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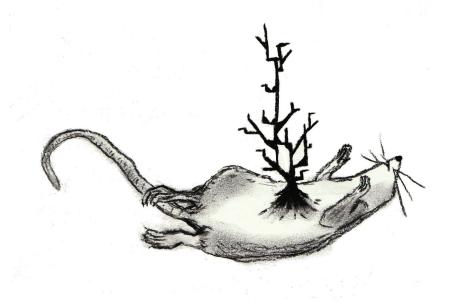


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## INTRODUCTION

"Plague" is designed as a four-to-six-hour, one-shot scenario for Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition. Six pregenerated characters are provided. With four players, the game can reach a satisfactory climax in four hours, perfect for a convention setting. Adding players tends to add hours to the session. With six players, you could split the game into two 3-hour sessions if playing at home.

Set in Arkham, Massachusetts, in modern times, the players are investigators for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), called from Boston to deal with a mysterious illness suddenly appearing in an Arkham apartment building. The house is under quarantine when the investigators arrive, and after some brief investigations outside the team enters the house and the heart of the scenario.

Read this scenario carefully. The house is home to more than a dozen NPCs, and you should know how each reacts to the investigators, a reaction that changes once the NPC in question becomes sick. We haven't predetermined which NPCs fall sick during the scenario, rather, that choice is randomly determined. The scenario changes depending on who is sick and how sick they are when the investigators arrive.

There are a few triggering events that let you control the pace of the game, which otherwise unfolds based on the investigators' choices as they explore the house and deal with the infected occupants. The clues to unravelling the mystery are all present in the house, as is the Mythos monster. A second monster, which often signals the end of the scenario, manifests either in the house or directly outside it, smashing its way in.

## **KEEPER'S BACKGROUND**

Before being banished to the underworld of the Dreamlands, the hideous creatures called gugs lived on the surface of the Earth, vying for the same ecological space as a species of living, granitelike gnomes. Long before human civilizations, these two races warred, the larger and more powerful gugs often capturing and imprisoning the more populous gnomes in stone monoliths. The gugs also used these monoliths as centers for their abhorrent ceremonies and file venerations of their repulsive gods. The ancient Earth gods brought ruin to the gugs' earthly cities, relocating both gug and granite gnome survivors below the Dreamlands' surface. The monoliths remain, hidden in remote valleys and tucked away in untrod defiles.

A few brief mentions of these practices are found in Von Junzt's *Nameless Cults*, the infamous "Black Book" compiled in the mid-nineteenth century and later published in the late twentieth century in abridged and error-filled mass paperback editions. While most of *Nameless Cults* concerns cults active during the author's time, a few sentences mention the ancient practices of the gugs, their diminutive enemies, and their reverence for the mysterious black monoliths. The Penhew Company, a multinational conglomerate with business interests across the globe, desires these monoliths and the secrets they may hold. The company recently funded a team of archeologists and geologists from Miskatonic University to explore several of the sites suspected of housing the artifacts.

In a remote pocket in the mountains of Hungary, near the almost-forgotten village of Stregoicavar, the team discovered one of the monoliths. They took several photographs and video recordings, and chipped a few samples from its granite-like surface. One of the team, a graduate student named **Henry Wharton**, clandestinely took a larger sample. While the other members slept, Wharton pried a fist-sized rock from the monolith. He returned with it hidden in his backpack, in the hopes that he could use the artifact to further his personal academic career.

Upon the group's return, the Penhew Company grew suspicious of the paltry artifacts delivered by the group. The Penhew Company owns several buildings in Arkham, including the apartment building Wharton lives in. It was an easy matter to hire a local private investigator to follow Wharton and report on his activities. Wharton led a simple life, and other than regular trips to the university library and visits with a friendly neighbor and fellow academic, there was little to mention. Ordering the P.I. to continue following Wharton, **Letitia Beasley**, the executive in charge of the Monolith project, contemplated breaking into Wharton's room and looking around. But tragedy strikes before she can implement this plan.

Wharton is friends with Miguel Delgato, another graduate student who works in a plant pathology lab at Miskatonic University and also lives in Wharton's apartment building. On the morning of August 15, the second extremely hot day of the year, Wharton and Delgato left their apartment house on French Hill and walked to the University. As per the last few days, the P.I. followed the pair. Delgato split off and headed to the lab, while Wharton, followed by the P.I., headed to Miskatonic University's Orne Library. Delgato had a noticeable cough. Signing in at 8:00 AM, Delgato collapsed and was discovered unconscious at 10:00 by fellow lab worker Brian Clapper. Rushed to the hospital, Delgato died from a mysterious illness at 11:00. Clapper immediately showed signs of infection, a ragged cough and fever, and died an hour later. Fearful that such a virulent disease could decimate the town, the hospital called the closest office of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which ordered Delgato's residence quarantined. The local police complied and informed the owner, the Penhew Company.

CDC Operations Manager **Carlton Ochs** (pronounced "oaks") arrived on the scene. He had Delgato's and Clapper's bodies transferred to a mobile morgue unit, an RV-sized mobile laboratory, which was then driven to the scene of the quarantine, 969 S French Hill St. The property, known as the Brighton House, is an old two-story Victorian mansion converted into several apartments. French Hill is one of Arkham's lower income neighborhoods, filled with blue-collar workers, minorities, and poorly paid graduate students. By 1 o'clock (13:00) the local police chief, **John Bennett**, called in the heavily-armed Arkham S.W.A.T. team and had the quarantine in place, with the residents shut inside Brighton House.

Letitia Beasley arrived from New York, ostensibly to do damage control but more interested in what's happening inside Brighton House. Does this have anything to do with Wharton's latest expedition, and the secret samples she suspects he has taken?

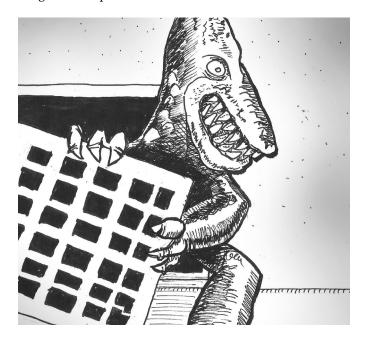
Why yes, it does.

## WHAT LIES UNDERNEATH

During his stay in Stregoicavar, Wharton suffered terrible nightmares, visions of Neanderthal tribes making blood sacrifices at the base of the black monolith. Compelled by these visions, one night while his colleagues slept he snuck to the monolith and removed a fist-sized rock, a roughly spherical section that almost seemed to pop out of the monolith of its own accord. Upon returning home, Wharton placed the rock on his desk. After taking more pictures of it, he pushed it to a back corner and concentrated on finding more information about the monoliths in the restricted section of Orne Library.

The rock is not a rock. It is a gnome-like creature from the Dreamlands, a being similar to the Goatswood gnomes found in the British Severn Valley, but rolled and compressed into the fetal position. Made out of granite, this curled-up statue has the appearance of an oddly shaped stone roughly 7-inches in diameter. Over the centuries the creature, named **Bruk-B'Zulh**, managed to squirm its way towards the monolith's exterior. Noticing the Miskatonic University team, it invaded Wharton's dreams and convinced the grad student to pry it loose. Freed from the monolith, Bruk-B'Zulh was still helpless and immobile, a condition caused by Hungary's cool temperatures and one that lasted all the way back to Arkham.

August 14 was unnaturally hot, the beginning of the summer's first anticipated heat wave. The poorly insulated Brighton House grew warm enough for Bruk-B'Zulh to regain his mobility. In the early hours of August 15, the day that the scenario begins, Bruk-B'Zulh used the house's heating ventilation shafts to visit a few of the house's occupants. Leaning over the sleeping victim, Bruk-B'Zulh breathed into his or her mouth, releasing a toxin that infects the victim with a lethal disease, fatal within approximately three hours. From the infected's corpse sprouts black fractals, fast-growing compositions that emerge like fungus from a rotting log. Several patches of the fractals can grow from a single body, forming branching, tree-like structures that grow as high as twenty feet. Called "corpse trees," once there are enough of these fractals to form a forest that is too thick to see through to the other side, a gate opens in its midst that will transport a walker to the Dreamlands. Bruk-B'Zulh hopes to use this gate to escape back to the Dreamlands.



Leaving Wharton's room through the ventilation shaft, Bruk-B'Zulh crawled to Delgato's room and infected him. The evil statue then climbed upwards into Keith Johns's room and infected him, hoping to grow two separate patches of corpse trees. Bruk-B'Zulh then climbed down into the building's ancient furnace in the basement to wait. Delgato woke soon after and went to work. Johns woke, noticed his cough, and stayed home in bed. Johns died three hours later, around 10:00, after which corpse trees began to sprout and grow. If left unnoticed, it will take 10 hours for enough corpse trees to grow to activate a gate within them (8 o'clock or 20:00).

In the Dreamlands, the gugs notice the growing corpse trees and the soon-to-open gate. Symbiotically linked to the statue through their ancient racial hatred, the gugs wait for the gate to open, at which point one of them will rush through to capture and re-imprison the statue.

## THE DISEASE AND THE CORPSE TREES

Bruk-B'Zulh's spell creates an especially toxic pathogen. After initial infection, the pathogen kills the victim within 3 hours. While the victim is ill, the pathogen spreads through airborne proximity to other victims. Investigators not wearing breathing apparatus and in proximity to a living, sick person, need to succeed with a **CON** roll or catch the disease. Airborne infection ends when the victim dies.

During the first hour of the disease, stage 1, the infected suffers a harsh cough and aches and pains in their joints. The second hour brings fever and unconsciousness, unless they succeed at a Hard **CON** roll. Most victims at stage 2 head for bed. In the final hour, stage 3, the host's internal organs begin to liquefy, turning into a black, viscous fluid that shines like motor oil. At this stage, victims cannot move unless they succeed with an Extreme **CON** roll. Death is unavoidable if the disease progresses this far. Each stage takes approximately one hour.

Investigators can delay the disease, however, perhaps enough to find a cure. If a **Medicine** roll succeeds on someone who suffers in stage 1, they will remain at stage 1 for another hour. Subsequent **Medicine** successes can keep a victim at this stage of the disease's progression. It is more difficult to aid a person at stage 2, but a Hard **Medicine** roll will keep them from progressing to stage 3. An Extreme **Medicine** roll effectively returns the sufferer to stage 1. At stage 3, the victim is beyond the benefits of modern medicine, and no amount of treatment can save them. If an infected individual can survive a full day of the disease, meaning that they are held at stage 1 or stage 2 for 24 hours, then it will mysteriously depart the victim with no lasting side-effects.

A few hours after death, the oil begins forming cartilaginous structures that grow and branch like fractal trees, initially from the corpse's mouth, but later burst the skin in a shrubbery of death. These fractal limbs draw to one another, and branch and stretch in their slow attempt to join other corpse trees. When enough of these trees link, a doorway to the Dreamlands opens, allowing for the passage of physical forms between our world and the Dreamlands. A single corpse sprouts enough corpse trees for a gate to form within 10 hours. That time is halved for each additional corpse close enough for its corpse trees to intersect. The fractal corpse trees are unharmed by fire but slowed by freezing temperatures, and are extremely difficult to break. They are also extremely conductive, and after reaching a foot in height begin to generate their own electrical charges. Contact with a corpse tree that is taller than a foot but less than five feet high causes 1D2 points of electrical damage. Corpse trees taller than five feet cause 1D4 points of damage. Moving through a corpse tree forest is exceedingly difficult, and if an investigator does not succeed on a Hard **Stealth** or **DEX** roll, she suffers 1d8 points of damage per round spent moving through the forest. Bruk-B'Zulh and the gugs are immune to this damage, the first being made of stone and the second biologically linked with the trees.

