

The Saltwater Inheritance

by

Mark Morrison



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THE SALTWATER INHERITANCE

By Mark Morrison

Dedicated to Leigh Southall, artist and dreamer

PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

The University has offered you a welcome holiday; a paid vacation in the peaceful village of Saltwater. The English History Department is interested in research on William D'Estrier, a mysterious figure in medieval times, reputedly a sorcerer of high power. D'Estrier's family estate, D'Estrier Manor, has remained in the family and is presently held by one of his descendants, Simon D'Estrier. Simon responded favourably to the University's enquiries and has issued an open invitation for a team to stay at the Manor whilst going through the old library.

KEEPER'S INTRODUCTION

The above is quite true; William D'Estrier was a white magician and a remarkable prophet. His experiments have made the area into a focus of power, and as such it has attracted the attention of Nyarlathotep as a place where the fabric between the planes is particularly thin. Over the centuries he has tried to get in, and he will try again – very soon.

The scenario is designed for 4-6 investigators of moderate experience, and is set in "England" in 1925; the Investigators arrive in Saltwater on October 9th. At first there is no scenario as such, they will simply research into the D'Estrier heritage (although they will learn some things that may disturb them...) However, events will suddenly move with a rapidity that they will not be able to control; only if their research has been thorough will they be able to deal with the threat which looms over Saltwater.

D'ESTRIER MANOR

When they arrive they will be given a cheerful greeting by Simon and his two large and energetic bloodhounds. The Manor is magnificent, in perfect condition and glittering with the wealth of eight hundred years. The Investigators will be shown to their rooms and through the building, particularly noting the huge library, with its towering stacks of books. Over the fireplace hangs a painting of a grim man with a flowing white beard – William D'Estrier.

Simon D'Estrier

Simon is a young man of 23. He is quiet and withdrawn. This is partly because he has grown up in the Manor and is unused to the villagers, let alone these city folk. However, he invited them in because he hoped they would take his mind off the recent and tragic loss of his father, Thomas D'Estrier, a kindly gentleman of 70, who drowned whilst walking along the beach. Simon hides his grief, and frequently takes his bloodhounds and goes for a long and thoughtful walk.

Simon has no magical ability, save the spell the Elder Sign; he was taught this when he was 10, and has almost forgotten it. His education was in the library, poring over the old books. He has the high Power and Intelligence which characterise the D'Estriers, as well as a striking resemblance to his ancestor.

STR 50 CON 45 SIZ 55 DEX 55 INT 85
APP 70 POW 90 EDU 80 SAN 90 HP 10
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 8 MP: 18 Luck: –

Armor: none.

Skills: Astronomy 30%, Chess 75%, History 45%, Library Use 65%, Occult 60%, Read/Write Latin 40%

Spells: Elder Sign

The Investigators can settle in to their study. The following items can be learned by successful Library Use in the Manor's Library, but be sure to introduce them gradually over a few weeks, as they will also be reading a lot of normal history (during this time the Investigators should also be becoming acquainted with the villagers):

The first item is on a single sheet of parchment. This will be found in a book on demons (the book itself is not of Cthulhoid significance):

"If ye should wish to bar entry to those things from other places, to prevent them from passing or leaving, then ye must inscribe the symbol of the five-pointed star onto the place, and ye must pour some of your own essence in, and then ye must recite the following words ..."

This is the spell Elder Sign (Call of Cthulhu Keeper Rulebook, p255). An Investigator can learn it by studying it for a week, and then making a Hard INT roll.

The most interesting account in the diaries of D'Estrier is the following, which they shall find after two weeks:

"...but the greatest struggle before I tread the true path of magick came when the Keeper of the Gate tried to send through the Servant. With the great white light of purity I sent It scurrying and howling through the Void; It shall return, for I have only seen the place from whence it came in distant dreams; were I to know where the Gate is, I could seal it: but it shall not return in my time, but in a time far from here; this I have seen, and have duly chronicled elsewhere."



The next item is in a large book which Simon keeps under lock and key. He will get it out for them on October 25th, claiming that he had forgotten about it, it was so long since his father told him of it. He will urge them to take care; for his ancestor was also a great and mighty prophet, and this volume contains his visions.

Each entry has come true (a History roll will confirm this), but it is the last that will disturb the reader most – they must roll against SAN or lose 1D4 points:

“...the most terrible threat to all mankind shall come in the time of my descendant Tom, when that which I have cast out once shall attempt to return. Four men of great faith shall hold the Beast, but It shall try yet again; five decades after, on the dawn of All Saints’ Day, It shall come from the place that is over the sea and under stone; and I cannot tell the outcome, for a great Shadow clouds my sight. But I know when by the stars, and I know that a red light shall fill the sky, but that death-glow shall be nothing to the redness of the dawn to com...”

At last, on October 29th, they will find a direct reference, written on D’Estrier’s deathbed:

“As the final night waits for me, and indeed I welcome it, in defiance to that unending half-life that base Magicians do fabricate from foul rituals of unspeakable necromancy, it is time to chronicle that which came for me from Beyond. It was the Beast with a thousand forms, the messenger, the heart and soul of their evil. It was the Haunter of the Dark, and only by driving It back into Its shadows can It be held and contained, for It has no place in the light, the light of day. It is spoken of in that dread book by the Mad Arab, but I have cast that profane and blasphemous tome into the sea long ago, and may the Lord have mercy on my soul for reading it.”

