



Shreds and Tatters

Six Tiny Interludes in Yellow

Genevieve Colter

A DARK TRAPEZOHEDRON PRODUCTION



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For All Those Who Have Found the Sign.

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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 group of mini-scenarios 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 supplement is a set of scenes and events for use with any campaign regarding Hastur the Unspeakable. Use these as seeds for further scenarios, as leads, or to display how Carcosa’s dark influence warps reality and the perceptions of those around it.

SHREDS AND TATTERS

**“Songs that the Hyades shall sing
Where flap the tatters of the King
Must die unheard in
Lost Carcosa.”**

-- Cassilda’s Song, *The King in Yellow* Act I

There is something deeply pernicious about the mythology of Hastur the Unspeakable, Carcosa, and the Sign which symbolize these things. It is a sort of creeping madness that calls to the most artistic and creative amongst humanity, almost a truly human terror in the way it turns fascination into obsession, pleasure into decadence, and ambition into power-mongering authoritarianism. With such a mysterious backdrop of what exactly is in the maddening script of *The King in Yellow*, is it really any wonder we’re so intrigued by the cursed play to the point it’s crept even into television and gaming?

Despite weird fiction’s ongoing interest in writing about the Yellow Mythos, surprisingly few of those writings have been supplements for *Call of Cthulhu*. There is as of 2019 exactly one major campaign, a mini-campaign, and multiple scattered scenarios in various older supplements for the game. Nothing against *Tatters of the King* or *Ripples From Carcosa*, but sometimes a Keeper needs something... more to give those campaigns and scenarios a kick. Something shorter and more easily inserted as a strange event. Something that shows the way Hastur’s influence can bend and twist reality into something surreal and nightmarish, something bizarre and foreboding. Something absolutely insane.

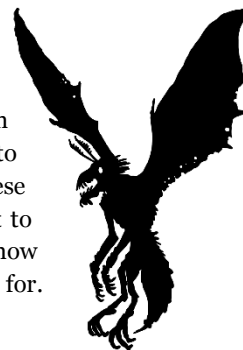
That is exactly what this small supplement is intended to fix somewhat. These are all extra scenes or scenarios for any Hastur-related campaign or scenario, but all can be expanded and used as one-shot scenarios if desired. For the Keeper, they are a way to bring more Yellow Mythos lore into the game while also bringing helpful allies and dangerous enemies to the forefront. Treat them like BBQ sauce – something that is used as a fun addition to spice up the campaign and change its pace.

Scene the First: The Star-Banshee

This scenario is easily finished within one session, and is an adventure in and of itself. Beware! The monster here can be killed, but it is just as likely to kill...

Strange, keening cries have recently been heard from the old abandoned farmstead outside of town at night. They sound almost birdlike, mixed with odd braying like that of a horse. Furthermore pets, farm animals, wild animals, and even people have all been found dead over the past few weeks, drained of all blood. The only wound on the corpses seems to be a single set of oddly arranged knife or teeth marks to the jugular or chest, and it is from here the blood is drained. The effect is more like some sort of sick animal serial murderer than an animal, and if it really is just an animal doing this, well, those teeth certainly don’t belong to anything local, that’s for certain.

On a tip from a frightened local (a farmer or perhaps someone who is a friend of a friend), the Investigators are implored to help, and perhaps even given a reward for agreeing. They thus set out to figure out just what is causing these problems at the farmstead, and attempt to set right what is wrong. Little do they know just what exactly they are in for.



The Truth of the Matter

Somehow, a lone byakhee has roosted in the barn of the farmstead, though the Investigators are unlikely to have encountered one before. From this base, it flies nightly to seek food in the form of fresh blood, which it drains. This vampiric beast is feral, hungry, and highly aggressive, attacking anyone or anything within its sights, and may not be very willing to leave its roost.

In addition, this particular byakhee has escaped from an abusive summoner, which is part of why it’s so aggressive. It has been trapped for a long time prior to its escape and is half-starved. This is its first good meal in a very long time, and it is a little weaker and scarred as a result. While it rests and licks its wounds, preparing to fly back to its yellow master, it feeds on the easy prey surrounding the farm itself. As a result of its ill treatment, it has an injured limb and a fear of loud noises, so it has 4-5 fewer HP than normal.

