



protodimension magazine

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Infested Corridor by Nagy Norbert

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DITHERING

INSPIRATIONS TO DRAW from. This whole editorial is devoted to discussing what inspires us in our writing and gaming. Now as an editor, my inspirations lie solely in assisting in providing the best product I possibly can. Not much to draw from besides what sounds the best and conveys the message or content in the clearest fashion it can be.

Now as a writer and creator, my inspirations are both focused and much more varied.

There is a pool of things that help influence much of my work, with other elements also playing a role. Music, fiction, literature, visual elements, and concepts all play a part in the creation process. In both my fiction and my gaming, some elements tend to be used and re-used on a regular basis such as the post-apocalypse, mixtures of cosmic horror and cyberpunk, dreams and other worlds intruding on the current plane of existence, and similar influences.

All of these I mix and match in different combinations creating from them all and usually initiated with music. This is a large portion of my creative inspirations. There is a large list I keep updating and modifying of those things that drive my creations and ideas.

Some of those include:

- ☛ The Moon
- ☛ The Post Apocalyptic
- ☛ The Surreal
- ☛ Dreams and Dreamlands
- ☛ Cyberpunk and the related Sub-Genres
- ☛ Wastelands
- ☛ Urban Fantasy
- ☛ Music

These are some of the many different and divergent sources I pull from in my writing and gaming creation. Of course each of us have our sources to draw from. Other authors, history, mythology, current events, all are totally valid to source from.

Now of course those that contribute to our magazine draw from similar sets of inspirations. The backstory to the Dark Conspiracy setting, the overall works of HP Lovecraft, shared memes and ideas posted on the online services that are all around us. Making for some similarities in the starting points, all ending up in different places.

So why not sit down and make a list of some of the things that inspire your gaming and take a look at them all. What can be mixed and matched to make something a little different than what has come before. Maybe take a look around and see what else you could use to mix in and go in a new direction, without straying too far from what is the comfort zone. Share what inspires your creations with us all and see what maybe gets sparked from it.

So in this issue of Protodimension Magazine we have tons of articles, covering all the usual bases. A little adventure action, some guns and stuff, along with some other assorted fare. From the distant past to obscure rituals, from skinning to Nyarlathotep, we have something to help out your game what ever it is.

We here at PDM and 3 Hombres are always thrilled and grateful for the contributions that are made and sent in support of our magazine.

Good Gaming,
Tad Kelson
Editor in Chief
Protodimension Magazine

IN THE DARK

EASY AS THAT

A bit of fiction

by Osmond Arnesto

FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

[allisonwonderland \[1:00AM\]](#): I just want you to feel alive again

“Nobles, that’s people with royal blood, they become knights all the time. No big deal, they’re the kids of kings. The guy who develops your pictures? Forget about it. That’s why this game’s so fun. One of the kids was talking about it. The blonde one’s, you know the one. White heels, necklace with a little fish on it. Oh, gorgeous. I’m not saying she’s the Venus de Milo, because she’s real. That, and she’s got arms. So strong, raising a kid by herself like that. I could never do it. I can barely take care of myself. Car dealerships go to me for spare tires.”

[actionhero6 \[09:38PM\]](#): It’s like being complete

[actionhero6 \[09:38PM\]](#): being here, I mean

[actionhero6 \[9:39PM\]](#): playing with you

[actionhero6 \[9:40PM\]](#): And everybody else, too

[actionhero6 \[09:43PM\]](#): That sounded stupid, I’m sorry

[allisonwonderland \[09:56PM\]](#): it’s not, and I know how you feel

[allisonwonderland \[09:57PM\]](#): I’m here for you

[actionhero6 \[10:01PM\]](#): I’m so glad

If the lights were on, there would be pizza boxes on the floor and half-finished cans of this soda, that beer – bought only on special occasions, like the end of another week – maybe a doggy bag or two. The Buddha’s delight would have long since eroded the foam containers and seeped into the carpet. There would be sopping black spots and it would look like walking through a primordial swamp. But the lights aren’t on, so it’s all just a careful walk to the computer chair. Toes tip, prodding for sharp edges, and hands grope.

The monitor cracks a bright blue light into the apartment, a lightning blaze, or the flash of a camera, exposing surfaces and deepening the shadows behind them. Everything seems to crawl up the walls. Black, mismatched fingers stretch out behind piles of dime novels and clothes that haven’t seen the inside of a washing machine since the turning of the season. That is an ignored fact, however. The underwear might as well be fresh and the pants pressed. Facing it all is the welcome screen. “Reign of the Golden Kingdom.” Ten dollars USD a month, only eleven months out of the

year, and the ad promised ADVENTURE! WEALTH! FAME! Game with players all over the world! The words were almost audible. The temptation, undeniable. The wallet, a little lighter just about every time the calendar landed on the 25th.

“Mom and Dad, they raised me Catholic. Went in every Sunday, confessed every stolen cookie, invested my free time at CCD, the works. Stands for Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. That’s a Jeopardy question for you. For a while I even bought into the Word. You’ll want the one where they pack three rolls of film in one box. You save more money in the long run that way. Don’t sweat it. But I’m not one of those bitter ex-Christians. Always mouthing off about how they’re so much better now, science is where we’ll find all the answers we need, how could they have been so stupid before, yadda yadda yadda. It’s like they’re insulting my folks, you know? But I kind of admire religious people. The rest of us, we’re doing the whole bills and taxes thing. I don’t know how many days where I get home and I’m surprised that it’s already the end of the day. Them, they’re playing the most far-out game you can play. It’s not about... It’s between eternal bliss and eternal damnation. I admire them.”

[allisonwonderland \[10:30PM\]](#): 7 years? I can't imagine that

[allisonwonderland \[10:30PM\]](#): must be tough, to live like that

[actionhero6 \[10:30PM\]](#): You get used to it though

[actionhero6 \[10:31PM\]](#): Life's not just about love

[allisonwonderland \[10:33PM\]](#): it's just you sound so lonely

[actionhero6 \[11:11PM\]](#): Where are you from? Maybe we can meet

“I’ve got friends now in places like Denmark and Korea. You think America’s a melting pot? That’s nine fourteen. Forget the fourteen though, it’s just change. I mean, I don’t really get to see them in person, but meeting in the flesh has all these limitations. Schedules to keep, bedtimes, the distance. There’s always someone online. You come back soon, alright?”

Last time, the clock said 21:52. It says 02:00 now, and that’s only because the hourly beep called attention to it. The blurry lights of

cars passing by playing on the ceiling looks like the murky surface of a waiting lake. A low growl coming from a dog that isn’t in the room is the reminder of a skipped dinner. There are probably a few take-out places still open. Not pizza again, but something from that diner. Something light, otherwise skipping dinner in the first place would have been for nothing. The alarm will need to be set a little later than usual. As long as the head hits the pillow before the sun comes up, there shouldn’t be a problem. It takes at least fifteen, twenty minutes



to get to work – twenty-five, hitting all the red lights – so a shower is in the ‘maybe’ column for now. Thankfully, there’s no such thing as a morning rush at the mini-mall. The privilege of getting there early is reserved especially for baristas and anyone who wants to munch on senior citizens’ specials. The old kiosk is a blight on the surface of the parking lot, and that’s saying something for a giant sprawl of painted asphalt. It’s the last ruin of a lost city. No one comes in to develop photos at eight in the morning. No one comes in to develop photos. That shower’s looking more and more like it’s in the works, after all.

02:01.

[allisonwonderland \[11:26PM\]](#): we can go together

[allisonwonderland \[11:26PM\]](#): ill find you there

[actionhero6 \[11:35PM\]](#): Easy as that

[allisonwonderland \[11:35PM\]](#): easy as that

Ideally, when the razor is sharp enough, the first surprising, often-times sobering thought is that it’s actually happening. The endorphins are the second surprise. Depending on the person, looking down and wondering how long that faded ring around the third finger’s been naked is the third. If the all-caps HIGHER POWER exists, the biggest ‘fuck you’ It ever bestowed on Its children was the ability to remember how much time they’ve lost when they weren’t paying attention.

“I used to watch those a lot when I was a kid. Van Damme. Segal. I’ll get some flak for this, but Schwarzenegger too. Playing makes me feel like I’m one of them. Punching terrorists, slaying dragons, it’s all the same thing. They weren’t mindless! They pump you up, make you feel like kicking someone’s ass. Left hook. Forward kick. I used to take classes when I was in high school. It’s been a while since the last time I got into this stance, but it’s like riding a bike. Sometimes it hurts. You try. Come on, the place is practically empty.”

The computer is already on. A sock dips into a pool that stains it rotting crimson. Nothing a little hydrogen peroxide won’t fix. She’s standing beside the chair, wearing a tattered golden cloak, arms outstretched and palms out. Like she’s presenting something that can’t be put into words. Her face is expressionless, a mask to interpret, but oh, so gorgeous. The crown that doesn’t seem to be resting on the top of her head glows bright blue. There was a statue of the Virgin Mary

a lot like this. The Virgin isn’t blonde, though. She doesn’t wear heels. Statues don’t bleed.

“You try. Come on.”

[actionhero6 \[12:58AM\]](#): Why me?

[actionhero6 \[12:59AM\]](#): What’s so special about me?

Blood runs between the gaps in the keyboard and fills the rest of the night. The stars are black, and there almost aren’t any more words to say.

[actionhero6 \[1:03AM\]](#): I believe you

[actionhero6 \[1:04AM\]](#): I’m coming

[actionhero6 \[1:04AM\]](#): I love you

[actionhero6 \[1:04AM\]](#): I can see you

[actionhero6 \[1:04AM\]](#): I love you

“Used to be, you had to do all this yourself. Now they have a machine you just stick the reel in, and you wait. What’s the sign up there say? One Hour Photo. One hour, and you have these little things. Like windows. Windows into someone’s vacation or wedding or whatever they want. See? Your picture here, that suit he’s wearing, the glass in his hand. See how that’s shining. I can see it, too, but it’s not like I can climb in and toast the both of you. You remember this night, don’t you? It was dinner, or his birthday. Your anniversary. You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to. You can jump in and you’re there. But to me, it’s just a photograph. It’s just light in time. I’m a little jealous. You look so happy in this one.”

[allisonwonderland \[3:00AM\]](#): You’re mine

[allisonwonderland \[3:00AM\]](#): this is what you wanted, right?

[actionhero6 \[3:01AM\]](#): It’s nice to belong to somebody again



THE SHADOW OF THE FLESHLESS ONES

A New Race

by Eric Fabiaschi

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU, DARK CONSPIRACY & CONSPIRACY RULES

THE FLESHLESS ONES first appeared in the 1953 *Worlds of Fear* #10 classic comic book by Sheldon Moldoff. It has since fallen into the public domain and has been adapted numerous times by various companies over the years. The Fleshless Ones have appeared in numerous horror campaigns of mine from the *Call of Cthulhu* RPG to most recently in a *Conspiracy Rules* one shot adventure. They are often mistaken for mindless undead servants or zombies and in my mind make a welcome change from the hordes of thoughtless horrors that actually serve these dark priests of undeath and horror.

THE FLESHLESS ONES FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

Fleshless Ones are a tribe of undead horrors that have been with mankind since the days of Atlantis and have been a part of the cycle of creation and turmoil since we first began the worship of the Great Old Ones and the Outer Gods. These skeletal horrors wish to turn the world into a giant silent graveyard or empty cemetery. They have infiltrated modern society on all levels and have worked for centuries to undermine, sabotage, spy, and work their machinations until the world is ripe for the stars to be right and the

Great Old Ones awaken. They serve as high priests, soldiers, spies, and assassins for many cults all of the while pushing forward their own hidden agendas of power and manipulations. There are times when tribes of Fleshless Ones make war with one another and often slay each other's pawns in bizarre terrorist dust ups in the name of their respective deities. Sometimes reasons for these displays are not easily understood by right minded or thinking people.

In the world of *Call of Cthulhu*, Fleshless Ones are both a tribe of monsters and those who have been especially rewarded with the undeath state in the service to their horrid and sanity bending masters. Especially deserving cultists and priests of a skeletal aspect of Nyarlathotep and Mordiggian but there are other dark gods with their own tribes and versions of these ancient and terrible horrors. Many in the service of the Great Old Ones are converted into the undeath state and it should be of special note that all retain their intelligence and cunning once they have joined the ranks of the undead. These horrors often have vast underground facilities and hidden grotto lairs of twisted technologies and artifacts left behind by other ancient & terrifying races such as the Serpent

Men and The Great Race Of Yith. These technologies are adapted and twisted to the Fleshless One's own agendas for extinction and depravity for the living.

The Fleshless Ones are urbane and an evil race that often lives side by side with their human neighbors. They loath and envy the living for the spark of life force that they have. These horrors hide mad hidden hungers for the flesh and souls of the living and their undead state does little to detract from the desire for blood, gore, and mayhem. Even though they have little need for human food the state of the living calls to them as a moth is called to a flame. They will and sometimes must feed on the living from time to time. They are often found within the service of cults devising and making plans to obliterate the whole of the human race from the face of the Earth even as they are singing the praises of the Old Ones and the Outer Gods. Their undead state does little to detract from their aptitude for magic and sorcery. The Fleshless One's undead state and insane hatred of humanity are boundless engines for their machinations.

These horrors have a strange symbiotic relationship to ghouls. On the one hand they fear these eaters of the dead who often take lone or stray members of the tribe or cult during rites. Yet the Fleshless Ones will sometimes sacrifice their injured or most devoted members in weird feeding feasts with ghoulish witch cults as honored guests.

The Fleshless Ones grow their numbers through a contagion found within their drool and the decayed bile that drips from their jaws that can infect others with their curse of decay and undeath. But only by forsaking humanity & giving themselves into the service of their deity can these horrors retain and indeed achieve the insane insights that come with the rites and incantations of these mockeries of the living. The Fleshless Ones pass among humanity and their numbers grow even as they dwell side by side with us. All the while paving the way for the stars to be right once again.

Fleshless Ones

LESSER INDEPENDENT RACE OF UNDEAD

<i>Strength</i>	3d6x2	20- 22
<i>Con</i>	3d6x1.5	15-17
<i>Int</i>	3d6	10-11
<i>Pow</i>	1d6 +12	15-16
<i>Dex</i>	3d6	10 -11
<i>Move:</i>	7	
<i>AV Dam. Bonus:</i>	+1d4	
<i>Weapon:</i>	<i>Fist 70% Damage 1d6+d6</i>	
<i>Armor:</i>	2 points light armor often worn	
<i>Skills:</i>	<i>Move Quietly 50% Stalk 30% Disguise and Pass For Human 50%</i>	
<i>Sanity Loss:</i>	1/11d8 sanity points to see a Fleshless One reveal itself from its human disguise	

SPELLS OF THE FLESHLESS ONES:

Draw The Flesh From The Living

Through a strange and bloody series of rites and incantations dating back to Atlantis, the Fleshless One uses a set of copper skinning tools to carefully flay and skin his victim and magically assumes the vista and form of the poor soul. He magically draws and pulls the memories, intimate details, and violates the flesh of the victim as he becomes him or her. Flesh, bone, and brain matter is consumed during this rite as the monster's own form magically changes shape in a sanity shattering symphony of rebirth. From then on the Fleshless One may assume the shape of its victim from among its menu of pseudo souls and facsimiles. The Fleshless One must sacrifice one point of power per every three Siz of flesh assumed. Seeing this rite costs 1/1d6 points of sanity or more especially for relatives or close relations.

Conceal The Sins

The Skinless One sacrifices one point of power and shunts extra-dimensionally any flesh, bone, scraps etc. into an extra dimensional location where ancient horrors and scavengers await to devour any gore that they can. Anyone caught within this shut will take 1d6 +d6 as tendrils, teeth, and worse slice, whip, and feed upon them. They may not escape such a fate at all. Those who do will lose 1/1d8 points of sanity from the horrors

Rebirth Of The Blessed

This ancient rite is used to usher in a new discipline into the world of the Fleshless after he or she has received the bite of one of the monsters. The Fleshless One must sacrifice one point of power as their flesh, organs, and humanity are shed in a gore filled night of rebirth. Sanity will be shattered and ancient cosmic truth of those who have gone before them will be whispered to their minds even as they shed the flesh that ties them to the weak mortal frames that they inhabit. There is a 20% chance of those going through these ancient rites of passage of the Undead and Great Old Ones may become especially devoted and driven in the service to their god.

Pose Mundane

This spell (as per the Call of Cthulhu rulebook) is often used to conceal the comes and goings of the Fleshless Ones

Dominate

As Per the CoC Rule Book

FLESHLESS ONES

For Dark Conspiracy

STR:	11	EDU:	6	Move:	3/9/17/32
CON:	12	CHR	6	Skill/Dam.:	7/1D6+1
AGL:	3	EMP (PSI):	8	Hits:	8 / 15
INT:	6	Init.:	5	# Appearing:	2D6

Special: Automatic image projection after consuming the flesh of the victim along with memories.

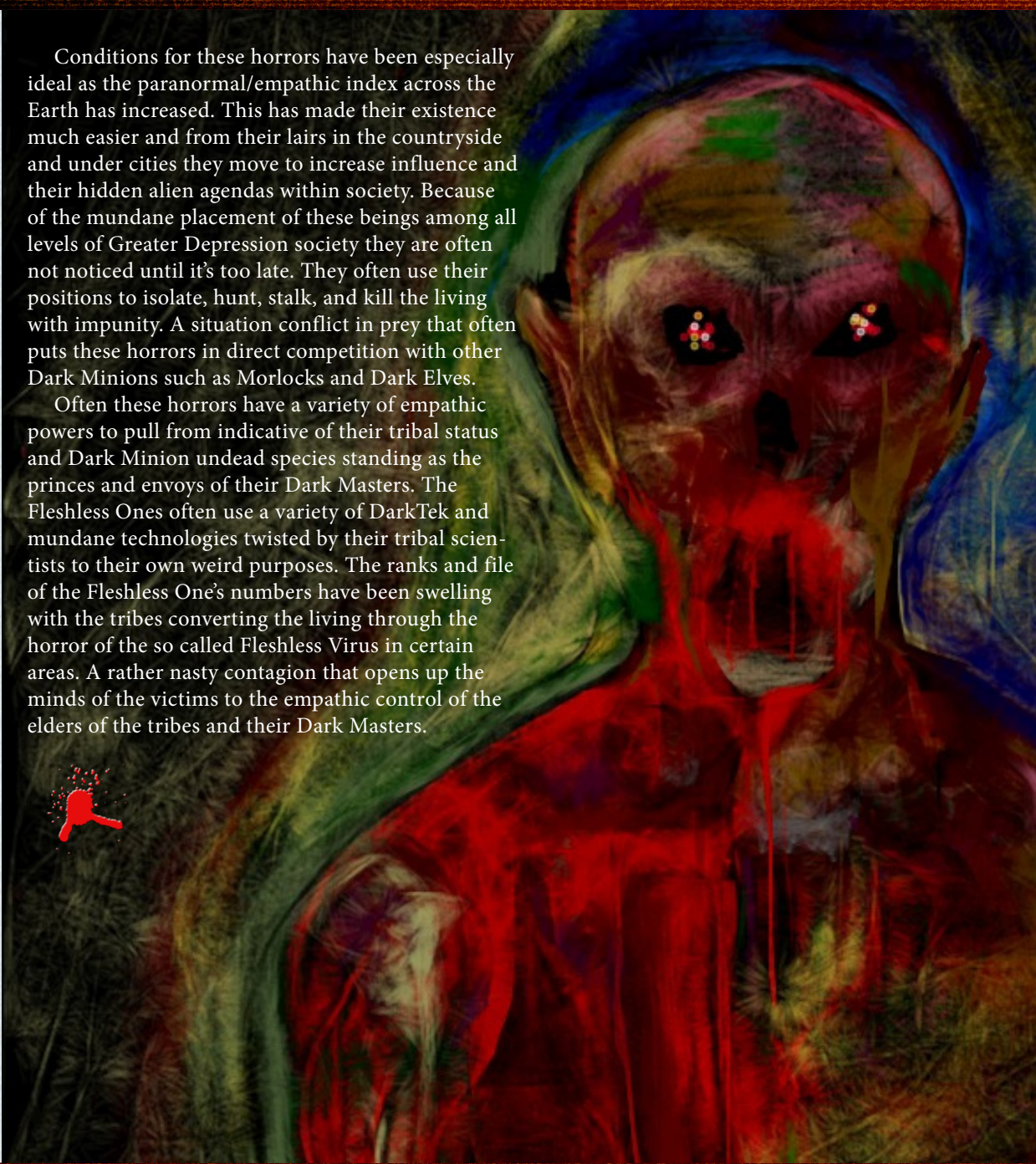
Skills: *Human Empathy, Willpower Drain, Project Emotion, sometimes Dimensional Walk, Infection*

THE FLESHLESS ONES IN DARK CONSPIRACY

The Fleshless Ones are a perfect fit for the world of the Greater Depression. These quasi undead horrors have been with us for centuries prior to the opening of the gates on IO. They live among us, dwelling side by side, and all of the while furthering their own hidden agendas and weird alien machinations for their Dark Masters making the world fit for these horrors yet to come. They hate the living and hunt adventurers when and where they can. They serve as the dark priests and envoys for their alien and dark masters in a world that neither knows nor cares that they secretly exist. The Fleshless Ones tribe has been preparing Earth for its 'Next Phase', a hidden agenda of their own. They plan to turn the Earth into a silent and empty tomb world filled with the undead and themselves as its princes, kings, and queens. This devotion makes them especially dangerous and devoted servants of the Dark Lords.

Conditions for these horrors have been especially ideal as the paranormal/empathic index across the Earth has increased. This has made their existence much easier and from their lairs in the countryside and under cities they move to increase influence and their hidden alien agendas within society. Because of the mundane placement of these beings among all levels of Greater Depression society they are often not noticed until it's too late. They often use their positions to isolate, hunt, stalk, and kill the living with impunity. A situation conflict in prey that often puts these horrors in direct competition with other Dark Minions such as Morlocks and Dark Elves.

Often these horrors have a variety of empathic powers to pull from indicative of their tribal status and Dark Minion undead species standing as the princes and envoys of their Dark Masters. The Fleshless Ones often use a variety of DarkTek and mundane technologies twisted by their tribal scientists to their own weird purposes. The ranks and file of the Fleshless One's numbers have been swelling with the tribes converting the living through the horror of the so called Fleshless Virus in certain areas. A rather nasty contagion that opens up the minds of the victims to the empathic control of the elders of the tribes and their Dark Masters.