In between these Cthulhoid interludes, the Investigators will find themselves reading of the life, times and experiments of a great magician.

THE VILLAGE OF SALTWATER

The Investigators will be welcome wherever they go, providing they behave themselves!

The Church

This is a fine old stone church, with a white steeple and beautiful stained glass. There is a small graveyard, dating back centuries. The Vicar is a surprisingly young man, Lawrence Ascott. He will explain (over tea and scones, of course!) that this parish is his first, but that already the villagers have accepted him gladly.



“Lawrence Ascott”

This is not Ascott at all – he was drowned by the Deep Ones before he reached the parish (just as they drowned his predecessor, Walter Nason, and also Thomas D’Estrier). This imposter is a wicked and loathsome servant of Nyarlathotep, clothed in human form. He is preparing the way for his Master, and the time will come on All Hallows’ Eve (October 31st).

He plays his role brilliantly, and should soon have the players as charmed as he has the villagers. Use him as the most helpful NPC; it is vital that he gains their trust. He is often in the pub of an evening, and is seen strolling around and talking all the time. He will not do something stupid to tip his hand; he will bide his time until the fateful evening is nigh.

When he is exposed and rises to do battle, tentacles explode outwards from his chest. His skin ruptures and splits, revealing the festering corpulence beneath. The SAN loss for this is 1D20, or 1D6 if the roll succeeds.

STR 135 CON 100 SIZ 60 DEX 50 INT 100
 APP 75(10)POW 150 EDU - SAN - HP 16
DB: +1D6 Build: 2 Move: - MP: 30 Luck: -

Attacks per round: 2

Tentacles 60% (30/12) 2D6

SKILLS: Cthulhu Mythos 100%, Hide 85%, Listen 75%, Oratory 65%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 70%

SPELLS: Summon/Bind Hunting Horror, Contact Deep Ones, Contact Ghoul, Contact Nyarlathotep, Dread Curse of Azathoth, Shrivelling

NOTES: The Ascott-thing only takes half-damage from gunfire.

The Laughing Fish

The Village Inn is a bright and friendly place, run by Sid and Edna Jackson. A hearty fish meal can be had at any time of the day (most out-of-towners shy away from Fish Flakes, their specialty breakfast cereal).

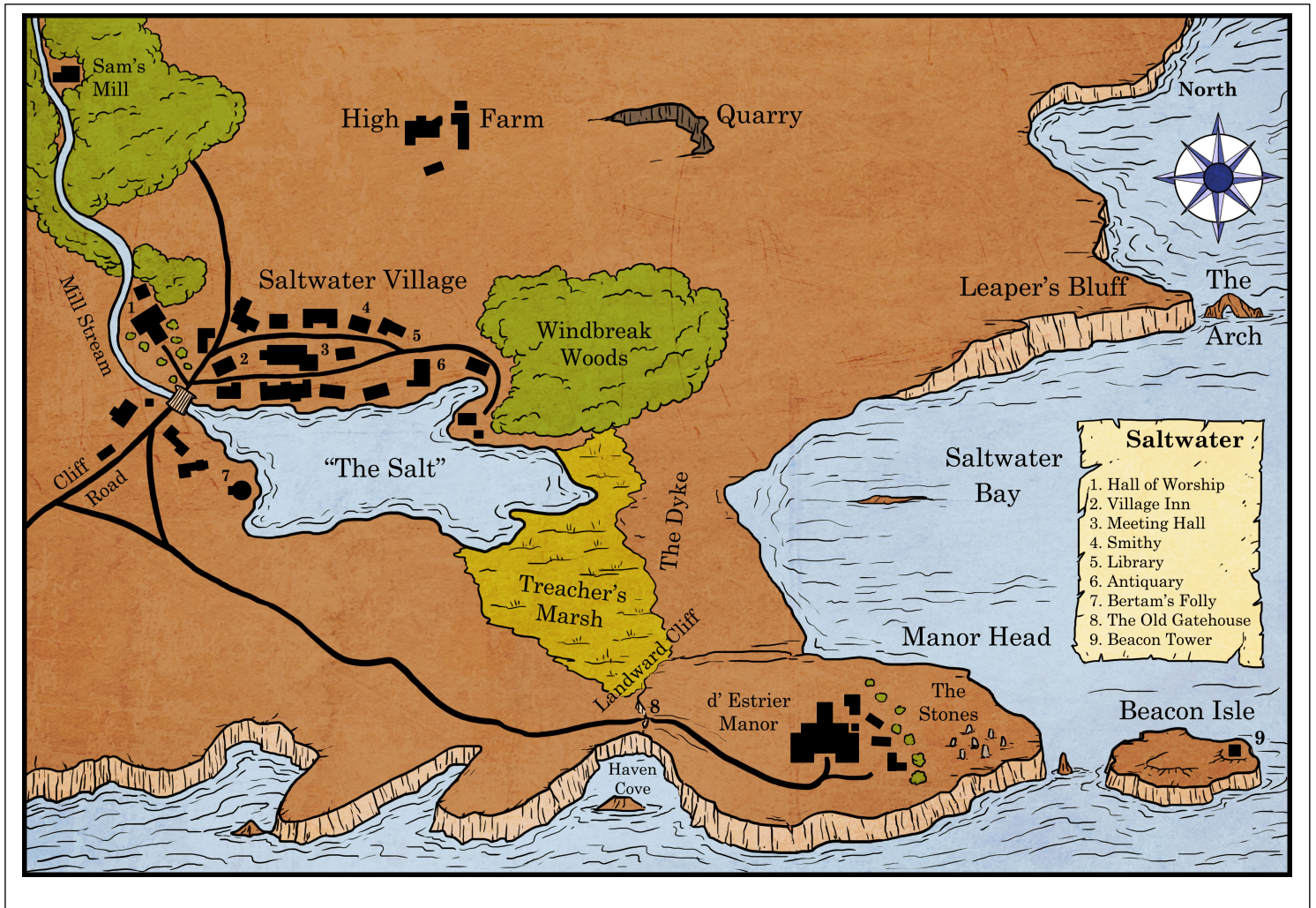
Most of the villagers drop in here once a week, including all of the important NPCs. Ale is drunk, stories are swapped and darts are hurled, until Sid closes up (usually around midnight).

