house you'll hear plenty of theories about the graveside assemblies. Some say it's the Catholics, of course, growing bold with their popery plots. Some say it's the Polish refugees, starting trouble as always, siphoning cadaver profits. Others joke that it must be one of those new hedonist groups, looking for the next exotic treat.

A hat tip to Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, published in 1851.



HABLOT KNIGHT BROWNE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Unwanted Visitor

BY ED POSSING

I BARELY HEARD THE FIRST KNOCK. WAS IT REALLY A KNOCK? COULD HAVE BEEN THE DOG. EVERY UNEXPLAINED SOUND WAS THE DOG. SOUNDS DON'T MAKE THEMSELVES, RIGHT? LATELY, I'VE BEEN HEARING A LOT OF SOUNDS. BUT IT WAS A KNOCK. THE DOG SLUNK BEHIND ME AND WHINED.

"Hello?" I asked, barely breathing.

Nothing.

Silence filled the room like a fog, heavy and opaque. I sat down

on a chair and waited. The dog was shivering. I rubbed my hands on my pants. "I know you're still there" I whispered.

Nothing.

I heard the soft shifting of feet behind the door and a heavy exhale. Silence followed. I don't know how long I waited, sitting, staring at the door.

The knocks started again, jolting me out of my seat. The knocks were clear and urgent. "Who are you?" I asked trying to sound calm. The



ISSUE ZERO

only answer was more knocking. I opened the kitchen drawer under the coffee pot. That's where I kept my gun. I took it out and put the safety off. "What do you want?" I yelled, turning back to the door.

The knocks turned into heavy pounding. The door shook with every impact. Shaking, I lifted my gun and aimed toward the center of the door. "Go away! Leave me alone! I didn't call for you!"

The pounding continued, loud and unabated. The door creaked and groaned, but held still. This door, my cellar door, was strong but wouldn't last forever. Anything that could help me now was down cellar. The gun would be no use against the visitor.

I messed up. I thought everything was perfect. The glyphs, the charms, the incantations -- everything was perfect. I know it. I never make a mistake. What did I do wrong? What had I done?

I took ointment from my pocket

and drew protective sigils on the splintering wooden door. It might hold. It might. It had to. The knocking continued, but the sound was muted, like listening to pounding waves while being held underwater. And finally it stopped.

Nothing.

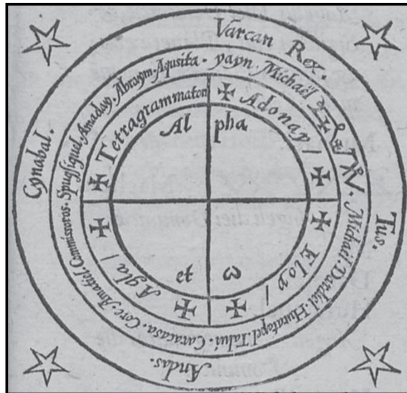
It worked.

I relaxed and collapsed against the kitchen table. The gun swung heavy in my hand. I struggled to control my breathing. My heart raged, threatening to burst out of my chest. But everything would be all right now. It's gone.

Nothing.

And then I heard it, a wet sound, barely louder than a heartbeat. Was it the dog?

The doorknob began to turn, slowly and deliberately. I pressed the cold muzzle of the gun up to the side of my head as the door slowly opened. Breathlessly, I awaited my guest.



Cleaning Up the Supernatural

AN INVESTIGATOR BACKGROUND FOR ANY GAME SYSTEM

BY TYLER HUDAK

IN HORROR RPGS, MANY PLAYERS LOVE PLAYING THE EVERYDAY PERSON - THOSE WHO ARE JUST LIVING THEIR LIVES BUT ARE THROWN INTO UNSPEAKABLE HORRORS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE LOTS OF ALTERNATIVES TO THE TYPICALLY CHARACTER PROFESSIONS ROUTINELY AVAILABLE IN HORROR GAMES. SOME EXAMPLES ARE THE CLEANING AND SANITATION SERVICES PROFESSIONS.

It may seem an odd choice to play a janitor or garbage collector in a game. However, cleaning crews are actually well-suited to find, clean up, and hide evidence of the supernatural. In buildings, the cleaning crew sees everything. They have access to most, if not all, rooms, can come and go without raising suspicion, are easily forgotten, and have access to caustic chemicals and disposal systems. Trash collectors have to travel everywhere to get their job done. You know that creepy house at the end of the road or that building of suspected cultists? Chances are they have garbage that is going to be picked up.

These professions have been around for most of recorded history

so they can fit into pretty much any game era. The first landfill was dated to 3000 BC in Knossos, Crete, and in around 500 BC Athens was passing laws dictating where landfills should be located. Who was filling these landfills? The garbagemen. The time of the Black Plague saw Britain creating rakers, men and women who would rake the trash from the streets into their carts. Even the word janitor can be found originating around 1707, where only 50 years later Benjamin Franklin started the first cleaning company.

When creating a janitor or trash collector, there are a few skills that should be taken into consideration. Since cleaning services professions tend to be ignored by most people, they should have a bonus to any hiding or sneaking skills, as long as they are hiding in plain sight. After all, do you pay any attention to the person emptying your trash at work? Unfortunately, this also means they should have a penalty to any interpersonal or societal skills, due to the stigma of their job and the likelihood they are in the lower or middle class of society.