The Investigator’s task is simple in theory, but difficult in practice – they need to kill, relocate, or otherwise remove a trapped animal from an unusual location. The only problem is, this is no ordinary animal.

Taming the Beast

All the Investigators must truly do in this little scenario is hear the rumors, investigate the farmstead, and find the monster. From there, they can kill it (a very unwise measure which will make Hastur quite displeased with them) or send it back from whence it came.

A byakhee is a difficult beast to kill. They are fast, aggressive, and rather intelligent predators. The Investigators will need to have a plan going into the fight if they want to stand a chance.

If an Investigator instead shows kindness to it, perhaps by healing its wounds, then skills such as Animal Handling, Charm, DEX, and Luck apply if they even hope to get close to the beast. If they do get close enough, a Hard Medicine or First Aid roll is required to repair the injury. If any of the rolls fail, the byakhee attacks and tries to eat the investigator for getting too close; if the rolls succeed, the byakhee seems grateful and flies off, perhaps to reappear elsewhere or teach some spell to the Investigator. So tamed, the creature may agree to carry the Investigator anywhere they wish, but only that Investigator, however mounting the creature without taming it first results in it flying them through space to Carcosa with the unlucky Investigator on its back, likely killing them in the process.

It should be noted that byakhee are notoriously intelligent and quite dangerous – and that’s without the sanity cost to see! It may be attempting to trap new prey by pretending to be injured. However, it’s also not stupid enough to risk its life – if overwhelmed, it will try to retreat.

If the Investigators somehow get the byakhee to stop causing trouble, you may grant them 1d4 SAN for the privilege and the gratitude of the local farmers.

Scene the Second: Kidnapped!

This is a nasty trick for the particularly mean Keeper to play on their Investigators. If your players have run afoul of some Hastur cult, try this option. Death is likely here and this *will* test the Investigators to the limit, both mentally and physically. Then again, who doesn’t want to experience a death-defying escape attempt?

Late one night, or perhaps during an ill-fated meeting somewhere, one or several Investigators are drugged/knocked out, trussed up, and kidnapped. Perhaps they don’t even remember the event that got them captured and simply wake up in chains. When they do awaken, they find themselves in cages and shackles, stripped of all possessions and clothing. They are alone in the room and perhaps even separated, their heads swim with grogginess and pain, and they are pitifully defenseless. Spells can’t be recalled, and fighting back is useless when you’re half-drugged.

“Where Are We?”

As the investigators get their bearings, a figure in a golden mask and yellow and black robes enters the room they’re all in, and proceeds to threateningly explain the circumstances. The cult and Hastur both have tired of their interference, and now they’re going to teach the group a lesson they won’t soon forget, or get the information they know the group is keeping. They will do this through a calculated campaign of psychological and physical torture, which can last days if the group’s unlucky enough. Once the group has outlived their usefulness, they will be sacrificed, thrown into Carcosa, or otherwise disposed of. Unless the Investigators can escape, a grim fate awaits them, a dismaying revelation that causes 1d3 SAN loss.

Torture or at least severe pain is very likely to happen to all of the Investigators, at random. This torture consists of sustained psychological torment by isolation, exposure to corrupting Mythos influences like the Sign, and sleep deprivation. It also includes copious applications of physical tortures such as nail-pulling, whipping, and branding. Undergoing such torture deprives the investigator of 1d10 SAN per session, and can easily drive a more fragile investigator to madness. Those who do break under such torture will babble all they know, and willingly give up information to their captors. They may also potentially develop such things as learned helplessness or Stockholm Syndrome, or become withdrawn and depressed. A truly tormented and broken Investigator may even go so far as to attempt suicide, which the cult will always prevent.

One of the most horrific punishments the cult might inflict involves carving or branding the Yellow Sign into the victim. This scar never quite heals right, and always seems to have a sickly yellowish tinge to the flesh once it does, not unlike gangrene or jaundice. Occasionally, the cultist may also imbue the symbol with 2 MAG points to cause it to become active; otherwise it is just a symbol and horrific scar. The scar is always empowered if Hastur is nearby. Once powered, the brand cannot be removed even if the skin is removed as it slowly works its way into the mind of its victim, eventually coming back as a strange mark or scar.



