



# Through a Dream, Darkly

A Brief Experience in the Dreamlands

Genevieve Colter

A DARK TRAPEZOHEDRON PRODUCTION



# CREDITS

*Dedicated to Dreamers Everywhere.*

Proofreaders:

TK Nyarlathotep, Haruspex, and various others on the Necronomicon Discord server.

Play Testers:

Robert Dunne, Chance Colter, A Nameless Investigator, Levi Rinck, and many online players (you know who you are).

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Genevieve Colter is a writhing, constantly dreaming, internet-dwelling Mask of Nyarlathotep with her tentacles in many areas, including on Discord! Come say hello to her as Vantablack Pharaoh, along with many other insane cultists, on the Necronomicon Discord at <https://discord.gg/PyQFjG6>.

The Vantablack Pharaoh also has a Blog! Come read my fiction and writings on *Call of Cthulhu* and other topics at <http://www.wherewordsflow.weebly.com!>

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# INTRODUCTION

This mini-scenario is part of a series of short, open-ended mini-scenarios that Dark Trapezohedron Productions refers to as “The Miskatonic Files”. These short scenes and events can be applied to any scenario the Keeper so chooses. They are similar to “Seeds of Doom” in that they are meant to be open-ended and not fully realized campaigns. There is no SAN reward at the end and there is no big reveal, there is only the event for the Investigators to live through and the Keeper to use however they like. In particular, this scene is meant as an introduction, hook, or potential brief excursion into the Dreamlands. It could also make for a fun and unique way to link two Dreamlands scenarios together, or simply be a strange interlude in an otherwise normal campaign.

## WELCOME TO THE DREAMLANDS!

It’s truly a pity there aren’t more supplements for the Dreamlands. Such a unique setting with so much written about it, and not one supplement for it has been converted to 7e yet! It’s a shame, too, since the fantasy aspect of the Dreamlands is great for introducing new players who are used to RPGs such as *Dungeons and Dragons* to *Call of Cthulhu*. It also gives the Keeper an excuse to paint pictures with words and create surreal fantasyscapes impossible anywhere else in the universe, letting Investigators do things they never could in a typical game of *Call of Cthulhu*.

There’s a myriad of ways Investigators could end up in the Dreamlands, but one that this author’s always found particularly frightening and eerie is the concept of the Night Gaunts. These rubbery beasts, imported straight from Lovecraft’s own night-terrors into his works, are everything we’re told to fear as kids – a stranger coming to take you away, and you being unable to even scream for help as you’re taken. Again, their use in *Call of Cthulhu* is tragically minimal, especially when they can be used as the perfect element of dread, descending from the skies to snatch a person up before leaving them stranded in the most dread of places, the peaks of the Underworld.

This scenario begins with just such a dangerous and bewildering flight, without regards for any specific narrative. It’s been left to the Keeper to decide just why the Investigators have been beset by Night Gaunts – perhaps they have angered Nodens, summoned them themselves, or disturbed a flock of the creatures roosting in a cavern or abandoned church? Either way, the Investigators have found themselves swarmed, overwhelmed, tickled, and one by one snatched up into the sky to land in places unknown. Such an excursion could be just the thing for shifting a game to a Dreamlands adventure. If the Keeper wants to do a little conversion gruntwork, it could even be used with supplements like *The Sense of the Sleight of Hand Man* or any of the scenarios in *The Complete Dreamlands* as a means of getting the Investigators from Here to There.

There is one little caveat, however – because the Investigators have been physically dragged into the Dreamlands, they are more vulnerable than a normal Dreamer would be. It’s not uncommon for humans to accidentally enter the Dreamlands from the Waking World without falling asleep, but even this is enough of an anomaly to cause certain parties to take notice. Surely, Nodens will want to know why these humans have been snatched by his emissaries. And lurking not far in the distance is his foe Nyarlathotep, no doubt interested in seeing just how he can entrap the Investigators for his own dark purposes.

## A Quick Note

The reader will no doubt notice that this text switches between referring to the player characters (PCs) as Investigators or Dreamers. Both are considered interchangeable terms, but for the sake of clarifying which rules pertain to the Dreamlands ruleset, “Investigator” is used when the PC is awake, and “Dreamer” is used when the PC is in the Dreamlands.

## THE DREAMLANDS: A CRASH COURSE

All of the information for the Dreamlands as pertains to *Call of Cthulhu* can be found in *The Complete Dreamlands*, if the Keeper can get their hands on a copy. This supplement assumes the Keeper is familiar with the Dreamlands and its ruleset, but just in case here is a quick rundown of the basic concepts for the setting.

The Dreamlands itself is a sort of parallel reality to our own, and as the name would indicate, it is usually (though not always) accessed through sleeping. There are some places on Earth where the veil between realities is very thin, liminal spaces that let a person cross between the two realities without ever realizing they have done so.

Most people who arrive in their sleep never recall their visits to it, however some people, Dreamers, are able to recall their trips and shape the nature of the Dreamlands itself via a little imagination. For those intrigued, this author recommends reading *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and other Dream Cycle stories by Lovecraft to get a feel for the setting and its locations. These locations are also discussed in further detail in *The Complete Dreamlands*.