GMs can also bring PCs of these professions into horror games using a variety of unique hooks. Since they go everywhere and see everything, there is a high likelihood they'll easily stumble onto something horrible. Some examples include:

- ☞ When the PCs arrive to clean up after a party thrown by their rich employer, no one is to be found and the party looks like it stopped mid-way. There are oily, black silhouettes of people burned into the walls that seem to move, and odd symbols drawn on the floor of one of the rooms.
- ☞ The PCs are sent to collect the garbage from a new corporation in the middle of nowhere. The dumpster is emptied into the truck as normal, but won't compact. Upon investigation, they find the remains of an alien, humanoid creature.
- ☞ While on their nightly routine of emptying trash cans at a university, the PCs run into a ragged man, eyes wild, who begs for their help. Strange symbols are carved into his skin. A number of young men wearing t-shirts of a local frat burst in, grab the man, and throw a few hundreds at the PCs, telling them to forget anything they saw.

The Order of Janus

Cleaning crews and sanitation engineers don't have to be working on their own. In fact, they can be part of a global conspiracy whose purpose is to "clean up" evidence of supernatural threats. Introducing, The Order of Janus.

The Order of Janus, originally called *Ordinem Janus*, was started around 50 CE after some Roman centurions tangled with a supernatural creatures and the Roman Senators needed to hide the evidence without being involved. The Senators reached out to some of the lowest class in the Empire: cleaners.

A number of street cleaners and janitors were recruited to form The Order of Janus, an Order whose purpose was to find evidence of the occult and remove it. The name was chosen as a reference to Janus, the Roman god who is the "custodian of the cosmos".

After the Roman Empire fell, The Order of Janus kept on. By the 1920s, the Order had created a shell company named Janus Incorporated that supplied janitorial staff to governments and businesses worldwide. Janus Incorporated has grown to become a multi-billion dollar company, and even offers services to perform crime scene clean-up for law enforcement around the world.

The Order works behind the scenes, placing its agents in key locations where supernatural activity

HYPERGRAPHIA

is known to take place. New recruits are contacted by the group when an existing member learns of their experience and feels they would benefit the Order, giving them access to supernatural items and information collected during the Order's long history.

While janitors and garbage collectors may not be the first choice for players, they offer unique advantages and hooks into games that

might normally not be available. Whether it's the solitary man working the night-shift emptying out wastebaskets, or garbage woman cleaning up supernatural evidence for a global conspiracy, players who choose characters in these professions are sure to have an amazing, and horrific, time.

Ashes in the Dark

A SCENARIO HOOK FOR CTHULHU DARK'S
LONDON 1851 SETTING

BY MAX MAHAFFA

Climbing Boys

The early morning cries of the chimney sweep and his soot covered cadre of boys were heard throughout the streets of 1850s London. The youths were known as Climbing Boys and in most cases they were sold or indentured to a Master Sweep, sometimes as young as four years old. The Master Sweep was tasked with feeding, clothing, and washing the boys. He in turn taught the boys a craft while they serviced the chimneys of London together. The sweep needed these

boys almost as much as they needed him due to the fact most chimneys were around 14 inches by 9 inches. This was dirty and dangerous work fraught with peril at every turn for the boys. Most of the time, when the chimneys were especially narrow, they would come and go in the nude whilst sustaining burns, cuts, bruises, twisted limbs and wrenched spines. If not careful a boy could become wedged in a chimney if he got his knees up to his chest, this usually had them pinned for hours until they could be pushed out from above or below.

Poor living conditions rife with soot and grime, as well as the constant carcinogens from their daily work created a bigger problem for the boys over time. The boys could look forward to developing Chimney Sweep's Cancer or "Soot Wart" as they called it and what today we would call a scrotal squamous cell carcinoma. Another hazard was when soot from higher up in a chimney would dislodge and crush or suffocate a boy. So hard working were these boys that oft when a boy tried to push through a blockage of soot he would become stuck fast, pressed in on all sides by the black tomb he created for himself. If there was quick work made and someone noticed in time to take out a wall of the chimney he could possibly be saved. The boys perished before they were able to be saved more often than not. If a boy was scared or reluctant to work, the Master Sweep would sometimes light small fires underneath them or have another boy climb under them and prick them with needles in the bottom of their feet.

The Horror at Berkeley Square

50 Berkeley Square in London has a storied past rife with mystery, disappearances, and death. From stories of a woman who killed herself haunting the location to a terrible undulating horror living

in the building that attacked some sailors, many ideas for the GM to build off of are present in the history. The stories are varied in their accounts of the "horror" there. No one unifying feature of this unnatural horror or phantasm is able to be ascertained.