The Meeting Hall

This large and locked building is used mainly for dances and fetes. It is reputedly haunted by the ghost of a highwayman who was cornered and shot here; the council is constantly having to pay for windows broken by the village children who crawl in to see the ghost. One such brat may give the Investigators a mutual scare if they decide to check it out for themselves!

The Smithy

This building burned down fifty years ago. The villagers have never rebuilt over the site.



The Library

The town's library is kept by Bert Falconhurst, a man in his mid-fifties. Bert has a peculiar shuffling gait, a result of an injury sustained thirty years ago when a mast fell across his legs. Bert's nautical involvement now is limited to the production of ships in bottles. The library is stocked with volumes pertaining to fishing and navigation, but is also an excellent source of back issues of the county newspaper. The following articles will be discovered on a successful Library Use, but only if there is some reason for them to catch the Investigator's attention (i.e. some prior knowledge or interest):

MAN DROWNS

Residents of Saltwater were saddened today to hear of the accidental death of Thomas D'Estrier. Mr D'Estrier was found drowned after failing to return from his nightly walk along the beach. The police do not suspect foul play. Mr D'Estrier, 76, is survived by his son, Simon.

From "The County Bugle," December 18th, 1924:

MERMAID SIGHTED AGAIN!

The elusive "mermaid" of Saltwater Bay has again been sighted, this time by a London couple holidaying in Saltwater. Mr Harold Redgate explained that he and his wife were strolling along Leaper's Bluff at sundown when they noticed some turmoil in the waters below. Looking down, he claims to have seen a number of fish playing in the water - fish with arms and legs!

The Bugle is tired of reporting this sort of idiocy, both as a waste of time, and because it may endanger impressionable young kiddies, who could have a real accident whilst looking for a "mermaid." Shame on you, Mr Redgate!



From "The County Bugle," November 30th, 1924:

REVEREND DROWNS

Residents of Saltwater are still in mourning today after the tragic death of Reverend Walter Nason. Rev. Nason, 79, often took an evening swim in Haven Cove; sadly, it seems that he may have entered a rip, for after a short search his body was discovered along the nearby coastline. Constable Withers has expressed his sadness at the loss of the Reverend, and wishes to express his sentiment that people take more care in the water, even in the apparently safe Haven Cove. The Church has advised The Bugle that Rev. Nason will be replaced by Rev. Lawrence Ascott, 25, a young priest of excellent character. Rev. Ascott will arrive in Saltwater in time to lead the Christmas services.

From "The Diary of Captain Jurgen Nigg," entry dated January 13th, 1911:

"Today we rounded Saltwater Bay, guided by the Beacon Isle lighthouse; there was some excitement among the men, they claimed to see manlike shadows in the water trailing the ship; I shall be glad when we can reach port and they can rest."

From "The County Bugle," November 1st 1875:

MAN KILLED AS SMITHY BURNS

The Blacksmith of Saltwater, John Anderson, was killed last night when his smithy caught fire and burned to the ground. Valiant efforts were made by the voluntary Saltwater Fire Brigade, but the fire was well out of control before the hose could be brought to bear, too late to save either Mr Anderson or his home. Police have reported that there are no suspicious circumstances - the fire probably started in the forge, and spread before Mr Anderson was able to contain it. Mr Anderson, 29, is survived by a sister in Surrey.

The fire was a huge one – ashes and sparks rose high into the air, visible for miles around (a red glow, in fact). It was terrible that the smithy didn't get out – he should have been able to, there would have been time before the fire spread. The most terrible thing of all was that when the firecart was pulled out, the tanks were empty – and the volunteer responsible was sure he'd filled them after the last fire! By the time they had charged down to the stream and back again, it was too late.

Anderson's sister passed away peacefully in 1912.

Antiquary

This small and dingy shop is run by Margery Nightshade. A thin woman of sixty years, she will be sweeping the floor when the Investigators first visit her; a black cat will brush against their legs. Apart from this, the shop is of little interest, filled with nautical antiques of varying and alarming types.