CALL OF CTHULHU FATE HACK

Hacking the Mythos

by Ed Gibbs

FOR FATE (COC)



For more information on the FATE core role-playing game system, see:

<http://www.faterpg.com/>

WELCOME TO MY Call of Cthulhu Fate Hack. This is a light hack designed to make Fate accommodate Lovecraftian horror by adding some new rules and changing others. Some of the changes made also account for my personal GMing style and are not necessarily meant to be a reflection of Call of Cthulhu, or Lovecraftian horror as a whole. Any parts of the Fate Core system not mentioned here are unchanged from their use as written in the corebook.

SANITY

Particularly unnerving scenes have a “Horror” skill that will “attack” players when they enter the scene, causing Mental stress. Monsters of the Mythos also have the Horror skill, which they can use to attack with as a free action once per conflict.

Julia walked down the steps to the secret lab hidden deep in the bowels of the mansion. Inside, she found a rusted, iron cage. Inside the cage, a dead body lay on the stone floor, rats feasting on the entrails spilling from the open abdomen.

The GM rules this a scene with a Horror skill of Good (+3). He rolls a Good (+3). Julia, unfortunately, botched her Will skill roll, and ended up with a -1. The scene inflicts four Mental stress on Julia. She shades her 2-stress box and takes a Minor consequence. The GM tells her to write down “Haunted by the Cage.”

Particularly gruesome scenes and monsters may, in addition to the Horror skill, have *Insanity* ratings. Insanity ratings work like the weapon rating Extra in Fate Core; a successful Horror attack action inflicts extra shifts equal to the Insanity rating.

CHARACTER CREATION

Characters begin with four Aspects. The first one is High Concept, and the second one is Trouble, just like normal. The third one is “Dramatic Hook.” It’s an Aspect that directly ties the character to the story about to unfold. For example, the first story involves finding a missing college student. Each character’s Dramatic Hook Aspect will tie a character to that student. Maybe one of them is the student’s boyfriend; another is

a brother or sister; another a classmate, and so on. The Dramatic Hook Aspect can (and will) change often to reflect the character's involvement in the story.

The fourth Aspect is the "Specialty" Aspect, and simply represents something dramatically important about the character. Here's a small list of sample possibilities the players can choose from for inspiration:

- ☠ Something your character is exceptionally good at
- ☠ Something your character is exceptionally bad at
- ☠ Something that happened in your character's past
- ☠ An important, useful, or valuable item your character possesses
- ☠ A position of authority or respect, or status with a certain group
- ☠ An important friend or contact

Note that this differs from High Concept in that a High Concept tends to define who your character is, whereas the Specialty Aspect is more like a quirk or special ability the character has been gifted with.

Starting players have 1 Refresh and two stunts. They may *not* trade in those two stunts for more refresh; they may, however, trade in the 1 Refresh for a third stunt.

NEW SKILL: MYTHOS LORE

Mythos Lore is a skill the players learn over the course of a campaign. Whenever the players use the Mythos Lore skill, it also "attacks" the player's mental stress at the same skill level the Lore skill is at. So the higher the Mythos Lore, the harder the skill attacks the character when used...

Gerald Harvey, great grandson of Walter Harvey, discovered some interesting notebooks in his ancestor's belongings. Inside were secrets collected from a lifetime of chasing things that were best left alone. Gerald, like his great-grandfather, didn't know when to stop, and thus has now acquired a Mythos Lore skill of Good (+3).

In his investigations, Gerald finds a mysterious statue hidden out in a Louisiana swamp. Gerald seems to recall seeing something similar in Harvey's notes. The GM says he can use his

Mythos Lore skill to find out, and Gerald agrees. He succeeds in his roll. Before the GM will tell him anything else, Gerald must immediately make a Defend action with his Will against his own Mythos Lore skill. He fails the roll by four shift, causing him to get a Mild mental Consequence.

Since he succeeded on the action, however, the GM tells him the statue is none other than Cthulhu himself! Suddenly, Gerald remembers all of the things he read...the prophecies foretelling Cthulhu's awakening. Things that seemed so distant now suddenly have a sharper, deadly context. The GM tells Gerald to put the Consequence "Knows Cthulhu is coming" on his character.

Spells (which are essentially stunts for the Mythos Lore skill) are learned by the Investigators during the course of play and are cast using Mythos Lore. Like certain scenes and Mythos monsters, especially potent spells may have an "Insanity" rating.

GMs should hand out Mythos Lore skill points in +1 increments; "rewards" for discovering Mythos tomes, witnessing ritual magic, etc.. GMs, note that not every scene of horror or book of dark secrets has to enhance the Mythos Lore skill. Some of those things can also be depicted as boosts/Aspects.

Mythos Lore does *not* have to fit into the skill pyramid or column design.

EDIT TO HOW FATE POINTS WORK: "FATE CLUES"

Characters in a Call of Cthulhu Fate game cannot use Fate Points to declare story details, as they can in regular Fate games. Instead, investigators can use Fate Points to "Receive a Clue." When spent, the GM automatically gives the player a clue about the mystery at hand.

Gerald, Julia, and Jonathan have been wandering Innsmouth for the past few days looking for signs of the missing Miskatonic University student. The trail grows colder by the day, and the investigators can't seem to figure out where to go next. Finally, Julia plunks down one of her Fate Points.

The GM looks over his notes, and then says "Hmm...in one of those emails, Kevin mentioned his photography website. Have

The FATE Core System is available as a pay-what-you-like PDF download. See the

[Evil Hat Productions](#) website for details.

you been to it yet? There might be an address in the contact info on the webpage..."

Note that *clues essential to the story should be given freely*. If the players definitely have the clues they need but aren't putting them together to progress the story, then a Fate Clue can implicitly put those clues together meaningfully for them. Clues gained from this ability can also be supplemental in nature, providing important background details, or maybe even unlocking an Aspect the investigators could use later.

A GM writing a CoC Fate adventure should have a few Fate Clues ready to give players if and when they spend their Fate Points this way.

CHANGES TO SKILLS

The following changes have been made to skills:

- Lore is now *Research*, and covers using resources such as libraries, internet databases, or archives for Creating Advantages or Overcoming Obstacles.
- A new skill, *Logic*, has been added. This skill applies to figuring out puzzles, deciphering codes, or making critical analyses/conclusions from data. This is most-often used for Overcoming obstacles, but can also be used for Creating Advantages. Investigators wanting a clue but not wanting to spend Fate Points can try to use their Logic skill for clues, instead (GMs should set the difficulty high, Great at least, for this; this is what the Fate Points are supposed to be used for!)

TIPS FOR RUNNING THIS HACK

This hack can be a suitable entry point for players new to *Fate Core*. By design, players have less control over the story than they do in more traditional Fate games; this can help ease in new players not used to that kind

of control, particularly gamers coming from more conventional role playing games.

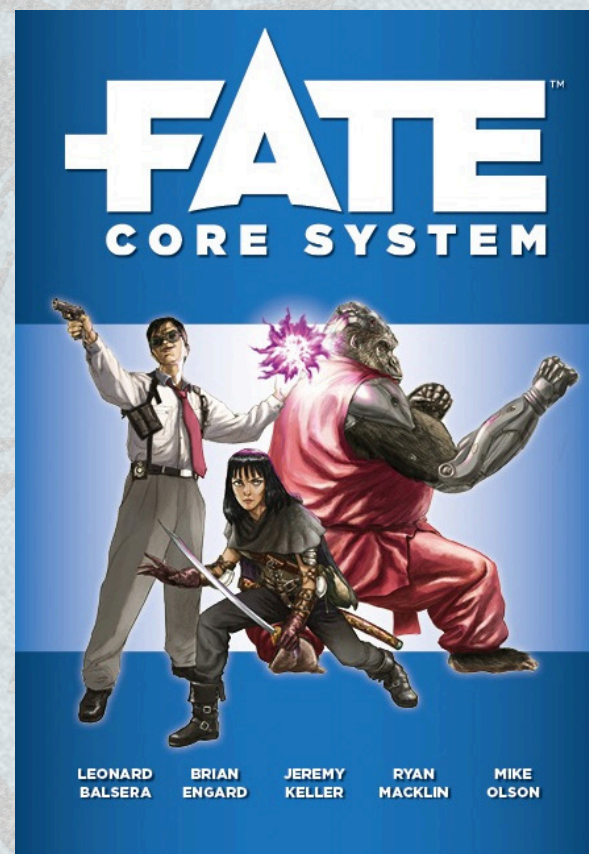
Although Lovecraftian horror seldom concerned itself with the personal lives and dramas of its protagonists, modern investigators in a modern setting will have more interpersonal conflict. Don't be afraid to stray off the adventure path to explore these details. This is a natural part of *Fate Core*; this hack tries to marry that with the more exploratory nature of Lovecraftian horror RPGs.

More than many other Fate games, it's important for GMs to compel the hell out of their players' Aspects. Those compels should almost always lead into ever greater danger and horror. Players should not want to accept your compels; choosing whether or not to take that Fate point should be a tough decision for them.

Fate points, in general, should be a rare, coveted resource in Cthulhu Fate games. Players should agonize over whether or not to spend them, and they should be scared when they have none, knowing they cannot resist your compels.

If you have any questions, comments, or critiques to offer about this hack, please email me at:

edgar.g.gibbs@gmail.com.



THE DIGITAL TOME

The Right to Know, Chapter One

by Ed Gibbs

FOR FATE (COC)

How to Read This Adventure

“The Digital Tome” is broken into scenes. Each scene starts with italicized “flavor text”, to be read aloud to the players. GMs should feel free to summarize or re-word italicized text as suits their own narrative style. Following the flavor text are any Situational Aspects that may be relevant to the scene. After that, a brief overview of what the GM and players can expect from that scene is listed.

After the overview, a list of skills with numbers in parentheses appears, like this: “*Athletics (3)*.” The skill name is a relevant skill that can give a player clues or advance the story. The number is the difficulty of an Overcome action to unlock the clue associated with the skill use. Certain skills will have additional details that can be unlocked by succeeding with style (+3 shift).

At the GM’s discretion, each scene can be done as a Challenge instead of separate Overcome actions. The GM can call out all the relevant skills at the beginning of the scene, have each player roll, then the GM can narrate the results and reveal the clues as indicated by the roll.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Jennifer Solomon, resident of Hamlin, Massachusetts, is a quiet, bookish college student, pursuing a Masters Degree in Library Studies at New England University (NEU). Jenny’s friends and family describe her as neat, polite, and organized, exactly what one would expect of a librarian in training.

Jenny’s been gone for about three days, and her friends and family do not know what has become of her. She is not answering her phone. She does not appear to be in her apartment; a small, one-bedroom place she lives in, alone.

Jenny’s only been gone a few days, but the investigators, who know her well, know that it is very unlike her to simply disappear. Fearing the worst, the investigators begin following the clues and get drawn into the beginning of a horrifying and epic tale...

SCENE 1A: THE FIRST MEETING

“All of you sit around a table. The combined concern for Jennifer’s welfare is almost palpable. Hopefully, by putting your minds together, you will be able to discover her fate, and if necessary, bring her to safety.”

Scene Aspects: Varies by location.

Overview: This is a roleplaying scene where the players, acting as their investigators, ask questions of each other and start brainstorming about where Jennifer may be. The scene should take place in a mutual location where all the investigators can meet, such as the NEU cafeteria. The GM can be in the scene as Jeffrey Johnson, a campus Public Safety (security guard) officer who may be a contact of one of the PCs. This way, the GM can guide the role-play while being in character.

Before the scene begins, the GM should give each player a question about Jenny to answer. The “objective” of the scene is to give the answer to that question in character during the role-play. Some potential questions are below:

- Where did Jenny often go to think?
- What is a common place Jenny likes to hang out at?
- Where do Jenny’s parents live? Does she get along with them?
- Did Jenny ever mention going to some exotic place for a vacation? If so, where? If not, why not? Does she hate to travel?
- Did anything traumatic or important happen in Jenny’s life in the past few months? If so, what? If not, what’s Jenny’s personal life

like? Boring? Is she out-going? Does she have any hobbies or interests that may explain her disappearance?

- What's one thing you know about Jenny that no one else knows, that could help in finding out where she is right now?

The GM should remind the players that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to their question. Whatever they come up with for the answers may or may not play a part in the investigation. The GM should keep an eye out for interesting ideas from the role-play and work them into the story as it unfolds.

As Jeffrey, the GM should try and guide the characters towards checking Jennifer's home. Jeffrey can be played however the GM chooses. The other players may know that she's not there, but Jeffrey will insist that her home is probably the best place to find her, or at least get some clues as to her whereabouts. Alternately, Jeffrey could suggest the players check with Jennifer's job. Jennifer works part time at the NEU library as an assistant librarian.

The point of the scene is to let the players get into character and to get them involved in the investigation. If the scene starts to drag or be un-fun for anyone, end it and move on.

SCENE 1B: THE NEU LIBRARY

“The Beth Absen Research Library is a weathered, old facility of tarnished steel, smudged windows, and worn, ugly carpeting. As you approach the front desk, the librarian...a tall, bird-looking woman with shockingly white hair...looks at you from above her spectacles. She does not speak; instead, she stares at you, expecting your inevitable question.”

Scene Aspects: Suspicious Librarians

The PCs can come here looking for clues. Ultimately, all clues will point towards getting into Jenny's apartment. The librarian notices Jenny's disappearance, but otherwise seems unconcerned and knows little about her or her whereabouts. Unless the PCs have any kind of legal authority, the librarian is very suspicious and stand-offish to the PCs asking around about their employees and students, and will absolutely not let anyone near Jennifer's workstation without sufficient reason.

Rapport or Deceive (2): A few library employees have been covering Jenny's shifts because she's been “working on a project at home.”

Succeed with Style: Josh, Jenny's friend, is a regular at the library, but hasn't visited since Jenny's disappearance.

Crafts (3): Breaking into Jenny's computer reveals little. An email to her work account from a friend a few days ago says there's a package waiting for her at her doorstep.

Burglary (2) or Investigate (3): Breaking into Jenny's desk reveals a hidden key to her apartment.

SCENE 2: JENNY'S APARTMENT

“Jennifer Solomon lives on the top, third floor of an old apartment building. Her big living room windows give a commanding view of a mostly-empty parking lot. Despite the age and apparent run-down condition of the building, Jenny's door is thick and wooden, with peeling white paint, and securely locked.”

Scene Aspects: Walls and Carpet Covered in Printouts; Cryptic Notes

Jenny's door requires Burglary (3) to open. Optionally, the windows could be broken, but that may create noise and cause someone to call the police. When the investigators get into Jenny's apartment, read this to them:

“Stale air, tinged with old Chinese takeout, wafts outside the open door. Papers saturated with hand-written notes are fanned across the beige carpet. Printouts are taped so thickly to the walls that the wallpaper is barely noticeable underneath. Jennifer's bed is untouched; instead, an old quilt lay haphazardly on the living room couch, surrounded by yet more papers and books.”

In Jenny's living room is a desk with a computer. She does not own a TV. The first time anyone approaches the computer, tell them the computer is unlocked and the email app is open. Then read:

“Jennifer’s email is laden with various mundane comings and goings. However, one particular conversation strikes your eye...”

Then give them the email handout.

Investigate (2): Jennifer’s closet and drawers have been rifled through, as if a bag was packed in a hurry...

Investigate (3) (or include with 2, or give to the PCs for free): Jennifer has a home phone with a call log on it. It has Kevin’s phone number in it. No one answers if the phone is called. If the investigators call from the home phone, Jennifer will “Know Someone is Looking For Her.” This is a Boost with one free Invoke Jenny will get during their inevitable confrontation. Jenny can also give this to Josh to help with his ambush (see Scene 5: the Mansion).

Notice (4), or Succeed with Style on the Investigate roll: A few knives are missing from an otherwise complete cutlery set in the kitchen.

Research (2): The printouts appear to be scans from an ancient text. The writing is Latin. Jennifer’s margin notes appear to be translations and interpretations of the text.

The notes and printouts can be assembled and read by a character in an afternoon. Doing so grants +1 Mythos Lore.

Research (2) (Or just give it to them, if the PCs are stumped): Going to Kevin’s website as mentioned in the email will reveal his home address listed as contact information.

Investigate (2), Notice (3) (Or, again, feed it to the PCs if they’re stumped): Rifling through Jenny’s garbage reveals the broken-down package the tome came in. It shows Kevin’s address on it.

SCENE 3: INNSMOUTH

The investigators can reasonably conclude from the email that Jennifer has gone to Innsmouth to find Kevin and get the other books. The PCs will most-likely want to follow.

“Driving into Innsmouth, you can see this is as lonely and forgotten a town as any in a country that’s moved on. Ancient, abandoned buildings, shadows of their former grandeur, crowd the empty streets, broken and dirty windows staring out like sad eyes. The occasional resident on the sidewalk looks at your car incredulously, as if stunned that anyone not instantly recognizable would be driving down the street. The only signs of life in the town appear to be at the docks, where a modest trickle of activity flows. The goods that come into and out of the river running through the city into the Atlantic must be the only reason Innsmouth still exists at all.”

Most locations the PCs come up with will be dead ends. If the PCs are floundering, they may begin asking random residents about Kevin.

Rapport (1): A local who knows Kevin tells the PCs (read aloud):

“Yeah, Kevin. I know him. Hot-shot photographer, takes pictures of all these old buildings, instead of using them for anything. Stupid. Anyways, he lives over on Chestnut, down the block from Demsey’s place, that old bed and breakfast.”

SCENE 4: KEVIN’S HOUSE

“Kevin’s home is a small, two-bedroom, single floor house in one of the few lived-in neighborhoods in the town. As you approach, you notice the door is ajar.”

Scene Aspects: Photo Studio; Ransacked

There is a second entrance in the back that leads into the kitchen. The door is not locked. Once the players enter, read:

“The house appears empty, except for a black cat meowing loudly in the kitchen. Kevin’s bedroom is trashed; the closet door open, clothes thrown everywhere, desk and drawer doors pulled out. The second bedroom has been converted into a photo studio, and is largely untouched. The same cannot be

said of the rest of the house: the living room is a mess, the kitchen looks rifled through, and the unfinished basement has open boxes tossed everywhere.”

Jennifer and Josh were here. They tore apart the house looking for the other tomes. When Kevin showed up, they abducted him and took him to his great-great grandfather’s mansion.

PCs who search the house will automatically find mail on the hallway floor from the estate attorney about Kevin’s ancestor’s will. The address for the mansion is written in the letter.

Investigate (2): In Kevin’s bedroom, a small silver box lay open on the floor. It looks like a case for a gun and bullets. The gun is missing.

Investigate (1), Notice (2), or give it for free: Another letter on the floor is found:

“You are in grave danger. Give me the tomes and you will be safe. Meet me at your grandfather’s mansion at midnight tomorrow with the books. I’ll explain then.”

The letter is unsigned. A *Notice (1)* check shows the penmanship is old-fashioned, the ink perhaps from a quill, and the paper feels old and weathered.

SCENE 5: THE MANSION

“The gate outside the mansion lay open to the street. As you drive in, you notice the chain appears to be cut.”

“You park in the circular driveway outside the front entrance. There is a car in front of you with Massachusetts license plates. The outer door of the front entrance is wide open, inviting you inside.”

The mansion is a huge, sprawling estate. In the driveway outside the mansion is another car. Anyone who would know what Jenny’s car looks like can see it’s Jenny’s. The car is unlocked, but nothing of value is inside.

If/when the PCs enter the mansion through the front doors, read:

“You enter into a large reception room. The room, and the mansion it is a part of, is very dated, like something out of an old, black-and-white movie. Your footsteps send creaks snaking through the room.

Suddenly, to the east, you hear someone yell out, then is suddenly cut off. You can’t make out what, or who, was yelling.”

If the PCs follow the yell, they will enter a foyer. Through the foyer is a large, open study.

“The yell takes you through a foyer. The foyer opens into a large study. There, sitting in the middle of the study is Kevin, tied to a chair. Behind him, Jennifer holds a knife to his throat with a trembling hand. She looks at you with wild eyes. Blood is everywhere; on her hands, the blade of the knife, across Kevin’s shirt. A severed finger lays on the floor.”

Role-play this scene as the adventure to this point demands. The scene of torture the PCs walk in on subjects them to a Horror attack (rating 1, active defense against the PCs Will), inflicting mental stress.

Jennifer is quite mad but not completely out of her mind; she recognizes the PCs, and tries to play her relationships to them to help her get the location of the missing tomes from Kevin. Jennifer’s threats to slit Kevin’s throat are bluffs; she will not risk losing the location of the tomes if Kevin dies.

Behind the players in the study, hidden behind a piano, is Josh. He’s armed with the revolver found at Kevin’s place. If any of the players make threatening moves, demands, or otherwise seem about to take down Jennifer, he shoots.

If/when the confrontation turns physical, Jennifer will fight savagely and use every advantage she gets, including invoking/compelling PCs Aspects to help her. She will not think twice about killing anyone who keeps fighting, but will not pursue fleeing PCs for fear of losing Kevin. Josh will also fight savagely, and burn all of his Fate points to kill the PCs (his “Will Do Anything for Jennifer” Aspect should make him exceptionally dangerous).

If the PCs want to try and convince Jennifer to let Kevin go, the PCs can engage in a mental conflict with Jennifer. If she gets taken out, she puts the knife down and runs out of the mansion, entering her car and driving away.

JENNIFER SOLOMON

(at the time the characters meet her in this adventure)

LIBRARIAN IN TRAINING

*Driven Mad by a Mythos Tome
"People Have the Right to Know!"*

Physical rolls: +1

Mental rolls: +3

Social rolls: +1 (Rapport: +2)

Fate Points: 1 per investigator

Stunts: None.

JOSHUA SMITH

LIBRARY LURKER

*Driven Mad by the Mythos
Will Do Anything For Jennifer*

Physical rolls: +0 (Stealth +2)

Mental rolls: +2

Social rolls: -1

Fate Points: 1 per Investigator

Stunts: None

If Jennifer is taken alive and the PCs call the police, she will kick, scream, and generally freak out when the police pick her up:

"The police practically need to drag Jennifer to the car. She thrashes wildly, screaming "I'm not the monster here; THEY are! I'm trying to HELP people! Don't you understand! Arrest THEM! I'm trying to inform everyone! You can't hide the truth! The people have the RIGHT TO KNOW!!!"