An investigator afflicted with such a powered brand always feels a sick sort of squirming or pulsing from beneath the wound's surface, will hallucinate vividly, and has awful dreams of Carcosa. Someone so afflicted will slowly go mad from the symbol's taint, losing about 1d4+1 SAN every three hours or so. The victim feels a crushing despair and guilt, and a temptation to commit decadent acts, a compulsion from which he or she cannot be convinced to stray. Upon going permanently insane, the victim realizes the full power of Hastur and becomes a cultist themselves. The only reliable method of removal is to counter it with magic.

Jailbreak

If the group cannot get out within one week, they will be sacrificed to Hastur and all die horribly, in decadent or otherwise awful means. If they want any hope of survival, they will need to find a way out of their bonds, seek a way out of the building (filled with halls and tunnels), and escape the cult's range of influence. This will not be easy, as the cult's complex is in a rural location, filled with halls and tunnels, and may have some very dangerous traps and beings roaming within if the Keeper so desires. Suggested rooms in the complex might include rooms with cultist robes, rooms with their weapons, a room with a map to the complex, and rooms with various Yellow Mythos artifacts. The Keeper can also plant clues and connections to other scenarios in these rooms. Stealth, Locksmith, and possibly combat skills will all be needed to escape the nightmare the Investigators find themselves in now.

It is possible that the players might try to kill their captors if they get their weapons. Discourage this, as killing the cultists will only make the surviving ones angrier – and there's way more of them than there are of the Investigators. Destroying the base is an option, if the group can get out alive before whatever destroys it also destroys them! If the Keeper wants to take this option, there could be a room with some dynamite or high explosives in it (the cult was planning a mass terrorist attack in order to summon Hastur).

The group can, if they escape, report their ordeal to the police, however they will either need to have very good Interpersonal skills or enough evidence to support their claim. Showing any wounds or illegal goods snagged from the complex can do the trick. If they do successfully report to the police, expect them to descend swiftly on the compound and disband the cult once and for all. That's alright – their capture has absolutely no bearing on whatever the Keeper has planned for later. They can always regroup and return to haunt the Investigators – cultists don't like it when their sacrifices give them the runaround.

If the group successfully escapes, give them 1d8 SAN; if they themselves (not the police) manage to destroy or disband the cult somehow, give them 1d10 SAN instead. This may seem like an excessive amount of sanity as a reward, but they've earned it for becoming hostages and living to tell the tale.

Scene the Third: The Yellow Sign

This scenario has been adapted from the Robert W. Chambers tale of the same name, and it has a hefty amount of sanity loss as a result. Use this one to introduce new Investigators or expand it into a larger scenario.



A photographer named Byron has come into the possession of a mysterious brooch, which has an odd gold symbol inlaid into it. The brooch was given to him by his girlfriend and model Tessie, who found it in a rummage sale. Neither of them recognized the symbol on the brooch, but thought the design was interesting enough to keep. Tessie has been wearing it ever since.

Since obtaining the brooch, both Byron and Tessie have been beset with strange dreams and another problem still stranger. They have started noticing a man in all black that appears to be some sort of mortuary worker, pale as the grave and staring at them hatefully as he follows them around. This stalker has put them both on edge, leaving them paranoid of just about everything. Byron spends most of his time drinking, and Tessie refuses to leave their shared apartment.

The group can encounter Byron at a local bar or speakeasy, or perhaps even asleep in the gutter after a night of drinking too hard. Spot Hidden notes he's there, and Psychology can pick up that he is deeply troubled about something more intense than a typical drunkard. A curious Investigator can ply him for answers by buying him a drink or striking up a conversation, however a Persuade or Charm roll is needed to get him to start talking. Once he does, he begs the Investigators to believe him and even says he'll show them the brooch if they're skeptical. Moved by the person's sad tale, they will likely want to help.

Byron insists the group must come to his apartment to see the brooch. Tessie has it and will not let it out of her sight for some reason, so he can't just go get it. He is also unable to photograph it, as every photo he takes seems to come out damaged or in poor condition. The only option is to follow him to his apartment and see for themselves.