The nature of the Dreamlands is shaped by many Dreamers, both human and non-human, and is subject to constant change. The same way the laws of science are the baseline of our reality on Earth, the surreal nature of dream logic is the baseline of the reality of the Dreamlands. Time is not the same as it is on Earth, being on average 200-500 years behind the current time period. Monsters and mythical beings, gods and demi-gods, and alien races are all present here, and very real. Much of the land is undeveloped and wild dreamspace, and in these places there be dragons. And as with our waking reality, the Outer Gods and Great Old Ones can just as soon cause danger in the Dreamlands as they do on Earth...

## Dreaming and Dream Lore

When a Dreamer first realizes they are dreaming, they normally gain the Dreaming and Dream Lore skills, which increase slowly with use to a cap of 25% or another cap set by the Keeper. On the first incidence of waking up from a Dreamlands excursion, the Investigator rolls INT. If successful, they recall their trip and can keep both of these skills. If it's a failure, they forget and will not understand what has happened unless they have another Dreamlands trip in the future, requiring another INT check.

Once the Investigator has made these checks, they can enter the Dreamlands at will simply with the Dreaming skill. Dreaming is also skill primarily used to shape the Dream to one's will. It is typically tied to Magic Points, and when they are depleted, the Dreamer wakes up.

Dream Lore, in contrast, is similar in nature to Cthulhu Mythos or any other "Lore" skill in that it represents specialized knowledge that is only applicable to the Dreamlands. Like Cthulhu Mythos, learning the right (or wrong) knowledge can add points into it, but unlike Cthulhu Mythos, it can be checked like a normal skill and does not impact maximum sanity of a character.

As long as the Dreamer used the skills or learned something about how to use the skills, both Dreaming and Dream Lore are increased when an Investigator wakes from a Dream, usually by a few percentiles. Because the act of being in the Dreamlands counts as using the Dreaming skill, it almost always increases until the skill cap is reached, and once this happens these skills need to have been marked as used before any more points can be accrued in them.

## Sanity Loss and Death in the Dreamlands

Whenever a Dreamer loses enough sanity to prompt a Bout of Madness, Temporary Insanity, or Indefinite Insanity, a nightmare effect can occur. Such an effect can be anything from a hallucination to a misapplication of the Dreaming skill that causes a dangerous situation, and is dependent on the Keeper's whims and the Dreamer in question. For example, someone with arachnophobia who sees a Leng Spider and has a Bout of Madness may begin to unconsciously Dream that they are turning into a spider themselves, or Dream that they are covered in webbing. Due to the way the reality of the Dreamlands operates, such a delusion will come true, and often be larger than life as a result.

In addition to this, pre-existing mental disorders and conditions might react in odd ways with the fabric of Dream, becoming more intense or causing blockades to form that might not otherwise be there. It's even possible for a Dreamer's mental state to be reflected in their physical appearance, for example a person with Depression might appear as if they have stepped from a black and white photo, or have shadows following them. In other words, insanity in the Dreamlands is a lot like insanity in the waking world, except here, your mind really does make it real.

If a Dreamer should die in the Dreamlands and they arrived by sleeping, they suffer a nightmare before waking up screaming in their beds. That Investigator can now no longer return to the Dreamlands, suffering nightmares for the rest of their lives and taking 1d10 SAN loss. If a Dreamer dies in the Dreamlands and they physically entered (that is, they're not asleep), they simply die for good.

However, not all deaths are cause for sorrow. If a Dreamer were to die in the waking world, they will awaken again in the Dreamlands – this time, as a permanent resident. This would of course apply to any Investigators who can Dream, too.

## THROUGH A DREAM, DARKLY

As discussed in the introduction, this excursion begins *in media res* – Night Gaunts have somehow captured or are carrying the Investigators. It is unlikely the Investigators will be able to fight them off at this point, but if needed, their stats are found in the 7e Rulebook. The rubbery creatures will occasionally tickle their victims to keep them too distracted to struggle until they have delivered them to a particularly scraggly-looking forest of fungal growth, glowing with eerie phosphorescent light. Anyone who is able to make Spot Hidden while being tickled can see a vast jungle of mushrooms as large as oak trees, huge glimmering slime molds, and shelf-like tree mushrooms big enough to hold a small building. The strange primal forest goes on for miles on end, a sea of rubbery caps and spore-choked air that abruptly stops before a vast flat plain marked with ominous stone fixtures and gigantic, strange-looking skeletal remains.

Before the Dreamers have time to see much of anything, however, their couriers suddenly drop them onto the ground, where they land harmlessly on a cushion of soft puffball mushrooms the size of beanbag chairs. Thick shining spores spray into the air when they impact, covering everyone with a shimmery dust that smells of old books and moldy bread. All around is dark, dank mildewed caverns and forests of bizarre-looking fungi, glowing eerily in a wide range of shifting, prismatic colors.

The Dreamers don't know it yet, but they have just landed in one of the livelier areas of the Underworld, a dangerous place for any human to be. This fungal forest is directly on the edge of the Gugs' hunting grounds, and it spans some hundreds of miles in the darkness. In it nocturnal creatures move and stir, Night Gaunts occasionally roost like great nightmarish bats, and the occasional ghoul stalks. Not only that, but there's carnivorous man-eating fungi, sentient slime molds, pitfalls, dense and tangled foliage, and the possibility of encountering Gugs on the hunt for food. The only available light is the eerie glow of various fungi, unless someone has a torch or a lantern on them. If they aren't careful, the Dreamers could get into very deep trouble here or worse. They might also be half-delirious and disoriented from the tickling, so give them time to come to their senses and realize that they are very, very out of their league.