A secondary condition of the corpse trees is that their electrical charges effectively negate other sources of electricity nearby, including those things that draw electrical power. As soon as a mature corpse tree grows in the house, investigators' cell phones and radio stop working, as do the rest of the electrical appliances inside the house.

## THE CDC TEAM

The players form the team of CDC agents summoned by Ochs to investigate Brighton House and contain the mysterious disease. Stationed in Boston, none of them have ever visited Arkham before, although they may have heard of the sleepy college town on a regular **Idea** roll. Fill in the group with whatever details you like about Arkham and Miskatonic University.

The CDC agents each have interpersonal relationships and conflicts with other members of the group. Much of this scenario's roleplaying comes from characters dealing with these conflicts while in the midst of an emergency, and from dealing with the tenants of the Brighton House apartment building.

At the beginning of the scenario, the investigators are in touch with the outside world. They have a radio connected to Ochs outside and they carry cell phones. They may use the internet on their phones, text, etc., at any time, and, if creative, they might receive several clues in this manner. As the corpse trees grow, however, the electricity they produce interferes with all electronics in the house—cell phones shut off, and the radio goes to static. A summary of each pregenerated investigator is provided here for the Keeper's convenience. Full stats and character sheets are found at the end of the scenario.

## VERONICA SHU, 45, PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISOR

- Veronica is the boss of this outfit. She's smart, tough, and has worked for the CDC long enough to know when to call bullshit. While stubborn when she knows it's important, she's not bullheaded, and will listen to her subordinates in tough situations—that being said, she's not afraid of making unpopular calls.
- A few years ago, the CDC promoted Veronica out of another division to chair this team, passing up John Severn for promotion in the process. While he says that he doesn't hold a grudge, Veronica can never quite tell where John's loyalties lie.
- Veronica was responsible for the hiring of Eliza Hayes, the young and prodigally brilliant toxicologist. Now, Veronica and Eliza are fast friends; the two take jiu-jitsu classes together every week.

## ELIZA HAYES, 28, TOXICOLOGIST

• Eliza was one of the youngest M.D. hires at the CDC in a long time. In her time at the Centers, Eliza has identified and helped arrest several highly virulent agents before they got out of control.

• Recently, Eliza has been dating Bill Beatty. She knows that Bill and Pat Gelena were once engaged, but she doesn't think (somewhat naively) that Pat has any feelings left for Bill.

## PAT GELENA, 32, MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIST

- Pat is one of the foremost technologists (someone who analyzes body fluids and tissues) in the United States. She designed the standard technologist field kit now used by CDC agents throughout the country.
- Pat and Bill Beatty were engaged to be married about two years ago. After Bill called it off, Pat spent a lot of time trying to get over him. While for the most part she has, there remain complicated feelings around both him and his new love affair, Eliza Hayes. Eliza is smart and beautiful, and Pat, despite herself, has to admire Eliza somewhat.
- Pat has recently started dating Fred Gillette, the young medical student who has shadowed the team for the past few months.

## FRED GILLETTE, 26, COCKY MEDICAL STUDENT

- Newest member of the team, Fred is oblivious to the interpersonal connections of the other team members.
- The son of a New England senator, Fred is extremely self-centered, constantly looking for ways to promote himself by out-performing his teammates. His CDC career is one step toward greater things.
- Fred recently, and secretly, started dating Pat.

## JOHN SEVERN, 57, PHYSICIAN

- A 30-year veteran of the CDC, John is five weeks away from retirement.
- John has known Bill, Pat, and Veronica for years. He likes Bill and Pat, but doesn't know Eliza terribly well. Sharp-eyed, John is aware of the tension that exists between John and Pat, and Pat and Eliza.
- John resents being passed up for promotion, but would never admit that his lackluster performance over the years had anything to do with it. While there isn't anything in particular that he dislikes about Veronica, and privately he thinks she does a pretty damn good job of leading the team, he often grumbles about the tasks she assigns him.

## BILL BEATTY, 30, PHYSICIAN

- Though a decent physician, Bill seems to have the emotional maturity of a college student.
- He proposed to Pat to keep the relationship going, but once he realized that she really did want to marry him, he broke up with her. He claimed that he needed to put his profession first, but was soon spotted at local singles clubs.
- He swears to Eliza Hayes, his newest and latest girlfriend, that he is a changed man and serious about their relationship.

## CDC EQUIPMENT

Each investigator has a hazmat suit and an SCBA. They also have short-range, Bluetooth headsets so they can communicate with each other as they move through the house. Each has the necessary tools of their profession. Everyone has stethoscopes, gauze, medical tape, and flashlights. There is one defibrillator for the group—at the outset, determine who would like to carry it. If an investigator asks if they have a specific piece of equipment, let the dice decide. If it fits in a medical kit, a regular **Luck** success allows it. If it would need to be carried separately, like a humane trap to catch a rat, a Hard **Luck** roll is required. **ADMINISTRATOR'S KIT (SHU)** 

## Notebook

Flashlight Voice recorder Measuring tape UV light Thermometer

## PHYSICIAN'S KIT (GILLETTE, BEATTY, AND SEVERN)

#### Albuterol inhaler

Epinephrine pen Stimulants and sedatives Suture Kit Aspirin Bandages Blood pressure cuff Pulse Oximeter

#### TECHNOLOGIST'S KIT (GELENA)

Urinalysis Kit Phlebotomy Kit Anthrax Test Kit Camera Nasal swabs Alcohol swabs Measuring tape Notebooks



## TOXICOLOGIST'S KIT (HAYES)

Sterile swabs Sterile scalpel Portable microscope (attaches to smartphone) UV light Thermometer Notebooks

## WEARING A HAZMAT SUIT

Through protective, hazmat suits can be clumsy and inhibit physical activities. As an option, you can penalize physical skill rolls with a penalty die when appropriate to increase tension. In other circumstances, wearing a hazmat suit might benefit the investigator. Rolls like **Intimidate** and **Persuade**, again when appropriate, should receive a bonus die.

## **BRIGHTON HOUSE**

Once a stately Victorian manor home, perched at the top of South French Hill Street, the house is but a shadow of its former glory. The frame that once held a pair of large, handsome doors still remains, but the landowners have replaced the doors with a cheap, swinging glass entrance. Inside, a large atrium testifies to the house's past majesty, with a spiraling staircase winding up the walls of a center chamber. A grand fountain sits in disrepair in the center of this vaulting room, and the tenants access each of their apartments via this central staircase.

In the sixties, the once-handsomely furnished apartments and parlors of the manor were walled off, kitchenettes added, and numbers applied next to the doors. For a decade or two, they provided cheap but comfortable apartments, but by the 1990s the house had begun to fall into disrepair, and today Brighton House is little more than a tenement. The rooms are cheap, overcrowded, and the house has taken on a sickly smell, rotting from the inside out. Neighborhood kids say that the house is haunted, and the children who live there play loudly anywhere they can.

Penhew American Apartments, a subsidiary of the Penhew Company, owns the house. The company hires out maintenance to local contractors, and there is no super or maintenance man in residence.

## THE FIRST FLOOR

The first floor of the Victorian mansion contains five rooms converted into apartments, all radiating off from a central atrium and circular stairway.

## **ROOM 101**

Occupants: Ryan and Carla Cash, mid-70s, former hippies

**Description:** Ryan and Carla Cash are burned out stoners from the 1960s. Now in their 70's, they both "partake" regularly, and their apartment has a constant skunky smell. Both live off wealthy inheritances set up for them years ago, but display no evidence of this wealth. Their apartment is chock full of old paperback novels, stacks of newspapers, tattered easy chairs and two flower-patterned couches with numerous small burn marks. On the far wall an old CTR television sits playing CSPAN. Ryan styles himself a philosopher and will engage the investigators in rambling conversations about existentialism. Carla reads mystery novels, and can cite her favorite authors. Both are paranoid and convinced that the investigators are from the government (they are) and here to steal their rights, although they aren't certain which particular rights those might be. Both have hacking smoker's coughs, and when they get infected the first hour of contamination goes unnoticed.

When the investigators arrive: The couple remain oblivious to the outside world and sit in their apartment absorbed in their own interests. They won't even have realized that the house is quarantimed.

**When sick:** If either gets sick, then the other treats them tenderly, putting them to bed and making them tea with honey. They won't think to go for help until the last hour.

## **ROOM 102**

#### Occupant: Miguel Delgato, 31, lab technician

**Description:** Miguel has kept his apartment neat and wellorganized, and the only clutter is his stack of PS4 games by the 56" LCD screen. He has nothing suspicious in his personal effects, either in the apartment or online. It seems that he worked, came home, ate microwavable meals and played console games at night. His apartment is almost suspiciously clean and well-tended. On Delgato's coffee table there are two birthday cards, one signed by a "Henry," and another by "Ted." These cards point to Henry Wharton's and Theodore Kirby's rooms, respectively.

**Spot Hidden** rolls reveal a grate near the head of Delgato's bed, which leads into the building's air ducts. Similar to the rest of the building's ductwork, the grate (and connecting vent) is much too small for a human or even many children to move in comfortably. This grate, conspicuously, has one corner bent down and forced inwards, into the room. Closer investigation (and Hard **Spot Hidden**) shows tiny crystals left along the edge of the bent piece, not unlike the crystals found in the corpse trees. (These are granules left behind by the Statuette, when it entered Delgato's room to infect him in the night.) Unscrewing the grate from the wall, or ripping it away, reveals nothing beyond but a six-inch by four-inch vent, extending into darkness.

### **ROOM 103**

Occupants: Lloyd Denning, 41, plumber

Kate (16), Ben (12), and Tonya (7), Lloyd Denning's children

**Description:** Lloyd Denning and his three children live here: 16-year-old Kate, 12-year-old Ben, and 7-year-old Tonya. The children's mother lives across the river on the other side of town. Denning was on a construction site when the police quarantined the house, leaving Kate in charge of her younger siblings.

When the investigators arrive: Kate has strict instructions not to open the door to strangers and is reluctant to interact with the investigators, despite their badges and best efforts to treat the family. **Persuade** rolls are effective, with a bonus die if the investigator tries to alleviate Kate's fears. All of the children have watched the police cars and ambulances through their windows.

**When sick:** If any of the children get infected, Kate becomes eager for professional aid.

## **ROOM 104**

Occupant: Theodore Kirby, 39, adjunct archaeology professor

**Description:** Ted Kirby, adjunct professor in Miskatonic University's archaeology department with a specialty in pre-Mesopotamian mythology, teaches primarily introductory Archaeology classes for the university. He keeps his apartment cluttered with academic books. Ted is plugged-in. He has followed the news of the quarantine on his smartphone and Macbook, and has deduced that it must be either Wharton or Delgato who have died.

Ted can be a valuable resource to the investigators, as his chats with Wharton have revealed to him some of what the young man studied. He knows, vaguely, about the trip to Stregoicavar, but nothing about the monolith or what Wharton returned with. If asked specifically about Hungarian legends, or about myths in the Stregoicavar region, Kirby can dredge up memories of ancient, paleolithic cave paintings that depict monstrous beings doing battle against a single, heroic man, and that the monsters overwhelmed the man, turning him into a pillar of ice.

When the investigators search Kirby's apartment, a **Library Use** roll indicates that Kirby researches proto-myths of the Fertile Crescent region of the Near East. More importantly, this roll (or a **Spot Hidden**) reveals a cheap paperback copy of *Nameless Cults*, which Henry Wharton recently returned to Kirby after borrowing it. There are a couple of page markers, and any investigator who turns to those pages receives **Handout #2**.

## HANDOUT #2: EXCERPT FROM NAMELESS CULTS

Several records preserved in the Biblioteca Nacional de España are thought to originate from the Spanish Inquisition, some perhaps even penned by the hand of Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada. During one particularly lengthy interview with a lugubrious heretic claiming to be of Romanian origination, the witch confessed to participating in loathsome rites and unholy sabbaths in the Austrian hinterlands, rites which centered around coal-black monoliths that leaned vertiginously over the writhing mass of sweating adulators. The confession names Satan as the object of the practitioners' venerations, but parallel ethnographic evidence from Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher suggests that the worshipped entity was much older than Christianity's great Fiend.