The Horror

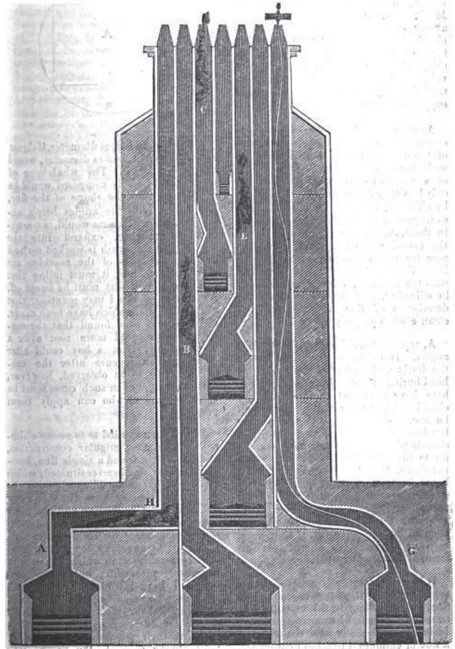
The eldritch horror is an ancient precursor of the nightgaunt race. It is insectoid and primal in nature as well as being quite sizeable. Similar to a nightgaunt in form, but chitinous, antediluvian, and filled with a feral hunger. It only exists in a small pocket dimension where it was trapped aeons ago when its home was destroyed. It has gained the ability to warp the reality around its prison after millennia of existence struggling to free itself and to stay alive off of the scraps of humanity it can manage to reach. The creature's pocket dimension exists outside of time and is roughly 30' x 30' and looks like a featureless cavern littered with bones. When awake in its prison, it creates a portal to its dimension, from which beings can enter its realm. The creature materializes false doors and hallways for the servants to blunder into or a seamless transition from one of the apartment's chimneys to its chamber. The creature used to work primitive magic long ago and created this prison to save itself

from destruction; it has forgotten over time and reverted to the terrible thing it has become today. It draws victims to its lair and uses its taloned claws to grab, tickle, and rend its victims asunder. It has a gaping maw filled with rows of black jagged teeth to devour its food.

The Hook

Climbing boys and servants have been going missing in Berkeley Square for some time now. Some local sweeps have noticed boys disappear after cleaning this building and flat owners sometimes report absent servants. All have chalked it up to running away. This is due to the lack of a body or other evidence to the contrary. The other climbing boys in the area know, however, that you don't want to clean the stacks around 50 Berkeley Square. The chimneys are a maze of twisting columns and right angles that seem narrower and steeper than most others in the city. The construction is like this due to the number of apartments in the building (6+). To fit new additions over time radical adjustments had to be made in the chimneys.

Climbing Boys who are interviewed will tell of others who just never come out after starting work. This is usually not a problem as there are enough climbing boys or servants that the Horror can pick



A SEVEN-FLUE STACK, SHOWING HOW IT WOULD BE CLEANED BY CLIMBING BOYS - JOSEPH GLASS
[WIKIMEDIA COMMONS](#)

off per year as to not raise suspicion. It has been especially hungry as of late and will draw the attention of the investigators. The PCs should be summoned by a Chimney Sweep, some climbing boy(s), or a worried maid/butler to investigate the most recent disappearance at the building.

The following words could be used by a GM to enhance descriptions:

Location: Cramped, Dark, Damp, Disorienting, Dusty, Hot, Smoky, Sweltering, Unsettling

Physical Feelings: Coughing, Nauseating, Sneezing, Wheezing

The Monster: Ancient, Antediluvian, Carapace, Chitinous, Gnarled, Grotesque, Malevolent, Twisted, Undulating

For further background on the topics covered in this article, several sources will prove useful. Wikipedia has a solid page on Chimney Sweeps

as well as some basic information about 50 Berkeley Square. The website Cryptopia has a collection of information on The Nameless Thing of Berkeley Square. Issue 335 (January 2015) of *Fortean Times* includes an article by Jan Bondeson entitled “The Most Haunted House in London” which may also provide background on 50 Berkeley Square.

The Green Bough Inn

A SETTING FOR ANY GAME SYSTEM

BY ANTHONY LEE-DUDLEY

I WILL NOT MAKE KINGSPORT BEFORE NIGHT FALLS COMPLETELY, OF THAT I AM CERTAIN.

Pulling my pack higher upon my back, I peer through the gathering gloom and once more curse my decision to tarry over lunch.

The tall boughs of the New England countryside, they that once provided welcome shade, now seem to hang lower; crowding the side of road, their limbs reaching out in the half-light.

Clutching my light jacket a little tighter and hunching my shoulders against the new falling rain, I recall

the words of a fellow traveller, met the day before. He told me of an Inn he had heard of. Surely that should be around here somewhere?

Is that a light I see ahead? The rain and darkness make up my mind for me, and I stumble towards the glow.”

Situated somewhere on the roads into Kingsport, always just around the next bend or over the next hill it seems, sits an inn.

Travelers argue about its exact location, almost as if it shifts its place, wandering as an itinerant beggar through the gloomy lanes



ANTHONY LEE-DUDLEY

and paths. Few that escape its grasp attempt to return, but those that do rarely, if ever, succeed.

Their descriptions however, always agree.

The Green Bough Inn sits back from the road, the only obvious indication of the Inn is the weather-worn sign creaking in its dark wood frame. The front fence is ivy covered and broken down in places; the gate sits open, grass growing through its wooden slats. Off to one side a wider gate hides a long driveway that leads up to a dilapidated barn.

Following the path from the front gate brings the traveller to the heavy oak front door; dark and

massive it hardly speaks of a warm welcome to those that would approach. A cracked bell sits in a nook to one side, almost daring one to attract the attention of those inside.

The Public Areas

The Lobby

A room of dark wooden panels, this gloomy entrance hall gives the weary traveller their first glimpse inside The Green Bough Inn. An large reception desk sits across from the front door, occupied by the ageing but doughty Henrietta Crouch. There is a door behind the desk and further doors lead left and right.