She'll keep going on about how the PCs are the "real villains" for "hiding the truth from us all" and how the public has "the right to know." If she's killed, she'll say something similar before she dies:

"Collapsed on the ground, life fleeing her body, Jennifer sums up the last of her strength. She speaks, in a voice barely louder

than a whisper: "Don't...hide...the truth. The people...need...to know..." She gives a final gasp, and dies."

Josh is deathly quiet, ignoring all questions and comments. He goes quietly with the police, if captured.

Kevin is, understandably, traumatized from the past few days of torture and watching a former friend descend into obsessive madness. However, he is grateful for his rescue and is coherent enough to answer questions.

If the PCs ask where the tomes are, he says he gave them to a friend who was going to his cabin in the mountains this weekend. He gets no cellphone signal out there, and he doesn't completely trust the PCs enough to give up the tomes. He will go get them and decide what to do with them in time...



*The Digital Tome
email trail starts
on the next
page.*

THE DIGITAL TOME --- EMAIL TRAIL

To: jsolomo@neu.edu
From: photog_89@gmail.com
Subject: Inheriting the Earth

Jenny from the Block,

Sorry I been incommunicado for the past few. My great-great grandpa finally passed, and get this: he left me the entire estate! Here I thought he hated me for all those photos I took... ol' bastard probably loved the attention!

Anywho, I was going through the mansion (yeah, I own a mansion now, because I'm a baller) and I found some crazy stuff you might like. Some ancient books, look like they're written in, like, Lost Civilization Language or something. I mailed one of the smaller ones to you, but there are a bunch, and they're HUGE! Let me know when you get it!

TTYL,
Kev

To: photog_89@gmail.com
From: jsolomo@neu.edu
Subject: Re: Inheriting the Earth

Kevin,

I'm sorry to hear about your great-great grandfather passing. I can't believe he left you an entire mansion. I'll definitely have to come visit now. :)

I got the book you sent me the other day. It's FASCINATING! The title, translated from "Lost Civilization Language," a.k.a.

LATIN, is "Beasts from the Heavens" I'm working on translating it, but it seems to be a book tracing the history of monsters from another realm or something. Have you seen some of these diagrams and sketches in here? Creepy!

I'm going to bring the book to Josh this afternoon and see what he makes of it. This is really awesome stuff. Thank you SO much for sending it!

-Jenny

To: jsolomo@neu.edu
From: photog_89@gmail.com
Subject: I Always Get You the Best Gifts!

J,

Yep; when I saw an ancient, dusty, ugly-ass book, my first thought was "Jenny is going to LOVE this." I know you so well. ;) There's more where that came from; apparently my great-great was quite the scholar. Let me know if you want me to send more!

And don't worry about visiting anytime soon. The mansion is a mess, and even if it weren't, it's still in Innsmouth, Connecticut, the Lamest Place on Earth.

Later,
Kev

To: photog_89@gmail.com
From: jsolomo@neu.edu
Re: I Always Get You the Best Gifts!

Kevin,

Yes, please send them all, if you can. I can cover the shipping cost, or maybe take a day trip to visit and get them. I know you said the place is a mess, but hey, a mansion is a mansion, and maybe there are more books on the shelves you missed...

Josh and I have been working on translating the text you already sent. It's incredible stuff, Kevin. There are mention of creatures in here that never appear in any other myths, anywhere in the world. I think your great-great grandfather was discovering legends that were about to be forgotten! It's extraordinary stuff, Kevin. Thanks again for sending it.

I know you're probably pretty busy, but as soon as you get time, please send those other books!

-Jenny

To: jsolomo@neu.edu
From: photog_89@gmail.com
Subject: Photo-gigs and such

Jenny,

Alright, I'll send 'em, but it's going to be a while; I've got a couple of weddings upstate to shoot for, so I'm going to be busy. You know, important photographer I am and all...I guess the website's finally paying off!

Glad you're getting something useful out of that book. You MUST like it; I noticed the time-stamp on your last email was 3:48 A.M.! Get some sleep, dammit! Normally you're good for nothing past 10!

Deuces,
Kevin

To: photog_89@gmail.com
From: jsolomo@neu.edu
Subject: Re: Photo-gigs and such

Kevin,

It's been about five days...I know you're busy, but please send those books. Josh and I have begun to .pdf scan this first book, we're going to coordinate with some scholars across the country. This is huge, we're discovering secrets that have been lost for hundreds of years! Let me know when you can send the books!

Jenny

To: photog_89@gmail.com
From: jsolomo@neu.edu
Subject:...

Kevin,

Any word on the books yet?

Jenny

To: photog_89@gmail.com
From: jsolomo@neu.edu
Subject: Day Trip?

Kevin,

How about I just go and pick them up? Let me know when you'll be home. I'll come by and just get the books, okay? No biggie. Let me know.

Jenny

To: jsolomo@neu.edu
From: photog_89@gmail.com
Subject: Ease-Up on the Book Talk

Jenny,

I finally got around to rounding up the books. Jenny, I'm not so sure about this. I flipped through one of them and it was talking about some pretty intense stuff...human sacrifices, holes in the universe and stuff. I don't need to be able to read Latin to know that this is some sick, twisted shit. I don't know if you should be sharing this stuff online, I mean, doesn't the government, like, watch for people who are sharing this kind of material? Maybe you should just work with the one I gave you for now. The other ones are safe with me, you don't have to worry about them disappearing. I mean, they've been forgotten for this long, right? What's a few more months?

Kevin

To: photog_89@gmail.com
From: jsolomo@neu.edu
Subject: Please.

Kevin,

Please just send the books. You know me, I'm not going to cause any trouble. I just want to scan these books, put them on a private website that a few of my LS colleagues can look at, and maybe even publish an article or something about it, alright? I'm not going to go summoning any monsters or anything. I'm only going to share the .pdf's with people in my circle, it's not like it's going to be on YouTube or anything. Just send them, please. I can take care of them.

Jenny

To: jsolomo@neu.edu
From: photog_89@gmail.com
Subject: Fucking KNOCK IT OFF!

Jenny,

I just got a snail mail from some dude asking about the books. How did he even get my address? Who the hell is he? Who have you been talking to?

You know what? This is fucked up, Jenny. I'm done with this. I didn't think a couple of old books could be dangerous, but this...this is just fucked UP. I'm stashing the books until I figure out what to do with them. This is getting crazy. Just stop asking for them.

-Kevin

P.S. Stop calling me, too. Jesus.

To: photog_89@gmail.com
From: jsolomo@neu.edu
Subject...

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS? YOU ARE HIDING IMPORTANT INFORMATION. YOU'RE A TERRORIST. A FUCKING TERRORIST, AND YOU ARE NO BETTER THAN THOSE WHO WOULD HIDE THIS FROM THE WORLD. WE NEED TO KNOW. THE PUBLIC HAS THE RIGHT TO KNOW. YOU CAN'T HIDE THE TRUTH KEVIN. YOU CAN'T HIDE THE TRUTH. THE PUBLIC HAS THE RIGHT TO KNOW THEY NEED TO KNOW WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW

RANDOM HARDWARE

Getting by in the Greater Depression

by Jason D McEwen

FOR CONSPIRACY RULES!

RANDOM HARDWARE FOR DARK CONSPIRACY AND CONSPIRACY RULES!

Anna looked around Creighton's work room with glee. "What we want is in the third cabinet on the right." I'm still a little reluctant, but the Parkside Ripper case was outside the usual police experience. Anna found out it was a Were, and the second victim's father almost died getting that tip to us. His offer of a reward didn't hurt her enthusiasm either. She pulled two pistols and a fistful of mags from a drawer. "I'll use the .460 Rowland, you get the Coonan." I hefted the stainless steel auto, "Is Creighton alright with us going alone?" Anna just grinned, "Sure! Let's go bag a furvert!"

These are a pair of heavy M1911 style handguns for those special occasions when large holes are desired. The .460 Rowland is found as a kit for a custom Wilson M1911A1, Coonan offers a nice stainless .357 magnum.

Coonan Model B

Ammo	ROF	Dam	Pen	Bulk	Mag	Recoil		Rng
						SS	Brst	
.357 Mag	SA	2	1-Nil	1	7	3	—	18
.38 Special	SA	1	Nil	1	7	2	—	16

This stainless steel pistol uses 24 M1911 parts, 18 without modification! Also M1911 holsters fit this weapon. A lighter recoil spring allows the Coonan to fire .38 Special. This is an alternative to the .357 Desert Eagle pistols.

Weight: 1.36kg.
Price: \$385 (R/S)

Rowland Conversion

Ammo	ROF	Dam	Pen	Bulk	Mag	Recoil		Rng
						SS	Brst	
.460 Row	SA	3	1-Nil	1	7	4	—	12

A custom M1911A1 slide assembly in .460 Rowland, giving .44 Magnum punch to the platform. Most of these kits are compensated and/or ported to reduced pressure and felt recoil. The converted pistols can also fire .45 ACP and .45 Super. The .460 Rowland cartridges are too long to chamber in a .45ACP pistol or unconverted revolvers.

Weight: 1.38kg.
Price: \$130 (R/S) The 1911 frame costs extra.



Rowland
460
Conversion
Kit

CHRYSLER TRAVOIS SUV

Chrysler Travois SUV (Unarmored Cargo Vehicle)

Price:	\$60,000 (V/V)	This is the SUV variant of the Chrysler Chieftain pick up. If three passengers aren't carried and the seat folded down, 1.25 tons may be carried. Both the Chieftain and Travois have diesel variants, fuel consumption is 3L for these versions.
Fuel Type:	G, D, A	
Load:	1 tonne	
Weight:	2 tonnes	
Crew:	1 + 4	
Night Vision:	Headlights	
Cruise Speed:	90 / 20	
Combat Move:	60 / 20	
Fuel Capacity:	110	
Fuel Consumption:	5 (Diesel 3)	
Configuration:	Standard	
Suspension:	Wheeled (3)	
Armor:	HF: 1 HS: 1 HR: 1	



Coonan
Model B in
.357 Mag

EXPEDITION GEAR

Creighton stopped as Anna snorted. "What?" Anna glanced around, "This place is a hole!" "Anna, this is the only place to do surveillance in secret. Don't worry honey, I have cots and sleeping bags, a camp kitchen, toilet and portable shower."

Anna smiled slyly, but Creighton quickly stated, "No, I didn't bring the double cot and bag."

Anna went to the back of the travel trailer to unroll the double sleeping bag. Creighton began putting the food away. Stephanie had brought pizza and beer. Creighton turned the generator on for the fridge and laptop.

The following is a collection of expedition gear for Dark Conspiracy and Weeper's World. Some of the items are now used on a daily basis by citizens of Dark America in squatter camps.

Coleman-Coghlan Camp Stove: This has been a standard camping appliance since the mid twentieth century. Holds 1.18L fuel tank is hand pumped to pressurize. Fuel lasts for 2.5 hours on high, 7.5 hours on low setting. Weighed 4.5kg, cost is \$90.

Drip Coffee Maker for Camp Stove:

This sets on top of one of the burners of the camp stove. It uses paper filters like the household models (-kg,\$5 per 100) and makes 10 cups in 5 minutes.

Coleman-Coghlan Sleeping Bag: Cotton duck shell with a flannel lining, insulated to 30 degrees F. Weighs 1.18kg, cost is \$35. A -20F version is 5.44kg, \$115.

Coleman-Coghlan Double Sleeping Bag: A sleeping bag for couples rated for 30F Made of newer materials, weight is 4.9kg, and cost is \$125.

Single Cot: This cot folds up for storage, has a 136kg capacity. Weight is 8.6kg, cost is \$75.

Double Cot: A two person variant that has a 227kg capacity. Weight is 19.5kg, cost is \$165.



Over the centuries, mankind has tried many ways of combating the forces of evil... prayer, fasting, good works and so on. Up until Doom, no one seemed to have thought about the double-barrel shotgun. Eat leaden death, demon.

Terry Pratchett



SOLITAIRE

A Vignette

by Bradley K. McDevitt

FOR HALLOWEEN

MY THIRD GAME of solitaire, and I think I am gonna win this hand. Then I think I am gonna blow my brains out. I normally hate solitaire... I prefer poker; the whole social aspect of card playing. But there is no one around, at least not alive, so here I am playing solitaire.

And I can't even play with a normal deck of cards... all I could find in this room where i am barricaded in was, of all things, an old Tarot deck, so i am having to improvise. All I have is my gun, a kerosene lamp, the deck, and this tape recorder, which I can barely hold, my hand hurts so much.

Not that it is gonna matter. I can hear from the rising level of noise outside the room, more and more of them are arriving every minute. That door isn't going to hold much longer, and I only have one bullet left.

The card I just drew was "The Lovers," and it reminds me of the one good aspect of this situation: at least my wife Anna won't be among them. We had been together eighteen years when she got bit: all it took was for both of us to see how bad the bite was, a meeting of the eyes, and a nod.

"Save the last bullet, hun... I love you" she whispered, then I shot her between the eyes.

She and I had been the last survivors in our little band, now Anna was gone. For all I knew, I was the last living person, period.

It had been months since we had seen anyone, at least anyone still alive. We had started out from Charleston, about twenty of us, trying to get far enough north that maybe the cold would slow them down enough to give us a chance.

It was a nice idea, it just didn't work. We kept getting picked off, one or two at a time. A few were still in good enough shape to come after us, afterwards. I had to shoot what had been my brother in law, right in front of my wife. The only way I could recognize him was his red hair: his face and most of the flesh off his upper torso had been gnawed off, not that it seemed to bother him, and it didn't stop him from ripping out my friend Joe's throat.

It didn't get better from there. A few of us just ate their bullets, overcome with despair... not sure I could blame them. Through all of New Jersey and New York, we had not seen anyone alive, just hordes and hordes of them, all trying to get to at our rapidly dwindling little crew.

By the time we crossed into Canada, there were only six of us left, and we lost Tina, Bill, and Ahmed when the

van broke down in Hamilton. Before we could find another usable vehicle... well, I try not to think about it too much.

Another card pulled: "The Fool." Which is what I probably was not to just eat a bullet and be done with after I shot Anna. The next day as just a blur of tears and avoiding the dead until I ended up here, in this little room, talking into this tape recorder. The picture on the card shows a guy walking down the road, I guess that will not be me. I won't be leaving this room alive: I can see the hinges on the door deforming and starting to rip loose of the frame, so it won't be long now.

Time to finish this game, I am almost at the end of the deck, and my hand is really hurting. No wonder... I can see the blackness spreading from around the bite I got about an hour after Anna.

The hinges just gave way. The dead are flooding into the room, stalking towards me, time for me to go now.



The last card is "Death." Didn't win this hand after all, I guess.



100 ODDITIES FOR A CREEPY OLD HOUSE

A Review of Skirmisher Publishing's Book

by Eric Fabiaschi

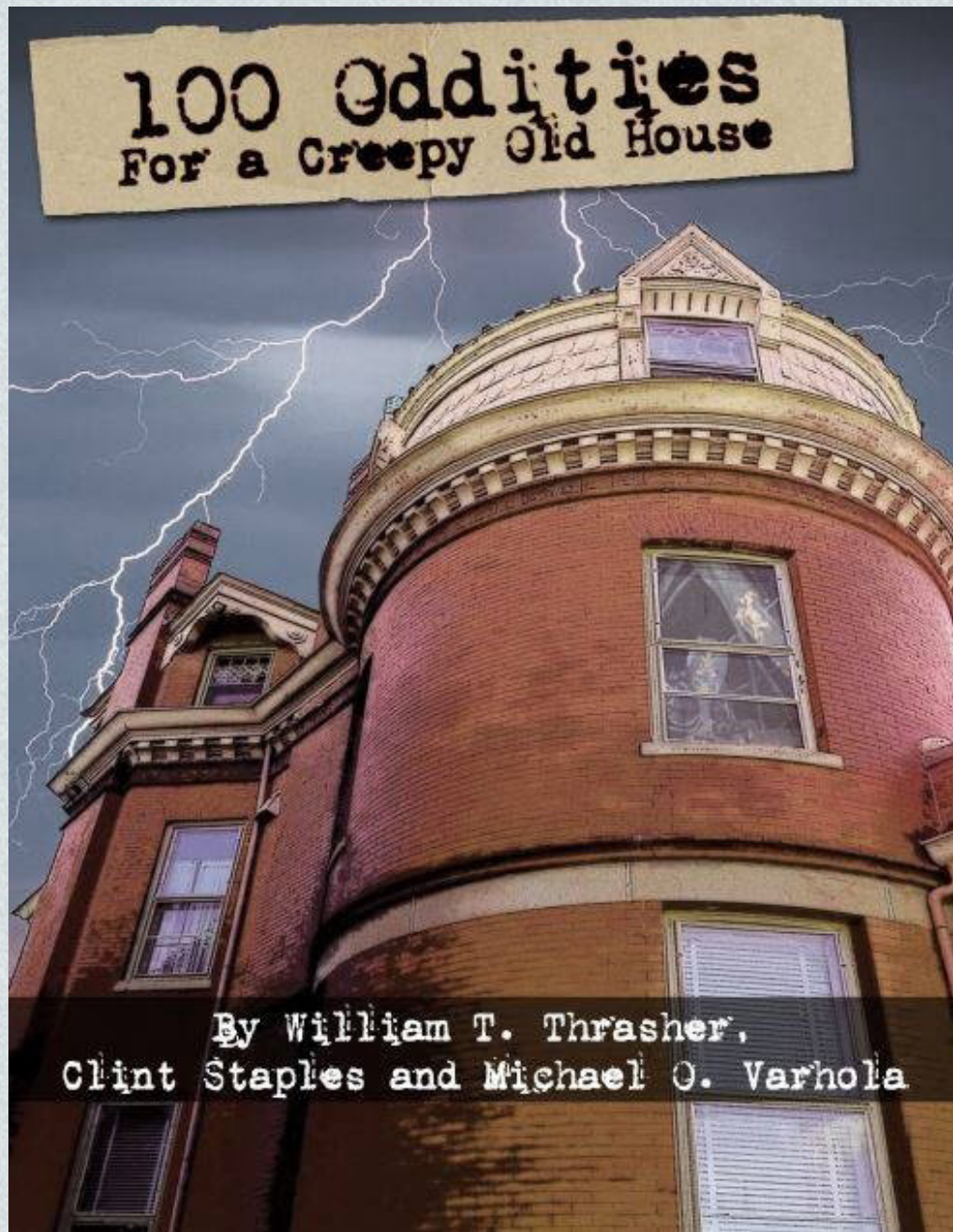
FOR YOUR OLD SCHOOL HORROR CAMPAIGNS

THIS IS AN eight page pdf from the folks at Skirmisher Publishing as a 'pay what you' like publication that details the contents of a horror adventure location. This is a very well put together document and fills out in eight pages a very nice set of item contents that can be added to your favorite horror rpg. This supplement follows a growing trend of system agnostic products that have come to the market place over the last few years. A trend welcomed by myself and other DM's who wish to get the maximum utility out of a product. Skirmisher Publications has over the years followed similar trends for post-apocalyptic games with their *Wisdom From The Wasteland* series but this title takes the trend in a new direction.

100 Oddities for a Creepy Old House will seamlessly fit any horror RPG system with *Call of Cthulhu* or *Chill* being two that spring immediately to mind. These items can be randomly rolled up or easily assigned as the DM sees fit and that's one of the strengths of this product. While *Call of Cthulhu* and *Chill* spring to mind, the *World of Darkness* line from *White Wolf* is another series of games that could easily benefit from *100 Oddities for a Creepy Old House*. Think about your adventurers breaking into a rival vampire's abode especially of a *Giovanni* or *Tremere* clan member this list rolls up a few mid or low level curiosities that can add more than mere window dressing but adventure hooks for future foibles for the PC's. And this is where the strength lies with this product. The items provide that extra bit of weirdness that will have the players wondering what the DM is going to do.

Skirmisher's own blurb on *Drivethrurpg* contains a very vivid description and also gives buyers a heads up on possible future products but there's more than meets the eye:

Oddities are the little touches that fill up the corners of lives. In our own mundane world, they might be limited to old, chewed pencils, unused key-fobs, or a half-finished decorative spoon collection awaiting the Grand Canyon and Mount Rushmore. In the worlds of our imagination, however, they can be so much more. What oddities



might be found in the halls, on the walls, or occupying the shelves of a Creepy Old House? Let's find out...

Oddities are intended to aid GM creativity, turning possibly bland areas or gaming episodes into something more. The goal of this publication and those to follow is to make things more fun and to take your imagination in directions it might not otherwise have gone.

By using the *100 Oddities for a Creepy Old House* formula a DM can take the template that this supplement provides and create their own list of materials for their own horror rpgs. I have a feeling that we'll soon be seeing more of these titles in the future. But why I'm I so excited by this eight page pdf? Well it's because system agnostic gaming over the last couple of years has given the power back into the hands of the DM. It's a part of the tool box approach to RPG marketing that is welcome. It can be seen as a bridge gap between old school and new school adventure design in horror games. When campaigns enter certain phases things can bog down such as with games such as *Wraith* or *Orpheus* where the tone and substance relies on nuisance on the DM's part as much as the contents of materials found in play.

With a game like *Chill* and *Call of Cthulhu* adventures can and sometimes do resemble crime scenes from police shows. Once again *100 Oddities for a Creepy Old House* can add that extra bit of flavor to push the contents of a murder scene or monster aftermath over the top.

These items can also pop up in excursions into the spirit realms, dreams, or other unexpected places where the very presence of such an item can foreshadow or signal a monstrous presence or even a demonic encounter with a specter or something worse. And there in lays one of the ins and outs of this product, it adds a bit of the unexpected to an adventure. Why grab this one? This piece adds a nasty haunted cherry right on top of your old school horror game or a post-apocalyptic adventure. This eight page piece of horror fueled nastiness is a great system neutral piece of work that you could add right into your own campaign right now. From *Call of Cthulhu* to even a *OD&D* style of Gothic adventure campaign this is a great addition to the DM's arsenal of tricks and traps that adds a nice haunted bit

There are a few reasons but for most on my mind is the product's utility and concise in the way that it delivers its contents. The authors have done an excellent job of putting together a solid product that you may find yourself using over and over for a wide variety of horror rpgs. Its available right over at [DriveThruRPG/RPGNow](https://www.drivethrurpg.com/).



THE BIRTHRIGHT

A Dark Seed

by Jason D McEwen

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY AND OTHER DARK SETTINGS

Anna finished her shower and put one of Creighton's T-shirts on. She noticed Creighton was still doing paper work for today's concealed carry permits. "Are you ready to shower and call it a day?" "Just a minute, gotta keep this in order." Anna heard a gentle tapping at the door, "Did you ask for anything?"