According to Kircher, similar cults worshipped in the Carpathian and Wallachian Mountains, but rather than lay praise at the Devil's feet these cults worshipped a god more dire, if that is possible, one far older than Christian and Jewish tradition, in fact so old that the deity existed before man climbed past his evolutionary forebears and stood erect on two feet. This deity, whose name Kircher fails to mention, was originally worshipped by a race of hoary, black-haired giants, whose nemesis and excruciating foe was a multitudinous species of diminutive beings made of stone. The two races warred long before man trod the earth, with the former capturing and imprisoning the latter inside their towering artifacts of worship.

Christian accounts do not explain the two races' disappearance, but Sumerian cuneiform tablets recount the gods of Sumer banishing both races to the Underground, a distant place far removed from the world of men. And yet, accounts tell that the two species, both black-haired giant and granite-skinned gnome, can wander through "magical forests" and enter the world of man, passing through mystical portals that exist in these mysterious woods with trees described as having "branches of stone and roots of flesh." Though investigators may think Kirby some kind of cultist, an **Occult** roll indicates that there are no paranormal connections to his work. Kirby's diet is mostly Ramen noodles and cheap take-out. Miskatonic U. doesn't treat its adjunct professors any better than the rest of the Ivy Leagues.

When the investigators arrive: Kirby wears a dust mask saved from a former archeological dig. Worried that the pathogen might be airborne, he stays in his apartment behind a closed door until approached. When the investigators knock he opens the door, cell phone in hand, and informs them that he is live-streaming to his social media account. He asks them what they plan to do about the infection and if they have any leads as to the type of virus. While Kirby is persistent and irritating, the investigators can convince him to be helpful.

When sick: Once Kirby falls ill he sets up his cell phone to record the progress of the disease. Locking and barricading his door, he starts a long invective railing against the university and its labor practices. Eventu ally he tires and retreats to his bed, still live-streaming his own demise. The feed lasts until interrupted by the electrical disruptions of the corpse trees.

### **ROOM 105**

Occupant: Vasile Sandu, 81, retired engineer

**Description:** Mr. Sandu immigrated to the United States nearly forty years ago to work as an engineer at Miskatonic University. While his English was quite good at the time, in his old age he has begun falling back on his native Romanian. He is something of a recluse in the house, but has lately found excuses to spend time with Marla Kopel, from room 201.

While he never believed in them as a child, as an older man Sandu remembers numerous ghost stories told to him by his grandmother, and now he tells them to the children around the Brighton House. If investigators ask generic questions about "the occult," anyone in the house can direct them to Sandu, though his "expertise" is really only in fairy stories, Romanian folktales, and New Age books that he has collected since his retirement. Along with these, Sandu has a modest collection of Tarot card decks, crystal balls, and healing crystals.

When the investigators arrive: Sandu waits downstairs with some of the other tenants. He doesn't shout questions like they do, but he does want answers, and if spoken to directly will say that he's "seen this all before, as in a dream."

When sick: Sandu sticks to his room, and doesn't want to be moved. As he becomes weaker, he asks quietly (in Romanian) if Marla would come visit him—a **Psychology** roll can convince him to repeat this in English. He deposits several of his healing crystals in the bed around him.

## THE SECOND FLOOR

Like the floor below it, the second floor is split into five apartments radiating off from the central stairway. Stairs a little way off from the balcony continue to the attic.

### **ROOM 201**

**Occupants:** Marla Kopel, *75, grandmother* Winthrop "Tuna" Kopel, *22, town ruffian* 

**Description:** Marla Kopel has cared for her grandson Winthrop since he was a baby, when a drunk driver killed both his parents. Marla worked as a waitress in a local Arkham cafe the Red and Blue—until three years ago, when she retired and Winthrop graduated high school. Winthrop now works at a fast food chain during the day, but has taken to rolling with a rough crowd at night. He calls himself "Tuna," and hates it when Marla calls him by his given name. Unknown to Marla, "Tuna" recently acquired a small-caliber Beretta, which he keeps stowed on his person at all times.

Their apartment smells of rose water, and vaguely of pot. Marla keeps a collection of ceramic, cherubic children on every shelf of the main room. **Spot Hidden** rolls in Tuna's room reveal a glass bong and several dimebags, and with a Hard **Spot Hidden** the investigator notices a roll of fifty-dollar bills tucked into an air vent, amounting to five hundred dollars. Tuna, of course, will not want them to have any of these items, especially the money.

When the investigators arrive: Both Tuna and Marla are downstairs, shouting questions at the investigators, unless instructed to do otherwise. Marla has a heavy New Jersey accent and an attitude to match. Tuna is more succinct, but asks sharp, intelligent questions.

When sick: If either fall ill, they will seek the aid of the investigators, doing their best to get the investigators to wherever their sick family member lies waiting. While Tuna acts tough, he loves his grandmother deeply, and will go so far as to hold the investigators at gunpoint if they leave Marla unattended.

#### **ROOM 202**

Occupant: Henry Wharton, 26, archaeology graduate student

**Description:** When the scenario begins, Henry Wharton is in the laboratory at Miskatonic University, going about his work. It is not unusual for Wharton to work all-nighters, so while the tenants of Brighton Hill House have been closed off from the outside world for a solid 12 hours, Wharton will not show back up at his building unless the investigators find some means of procuring him. When the investigators convince the police to fetch Wharton and either allow him into the building or *force* him in, they encounter a retiring man of 26 with wire-frame glasses, very skinny, about 5' 11". He has no poker face to speak of, and in uncomfortable situations looks visibly nervous.

Wharton's room seems standard for a twenty-something grad student. He has lots of books, many on climatology and meteorology, but some fiction as well, and even a few roleplaying books. The room appears very lived in—disheveled. He has laundry strewn about and a cluttered writing desk in one corner, where it seems like a laptop would fit (the laptop is currently with Wharton at the school). **Spot Hidden** rolls on the writing desk reveal a business card with the name of Wharton's academic advisor, Sarah Browne, and a telephone number. This provides one avenue the investigators might take toward getting a hold of Wharton. Examination of the writing table itself, where the rock once lay, reveals indents and sharp scratches. A **Spot Hidden** on the table, or close investigation with any tools, will find igneous stone granules resembling granite. Henry Wharton is the unwitting source of the corruption, and several clues in his room point to the events in Hungary. He has a photograph of the monolith, (Handout #3) with the Hungarian plains in the background, pinned to a corkboard amid several other photos—one of these other photos depicts Bruk-B'Zulh, still in his rolled-up state, sitting on a desk (Handout #4). Another Spot Hidden roll on Handout #4 reveals that the desk in the photograph is Wharton's writing desk in that very room. Additionally, dropped carelessly behind the desk is an invoice for recent travel expenditures addressed to Wharton, from "THE PENHEW COMPANY," and signed by Letitia D. Beasley. Finally, Wharton's diary sits on top of a nightstand, and successful Library Use rolls reveal entries for June through August (Handout #5):

#### HANDOUT #5: WHARTON'S DIARY

#### June 7th, Stregoicavar, Day 2

I don't know what we're doing here. Another shabby town, another old story, more people who can't afford to eat. We're on our last legs. God I hope we don't find anything remotely interesting so we can just go home. We're running out of grant money anyways.

## June 8th, Stregoicavar, Day 3

I'll be damned but we've done it! We've actually found one! The locals said there was a "tower" up in the hills, and they were right. Well, it's not a tower, but it's big enough to be! A black granite that the geologists don't know what to make of it. I can't believe how pessimistic I was—we've hit the jackpot. Letitia should be pleased.

#### June 24th, Stregoicavar, Day 19

More samples. Evidence of the site's habitation is next to nonexistent. But what we've found... I don't know how to say it, but we'll have to revise the books on this one. Habitation, a living and breathing city was here once, long before we were supposed to have ever crawled up out of the muck. Hell.

#### July 15th, Stregoicavar, Day 40

That dream keeps happening. I'm walking through a forest, hearing someone call my name. It's not—at least I don't think it's English. It sounds, I dunno, older than that. And then there it is, the monolith. There's no forest around the actual monolith, but this one has grody black trees all around it. And then I see a man, except he's sort of part of the monolith, or is the monolith. It's all very hazy. He's asking me... something.

The locals won't look at me anymore. Won't even talk to me. They're probably just tired of the team invading their city for so long. Well we'll be gone soon.

#### July 29th, Stregoicavar, Day 54

I can't believe I did it. While everyone was asleep, are still asleep, I snuck out up to the dig and looked at that strange rock we've been talking about. I would swear it was protruding farther than before. I almost didn't need the crowbar, it came out so easily.

Miguel's always telling me I should follow my guts. Well, ol' buddy, that's what I'm doing. I'm not sure what this thing is, but it's my ticket up.

#### August 1, Budapest

One night in Budapest and then it's back home. Yay. There's so much more to learn! Thank goodness I've got something to take back with me. I keep trying to tell someone about it, about the stone, but... I can't. Something stops my lips. Oh well, it's probably all for the best. Once I learn more about it.

When the investigators arrive: Wharton is at the university, but there are ways that the investigators may contact him, or procure his arrival at the house.

**When sick:** Wharton becomes terrified. If he begins vomiting the oil in stage 3, he starts crying for his parents, and does his best to call them from a phone.

### **ROOM 203**

#### **Occupants:** Carlos Lopez, *35, meat packer* Maria Lopez, *34, drugstore clerk*

Enrique (7) and Matilde (9) Lopez, *Carlos' and Maria's children* **Description:** Maria and Carlos Lopez immigrated to the United States five years ago, and speak broken English. Both work fourteen-hour days: Maria at a drugstore, and Carlos in a meat-packing facility outside Arkham. The day the investigators arrive is their only day of the week off. Their children, Enrique (7) and Matilde (9) speak fluent English and Spanish, and spend most of their time playing in the house or on the grounds. They stay away from the Gilpins next door, who "creep us out," but know the rest of the tenants well. "Tuna's a jerk!" Matilde might say, stamping her foot. Ingratiating themselves with the children could be a very valuable strategy for investigators who want to know more about the private lives of the tenants, as the children sometimes see things they shouldn't.

When the investigators arrive: The family has buttoned up inside their apartment. Maria will wait by their door until the investigators come near, and then will ask them quick, frightened questions in Spanish. If the investigators enter this apartment while wearing their hazmat suits, the parents hold their children's hands, who look up at the CDC team members with fascinated eyes.

When sick: If either of the children are ever sick, the rest of the family will do their best to care for them. If Carlos or Maria becomes ill, the other will attempt to care for their spouse. If both parents die, the children will wander the house, certainly getting in the way at the least opportune time.

### **ROOM 204**

Occupants: Robert and Thomas Gilpin, 41, high school janitors

**Description:** Twin brothers, Robert and Thomas both work at Arkham High School as janitors. Fraternal twins, they are both very large men: 6' 4" tall, and close to 260 pounds. They lumber from their job to their apartment and back again; the police arrive just before they leave for work. Robert knew Miguel Delgato, though not well, and will refuse to speak to the investigators about him unless convinced otherwise (which a **Persuade** or Hard **Intimidate** will produce). Father Zimmerman teaches Thomas chess occasionally, and when it's obvious that the Gilpin brothers won't be going out today, Thomas sits down to Zimmerman's game at a table on the first floor. Their room is fairly spartan, with a kitchen unit in their living space, where a foldout couch bed supplies Robert's sleeping area. Thomas sleeps in the bedroom, on a mattress on the floor. The couch seems to be their only real furniture—no nightstands, no dining table or chairs, just a lamp in the bedroom on the floor, and a television, also on the floor, in the living room.