The Stairwell

Moving left from the Lobby leads the traveller into the bottom of a wood panelled stairwell, this gothic monstrosity wends its creaking way up to sleeping rooms on the floor above.

The Grand Dining Room

Continuing on through the Stairwell brings the traveller to the Grand Dining Room. Adorned by dark and brooding pieces of art and heavy items of black wood furniture, the dining room was clearly once an impressive location but has now seen better days.

Guests in the dining room are served by the three Crouch daughters Aphra, Mercy, and Hester.

The Bar

Through the door on the right of the Lobby is a small bar. Clearly

designed for less convivial drinkers, the bar is a shadowed and unwelcoming place. Behind the cracked wood of the bar lurks Nathan Crouch, the husband of Henrietta, dispensing alcohol and a dour mood in direct contradiction of both The Volstead Act, and basic customer service.

The Lounge

Through the bar, an archway opens into the Lounge. Another dark and gloomy room, full of cracked leather chairs and a huge carved fireplace with a fire that never seems to quite catch properly. Stuffed animal heads, both local wildlife and some more unusual stare down with glassy eyes from the walls.

The Other Rooms & Outbuildings

The rooms to the rear of the Public Rooms are a mixture of storerooms, kitchens and living rooms for Nathan, Henrietta, and the rest of the Crouch family.

The rooms upstairs are not uniform. Long, winding corridors create an atmosphere of confusion and tension. Noises seem to come from rooms that should be empty, the feeling of not being





ANTHONY LEE-DUDLEY

alone whilst walking the corridors a recurring complaint.

There are lights in the attic, which does not seem accessible from inside, and shapes move past the small windows. Circling the inn outside will not reveal a stairway to the attic.

There are a few small outbuildings; the barn serves as a garage for any automobiles as well as an old cart belonging to the Crouches. A woodshed sits to one side of the yard and an empty chicken coop sits to the other.

An overgrown path leads between the buildings and off into the woods.

The Staff

Nathan Crouch - Husband, Father and Barman

Henrietta Crouch - Wife, Mother and Receptionist

Aphra Crouch - Eldest Daughter

Mercy Crouch - Middle Daughter

Hester Crouch - Youngest Daughter

Adventure Seeds

The Green Bough Inn is a strange place; remote, eerie and sinister. The staff at the Inn are unpleasant and unwelcoming.

The Green Bough could be a hotbed of cult activities; the Crouch family leading

the cult from a temple deep in the woods, reached via the path from the garden. Or perhaps they have another child undergoing some sort of supernatural change kept up in the attic!

Where is the entrance to the attic? Are evil spirits and ghosts responsible for the noises and lights? Perhaps criminal elements use the inn as a meeting place, either known or unknown to the Crouches.

What of the inn itself? Is there any truth to the rumours that the Inn cannot be found again, or that it changes location? Are guests in danger? Are they being lured in for some other-worldly purpose, or are nefarious elements simply taking advantage of the remote location?

The reasons for this, Dear Reader, are up to you.

Occultarum Borealis

BY IAN MACLEAN

CLOAKED WITH DARK BOREAL FORESTS, ROLLING, VERDANT HILLS, VAST TREELESS PLAINS, CRAGGY, SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS, AND LONG STRETCHES OF TUMULTUOUS COAST, ALL TOPPED BY A MASSIVE SWATHE OF ARCTIC TUNDRA, CANADA CONTAINS AN INCREDIBLE VARIETY OF TERRAIN. IT IS A HOARY AND MASSIVE LAND, COMPRISING 6% OF THE TOTAL SURFACE AREA OF THE EARTH. THE COUNTRY CAN TRACE HABITATION BY HUMANS TO AT LEAST 12,000 YEARS AGO AND YET MUCH OF THE COUNTRY REMAINS UNTOUCHED BY HUMAN HANDS. ONLY 5% OF ITS ALMOST 10-MILLION SQUARE KILOMETRES HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED FOR AGRICULTURE, AND LESS THAN 0.5% HAS BEEN EXPLOITED FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT. THOUGH EXTENSIVELY SURVEYED AND MAPPED BY AIR AND SATELLITE, MUCH OF THIS LAND REMAINS UNEXPLORED, FIRST-HAND.

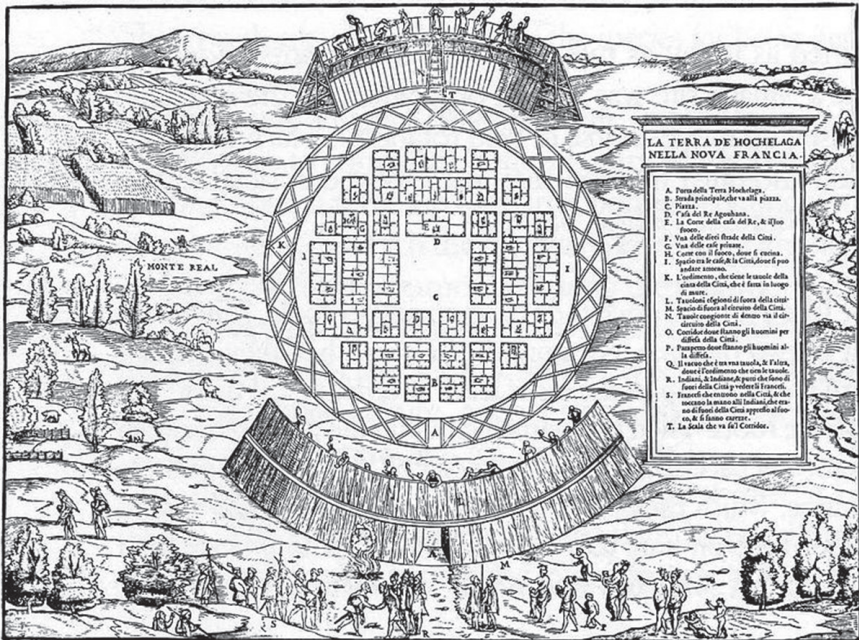
With such a vast canvas of time and space, it's no wonder that Canada has collected its share of mysteries and legends. In this article we will plumb those mysteries and mine them for potential as scenar-