REFEREE'S SUMMARY:

The local Irish community is hosting an ethnic festival where the PC's are staying. The local pub owner/ patriarch's family has a secret that will be exploited by the Dark. The now upright pillars were early worshippers of the Dark. Rumors of black rites, and cavorting with inhuman things until the other lords destroyed all but the youngest children, and a distant cousin was made of the new lord of the clan. What was lost in history was the interbreeding with dark elves and the clan. An ET scientist learned of this from a test subject's DNA. An empathic viral mutagen was developed, and the subject was cyborged and given this mutagen in aerosol form. This will activate the dormant genes, turning the family members into dark elves and initiating a slaughter of guests and uninfected family. The local cozy inn has some minion hunters pooling data and intelligence, who are to be the other targets of this attack.

Creighton grabbed his first aid kit, "Are you OK?" Anna checked the cut on her shoulder, "It's shallow, hurts like hell!" The dark elf in the room had broken bones, several .45ACP hollow points in its torso. "This elf looks like the pub's serving girl, Lisa!" A fierce pounding at the door brought two safeties off and muzzles at the entry. "Are you guys safe?" Anna, Creighton relaxed and opened the door. Anna reached for her bag, "Let me grab my gear and some pants!" Creighton put a C-Mag in his carbine, Anna quickly pulled on pants and SWAT boots.

Λ LONG NIGHT AHEAD:

The dark elves will use tools and the handful of firearms the hotel has to kill all non-elves. If the PC's are tough or very skilled, let the elves set booby traps. Or let a lot of NPC's get ground up in these traps to emphasize the danger. These dark elves haven't mastered their empathy yet, but will be very cunning. The PC's must survive, help others and hunt down elves.



JUST NOWHERE

A hap(hazard)ly fashioned adventure

by Tad Kelson

FOR MULTIPLE SETTINGS

OVERVIEW AND PROLOGUE

It is the modern age. Cellphones and smartphones hold more computing power than all of NASA in the 60s. The NSA is observing everyone, listening, and collecting the data that the marketers all crave and would sell their organs for. In between the social unrest, political maneuvers, and impending climatic disruptions, there comes other stranger tidings.

A strange file comes falls into the hands of one of the player characters. Inside it are details on a new app that is going to be released on all platforms. From iOS to Droid, to all versions of Windows as well as cross-platform compatible with all versions of UNIX, something pretty incredible.

Of course this will be too good to be true and in fact the solitary file needed to install on all platforms, virtual OS ones included, are in the folder. If anyone clicks on it, even single right click to view properties, it starts to unpack and autoinstall in whatever devices are connected to the network, or within WIFI range, of the installing machine. This includes cellphones, other computers, networked POS devices, etc. Everything in the network with the initial device will have the file installed in them, taking a few seconds to transfer the installer into each device. It is not installing the actual app, but instead is installing the installer.

Now will come the panic of the file doing that and what it might be doing to their devices.

Just NoWhere is a system agnostic adventure suitable for the modern age. It is intended to cause more paranoia and fear than actual physical danger to the characters. The core settings/systems considered in the adventure are Call of Cthulhu (Modern), Dark Conspiracy (All Editions), as well as any modern setting with a strange sense of conspiracy and or the surreal. Settings as Over The Edge, Kult, Unknown Armies, or even an adult version of Little Fears: Nightmare Edition would all be suitable for Just NoWhere.

WELCOME TO THE FILE

This portion takes place on a slow day in the characters life. Meeting up with a friend in a public location, such as a coffee shop or a trendy indie bookstore, which has several free WIFI networks covering the location where they meet at. Point this out to the PCs by either saying they notice the sign or their cell phones switch to WIFI once they walk in. If you are feeling devious point out to them they are close to their data limits at the start of the game session and mention that they will incur overage charges if they are not careful.

Small talk and snacks start off this encounter, before diving into the start of the adventure.

One of the characters on a slow day hears about a new app that is gaining popularity. A friend casually mentions it to them, as a great way to do crowd sourced problem solving, similar to programs such as SETI and BOINC. They offer to share it with the character.

At this point the other person pulls their smartphone out and offers to send it to the PC. Presuming the character has a smartphone and it is on, as soon as the other person offers to send it, they have the app open on their phone, and it will start to migrate to all phones and devices that are connected to the local WIFI network they all happen to be on.

Depending on how many networks are in this area and passersby phones there are is how many more devices that will become infected by this file. It will automatically migrate from the friend's phone to all the other devices that happen to be just in the area and then seek to migrate farther away as the other devices move into new networks and areas. It mostly spreads via WIFI but it can move by LAN as well if an infected device is attached to a hard network.

It is presumed that more than just the character's phones will be infected in this first encounter. As the GM can adjudicate which PC's phones or devices, besides the initial one, are also affected.

The file name is NoWhere. It has a strange extension to the file name, .nlatep. This does not correspond to any file extension that is findable on the File Extensions.org website if someone searches or thinks to check there. Any AV program will declare it clean, does not show up as a PUP or malware. Just a strange file name and extension. Once it installs then the file will silently work to migrate to other devices if it is able to.

Once the file is opened up it seems to be a screensaver like app running distributed computing tasks for various NGOs and Governmental agencies. It takes up about 3 to 5 % computing power and does not seem to draw an excessive amount battery power. Not enough to make most users stop it or uninstall it as a juice hog.

Nothing much else happens, it has a fractal like animation to it and a fractal distorted face as a guide. This is about all it seems to do except display progress on different computing tasks and their completion/upload status in the menu. There is nothing much else to report about the file really, almost boring.

Of course the characters might not even notice right away the file installing (Difficult to Detect unless familiar with App Development or with experience) so it might go in without even being noticed. If any other characters get phone calls during the transfer or install portion their phones, or Tablets, if being used will also be infected.

This is the main focus for the introductory phase of the adventure. Direct the players on in whatever else they might be doing as a part of their in character lives and basically let this part drop away as being less than significant.

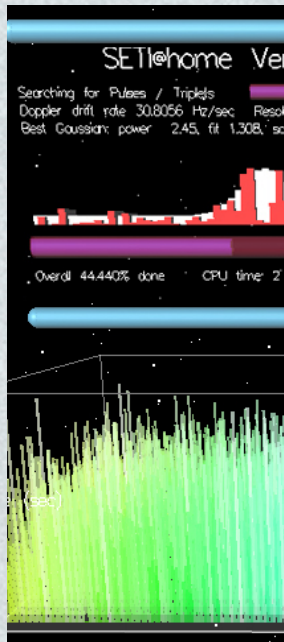
PART 1 SURVEILLANCE

Several days after the public meeting the first character that was exposed to the file, they start to have some odd occurrences going on around them. Their phones will turn themselves on and off. Devices around them will start to display the fractal screensaver that indicates NoWhere is running on a device. Their friends and families will all rave about the app that is now installed on their own devices. Local news will start to report on the widespread distribution of the NoWhere app as well as reports of strange sightings of stalkers and an upsurge in homeless people in the immediate areas around where new installations of the app are occurring.

As a part of these sightings on occasion characters cell phones will get phone calls with numbers that display as letters or just as special characters such as { or ¥± as well as other mathematical symbols that are not a normal part of a phone number. On occasion the numbers will display as not available and unable to display. They will come at all hours of the day and sometimes will be back to back or simultaneous. If someone answers the phone they will be treated to a babel of voices, modem dial tones, what sounds like whale songs, as well as strange electronic type sounds. If any character has skills or experience in the recordings of stellar bodies such as pulsars, they would be able to discern similar sounds and patterns in any calls they decide to answer.

A week or so after this starts, giving the GM plenty of time to intersperse other activities to draw attention away from these occurrences, the characters will note, overall, an increase in black cars and vans on the streets. It seems to be at least 1 to 3 on most every street. Sometimes these vehicles are found parked on the side of the road with obvious figures sitting inside the heavily tinted windows. At no time will law enforcement be seen to stop any of these vehicles with their suspicious activities and heavily concealing accessories. Sometimes there will be multiple antennas on the vehicles and other potential electronic devices. All of which should spike the curiosity and/or paranoia quotient of the player characters.

If any character approaches one of the vehicles, they will pull away, drive away, no one will open the doors no open the windows.





Essentially they will be completely ignored. If they persist, if brought to the attention of law enforcement they will receive stern warnings to leave well enough alone without mentioning any agencies or reasons, to just leave it all alone and go back to their lives.

At times have the characters make tests suitable for the system this is being used for to spot surveillance. It is difficult to spot, consisting of electronic, use of their smartphones, as well as distance devices such as cameras, drones, and shotgun style mics. The only ones under surveillance are those with the NoWhere app installed. At this time characters, if they check, will find that the GPS is always on and the app will no uninstall from their devices. The first time they attempt it will look like it uninstalled. However unless extraordinary steps are taken, such as uninstalling in a location with no access to any networking or WIFI, along with a complete factory reset, if any storage device or capacity of RF energy is present when the uninstall is attempted the file will go into hide mode and will remain resident on the affected device.

Of course if no one notices, no character asks about their smart phones, etc. then they will only notice the strange and very evident black vehicles. After a few weeks like this then black stealth helicopters also start to show up over all major cities. They can be sighted in news pieces, live camera feeds, etc. There is a black vehicle on essentially every block within about a month of time, then onto the second part of the adventure. Also by this time there will be figures sighted at night, dusk, and dawn, all in black trench coats, black trousers and wingtip shoes, thick black plastic tinted sunglasses, with large wide brimmed cowboy like hats obscuring their faces. If pursued they will always make it around a corner or into a doorway and disappear from sight. This is a special effect of the strange magics used to create the trench coated MIBs. Keep in mind the media makes no note, no real attention is drawn to these occurrences, and most people seem oblivious to what is going on. Almost as if the steal cars and helicopters are outside of most perceptual ranges.

This portion of the adventure is more a set up for what comes afterwards. There are two competing forces also at work in the city, goaded and covertly guided by the creator of the NoWhere app and once the app has infiltrated much of the city he will goad the other two forces into action to cause discord, sow chaos and confusion, as well as cause casualties among the city residents. Once the app has close to full saturation in the city and with the MIBs spread out all across the city to further the surveillance then he will subtly reach out and start the next phase of his plans.

PART 2 STRANGE SEWER PEOPLE

In the search for the source of the file and the strange surveillance that started up a week after the file came to light, the characters begin sighting more trench coated followers as well as other more shadowy stalkers and tailers. This can take place about anytime, and no later than about 1 month since the app installation.

Reports will come into public utilities and complaints of snakes coming up out of water and sewer pipes in the city the characters call home. Ensure that if any character, or player, has a phobia about snakes that they are visited at least once by multiple poisonous snakes being found in their toilet, shower, open drain, etc. If nowhere else then in a basement with a drain grate that a rattle-snake or cottonmouth could fit through.

These presage the start of the campaign of the Serpent Folk in a bid to take over the city. By working to drive out as many residents as they are able to with the use of snakes and serpents, followed by more drastic measures if those do not work (which of course they would not). Based on what city and what geographical features there are locally, they will also work to engineer a disaster of some sort, hopefully sufficient to drive out the entire human population leaving them a place to work to resurrect their ancient empire.

The leaders of these Serpent Folk have decided that the change in the climate would work to their favor, hotter and wetter favoring their original living conditions. So they are working to create an environmental disaster along with long term climate change to get rid of the troublesome mammals that have taken over their once mighty empire. Taken together these are their plans for the city.

With the arrival of the snakes in drains and that a giant upsurge in calls to animal control and exterminators goes out. By the time the characters are also in need of extermination services, they will be told it will be at least a week before they could be helped. If it is a true emergency then the going rate will be \$500 an hour with a 1 hour minimum fee, cash only, to arrive and assess the situation. Otherwise regular rates of about \$100 an hour if they can wait a week, perhaps two before a service call could be scheduled. If they call to other services they will get approximately the same answer from any other services. Of course the PCs could work to remove the snakes themselves. Within 24 hours of the start of the Serpent Folk campaign almost all households will have at least five to ten poisonous snakes or serpents in their homes or apartments.

The Serpent Folk have been breeding the various snakes being used here for several years amassing millions of their slithering kin as a resource and now as a weapon to be used against the surface folk. They had used special chemicals and the side effects of their crystalline based technologies to spur and increase their snake charges and also to direct them upwards from their nest to the world above.

The longer this goes on the more the city's basic services will be disrupted. Eventually the city officials will resort to gassing the underground portions of the city making it, they hope, inaccessible to the snakes coming up. This will be about two weeks into the assault when they will make the decision. Within a week of the start of the campaign assault there will be snakes to be found on city streets, every park is a place to encounter the reptiles, any dark corner could hold a dangerous serpent ready to strike. The longer it goes on the more exotic the snakes. Mambas and Cobras will start to show up about day 8 or 9 and by day 14 there are snake breeds never seen by human eyes, due to their almost prehistoric nature as well as many new species created in the millions of years since the Serpent Folk lost control of the surface world. After two weeks of the assaults then the city council will convene and after a couple of public forums and meetings will decide to proceed with the gas plan.

This is a rough timeline to allow GMs to tailor it to provoke the maximum response to what is going on. There are the snakes coming up, the strange surveillance still going on from Part 1, along with the city officials slowly shutting down parts of the infrastructure of the city. Power will slowly turn into brownouts, then into blackouts in parts of the city. The water services will become spotty, along with trash and refuse pickup becoming non-existent due to the dangers of the snakes to the sanitation workers.

If any PCs decide to trace where all of the snakes are coming from, it is easy enough to track them down to the sewer systems under the city. Feel free to make up endless miles of pipes, tubing, maintenance shafts and corridors all under the city. With the influx of the ophidian folk the city public works department goes offline, due to safety concerns. Any trip into the places underground will need to account for the constant flood of snakes slithering up from far underground towards the city. Heavy large calf high boots at least that are resistant to large timber rattler bites are the absolute minimum in safety gear. More like a full body suit, antivenin, snake handling gear, etc. is a more prudent way to progress.

Presuming the characters are able to find or equip themselves well enough to brave the trip down under the city once they are as far down as possible, at least five to six stories down, they will start to find evidence of neglect and then of dirt and debris.

The Serpent Folk had been dwelling in some deep underground caverns several hundred feet down below the city and had slowly made their way up far enough to encounter signs of human civilization. After spending a decade or so observing they began to make their plans. This took several more decades to decide and to begin the breeding process. Never too numerous in this location, there are approximately 200 or so of the Serpent Folk total in this location.

The rest of their kind has moved to other caverns and locations in case these plans did not go off as anticipated. In case of danger or misfortune all of their females and young have been moved to help safeguard their races future. The 50 some left here are the scientists, mystics, and warriors of this cavern structure. All are experienced and prime representatives of their race. Divided into about equal parts of the three types, the warriors have the weapons while the other two types are more there to manage the machinations.

Once past the human infrastructure there are several crude tunnels leading down several hundred more feet to the artificial caverns where the Serpent Folk live at. These tunnels are the conduits by which the snakes are moving up into the city. About the time the PCs would be down this far the tunnels are about knee deep in snakes all moving up towards the city. After fighting their way down through the seething mass of venomous reptiles for the couple of hundred feet drop (about a 57 degree downward slope making it about a 368 foot long battle) the characters will be in the caverns of the Serpent Folk.

Once down the slope there is a series of caverns with open sleeping areas, ones filled with crystalline structures for mental and scientific experiments, as well as vast caverns filled with vats of fungus and mushrooms as well as the breeding pits for the snakes now invading the city. The pits are still disgorging snakes up stone ramps the Serpent Folk had installed to facilitate the movement. They had used large focusing crystals to speed and increase the rate of growth in the reptiles. Use large irregular sizes and shapes for these caverns and pits. On the walls and ceilings inside each of the spaces are glowing globes filled with bioluminescent gases the Serpent Folk create to provide for more illumination in their subterranean homes.

The details are left up to the GM to flesh out. There are numerous maps and other visual resources online to pillage from to make the

locations their own. There are about a total of 200 Serpent Folk that had lived down here. The caverns are much larger than are needed for only a couple of hundred ophidian folk. At one time there were thousands that lived down here. Now down to the couple of hundred they are slowly dying off and have become desperate to take back once was theirs, the surface world.

With this as open ended as it is, the PCs might not be outfitted for a pitched battle with maybe three times their numbers in trained Serpent Folk Warriors. Of course they are capable of fleeing or just scouting. The snakes down there will not relay the presence of the invaders. But if they are sighted by any Serpent Folk then a silent alarm will be raised and all of the ones down there will know of the intruders being present. Not details but general location is all that will be communicated. The warriors will all converge on the location if the characters are spotted in an effort to stop the intruders and to safeguard the nest.

Portray the 17 some Warrior Types as fanatical in defense of their home. They will spend their lives to safeguard the Scientists and Mystics among them. The Mystics will attempt to use powers of fascination to captivate the characters into surrendering, which would make them easy victims to either the grown snakes or other Serpent Folk. The Scientists will not be of much use in the battle.

Their weapons consist of crystalline arrays of rods that function like projectile weapons that fire invisible bolts of energy. Treat the damage the same as a SMG for fire rate and damage except there is no sound, no noise, and no recoil, just the Serpent Folk Warriors aiming towards characters and firing. They are not the most accurate of weapons and they have no sights and the range is about 15 yards for effectiveness. Beyond that range the energy dissipates and only causes strange tingling with no other effects.

The other Serpent Folk have no physical weapons. A Scientist might throw a crystal flask with chemicals in it at a character while the Mystics attempt to Fascinate in order to allow the Warriors to do their work, or worst case allow a Mystic or Scientist to use their Poisonous Bites on a unwilling victim. Otherwise once the Warriors of the Serpent Folk are defeated there is little opposition left in them. Of course there are still thousands and thousands of snakes to cope with as well.

PART 3 EVEN WORSE

This part can either start up immediately after the defeat of the Serpent Men, or with a day or three down time, this part can start up.

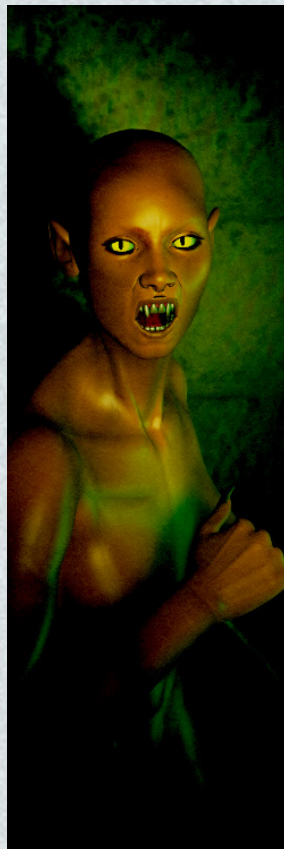
Rampant paranoia should be the bread and butter of daily life by this point. Even if there is nothing going on keep asking, at random intervals, for players to make appropriate rolls for sighting hidden/concealed/tracking individuals or devices. Make it seem as if every lamp has a bug in it and every phone call is being recorded. Have police drive by on city roads slowly, obviously taking long looks as the characters every time they are out in the public eye.

The local news crews are visible most every day, following crime scenes, etc. Once the Serpent Folk are defeated then the last phase of The TickTock Man's plan will go into action. This involves the use of Ghouls to make more depredations on the city's populous until it reaches the breaking point at which time complete chaos will have taken over.

Here is where the ghouls start to make their appearances. Searching for both food and spare parts in the city, they are starting to raid the underground places. Their boldness is caused by the recent disruptions in the city due to the app and the Serpent Folk as well as the leader of these Ghouls having been contacted by Nyarlathotep in dreams and nightmares. This is where the Ghouls got the idea to take spare parts and implant them into their bodies. Their ability to come back from damage as well as the outside influence is what is making that possible for them.

If the city where the PCs are located at has subways or underground structures such as parking garages, then they will start to make overt raids. If not then the Ghouls will raid parks and parking garages for their victims, striking once the sun sets and running rampant all night long. Along the same lines multiple laboratories, computer support facilities, as well as chemical supply houses and the local airport all could be targets of the Ghouls. At the same time these attacks commence the local police will announce a new policy of no patrols and no responding to any emergencies from sundown till sunrise. Later that same day the fire and emergency rescue chiefs will also announce a total suspension of services during darkness. This is due to the lack of support from law enforcement.

At no time will the Governor respond with National Guard units. His entire office has been overtaken with the NoWhere app and have been totally subsumed into the machinations of The Ticktock Man. The governor's office has been totally compromised and if a GM desired could just have all of the principle personnel, Governor included, having been replaced with specially crafted artificial folks. This means that the city is on its own during this last phase of the



adventure. It is basically up to the player characters to save the city from the last phase of the adventure.

So with lawlessness and chaos starting to engulf the city it will be up to the player characters to step in and thwart the last part of the plan to destabilize human society.

The Ghouls will move in groups of 5 to 10, striking at multiple places in a single night. Using any underground structures that exist to move about if possible; otherwise they will stick to mostly unlit or debris filled locations, deserted buildings, run down tenements, etc. to facilitate their movements. This will mean the PCs will need to become aware of the danger and then decide to step in. the easiest way of course is for a loved one or relative, perhaps even just a neighbor, to be found partially chewed and mutilated to give them a starting point.

Once intrigued, even if by nothing else other than news reports of serial killer style attacks across the city cropping up in the last few days, the Characters will need to investigate. Lay a few clues out, allow for some Research Rolls to allow them to dig up some info. Perhaps a news or police contact will be able to slip them some photos of corpses with hunks taken out is by claws or ripped out with cruel fangs. Many PCs will jump to the Ghouls idea and will go to find the local cemeteries. These are not dwelling there anymore, having cleaned out most of the good supplies by underground tunnels before launching this campaign.

Allow for random other clues such as Electronics Stores being broken into and ransacked, as well as scrap iron and recyclers all reporting losses and break ins. Some pawn shops will be victims of the thefts as well.

With these Ghouls doing what little they can to add a techno-vibe to their pack, their actions should confuse the characters. So in the same night there should be a brutal attack in a suburb, along with the knockoff of a PC repair store, with a local hardware store reporting thieves had taken hammers, rivets, screws, etc. These tools are to help them to implant the tech they are trying to upgrade themselves with. Little to none of it will do them any good. The only real side effect is the increased armor and damage from metal in the claws the actions will have on the Ghouls. Otherwise this is just a Japanese Cyberpunk style vibe to the cannibalistic Ghouls.