The first question of importance is likely to be “Where are we?” Describe the Underworld, but do not tell the Dreamers that is where they are. They will see it as some sort of vast cavernous place, perhaps even Hell itself. There are strange bones lying about, and even stranger noises. The place is incredibly dark, the only light coming from strange, glowing, ever-shifting-hued fungi and lichen. They are in some

sort of... fungal forest, immense and strange. The smell of dank underground and mildew is everywhere, and those with allergies may find themselves sneezing constantly. Let them draw their own conclusions about where they are.

The next thing the Dreamers are likely to notice is that their clothing is different. *Very* different. It comes from a much earlier era, and it is fanciful. If History is rolled, it’s from about 200-500 years ago, and may look familiar to historical dress of a certain era depending on the time period of the campaign. Dreamers checking their person quickly find that all firearms have become some sort of bladed weapon – a dagger, an axe, a sword, etc. – there simply are no firearms now. Any objects that have come from the current era have become more primitive counterparts – flashlights are now lanterns, etc. This very well may shock them all for  $0/1d3$  SAN if you’re mean, and if they insist this is not a dream. However, if they correctly realize this is a dream, they immediately get the skills Dreaming and Dream Lore at a base equal to  $1/5$  their POW.

The third thing the Dreamers will notice is the sound of something fluttering in the dark, and a stark buzzing of wings. The odd sound is immense, unlike anything they have ever heard. It echoes in the dark, but Listen can easily pinpoint its location with a little effort.

If the Dreamers do follow the noise behind the rocky outcroppings and mushroom overgrowths, they will soon find the source of it. In the center of a small clearing is a small, lone Night Gaunt trapped in some sort of makeshift mechanized trap with cruel steel teeth that bite into its chitinous leg. The leg itself is broken and oozes a yellowish-green fluid from the wound. It is near exhausted from struggling with the trap. This Night Gaunt is obviously young. It’s no larger than a five year old child, seems confused, and is clearly in pain as it tries desperately to escape.

The Dreamers now have a choice to make.

### **A Trapped Animal**

As the Dreamers might expect, this is indeed a baby Night Gaunt, or at least what passes for a juvenile of the species. Night Gaunts are curious, but stupid creatures – they seek out novelty and obey orders well, but they are also easily tricked with the right techniques.

This one was caught after wandering too close to a trap set by Nyarlathotep, who is currently observing the clearing to see what these humans will do in this situation. Not far behind, on the other end of the clearing is Nodens, who has heard the cries of his trapped helper and was about to free it when the Dreamers showed up. Neither are going to act until the Dreamers do – this is an unexpected event, and both of the gods want to see what happens.

The trap itself is a clever, but cruel mechanical device. Much like a beartrap crossed with a mousetrap, it baits a potential victim with a sappy-looking, sticky piece of an oddly floral-smelling mushroom on which Night Gaunts feed. Once it flutters down to land on the perch it’s positioned on, the trap immediately clamps down on the leg of the creature. Its teeth are more like spikes that drive deep into the chitin and interlock, keeping the creature in place even as it struggles for freedom. Soon the victim will wear itself out, and either die of exhaustion or become easy prey.

If the Dreamers think to take a look around the dark surrounding foliage, they see nothing, but those with POW greater than 60 or SAN lower than 40 feel a distinct presence of something or someone very powerful. If they’re closer to the east side of the clearing, they feel a soothing but stormy presence; if they’re on the west, they feel a dark and brooding presence. Someone in the center of the clearing would feel both of them, naturally. Sensing this presence is a  $0/1d2$  SAN loss.

What happens now depends on the Dreamers’ actions. If they desire, they can kill or free the Night Gaunt, or they can leave it alone. Whatever they choose, be sure they agree on what they’re doing ahead of time.

### ***If They Kill It:***

This is certainly an understandable sentiment given the trauma they just experienced from the adult Night Gaunts earlier. This Night Gaunt is already injured, making it an easy target that can be dispatched without trouble in two rounds. Some parties might assume this tactic as a mercy killing or an option of last resort if they can’t get the trap open. Regardless, the same event occurs if the Night Gaunt dies no matter if it was purposeful or accidental.

By any means chosen, once the deed is done they will hear a vast, booming voice tell them they are unworthy and wicked people. “INSOLENT ONES!” it thunders, shaking the fungi around them. “YOU WOULD SO CALLOUSLY KILL A CHILD IN NEED? BE YOU GONE!” This is Nodens, angered at the loss of one of his helpers and especially due to it being a child. Shortly thereafter, about  $2d10$  more Night Gaunts (adults this time) swarm from the canopy above to attack like particularly morbid vultures. The Night Gaunts are out for blood this time, and intend to fly away with their prey and drop them either to their deaths, or into far more hostile territory in the Underworld. The Dreamers can either run or try to fight the things off for about 2-3 rounds, however it should be clear that they will need help to escape.

It's not long until help arrives, however. Just when they are about to be killed or grappled, a strange-looking dark-skinned man in ebony and red hooded clothes appears, smirking (This is Nyarlathotep; the trap is his). Upon seeing this figure, the Night Gaunts swarm him but are quickly brushed aside with a burst of crackling red energy, which sets them scattering in fear into the darkness.