When the investigators arrive: Robert Gilpin waits downstairs for the investigators to enter. Even if instructed otherwise, he will wait in the atrium for them. This encounter should be slightly unnerving. While not truly confrontational, Robert has an aggressive countenance. He demands answers, shaking his finger in front of the investigators' noses. "The guvver'mint cain't shove us folks around like dis." Thomas plays chess with Father Zimmerman by the atrium fountain until circumstances prevent them.

**When sick:** If Robert or Thomas gets sick, the other will attempt to care for him, and if either dies, the other will let out intermittent wails that echo around the drafty old house.

## **ROOM 205**

#### Occupant: Vacant

**Description:** This room shows no signs of recent occupancy, with an obvious reason made apparent on entrance—the room stinks of cat piss. The investigators cannot smell this so long as they continue wearing their SCBA masks. Any of the older tenants will remember the room's last occupant, a Mrs. Schneider, widowed, who died in her mid-80s a few months ago, and kept a plethora of cats against the wishes of the rental company.

Despite its smell, this location can become a helpful staging room for the CDC agents, where they can plan next moves, relocate bodies, etc.

## THE ATTIC

The two apartments in the attic have slanting ceilings and old, ornate windows that look out on different vantages of Arkham. These rooms are mostly bare wood, with only a suggestion of insulation. **Idea** rolls can tell that these rooms are definitely not up to code.

### **ROOM 301**

Occupant: Keith Johns, 42, recluse

**Description:** Keith Johns is dead at the beginning of this scenario. He fell ill in the morning, retired to his bed, and there expired. By the time the investigators arrive several trees have already sprouted from him.

A retiring man, Johns never asked for much, and after making a small fortune in the dot-com bubble, Johns moved back to his hometown of Arkham, found a quiet place to live, and shut himself off from the world. He had as little interaction with the others in the house as possible. Some of them may have seen him bringing home groceries on occasion (with **INT** rolls) but more often he would order in food.

The apartment itself overflows with books. An expensive red couch sits in the living room facing a nice television, again with books piled on its armrests. Leftover pizza sits in the fridge, but otherwise Johns keeps his home tidy. His body is easy to find in the bedroom, with the corpse trees lifting the sheet away from his body. **Spot Hidden** rolls here reveal several antidepressant medications on his nightstand.

## **ROOM 302**

## **Occupant:** Ned Zimmerman, *52, disgraced Lutheran pastor*

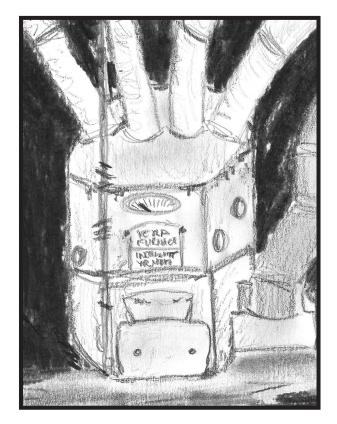
**Description:** Father Zimmerman has lived at Brighton House for the past six years, after he was caught embezzling funds from the local Lutheran church. After a few months in a jail cell, Zimmerman was released on good behavior, and he moved into Brighton House. While families and other tenants come and go, Father Zimmerman is a neighborhood fixture.

Zimmerman regularly plays chess with Thomas Gilpin, and has a set laid out on a dedicated sidetable. On the far side of Zimmerman's room, a large ornate window looks down upon Arkham—Zimmerman has covered this window with a ragged piece of old plaid wallpaper that doesn't match the other walls. If the investigators look behind the wallpaper, they find markings painted onto the window that line up over certain seventeenthcentury buildings in Arkham (**Archaeology** / **History**). Zimmerman has no good reason for covering over these markings, except that he found them disturbing. Zimmerman can tell the investigators that he found the wallpaper in the basement.

Investigators also find a half-empty bottle of cheap whisky by his bed, and a **Spot Hidden** roll reveals a crumpled-up brochure from a 12-step program.

When the investigators arrive: Father Zimmerman plays chess with Thomas Gilpin on the first floor near the fountain until circumstances, or the investigators, interrupt him. Once the illness has spread through the house, and many seem near death, he begins administering last rites.

**When sick:** If Father Zimmerman gets sick and Thomas Gilpin is aware of it, he will do his best to ease Zimmerman's ailments, though he lacks any medicine or first aid. Zimmerman succumbs quickly to the disease, and the best that Gilpin can do is read from *The Holy Bible*.



## THE BASEMENT

Accessible from the first floor, the basement consists of stacked fieldstone walls, patched in several places. The basement is cluttered with broken furniture, musty clothes, boxes, the forgotten remainders of former tenants. Corners of the basement have obvious rat droppings, and **Spot Hidden** rolls see one or several rats scatter out of the investigators' flashlight beams.

Several stone pillars throughout the basement support the floors above. Near the center of the room, investigators easily notice a large tiled pillar. This houses the inner workings of the fountain directly above it, and a panel built into its side accesses the fountain's mechanisms.

A few feet east of the central pillar sits an ancient behemoth of a furnace. Its octopus-like arms run throughout the ceiling of the basement, connecting to several air vents of the rooms above. While the basement doesn't provide many clues directly, it does set the backdrop for several of the staged scenes, and Bruk-B'Zulh often hides in the furnace.

# ACT ONE: OUTSIDE BRIGHTON HOUSE

Play begins with the investigators arriving at the quarantined Brighton House. Police cruisers have cordoned off both ends of the street, and neighbors mill about their front porches watching the event. Several civilians stand inside the police barricade, as do a news reporter and her cameraman. The investigators arrive in a van following their GPS to 969 S. French Hill Street. **Carlton Ochs** greets them and fills them in on the details:

• A man who was seemingly healthy yesterday became sick and died this morning, along with one of his coworkers.

- Their place of work, a lab at Miskatonic University, and the first patient's home have been quarantined.
- Because the occupants of the house interact frequently, the entire building has been quarantined.
- The bodies have been removed from the hospital and placed in a CDC mobile morgue and lab unit, parked nearby.

Ochs answers any questions the investigators have and is honest in his responses. He is the senior CDC officer on the scene and the default leader, although he won't go into Brighton House—that's the investigators' job. Besides the newly arrived team, Ochs has two assistants with him, both working in the mobile lab.

Ochs shows the investigators to the mobile morgue, but reminds them that they need to get inside the house fast. Besides investigating Delgato and Clapper, Ochs says that someone should interact with the police chief (**John Bennett**), possibly the reporter (**Kristi Waters**), and the landlord's representative (**Letitia Beasley**). Inside the CDC's mobile coroner's laboratory, the investigators meet Ochs's two assistants and can view the two bodies. The assistants wear hazmat suits and self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA). Delgato is Hispanic, twenty-five, and unmarried. When the investigators inspect the body, **Spot Hidden** rolls find traces of what looks like motor oil on his cheek and in his right eye, where blood vessels seem to have burst and the eye pigment to partly mix, forming wild colors. An additional **Medicine** rolls reveals systemic failures on all fronts: it appears that Delgato died from Cardiac, Pulmonary, Digestive, and Endocrine system failures, simultaneously; blood vessels and burst arteries are visible beneath the skin, like bruises. Clapper's body demonstrates the same symptoms.

Let the investigators be the ones to suggest that they perform autopsies. Within Delgato's body his internal organs have dissolved—sticky black tar coats his chest cavity, with black fluid that pools around the body's natural recesses (**SAN** 1/1d4). Thin, fragile strands stretch between ribs, forming a beautiful, intricate web—these are the beginnings of the corpse trees, their growth slowed significantly by the cold of the morgue. The substance baffles analysis, and a Hard **Pharmacy**, **Pathology**, or **Toxicology** roll indicates that nothing like it has been seen before. If compared to the webbing forming in Clapper's chest cavity, the webbing in Delgato's is more advanced.

Outside the mobile lab, Police Chief John Bennett shows the CDC officers the lay of the land. Bright yellow police tape cordons off the Brighton House, forming a line around the exterior. There is a single entrance, the lobby doors, guarded by two S.W.A.T. officers wearing hazmat suits and carrying assault rifles. More S.W.A.T. officers patrol the sidewalk, in front of the walk that leads to Brighton House's front porch, about 10 vards' distance from the front doors. They have orders to shoot anyone leaving the house. A Hard Spot Hidden roll reveals a pair of S.W.A.T. snipers on the rooftops across the street. An exterior fire escape runs along the southern wall, and two more S.W.A.T. officers wait below it. The neighbors on both sides have been evacuated. If this seems extreme, Bennett says that the town's safety is his primary concern. Bennett is more than willing to lever his militarized police force "in defense" against any infected people inside.

**Kristi Waters** wants the inside scoop and will talk to anyone who will talk to her. Ochs and Bennett have already declined interviews. She correctly suspects that the investigators are going inside the house and she wants an interview with one of them. Kristi is primarily here to give those not interested in performing an autopsy something to do.

More vital information comes from **Letitia Beasley**, although she won't disclose the whole truth of the matter. She represents the building's owner, Penhew American Apartments, and its parent corporation, the Penhew Company. She says the police called her to provide information about the occupants, and she holds a list of the lease holders inside the building (**Handout #1**). If anyone asks Police Chief Bennett, he says that Letitia was one of the first to arrive after the quarantine, and that he never called the owners. "Perhaps the hospital did," he says. Letitia says that she doesn't know anything more than that, while a successful **Psychology** roll indicates that she holds something back. It takes an Extreme **Persuade** or **Intimidate** roll to get Letitia to admit to Penhew's interest in Wharton, but even then she will omit as many facts as possible, and the company has no knowledge of the statue as of yet. Ochs pressures them to enter the house, "Time is essential!" He gives them a shortwave radio, so that they can communicate to him while inside. If they request that the assistants in the mobile lab run any tests, either on Delgato or the black filaments inside him, those results will return via radio. If they desire, the investigators can ask to talk to other people besides Ochs, and he will hand over the radio accordingly.

The investigators each have a hazmat suit and SCBA. Each carries a medical kit specific to their field of medicine, and a flashlight. Ochs reminds the team that Veronica Shu is the team's leader, or he can nominate another if the Veronica Shu character isn't being played. He hands the team leader a taser, and suggests that she might need it inside if anyone is uncooperative. A taser is a Torch range weapon that does 1D<sub>3</sub> points of damage and stuns the target for a number of rounds equal to the damage received. A **CON** roll prevents the stunned condition. Use a character's **Fighting (Brawl)** skill to determine if a taser attack is successful.

Ochs nods encouragingly and points to the house.

## WHO'S SICK IN BRIGHTON HOUSE?

At least two residents of Brighton House are sick when the investigators enter, contaminated by the airborne pathogen from Johns, who died in his attic apartment earlier in the day. Rather than proscribe which NPC tenants are ill, "Plague" uses a random table to generate the spread of illness. The table is a useful numerical tool that monitors the health of the scenario's many NPCs. "1" represents stage 1, the first hour of infection, when the symptoms constitute coughing and sore limbs. In stage 2, the second hour, the tenant becomes bedridden. Stage 3 is the final hour, during which the victim's organs slowly dissolve into the black tarry mass that later sprouts the corpse trees.

When the investigators enter Brighton House roll twice on the Random Infection Table. Mark the Sickness Tracker at 1 for the first roll and 2 for the second. See individual descriptions of the tenants for how they and their flat mates respond to their illness.