Once the characters have taken some steps to locate the Ghouls, allow them to attack them as they will. This last part should almost feel anticlimactic. Once found, there is no guile, no real tactics or

abilities to the Ghouls. Mostly just swarm, overrun a victim or victim's location, strip the corpses or take a few victims back for consumption later at their lair. There is nothing subtle about this portion. More combat focus than anything else.

Once they are on the trail it is somewhat easy to track them down. Enterprising characters might want to try the GPS locator function on modern smartphones. Someone could just tail the Ghouls as they take a prize or trophy back to their lair. If nothing else the NoWhere app could be used by The TickTock Man to lead the Ghouls around and a hacker type could have discovered this feature and relayed the information to the other characters.

Regardless the method or means taken to find the Ghouls, their lair is in the basement of an old abandoned hospital. They have turned the morgue part into their main lair, where they both dine and experiment on each other. This should be portrayed as a chamber of horrors where gore is splattered everywhere, where the victims still alive are systematically or spontaneously used for food or spare parts or as decoration as the Ghoul's see fit. Once in there the main reaction by the PCs should be along the lines of Flamethrowers and then serious mental counseling.

The Morgue part should be at least 2d6 SAN loss and the potential for at least temporary insanity due to the over the top nightmarish nature of the situation. Make this as much of a gore/splatter fest as your players and you as a GM can stomach. Push it close, keeping in mind people's actual life experiences and make sure to not go too far. If it can be helped that is.

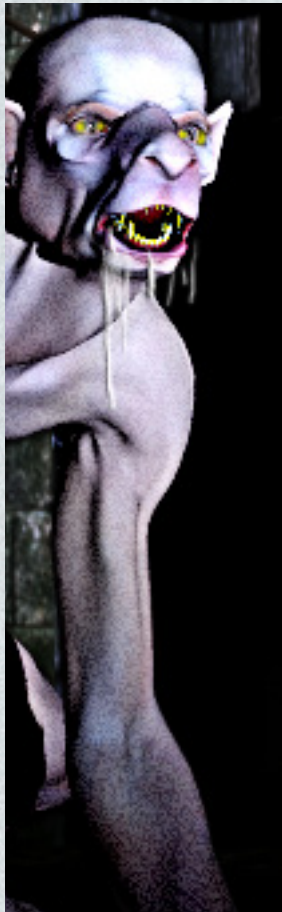
CONCLUSION

The obvious threats to the city have been taken care of. The Serpent Folk and the Ghouls are hopefully defeated and perhaps the existential threat of the NoWhere App has been discovered or at least countered. That threat will not go away anytime soon. In the Early Information Age now that The TickTock Man has a way to infiltrate every piece of functioning electronic devices

SO was it uninstalled or not?

So will the changes in personality in their friends reverse or are they permanent, should any of the player characters had gone insane as a result of what was going on.

What about the monsters the characters had encountered and the strange devices they were carrying and had installed in their bodies?



What does it seem like everyone at work stares at the characters all the time, and strangers on the street just shy away without any conscious realization it is happening.

Just as suddenly the local city government reverses all of their decisions, brings in extra law enforcement and emergency services, initiated massive infrastructure projects, and suddenly seem like they want to help everyone out RIGHT NOW.

The adventure really should leave the players more confused at the end than at the beginning. Once the Ghouls are defeated the MIB all disappear within 24 hours. The NoWhere app goes quiescent and sits hidden on all of the devices it was installed on, waiting for the next time the creator needs to call on its services.

STRANGE AND RANDOM HAPPENINGS

In each of the 3 Parts

In an effort to aid the GM in making this a more surreal and strange adventure, here are some random occurrence charts for use in the running of this adventure.

Each Chart is designated for a different part. There is also a master one for those that want to just mix it all up. In some of the cases elaboration or embellishment will be necessary to fit them within the exact flow of the characters actions and investigations.

PART 1 RANDOM CHART

Roll 1d6 and consult below. These can be encountered on a street, in a local store, etc. Tailor to suit.

1. A pair of younger people, mid 20s, leather, chains, lots of tattoos and heavy piercings and some obvious crude other implants such as railroad spikes through upper arms, large knitting needle like piercings in arms, etc.
2. Steampunk/Clockpunk like Cosplayers with some anachronisms such as modern smartphones, etc. visible on them. They duck into the next store.
3. Female in a flame red dress, holographic like so it appears like flames are all over her figure, comes out of a dress shop and heads across the street, a purse looking to be made of gold wire in her hand.
4. Smartphone lying on the ground, wakes up and looks like

someone swipes the lock and displays a mustard yellow background with a stick figure with 8 arms dancing on it. The phone shuts off if anyone touches it.

5. On the news it shows a satellite falling out of orbit and crashing into the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Once it enters into the atmosphere it disappears from all radar and surveillance screens.
6. Pack of dogs, dozen or so, comes out of an alleyway, looks at the PCs, a couple sniff hands, they all trot away together, more like a military formation than a pack of dogs. Leader is a shepherd/Doberman looking mixture.

PART 2 RANDOM CHART

Roll 1d6 and consult below. These can be encountered on a street, in a local store, etc. Tailor to suit.

1. Police Officers in Full SWAT Gear and Body Cams are walking the streets. The Body Cams On Lights are Red
2. News update, intensified fighting in the Middle East and in many parts of Africa over water and other resource rights. Sightings of black stealth like jet fighters and AFVs are reported on both sides of the conflicts.
3. A new musical is coming to the city in a few weeks. This is the first national traveling show for the production. It is a tale of a family and their struggles with the occult as well as strange genetic manifestations. The title of the musical is The Burning.
4. Local Doomsday Preppers sign a lease for several city blocks, announcing plans to construct a fortified structure within their purchase, in anticipation of violent geophysical changes their research is pointing towards. The City Mayor is seen in the news footage praising the new construction jobs that will come to the city during the building phase of their plans.
5. A traveling circus comes to town, with an impromptu parade of sorts as their caravan enters town and slowly makes its way across the city to a series of empty parking lots in the more industrial part of town.
6. Major fire ravages several blocks of apartment buildings. Surprisingly no injuries or deaths, just destruction.

PART 3 RANDOM CHART

Roll 1d6 and consult below. These can be encountered on a street, in a local store, etc. Tailor to suit.

1. UAVs/Drones about 15 feet up in the air circling more like vultures than like controlled devices. Red Camera Lights visible
2. Surplus Military Grade AFV/Rescue Vehicle driving down freeway/main road. LE agents standing in the upper hatch with readied weapons.
3. Flight of three helicopters pass overhead. No markings, unable to determine nationality or make/model
4. Hazmat Van stops in front of a tenement and a dozen individuals get out of it, all in heavy Hazmat/MOPP 4 gear with several portable stretchers and they all race into the building. A second van arrives and more Hazmat suited individuals start to cordon off the area for at least 100 feet from in front of the building, diverting traffic, etc.
5. Flash Mob of 15 to 25 well-dressed office professionals all stop and stand in a circle, heads bent down over their phones with ear buds in. If you pass close enough to hear them it is a strange droning sound, like metallic bumblebees, coming out of the phones.
6. A trio of male clowns, traditional red nose, chalk white face paint, dapper suits, large plastic flowers on lapels, walking down the street discussing the impending stock market and societal collapse. Casual observation will determine all three are carrying sidearms in shoulder rigs.

MASTER RANDOM CHART

Roll 1d20 and consult below. Items 19 and 20 are only on this chart.

1. A new musical is coming to the city in a few weeks. This is the first national traveling show for the production. It is a tale of a family and their struggles with the occult as well as strange genetic manifestations. The title of the musical is The Burning.
2. A pair of younger people, mid 20s, leather, chains, lots of tattoos and heavy piercings and some obvious crude other implants such as railroad spikes through upper arms, large knitting needle like piercings in arms, etc.
3. A traveling circus comes to town, with an impromptu parade of sorts as their caravan enters town and slowly makes its way across the city to a series of empty parking lots in the more industrial part of town.
4. A trio of male clowns, traditional red nose, chalk white face paint, dapper suits, large plastic flowers on lapels, walking down the street discussing the impending stock market and societal collapse. Casual observation will determine all three are carrying sidearms in shoulder rigs.
5. Female in a flame red dress, holographic like so it appears like flames are all over her figure, comes out of a dress shop and heads across the street, a purse looking to be made of gold wire in her hand.
6. Flash Mob of 15 to 25 well-dressed office professionals all stop and stand in a circle, heads bent down over their phones with ear buds in. If you pass close enough to hear them it is a strange droning sound, like metallic bumblebees, coming out of the phones.
7. Flight of three helicopters pass overhead. No markings, unable to determine nationality or make/model
8. Hazmat Van stops in front of a tenement and a dozen individuals get out of it, all in heavy Hazmat/MOPP 4 gear with several portable stretchers and they all race into the building. A second van arrives and more Hazmat suited individuals start to cordon off the area for at least 100 feet from in front of the building, diverting traffic, etc.
9. Local Doomsday Preppers sign a lease for several city blocks, announcing plans to construct a fortified structure within their purchase, in anticipation of violent geophysical changes their research is pointing towards. The City Mayor is seen in the news footage praising the new construction jobs that will come to the city during the building phase of their plans.
10. Major fire ravages several blocks of apartment buildings. Surprisingly no injuries or deaths, just destruction.
11. News update, intensified fighting in the Middle East and in many parts of Africa over water and other resource rights. Sightings of black stealth like jet fighters and AFVs are reported on both sides of the conflicts.

12. On the news it shows a satellite falling out of orbit and crashing into the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Once it enters into the atmosphere it disappears from all radar and surveillance screens.
13. Pack of dogs, dozen or so, comes out of an alleyway, looks at the PCs, a couple sniff hands, they all trot away together, more like a military formation than a pack of dogs. Leader is a shepherd/Doberman looking mixture.
14. Police Officers in Full SWAT Gear and Body Cams are walking the streets. The Body Cams On Lights are Red
15. Smartphone lying on the ground, wakes up and looks like someone swipes the lock and displays a mustard yellow background with a stick figure with 8 arms dancing on it. The phone shuts off if anyone touches it.
16. Steampunk/Clockpunk like Cosplayers with some anachronisms such as modern smartphones, etc. visible on them. They duck into the next store.
17. Surplus Military Grade AFV/Rescue Vehicle driving down freeway/main road. LE agents standing in the upper hatch with readied weapons.
18. UAVs/Drones about 15 feet up in the air circling more like vultures than like controlled devices. Red Camera Lights visible
19. Military convoy rolls through town, deuce and a half trucks filled with camo covered Special Forces along with M1s, Bradleys, and MRAPS. A full infantry company with heavy armored support.
20. Dozens of Black Limousines converge from different directions, all ending up in the middle of the city where dozens of black suited men and women all disembark from the cars and all enter into the same office building. The limos all drive away.

THE OPPOSITION

MYTHOS GHOULS WITH CRUDE CYBERNETIC IMPLANTS

For Call of Cthulhu use standard Mythos Ghouls modified with the crude implants they have devised. Alter their stats adding in a + 5 to Str and + 5 to Sz making for an average Dam Bonus of +2d6. Claws also do 1d10 + db due to the implanted metals in their torsos and replacing their claws.

For other game systems use a similar creature, such as a Morlock (d20 type games) increasing the chance to avoid damage by about 15% as well as increase the damage they can take to the species maximum for the game system. Increase the damage done with claws by at least 2 times to make more of a challenge.

There is a total of 35 some ghouls that will make the raids and assaults on the city.

SERPENT PEOPLE

Same stats as in the CoC game adding in more advanced technology. They have access to crystalline versions of smartphones and tablets, allowing their hissing language to be automatically translated into the language of the receiver on the other end. Be it vocal or text in context, their devices will detect the language in use at the other end and will deliver the message in the correct language. Otherwise they have similar technology as per their game stats.

In a d20 setting use Lizard Men with advanced technology and a more slender build. Just pull in the same stats, increase intelligence, add in modern technology and use them as is with the addition of a poisonous bite. The Mystics can use Charm Person at Will as a Special Quality.

There is a total of 50 some Serpent Folk in the caverns under the city. They are divided into roughly one third Warriors, One Third Mystics, and One Third Scientists. This is a simple classification based on what role they fulfill in their nest. The other types such as Builders, Creators, Tenders, old and young, all have fled the Nest in case something was to go wrong with the plan.

The Mystics are capable of using Serpent Like powers of Fascination to sometimes beguile and fixate their prey into immobility allowing them to fall before the Serpent Folk. In CoC consider this to be a Pow vs Pow attack Mind Effect. If the Serpent Folk wins then the victim will stand there transfixed and fascinated by the Mystic, allowing others to attack with impunity at least one time.

MIBS

These are a constructed race for this scenario. The Ticktock Man pulled in Mannequins and spare rubber and plastic tarps and grocery bags and melted it all together into a faceless humanoid structure. To control them he installed smartphones in the head allowing the cameras to look out onto the world. With his software installed they are excellent eyes for him. The mics and speakers will give the Ticktock Man the ability to communicate in a two directional fashion. As a side effect of the creation process they are able to slip sideways into a pocket dimension allowing them to effectively disappear. They are not able to affect the world or be affected.

In CoC their stats are the same as Mummies with a Move Quietly at 75% and Stalk at 85%. SAN loss 1/1. Same special damage as per Mummies and susceptibilities due to their plastic construction.

For d20 games use the following stats to simulate the MIB (www.paizo.com/prd for rules that can apply). The Terra-Cotta Soldier, instead of being made of fired clay they are composed of the rubber and plastic mixture. Use the same stats for the rank and file, replacing the longsword with conventional pistols and for the Archer variant use ARs for their main weapon. They are all directly controlled by the Ticktock Man via the implanted smartphones allowing for superb coordination. Add in a Dimension Shift, At Will, Only if not being observed as a SQ for them to allow them to escape if only they can make it around a corner or into a doorway or empty alley.

<http://paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd/bestiary3/terraCottaSoldier.html>

These are the drivers and operators of the black surveillance vehicles that start to show up in Part 1 and continue to be present through the rest of the adventure. Feel free to add them in at any point in the adventure, appropriate or not.

THE TICKTOCK MAN: AN AVATAR OF NYARLATHOTEP

Pulled from The Creature Companion from Call of Cthulhu by Chaosium.

The mechanical avatar of the messenger of the Old Ones. The creator of the NoWhere app.

Architect of the entire scenario being played out here. NoWhere in the adventure should the characters come into direct contact with The Ticktock Man. Instead he shows up frequently on cams, videos, as a shadowy figure in the dark and fog, etc. No stats for him are provided. For those with The Creature

Companion, use that as a basis for any other game system besides Call of Cthulhu.

NOWHERE.NLATEP

This binary file is capable of installing and operating on any electronic device that will have the space for the installer. Running about 1 MEG in size, this should be able to infect most any modern device. From smartphones to tablets, the file will reside in the download folders for mobile devices and on computers in the programs directory in a hidden folder.

It will run and install on all platforms and under all OS past and currently in use. From UNIX to Windows, all MAC OS, as well as older operating systems dating back over the last forty or so years all of them are susceptible to NoWhere.

Once on a device the installer part resides in the download or in the root in a hidden folder. One portion of the application resides in the wireless/networking directory as well as one portion



resides in the actual wireless signal that is produced in most modern devices. This segment in the actual wireless spectrum is what makes this almost impossible to be eradicated from a device once it is installed.

Actual cleansing would entail being in a completely RF free environment as well as a complete factory reset of the hardware, along with a total wipe after the reset. Otherwise as long as any one file remains on a device, then as soon as it can connect to any other device with an installer of the app present it will regenerate the entire program

The program allows for Nyarlathotep to have full access to the storage and computing powers of the device. Full access to all files and directories, and via wireless and RF full access to all other devices on any network it resides on. Part of the app connects wirelessly with the underlying quantum structure allowing for unlimited bandwidth for his avatar's purposes as well as instantaneous communications. It also activates all cams or cameras on the devices or networks as well. This leads to a continual sense of being under surveillance or being watched, heightened by the unearthly nature of the app creator. Long term use will result in a heightened sense of paranoia and will greatly exacerbate PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) in any user.

THE VIBES OF JUST NOWHERE

- ☠ Cyberpunk
- ☠ 90s
- ☠ 80s Electronica
- ☠ Bleakpunk
- ☠ Environmental Concerns and Issues such as
 - ✦ Changes in Severity of Seasons (Hotter Summers, Colder Winters, Heavier Rainy Seasons)
 - ✦ Fracking Chemicals in Tap Water
 - ✦ Melting Icecaps

- ✦ Predatory Species migrating to new habitats
- ✦ Severe Storms that each year set new records
- ☠ Sinkholes
- ☠ Rampant malware and apps
- ☠ Pervasive advertising

FLAVOR TEXT AND INSPIRATIONS

- ☠ Chimney Sweeps
- ☠ Dark Web
- ☠ *Frank Sinatra* by Cake
- ☠ Google Glass
- ☠ Goth
- ☠ *Hotel California* by The Eagles
- ☠ <https://wagle.net/> Wireless Geographic Logging Engine
- ☠ *Inception* (Movie)
- ☠ Ingress (App: Go Enlightened)
- ☠ Mannequins
- ☠ *Mary Poppins* (Movie: Especially the rooftop scene)
- ☠ New Scientist Article and Video (Similar piece seen on TV in 2013)
 - ✦ <http://www.newscientist.com/blogs/nstv/2011/03/invisible-wi-fi-signals-caught-on-camera.html>
 - ✦ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KMAHcvuXN0>
- ☠ NSA Surveillance of us all
- ☠ *Sentinel* by The Clockwork Dolls (VNV Nation Cover)
- ☠ Siouxsie and the Banshees
- ☠ Smartphones/Tablets almost overtaking PCs for the younger generations
- ☠ SQL
- ☠ The Band Cake
- ☠ The Band Primus

- ☠ The Cthulhu Mythos (all of it)
- ☠ *The Distance* by Cake
- ☠ The Dresden Dolls
- ☠ The realization we are bathed in WIFI, RF, Radio, EMF signals in the developed world and it is a 'World' that is invisible to us for the most part.
- ☠ The Ryleh Interface from GURPS Cthulhutech Sourcebook (Also a major inspiration for my Courier Ayes story)
- ☠ Wearable Watches

RPG RESOURCES CONSULTED OR CONSIDERED IN THIS ADVENTURE

- ☠ Call of Cthulhu (In a modern context)
- ☠ Call of Cthulhu the Creature Companion
- ☠ Champion Cyberhero
- ☠ Champions Horror Hero
- ☠ Cthulhutech
- ☠ Dark Conspiracy (All Editions)
- ☠ Grimm's Cybertales (Cyberpunk)
- ☠ GURPS Cthulhupunk
- ☠ GURPS Cyberpunk
- ☠ GURPS Cyberpunk Adventures
- ☠ KULT Rpg
- ☠ Malifaux by Wyrd Games (Squad Level Miniatures)
- ☠ SLA Industries
- ☠ Through the Breach RPG by Wyrd Games



GUMIHO

A New Race

by Jason D McEwen

FOR CONSPIRACY RULES!

Jack Oh followed the young hottie into a dark alley. "She'll do just fine" he thought. As she rounded the corner he pulled his Makarov from his waistband.

"Where'd she...." Jack suddenly flew into the small mountain of garbage. Dazed, he noticed a figure with red eyes and some weird skirt, no it was tails! "The stories were true!" was the last thing he thought as claws ripped into his chest.

Eun Ha sniffed the liver: it wasn't too damaged by drink. She began to nibble delicately at the morsel. The pistol and cash went into her jacket pocket. Wiping her mouth clean, she wandered into the night.



GUMIHOS

Strength:	7	Education:	5	Move:	3/9/17/32
Constitution:	5	Charisma:	9	Skill/Dam.:	7/1D6+1
Agility:	7	Empathy:	8	Hits:	30/65
Intelligence:	6	Initiative:	5	# Appearing:	1D6

Special: Highly empathic, can mate with human males. Silver disrupts empathy.

THE MYTHOLOGY:

Throughout medieval Asia there were legends of foxes with nine tails who could look like beautiful women. They liked to feed on human livers or hearts. On occasion they married human men and had children. These foxes could become human after one thousand years. In China they are Huli jing, in Japan they are Kitsune, the Korean name is Gumiho.

THE REALITY:

These Gumiho are an unusual type of were, their actual form is an attractive Asian female, their empathic form is that of a nine tailed fox. When silver disrupts their empathy they are just human women, this helped them avoid the human empathis and minion hunters of the era. When using their empathy, they project one of a couple of fox forms. In example, using dimension walk, the human sees a fox entering a hole. Full combat appearance is a fox-human hybrid, telekinesis alters claw and bite marks, foot prints accordingly. When showing their "true nature" to a loved one it is a human with nine tails. The Gumiho can assimilate to earth, but it takes 1000 years. Assimilated Gumiho become completely human. When the gates shut in ancient times, those that weren't killed became assimilated. Gumihos are female, and girl children become Gumihos unless the mother influences the fetus with empathy.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Gumiho's appearance is that of an attractive Asian female. Any other form is a result of Project Thought while using their powers. They can be encountered at all but the lowest levels of society.

GUMIHO AS PLAYER CHARACTERS

Soo In bowed to the elders. "I wish to aid the hunters against our outlaw kin."

Low murmurs rippled out from the table. The First Elder fixed Soo In in her gaze. "Why?"

"The woman is a descendant of my sister."

The Elders leaned in. "What makes you believe this?"

"I touched a family heirloom, it showed me Eun Ha as a human with a large family."

The First Elder nodded. "You may aid them, but use caution."

Not all Dark Races are completely enemies of mankind. When the ancient gates closed the Gumiho rebelled, overthrowing the would-be Dark Lord. The gates reopened at a critical moment, less males were being born, descendants of those human men caught in the proto-dimension centuries ago. Gumiho's are learning to adapt, and remain hidden since humans have a lot more options to slay what they fear or don't understand. But just as some succumb to the Dark, some wish to fight it.

The Darklings will treat any Gumiho minion hunters like renegade ET's or cyborg escapees. Gumiho PC's must roll to see if they are being hunted.

Gumiho's usually take another career later. Gumiho researchers are looking into how to control their urges.

Creighton had started the BBQ grill as Anna arrived from the store, "Anna, there's something you should know about this Soo In."

Anna frowned, this woman was too attractive in her opinion. "What is it?"

Creighton could see Anna's annoyance building up. "She's a fox. OW! No not like that, she's really a fox!"

Anna's second punch stopped short, "Huh?"



Gumiho

PREREQUISITES: None, but should be female.

FIRST TERM

Attributes: STR +1, AGL +1, EMP +1. Attributes better than 10 are possible. No age rolls are made until assimilated.