Bertram's Folly

This is a house by the lake; however, it is in the process of sliding into the water, at the rate of a foot a month. It presently tilts at thirty degrees, and there is some bizarre woodwork on the shoreward side, in a valiant attempt to nail the thing to the land. The hut is made of driftwood – tea crates, rudders, planks, and God knows what. If the players could somehow import it intact to New York, it would be hailed as a masterpiece of modern sculpture.

The villagers don't hold it in such regard; they consider it to be as crazy as the occupant.

Bertram

Bertram is a wizened little character; he is actually only about 45, but he carries himself as if he was 90. His teeth are broken and rotting, his beard is as unkempt as his dwelling. He spends his time wandering the beaches looking for new things to help prop his house up. He survives on the generosity of the villagers.

Bertram has no regular company, so long ago he took up the practice of talking to himself. If the Investigators show interest in him, he will at first be shy and run away; he will eventually overcome this, and babble constantly. Bertram talks nonsense, with a few maddening elements of truth; if the Investigators pursue any line of questioning, he will tell them what he thinks they want to hear. He has seen the Deep Ones leaping and swimming – "real big fish, floppin' and laughin' and leapin' around! Didn't have me rod, though" – but has forgotten where.

STR 40 CON 85 SIZ 25 DEX 45 INT 55
APP 40 POW 50 EDU 15 SAN 50 HP 11
DB: -1 Build: -1 Move: 8 MP: 10 Luck: -

SKILLS: Scavenge 85%, Spot Hidden 75%, Swim 65%

If the Investigators try to get any relevant information out of the villagers, they will waste their time; those that actually know anything will stay closemouthed.

There are three more buildings of note in the locale:

High Farm

This farm lies in the northern hills. The farmhouse is an old stone building, and was the centre of a skirmish during the Civil War. It is “managed” by Eric Baskerville; in actuality his hired hands run the show, doing the accounts, tending the sheep, and cooking and cleaning for Eric, who is usually out.

Eric Baskerville

Eric is a ruddy faced and cheerful bachelor in his mid-forties, who never quite got used to the idea of growing up. He will express boyish enthusiasm for the most trivial of things – “I say, what a super pair of shoes!” He is rarely seen without at least three of his seventeen dogs. He will befriend the Investigators if they will let him, and will constantly invite them to go hunting.

STR 75 CON 60 SIZ 70 DEX 55 INT 40
 APP 60 POW 60 EDU 60 SAN 60 HP 13
DB: +1D4 Build: 1 Move: 8 MP: 12 Luck: -

SKILLS: Jump 35%, Ride 65%, Shotgun 45%, Sing 05%, Track 55%

Sim’s Mill

The mill stands in the heart of the woods, and is still very much in use. It is run by one man – Ted Simpson.

Ted Simpson

Ted is a burly old goat of 70, still as strong and broad as he was in his youth (Ted can be found in The Laughing Fish every night, and this is what he attests his good health to).

Ted is one of the two survivors who foiled Nyarlathotep’s last attempt to come through the Gate, fifty years ago. However, his nightmares are increasing (the real reason for his alcoholism), and he is afraid for himself after the deaths of his close and dear friends, Walter and Thomas. He will eventually speak his mind to the Investigators; this is detailed in The Beginning of the End section. In the meantime, he will come across as a loud and hard-drinking man, possibly even frightening them a little with his roaring voice and table pounding.

STR 90 CON 80 SIZ 90 DEX 50 INT 65
 APP 60 POW 75 EDU 45 SAN 75 HP 17
DB: +1D6 Build: 2 Move: 4 MP: 15 Luck: -

SKILLS: Consume Ale 85%, Milling 90%, Storytelling 55%

Beacon Tower

The lighthouse stands on Beacon Isle, and shines forth to guide shipping safely around the coast; include it in descriptions when the Investigators are abroad at night. The lighthouse keeper, Frederick Johnson, never leaves the island.

Frederick Johnson

Frederick is the other survivor of Nyarlathotep’s attack all those years ago – he is now 85. He has recently discovered something washed up on the shore of his isle which has made him very afraid, too afraid to even tell Ted. Should anyone try to visit him he will chase them off with his shotgun. The villagers will explain that Fred has always been a bit touchy, and that it is best to leave him alone – indeed, he never comes onto the mainland nowadays, instead he telephones Ted, who takes his supplies across in a rowboat.

STR 40 CON 50 SIZ 60 DEX 35 INT 65
 APP 50 POW 80 EDU 40 SAN 80 HP 11
DB: 0 Build: 0 Move: 2 MP: 16 Luck: -

SKILLS: Shotgun 55%, Spot Hidden 35%, Poetry 25%, Rant and Rave 85%

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Keeper’s Notes:

As Halloween draws nigh, the forces of Darkness will commence to move. Nyarlathotep is served both by the Ascott-thing, and a colony of Deep Ones who dwell in Saltwater Bay. The Deep Ones worship at The Arch, for this is the place that is “over sea and under stone”; it is the Gate through which they summoned the Ascott-thing, and through which they hope to summon Nyarlathotep, in all his charnel glory. To perform this they require the blood of 3,000 SIZ points – the villagers!