1d20	Tenant	Room	n Sickness Tracker			
1	No one falls ill.					
2	Carla Cash	101	1	2	3	Dead
3	Ryan Cash	101	1	2	3	Dead
4	Ben Denning	103	1	2	3	Dead
5	Kate Denning	103	1	2	3	Dead
6	Tonya Denning	103	1	2	3	Dead
7	Ted Kirby	104	1	2	3	Dead
8	Vasile Sandu	105	1	2	3	Dead
9	Tuna Kopel	201	1	2	3	Dead
10	Marla Kopel	201	1	2	3	Dead
11	Henry Wharton	202	1	2	3	Dead
12	Carlos Lopez	203	1	2	3	Dead
13	Enrique Lopez	203	1	2	3	Dead
14	Maria Lopez	203	1	2	3	Dead
15	Matilde Lopez	203	1	2	3	Dead
16	Robert Gilpin	204	1	2	3	Dead
17	Thomas Gilpin	204	1	2	3	Dead
18	Ned Zimmerman	302	1	2	3	Dead
19	Roll twice	ignoring r	olls high	ner tha	an 18.	
20	Roll three times ignoring rolls higher than 18.					

## **RANDOM INFECTION TABLE**

# ACT TWO: INSIDE BRIGHTON HOUSE

The CDC team heads toward the armed guards and the house. As a final warning, Bennett tells the investigators that until he gets the all clear from Ochs, no one may leave. If asked to clarify, he states that his men have orders to shoot anyone attempting to exit the building.

The front doors lead to a short hallway that opens up into Brighton House's central lobby (see Appendix B: Handouts). Unless sick and at stage 2, Father Zimmerman and the Gilpin twins are in the lobby. Zimmerman and Thomas sit at a small table playing chess, and Robert nervously paces around the broken fountain, wringing his hands. They all notice the investigators as they enter. Robert demands that the government can't treat them this way, Thomas is engrossed in the chess game, and Zimmerman calls soothing words to Robert.

Lay out maps 1 and 2 of Brighton House, which show some of the exterior location, the first floor, second floor, attic apartments, and basement. There are no secret rooms or hidden areas, so a keeper's map isn't necessary. Every apartment has several heating vents and cold air returns, which Bruk-B'Zulh uses to move around. It doesn't matter where these are in the apartments; locate them as best serves the unfolding scenario. When he can, the wizard replaces the metal grills that cover the vents, but if in a hurry he will simply rip one from the wall and slip into the vent. A lucky investigator may spot an open vent.

The investigators explore the house as they see fit, using the inaccurate list of leaseholders received from Letitia to guide them (**Handout #1**). Roll on the Random Infection Table every half-hour of real time to see who next gets sick. Since the disease is airborne during stages 1, 2, and 3, you can make **CON** rolls for NPCs that are in close contact with an infected individual. Do this sparingly and only at your discretion; too many NPC **CON** rolls will slow down the game with unnecessary bookkeeping.

The investigators wear hazmat suits and SCBA, and while so adorned do not have to worry about getting infected. Because the disease isn't transmitted by physical contact, the investigators don't strictly need their hazmat suits. If an investigator removes her SCBA, however, she is in danger of infection. Have the player make a **CON** roll every time she enters a new area inside Brighton House, and every half-hour of real time.

Ochs regularly checks in with the investigators, asking if there is anything they need and reporting on the scene outside. Use the following Staged Events to control the pace of the game, creating more and more tension as the scenario builds to its climax. If play has already surpassed a planned staged event (for example, if the investigators have discovered the corpse trees in the attic before Ochs radios them to tell them about the corpse trees in the mobile lab) ignore that staged event. The staged events may occur in any order. Use your best judgement as to when they will be most effective in your game.

# STAGED EVENT: STRANDS INTO SHRUBS INTO FOREST

The refrigerated mobile CDC laboratory slows the corpse trees' growth but doesn't prevent it. Ochs calls to say that the lab assistants have noticed that the fragile strands inside Delgato's body are growing like mathematical fractals, looking like small, pointy shrubs. If none of the investigators suggest running tests on the fractals, Ochs suggests this and asks their opinion. While the corpse trees don't respond to heat or sub-freezing temperatures, they easily carry an electrical charge. If anyone applies a high charge to the corpse trees they grow exponentially, blossoming into towering trees in a matter of seconds.

A large generator supplies power to the mobile lab (see map of the first floor). If any investigator suggests attaching the generator to the fractals and zapping them, Ochs' assistants comply. The investigators can watch from the windows as police run connections into the lab. That much electrical current causes the fractals to grow amazingly quickly, with enough force and energy to expand beyond the confines of the metal lab and shred it to pieces (along with the assistants inside). This calls for **SAN** rolls, 1D2/1D6 loss. A fully formed corpse tree forest now occupies the area where the lab, generator, and a couple police cruisers once stood. Hiding inside Brighton House's ventilation system, Bruk-B'Zulh won't notice this forest. His enemies, the gugs, will, and soon send one of their warriors through the gate to re-capture Bruk-B'Zulh. Time this accordingly, as this heralds the scenario's closing scene.

## **STAGED EVENT: WHARTON ARRIVES**

At some point the investigators may wonder where Wharton is, especially after talking to Kirby and investigating Wharton's room. He remains at the university, studying late in Orne Library. If they want him, Chief Bennett can find him in about an hour. Letitia knows exactly where he is, having received regular updates from her private investigator. If asked, and investigators may want to talk to Letitia after searching Wharton's room, she can tell the police his location and Wharton can be on the scene in 15 minutes.

Wharton has no idea what's going on. His nightmares haven't stopped and he's low on sleep (and **Sanity** points), but he knows nothing about the rock's identity. He has learned that an ancient species of monster worshipped at the black monoliths, and that they called one of their deities "Nyarlathotep." He believes that they perished before man evolved into an intelligent, bipedal species, although *Nameless Cults* suggests that Bronze Age sorcerers knew spells that could summon the creatures.

If asked where the rock is, Wharton assumes that it's on his desk, right where he left it. Any news of the stone's vanishing confuses and surprises Wharton. The only person he has told about it is Kirby, he says, maybe Kirby has it.

If investigators press Letitia she tells them the truth. The Penhew Company funded the Hungarian expedition because they were interested in the monoliths. She doesn't know why the owners are curious about them, she's just following her superior's orders. She suspected that Wharton hadn't shown the company everything he returned with. She doesn't know the ramifications of anything that is going on, and has no idea where the rock is but wants it found and given to her; she may go to the lengths of trying to bribe the CDC team. If the investigators are unable to find the rock, she promises that a Penhew team can and will.

## STAGED EVENT: RATS IN THE WALLS

Investigators will make a lot of **Spot Hidden** rolls in Brighton House as they move from room to room. Whenever anyone makes a Hard success, ask her to immediately make a **Listen** roll. On a success the investigator hears scratching and scrabbling sounds coming from the wall or the ceiling. Does the place have rats? It does, yes, and the investigators should see a rat or two when they explore the basement. But the sound they hear is no rat.

Bruk-B'Zulh is on the move. Impatient with the corpse trees' slow progress, he sneaks around to infect more people and to see what is going on. From this point onward, anytime an investigator makes a Hard **Spot Hidden** roll they see something move from the corner of their eye—something dashes around a corner, but when they rush over, there is nothing there. On an Extreme success they get a better view, and see a gray, blocky, doll-like thing rush past them. Bruk-B'Zulh runs to another room. If a chasing investigator succeeds on a Hard **DEX** roll, they arrive in time to hear Bruk-B'Zulh pull a grate from an air vent and jump inside. With an Extreme **DEX** roll they see the diminutive thing pull the grate free before disappearing into the air vent (**SAN** 1/1d6 to see the animate statue).

No one is small enough to fit in the vents except Tonya Denning, the seven-year-old that lives in apartment 103. If the investigators have met Tonya, an **Idea** roll makes them realize that she would fit in the air ducts. Call for **Sanity** rolls (1/1d4) from anyone who forces the child into the air vents.

Bruk-B'Zulh tries to avoid physical encounters with the investigators, but if cornered he will attack. He is a vicious little thing and nearly invulnerable. His stone claws and teeth easily tear hazmat suits. As soon as he has the advantage, he retreats into the building's ventilation system.

## STAGED EVENT: UP FROM BELOW

The fountain in the lobby doesn't work. The pipes are still intact but the pump, housed in the pillar in the basement beneath the fountain, has seized up. An access panel set into the pillar opens onto the pump. A Hard **Mechanical Repair** roll will fix the pump in half-an-hour and the fountain will start working.

The pipes continue through the pillar and into a crawl space that leads to Arkham's water and sewer system. Lloyd Denning, a local contractor and ever resourceful, knows that he can reach the basement from the sewer, simply by finding the right crawl space, crawling several hundred feet through it, and bashing open the access panel. Once the police deny him entry, he rushes to a friend familiar with the city's sewer system. After gaining the information he needs, and a snub-nosed .38, Denning heads underground.

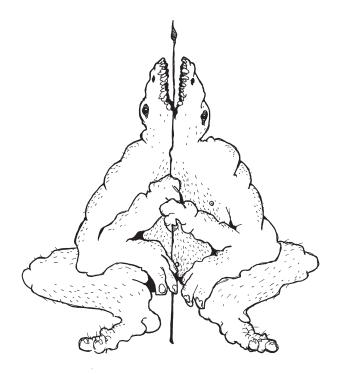
When the investigators explore the basement, focusing either on the furnace or the pillar beneath the fountain, they hear an odd clunking noise, followed by an intermittent scuffling or scraping sound. A **Listen** roll determines that the sounds come from the central pillar. Add a bonus die to an investigator if the access panel is open or if they are working on the pump. Within minutes, Lloyd Denning wiggles through, filthy, frantic, and demanding to see his children. At the least resistance, Denning reveals his .38 revolver and points it at the closest investigator. If he isn't immediately led to his children, he shoots the investigator. If the investigators aren't in the basement when you trigger this event, they may meet Denning as he comes up from the basement, gun in hand. If they fail to notice his entry, and if his children are still in apartment 103, the investigators may notice him as he leads his family to the basement and back through the sewer.

## **ACT THREE: THE FINALE**

At some point, a group of corpse trees grows large enough to generate a gate to the Dreamlands. A gug on the far end begins to come through. The statue only knows this if he's watched a specific patch of trees, perhaps the one in the attic. The gug that comes through aims to trap the statue once more in a human host, while the statue hopes to sneak past it back into the Dreamlands.

The gug is huge, almost 20-feet tall, and very strong. It moves through the corpse trees as nimbly as a deer through a forest. The gug immediately begins searching for Bruk-B'Zulh. The gug shatters walls and pulls up flooring to find the creature, who will scamper away and do his best to avoid the gug. The investigators, trapped in the middle, feel the ill effects of the gug's search, and must decide how to respond. The gug is not immediately aggressive toward the investigators unless it perceives them as inhibiting its search.

If the gug catches Bruk-B'Zulh, it rolls him into a ball and attempts to ram the stone inside a human being (preferably an investigator). This kills the human most painfully, and triggers a supernatural process that raises a black monolith from the human's body (**SAN** 2/1d8+1). The similarities between the monolith's growth and the corpse trees are undeniable, and Wharton will lose his mind if there to witness it. After the monolith's completion—a new tomb for Bruk-B'Zulh—the gug shambles off back toward the corpse tree forest.



## **APPENDIX A: NPC STATS**

## TENANTS

## **TENANT STAT BLOCK**

Except as specified otherwise, this stat block applies to all tenants in the house.

STR 50	CON 50	SIZ 50	DEX 50	INT 50
APP 50	POW 50	EDU 50	SAN 50	HP 10
DB: 0	Build: o	Move: 8	MP: 10	Luck: N/A

 Attacks per round: 1

 Brawl
 25% (12/5), damage 1D3

 Dodge
 25% (12/5)

Armor: none. Skills: none.

CASH, CARLA AND RYAN, *MID-70S*, *FORMER HIPPIES* 

Both Ryan and Carla Cash use the basic Tenant Stat Block.

## DENNING, BEN (12), KATE (16), AND TONYA (7)

Ben and Kate Denning each have SIZ 40 and and 9 HP.