Skills: Act/Bluff 1, Animal Empathy 2, Foreboding 1, Human Empathy 1, Persuasion 1, Project Thought 3, Unarmed Combat 2.

SUBSEQUENT TERMS

Only one term to start. Character can take terms in other human careers.

ALL TERMS

Special Assignment: None.

Promotion: None.

Contacts: None, gumiho are elusive with other humans.

Special: No cash for this term.

A HAUNTED SUBJECT: GHOSTS IN DARK CONSPIRACY

Referee Advice

by Eric Fabiaschi

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

PART I - THE USE & ABUSE OF GHOSTS

Ghosts in the Dark Conspiracy RPG are problematic at best and cliched at worst. They almost seem as hold over monsters at first glance. The ghost of DC isn't the moaning, groaning horror out of legend and film. These things are completely and utterly ancient alien horrors beyond the ken of mankind. Out of all the terrors of the Greater Depression, ghosts are some of the oldest horrors that have existed alongside of us - and the most alien.

Ghost are listed on page 222 of the first edition rule book for Dark Conspiracy, where it gives an overview of the stats of the ghost as monster. The book gives the ghost as simply another Dark Minion race. Given the science fictional nature of the game this isn't a surprise, but if ghosts are a Dark Minion race then what exactly are they? There isn't a country upon Earth that does not have some form of native version of this horror. These things must be more than simply spirits of dead and something far more disturbing. These creatures are horrors of subtle energy, also known as paranormal energies or the energy of the soul. These energy matrix beings are attracted to death and points of depravity. Pools of negative psychic energy in the DC universe created by their victims. At the moment of death, the ghost slips past the victim's spiritual

defenses and they become their victims after a fashion copying the electrical and spiritual impulses of the human victim at the moment of death. The fresher the victim the more solid a copy they will become. Often these horrors become fun house twisted versions in a limited and horrific way to the living. This is done for both spiritual food by the ghost and as a lure for the coming meals.

PART II - THE WEB OF TERROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Reading through the Dark Conspiracy Rules and The Conspiracy Rules description of these monsters it becomes perfectly clear that ghosts work upon the fears and sorrow of their victim's families, relatives, and those around the victims whose souls they devour and copy. As 'subtle energy beings' ghosts often use the memories and experiences of their former hosts to weave a trail of terror and horror on an emphatic level around them. Given their empathic powers they stalk, hunt, and prey upon their chosen array of victims in a variety of fashions. These can range from implanted thoughts of smells, illusions, and emotional turmoil that will wring a victim out over time. All of these feelings are projected out from their victims even on a physical level. And victims of ghosts

will often look physically and mentally exhausted as the emendations of the horror take their toll on family, friends, and anyone who is within the psychic grasp of these predators. Ghosts will never drop the facade of not being their former victims because on an instinctive level they 'believe' themselves to be the deceased. It matters not though as they move from one victim to another. The subtle energies of their form often expressing itself as ectoplasmic existence as they interact with our plane and space time continuum. Ghosts will haunt and torment their victims sometimes feeding on victims for years at a time. As they often grow in strength and intelligence ghosts may transform into black entities or psychic vampire spirits whose ultimate aim is the total annihilation of their victims through suicide. This transformation can be quick taking 1d4 months or even years to a quick switch over. The entity becomes violence, evil, and worse as time moves on often exhibiting psychotically violence behavior as it feeds from its victim's emotions. Ghosts at this stage can and often do have a very cunning personality crafted from several individuals melding traits as needed over time to create unique entities from the very subconscious thoughts and ideals of their victims. Ghosts of this type can cross the line into demonic horrors bloated with the energies they need to overcome the spiritual defenses of living humans. Here then is where ghosts can possess their victims and move into a human host stripping out a human host of valuable empathic energy while molding itself into a victim's subconscious demonic form. These predators are the worst horrors imaginable because they often leave their victims merely shells of their former selves.

Ghosts of DC are part of a species of 'subtle energy' beings but are some of the most commonly encountered horrors. Electogeists, Gremlins, Storm Reavers, Tulpa, & more within the DC universe are all part of the same species of Dark Minions and energy parasites. These horrors have infected our world for eons. The coming of their Dark Masters has only increased the paranormal index allowing incredible access to our universe and local space time continuum.

PART III - WALKING AT MIDNIGHT OR USING THE GHOSTS OF DARK CONSPIRACY

Ghosts offer the DM in Dark Conspiracy games incredible opportunities for mayhem with the PC's on a variety of fonts. They can be used as a sign post or signal of greater horrors for a nearby Demonground. The Ghosts of DC are creatures that can inflict depravity, madness, and worse on their victims combining on eventual suicide. But remember to never take the bits and pieces of these horrors past the comfort zone of the players. Ghosts are often fun house mirror reflections of their first victims and they can lend themselves to a variety of DC adventures from action to full investigations. They often use a two part attack of Project Emotion, and Project Thought to cause weirdness on subtle and full scale attacks. This means that they will leave some trace behind in the local area where they're 'haunting'. A fact that will not be lost on investigating teams especially those with parapsychologists, physicians, and empathetically gifted party members. Empathically gifted party members and adventurers will be seen as predators and threats to be eliminated by ghostly species, who will instinctively 'know' the threat that these PC's are to their 'existence'. The recent release of the new Empathic Source book by Tres Hombres Games has the lowdown on the PC types that can pose a problem for these monsters.

Haunted houses and the like are actually place where activity of a spectral kind has allowed a pin prick into special type of proto dimension to exist. The conditions of a 'haunting' are actually the sort of feeding ground where ghosts are drawn to in the DC world. Here there are corridors into the subtle energy worlds because of the psychic reservoirs and resources of our world allow these horrors access. They act as sink holes, spawning pools for the young of the ectoplasmic species to spawn and enter our world. Those who venture into the twisted dimensional Hells of such places seldom return if ever. The energies of such places are not the least bit healthy for adventurers or investigators especially those with Empathic gifts will want to close and seal gateways to such places. Often Dark Entities will employ other Dark Minion species to act as guardians of such gateways.

Ghostly encounters can easily be scaled to the level and experience of parties for Dark Conspiracy making them one of the most flexible and dangerously unpredictable Dark Minion species in the rule books. And they a damn fun hoot to use when dealing with players of the Dark Conspiracy and Conspiracy rules game. So grab some dice and get haunting!



HAPPY SAMHAIN!



THE BAR RUN

Fiction

by Tyler Omichinski

FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

MOVIES AND TELEVISION never get the details right. The gunshots always sound like toys, and train the movie-going audience to expect a manufactured audience friendly version of reality. I heard once that gunshots created by audio engineers are actually several other sounds stitched together. Choreography and other details are oriented around what makes for good entertainment rather than anything resembling plausibility. We have entire generations growing up on this; moving further and further from reality. In modern shootouts against untrained drug dealers and other idiots raised on this heady stream of anti-hero worshiping disinformation they have no idea what to do if a gun misfires. American SWAT teams have reported that during shootouts criminals have started to do such ridiculous things as hiding behind couches for cover, as though some cotton batting and cheap polyester would provide any protection. How stupid is that?

There are entire generations raised on television. They never realized that you needed to bring additional clips, that you should be counting your shots, or that maybe you should cover each other every once in a while. None of this is to even say anything about suppressing fire. Most people don't realize that the average gunfight has a hit percentage that is lucky if it tops 1%. Most bullets are purposefully fired not to hit anything.

Most bullets.

The next generation, however, came up with a very different interpretation of things. Videogames dedicated to realistic portrayals of how guns work, how to engage in coordinated attacks, how to actually be something resembling a soldier, training the next generation to behave very differently. I heard somewhere that once upon a time the average video gamer could, upon their first use of a gun, demonstrate better accuracy than trained police officers. I'm not sure if that's true or not, but it sounds impressive.

It also taught some of them how to automate in situations of stress. Think about it; if you were asked how to do your job, whether you're a surgeon or an office drone or a janitor, you usually have no idea how to break it down and explain it to someone else. You just do it. We evolved to be efficient, to have our brains check out. One of the hardest things to teach is to behave in an automated fashion during these moments of intense stress. That's what's best for all of us. You don't want your surgeon thinking and stressing about what to do when he's elbow deep in your guts; you want him to be humming to himself, maybe pondering about what to cook for dinner. Let his hands do the work.

The average idiot, even if they are a police officer, has no idea how to behave in an actual gunfight. They are chaotic and you're lucky to survive one with any idea of how you didn't die. You probably think they can't possibly be that terrifying. That's your distorted view of reality talking. Trained police officers regularly do not perform as expected in gunfights. Everyone reacts differently in a situation that stressful. I'm not talking about the kind of stress you felt in university, having an assignment due in the morning. I'm talking about the kind of stress where one wrong action will relegate you permanently to the past tense. Time processes differently when you have that much adrenaline and other hormones charging through your system. It isn't unmanly or any of that other shit you hear to drop to the ground and do absolutely everything you can to get out of the line of fire and away from the violence when shards of metal start streaking through the air in excess of a thousand miles an hour. Only an idiot will tell you otherwise.

I wish I were still one of those idiots.

* * *

After graduation things didn't turn out like they were supposed to. The recession, or whatever they're calling it now, hit in my final year and jobs were drying up everywhere. I had been raised on the myth of the 1990's that Democracy, Capitalism, and the American Dream had won the day. We were just riding out the clock until either the end times or the next big scientific discovery that would put us on Mars or whatever. Even 9/11 only did so much to dampen people's spirits. I think at the beginning there was still some sort of underlying idea that this was just the birthing pains of Pax Americana.

Either way, four years of University later I had a history degree, and the summer of 2011 began with me living in Toronto without a career in sight. Instead of ending up on Bay Street and working in some office, I found myself in that most ignominious of situations; a University graduate working in the service industry. I kept a roof over my head slinging drinks at a bar downtown and then having the spurious privilege of taking mass transit home.

I wasn't angry like so many others. I would see Occupy Movement activists and protesters out in the streets or on the news. I had settled into something more resembling ennui. I was too concerned about ending up on the news and becoming nothing more than a joke to potential employers. I still had some sort of hope that I would

eventually have a career, that maybe things would get better. That... something would change. Some sort of vainglorious hope that there may not be a God or anything, but there had to be some sort of justice. Things had to be better later. Right?

"James!"

I was shaken out of my reverie of self-pity by my boss, Louis. He was a large man; equal parts overweight and muscled. He perceived himself as some sort of a blend of a player and a mover and shaker. Dark hair slicked back and a suit two sizes too big, even on his frame, screamed a wannabe.

"Yeah?"

"Get back here!"

"Who's going to man the bar?"

"You and I both know that there's nobody fucking here. Get your ass back here."

I sulked my way into the storeroom, chaffing, as I did far too regularly, at the position I found myself in. "Yeah?"

"There's nobody fucking here."

"Yeah?"

"So who're you serving?"

"No one?"

"So why the fuck am I paying you?"

He probably wasn't sober. "In case someone comes in."

"But there's no one in here. Fuck. Okay. Load these boxes up in your car. It's booze for Lucy's. You drive it over there, drop it off around back, and come back. Alright."

"This isn't really what I'm supposed to do... I'm a bartender."

"And I'm your fucking employer so if you want to stay a bartender, you'll get your ass to Lucy's." He shoved past me and stormed into the front of the bar.

Full of impotent rage and bitching to myself I loaded the boxes into the truck that belonged to Louis's little empire of a few bars across the city.

Lucy's... I hated the place. It was run by some thin guy named Carlyle who looked like he was everything Louis wanted to be: decent looking, wore nice clothes, people were afraid of him. Something about him just rubbed me the wrong way. It was like something deep in my instincts screamed at me to edge away from him slowly without turning my back, then once I were far enough to run as far and as fast as I could to get away from him. I had no idea why he just managed a

bar for Louis. He seemed like he was doing so much better than him. I figured at the time that he just came from money or something.

Looking back, I should've known something was up. Lucy's was a higher end place than The Cavern where I worked. Where The Cavern would have punk bands and not irregular fist fights, Lucy's was something else entirely. People would dress up to go to Lucy's. That being said, it wasn't without its own particular brand of sleazy. I figured that Louis had somehow figured out that his jackassery just wouldn't fly around Lucy's.

Lucy's was up Yonge near Eglington. Yuppie central. I had thought that's where I was going to end up after university. No such luck. Anyway, Lucy's. It had an unassuming frontage right on to the street. If it wasn't so popular you wouldn't know from the outside that it was much of anything. Inside was a bit of a maze, but it was a place worth getting lost in if you had the money. It opened into a large front lobby with red leather on just about everything. Big wooden bar along the right hand side of the room as you walked in. A staircase led downstairs to a dance floor and a bunch of little side rooms. You can probably guess out what happened in those rooms. It was the place that a lot of the yuppies went to pretending they were going out for a relatively respectable night on the town, only for it to devolve into the same debauchery that almost everyone else's night did, at least when things went according to plan.

Once the truck was loaded up I grabbed the keys from where they hung just inside the back door. I didn't bother to tell Louis I was on my way out. He was in a mood and I figured it was better just to leave it.

Traffic was terrible, even for early Saturday night. I spent too long getting there, fiddling with the radio listening to music, though I couldn't tell you now the name of a single song I heard. A drive that should've taken me 45 minutes at the most took much longer than that. I arrived as I was approaching the hour and a half mark. I knew I would be yelled at, so in a bout of sheer stupidity, I spent some time stalling and smoking a cigarette outside. I was an idiot.

It's amazing the things that can hinge upon a single small act, and how seldom you'll know what affects your life. I'm not sure if that cigarette or a different route moving the crates might've changed things.

I started to unload the boxes. It was a relatively simple task. The back door was unlocked and it wasn't until I was nearly done unloading that I realized I hadn't seen anyone yet.

"Hello? Carlyle?"

Silence.

I remember thinking in that moment that it was weird, but there was no moment where I thought, "Oooh, this is just like a horror movie," or anything like that. It seemed more likely to me that whoever was supposed to be back here was taking a shit.

I wandered from the storage area to where it fed liquor and limes and ice behind the bar. The place was empty. The entire area that should be filled with people on a Saturday night was just empty. I checked my cell as that weird panic gripped me that somehow I was in the wrong here. Nope: 10:17 on a Saturday night. The place was empty. There wasn't even a single member of staff in the entire entry area.

Checking the front door, I saw that it was locked. The place must be closed. But closed on a Saturday? That made no sense. First The Cavern was empty, and now this. I selfishly became concerned for myself: if these places were run this poorly, what was going to become of my own underappreciated paycheck.

Things were definitely weird. The back door was unlocked when I came in, wasn't it? Wait. Why would it be even if the place were open? It's not a large stretch for some drunk to wander into a back alley and just start trying doors. That happened all the time. I couldn't remember. I didn't remember it being so warm in Lucy's either.

Fumbling with my phone I pulled it out of my pocket. 10:21. I was about to call Louis and touch base with him, bad mood and lack of sobriety be damned, when I thought I heard something from downstairs. Sounded like someone talking, or singing maybe?

I headed down the stairs. I was sweating, but I wrote that off mostly to the inexplicable heat in Lucy's. Maybe that's why it was closed, I thought, the furnace is on the fritz. That would explain all of it. Carlyle was probably downstairs with someone he hired to fix the problem.

The heat was even worse downstairs. My black dress shirt, insisted upon by Louis so it wouldn't show when his employees spilled something or screwed up, was sticking to my back. I hadn't worked up this much of a sweat moving the boxes in. Something definitely had to be wrong with the furnace. The heat was oppressive; it felt like I was moving through some sort of viscous liquid. I even thought I felt my pants dragging behind me like when swimming with your clothes on.

The house lights, that's what we called the bright lights that they turn on at the end of the night, throwing your dance partner's features into stark relief and forcing the confrontation with decisions that were

still being made, weren't on in the basement. Instead, the lights were set up as though it were any other busy Saturday night. Lights; mostly dark purples and vibrant reds danced across the floor in kaleidoscopic patterns. I had no idea how to change the lights here, but I had grown used to operating in environments like this so I just left it.

I kept moving forward. I wasn't familiar with where the furnace room was, but I figured it would be amongst those winding hallways and little rooms in the back. I moved forward across the dance floor as briskly as possible given the darkness and the heat. In the eerie quiet I could almost hear the low thudding bass that would usually accompany each Saturday night.

I wished I were closer with the bartenders who worked at Lucy's as I was wandering through the warrens at the back of the basement. Maybe I would have gotten in more often and been more familiar with the place. Nothing but wishful thinking. I started to move down one of the hallways at the back; a left, a right, moving past a series of small rooms. Most of them were made up around a general theme: something soft like a couch, a table to rest drinks on, red lights, and the occasional mirror.

The rooms were filthy. As I move down the hallways I was assailed first by familiar the smell of day and week old beer that hasn't been mopped up. The smell grew and took shape with the addition of something sickly sweet; I figured it was likely those sugary drinks that so many people liked to drink also spilled about the floor. Moving further it began to smell of something putrid and rotten. It wasn't the sickly sweet smell of rotting meat, nor was it the earthy rot of vegetables; it was something entirely different – even thinking of it causes me to gag. Putrefaction. Something... wrong.

I kept telling myself it had to just be the heat making a bunch of old smells worse. I remembered having to dig semen stains out of a booth at the back of the bar after someone had gotten head and it had dried into the fabric over Sunday night through until the next time someone came in on Wednesday, and I had been the lucky man to deal with it. My hair was drenched at this point and I remember, vaguely, feeling that the smell was working its way in and would follow me like shampoo does throughout the day.

The voice, voices maybe, that I heard from upstairs still seemed to be further into the basement despite how long I moved forward. The hallway forked and I followed the sound. It had to be Carlyle working on the furnace with some staff. That's what it was: just him directing them.

I can't say what kept me moving forward; it definitely wasn't any sense of loyalty to my employer. It was probably something foolish like the fear that if I called Louis I would just have ended up being yelled at and told to figure out what was going on at Lucy's. More likely, I suspect I knew I was lost down there. All I could do was to keep moving forward.

I fumbled with my phone again, pulling it out of my pocket. 11:13. How on earth had I been down here this long? That couldn't be right. There was no way the hallways went on this long. It had to be the heat. It was just playing tricks on me. I could feel my head swimming. Between the smell and the heat and the humidity of the Toronto summer... my head was just off. That had to be it.

After what felt like far too long to be wandering in the basement of a bar, I at last came to a door that was closed, and it sounded like the voice was coming from the other side of it. It was still too quiet to make out; it sounded like the voice was still just a hushed noise. There was no way that it could come from the other side of the door.

I opened the door slowly; I didn't want to surprise anyone on the other side. I could feel the sweat dripping off my face as I took quick haggard breathes through my mouth in an attempt to avoid the smell.

As I opened the room I saw a taunt shirtless body facing away from me. The muscles along his back twitched and writhed, but he didn't move. Instead, he stood still, but twitching. Almost like he was uncomfortable even being in his own skin. Muscles tightened and relaxed, fighting against each other to keep the man standing, causing spiraling tattoos to writhe across his skin. Shoulder blades danced across his back like two flat stones trying to skip across water, but instead tied down and bound by sinew and tendon.

"Carlyle?" I whispered. This is what I'm talking about. It sounds stupid to repeat it out loud now. To tell you that I did something this moronic instead of running full tilt out of the room. Instead, a silly question slips forth from my lips. All at once I give myself away, if I hadn't already.

The man slowly turned counterclockwise. Moving didn't stop the twitching, the contractions, the internal struggle that caused designs and ink to dance across his skin in a nearly mesmerizing way. It was like watching a car accident or someone falling from a great height. At once your brain screams, pleads, and attempts to drag your eyes away from it. Trying to spare you from the sight that is to come. Despite the insistence, most people freeze. Their eyes become transfixed. Just like a deer frozen in incomprehension as a thousand tons

of metal and plastic driven by a barely controlled series of explosion hurtles towards it through the night.

“Ah.... Ah... James. Good. Good of you to join... us,” Carlyle whispered. He continued his breathy, under his breath style of intonation.

He has turned around at this point. The tattoos continued around the front of his body, all meeting in an inky black spot about the size of my fist below his sternum; a point from which all the spiraling and jarring lines grew out of. His gaze affixed mine and I was keenly away of my sphincter clenching tightly closed, as adrenaline began to flow through my system like a tidal wave, begging me to run. Like the rabbit who finds itself face to face with a snake in some simplistic television show, I was unable to move. Despite a desperate pleading that came from within, from a place without words, my feet remained dug into the floor. My socks were drenched with what I desperately hoped was just sweat.

“You were supposed to be here... quite some time ago. Pity. Louis is fond of his little empire. Like a child playing in the dust. Pretending that the impermanent marks he makes upon it are the building of something to last beyond his time on this plane.”

He cocked his head back and forth at me, slowly leaning closer, moving ever closer to me. I couldn't see the steps he was taking to close the distance, but he was slowly, assuredly closing the distance between us. My eyes darted back and forth from his, to the inky blackness below his chest. That darkness; it was something beyond what can be accomplished with mere ink.

“Silly little James. Just trying to do your job. It didn't have... to come to this. You could've left enough alone.”

It was at this point that I noticed what lay behind Carlyle. Some poor woman had been shot and something had begun tearing at her. Something deep within informed me that it looked like an animal had been at her body, though I'd never seen anything like it in my life. I saw, however, the weapon of her demise. Some small pistol, I couldn't tell you the make or any of that information, I could only tell you that I was surprised with how small it was considering it so recently ended a woman's life.

At this point I began to hear a low rumbling noise as Carlyle continued to shift closer. Closing the distance betrayed... whatever he was. The light shifted and showed that the inky blackness wasn't a tattoo but instead was some hole boring deeper into him than should have been possible. Along the edges I could barely make out what

looked like wisps of skin and musculature, paper thin, slowly being pulled deep, deep into that blackness. A rumbling came from within.

The rumbling caused something within me to break. I dove forward and to the Carlyle thing's left without making any conscious decision to do so; grasping for the gun. A shriek rose from the thing I had disrupted as it turned, terrifyingly fast now, coming to close the distance. I fumbled with the gun, my hands shook as I squeezed the trigger again and again and again until I was greeted with a click instead of the explosions that had sprung from it moments before. My legs spasmed, pushing me to my feet and starting to run down the hallways. I ran and ran, driven by instinct. I can't tell you how long I ran, or what route I took.