Once the Investigators acquiesce and go, they find the apartment in a condition of filth, covered in old canvases and bottles of liquor. Tessie herself is lying on a fainting couch, staring at the brooch as she turns it over in her hands. Psychology notes she is nearly catatonic from trauma, and Listen notes she is mumbling something. Anyone who has Cthulhu Mythos or has read *The King in Yellow* even partially can tell that she's murmuring lines from Cassilda's Song. It will take a Hard Interpersonal Skill roll (but not Intimidate or she shuts down) or proper application of Psychoanalysis to get her to part with the brooch even momentarily.

Have You Found...

The Investigators may have already guessed that the gold symbol on the brooch is of course the Yellow Sign, and the man the photographer keeps seeing is the Phantom of Truth.

The Phantom is another aspect of Hastur that haunts anyone familiar with the King who has found the brooch – a regal Carcosan artifact – and seeks to return it to its rightful place. He will do anything and everything, including killing the brooch's owner, to do so.

The brooch itself is a dangerous thing, as it thrums with the dark energy of Carcosa and causes the slow mental decay of its owner, not to mention a temptation towards decadence. It can also potentially summon the King if imbued with enough magic points (it currently has 20 and will summon the King with another 20). If used with the spell Call/Dismiss Hastur, the success rate of that spell is 50%. This is a very big problem, obviously, and thus the brooch cannot fall into the wrong hands.

Upon seeing the brooch, the group might rightly conclude it's got the Yellow Sign on it if they have prior experience with it, and if not a Cthulhu Mythos can reveal its origins and some of its purpose. If they tell Byron and Tessie about the symbol's meaning, they become terrified. Both have read the play and know what this means for them. Unfortunately, as soon as they comprehend all this and start to discuss the ramifications, everything goes downhill.

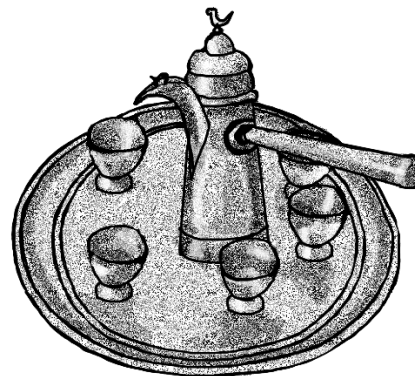
... The Yellow Sign?

Suddenly, all of the lights in the building die, startling Tessie to the point that she begins to hyperventilate. A cold, chilling decay is creeping into the room, almost an insidious cold. Byron begins to try and barricade the door, however the sound of footsteps and someone jiggling the doorknob can be heard. Before the Investigators' eyes, the door and anything piled against it begin to quickly mildew, corrode, and decay with a sickening yellowish rot that smells of algae (1/1d4 SAN loss). Once the door is broken, a deathly pale man in all black enters, his eyes glowering with hate. The Phantom has returned to claim his brooch, and he's going to stop at nothing to get it!

The task is to either destroy the brooch or somehow escape with it alive. Destroying the brooch is difficult – it will not melt, will not mar, and will not pit from acid or fire. The only real option is magic. If the brooch is dissolved in Space-Mead (brewed for such a purpose) or otherwise destroyed/warded by magic, it ceases to be effective and the Phantom, roaring in anger, will cease to haunt the players and Byron/Tessie any longer. Destroying the brooch can grant the players 1d8 SAN. If the brooch is not destroyed but is kept, the owner continues to be haunted and pursued by the Phantom, however it could have other applications if the Keeper chooses.

Byron and Tessie are doomed unless the players specifically save them from the Phantom somehow. Whether by magical or mundane means, award 1d4 SAN for saving them both. If only Tessie survives, she goes inescapably mad and never recovers, forever murmuring about their lost love and her belief she is Princess Camilla. If only Byron lives, he will begin madly and feverishly assuming the regalia of the King, believing himself an heir or otherwise a member of the royal court.

If the brooch is not destroyed and the above is the case, one of these mad souls will keep it and never part from it. They will later be found dead, the brooch gone forever. If the players stumble on Tessie or Byron later on somehow in these states, take 1d4 SAN out of remorse.