Tonya Denning has SIZ 30 and 8 HP.

### DENNING, LLOYD, 41, PLUMBER

Attacks per round: 1 Firearms (.38 Revolver) 45% (22/9), damage 1D10

Skills: Firearms (Handgun) 45%, Plumbing 65%

## GILPIN, ROBERT AND THOMAS, 41, HIGH SCHOOL JANITORS

The Gilpin brothers each have SIZ 75 and 12 HP.

DB: +1d4 Build +1

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

KIRBY, TED, 39, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Skills: Archaeology 45%, Library Use 50%

**KOPEL, MARLA**, **75**, **GRANDMOTHER** Marla Kopel uses the basic Tenant Stat Block.

### KOPEL, TUNA, 22, TOWN RUFFIAN

Attacks per round: 1 Firearms (Beretta 7.65) 45% (22/9), damage 1D8

### LOPEZ, CARLOS, 35, MEAT PACKER

Carlos has EDU 70.

**Skills:** Language Own (Spanish) 70%, Language Other (English) 35%

## LOPEZ, ENRIQUE AND MATILDE, 7 AND 9, RESPECTIVELY

Both Enrique and Matilde have SIZ 35 and 8 HP.

## LOPEZ, MARIA, 34, DRUGSTORE CLERK

Maria has **EDU** 60.

**Skills:** Language Own (Spanish) 75%, Language Other (English) 40%

#### SANDU, VASILE, 81, RETIRED ENGINEER

**Skills:** Language Own (Romanian) 60%, Language Other (English) 45%, Occult 60%

## WHARTON, HENRY, 26, GRADUATE STUDENT IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Wharton has SAN 25.

**Skills:** Archaeology 50%, Cthulhu Mythos 5%, Language Other (Hungarian) 25%, Library Use 70%, Occult 15%

## ZIMMERMAN, NED, 52, DISGRACED LUTHERAN PASTOR

Father Zimmerman uses the standard Tenant Stat Block.

## MONSTERS

## **BRUK-B'ZULH, A DREAMLAND GNOME**

Similar to Goatswood Gnomes (*Malleus Monstrorum*, page 45), Dreamland Gnomes are short, evil creatures made out of stone. Fully animate and thoroughly malicious, these creatures love to wreck woe upon all they meet. Bruh-B'Zulh wants to go home, back to the Dreamlands, and will limit his desire for wanton mayhem. If frustrated in his efforts, however, he will not hesitate to savage an opponent with his granite bite and stony claws.

STR 35	CON 85	SIZ 20	DEX 50	INT 30
APP N/A	POW 65	EDU N/A	SAN N/A	HP 10
DB: -2	Build: -2	Move: 9	MP: 13	

Attacks per round: 1 Claws 30% (16/6), damage 1D3 - 2 Bite 40% (20/8), damage 1D4 - 2

**Armor:** 9-point granite skin. **Skills:** Climb 60% (30/12), Listen 50% (25/10), Stealth 80% (40/16).

Spells: Infection. Sanity Loss: 0/1D3

## NEW SPELL: INFECTION

- Cost: 1
- Casting Time: Instantaneous

The casting of this spell produces a noxious toxin from the caster's mouth. When a victim inhales this toxin and fails a **CON** roll, they contract a disease that is fatal in three hours, causing fractal-like trees to grow from their body. When enough of these trees are present, a portal to the Dreamlands can open within them.

## GUG

Gugs are abhorrent giants, banished to the Dreamlands' Underworld. They hate most living things and willingly destroy those that they can catch. Their hatred for the Dreamland gnomes is unlimited, and given a choice a gug will catch a gnome before chasing anything else.

The gug sent to capture Bruh-B'Zulh is a young warrior proving herself to her tribe, and is relatively inexperienced and small.

STR 180	CON 120	SIZ 240	DEX 55	INT 65
APP N/A	POW 55	EDU N/A	SAN N/A	HP 30
DB: +4D6	Build: 5	Move: 10	MP: 11	
Attacks pe	r round: 1 E	Bite or 2 Clav	ws or 1 Ston	np or 1 Disembowel
Bite		40% (20/8	3), damage	1D10 + 4D6

	10:0 (-0, 0),
Claws	30% (16/6), damage 4D6 (no DB)
Disembowel (Mnvr.)	40% (20/8), damage 1D10 + 4D6
Stomp	20% (20/4), damage 1D6 + 4D6

Armor: 8-point skin, hair, and cartilage. Skills: none. Spells: Imprisonment. Sanity Loss: 0/1D8. NEW SPELL: IMPRISONMENT

- **Cost:** 3
- Casting Time: Instantaneous

This ancient guggish rite entombs their old enemies, the gnomes, within towering black monoliths, through the medium of a human sacrifice. When a gug succeeds on a **Fighting** (**Disembowel**) roll against a human, the gug can shove a captured gnome into the human, starting an irrevocable process that transforms the sacrifice into a monolithic prison for the gnome. The transformation process takes 10 minutes.

## Plague

## **APPENDIX B: HANDOUTS**

<b>#1: RESIDENTS OF 969 S. FRENCH HILL ST.</b>				
Name on Lease				
Cash, Ryan				
Delgato, Miguel				
Denning, Lloyd				
Kirby, Theodore				
Sandu, V.				
Kopel, Marla				
Wharton, Henry				
Lopez, Carlos				
Gilpin,				
vacant				
Johns, Keith				
Zimmerman, Edward				

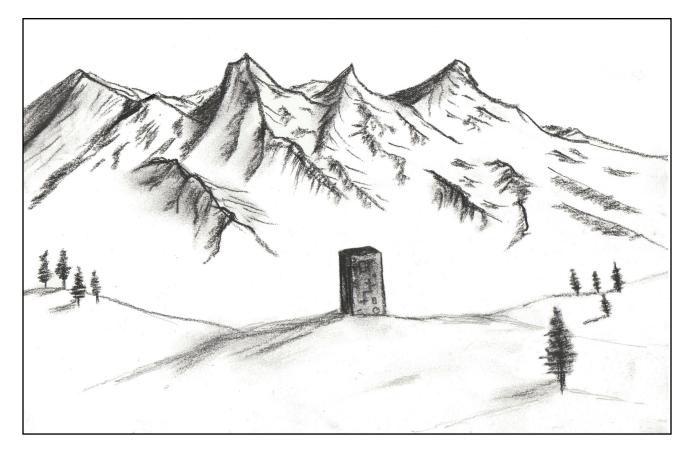
### #2: NAMELESS CULTS EXCERPT

Several records preserved in the Biblioteca Nacional de España are thought to originate from the Spanish Inquisition, some perhaps even penned by the hand of Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada. During one particularly lengthy interview with a lugubrious heretic claiming to be of Romanian origination, the witch confessed to participating in loathsome rites and unholy sabbaths in the Austrian hinterlands, rites which centered around coal-black monoliths that leaned vertiginously over the writhing mass of sweating adulators. The confession names Satan as the object of the practitioners' venerations, but parallel ethnographic evidence from Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher suggests that the worshipped entity was much older than Christianity's great Fiend.

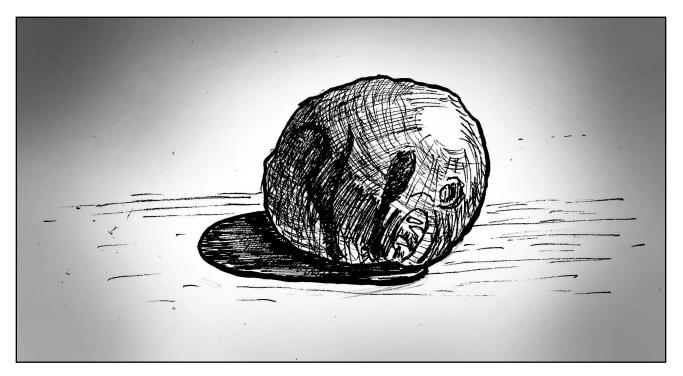
According to Kircher, similar cults worshipped in the Carpathian and Wallachian Mountains, but rather than lay praise at the Devil's feet these cults worshipped a god more dire, if that is possible, one far older than Christian and Jewish tradition, in fact so old that the deity existed before man climbed past his evolutionary forebears and stood erect on two feet. This deity, whose name Kircher fails to mention, was originally worshipped by a race of hoary, black-haired giants, whose nemesis and excruciating foe was a multitudinous species of diminutive beings made of stone. The two races warred long before man trod the earth, with the former capturing and imprisoning the latter inside their towering artifacts of worship.

Christian accounts do not explain the two races' disappearance, but Sumerian cuneiform tablets recount the gods of Sumer banishing both races to the Underground, a distant place far removed from the world of men. And yet, accounts tell that the two species, both black-haired giant and granite-skinned gnome, can wander through "magical forests" and enter the world of man, passing through mystical portals that exist in these mysterious woods with trees described as having "branches of stone and roots of flesh."

## **#3: MONOLITH PHOTO**



## **#4: GNOME PHOTO**



#### **#5: WHARTON DIARY EXCERPT**

#### June 7th, Stregoicavar, Day 2

I don't know what we're doing here. Another shabby town, another old story, more people who can't afford to eat. We're on our last legs. God I hope we don't find anything remotely interesting so we can just go home. We're running out of grant money anyways.

#### June 8th, Stregoicavar, Day 3

I'll be damned but we've done it! We've actually found one! The locals said there was a "tower" up in the hills, and they were right. Well, it's not a tower, but it's big enough to be! A black granite that the geologists don't know what to make of it. I can't believe how pessimistic I was—we've hit the jackpot. Letitia should be pleased.

#### June 24th, Stregoicavar, Day 19

More samples. Evidence of the site's habitation is next to nonexistent. But what we've found... I don't know how to say it, but we'll have to revise the books on this one. Habitation, a living and breathing city was here once, long before we were supposed to have ever crawled up out of the muck. Hell.

#### July 15th, Stregoicavar, Day 40

That dreams keeps happening. I'm walking through a forest, hearing someone call my name. It's not—at least I don't think it's English. It sounds, I dunno, older than that. And then there it is, the monolith. There's no forest around the actual monolith, but this one has grody black trees all around it. And then I see a man, except he's sort of part of the monolith, or is the monolith. It's all very hazy. He's asking me... something.

The locals won't look at me anymore. Won't even talk to me. They're probably just tired of the team invading their city for so long. Well we'll be gone soon.

#### July 29th, Stregoicavar, Day 54

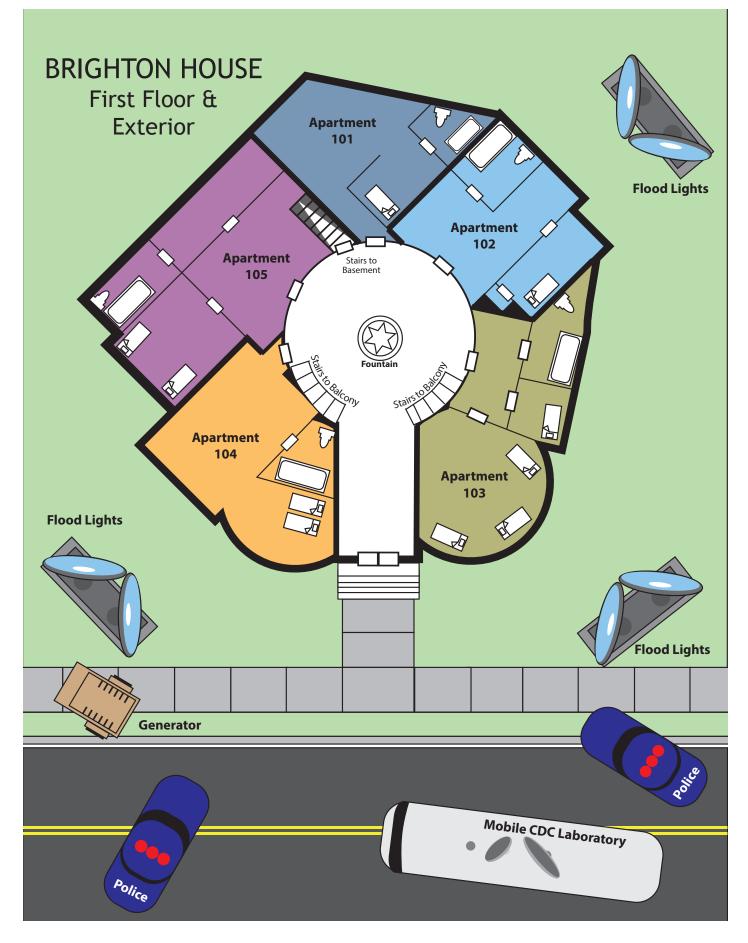
I can't believe I did it. While everyone was asleep, are still asleep, I snuck out up to the dig and looked at that strange rock we've been talking about. I would swear it was protruding farther than before. I almost didn't need the crowbar, it came out so easily.