Some time, maybe hours later, I found myself finally exploding into the Toronto streets. The air smelled fresh and clean and joyous. Nothing again will ever smell that pure. I didn't stop running. My legs continued to pound the pavement. A burning ache was emanating from thighs and a stabbing pain issued from my side. I finally collapsed in a small park. Panting. I checked my side in a panic, terrified that I had been stabbed or shot. Instead, the pain was must a stitch in my side emanating from running more than I ever had.

As the panic began to subside and give way to a new terror, I was greeted by the smell of shit. I had soiled myself sometime during the escapade.

There is little to add to this story now. I never returned to The Cavern or to Lucy's. I don't even know if they still exist. I wandered home that night, left blessedly alone as I smelled like shit and resembled nothing more than a homeless person. I finally made it home, terrorized, and packed a bag of things like a madman. It is amazing how little you really need when you feel your life is on the line.

Late in the night I went to the bus station, bought a ticket for as far from Toronto as I could, and got on a bus. To this day, there is nothing you can do to get me to go back to Toronto.



OLD RIFLE FOR A NEW CENTURY: PART 2, THE FG-42

Guns, guns, guns...

by Kevin O'Neill

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

DURING WORLD WAR TWO, the *Fallschirmjäger* (Germany's paratroopers) were under the control of the *Luftwaffe* (air force) rather than the army and as such, they were able to select equipment matched to their requirements rather than be bound to using exactly the same gear as their army counterparts. To this end, the *Luftwaffe* issued a requirement in 1941 for a rifle suited to airborne operations, the end result being the Paratrooper Rifle model of 1942, more usually referred to by its German name, the *Fallschirmjärgewehr* 42 or more simply, the FG-42.

The requirements for the rifle were made in light of the poor combat results of Operation Mercury, the German airborne invasion of Crete (AKA the Battle for Crete). The poor outcome of Operation Mercury was not the fault of the paratroopers themselves but can be attributed directly to the parachute used and the practice of dropping equipment by canister. Due to the design of the German parachute harness at the time, a paratrooper was required to execute a forward roll on his hands and knees upon landing. However, this method prevented him from carrying large or bulky equipment, hence all such equipment (submachine guns, rifle, radios, explosives, anti-tank rockets etc. etc.) had to be dropped by canister.

The paratroopers were armed only with a pistol when they jumped and had to locate these canisters to equip themselves before they could effectively engage in battle but during the Battle for Crete, they were continuously under long range fire from the well prepared defenders. They suffered numerous casualties before they could retrieve their weapons from the canisters and this convinced the *Luftwaffe* of the need for a rifle that could be carried by the paratrooper when he jumped. The rifle was also required to be capable of long range single shot & short to medium range automatic fire with the full-powered 7.92x57mm Mauser round, be no longer than 1000mm and no heavier than the Kar98k rifle then in widespread use by all arms of the Nazi war machine.

The final design underwent continuous development with two major production variants although the rifle never reached large volume manufacture. The two major variants are variously referred to as "early war" & "late war", "Model 1" & "Model 2", "Type I" & "Type II", "FG-42/I" & "FG-42/II" or "FG-42/1" & "FG-42/2" with the later model featuring significant improvements to make it more robust and ergonomic compared to the earlier model. It's estimated that only 5000 or so rifles were produced with many being destroyed after the war. Original examples have been valued by auction houses as high as US\$160,000 to US\$250,000 in 2014 prices.

The FG-42 therefore continues to fascinate firearms enthusiasts and WW2 history buffs due not only to its scarcity but also because it was an innovative design meant to fulfill the role of submachine gun, rifle and light machinegun and as such has had a strong influence on later military weapons (such as the US M60 machinegun which was also influenced by another WW2 German weapon, the MG-42). Other influential features included a case deflector (on the late war version), fold down front & rear sights and being manufactured to be capable of mounting a telescopic sight. It also featured a side mounted magazine (to help reduce overall length in the same manner as a bullpup design) rather than the typical

position of under the weapon ahead of the trigger as well as an operating system to allow it to fire from the closed bolt position in single shot (for accuracy) and the open bolt position in auto fire (to help cool the weapon).

To capitalize on the interest in the FG-42, a few companies have made fully operational reproductions though most are typically available as semi-auto only firearms. One such company is Sport-Systeme Dittrich (SSD), located in Kulmbach in the German state of Bavaria. SSD has been offering high quality semi-auto only reproductions of famous WW2 German small arms and it is their BD 42/2 version of the FG-42/2 and their development of modernized versions (the SG 11 and SG 12) that this article is about. The BD 42/2 is a faithful copy of the FG-42/2 (and as mentioned above, in semi-auto only) and as such is intended for collectors and historical recreation groups while the SG 11 is intended as a target/marksman's rifle with some secondary use for hunting and the SG 12 is a carbine that may be intended for close range hunting of larger animals such as deer and boar (although security or military forces may also be the potential market).

GAME USE

The SSD rifles, although costly, can have distinct advantages for many anti-Minion cells. They have the overall abilities of their military rifle parent but as semi-autos, they're available to civilian buyers without the complications of been caught in possession of a full-automatic weapon. Being shorter than other rifles of similar capacity makes them more user-friendly for confined environments such as the urban landscape, thick forests... or sewers... While the SG 11 and SG 12 are both capable of mounting various telescopic sights and bipods "out-of-the-box", the BD 42/2 is a copy of the FG-42/2 design and thus features an integral bipod and is fitted for mounting the WW2 era ZF 4 telescopic sight (working replicas of the ZF 4 can be bought with the initial purchase of the rifle).

DARK CONSPIRACY STATS

Some stats for the SG 11 and SG 12 are "best guesses" as I have been unable to find any reviews of these rifles nor information on the capabilities of the FG-42 if chambered in 7.62x51mm and to further confuse the issue, the SSD website has listed the SG 12 as having the same technical information as the longer barrelled and heavier SG 11.

The BD 42/2 features an integral bipod and the other two models can be fitted with bipods. Recoil is halved whenever the bipod is employed.

Also, the SG 11 and SG 12 are not fitted with any sights as the intention is that the owner acquires iron sights or optical sights (or both) as desired. To this end, the SG 11 & 12 feature a top mounted Picatinny Rail as well as Rails fixed to the sides and bottom of the forestock for other devices (such as bipods, flashlights and so on).

As another consideration for the Dark Conspiracy Referee, the BD 42/2 features the folding spike bayonet of the FG-42/2. The rules for bayonets when fitted to a rifle are: - Range: L; Hit Modifier: +1; Damage: 1D6 + ½ STR.

Note also that the Range listed is when using iron sights. The rules state that when using telescopic sights add +15 to the listed Range, however I would recommend using the expanded rules for vision devices found on Paul Mulcahy's Twilight: 2000 fan site because the ZF 4 scope is slightly more capable than the generic scope used for the Dark Conspiracy rules.

Paul's house rules list various devices with the modifier to Range and also

the Maximum Effective Range for the device. Under Paul's expanded rules, the standard game telescopic sight is a 3.5x magnification (giving the +15 to Range) whereas lesser magnifications give a smaller modifier and greater magnifications consequently give a larger modifier. For example, the ZF 4 is a 4 power sight would give a modifier of +17 meters to the listed Range.

The Maximum Effective Range (MER) is the farthest distance the average person can clearly identify a target with that device and takes into account the limits of the device in conjunction with human eyesight.

It should be noted though, that the Price and Availability should be adjusted to reflect the higher cost but greater availability of these devices in the Dark Conspiracy setting.

Paul's expanded rules can be found at the following link:

http://www.pmulcahy.com/equipment/vision_devices.html



BD-42/2						Recoil		
Ammo	ROF	Dam	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
7.92M	SA	3	2-3-Nil	5	10/20	4	—	65*

*Range 82 with ZF-4 scope.

Weight: 5 kg.

Price: \$1,745 (R/S), \$1,790 with replica ZF 4 scope



SG-11						Recoil		
Ammo	ROF	Dam	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
7.62N	SA	4	2-3-Nil	5	10/20	3	—	60

Weight: 4.9 kg.

Price: \$1,050 (R/S)



SG-12						Recoil		
Ammo	ROF	Dam	Pen	Bulk	Mag	SS	Brst	Rng
7.62N	SA	4	2-3-Nil	4	10/20	4	—	55

Weight: 4.5 kg.

Price: \$985 (R/S)



RED CARPET READY

Characters and plot seeds

by Jeff Moeller

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU 6TH EDITION

"It's all about whom you wear, sunshine." — "Crystal Darkewood", on the subject of the success of her latest fashion line.

OVERVIEW: "CRYSTAL DARKEWOOD" is her stage name. Her real name is Michelle Jonsdottir, and if you ask her, she makes no bones about it: she's a witch. Specifically, she's a volva, an Icelandic traditional soothsayer and charm maker. She's also a fashion designer, script consultant, and career advisor to the stars. She operates a business out of a boutique storefront on Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles, where she makes and sells self-designed jewelry, handbags and leather clothing, as well as offers traditional tarot readings, crystal ball soothsaying and other forms of divination.

The shop is accessed through a buzz-in security door, and is not open to the general public. It is by appointment only, and "Crystal" is very particular about matters of image. Her clientele is exclusive, and the rich and famous only need apply. Occasionally, though without seeming rhyme or reason, someone new gets an invitation in the mail to visit the shop. Often such a person is a young, aspiring actor or actress who has hit a rough spot in their career, or a fading celebrity who needs a boost.

There is truth to her claim about being a witch. Michelle's parents were hippie cultists, who were killed in a summoning gone wrong in Haight-Asbury in the mid-1970s. Her father was Icelandic and had a stash of

both faux witchcraft materials from back home, as well as some more authentic, Mythos-informed material. Michelle inherited what did not go up in the conflagration, and was sent to live with her uncle, a minor actor residing in Beverly Hills. She met and made friends in high school with some classmates who went on to roles in the film industry, giving her a network of celebrity connections.

Over the years, she has managed to figure out a few examples of practical magic from her inheritance. For example, she is able to conduct actual auguries. Her skill is middling in terms of being able to work actual divinatory magic, but that is far better than nothing. The higher the price you pay, the more materials she is able to devote to the augury, and the more accurate and intelligible the augury she is able to cobble together is. By way of example, she pledged her soul to the service of the Black Man of witch legend when she was 19, and the augury that this enabled is what has placed her on her highly lucrative career path.

"Crystal" has parlayed her abilities into a career as a "psychic to the stars", one who charges ridiculously high prices but who has given out some remarkably prescient career advice. A million dollars can tell a starlet who to sleep with, what agent to sign, or

whether a bad seeming project will get them a career-advancing notice. A select and carefully chosen few have taken advantage of her abilities.

She portrays the side of her business as red carpet fashion designer of jewelry, leather goods and (non-functional) lucky charms as a side-light, but in fact, it is integral to her advising business. This is because “Crystal” also (only for her most trusted and highest paying clients) can make one particular kind of real lucky charm: necroclothing.

Necropants: Also found in Finnish tradition, where they are known as “Lappish pants”, these especially disgusting things are another of the few bits of Icelandic witchery that “Crystal” actually knows how to do, such that they work. And initially, she was as surprised as anyone, although she now has the process down pat.

To create a set of necropants, one must first get a living donor to agree to donate the lower half of his skin after death. After the donor is dead and buried, the caster must dig him up, and skin the donor from the waist down (including the genitals) in one piece. This is a difficult and time consuming process. You then put the flayed skin on like pants, and steal a coin from a poor widow. The coin is inserted into the “pocket” created by the scrotum of the flayed skin. The scrotum will then fill with money, as long as the original coin is not removed. “Crystal” wears her late uncle, with the result that she is never short of gold coins to finance her operations. It is how Crystal has financed her operations since the early days, after her late uncle agreed to allow her to harvest his skin after his death, believing it to be a joke. It was no joke. Her late father’s more authentic occult works told her exactly what to do.

Necropants lose their efficacy if they are ever fully removed, and a horrible fate awaits the soul of anyone who dies while wearing them. Crystal really ought to take them off, now that her business is established, but she is just plain greedy and can’t bring herself to do it. Icelandic tradition holds that the soul of someone who dies while wearing necropants goes straight to eternal damnation. However, they can also be transferred to a new owner by taking one leg out at a time and having someone else step into them, one leg at a time.

Since necropants lose their efficacy if ever totally removed, Crystal never gets naked with anyone. She explains her apparent lack of a love life through her dedication to being an ascetic medium—“all the better to see the future with, sunshine.”

Likewise, since one’s soul goes straight to hell if one dies while wearing them, Crystal is extremely security conscious. Her shop is

a fortress of physical security and electronic surveillance, and she lives above it. She avoids going anywhere where violence is likely to erupt—no Vegas nightclubs, no Dodgers games. People generally have to come to her.

Over the years, “Crystal” has been experimenting with the basic principles behind necropants, corresponding with a few people who, after she signed her name in blood in the Black Man’s book, seemed to just know how to find her. Someone important apparently wanted her to expand her knowledge, and she did. She has learned how to incorporate sympathetic magic into the process; she has learned how things are more connected on unseen levels than most people know. After years of trial and error (some of which had some unpleasant consequences for early adopters), “Crystal” has learned how to create derivative lucky charms that really work.

Crystal’s “Lucky Leather” process is similar to that involved in creating basic necropants: one has to get the permission of a living person to flay their skin and use it to create magic charms after they die. It is not necessary that the donor actually believe that you are going to carry through with it, but if they do, the charm is that much more effective. One must then dig up the person after they have been buried, and personally flay them from the waist down. From there, a special, lengthy (and expensive) tanning and conditioning process ensues, involving blood sacrifice (the caster’s own blood is sufficient). Once complete, the resulting leather can be incorporated into any number of clothing items: shoes, purses, bracelets, etc. This “Lucky Leather” is often covered with runes derived from Icelandic witchcraft known as “staves of power”, charms designed to grant luck or success in a particular endeavor.

She tells her clients that it will only work the first time, and to not put the purse down or take off the bracelet until good luck has arrived. She does not mention the downside of what happens if you die while wearing them, but she has another way of mitigating that consequence.

Crystal openly sells “blessed” or “lucky” items of designer leather goods, but the ones available to the typical customer are just so much four or five figure-priced mumbo-jumbo. She sells the “real stuff” for six or seven figures to a very select subset of her clientele with far too much disposable income, most of whom do not really believe in magic. However, results are results. Starlets got parts that they did not think they would get, or made a favorable impression on someone at a party, and word of mouth spread.

In the past few months, unforeseen trouble has come her way, and she is questioning her understanding of what she saw in her crystal ball many years ago about her own life. “Crystal” has gotten too permissive with whom she has been providing necroclothing—just like when you happen to die while wearing a pair of necropants, horrible consequences ensue. The moment of death while wearing one of these items of necroclothing is not a pretty sight: a fiery sinkhole opens and one is literally sucked down into it.

The rumors of “real magic charms” and the horrible consequences that have befallen some of her elite clientele recently attracted the attention of a man named Robert Forte—some kind of “spook” or “Man in Black”. Forte just showed up one day, knowing far more about her and her ability to work actual magic than she is comfortable with. They have fallen into an uneasy partnership—he solves problems for her, cleans up after messes, and silences people who talk too much about what she does for them, and she provides auguries for him in exchange. Often these problems involve her foreseeing the deaths of one of her more famous clients, and arranging to have Forte “repossess” their “specialized” accessory, either before they die or afterwards. She’s trying to do her clients a service, after all.

PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE:

General: “Crystal” is a well-known psychic to the stars and designer of leather accessories. She has occasionally been interviewed by celebrity-oriented websites and gossip shows, offering predictions about who will marry whom, who will have a good year or a bad year, and the like. She is notorious for three things in this regard. First, she only gives interviews from her shop; she never goes to a studio. Second, there are certain celebrities that she refuses to discuss, such as (fictitious) young, drug-addled starlet and former child star, Mari McNeese. (This piece of information would require some interviewing of media production personnel, as it is the sort of thing that would not make an edited television feed). Third, she is distressingly accurate. People think that she has inside information and is engaged in controlled leaks, trial ballooning emerging romances in a plausibly deniable way to see how the fan base reacts.

(Keeper’s information: In fact, she “just” has unnatural insight and chooses her words very carefully. And the people that she refuses to discuss are, by and large, either her elite clients who she is

using sorcery to aid, or people whose suspected fates are going to be unpleasant. In Mari McNeese’s case, both are true).

Fashion Line and Fortune Telling: “Crystal” sells a variety of “lucky” or “charmed” four or five figure leather goods, exclusively out of her Rodeo Drive boutique, by appointment. They are well-made on premises by a small number of employees. The building is very secure and one has to be buzzed in. “Crystal” lives in a walk-up above the shop.

These leather goods are unremarkable; DNA analysis turns up cow, ostrich, alligator or other sources of origin. They are decorated with silver hobnails and patterns of various symbols (staves of power) from Icelandic witchcraft, which the shop employees are open about. The sales staff is superficially knowledgeable about them and can tell prospective purchasers what each one means. They are also open about how “Crystal” makes “customized” leather goods for “select” clients, but those are restricted to her “advice clients”, are “very expensive” and “she decides who she sells to—she likes to control her image.”

“Crystal” also employs a subordinate soothsayer (a polite and experienced charlatan with no real magical ability named “Karma”) to provide expensive (\$500) but elaborate tarot readings or astrological predictions. Soothsaying appointments with “Crystal” herself are by appointment only. Her methods of selecting those who receive appointments are rather inscrutable; young and rising, or famous but fading, entertainers with a lot of money comprise the typical “elite” clients. But she has been known to call people out of the blue and invite them in for a “pro bono reading”

Real Name and Recent Background: “Crystal” has not legally changed her name, and review of publicly available California business license records reveals that the business is owned by Michelle Jonsdottir. Michelle Jonsdottir is also an incorporator of the holding company that owns the building she is in, as well as the trademark holder of “Crystal Clear Fashions” and “Lucky Leather”, with an address corresponding to her Rodeo Drive headquarters.

Legal Trouble: Searching public court databases reveals that a Michelle Jonsdottir, with a residence address corresponding to the Rodeo Drive address, has a disturbing criminal record. Michelle was arrested and charged with felony grave robbery at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Hollywood Hills roughly one year ago (shortly after the death of Lara Miller, discussed below). The

publicly available indictment charges her with being caught in the act of disinterring a grave.

Michelle hired a very high priced attorney and quickly plead no contest to a misdemeanor charge of trespass. She was sentenced to (only) three days in jail plus probation, a fine and community service. Forest Lawn is well known for being the final resting place of a number of Hollywood celebrities, but the public record does not provide details about whose grave was involved, or what exactly she was doing when caught. More information about the circumstances of her offense follows below under non-public sources.

The police report (available separately from the local police department) reflects that she was released on her own recognizance after being booked. Her mug shot is clearly identifiable as "Crystal Darkewood", down to the New-Agey mode of dress. The inventory taken of her references her wearing a "full leather body stocking which she objected to removing for religious reasons." More information on the events at the police station follows below under non-public sources.

Unfortunate Client Demises: Internet research (or talking to journalists in the celebrity gossip industry) discovers that two celebrities with reported ties to "Crystal" suffered violent and troubling deaths in the past year or so. Summaries of these incidents appear in the nearby handouts.

(Note that each of these accidental deaths was followed by a symbolic descent into hell, as each was wearing their lucky leather goods).

NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION:

Old Acquaintances: People who have known her personally for a while may know that she is a 1979 graduate of Beverly Hills High School, and was involved in high school theater. She is still friendly with several people (both famous and not famous) working in the Hollywood entertainment industry. She transferred to Beverly Hills High in the middle of ninth grade, after her parents died in some kind of fire in San Francisco. Her maternal uncle, Thomas J. Smith, took her in. He was a minor character actor. She was nice enough in high school, and has always been a "flower power", hippie chick interested in astrology, tarot cards and that sort of thing.

Either her old friends or careful research or questioning of her employees can discover that Michelle's father was Icelandic and that she speaks fluent Icelandic.

Paparazzi/Gossip Rags: "Crystal's" clientele (seen entering and leaving her store, which is a popular paparazzi stakeout) included precocious child actress Lara Miller, faded but revived sitcom star John LaRue, and troubled young actress Mari McNeese, known for Adderall abuse rumors and "accidental" wardrobe malfunctions, as well as drying up parts. However, Mari seems to be getting parts again since she became a client of "Crystal's", despite being completely addled on pep pills, and has just landed a major part in an action-adventure flick. This came as a surprise to everyone, given how out of control Mari has been lately.

Child Protective Services: Sealed records (obtainable only through huge bribes or skullduggery) from San Francisco area child protective services agencies reveal many disturbing facts. Her parents were repeatedly investigated for suspected neglect and abuse, but formal charges were never brought. The charges did not involve physical abuse or cruelty to Michelle, but concerns about her environment. She lived in a communal situation in a walkup in Haight-Ashbury, described as a "cult" headed by her parents. Apparently drugs, "free love" and a general disinterest in obeying the law were rampant at the commune. Michelle was home schooled pursuant to a religious waiver, and repeated efforts to intervene in this regard failed when Michelle proved to be age-appropriately educated. She skated on the edge of being taken away from her parents until the age of 13, when she was taken into protective custody following her parents' death in a devastating fire in 1976. She was placed with her maternal uncle, a character actor named Thomas J. Smith, in Beverly Hills.

Vital Statistics/Probate Records: Privacy laws make getting people's birth certificates difficult without authorization of that person or their next of kin. However, should the investigators manage to get at Michelle's, they find that her parents were Jon Jonsson, born in Reykjavik, Iceland and with a profession listed as "spiritualist" and Mary Smith, with a profession listed as "spiritualist" as well. She was born in San Francisco, listed as a home birth at an address in Haight-Ashbury.

RED CARPET READY PAPERS #1, GOSSIP SHEET SUMMARY OF THE DEATH OF JOHN LARUE, JUNE 8TH, 2012.

John LaRue, star of the late 1980s television sitcom “The Bronson Family”, is confirmed dead by his publicist and advisor, Crystal Darkewood. Mr. LaRue was killed in an automobile crash early this morning. The Los Angeles Police Department confirmed the single-car accident, which closed two lanes of I-10 for several hours. Following seeming minor accident, a sinkhole opened beneath Mr. LaRue’s Bentley, which exploded in a fireball.

Mr. LaRue had fallen out of the public eye since his sitcom ended in 1992, but was surprisingly recently cast as the romantic lead in the well-reviewed film “Green Grass of Home”, and had received Oscar buzz for his performance.

RED CARPET READY PAPERS #2, GOSSIP SHEET SUMMARY OF THE DEATH OF LARA MILLER, JANUARY 4TH, 2013.