The Dreamers are now alone with their savior, and they might not realize who he is at first. An extreme Spot Hidden notices that he has no footsteps as he walks, but rather a gliding motion that implies he has no feet (0/1d4 SAN), otherwise they assume he's a normal human. Nyarlathotep will explain he intends to help them get out of the forest, and whether the Dreamers trust this figure or not is up to them. The major drawback with Nyarlathotep is obvious: he is a capricious god. If the Dreamers aren't careful, they could risk being deceived by the Crawling Chaos, or worse yet, become his newest playthings once he decides he's bored with them.

#### ***If They Free It:***

Kind-hearted Dreamers may want to do everything possible to help this poor, ensnared creature. If they are careful and attempt to keep the Night Gaunt calm, they may well be able to free it from the trap. However, if they're not calm or careful, they may well instigate the entire Night Gaunt hibernaculum, as above.

The trap Nyarlathotep has set is very complex, so disengaging it successfully requires DEX and Luck rolls – DEX to work the alien contraption open, Luck to be sure it doesn't snap shut on them and injure them. If it does, assess a 1d4 HP loss, and the possibility they lose a finger! Alternately, a Mechanical Repair or Dreaming roll can do the trick on opening the mechanism without any risk of accidentally killing the Night Gaunt. If they fail DEX or fumble any of the rolls, they kill the creature, incurring the above event instead.

If all goes well and the baby Night Gaunt is freed, it croons an odd, clicking sound and looks to its saviors with something like gratefulness. The person who freed the creature then hears a soft voice in their head, like a murmuring whisper of the wind, say *"Thank you... Dreamer..."* The Night Gaunt then flies away into the inky blackness beyond the canopy. The Dreamers now hear nothing but silence, but the presence from before has not left. This time, they can all feel it, and with a Spot Hidden they can notice a vaguely demonic, dark figure with glowing red tripartite eyes glare from the darkness before vanishing (this is Nyarlathotep leaving in a huff; assess a 0/1d4 SAN loss). Shortly after this, the other presence grows stronger and there is a glowing white light from the forest beyond. Turning to look at it, the Dreamers see an elderly-looking but strong man come from the brush, smiling. This is Nodens, and he is pleased with the Dreamers' actions here.

In a deep, booming voice with a fatherly tone, Nodens explains the players have done well to rescue one of "his children", and that he is willing to aid them however they wish. Whether or not they trust the figure or not is yet another matter of choice, but it should be Nodens will not betray or lead them astray. The drawback is that if they do not follow his instructions to the letter or seem to be trying to trick him, they risk possibly drawing the Hunter God's ire.

#### ***If They Do Nothing:***

It's very possible that the Dreamers will not engage the Night Gaunt at all. After all, it's none of their business, is it? Besides, whoever left the trap might be very angry if they disturb it...

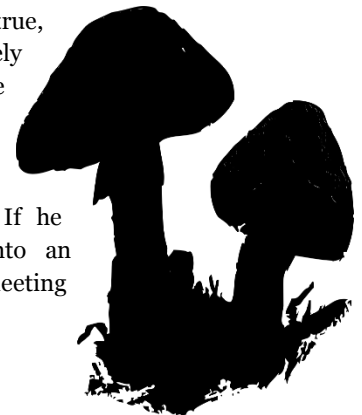
If the Dreamers leave the creature to its fate, about fifteen minutes later they hear a terrible keening cry of pain and the sound of something snapping (0/1d4 SAN). They then hear nothing else, but the presences then vanish elsewhere, leaving them alone in the clearing.

In this circumstance, the Dreamers have gained both Nodens' and Nyarlathotep's attention for the curious choice the group made. They will not intervene just yet, choosing to observe the Dreamers' next actions for now. Future interludes or dream segments may show one, the other, or both attempting to use the players as chess pieces. For what end exactly has been left to the Keeper to determine.

The Dreamers are now their own, or so it would seem. They will need to pick a direction and start walking if they want any hope of escape. As they travel, call for Listen checks; if successful they hear what sounds like something following them, although nothing seems to be there if they check. It's not long into their travels into the mildew-soaked jungle that they all hear a strange noise sounding like gibberish in the bushes behind them. Play this for all the tension it's worth!

Eventually a ghoul, clad in old-looking robes and begging for them not to hurt it, appears when they finally confront the noise (0/1d6 SAN as for seeing a ghoul). This one is intelligent and speaks English. His name is Bartholomew, and he claims to want to help the Dreamers escape.

It sounds too good to be true, and it is. Bartholomew falsely believes these Dreamers are associated with another Dreamer whom his warren attacked earlier for straying too close to their burrows. If he followed, he leads them into an ambush of ghouls, and a meeting with another Dreamer.



## A Guide in the Dark

Regardless of what happened with the Night Gaunt, the Dreamers now have a travelling companion, be it Nodens, Nyarlathotep, or Bartholomew. The pros and cons of each are simple – Nyarlathotep will help for the price of a favor later (but he might trick them into going in the wrong direction), Nodens will demand the Dreamers obey everything he says to the letter (and becomes angry if they don't), and Bartholomew demands nothing but is leading them into danger. The Dreamers may not have met these beings before, but all of them seem open enough to answering questions the group may have. Here are some questions they might ask.