Fifty years ago a creature similar to the Ascott-thing replaced the smith, John Anderson, and attempted to delve into D’Estrier’s books at the Manor; this creature was discovered and defeated by Thomas D’Estrier, Walter Nason, Ted Simpson and Frederick Johnson. It is their legacy that will hopefully aid the Investigators in what could be the final hour for Saltwater....

October 30th

Night: Ted Simpson will approach the Investigators at the pub. He will say that he is aware that they have been researching into William D’Estrier, and that there are things they should know, things that will affect our time. He will invite them back to the mill.

After the dark walk through the woods, he will light a single lantern and relate the following tale:



“It’s funny, you coming here now t’ look into these things... for there was such a one fifty years ago, who came to... learn.

“There were four of us then – me, Walt, Tom, and one other; him and me are the only ones left now. I’ll not tell you his name, not just yet – he’s safe.

“I don’t care if you believe or not, but I know that if you’ve read D’Estrier’s notes that you know that there are things... that are not as they seem. And fifty years ago, one of them came to Saltwater. Oh, it looked normal enough – but underneath! The horror! The horror! We found it out, and we cornered it, and we trapped it, and Tom did something to make sure it couldn’t get out, and then we put it to the torch.

“But the dreams – they’ve come again; and I think it’s coming back... unless it’s already here. We are not young anymore, not like last time – it will have to be you.

“I’ve said enough – I just wanted you to know. I’ll talk with the other one tonight; he knows more than I do – he’s seen things. I’ll not tell you who he is – it’s not safe. He’ll know what to do....

“Good night to you. We’ll meet you in the pub tomorrow night.”

Ted will then turn them out – he is shaking all over, but he has no more to say, and nor does he want to hear any more.

The Investigators must then walk back through the woods. They will seem to hear sounds, see shapes, feel pursuit, closing in from all sides – there is nothing there. Just as they are on the verge of panic, they will stumble out of the woods, and into the arms of a man holding a lantern – Lawrence Ascott. The golden glow will seem like a halo. Howls echo across the hills.

The Reverend will explain he is out for a walk – he feels uneasy tonight.

October 31st

Morning: Simon is missing; he has taken his hounds for a walk, and not returned.

Before the Investigators can act on this, there will be a pounding at the door – it is Sid Jackson. He will ask them to come down to the pub.

Little Emily Barnsworth has gone missing. There is a meeting taking place in the pub – search parties are being organised. The Investigators will be asked if they know anything, saw anything, where they were last night, etc. They will be asked to join the search, and will be given the area of the Mill Woods. Ted is not there yet, and they will be asked to drop in on him.

Eric is in the corner, uncharacteristically drinking whiskey. He is shaking. If asked to explain, he will whimper: “It’s my dogs... my poor little dogs. Last night they all started howling – such howls! – and when I got up to look they were all... all of them... dead.”

Afternoon: The Investigators embark on their search. Whilst in the woods, a Spot Hidden will notice something white floating in the millstream; it is a brawny, tattooed arm.

At the Mill, all is silent. Water swirls around the stilled wheel. There is no sign of Ted; if the mill wheel is rolled around, they will find it stuck on something – Ted’s horror stricken, mutilated body. All those viewing this must roll SAN or lose 1D6 points.

Evening: It is up to the Investigators as to whether or not they inform the villagers about Ted. They will be quite upset – “After all those years, the poor old fellow fell into his own machinery.” They have no time for tales of monsters, and will get quite angry if the Investigators start any – they are already tired and frustrated about not finding little Emily, and so they are quite on edge.

The Investigators will be advised to go home. On the way back to the Manor, a Spot Hidden will notice a lone figure strolling across the dyke, hands in pockets, two dogs at his heels – Simon. He is unaware of the events, and will be shocked. When they tell him about Emily, he will get quite excited – “Well come on then, what are we waiting for? Where did she vanish from? Does she have a teddy bear or something? Bruford! Burrell! Come on, boys!” and taking the hounds, he will rush back to the village; the Investigators may follow.

They must then approach Mr & Mrs Barnsworth, and hopefully tactfully, as they are still quite upset. Mrs Barnsworth will tearfully explain that she put Emily to bed at nine last night, and that when she looked in on her at seven this morning she was gone. She can provide Emily’s favourite doll.

The dogs will pick up the scent easily from outside the bedroom window (Tracking 100%!) and will follow it, barking furiously. They will set a breakneck pace (and a bloodhound is an amazing sight, charging along with its nose always the same distance from the ground), diving into and through Windbreak Woods, and up to Leaper’s Bluff, leaving the panting Investigators behind. Suddenly the barking stops – ahead, they will hear the dogs begin to growl.

When they come out of the woods, they will be looking up to Leaper’s Bluff. There is a figure standing, its back to them, gazing out to sea. It cradles something wrapped in a blanket – a Spot Hidden will notice blood dripping from one end. The dogs have stopped a hundred metres away, and are still growling savagely. In response to challenges from the Investigators, the figure will slowly turn around – and it has no face.

The figure is a vision, a projection of Nyarlathotep; as they look at it, they will realise that they can see the ocean through it – it is slightly transparent. Emily, however, is painfully real. Nyarlathotep is willing to play with them, to mock them; if asked who it is, it will reply with a low chuckle which will set the dogs howling, and mutter in a hollow, cadaverous voice “Which of my 999 names would you like me to give?” It will talk with them, taunting them, giving away no information. It is immune to all forms of attacks, which will simply pass through it. There is nothing they can do to save the girl.