io seeds. For this first foray we'll visit the past, to the early days of Canadian exploration by European pathfinders.

The Lost Village of Hochelaga

In October of 1535, the French explorer Jacques Cartier wrote a detailed account in his travel journal of the St. Lawrence Iroquoian village of Hochelaga. Hochelaga was a large and impressive fortified farming village, at the foot of what he would dub Mount Royal on the St. Lawrence River. Designed as a circular settlement, and containing around 50 wooden longhouses, it was surrounded by a triple palisade of wood and woven bark which reached a height of around 18 feet. Defensive galleries were spaced along these walls and stocked with rocks to defend against invaders. At the time of Cartier's visit the village held upwards of 2000 inhabitants. The area outside of the village was cultivated with fields of corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers. Hochelaga

HYPERGRAPHIA



PLAN OF HOCHELAGA-GIACOMO GASTALDI/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

was a significant, thriving, and healthy settlement.

When Samuel de Champlain, another explorer and “the Father of New-France,” returned to the area in 1603, he found no trace of the village. He had been following Cartier’s route to establish trading posts to bring valuable furs back to Europe. Hochelaga was a key destination on that route. The settlement and its people had vanished entirely. Theories on what happened to the Hochelaga people are varied. They may have been wiped out in wars with the Huron or Iroquois peoples (the St. Lawrence Iroquoians were a culturally and linguistically distinct people from the Iroquois). The Hochelagans might have been

driven away by Algonquin or Mohawk raids, as both tribes were now using the St. Lawrence as hunting grounds. It is also possible the Hochelagans migrated further west after exhausting the local lands, were assimilated into the surrounding nations, or simply succumbed to diseases introduced during their interactions with European explorers. Curiously, the nearby village of Stadacona was also found deserted, though the structures of that village still remained.

Involving the Players

There are some excellent possibilities for player characters to investigate the disappearance of

the Hochelaga. The most likely role for characters would be as a French expeditionary force. These groups contained people from a variety of professions: sailors, navigators, cartographers, merchants, hunters, engineers, farmers, and general labourers.

Although initial expeditions by the French were focused on fishing the well-stocked waters of the Grand Banks, subsequent voyages went inland, following previous charts and routes established by Cartier, to establish permanent outposts and exploit the fur trade. Relations with the indigenous peoples had become strained after Cartier's interactions over several voyages. Shoring up relations with the Hochelagan people would provide a secure base of operations to mend ties. If such relations had devolved into overt hostility, the crew may be harried along the river, and the knowledge of a large, well-provisioned, and defensible settlement would be too good to pass up. Scurvy was a common illness facing those on long sea voyages, and several of Cartier's crew had been saved from this potentially fatal illness by receiving white cedar tea brewed by the Stadaconans. Having one or several of the players suffering from scurvy could force them to seek help from the First Nations tribes. If Stadacona is the crew's initial destination they would find the village intact, but abandoned, so they would likely

continue downriver to Hochelaga.

Conversely, the players could adopt the roles of another of the local peoples. The Iroquois, Algonquin, Mohawk, Abenaki, and Huron nations are the major groups present in the area in the early 1600s. Tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy traded surplus commodities amongst themselves, such as furs, corn, and tobacco. With the rise in European interest in furs and pelts, surrounding nations would be eager to bring such wares to settlements along the St. Lawrence. The Algonquin and Mohawk would regularly raid settlements in the areas, taking captives and goods. Blood-feud, where the death of a tribe member by another tribe required balancing by killing the perpetrator, was common. If the perpetrator was not brought to justice and executed, the entire clan could be held accountable. Strained relations, already tenuous because of European interference, could also bring about full blown warfare between tribes. Any of these would provide motivation for players to seek out Hochelaga. Finding the entire village and its thousands of people simply vanished would be an ominous event.