Scene the Fourth: Strange Brew

This one is perhaps best used as a dream sequence or hallucination, since having an Investigator undergo it for real can kill or drive them permanently mad. Use it judiciously, and wisely, if you make it more than just a dream.

Some Light Refreshment

For whatever reason (dream, an inopportune meeting with the King, shift in reality, etc.), one of the Investigators suddenly notices something. If other Investigators are with them, they see nothing except that Investigator staring into space, entranced. He cannot be woken no matter what they do.

The affected Investigator finds themselves suddenly alone with a strange figure – perhaps it is the King, perhaps it is a cultist, or perhaps it is something else. This person doesn't speak much if at all, and silently offers the Investigator a golden chalice filled with a golden liquid, in which small black, ashy particles are suspended, shimmering like stars. A successful Cthulhu Mythos roll reveals the drink is Space Mead – and a critical success in this same skill (or a successful Pharmacy or Chemistry check) reveals it's a particularly potent version of it. The brew smells clearly alcoholic but delicious, and the stranger seems eager for them to enjoy the beverage.

The Investigator now has a choice to make. They can drink the liquid, or they can refuse, but they must make a decision. They cannot simply walk away, and if they try they find themselves standing before the same figure as before. Carcosa and all things involved with it bend spacetime to the King's will, playing weird games with reality in sanity-straining ways.

To Parts Unknown

If the Investigator bravely accepts the offering of Space Mead, then something particularly interesting and possibly sanity-straining occurs.

The first thing they recognize is the flavor and character of the drink – it’s dry but sweet in an acidic way. It has clear notes of something approximating honey, but has an underlying bitterness stronger than most mead, and an odd aftertaste the drinker cannot quite place. The drink has a slow burn not unlike whiskey, and spreads a pleasant tingling sensation throughout the body.

Immediately after imbibing the beverage, the drinker feels deeply intoxicated. Their head swims, their words slur, and a feeling of well-being permeates them. Then a leaden feeling comes over the person’s limbs; they begin to feel weak, and their thoughts slow as they fall into a deep slumber. If there are other Investigators with the person, they notice the affected Investigator slump to the ground, comatose. Nothing can wake them until the Space Mead’s effects wear off, at which time they will be back in control of their body.

What has just happened is that the Investigator’s mind has been cast out of their body into a place of the Keeper’s choosing. Upon awakening, they discover themselves in a strange locale; either another time, place, or reality from our own. The effect wears off in 1d4 hours, but in that time the Investigator is having one hell of a trip.

Below is a chart that can be used to determine where the Investigator has been sent. It is best if the Keeper does not choose a location that will cause more than 1d6 SAN loss.

| D10 Result | Investigator Finds Themselves... |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| 1-3 | In another time (past or future) |
| 4-6 | In an alternate reality |
| 7-9 | In an alien location |
| 0 | In Carcosa |

What happens to the unfortunate Investigator then depends on the Keeper, but whatever occurs, the experience is not pleasant. Upon waking, the Investigator is in a cold sweat, shaken and pale. From their experience, they take 1/1d4 SAN loss. The victim is otherwise fine, and depending on what they experienced, can gain a single point of Cthulhu Mythos for their trouble.

All Just A Dream?

If the Investigator ignores the stranger or outright refuses to drink the liquid, the stranger flies into a rage and shows their true, otherworldly nature, whatever the Keeper deigns that to be. If the Investigator runs, they find their movement slowed as if in a nightmare as the being chases them. Furthermore, their location has no exit, leaving them trapped with the horror. The Stranger attacks the Investigator with tentacles and spells, teeth and claws, leaving them near death or outright killing them... or so it seems.

Just before the final blow is struck, the Investigator wakes up or snaps out of the vision, as if recovering from an awful nightmare, sweating and shaking, pale as death. To their horror, as they check themselves over to ensure that it wasn’t real, they find they are left with tingling, yellowish scars approximating the wounds. These marks are not permanent, and fade after a few moments’ time. However, the Investigator is so frightened by their experience that they take 1/1d6 SAN from it.

