AGE of CTHULHU
•Pickpocket•

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Age of Cthulhu One-v-One adventures are designed for the Keeper to interact with only a single player. One-v-One adventures are short 'side quest' adventures that can be completed in just one or two game sessions. They are engineered to give the Keeper the freedom to define the details of the mystery and to set it in whatever location or time period that best suits his campaign.

BACKGROUND

For whatever reason, business or pleasure, the investigator is in a large and busy city. As the scenario opens, the investigator is out walking through a crowd of people sometime during the afternoon or early evening (anytime between noon and 9:00 PM). As the investigator is casually moving through the throng of people, he feels someone bump into him and snatch something from his pocket. At that moment, the investigator sees the young urchin boy running away from him with his possession. The investigator has just been victimized by a pickpocket.

Time Period and Setting

Pickpocket is intended to be usable in any *Call of Cthulhu* time period, the Victorian setting of *Cthulhu by Gaslight*, the Roman setting of *Cthulhu Invictus*, the classic jazz and modern settings of *Call of Cthulhu*, and the far-future setting of *Cthulhu End Times*. This adventure is written with the assumption that the Keeper is using the classic jazz era for his game. If the Keeper is using this adventure in a time period that precedes the invention of the electric light bulb, then the Keeper should substitute those references with period appropriate lighting, like oil lanterns or candles.

Urchin Boy

The main non-player characters encountered by the investigator in this adventure are a young urchin boy and his missing brother. A list of era appropriate names is provided for the urchin boy and his brother; the rest of this adventure references the boys by their classic jazz era *Call of Cthulhu* names. The Keeper may instead use the era appropriate names if this adventure is set in a different time period.

Setting	Urchin Boy	Missing Brother
Cthulhu By Gaslight	Hiram	Homer
Cthulhu Invictus	Cassius	Theon
Call of Cthulhu	William	John
Cthulhu End Times	Viktor	Colby

THE MYSTERY

William, the urchin boy, has snatched a small valuable from the investigator (a wallet, watch, pocket knife, or other personal possession). William is not a very good pickpocket, so the investigator was instantly alerted to the theft a moment after it happened, and is able to successfully spot the thief in the crowded city street. When he does, the investigator and William make eye contact with each other and the investigator sees fear in the boy's eyes (the investigator should assume it is fear of being caught as a thief). It is immediately after this moment that the adventure proper begins—William breaks contact with the investigator and dashes away through the crowd toward an alleyway between two buildings.

The Chase

The Keeper should be familiar with the chase rules beginning on page 132 of the *Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition Keeper Rulebook*. This chase is tracked by the following locations: City Street, Alleyway, and Abandoned Building.

Use the following chase line:

*	*	*	*	*	*
City Street 1	City Street 2	Alleyway 1	Alleyway 2	Alleyway 3	Adbandoned Bldg.

The chase begins with the investigator at the City Street 1 location and William, the urchin boy, about to duck into the alley at the Alleyway 1 location. If the investigator can reach any of the Alleyway locations before William reaches the Abandoned Building location, then the investigator witnesses William running into the building. Listed below are the hazards and skill rolls the investigator must make to catch William. William is fleet of foot and extremely familiar with his surroundings, so he is not impeded by any of the hazards.

- From City Street 1 to City Street 2: A crowd of people (**Dodge** skill)

- From City Street 2 to Alleyway 1: A street vendor (**Dodge** skill)

- From Alleyway 1 to Alleyway 2: No hazard

- From Alleyway 2 to Alleyway 3: Overturned garbage cans (**Jump** skill)

- From Alleyway 3 to Abandoned Bldg.: Slick wet ground (**DEX** roll)

If William is caught, he fights or bites the investigator to escape. With a successful **Psychology** skill roll, the investigator will realize that William is deeply frightened of something other than being caught as a thief. This psychological insight will grant a **bonus die** on any attempts by the investigator to calm William down with any social skill (**Charm, Fast Talk, Intimidate**, or **Persuade**). If the investigator attempts to calm William down without the benefit of the psychological insight, then there is no bonus die. If the investigator succeeds in calming him down, William begins to cry and plead for help in finding his brother, John. William is lonely and his street life has conditioned him to distrust people, but without his brother's guidance, he is growing frantic and is now ready to accept anyone's help in

finding him. At first, William only saw the investigator as an easy mark to pilfer from, but now he sees him as a savior.

If William is not caught, he enters the abandoned building and continues running, heading for the basement level. William is not stealthy, so the investigator can hear William running into the basement (no skill check necessary).