Miguel's always telling me I should follow my guts. Well, ol' buddy, that's what I'm doing. I'm not sure what this thing is, but it's my ticket up.

#### August 1, Budapest

One night in Budapest and then it's back home. Yay. There's so much more to learn! Thank goodness I've got something to take back with me. I keep trying to tell someone about it, about the stone, but... I can't. Something stops my lips. Oh well, it's probably all for the best. Once I learn more about it.

## Plague





# **APPENDIX C:**

## INVESTIGATORS

Print out this page and hand the appropriate sections to your players.

## VERONICA SHU, 45, PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISOR

- Veronica is the boss of this outfit. She's smart, tough, and has worked for the CDC long enough to know when to call them on their bullshit. While stubborn when she knows it's important, she's not bullheaded, and will listen to her subordinates in tough situations—that being said, she's not afraid of making unpopular calls.
- A few years ago, the CDC promoted Veronica out of another division to chair this team, passing up John Severn for promotion in the process. While he says that he doesn't hold a grudge, Veronica can never quite tell where John's loyalties lie.
- Veronica was also responsible for the hiring of Eliza Hayes, the young and prodigally brilliant toxicologist. Now, Veronica and Eliza are fast friends; the two take jiu-jitsu classes together every week.

## ADMINISTRATOR'S KIT

Notebook Flashlight Voice recorder Measuring tape UV light Thermometer

## ELIZA HAYES, 28, TOXICOLOGIST

- Eliza was one of the youngest M.D. hires at the CDC in a long time. In her time at the Centers, Eliza has identified and helped arrest several highly virulent agents before they got out of control.
- Recently, Eliza has been dating Bill Beatty. She knows that Bill and Pat Gelena were once engaged, but she doesn't think (somewhat naively) that Pat has any feelings left for Bill.

## TOXICOLOGIST'S KIT

Sterile swabs Sterile scalpel Portable microscope (attaches to smartphone) UV light Thermometer Notebooks

### PAT GELENA, 32, MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIST

- Pat is one of the foremost technologists (someone who analyzes body fluids and tissues) in the United States. She designed the standard technologist field kit now used by CDC agents throughout the country.
- Pat and Bill Beatty were engaged to be married about two years ago. After Bill called it off, Pat spent a lot of time trying to get over him. While for the most part she has, there remain complicated feelings around both him and his new love affair, Eliza Hayes. Eliza is smart and beautiful, and Pat, despite herself, has to admire Eliza somewhat.
- Pat has recently started dating Fred Gillette, the young medical student who has shadowed the team for the past few months.

## TECHNOLOGIST'S KIT

Urinalysis Kit Phlebotomy Kit Anthrax Test Kit Camera Nasal swabs Alcohol swabs Measuring tape Notebooks

### FRED GILLETTE, 26, COCKY MEDICAL STUDENT

- Newest member of the team, Fred is oblivious to the interpersonal connections of the other team members.
- The son of a New England senator, Fred is extremely self-centered, constantly looking for ways to promote himself by out-performing his teammates. His CDC career is one step toward greater things.
- Fred recently, and secretly, started dating Pat.

## PHYSICIAN'S KIT

Albuterol inhaler Epinephrine pen Stimulants and sedatives Suture Kit Aspirin Bandages Blood pressure cuff Pulse Oximeter

## JOHN SEVERN, 57, PHYSICIAN

- A 30-year veteran of the CDC, John is five weeks away from retirement.
- John has known Bill, Pat, and Veronica for years. He likes Bill and Pat, but doesn't know Eliza terribly well. Sharp-eyed, John is aware of the tension that exists between John and Pat, and Pat and Eliza.
- John resents being passed up for promotion, but would never admit that his lackluster performance over the years had anything to do with it. While there isn't anything in particular that he dislikes about Veronica, and privately he thinks she does a pretty damn good job of leading the team, he often grumbles about the tasks she assigns him.

## PHYSICIAN'S KIT

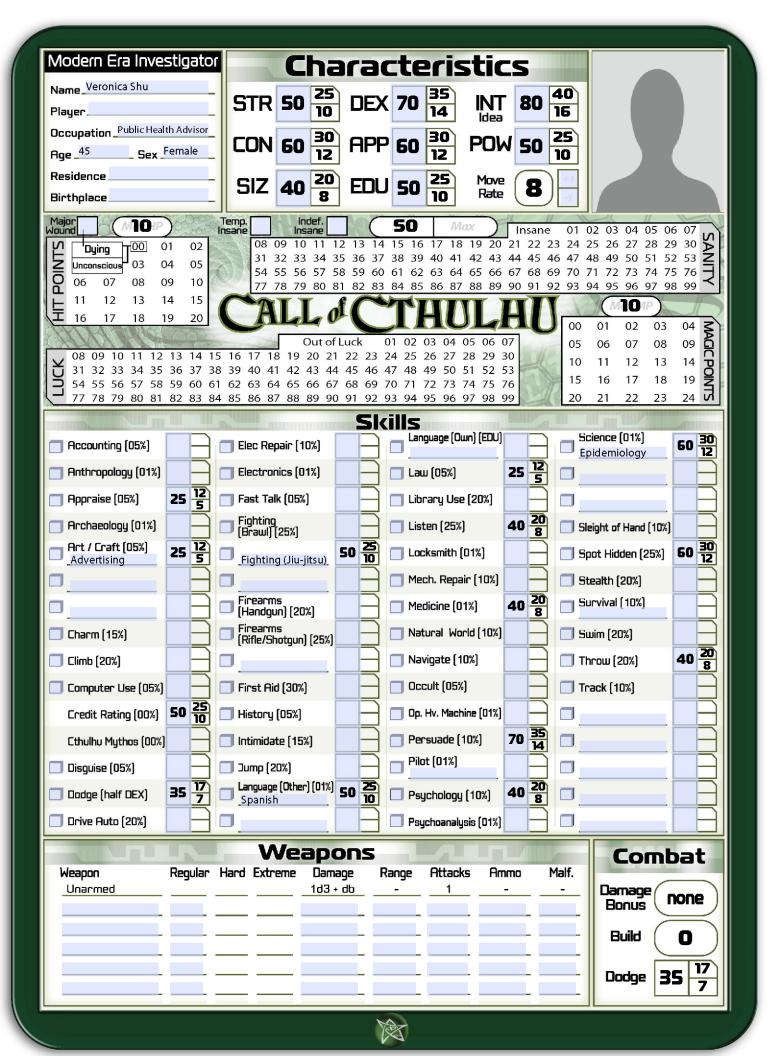
Albuterol inhaler Epinephrine pen Stimulants and sedatives Suture Kit Aspirin Bandages Blood pressure cuff Pulse Oximeter

## BILL BEATTY, 30, PHYSICIAN

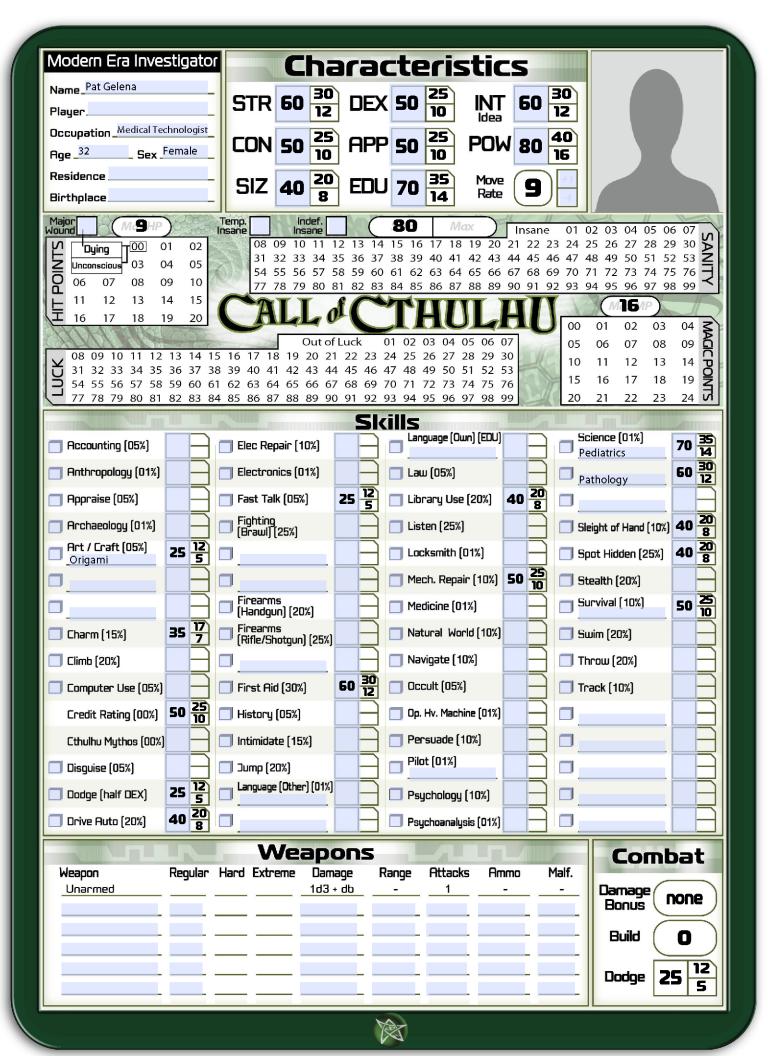
- Though a decent physician, Bill seems to have the emotional maturity of a college student.
- He proposed to Pat to keep the relationship going, but once he realized that she really did want to marry him, he broke up with her. He claimed that he needed to put his profession first, but was soon spotted at local singles clubs.
- He swears to Eliza Hayes, his newest and latest girlfriend, that he is a changed man and serious about their relationship.