Mythos Entanglement

The legends of the Iroquoian people can be used to link in mythos elements, creating some unique

HYP ER G R A P H I A

opportunities for horror. In the legend of the Flying Head, a demonic entity may be spawned by a particularly violent murder or mass murder. The creature resembles a massive head with burning red eyes, coated with long, writhing, black hair. Presaged by howling winds, it sprouts dark wings from its sides to fly, and a pair of claws below, which it uses to catch and rend victims before devouring them. The black writhing form sailing through the skies with its glowing eyes is reminiscent of the Haunter of the Dark, and perhaps this is one more of Nyarlathotep's many forms. If the Hochelagan people went to war with the Stadaconans, the superior numbers of the Hochelagans would have been devastating. In the midst of such a massacre, an Iroquoian shaman, having received secret knowledge while dreaming, could have enacted a ritual to summon the Flying Head, which would rise from the corpses to seek vengeance against the Hochelagans. One known weakness of the Flying Head is fire, which, if used in defense by the Hochelagans, could have consumed their village in the chaos of an attack. The creature may still be on the loose, haunting the area around the former village, attacking those who set foot on the island. The players would have to seek the help of local nations to find a way to kill or drive off the beast if they hope to establish an encampment

in such a prime location.

Mount Royal provides two other opportunities to link in mythos creatures. The Iroquois people believe that a race of little people, called Jogah, live amongst them. One group of the Jogah are known as the Ohdow, a race of knee-high subterranean people who keep control of dangerous entities beneath the earth. Of particular concern to the Ohdow are the "White Buffalo," great beasts that seek the surface to rampage and sow chaos. Cthonians seem to fit the bill, here. These massive, pallid entities are capable of incredible destructive force. The island of Montreal seems an appropriate place to corral such a creature, given their susceptibility to water, and there would be ample space to keep it housed beneath Mount Royal. Were the people of Hochelaga to become ill from European diseases, or be attacked by warring nations, they may not have been able to keep up with regular offerings to the Ohdow, placing fruit, tobacco, and fingernails into bowl-like depressions in the mud. Being constantly occupied with containing the Cthonian, the Ohdow would rely heavily on offerings to maintain their strength. Conversely, a drop off in offerings could be taken as an insult to the little people. Either deliberately or accidentally, if the Ohdow lost control of the Cthonian, it would lash out in anger over its imprisonment at the nearest

ISSUE ZERO

habitation. Whether still confined to the island, or having been able to tunnel beneath the river, the players will need the help of the Ohdow to deal with the creature.

Known for their penchant for mining, the Mi-Go may have begun operations inside of Mount Royal. Collaborating with the nearby Hochelagans could have meant advances leading to more fertile land, better crops, and settlement stability. Cartier only stayed two days before moving on to Stadacona, perhaps at the urging of the Hochelagans, or perhaps because he saw strange lights moving about the mountain. On his subsequent voyages, Cartier returned to the area, but never specifically mentions returning to Hochelaga. Suspicions of nearby peoples could have fostered animosity towards the Hochelagans, which may have forced the Mi-Go into an aggressive stance. Wiping out the Stadaconans would serve as a strong message to any others wishing to interfere in the activities of the Mi-Go. The Hochelagans may have thought of the Mi-Go as Thunders, winged storm spirits with turkey-like heads who can command lightning and may kill a man with a glance. They can also be quite benevolent, curing illness or bringing rain, which may align with the medical and technological expertise of the Mi-Go. Having either transferred the Hochelagan people to brain cylinders or used them for

other means, the Mi-Go would have disassembled or razed the village to cover their tracks. Even if their operations have ceased in the area, their infrastructure may still be intact beneath the mountain, along with either a small contingent of the creatures, or a hapless Hochelagan or two, whose brain cylinders were left behind.

From a player standpoint, Europeans in 17th century Quebec would be strangers in an unknown and hostile land. Interactions with the local population are tenuous at best, and the scale of the wilderness would be oppressive. The local flora would be quite different to that of northern France and the fauna could be incredibly dangerous, with wolves and bears to contend with, as well as constant swarms of mosquitoes, black flies, and deer flies. Without any permanent French settlements along the St. Lawrence, the only guaranteed assistance would lie 5000 kilometres across the Atlantic. For First Nations characters, although familiar with the land, they would still face the similar risks as the Europeans. The early 1600s are a time of flux for the Iroquois Confederacy; tensions are rising and have been exacerbated by the changes in the fur trade and European alliances with the Algonquin and Huron. Folklore and mythology also play an important part in the indigenous people's spiritual lives. Such changes could be seen

as ill omens and offending spirits or upsetting natural balances was a serious concern.

To enrich your storytelling, consider further research into New France in the 1500s-1600s, particularly the voyages of Jacques Cartier and Samuel de Champlain. Mostly

complete translations exist of Cartier's actual diaries. A great wealth of information can be found regarding the Iroquois Confederacy and its member nations, as well as the customs and beliefs of its peoples.

Fragments of Fears and Phobias

COULROPHOBIA: FEAR OF CLOWNS

BY SEAN MURPHY

"The clown's art is now rather terrifying and full of anxiety and apprehension, their suicidal feats, their monstrous gesticulations and frenzied mimicry reminding one of the courtyard of a lunatic asylum."