### “Who Are You?”

- Nyarlathotep: “I have many names, Dreamers...” If pressed further, or accused of being Satan/asked if he is a god, etc. “If that is what you perceive me as, but I am none of these... and all of these. Regardless, I mean you no harm, for you seem lost, and I know the way well. Perhaps I can help you? Thank you again for your aid, you cannot imagine how difficult it is to deal with those winged vermin... Though I do fear their progenitor may be rather upset with your actions...” A dark chuckle, and then he says no more.
- Nodens: “I am the Great Lone Hunter. Thank you again for aiding my child in its hour of need. You are indeed noble spirits, Dreamers.” If asked if he is a god, he says “If that is what you perceive me as,” and smiles. “Though be wary – the Dark One is not pleased with your aiding me...” If asked who the “Dark One” is, he says “He has many names and forms, for he is deceptive. Listen not to his silver-tongued whispers, for he will only lead you to madness and despair. As for I, I intend only to lead you home.” He smiles warmly.
- Bartholomew: “H-huh? Me? I-I’m nobody, who are you?!” If pressed, he will whimper and say “Okay, okay, I’ll tell you, please don’t hurt me...” If then assured he won’t be hurt, he says, “I am Bartholomew of Surrey, at your humble service, Dreamers!” and bows. “You seem lost, and I know this area very well... maybe I can be some assistance?”

### “Where Are We?”

- Nyar: “In the realm of Dreams... At least, a small part of it. No doubt the Hunter’s winged vermin brought you here, scooped you up, didn’t they? They live here, you know. In the Underworld realms. You poor unfortunate souls, who knows what might have become of you if I had not found you...?” Psychology is useless on a god, but if rolled they might notice some sarcasm in his voice. Unfortunately, they cannot read his true intent. *Everything* Nyarlathotep says is dripping with sardonic mirth.

- Nodens: “That is of no consequence, but know it is a place hostile to Dreamers, and should never be sought out again. I do not know why you were brought here, for my Children have not told me, but I will surely lead you from it.” Psychology is useless on a god, but from what those who roll it can tell, Nodens is telling the truth here. He has no reason to lie to them
- Bartholomew: “This place? The Great Mycelia Forest, in the Underworld of the Dreamlands...” If asked what the Dreamlands are, he responds. “It is a realm where humans go when they sleep. Normally, only I and my brethren come this far, though it’s not unheard of for human Dreamers to find themselves here... live humans, though, that is very unusual... You’re a damn lucky bunch, you are, and to not run into either the Dark One or the Hunter, either. Yes indeed, very lucky...” If asked about them, he refuses to speak their names. “Too much talk of them brings their attention, you see...” Psychology senses something a bit off about his intent, but then again, it’s hard to tell what a ghoul is really thinking.

### “How Do We Get Home?”

- Nyar: “Fear not! I know this forest well, and will do my utmost to lead you from it, but it will take some time. I will only ask that you return the favor, however, in the future if I do so. Is this acceptable?” If asked what for, he says “Well, that is the future, isn’t it? It won’t be anything too time-consuming, but trust me when I say it will be well worth your time.” The Keeper is encouraged to use every trick in the book to get the Dreamers to agree. If they do manage to find some loophole in the contract or mention that they aren’t fall for it, Nyarlathotep might be somewhat amused, but soon tires of their game and pretends to concede to what they want before leading them on the wrong route and then abandoning them once they’re thoroughly lost. If they agree to the bargain however, he is happy with that and gives them a specific version of Contact Nyarlathotep, noted nearby. He does indeed lead them out of the forest, and if they later follow through on the deal as the Keeper defines it, they might gain more spells or pertinent Mythos knowledge. If they don’t accept the offer or do something to annoy him, he may lead them astray and then vanish at the most inopportune moment.
- Nodens: “Allow me to guide you home... follow.” He will lead them expertly through the forest and eventually to a small clearing. He then teaches them Contact Nodens and sends them home via magic. The gate he opens costs 5 MP to travel through, but he asks nothing in return for its use.

- Bartholomew: “I might be able to get you back towards your civilization, but the trip will be long and arduous... I’m sorry, but I’m not exactly a magician.” If asked, he may teach them a little bit of Ghoulish, roughly equal to their 1/5 POW. Doing so adds 2% to Cthulhu Mythos. He then promptly leads them directly into an ambush of ghouls.

### Deeper Magic: Generalized Contact Nyarlathotep

Due to Nyarlathotep’s many forms, normally any Contact spell for him must specify which Mask is being petitioned. However, the Crawling Chaos sometimes enjoys tricking potential new followers by purposefully teaching them a slightly incorrect version of the Contact spell without the proper invocation rites for a certain Mask. The result is that *any* potential Mask might answer the request, and if the Mask actually does manifest as a result of the spell, the results can be Sanity-shattering.

This take on the spell has the same costs and requirements as the standard Contact Nyarlathotep spell does. If successfully cast, a Mask of Nyarlathotep of the Keeper’s choosing will contact the caster in a semi-friendly manner within a few hours, days, or even immediately. It is recommended that the most sanity-straining Masks, such as the God of the Bloody Tongue (1d10/1d100 SAN loss), do not appear as a result of this spell, nor that extra monsters accompany Nyarlathotep when he does appear. Unless, that is, you’re a very cruel Keeper.