Finally, when it gets bored, it will say: “Look on me, humans; know me. I am here only in spirit for now, but tomorrow at dawn I shall come here in form. You fools; you seek that which you have already lost.”; and with that, it will turn and step off the cliff.

There is no sign of it or Emily in the thundering waves below.

SAN loss for this scene (starting from when the apparition turns to face them) is 1D10 if the roll is missed, or 1D3 if it is made.

When they arrive in the village again, hot soup will be arranged for the searchers in the pub. As they sit, they will clearly hear Edna running the town switchboard (it has been transferred to here to assist in the operation): “Hello, operator. Yes, hello Mrs Appleby. Mr Smithers? Right, putting you through. Thank you.” The hint here is that the Investigators will be able to find out if Ted Simpson made any calls the previous night – he did, to Frederick Johnson, at the Beacon Tower.

At this point, Reverend Ascott will come in, and ask for a word with the Investigators. He will take them outside, and talk about the unrest, the need for faith at a time like this, and request that he lead some sort of service.

As they talk, the white light from the Beacon Tower will be cutting into the darkness – then suddenly the light turns crimson.

Ascott will go as white as a sheet – “I fear this may be our hour of judgement; this is surely the doing of Satan. Go, find out what has happened; I shall assemble the villagers in the church.” He will then hurry off.

Night: The Investigators can get a rowboat from the Manor, and make their way through the surf to Beacon Isle. The blasphemous red light casts a deathly glow across the landscape.

When they arrive, they can beach safely and approach the lighthouse (refer to the map). On the ground outside the lighthouse, a Spot Hidden will notice a shotgun – melted and bent, and still smoking; the Investigators must roll SAN or lose 1 point.

BEACON TOWER REVISITED

The lighthouse is accessible by a door in the base. A Spot Hidden will reveal that the roof of the tower has been ripped off.

Living Area

This room is simply furnished. There are a few pieces of furniture, a chess set, and an area for cooking. The most striking feature is that all of the walls have been scribbled on – indeed, this is constant throughout the lighthouse. The writings are poetry; a few samples appear below:

*He said that he'd return and then he said that he would know me
He said that there were things out there that he had yet to show me*

*Lighthouse beacon burning bright
Push back creatures of the night
Cut the dark before it thrives
Guiding ships and saving lives*

These deranged ramblings cover every surface, and the Keeper can invent more as he desires.

Stairwells (round, of course) lead up and down.

The Cellar

Here is all the machinery needed for running the lighthouse. Even down here, the infernal poetry is scrawled everywhere:

*'Tis the coming of the night that brings the
madness to the land
The sanity of order lies in the ticking of the hands
The Darkness lends a cloak to eldritch things
which flop and crawl
Ever watching ever waiting for a victim they can
maul*

Hidden in a stack of machinery (and wrapped securely in a tarpaulin) is the body of a man in his mid-twenties, obviously drowned – he has been dead for many months. His wallet identifies him as Lawrence Ascott; he is dressed in priestly garb. This body is so well camouflaged that it requires a Special Spot Hidden to notice at first glance; however, if the Investigators have read the log upstairs, they can find it immediately.

The Study

Here is a desk and chair. Many maps and charts cover the wall, with the ubiquitous poetry scrawled across everything:

*It croaked 'Ia' before it died
The secrets of the deep
I hurled it back into the tide
It haunts me yet in sleep*



Of greater interest is the large, leather-bound log on the desk. Inspection will prove to be disappointing, for more poetry has been scrawled over the original entries, obscuring them beyond recognition; all save the last, dated October 31st, 1925:

“It begins. No word from Ted - I fear the worst, like Walter, like Thomas, like the poor wretch I found on the rocks last week; he lies below, no time for proper burial, can't risk going out - would that a mere tarp could wipe from my mind that final rictus of horror! I hear them out there. I smell them. It begins. I am the last, but I shall stop them - I know where It comes from, and I shall push back that Dark; the wizard lived in the shadow of his nightmares - so close! So close! But I know where - over sea and under stone, It waits. It begins.”

The Bedroom

This is a sparse but functional bedroom. There is a bed, and a bookshelf – all the books have been taken out, and the shelf is lined instead with shotgun cartridges. There is still more poetry:

*The altar stands
The seas obey
Dark holds sway
In the Court of...*

One book remains on the shelf - “Observations on the Necronomicon; casting back the Night,” by William D’Estrier. This is a very old tome, handwritten. If read from cover to cover, it confers +5% Cthulhu Mythos, and anyone reading it automatically loses 1D6 SAN. The Investigators will not have time for such a thorough reading, but the book falls open at the following entry:

“And then there is the Summoning of the Haunter; always at night, for it cannot stand the brightness of day. Azif describes the most obscene rituals, for this demon cannot be persuaded from his dark lair without the blood of many helpless innocents; more I cannot and will not say. Denied this, It will wreak a terrible vengeance on the worshippers, and come no more.”

The Lighthouse

As the Investigators push up the last steps, a horrific stench comes from above; a sickly sweet smell, of burning. There is a faint sizzling.