- Edmond de Goncourt, 1876

IN LATE AUGUST OF 2016, A YOUNG BOY RAN HOME TO TELL HIS MOTHER ABOUT TWO BRIGHTLY COSTUMED BUT DOUR CLOWNS WHO TRIED TO LURE HIM INTO THE WOODS TOWARDS AN ABANDONED HOUSE. SOON AFTER THIS INCIDENT A RASH OF CLOWN SIGHTINGS CROPPED UP IN THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. UNNERVED WITNESSES REPORT SEEING CLOWNS STANDING NEAR SCHOOL GROUNDS,

GRABBING AND THREATENING PASSERS-BY AND DRIVING AS A GANG IN CARS AND TRUCKS. BENJAMIN RADFORD, THE AUTHOR OF *BAD CLOWNS*, TOLD *PEOPLE* MAGAZINE THAT "THE REPORTS SEEM TO BE COPYCATS, FUELED BY SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWS COVERAGE" AND THESE "STALKER CLOWNS" SHOULD BE CONSIDERED HARMLESS. YET THE OTHERNESS OF CLOWNS AND THEIR ROLE AS A FUNHOUSE MIRROR TO SOCIETY SERVES AS A RIPE SOURCE OF HORROR FOR GAMERS.

The history of clowning extends throughout recorded history. A pygmy clown entertained the Egyptian Pharaoh Dadkeri-Assi about 2500 B.C. and hieroglyphics suggest that priests would dress as clowns.



The courts of China saw similar performers as early as 1818 B.C. and Greek and Roman plays featured entertaining figures. Medieval jesters cavorted in ridiculous clothing and, in between songs and acrobatics, employed humor to mock their betters and speak truths that would result in punishment for any other member of the court. From his conquest of the Aztec nation in 1520, Cortez sent back “fools, dwarf clowns and hunchbacked buffoons” to Pope Clement VII. Many Native American cultures, such as the Pueblo and Lakota Tribes, employ “sacred clowns” as part of their religious ceremonies to reveal truths in a comical manner. The modern circus clown drew upon the hobo or tramp clown with their shabby clothing and alcoholic red nose, who entertained better-off audi-

ences as they underwent a series of humiliations. With this lineage, GMs should feel free to introduce clown figures into a campaign set in any age.

In modern times, the public sentiment toward clowns has evolved. During the early years of the Cold War through the 1970s, the public looked for cheery imagery. Clowns like Bozo and Clarabell delighted viewers of the new medium known as television while Ronald McDonald invited hungry families to come eat. But beginning in the 1980s, the “Satanic Panic” led to parental fears about dangers posed to their children from a variety of sources, including heavy metal and Dungeons and Dragons, and clowns fared no better in this period. In 1980, the public followed the trial of John Wayne Gacy, Jr., who en-

HYP ERGR APHIA

tertained at parties and charitable events as “Pogo the Clown” even while he tortured and murdered at least 33 boys over a six-year period. Children in Boston told authorities in 1982 that clowns attempted to lure them into vehicles and similar stories soon cropped up in Providence, Kansas City, Denver, and Pittsburgh. No adult ever saw these “phantom clowns” leading to suggestions by authorities that it might be a hoax. Gamers are welcome to try to answer the question as to how children from so many different areas in the pre-internet era independently reported similar events.

Popular culture began to reflect this ambiguous relationship with clowns. In 1982, the horrors of the movie *Poltergeist* included a killer clown attacking its owner and four years later Stephen King’s novel “It” centered on Pennywise, a child-killing creature in the shape of a clown. The subsequent movie in 1990 inspired an entire genre of killer clowns including *Clownhouse*, *Mr. Jingles*, and the *Camp Blood Trilogy*. More recently, the *Saw* series featured a clown mascot. It seems clear that one result of this imagery is that the predominantly happy association that children had with clowns is broken. A study conducted in 2008 at the University of Sheffield found that, of 250 children from ages 4 to 16, every one of them disliked the idea of clowns being part of the hospital

decor. Dr. Penny Curtis, one of the researchers, concluded that “clowns are universally disliked by children” and that “some found them frightening and unknowable.”

So what causes fear of clowns, or coulrophobia (from the Greek word “one who goes on stilts”)? Some psychologists have suggested that the “uncanny valley” is at play, as clown makeup and costumes distorts features just enough to engender repulsion. The white paint may be particularly disturbing if it reminds the viewer of a corpse. Others note that a clown’s mask and make-up make it impossible to ascertain their true feelings, resulting in a creepy feeling as one tries to guess their next action. This uncertainty is carried still further when clowns are hit by mallets, pies, and other objects by their cavorting companions, yet their painted-on smile continues to radiate as if they hadn’t a care in the world. “It is the fear of the mask, the fact that it doesn’t change and is relentlessly comical,” says Ramsey Campbell.

For a GM, clowns represent an opportunity to extend beyond the typical predator monster. In bureaucratic, norm-driven societies, the clown should distort the lines of acceptable behavior. The Joker is frightening in the way he calmly kills not only innocents but members of his own gang with no remorse. Anyone can be a clown – the man behind the deli counter, the taxi

ISSUE ZERO

driver, the frail school teacher – because once they put on the costume they give themselves permission to be social outlaws. And, as the Native Americans recognized, those who push the boundaries of the world towards the mysterious have a shamanic quality to them that is feared by those who cling to estab-

lished social orders. Playing a clown in a horror setting gives the GM a chance to poke holes in players' conception of safety and security, thereby uncovering the lurking uncertainties that lie beneath.