URCHIN BOY
Distraught brother, age 9

STR	35	**CON**	55
SIZ	35	**DEX**	75
APP	60	**INT**	65
POW	50	**EDU**	45

HP: 9   **Damage Bonus:** -1   **Build:** -1

Magic Points: 10   **Move:** 8   **Sanity:** 45

Luck: 55   **Attacks per round:** 1

Fighting attacks: the urchin boy flails his arms when he fights.

Bite and Flee (mnvr): If he is restrained, the urchin boy attempts to bite his opponent to get free.

Fighting (brawl): 20% (10/4), damage: 1D3 + damage bonus.

Dodge: 37% (18/7)

Fighting (bite): 60% (30/12) only when restrained.

Bite and Flee (mnvr): damage 1D3 (this attack can only be performed if the urchin boy is being held by an opponent, and if successful, the urchin boy is no longer restrained).

Skills: Begging: 45% (22/9), Climb 50% (25/10), Fast Talk: 55% (27/11), Jump: 30% (15/6), Sleight of Hand 40% (20/8), Spot Hidden: 45% (22/9).

The Building

The abandoned building was once a factory or textile sweatshop, but it has not been used for many years. There is no furniture or equipment in the building, only bare rooms littered with garbage and walls scrawled with graffiti. Most of the windows are broken and there is no active electrical power (in time period settings with electrical power). The building is three stories tall above street level and three levels deep below street level. If the investigator has followed William into the building, he can hear the urchin boy running down the stairs to the deepest level of the building. If the investigator caught William in the alleyway, and William has convinced the investigator to help him, then William leads the investigator by his hand down to the lowest level of the building.

William and his brother, John, recently took up residence in this building, and have candles and matchboxes stashed in various places around the building. If he is pursuing William into the building's dark basement levels, the investigator will find a pair of candles and a box of matches where William dropped them in his haste to get downstairs (alternatively, if the scenario is being set in the modern day, the investigator is likely to have a flashlight on his mobile phone). The lowest level includes access to a sewer system; the warm waters of the sewer makes the air on this level dank and humid and the walls and floor slick with moisture.

The investigator either follows or is guided by William to a small corner room on the lowest level of the building. The room is easy to spot because of the glow of electric light coming from it. The filthy room contains little more than the two makeshift beds constructed of scavenged cardboard and blankets that the boys sleep on and a small pile of refuse. A single light bulb hangs from a cord in the ceiling; it is the only thing getting any electric power in the building. The room has one other door on the wall opposite where the investigator entered. This door has a large sign in bold red letters that says, "DO NOT ENTER – UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE." There is no padlock on the door and it is not locked.

William tells the investigator, "My brother said he could hear music coming from beyond the door. I haven't heard anything. John said he wanted to find the music, so he went in. That was two days ago and he hasn't come back. Please, help me find my brother."

William is scared and wants his brother to come back. If the investigator suggests that they alert the police, then William gets agitated, and says that the police will want to send him and his brother back into the orphanage, and he promised to never go back. William will not fully trust the investigator until he finally chooses to help him by opening the door to look for his brother. William has a steak knife hidden under a blanket in the corner of the room.

Steak Knife (small knife): Fighting (Brawl) skill, damage 1D4 + DB

THE INVESTIGATION

Beyond the Door – If the investigator opens the door, describe the following:

Beyond the door is a small dark room; a huge hole, a tunnel, has been dug through the concrete floor and into the soft earth below. The tunnel is just large enough for an adult to crawl or walk through while stooped over. The echoing sound of dripping water can be heard once the door is open.

Descending into the tunnel is easy and does not require a skill roll. The tunnel is completely dark, so the investigator will need to bring a light source. If the investigator suffers from scotophobia (fear of the dark), must make a successful **Sanity** roll to enter the tunnel. William refuses to enter the dark tunnel.

The tunnel winds its way down and away from the building William is hiding in. A successful **Navigation** skill roll gives the investigator the insight to know that the tunnel (in general), heads in a westerly direction. After approximately twenty minutes of crawling, the tunnel branches into three different directions, north, south, and west. The sound of dripping water seems to emanate from all directions, but with a successful **Listen** (Hard Difficulty) skill check, the investigator can determine that the sound comes from the north branch.

North Branch – It takes ten minutes to crawl the length of this branch of the tunnel. The tunnel ends where it connects to a sewer system under the city. The sewer is larger than the tunnel, allowing for the investigator to stand up. The walls of the sewer are slick with water and slime, and approximately 10" of water covers the floor. The sound of water dripping from the ceiling echoes through the sewer.

Searching the sewer system for the missing boy is fruitless. The sewer system is a literal labyrinth where someone could easily get lost. The Keeper should describe the sewer as having lots of junctions that all look identical. With a **Luck** (Hard Difficulty) roll, the investigator will find a manhole cover and be able to escape from the sewer. A **Navigation** roll is required for the investigator to find his way back to the north branch tunnel or to relocate the manhole cover if it has already been discovered. (If the scenario is set in the modern day, a generous Keeper might allow the investigator to have a bonus die on both rolls if he has GPS or maps on his mobile phone.)