As they flip open the hatch, a scene confronts them which will cost the viewer 1D8 SAN, or in any case 1 point is lost if a SAN roll succeeds. The glass of the tower is spattered with bright, boiling blood; the light shines out through the red wash, giving the crimson glow. Draped around the revolving lap is the body of Frederick Johnson – the head is gone. The roof has been torn away. A Listen roll will hear the beating of great wings, far away, and heading north. Johnson was slain by a Hunting Horror, summoned by the Ascott-thing, and (fortunately!) since departed.

The Investigators should now have enough information to act, and at last they can take control of the situation – but what can they do?

PUSHING BACK THE DARK: THE SAVING OF SALTWATER

Nyarlathotep’s Plan

Here is a brief account of how Nyarlathotep’s minions plan to effect its triumphant descent onto Saltwater; it is up to the Keeper to put their plan into effect according to the circumstances.

The Ascott-thing has now (hopefully) got the villagers bundled up in the church; it will proceed to lock them in. It will then call the Deep Ones; in accordance with arcane ritual, thirteen of them will wade through Traacher’s Marsh (how appropriate!) at midnight, and continue on to the village. The Ascott-thing will then unleash them on the villagers, probably summoning a few monstrosities to aid in the slaughter. When this is achieved, the Deep Ones shall gorge themselves, and return to The Arch, where they shall perform the ritual of summoning Nyarlathotep (which has been in progress since sundown – the full size of the Deep One colony is over three hundred strong). Unless it is prevented, Nyarlathotep will step through at dawn, and the sky shall indeed glow a dull red forevermore.

Foiling the Plan

There are a number of ways, each fairly simple; no doubt feverish Investigators will invent a few of their own; it is up to the Keeper to adjudicate the success of these schemes.

The first way is to train the Beacon on The Arch; if the powerful light shines straight at it then Nyarlathotep, being the Haunter of the Dark, will be prevented from using the Gate. This will bring about frenzied attacks from the creatures; a simple Elder Sign on the bottom door will keep the Deep Ones out, but the open roof leaves the Investigators susceptible to aerial attacks. If they can keep the light burning until dawn, they will succeed (a fiendish Keeper could have the light break down, requiring a few desperate uses of Mechanical Repair!).

The next way to stop the Mad God is to place the Elder Sign on The Arch; as this would whip the Deep Ones into a gibbering rage, it is unlikely that the Investigators would reach it alive!

The other way, and the one which will ease their consciences the most (foiling Nyarlathotep without a death toll that makes the Somme look mild) is to deny him his sacrifice. The villagers could indeed be safe in the church, with Elder Signs on the openings; to do this, they will have to fight the Ascott-thing. The thing has also doused the church in petrol, and will attempt to light it if all else fails. There is then still the matter of many hungry Deep Ones arriving at midnight and chasing the Investigators across the village, if they were not able to take refuge in the church.

The Investigators will gain 1D10 SAN each for preventing Nyarlathotep from arriving, or 1D20 if this is achieved without the massacre of the villagers. They will also gain the life-long friendship of Simon D'Estrier, whose skills and whose library may be of use in further adventures.

Should they fail to stop the god, then the horror that follows will be a nightmare which I cannot and must not record...

Victory

If the Deep Ones are prevented from getting their sacrifices, they will fall on each other in a desperate and bloodied frenzy in an effort to appease their dark and terrible god; witnessing this cannibalistic scene of carnage will cost 1D4 SAN if a roll is missed. The god will not be amused however, and at dawn The Arch will shudder violently, and then explode. Most of the Deep One colony will be killed; the survivors will limp out to sea, back into the deeps from whence they were spawned.



	STR	CON	SIZ	INT	POW	DEX	HP	CLAW ATT.	DAMAGE
Deep One 1	50	60	80	45	70	60	14	30	1D6+1D4
Deep One 2	40	30	65	45	55	35	10	25	1d6
Deep One 3	45	65	80	50	60	70	15	30	1D6+1D4
Deep One 4	80	45	90	70	55	70	14	35	2D6
Deep One 5	95	70	100	50	70	50	17	35	2D6
Deep One 6	80	60	95	60	35	35	16	35	2D6
Deep One 7	85	45	85	50	55	65	13	35	2D6
Deep One 8	90	60	95	45	75	55	16	35	2D6
Deep One 9	55	50	95	70	60	40	15	30	1D6+1D4
Deep One 10	70	60	90	45	45	45	15	30	1D6+1D4
Deep One 11	105	45	85	75	55	60	13	30	2D6
Deep One 12	35	45	95	80	55	20	14	30	1D6+1D4
Deep One 13	40	40	90	80	35	60	13	30	1D6+1D4

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I'm so pleased that this scenario has finally fished up out of the sea and into print, and incredibly grateful to you for picking it up. Thanks so much. If it's okay, I'm going to set down what this hoary old thing means to me, because it's yours now too.

This scenario was almost retitled *Out of the Depths... of My Filing Cabinet*. It was written in 1985 and has sat untouched and unpublished, until the stars were right: Miskatonic Repository appeared, and gave it a chance to appear in PDF. That's not bad for a scenario that was originally written on a typewriter, and submitted by post.