JULIAN CARVAJAL

Horror at the Biltmore

BY EDWIN NAGY

A GROUP SITS DOWN TO PLAY A NICE FRIENDLY GAME ON THE 19TH FLOOR OF THE BILTMORE. MEANWHILE, UNBEKNOWNST TO THEM, A MEMBER OF A LARP IN THE SECOND-FLOOR STATEROOM HAS BROUGHT A LITTLE TOO MUCH REAL INTO A CEREMONY TO CALL OUT TO THE DISTANT GODS. THE BILTMORE STARTS TO SHAKE. THE WALLS BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT SHIMMER AND FALTER. SUDDENLY THE PLAYERS FIND THEMSELVES RUNNING THROUGH LEVELS OF HORROR HERETOFORE FOUND ONLY IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS. LED BY A ROTATING CAST OF GMS FROM MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY PODCAST, SKYPE OF CTHULHU, GOOD FRIENDS OF JACKSON ELIAS, SQUAMOUS STUDIOS, CHAOSIUM, AND MORE, THIS MULTI-TABLE CALL OF CTHULHU EXTRAVAGANZA IS RAISING MONEY FOR THE MIRACLE NETWORK CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS THROUGH THE EXTRA LIFE CHARITY.

During this four-hour game, players compete for prizes such as longest surviving investigator, most exciting demise, and most deaths,

while the GMs swap off after every horror-laden encounter. "But where does the money come from?" you ask, from the safety of your paisley clad armchair. Players, GMs, and passers-by are all invited to drop down some cash to affect the game. Players can buy their characters a book of spells, a lovely but ultimately useless revolver, or some sanity restoring drink. And the more malevolent amongst us might choose a new monstrosity to add to the mix or a twist to the GMs' carefully laid plans. While the players are struggling to keep their characters alive, the GMs must improvise around all the chaos brought forth from the wallets and minds of the audience.

Come join us, if you dare, Saturday, August 19th, 2017 from 2 to 6 PM in State Suite A of the Biltmore Hotel as NecronomiCon raises an Extra Life. No experience necessary. Dice and characters provided. Lots and lots of characters. Show up and play for as little or as long as you like. No donations required.



Off the Rails

BY BRIAN MURPHY

INVESTIGATIVE HORROR GAMES TEND TO RELY MORE HEAVILY ON WRITTEN SCENARIOS THAN FANTASY HACK-AND-SLASH GAMES. THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF DETAIL NEEDED TO RUN NORMAL INVESTIGATIVE GAMES INCLUDING CLUES, FORESHADOWING, AND RED HERRINGS. SO IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE THAT OCCASIONALLY GM'S WILL MAKE A MISTAKE. THIS IS A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF ONE SUCH MISTAKE THAT I MADE IN A GAME, AND WHY I CHOSE TO BURN DOWN A CITY TO FIX IT.

I was running the campaign *The Sense of the Sleight-of-Hand Man* for my group. The players made it to the Dreamlands city of Lhosk on the southern shores of the Cerenarian Sea. My mistake was allowing the players to sell a captured Black Ship owned by the Men of Leng for about 200,000 gold pieces. At the time I had no reservations since the cost of the vessel is listed in the game material. But after the players had bought a castle, servants, horses, and a small hired army, I realized that the situation needed to be fixed.

My co-keeper and I had pon-

dered previously if there was a commodities exchange happening within fantasy cities that adventurers were unaware of. So with that idea in mind, I chose to deflate the value of gold in Lhosk and crash the market. With gold devalued, the people of Lhosk were paying grossly inflated prices for common goods, e.g. a thousand percent markup for a rotten apple. And unbeknownst to the PCs, imports had virtually stopped due to the newly increased import tax at the docks, and goods in warehouses were going bad because most merchants could not afford the wholesale prices.

After several weeks of this, the city was in chaos. The typically sedate Dreamlands natives were in an uproar; riots were happening in the city's market district, and as people started dying, and disease began to spread, the lower classes staged a full uprising. The Men of Leng, who were none too happy about one of their own ships being stolen and sold to the highest bidder, naturally decided to return to the city and take what was theirs.

A fierce standoff between

HYPERGRAPHIA

proletariat forces, middle-class merchants and knights, and the Men of Leng began. And to set off this powder keg we just needed a spark. That spark was a PC by the name of Colonel Grant Beauregard. In a previous session, riding high on his recent increase in status to the super wealthy, the Colonel had kitted himself out in the best arms and armor he could afford and purchased some Potions of Rage from a merchant. And being a veteran of both the Spanish-American War and the Great War, he saw the Lengians as an invading force. So the boisterous Colonel did what came naturally and drank his Potion of Rage and planned to charge into battle against the Lengians.

The Colonel, now blinded by rage, began attacking the commoners around him. He killed several rather quickly, but waves of angry protesters and knee-high goatmen overpowered him and he was lost amongst the mob. And thus started the Battle of Lhosk, which rather quickly turned into the Burning of

Lhosk. Five days later, the entire city was in ashes, the population depleted, the market was stabilised albeit almost nonexistent, and the players, rightly seen as the harbingers of this calamity, were robbed and wanted men.

None of the Burning of Lhosk was in the book. It was simply the solution that I devised with my co-keeper to restore balance to the game and set them on edge. Sure, I burned a city to the ground, killed thousands of NPCs, and murdered a player character in the process, but this tangent from the main campaign provided some of the most memorable sessions our group has ever had. By the way, Colonel Beauregard did make one more appearance. His fragmentary corpse had been crucified in front of the Black Temple as a warning to those willing to bring trouble into Lhosk, and perhaps as a warning to my players.



ISSUE ZERO



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