### “What Were Those Things Back There?”

- Nyar: “Ah, the winged vermin? Night Gaunts, dear. Vile things. They capture humans in the waking world, and bring them here, abandoning them. Nasty little trick, isn’t it? What with all the awful things here – Gugs, Ghosts, Bholes...” If pressed, he does not explain what these are, but instead says “Terrible creatures. It’s really rather lucky you met me first, and not one of them...”
- Nodens: “Those are my Children. They are mischievous, but good Children... you have nothing to fear from them.” If the group protests, he doesn’t offer a good explanation. “They meant you no harm...” If the pressure continues, he becomes annoyed. “Do you wish to return to the waking realm or not? These questions cost precious time.” Continued questions result in him abandoning them.
- Bartholomew: “Uh, the winged things? We call ‘em Night Gaunts. They don’t really bug us any, but sometimes they drop a human Dreamer off here... Is that what happened to you?” If confirmed, he says “Huh. Well you must have done something awful stupid to piss them off then!”

### Other Questions?

These should be handled as the Keeper sees fit. In general, the following is true:

- Nyar: He will answer in vague non-answers, or try to lead them astray. He may give hints to scenarios in the far future, too. Play this by ear. Since he is by nature a wandering entity, Nyarlathotep proves to be an interesting if not slightly unnerving travel companion if the Dreamers are careful in what they say or do in his presence. In all things, he is bemused, jovial, and friendly... maybe a bit too friendly. And as always, he oozes a mix of sardonic contentedness and a darkness that can never be fully explained.
- Nodens: He does not entertain these questions. “These are not for a mortal mind to know. You will understand when the time is right.” Asking too many irritates him greatly and leads to him abandoning the group as above. Nodens does not speak to the Dreamers much as they travel, remaining aloof as if herding a flock of lost sheep. He treats the Dreamers the exact way he sees them – as lost children only in this situation because they meddled with things they ought not have.
- Bartholomew: He genuinely does not know, unless the questions involve the Dreamlands or the Mythos, in which case he does his best to answer. Bartholomew is a nervous sort and not one to fight unless he has no choice, but seems nice enough.

### Encounters in the Dark

As the Dreamers and their new friend travel, there is a chance something interesting could happen. The Keeper is free to elaborate as they desire, but here are some options.

#### Gug Hunting Party

As the group travels, their guide suddenly hushes them and motions for them to stay quiet as he listens. There is the sound of some vast, rhythmic noise approaching, like claps of thunder coming closer and closer. Soon the ground starts to shake a bit with each thunderclap, and the guide motions for the group to hide. They would do well to listen.

Call for Stealth Checks with a bonus. Successfully hiding, the group will be safe from the approaching Gug Hunting Party, but if they want to take a look and see the 1d4 massive four-armed terrors move through the fungal foliage, take 1d2/1d8+1 SAN for seeing a Gug.

If a Dreamer fails their Stealth check, they have one more chance to roll Luck and still succeed. If this too fails, then the Gugs notice them and snatch them up as food. Witnessing a fellow Dreamer die in the vertical jowls of the beasts is a 1d6 SAN loss.



### ***Carnivorous Fungi***

Randomly ask someone to roll Spot Hidden, or simply randomly choose a person to deal with this event. On a success, that Dreamer notices something in the undergrowth that looks sort of like a doorway inside of a tunnel. It's realistic enough that it looks like a real doorway back home, and even feels like one should they approach and touch it.

Touching the doorknob or the door in this "tunnel" is a very bad idea. The tunnel and door is in fact a large pitcher-like carnivorous fungus, and the door is a literal trap door. Every part of it is sticky and will snare whomever touches it instantly, requiring three DEX rolls to break free. The more the prey fails these rolls, the more difficult it becomes to escape, until the tunnel collapses in and digests them, wrapping about them tightly like acidic clingwrap. Seeing a fellow Dreamer eaten this way is a 1d4/1d10 SAN loss.

Fortunately, there's ways to tell the trap is a trap. Spot Hidden can detect a large number of spores floating in the air near the doorway, more than normal. It also notes there is the distinct smell of acid and there are acid burns on some of the other mushrooms, caused by this fungus. If all else fails, the guide or the other Investigators can always stop them from becoming trapped in the first place.

### ***Meeting Nyarlathotep***

This event does not occur if Nyarlathotep is their guide already. At some point in their travels, the group comes to a small clearing, darkened and worn to the dirt below. In the clearing is a pacing figure in dark robes, with ebony skin and red eyes. A Hard Spot Hidden notices his hooves, Occult suggests this is the Black Man of various witch cults, and Cthulhu Mythos connects the Black Man to Nyarlathotep. Seeing this figure is jarring, but only costs 0/1 SAN loss – unless they saw the hooves (incur a 0/1d4 SAN loss), or if they know this is Nyarlathotep (incur a 1d10/1d20 SAN loss). The figure is pacing, and stops only if the Dreamers catch his attention. If Bartholomew is their guide, he will caution that this figure is not trustworthy, but will not venture closer.

Once the Black Man notices them, he will smile gently and shift almost within the span of a blink to that of a dark-skinned man in black and red robes. He then beckons them forth and speaks in a friendly manner, but does not give chase if they run away. Once he has them in conversation, he may try to bargain. He will speak and give the group the same answers as above, if asked. If displeased, he will vanish and contact a Gug to attack them; as a result the Ambush encounter procs. If pleased, he may well give them the same gifts as above, then abandon them somewhere in the forest – or, he may actually help them, if the Keeper is feeling kind. If he does abandon them, Bartholomew or the ambush will find them later.