Back in the 1980s, *White Dwarf* Magazine was a leading light of the RPG scene. Visionaries Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson founded Games Workshop and along with it the entire UK roleplaying scene, by first distributing *Dungeons & Dragons*, and then later publishing UK editions of many original and reprinted RPGs, including *Call of Cthulhu*. To this day, Chaosium games are still in the bedrock of UK convention gaming, thanks to *White Dwarf* paving the way for a generation of storytellers.

White Dwarf was a must buy. Every month the magazine was chock full of scenarios, articles and ideas for a range of games. Writers like Marcus L. Rowland, Graeme Davis, Andy Bradbury, Carl Sargent and others were penning original content on the regular, and giving *Call of Cthulhu* a much wider scope than the usual Lovecraftian New England setting.

I always enjoyed the magazine, but *White Dwarf* 61 (January 1985) set my brain on fire: the Treasure Chest column had an intriguing seaside village map with the header PRIZE COMPETITION:

"This month we offer all those frustrated scenario writers a chance to get their work in print. We are looking for an original scenario, based on the above map from 4-10,000 words in length... It may be for any RPG you choose.

The winning entry will be published soon after, the author will receive £150, and we will award three runners up prizes of a year's subscription to White Dwarf."

I had been playing *Call of Cthulhu* for less than a year, and had just had my very first scenario published, "The Crack'd and Crook'd Manse", in the local Australian RPG magazine *Multiverse*. There's a godawful cliché which appears in *White Dwarf* to this day where article writers always say "I jumped at the chance". So much jumping goes on in those pages that they must have to reinforce the floors down in Nottingham.

But, reader, it's true:

I jumped.

Maps are one of my favourite things. I love looking at the places and imagining the stories that might happen there. So, getting a map with a village, and a beacon, and a marsh, and a mill, and a forest... that was perfection to my story brain, and the plot tumbled together really quickly. (It needed to, as by the time the magazine hit Australia, there were just a few weeks left to enter).

The map in the scenario is a new version (copyright for the old one remains with Games Workshop), but all the dynamics are the same.

So, off it went into the post, and I got on with working at the Australian Taxation Office and playing as many games as I could. Months (and months) later, I got an astonishing letter: I was one of three runners up (along with fellow Chaosium stalwart Jon Quaife, who probably wrote a *RuneQuest* piece, bless him). The winning piece was an AD&D scenario by Richard Anderson called "Plague From the Past" which appeared in *White Dwarf* 69.

I was happy enough. Getting a free sub to *White Dwarf* was huge (right in the golden age!) But what was even bigger was the huge validation it gave to a new writer, aged 20. Soon after I was out of the Tax Office and writing more, running more, helping distribute Carl T. Ford's legendary *Call of Cthulhu* fanzine *Dagon* in Australia, and working on my first scenario for Chaosium ("Land of Lost Dreams" for the *H.P. Lovecraft's Dreamlands* boxed set).

I owe a certain amount of that success to the boost I got from my scenario about strange events in Saltwater, but until now I've never properly thanked Ian Livingstone, the *White Dwarf* editor who ran a scenario contest. Thank you, Mr Livingstone.

And, in a nice piece of turnaround, I finally appeared in a professional UK gaming magazine: a copy just arrived in my mailbox today, I kid you not. I wrote some words on *Call of Cthulhu* for the June 2018 issue of *Tabletop Gaming UK* (the game polled Number 3 in the Greatest Games of All Time). I love that there are still gaming magazines in the world. Hats off to editor Matt Jarvis, go you good thing.

So, enough about me. I did okay. But the scenario?

It went nowhere.

Every time I worked with a new editor at Chaosium I tried to get it past them, and so can say that it has been rejected on separate occasions by Lynn Willis and Keith Herber, the finest minds in *Call of Cthulhu*. After a while I gave up, but I never chucked out the typescript.

It almost rose in recent years when my friend Dean Engelhardt of the Cthulhu Reborn blog started to expand it for full release, but we both got too busy and it went back to the filing cabinet, but this time in digital form: I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dean for scanning the text, and for having faith that there was still life in the old fish.



And then along comes Miskatonic Repository, and suddenly publishing is easy. My third and final thanks go to Chaosium for making this happen.

So, what the hell did you just read, anyway?

My second-ever *Call of Cthulhu* scenario, straight outta the Eighties and entirely unedited (well, I did change a couple of words that bugged me, but this is pretty much as it was).

Looking back over it, I'm pleased with how sand boxy it is, but annoyed by my utterly lazy Mythos Monster Manual approach. (Deep Ones working with Nyarlathotep... huh?) But, it was backinthe day, we were reading Lovecraft for the first time and just going crazy with this stuff. We didn't bother with things like research or internal consistency, we just tried to think up crazy stuff to freak each other out by candlelight.

I still remember the night we play-tested this, in the share house which was falling apart (the original cracked and crooked manse). I remember the faces of Penny, Seán and Leigh and the others in the dimly lit room, and describing the final confrontation in the church.

That was three decades ago. My old house mate Leigh Southall is no longer with us, but I can still see the chair from which he would smoke, drink coffee, draw beautiful sketches, roll dice and play eccentric characters. That's why we play, to tell stories with our friends.

So, I hope you get to play it too, with all its crusty unedited flaws. Light the candles. Scare your friends stupid. But they'll always remember the night they saved the world, or, at least, a small corner of fictional England.

Mark Morrison
Melbourne, 2018