Seeing Things?

Another option for the particularly mean Keeper is to have the aftereffects of the Space Mead trip the affected Investigator up for a bit after the vision. Space Mead, being so potent and alcoholic, is notorious for leaving nasty hangovers in creatures with a central nervous system. And by nasty, it can cause the unprepared drinker to become nauseous, have a horrible headache, and hallucinate vividly for up to 1d8 hours after the fact. These hallucinations are frightening, sometimes giving glimpses of the future or past, sometimes reminding the sufferer of what they experienced, and sometimes revealing some awful thing that lies just beyond the veil. The victim can see just how the Mythos taints him and his companions, the true natures of disguised beasts, and how tenuously close alternate realities and dimensions are to our own. These revelations are so jarring they can take up to 1d4/1d8 SAN from the sufferer, depending on the nature and quality of the hallucination. The average hallucination claims 1/1d4 SAN, similar to waking up from the dream.



Scene the Fifth: The Masquerade

A popular choice of event for any Hastur game is to bring in imagery from the infamous masquerade ball scene from the play. This is one way of doing that. It’s best used as a hallucination, a climax to a game, a dream, or as evidence that Carcosa’s reality is beginning to impose on our own. Such an experience is incredibly mentally mangling; it’s highly likely someone will go mad here.

Paper Faces on Parade

The Investigators suddenly stumble into another room or building to discover a beautiful, opulent, and well-planned masquerade ball going on. They find themselves dressed in fancy attire, with jewels and masks to match the beautiful outfits they're wearing. Food is plentiful, wine flows freely, party guests dance to skillful musicians in a breathtakingly large ballroom. Beyond them, the windows overlook a vast lake, its waters lapping at a shadowy, ashen shore and the skies beyond twinkling with both black and white stars in a sunset-tinged sky. It's as if even the natural world has put on its formal best for the occasion. The masks of the many guests are quite detailed, and some are even in full costume. There is music and gaiety, laughter and merriment, beauty and delicate conversation; all seems wonderful.

The time is approximately ten minutes to midnight.

The Investigators are free to ask the partygoers what happened and why they are here now, but they won't get very much information from anyone. Upon being noticed, the group will find themselves scooped up into the fray – enjoying the pleasures of decadent food and drink, the company of beautiful women and handsome men, and perhaps even speaking to some of the play's characters. Anyone who thinks they are one of the characters due to a delusional madness will find themselves absorbed fully into their role, unable to do anything other than go along with it. The partygoers will treat this person as if they were that character, and express confusion and perhaps dismay or disapproval at anyone who doesn't follow suit.

Sow in little threads that something is very wrong, especially if nobody realizes where they are yet. The Keeper can even call for Idea rolls, or set the players on edge by making them make seemingly useless rolls as they speak to the characters of the play and take in the party. The greater an air of uneasiness you set up, the better the inevitable payoff will be. A successful Cthulhu Mythos or Occult roll, or enough conversation, will quickly reveal their location to be the queen's grand palace in Yhtill during the famous masquerade scene. This realization will surely horrify anyone familiar with the play, since they know exactly what's coming next!

“You, Sir, Must Unmask!”

Come five minutes to midnight, a strange figure will enter the room, and the entire party will grind to a halt. The stranger is clad entirely in torn and dirty rags, and hasn't even deigned to make an appropriate mask – theirs is only a plain and grimy white, with no embellishments and very little detail to it. The whole costume seems like a mockery and pastiche of the others' opulent and incredibly detailed costumes, especially that of the queen's. Partygoers gasp in shock and dismay, and whispers begin to swirl.

A successful Listen check reveals that some think the costume this stranger wears is tacky and disturbed, while some praise the avant-garde nature of the simple costume. The stranger pays no heed, however, and most people seem to stay out of his way – they're either offended and want nothing to do with this tatterdemalion, or are frightened seemingly by something else about the stranger... something in his gaze, something in the eyes beneath that blank, off-putting white mask...