If the investigator spends ten minutes in the sewers, he hears something splashing through the water as it approaches him; it is a swarm of starving rats.

RAT SWARM, 15 Rats

STR	35	CON	55
SIZ	30	DEX	70

HP: 9	**Damage Bonus:** -1	**Build:** -1

Move: 9	**Attacks per round:** 1

Fighting attacks: rats attack with teeth and claws.

Overwhelm (mnvr): due to their numbers, if the overwhelm maneuver is successful, then the rat swarm's bite attack gains a bonus die.

Fighting (bite/claw): 40% (20/8)

Dodge: 42% (21/8)

Overwhelm (mnvr): damage 2D6 + mild poison (1d10 damage). The rat's bite can infect the investigator with rabies. A successful **CON** roll reduces the poison damage by half and a **CON** (Hard Difficulty) roll reduces the poison damage to 1d3 and the investigator does not contract rabies. If the investigator contracts rabies, the bite wound becomes red and swollen, but the real dangers of the disease take at least a week to manifest.

Scatter: Each successful attack by the investigator kills one or two rats. The rat swarm scatters and runs away once a third of the pack is dead.

If the investigator becomes lost in the sewer (due to failed **Navigation** rolls), the Keeper may opt to send a trio of ghouls hunting for food to deal with the investigator.

West Branch – It takes fifteen minutes to crawl the length of this branch of the tunnel, but after ten minutes of crawling the investigator stumbles upon a child's shoe stuck in the muck of the tunnel floor. The tunnel ends in a long chamber with a low ceiling, but it is large enough for the investigator to stand up in. When the investigator crawls within 10' of the chamber, he can attempt a **Listen** roll. With a successful roll, the investigator can hear what sounds like rhythmic breathing, possibly some soft snoring. If the investigator hears the sound of breathing, then a successful **Stealth** roll, with a **bonus die** due to the soft earthen floor, is required to enter the chamber undetected. Otherwise, a **Stealth** (Hard Difficulty) roll is required if the investigator is to enter undetected.

At the opposite end of the chamber, farthest from the tunnel entrance, the investigator finds William's brother, John, curled up asleep (or rousing from a deep sleep if the investigator was noisy entering the chamber), on a bed of old, torn,

and bloodied clothing. John is barefoot and shirtless; he is covered in filth, and his hair is matted with mud, but he is otherwise uninjured. Next to John's bed is a small steaming pile of bloodied organ meat; a successful **Medicine** roll identifies the organs as two livers and one heart. A **Medicine** (Hard Difficulty) roll confirms that the organs are human.

If the investigator confronts John, he vehemently resists leaving, his home is here in the tunnels and cavern now. If the investigator tells John that his brother, William, is scared, lonely, and worried about him, John replies that his brother will be safer back in the orphanage, and encourages the investigator to take William to the orphanage straight away. John also tells the investigator to leave because "mother" will be back any minute now. John is argumentative and is able to resist any ploy by the investigator to leave the chamber; John is immune to any social skill roll the investigator might attempt to use against him.

If John starts fighting with the investigator, he begins to call out for "mother". The ghoul that captured John, and has begun the process of changing John into a ghoul, arrives from the south branch of the tunnel in 1D4+1 combat rounds.

CHANGELING BOY
Missing Brother, Age 12

STR	40	**CON**	65
SIZ	45	**DEX**	75
APP	50	**INT**	60
POW	50	**EDU**	40

HP: 11   **Damage Bonus:** None   **Build:** 0

Magic Points: 10   **Move:** 8   **Sanity:** 30

Luck: 40   **Attacks per round:** 1

Fighting attacks: the missing brother has filthy fingernails that he uses like claws when he fights.

Fighting (brawl): 25% (12/5), damage: 1D3 + damage bonus + very mild poison (CON roll to resist redness and swelling of the injury and a Penalty Die to use the injured limb for 1 combat round).

Dodge: 37% (18/7)

Skills: Begging: 55% (27/11), Climb 50% (25/10), Fast Talk: 20% (15/4), Sleight of Hand 60% (30/12), Spot Hidden: 45% (22/9).