Talented teenaged actress Lara Miller, age 16, known for her leading role on the tween oriented cable sitcom “Life of Lara”, was tragically killed in an on-set accident today, her publicist and spiritual advisor, Crystal Darkewood, sadly confirmed. Early reports are that Ms. Miller was struck by a falling lighting rig, which collapsed the stage and caught fire.

Probate records are unavailable for Mary Smith (her estate was never probated), but do exist for Jon Jonsson in San Francisco. These are public records if the investigators think to look for them, but have to be retrieved from archives. Thomas J. Smith had himself appointed as estate administrator on behalf of his niece, Michelle. He was able to collect a life insurance policy and various accounts coming to a total of over \$2,000,000—an incongruous and impressive amount for the time for a hippie living in a commune. There is also a physical inventory of the estate, all of which went to Michelle, which lists a variety of highly suspicious sounding occult items, from “antique tarot cards” valued at \$10,000, to “Icelandic religious artifacts” valued at \$20,000, to “books, antique” valued at \$100,000. “Personal notes/diary” is also listed with a value of \$1. Some of the cash went to settle claims, brought against the estate by the City and neighboring property owners, for Mr. Jonsson’s negligence in causing an explosion at his property. Strangely (Law roll or appropriate inquiry), no one in the building with him, or their next of kin, stepped forward with claims.

Inheritance: Anyone who manages to gain entrance to “Crystal’s” office, on the second floor of her Rodeo Drive storefront above her living quarters, will get to see most of what she inherited from her father. There is a wide variety of valuable occult trinkets and tomes on open display, including a very real Hand of Glory, an impressive library of rare occult volumes in a variety of languages, and several framed Staves of Power on standard varieties of leather. However, with one exception, these are all mundane items.

WEAVE NECROCLOTHING

NEW SPELL

This complicated and expensive ritual creates one use only, limited purpose lucky charms. First, a willing human being, while alive and in possession of their full faculties, must agree to allow themselves to be dug up after death and flayed. They do not have to believe that you will actually do it, or understand the significance. Second comes the digging up and flaying, which must be done personally by the caster. After that, the skin must be tanned, a complicated process requiring about \$100,000 in hard to acquire occult ingredients and the investiture of 15 magic points by the caster, plus 10 POW (which can be donated by anyone via their blood, including an unwilling human sacrifice). Once tanned, the leather equivalent of one donor gives a +100% chance to the next roll made by a wearer to a sympathetic endeavor. Thus, the hide of a famous actor will give +100% to the wearer’s next roll (only) involving acting: getting a part, staging a performance, or the like. The hide of a great beauty might give a bonus to any effort at seduction. The hide of a great lawyer might give a bonus to a Law roll. A hide can be subdivided into smaller pieces, with each piece carrying a pro rata “charge.” Hence, the hide of an actor incorporated into 10 or so handbags or bracelets results in 10 items with a +10% bonus.

In order to be invoked, the wearer must make a wish. The charm lasts indefinitely until it is invoked, at which point the item quickly disintegrates. The downside is that if the wearer is killed before invoking the charm, the wearer’s soul is forfeit. It is literally sucked into hell via fiery sinkhole, costing 1/1d8 SAN as witness see a ghostly, burning, tortured image of the wearer ripped out of her body by shadowy, angelic-looking figures. For this reason, “Crystal” warns people to use them immediately and not strut around town in her special leather goods. People being people, they tend not to always listen, which has led to a couple of unfortunate recent incidents.

ICELANDIC WITCHCRAFT

NEW SKILL

A staff of power is not a staff in the sense of a big wooden stick, necessarily. Rather, they are complicated sigils (sometimes carved onto a big wooden stick, but often onto leather or metal) that are reputed to have magical powers. Common ones include symbols to scare enemies, ensure victory in some venture, protect against ghosts, and the author's personal favorite, to ensure that butter is not counterfeit.

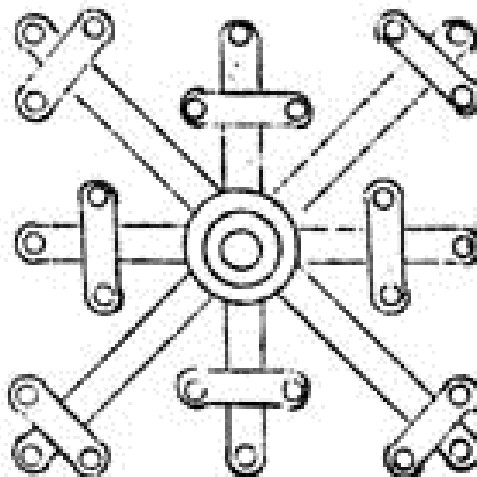
Carving an effective staff of power is included as part of a skill referred to as Icelandic Witchcraft. A successful roll is required to create an effective staff. This skill also includes general knowledge of staves of power as well as all traditional Icelandic methods of divination and sorcery.

Knowledge of a particular staff of power can be used in one of two ways, for purposes of game mechanics:

1. Creating a staff of power will give a +5% bonus per 5 magic points invested by the caster to the next serious effort to accomplish the particular task (i.e., the next time a die roll must be made). Each +5% increment also requires the sacrifice of 1 POW, either by the caster, by the recipient, or by some other "volunteer." It requires a decent amount of fresh blood from the donor, with each such donation (accompanied by appropriate ritual) investing 1 POW. "Crystal" sometimes waives her exorbitant divination fees in exchange for such a donation, particularly with "invited" clients.

Hence, a staff of power to aid in crossing a dangerous river invested with 15 magic points and 3 POW would give the person a +15% bonus to his next roll (only) when crossing a dangerous river. Hardly seems worth it, perhaps, but what if you invest 10 POW in something? 20 POW? What if that something is a Law check?

2. Magical staves are more often used as reusable keys or fail-safes. Such a staff usually only requires 1 POW and 5 magic points. It might trigger a Gate, allow or increase the chance of something magically hidden to be seen by the holder, or mark the holder as "safe" to a guardian. One such staff is the holast.



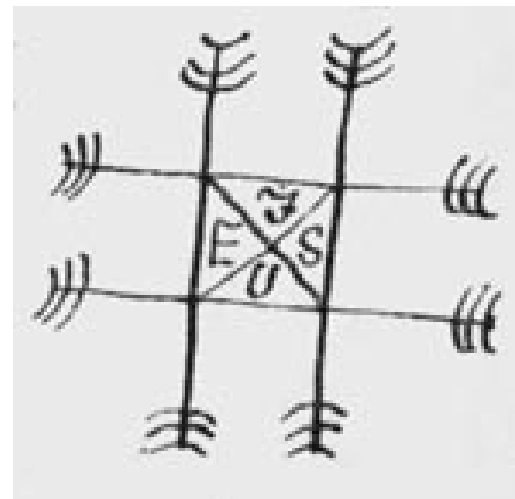
The Holast Staff

The holast ("hill opener") is carved on a stick of rowan and painted with blood from under one's tongue. If one knocks with the stick on the side of a hill, any magically hidden doors (or Gates) in the hill will open. This is an example of a "failsafe" use for a staff of power. It requires 1 POW, 5 M.P. and a successful Icelandic Witchcraft check to create.

Sympathetic magic elements should also be allowed as modifiers to staves of power, in the Keeper's discretion. Hence, a doubly effective holast staff might be made from blood under the tongue of the wisest man in the land. Opening a magical door at an ancient site would be helped by blood from a sage on ancient sites.

Other staves of power that the investigators might encounter, given their practical use in a Call of Cthulhu campaign, include:

Máladeilan: Carved on lignite and inscribed with blood from the septum of your nose, this staff helps ensure victory in court proceedings. This is helpful to tweak clutch Law rolls with judges, or Persuade rolls with customs officials. Crystal habitually carries one of these with her, often a powerful one (invested with 10 POW from various unwitting clients), giving her a +50% the next time she is confronted with an unpleasant legal situation.



The máladeilan staff

Gegn galdri: A ward against witchcraft. This staff of power simply needs to be carried in some fashion on one's body. This is helpful with clutch POW vs. POW checks when targeted by unpleasant wizardry.

The one exception is her father's grimoire, the "personal notes/diary" referenced in the probate records. "Crystal" has expanded on it over the years in her own handwriting. This is locked up in a floor safe under the rug in her office, along with a sizable amount of cash in various currencies, her Icelandic passport, and some consciousness expanding substances (both normal and Mythos-influenced). The tome itself is in Icelandic (requiring a successful Read Icelandic check), takes 1 week to skim or 2 months to thoroughly study, gains the reader +3%/+6% to Cthulhu Mythos, costs -1d6/-2d6 SAN, and has the following spells potentially available: Augur, Contact Narlato (Nyarlathotep, as the "Black Man" of witch legend), and Weave Necroclothing. Successful study also grants skill checks in Occult and Icelandic Witchcraft.

Jon Jonsson and the Bountiful Harvest Love Group: If the investigators have the address of the commune where Michelle grew up and do some San Francisco newspaper research (Library Use, non-fumbled if they also have the date when she was sent to live with her uncle), they learn some disturbing information. The entire commune was destroyed in an odd, purplish fireball. The "artists' colony", as the newspaper charitably describes it, was known as the "Bountiful Harvest Love Group", and included several Icelandic expatriates.

Numerous related newspaper articles reference purplish flames and smoke, as well as a weeks-long cleanup effort by Federal officials from the E.P.A. and Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The public is assured that "the radiation from whatever the group was storing in the building has been contained".

All known members of the group (including several rumored occultists) are believed to have been killed in the explosion. (Library Use, contemporary newspapers). No criminal charges ensue (Library Use, review of state and federal court records).

More About The Grave Robbing: Should anyone disinter either Lara Miller or Thomas J. Smith, they have been flayed. Lara Miller has been completely flayed (SAN loss 0/1) and Smith has been flayed from the waist down (SAN loss 0/1). (Yes, even after being caught and arrested, "Crystal" went back and finished the job later, this time bribing the night watchman with an obscenely large amount of cash). The bribery will be exceedingly difficult to prove, since the night watchman in question was killed not long after by Bob Forte.

The police officers who booked Ms. Jonsdottir (as they refer to her) have some interesting stories to tell about the night of her arrest. They may be forthcoming with other law enforcement; others (such as journalists) will have to resort to Fast Talk rolls or other shenanigans.

The police officers quite dislike Ms. Jonsdottir. The arresting officer caught her red-handed digging up the fresh grave of child actress Lara Miller. This is a felony, not to mention just plain sick. When she was brought in, her lawyer was waiting for her already, and the weird thing was, the local bail magistrate had stopped by—in the middle of the night—to visit an officer he had been dating. When they went to book her, they were going to do a strip search, but she threw an absolute, screaming fit. She was wearing some kind of full length, leather underpants under her dress. They were hairy and had male genitalia where you would expect. She started screaming about her religious rights and not having to take those off, and her lawyer managed to talk the magistrate into giving her bail right there. That was completely improper and the magistrate got into a lot of trouble. It was the luckiest thing that the officers had ever seen.

She never came back for the gear she had with her, either. This consisted of a shovel, a crowbar, a waterproofed canvas bag, and a big, sharp hunting knife with a skinning hook, the sort of thing you would use to dress a deer.

Bob Forte: Mr. Forte (if that is his real name) just showed up one day at "Crystal's" shop, and somehow knew everything. He even knew why the deaths of Lara Miller and John LaRue were so awful and upsetting.

Her initial reaction was to have him killed somehow, but he convinced her to enter into a partnership, and he has proven very useful. He cleans up her loose ends, quietly and expertly. If she gets the sense that one of her elite clients is marked for death, he burglarizes them and destroys their "Lucky Leather." He also got rid of a certain night watchman at Forest Lawn who knew too much and was thinking of blackmail.

His story (as told to "Crystal") is that he is a former government agent, specializing in the occult, and that his former employers are out to eliminate him. He contacts her through a series of burn phone to burn phone calls. He asks for no conventional payment, only her honest readings on what he should do next to avoid capture. She gives them to him. So far, it has worked out.

“Crystal’s” conventional security team is aware of him, and that he is a “cleaner” who she calls via burn phone, but nothing more, not even his name.

PLOT SEEDS:

1. The next of kin of Lara Miller is incensed and contemplating legal action against “Crystal Darkewood” for attempting to desecrate Lara’s grave. They cannot understand how she escaped with little more than a slap on the wrist, and want the investigators to dig up some dirt (pardon the pun). “Crystal” may put Bob Forte on their tails if she starts to get nervous with their poking and prodding—especially if they move to exhume the presumably unmolested Ms. Miller. Depending on whether Mr. Forte is truly on the outs with his handlers, or if that is just his cover story, the investigators may find themselves dealing with more than they bargained for.
2. An investigator who is in desperate straits gets a call out of the blue from “Crystal”. The spirits have told her to reach out to the investigator and take him on as a client. Apparently he is in danger from dark forces, and unless he listens to her, the threads of his future look short indeed. “Crystal” will give him a cryptic but accurate augury which should help him resolve a serious threat. The first taste is always free. Next time, she wants to be paid, but if he would not mind helping her with a little charm that she is working on, price is negotiable. Or, she might just ask for a favor in return....
3. Poor Mari McNeese. She is stunningly gorgeous, and had such a promising

acting career in her teens. She always wears the best of everything, including a Crystal Darkewood original, white leather and silver handbag that she goes everywhere with. Now she’s landed in a psych ward, reportedly on suicide watch, in Los Angeles after a particularly out of control weekend. Gossip websites are speculating that she is either bipolar, suffering from stimulant psychosis, or both. Rumor has it that she tried to slit her wrists once already in the ward.

Imagine then the hospital’s embarrassment when, amidst all of this media scrutiny, her handbag and all of its contents disappeared from the hospital’s locked inventory room. The camera was expertly disabled, the backup files scrubbed, the lock expertly picked, and the security guard assigned to camera monitoring duty fervently claims to remember nothing. Ms. McNeese’s agent/ advisor, “Crystal Darkewood”, also claims to know nothing. Mari insists that “Crystal” stole her handbag, somehow, and is threatening to tell her story to the media unless it is returned within 24 hours.



"CRYSTAL DARKEWOOD"

(MICHELLE JONSDOTTIR), FLAKY ADVISOR TO THE STARS

Nationality: American (Icelandic dual citizen)

STR: 8 CON: 12 SIZ: 8 INT: 16 POW: 18
DEX: 12 APP: 14 SAN: 00 EDU: 13 HP: 10

Age: 50ish

Damage Bonus: -1d4

Education: Beverly Hills High School; 1 year of fashion school; plus lots of New Age seminars

Weapon: None above base

Skills: *Own Language* (English) 75%, *Other Language* (Icelandic) 50%, *Other Language* (Spanish) 25%, *Accounting* 25%, *Art* (Fashion Design) 75%, *Bargain* 55%, *Computer Use* 30%, *Craft* (Leatherworking) 75%, *Credit Rating* 60%, *Cthulhu Mythos* 05%, *Drive Auto* 35%, *Fast Talk* 65%, *Icelandic Witchcraft* 70%, *Library Use* 50%, *Listen* 55%, *Natural History* 50%, *Occult* 60%, *Persuade* 40%, *Pharmacy* 26%

Defenses: None above base. She carries one máladeilan staff as one of her many pendants around her neck at all times, infused with 10 POW (+50% on next Law check involving her), in case she gets arrested.

Spells: Augur, *Contact Narlato* (Nyarlahotep, as the “Black Man” of witch legend), *Weave Necroclothing*

Notes: “Crystal” comes across as a bit of a ditz with an artistic temperament and “New Age” style about her. She is short, blonde and rail thin, but pretty and well-kept up for her age, with good plastic surgery in her past, and lots of piercings and (non-occult) tattoos. She wears her own jewelry and clothing line—she is “always on.”

ROBERT FORTE

SENIOR M.I.B., RUTHLESS AND WILY

Nationality: American

STR: 14 CON: 15 SIZ: 15 INT: 17 POW: 17
DEX: 15 APP: 12 SAN: 49 EDU: 18 HP: 15

Age: 40ish

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Education: M.A., Religious Studies, Harvard Divinity School; Military Special Ops Training and Spook School

Weapons: *Ruger P91* semi-automatic handgun, 2/round, 15 shots, 15 yards base range, malfunction 98-00, d10 damage, 70%, with laser sight (+10%) and silencer
Fist/Punch 54%, 1d3+db
Grapple 57%, special
Kick 54%, 1d6+db

Skills: *Climb* 50%, *Computer Use* 40%, *Cthulhu Mythos* 10%, *Dodge* 70%, *Drive Auto* 40%, *Fast Talk* 50%, *Hide* 77%, *History* 68%, *Listen* 50%, *Library Use* 60%, *Martial Arts* 50%, *Occult* 40%, *Own Language (English)* 90%, *Other Language (Aramaic)* 60%, *Other Language (Classical Greek)* 60%, *Other Language (Classical Latin)* 60%, *Other Language (Icelandic)* 25%, *Psychology* 45%, *Speak Pashtun* 10%, *Sneak* 50%, *Spot Hidden* 59%, *Tradecraft* 50%

Defenses: Kevlar vest, helmet and gloves, 6 points of armor (66% chance of protection) when geared up

Spells: *Cloud Memory*, *Command Ghost*, *Elder Sign*

Gear: Kevlar vest, military boots, Kevlar gloves and military helmet, 6 points of armor (66% chance of protection); satellite phone; GPS; sunglasses;

night vision goggles; binoculars; survival knife, rations and watering system; 2x throws worth of the Powder of Ibn-Ghazi.

Notes: Mr. Forte is calm, polite, affably evil, and utterly ruthless when about his tasks. Apart from being a spook, he is an academic, an expert on Early Christianity in general and schismatic Christian cults in particular, and knows that several early Christian cults were actually slaves of the Mythos in sheep's clothing. He believes in the Mythos, has seen quite a bit, and believes that in a species survival war, any means are justified.

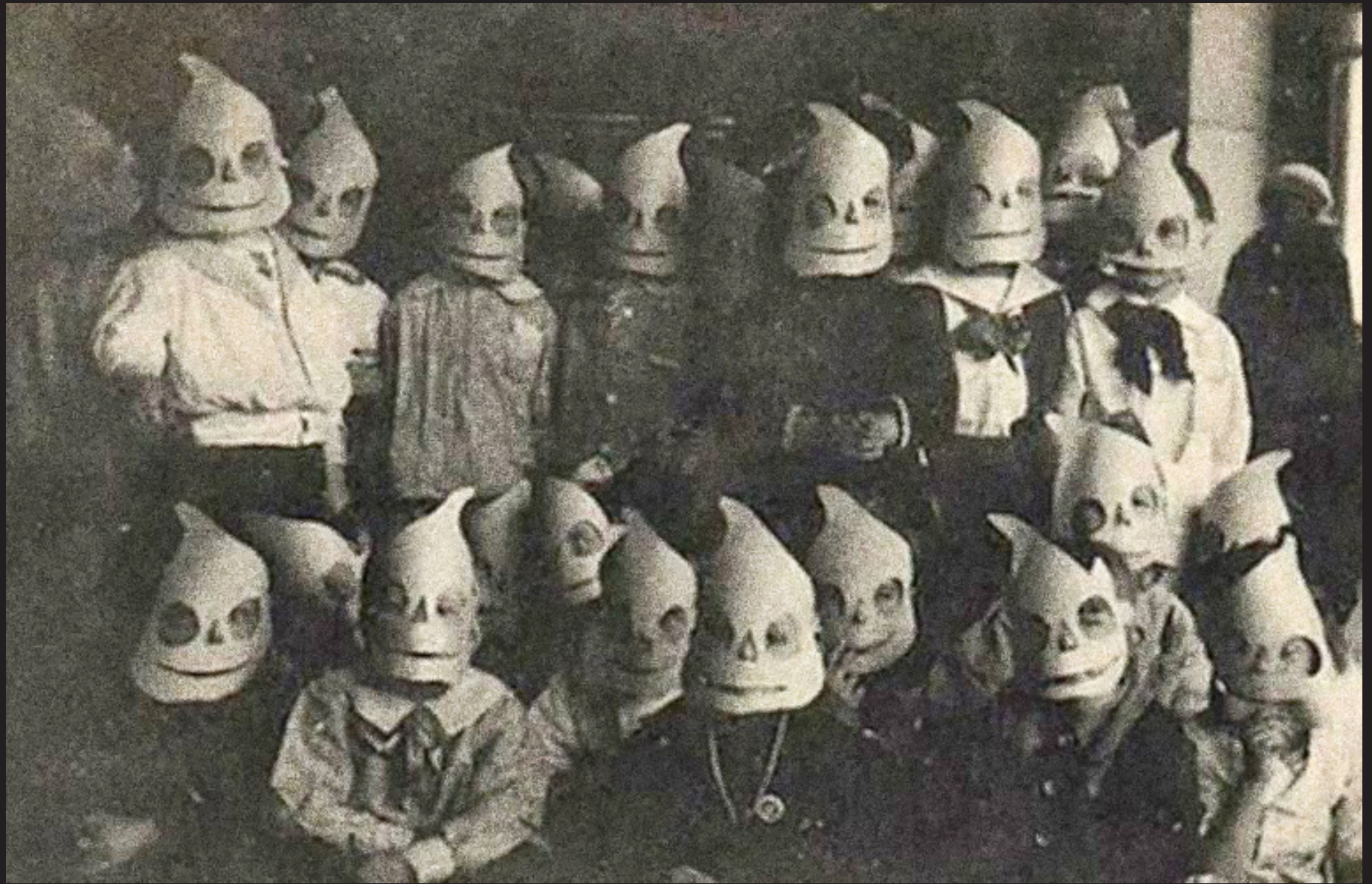
Forte has worked for several shadowy government intelligence agencies as a freelance consultant when cults, particularly pseudo-Christian messianic cults, appear to be involved. He has disrupted several pseudo-Christian messianic cults that were suspected to be (and turned out to be) Mythos-influenced.

There are two possibilities as to why he is doing wet-work and problem-solving for "Ms. Darkewood". One is that he really is on the outs with handlers. A "Burn Notice" has come down for him, and he is trading his occasional services in exchange for her soothsaying. This enables him to avoid capture. The other is that Forte is

pretending to be on the outs with his handlers. In reality, he is undercover and gathering intelligence on her, with a view toward quietly, and eventually overtly, leveraging her as a resource for whichever shady spook agency that he is currently working for. Once he has enough to blackmail "Crystal" with ease, he will make her an employment offer that she cannot refuse. In the meantime, he takes copious notes and transmits them securely to his handlers.



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