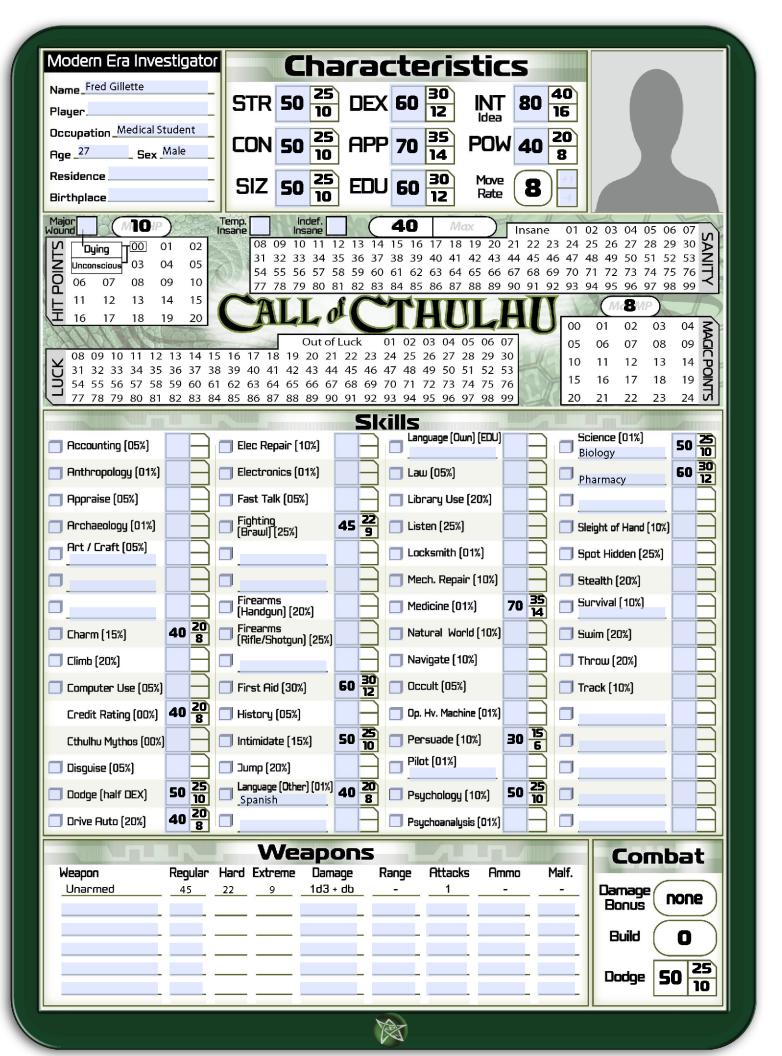
## PHYSICIAN'S KIT

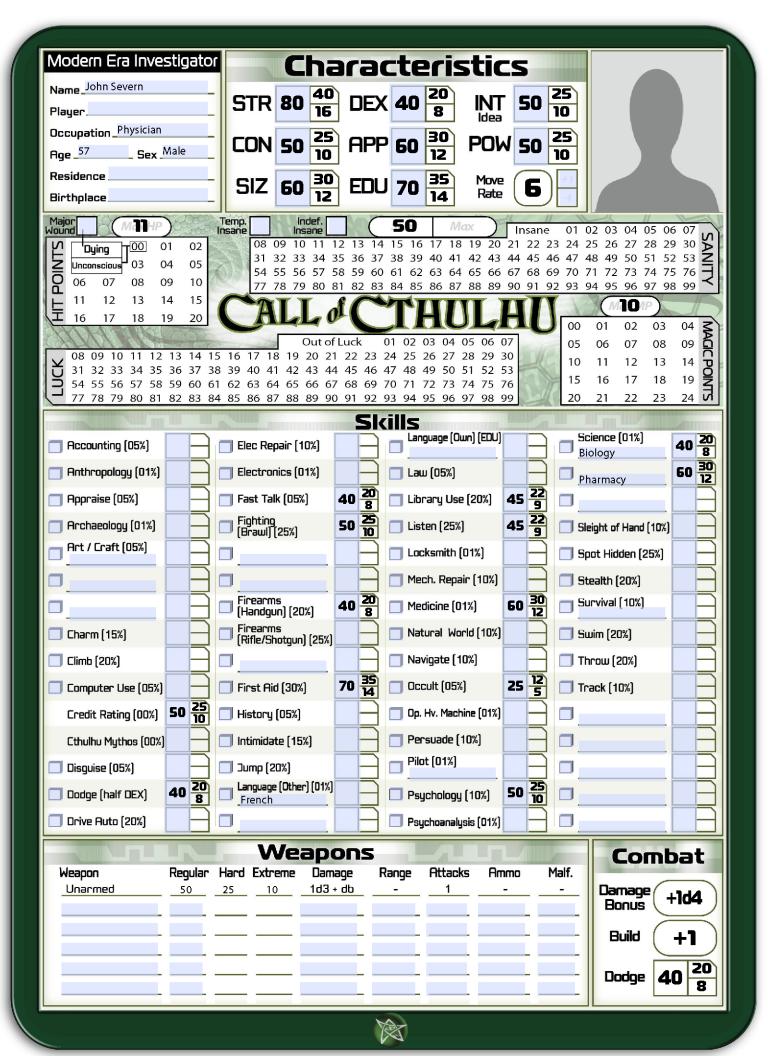
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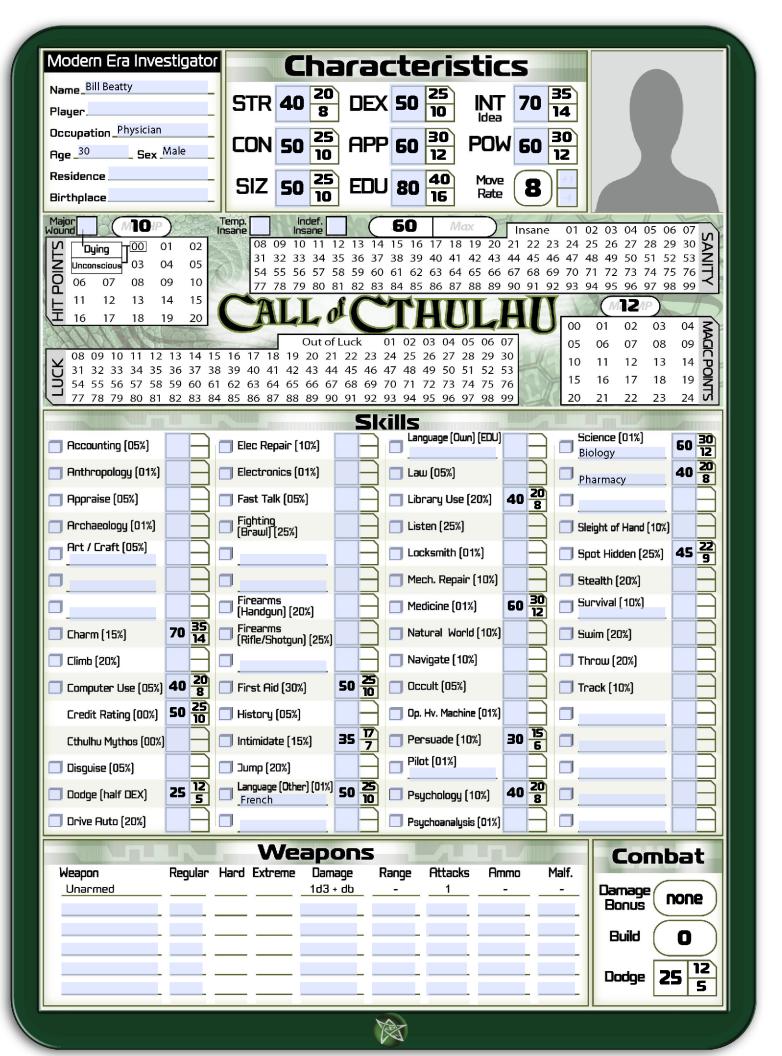


Modern Era Investigator	Characteristics
Name_Eliza Hayes	
Player Occupation_Toxicologist	lidea lidea
Age _28 _ Sex _Female _	CON 50 25 APP 70 35 POW 60 30 12
Residence	
Birthplace	SIZ 50 25 EDU 60 30 Move 8 41 Rate 8 41
1. Mark	Temp. Indef. 60 Max Insane 01 02 03 04 05 06 07
Unconscious 03 04 05	08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53
06 07 08 09 10	54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99
<b>H</b> 11 12 13 14 15 <b>H</b> 16 17 18 19 20	
ALCHIOL & COOL	Out of Luck         01         02         03         04         05         06         07         05         06         07         08         09         01           16         17         18         19         20         21         22         23         24         25         26         27         28         29         30         16         17         18         19         20         21         22         23         24         25         26         27         28         29         30         16         11         10
08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38	
54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84	62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 15 16 17 18 19
	Skills
Accounting (05%)	Elec Repair [10%] 50 25 Language (Own) (EDU) Science (01%) 70 35 Toxicology 70 14
Anthropology (01%)	Electronics (01%)
Appraise (05%)	Fast Talk (05%)
Archaeology (01%)	Fighting Listen (25%) Sleight of Hand (10%)
Art / Craft (05%)	Fighting (Jiu-jitsu)         40 20         Locksmith (01%)         Spot Hidden (25%)         40 20
	Mech. Repair (10%) 30 5 Stealth (20%)
	Firearms [Handgun] [20%] Medicine (01%) 60 30 [Handgun] [20%]
Charm (15%)	Firearms [Rifle/Shotgun] (25%) [25%] [Natural World (10%) [25%] [Suim (20%)] [25%] [Natural World (10%]] [25%] [Natural World (10%]] [25%] [Natural World (10%]] [25%] [Natural World (10%]] [Natural
Climb (20%)	Navigate (10%)
Computer Use (05%)	First Aid (30%) Occult (05%) Track (10%) 30 5
Credit Rating (00%) 40 20	History (05%) 25 12 Op. Hv. Machine (01%)
Cthulhu Mythos (00%)	Intimidate [15%] 35 7 Persuade (10%)
🗖 Disguise (05%)	] Jump (20%)
Dodge (half DEX)     20    10     4	Language (Other) (01%)
🗖 Drive Auto (20%)	Psychoanalysis (01%)
	Weapons Combat
	Hard Extreme Damage Range Attacks Ammo Malf.
Unarmed	
	Dodge 20 10





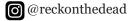


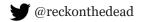




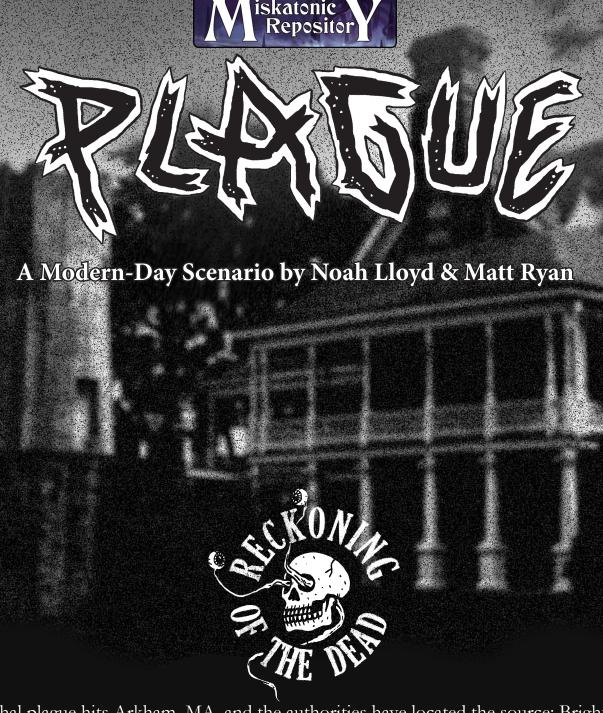
*Reckoning of the Dead* is an online, DIY resource for tabletop roleplaying games, primarily *Call of Cthulhu*. There you'll find interviews, game write-ups, and our bread-and-butter, one-page scenarios.

Matt Ryan and Noah Lloyd are two dedicated role-players living in Ithaca, NY. Together they run the website ReckoningoftheDead.com, run games at the local comic book store (and in other peoples' homes), as well as write scenarios like the one you hold in your hands. Or on your fancy mobile device. Drop us a line at the website and let us know the grim fates of your investigators.









ALL Of THULH

A lethal plague hits Arkham, MA, and the authorities have located the source: Brighton House, an old Victorian mansion on French Hill renovated into tenement apartment housing. The disease does not respond to any known treatments and kills its victims in a few short hours. The Centers for Disease Control respond by sending some of their top agents to investigate: can they save the inhabitants of Brighton House, and prevent the disease from spreading?

"Plague" is a one-shot scenario designed for 4-6 players, and contains six pregenerated characters, maps, and all new art. Lead your team through the horrors of Brighton House and the mystery that waits inside.