John is already beginning to show signs of metamorphosis into a ghoul. If the investigator makes a successful **Spot Hidden** when he is looking at John, he notices the subtle changes, and must make a **Sanity** (0/01) roll. The specific changes to John's body are:

- Pointed ears
- Cat-like eyes
- Cleft palate
- Enlarged canine teeth

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MOTHER, Guardian Ghoul

STR	75	CON	65
SIZ	75	DEX	65
INT	55	POW	65

HP: 14 **Damage Bonus:** 1d4 **Build:** 1

Move: 8 **Attacks per round:** 1

Fighting attacks: mother attacks only with her left arm, because her right arm is holding a human infant to her chest. She will do her best to fight the investigator as she attempts to protect both John and the infant she is holding. In addition to melee weapons, a ghoul can attack with a bite and/or claw.

Bite and hold (mnvr): If the ghouls's bite strikes home it hangs on instead of attacking with its claws. Instead, the ghoul worries the victim with its fangs for an automatic 1D4 points of damage each follow-ing combat round. An opposed **STR** roll is required to dislodge the ghoul.

Fighting (bite/claw): 40% (20/8), damage 1D6 + damage bonus

Dodge: 35% (17/7)

Armor: Firearms and projectiles do half of rolled damage, (round fractions down).

Skill: Climb: 85% (42/17), Jump: 75% (37/15),

Listen: 70% (35/14), Spot Hidden: 50% (25/10), Stealth: 70% (35/14)

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6

Mother is an obese ghoul, but she moves with the grace and speed of one who is naturally adapted to the subterranean tunnels. If the investigator makes an **INT** (Hard Difficulty) roll, he recalls an article in yesterday morning's newspapers (or from word on the street if the scenario is set in *Cthulhu Invictus*) about a missing infant. A hearty reward is available for the child's safe return.

South Branch – It takes twenty minutes to crawl the length of this branch of the tunnel. The tunnel ends in a large circular chamber constructed out of hand-made bricks. The ceiling is 15' high and the chamber is 25' in diameter; there is a 10' diameter hole in the center of the floor. The chamber is lit by a pair of candles sitting on the floor on the opposite side of the chamber from the tunnel's entrance. For all intents and purposes, the hole is bottomless; a set of iron rungs is set into the side of the hole that lead down into its depths.

> Mother (the guardian ghoul noted above), is huddled in this chamber unless she has already come to John's aid in the west branch chamber. If the investigator discovers Mother in this chamber, she immediately leaps into the hole, grasping the ladder rungs about 10' down into the hole. She then escapes down the ladder into the safety of the darkness below.

If the investigator takes the time to examine the hand-made bricks in this chamber, he may attempt an **Archaeology** or an **Art/Craft (Pottery/Ceramics)** skill roll. With a successful roll, the investigator estimates that the bricks date back 250 years.

The hole leads into the underworld of the Dreamlands. The act of descending into the hold has an incredibly traumatic effect on the human psyche; for each thirty minutes of descent, the investigator must make a **Sanity** (1/1D3) roll. After two hours on the ladder, the investigator must make a **CON** roll; if he fails, his arms and legs begin to ache from the climb and a successful **STR** roll is required to continue climbing. The investigator must make a **CON** roll every thirty minutes after the first **CON** roll until a roll is failed, then only the **STR** roll is required every thirty minutes. If the investigator fails the **STR** roll, he falls from the ladder into the bottomless hole. At the Keeper's discretion, as the investigator descends, the sounds of barking and meeping can be heard echoing up from below.

At the Keeper's option, instead of dying from the fall, the investigator could blackout only to wake up later in the ghoul city located under the Pharos of Leng in the Dreamlands.

CONCLUSION

William is an emotional wreck. For William, the time that passed while the investigator was beyond the door looking for John was an eternity; minutes felt like hours to him. In that time, William has retrieved the hidden steak knife and now has it in his pocket. William is extremely agitated and he desperately wants his big brother back. If the investigator does not return with John, then William flies into a rage-filled grief as he attacks the investigator with the steak knife.

If William does attack the investigator, then he can attempt a **Psychology** skill roll. If successful, the investigator will realize that William is lashing out in grief. The investigator will also realize that it may be possible to calm William down if he can be disarmed, restrained in a hug, and then soothed. The latter requires a **Charm** skill roll.

If the investigator rescued the infant, upon returning the infant to the authorities or the baby's family, then the investigator must succeed at a **Luck** roll or be accused of kidnapping the baby. If the investigator is arrested for kidnapping, he is exonerated a week later due to an airtight alibi, but the scandal still adversely impacts his **Credit Rating**.

Rewards

Rescuing John against his will	+1D3 Sanity
Rescuing the infant (without being arrested)	+1D6 Sanity, plus £50 pounds (*Cthulhu by Gaslight*); 50 aurei or 50 gold coins (*Cthulhu Invictus*); $500 (*1920s*); or $5000 (*Modern*)
Falsely accused of kidnapping	-1D3 Sanity and -2D6 Credit Rating
Defeating mother	+1D6 Sanity
Sooth grieving William	+1D3 Sanity