The complete tonal shift of the party is more than enough for the queen to notice (whether or not she's an investigator suffering from a delusion or the actual queen is beside the point). The queen, offended and not willing to stand for such a mockery, confronts the stranger. Her daughter, Camilla, joins her in this endeavor, thoroughly confused by the complete shift in tone. The atmosphere is tense and silent, and the entire crowd hinges on the queen's words as the entire sequence of the infamous “I wear no mask” scene then plays out.

The result of this is a slow, dawning realization as midnight hits – first of the queen and her daughter, then of nearby listeners and the Investigators, then finally of all the partygoers. The stranger is no man... no, not a man at all, but a particularly virulent idea, and a very bad omen. As the clock strikes midnight, the stranger's “mask” cracks into a horrific, mad smile (0/1d4 SAN) and the world begins to fall apart. The white stars fade until only the black ones remain, strange and previously unnoticed moons rise and eclipse the setting suns, mass chaos breaks out in the ballroom, and people seem to begin going mad and dying horrifically left and right as the stranger treads through the room, his power growing and his true nature as the Yellow King slowly taking shape (1d10/1d20 SAN if they know this is Hastur; otherwise 1d8/1d12 SAN). Think the climax of Edgar Allen Poe's “The Masque of the Red Death” here, and you've got the right idea. People are screaming in sudden madness and beating each other senseless, cannibalizing each other, ripping their eyes and intestines out, setting fire to the glorious décor and banners of the room... and Yhtill falls, merging with Carcosa, *becoming* Carcosa. Seeing this horrific massacre and madness causes the loss of 1d4/1d8 SAN.

The Fall of Yhtill

As the Investigators struggle in the pandemonium, they will need to find a way back out. The doors are locked, the stranger has set its eyes upon them, and he's rapidly approaching. An accursed and foul, pestilent wind blows, rifling the tatters of the King's mantle in a mad flurry of yellow scraps, sending chills through even the most stalwart heart. Victims beg and madmen pray for help that never comes. And all the while, the King is getting closer...

What should follow next is a mad flight from the ballroom and out of the terror therein. The Keeper is free to use chase rules, force DEX rolls, or otherwise have some sort of impediment. However, it's up to the Investigators how they get out of this awful mess, and the fair Keeper will play to this. Do they all die here? Do they run, madly, through the palace or through doors that lead to places that shouldn't exist, or do they find a portal leading back to their reality? Do they wake up screaming from a horrific nightmare? Do they pick the locks on the doors and make a break for it, or chance jumping out the window into the lake's fickle waves? Or, do they confront the King and see what happens?

Altogether, this horrific experience grants everyone involved 5 percentiles of Cthulhu Mythos, and costs up to 1d8/1d12 SAN (that's not counting the previous SAN losses). If they survive and the Keeper feels kindly, they can gain 1d4 SAN back for escaping the clutches of a Great Old One.



Scene the Sixth: The Pallid Mask

Aside from the Yellow Sign itself, the Pallid Mask of the Stranger is perhaps one of the most recognizable items from the play. In this minor encounter, the Investigators uncover this item, and its effects are discussed as well. The Keeper can put this item anywhere they wish, but it should be hard won.

A Curious Artifact

While exploring some foreboding locale, call for Listen checks. With a successful result, they hear vague whispering, a female voice. There are no consistent words that make any sense; it's in tongues. With a successful Spot Hidden roll, an Investigator will find a plain-looking, grime-streaked porcelain mask, cracked with age and wear. The mask gives only a vague approximation of a face – there are eye holes and nose holes, but no mouth hole, and there seems to be no way to secure it onto one's face.

The inside of the mask is pitted with small pockmarks that look like acid splashed it or something bit into the porcelain. From the eye and nose holes of this mask streaks what looks like rust or reddish grime, as if the previous wearer had been crying blood. If examined with Biology or Chemistry, this grime cannot be identified as any earthly substance. There are scrapes and scratches marring the surface that, if INT is rolled, are consistent with someone or something clawing furiously at the mask's face, as if trying to pull it free.