If Nodens is their guide, Nyarlathotep will appear, but as soon as he senses Nodens he will scowl and vanish into shadow before the group gets a good look at him. He knows better than to confront his foe under unfavorable circumstances.

If the group is being attacked by something, Nyarlathotep might intervene. In this case, he appears as the man in the black and red robes, and the encounter with him is very similar to as if the group killed the baby Night Gaunt.

### ***Meeting Nodens***

This does not occur if Nodens is already their guide or if Nyarlathotep is their guide. Nyarlathotep has no desire to share his "fun new toys" with his enemy, nor does he particularly want to start a fight with him right now. Rather, he will observe from a distance. Should the Dreamers offend Nodens to the point of his abandoning them, Nyarlathotep will swoop in to manipulate the Dreamers into his bargain.

At some point in their travels, the group comes to a clearing in which there is an inherent light, strange flowers bloom, and a vague smell of incense wafts from no discernable source. Above is a massive flock of Night Gaunts hanging upside down from the trees and getting thicker towards the clearing; the sight of this is a 1/1d4 SAN loss. In the clearing is an older man, healthy and wise-looking. His eyes turn to them, and he laughs before beckoning them closer. If Bartholomew is with them, he will not approach and will caution that this figure is not as gentle as he looks.

From here, Nodens will speak to the group giving the same answers as above. If displeased, his Night Gaunts immediately attack and eventually either the Nyarlathotep or Ambush encounters proc. If pleased, he sends them home with the same results as previously discussed.

Nodens does not tolerate the foolish, the overly curious, or those who cannot obey orders. If a Dreamer does manage to offend him, Nodens will abandon the whole group to themselves after voicing his disapproval.

### ***Meeting Bartholomew***

This can proc if Nodens or Nyarlathotep are with the group, or if they are alone. It is much more likely that they will encounter this one alone. This event is very similar to Bartholomew's entrance above. Once he does approach, what happens next depends on whether they're alone or have a guide.

If Nodens is with the group, he denies the ghoul and frightens him off. Nodens may also chide any of the Dreamers if they showed interest in or sympathy for the ghoul. He then tells the group he would have led them astray – and he's pretty much correct.

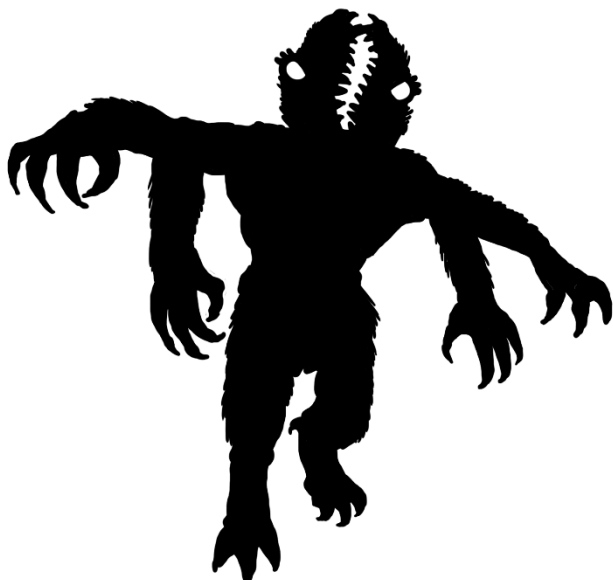
If Nyarlathotep is their guide, he will smile (much too widely and suspiciously) and beckon the ghoul forth, to which the ghoul will be nervous and hesitant. Flip a coin: on heads, the ghoul runs away, on tails he will eventually relent. Nyarlathotep will then tell the Dreamers that the ghoul's name is Bartholomew, and he will take them to a way back to the waking world. Bartholomew then agrees and takes them directly to the Ambush encounter. Smart Dreamers will not take the ghoul's offer, and will stick with Nyarlathotep or forge their own pathway out.

**Ambush!**

This event only occurs if the Dreamers do not have a guide or if Bartholomew is their guide. At some point in their travels, the group is ambushed by several ghouls, Gugs, Night Gaunts, or another creature of the like, and are attacked. They are overwhelmed by 2d8 of the creatures, and may fight back for several rounds. If it's a pack of Gugs they're fighting, there are 1d4 of them in the pack, although if your players have ended up in the sort of circumstance where they're fighting that many Gugs at once, they've clearly made a grave error somewhere along the line. Stats for Gugs, ghouls, and Night Gaunts are in the *Call of Cthulhu 7e* Rulebook.

As they are battling and after 3 rounds have passed, all the Dreamers suddenly hear a woman's voice chant some bizarre phrase and then see strands of white light from the shadows; when they next look several of the beasts have been pinned by a glowing webbing, incapacitated, or otherwise driven off. The woman then steps forward from the brush. She is wearing clothing of similar style to the group, is red-headed, and wears a strange silver key on a necklace around her neck. This well-spoken woman also has a silver filigreed sword, which she uses to drive off the other creatures expertly. She looks the perfect picture of confidence and seems concerned for the group.