If an Investigator picks the mask up, the whispering grows louder for them and they will feel an uncanny, strong urge to put the mask on. Have the player roll Hard POW against POW 50. A successful roll means the investigator snaps out of the strange trance the mask put them in, and with a successful INT check can figure out that the mask is probably some sort of dangerous artifact. Successfully rolling Occult, Cthulhu Mythos, or INT (if they have previously read *The King in Yellow* or are otherwise familiar with the play's characters) lets them learn that they are holding the Pallid Mask. It's probably for the best if the Investigator puts it down or destroys it, although they can keep it if they really want to. However, if they do keep the mask, it will continue whispering to them, and they will need to continue to make Hard POW checks to resist its temptations.

However, if the Investigator doesn't successfully make the POW check, they fall into a trance from which no one can snap them out of. During this time, they are compelled to put the mask on. Upon doing so, the mask immediately snaps onto the victim's face and will not come off. The wearer feels a sensation like a slug or octopus glommed onto their face, and will more than likely try to struggle with it, but no matter what they try, the mask won't budge. The victim's eyes seem to vanish within coalescing shadows in the eye holes, and the wearer is then subject to a vision of Carcosa, the true nature of Hastur, the King, or some other appropriate vision. It has been left to the Keeper to determine precisely what the wearer sees.

While wearing the mask, the Investigator reacts to all they are seeing as if it were really happening. If someone hands them something in the vision, they reach to take it; if something attacks them they fight back, etc. It appears to on-lookers as if the wearer is pantomiming something, for they cannot speak even if they are spoken to. The wearer is so ensorcelled by the mask's power that they can't break free even if they wanted to. The visions seen while wearing the mask may grant knowledge, foresight, spells, or some sort of weapon as the Keeper wishes. Upon completion of the vision, the victim collapses unconscious, and the mask clatters to the floor.

All visions experienced in this way grant five percentiles of Cthulhu Mythos and incur a penalty of 1d4/1d8 SAN, unless the unlucky devil sees Hastur; then use 1d10/1d100 SAN (If it's the King in Yellow avatar, use 1d8/1d2 SAN loss). This SAN damage occurs every time the mask is worn; the wearer does not become used to the visions. An Investigator driven insane by the mask will assume they are acting, and may even believe they are a character from the play. They may gain an obsession with or fear of masks, a fear of the color yellow, or any other such madness the Keeper finds appropriate.

If the Investigator keeps the mask on their person, misfortune follows. It is, after all, an artifact belonging to a Great Old One, and odds are he won't be too happy that someone has stolen it.

“No Mask?!”

Another option if the Keeper feels like being horrible is to have the mask become somewhat addictive. The person who first put it on feels a compulsion to wear it again that becomes stronger over time until they never want to take it off. As they wear it more and more, they become the King while wearing the mask, and begin to act as if they are such.

Every time the mask is worn, the temptation to use it again grows stronger as Hastur exerts his influence on the unfortunate wearer, calling for increasingly difficult POW checks. The slow blurring of roles begins to warp the poor soul, until they can no longer tell the mask, and thus the role, from reality. That is, they slowly become the King in Yellow until they are convinced they are him, and act like it regardless of if they're wearing the mask or not. This process becomes more and more prominent until the wearer finally goes Permanently Insane. At that point the King painfully manifests through the wearer to roam Earth, at least so long as Aldebaran is above the horizon. This type of manifestation kills the wearer and costs anyone witnessing it 1d8/1d12 SAN.

On the plus side, the wearer of such a mask is revered by Hastur's followers as an aspect of the King, or as otherwise having been touched by the King in some manner. This can be good to get out of a bind, despite the serious drawbacks. It can also give glimpses of the nature of reality and act as a reserve for POW (it has 20 POW in it and slowly regenerates it over time). Whether these benefits are worth the risk is up to the Investigators to decide.

The mask is made of mundane porcelain and can be destroyed by perfectly mundane means, but it matters little. Such an artifact imbued with the power of a Great Old One is likely to never truly be destroyed. It will inevitably manifest again, somewhere else... perhaps even back on the face of the person who first found and wore it.



Ashen Remnants of the King

Somewhere in a cold, dark abandoned theater there lies a set of faded scraps of paper upon which are written stage notes for a truly wicked play. Faded and worn, these shreds and tatters of darkness will unnerve any Investigator unlucky enough to find themselves in such scenes...

Shreds and Tatters is a set of six short interludes involving Hastur and Carcosa. 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.