The woman's name is Adele Carter, a relative of the famous King Randolph Carter of Ilek-Vad. She is an adventurer by nature and one of the most accomplished Dreamers the Dreamlands have ever known next to her more famous cousin. On seeing and saving the Dreamers, she immediately is concerned if they're alright. If they are, she is relieved and happy to answer any questions about herself or the Dreamlands. She will lead the group out, explaining that the key around her neck is used to travel freely between the realms of Dreaming and Waking. The key opens a doorway right back to the waking world. The Keeper may desire to use Adele as an NPC in other Dreamlands encounters. If so, her statistics are found nearby.

**Adele Carter, 22, Adventuress of Dream**

Soft-spoken and beautiful, Adele is a Dreamer of no small clout, something like the Dreamlands equivalent of an Indiana Jones or Lara Croft. She genuinely enjoys helping people and loves cats. In some circles, she's a hero; in others, a thief and rogue. Because of the odd properties of time in the Dreamlands and because she spends so much time Dreaming, she doesn't know anything about current events in the waking world, and in fact seems to be a bit behind on the current news. Precisely why this is has been left to the Keeper to decide for themselves.

Adele has always sought adventure and intrigue from a young age, and acquired the famed Silver Key during a prior Dream-Quest of her own. She will later bring this artifact back into the Waking World for Randolph Carter to find. Dreamers in need of a companion for further adventures could certainly do worse than her!

STR 40	CON 50	SIZ 45	DEX 65	INT 60
APP 70	POW 75	EDU 50	SAN 55	HP 10
DB: 0	Build: 0	Move: 7	MP: 15	Luck: N/A

Attacks per round: 1

Brawl	35% (17/7), damage 1D3
Sword	65% (17/7) damage 1D4+1

Armor: none.

Skills: Dreaming 65%, Dream Lore 45%, Stealth 60%, Other Language (Cat) 85%, Psychology 45%, Anthropology 55%.

Spells: White Web of Soren and any other three Dreamlands-only spells of the Keeper's choosing.

**All Just A Dream**

When the Dreamers go through the door, regardless of who shows them it, it's a simple wooden door in a fungal stalk frame. Entering this door leads to a set of stairs going up, and these take the Dreamers either to further Dreamlands adventures or to waking up, as the Keeper desires. For the purposes of this supplement, it has been assumed the Dreamers wake up when they enter the doorway.

When the group eventually awakens from their dream, they are in their beds. Assess a 0/1d2 SAN loss for not knowing how they got back here (they were physically in the Dreamlands, remember) then have them roll INT to recall the dream.

If it's a Success, the Investigator may add 1d6 to Dreaming and Dream Lore, 1 to Cthulhu Mythos, and they will recall the dream as well. If an Extreme Success, the Investigator also gets 1d6 Cthulhu Mythos. That Investigator now has access to the Dreamlands for the remainder of that character's life, until they are killed in the Dreamlands or die in the Waking World, at which point they either lose the Dream skills or become stuck in the Dreamlands. If the Investigator fails the roll, they recall nothing except that they had been dreaming; confiscate their ability to use Dreaming and Dream Lore.

### **And Then...?**

There's still a few loose ends to cover depending on who their guide was. It's possible Nyarlathotep or Nodens may have found them interesting enough to observe for a time. It's also possible they may have angered them.

If the Investigators have attracted Nyarlathotep's ire, they will find he will be a hard customer to shake. He will follow and taunt them in the waking world, making their lives absolutely miserable, and seek to ruin their chances of success at all costs. Of course, this will all be paired with a nice dose of sanity loss every so often. Nyarlathotep is a very petty god when he is slighted, regardless of how minor the slight.

If the Investigators have attracted Nodens' ire, they may occasionally be assaulted by Night Gaunts, as well as various wild animals. They will also become lost very frequently, making Tracking, Navigate, and related skills like Pilot at a permanent penalty. Animals will dislike them and storms will seem to follow them everywhere.

If they have not enraged either, they will find little hints from both gods on occasion. A strange gargoyle-like figure watches from a rooftop. An odd man with dark skin and darker eyes bumps into them in the streets. Animals give them curious glances. They find themselves encountering a lot of bats, or feel as if watched by a great trilobed eye. These little jolts are 0/1 SAN if they understand why they're experiencing them.

If the Keeper desires, both Nyarlathotep and Nodens may give occasional hints that lead the players in new directions, but always in order to undercut the other. They may even appear in the Investigators' dreams to guide them, or show up as visions or hallucinations. Whatever or however they show their hands, it should become clear if you do this that Nyarlathotep and Nodens are playing a game of chess... and the Investigators are the pieces. Who wins in the end, and what if anything this game implies about their motivations, is solely up to the Investigators and the Keeper to decide for themselves.



***“All that we may see and seem  
Is but a Dream within a Dream...”  
-- Edgar Allen Poe***

## A Phosphorescent Phantasmagoria

In the Dreamlands, nothing is ever as it truly seems. This is doubly true when the dangerous, nightmarish Underworld is involved, a place no human dares go on purpose. But what if something brought the Investigators there by accident, or by some sudden twist of fate?

Through A Dream, Darkly is a short interlude to mystify Investigators as a quick interlude or hook into a Dreamlands campaign. It is presented as part of The Miskatonic Files, a set of short scenes and utilities for Keepers in need of a little extra sparkle for their games.

