

TALES OF TERROR



AN ADVENTURE SOURCEBOOK
FOR
CALL OF CTHULHU

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION by Steve Hatherley	04	THE SECOND CIRCLE by Steve Hatherley	17
THE WRITING ON THE WALL by Steve Hatherley	05	THE OLD CHURCH by Steve Hatherley	17
FORKED TONGUES by Steve Hatherley	05	TROPICAL DEATH by Steve Hatherley	18
WHO IS THE MURDERER? by Graham Theobalds	06	DINOSAUR EXPERIMENT by Steve Hatherley	19
GRIM PORTRAIT by Steve Hatherley	07	THE DISAPPEARANCE by Steve Hatherley	19
SCARLET FEVER by Steve Hatherley	08	ENCHANTED WOOD by Steve Hatherley	20
THE SPIDER MAN by Steve Hatherley	08	THE ISLAND by Steve Hatherley	21
THE GHOST OF HEDDON MANOR by Steve Hatherley	09	THE DEVERE POOL by Garrie Hall	21
THE RIPPER by Steve Hatherley	10	BLACK ANNA'S BOWER by Garrie Hall	22
A WOLF AT THE DOOR by Steve Hatherley	10	WASTELAND by Garrie Hall	23
THE MANACLES by Steve Hatherley	11	TURKISH DELIGHT by Garrie Hall	24
THE HATCHING ROCKS by Steve Hatherley	12	DREAMFIRES by Steve Hatherley	24
THE MIDLOCK DRAGONS by Steve Hatherley	12	HEADACHES by Steve Hatherley	25
AN OUTBREAK OF CANCER by Steve Hatherley	13	SMUGGLER'S COVE by Garrie Hall	26
THE OLD STRAIGHT TRACK by Steve Hatherley	14	THE THEATRE OF DEATH by Garrie Hall	27
THE BLACK BOOK OF THE EAST by Steve Hatherley	15	GRIM JUSTICE by Garrie Hall	28
THE HELMSDON MONSTER by Steve Hatherley	15	THE CRAZED by Garrie Hall	29
SHORT STORY by Steve Hatherley	16	DARK INCAL by Perry Okerstrom	29

FIRE VICTIM by Perry Okerstrom	30	SAGE ADVICE by Peter Devlin	43
THE TOAST OF LONDON by Perry Okerstrom	30	A MATTER OF TASTE by Peter Devlin	44
NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES by Garrie Hall	31	GRAVEN IMAGES by Peter Devlin	45
INTO THE DARKNESS by Garrie Hall	32	BURN by Peter Devlin	46
THE TERRIBLE OLD BOOKSHOP by Peter F. Jeffery	32	KINDERGARTEN KULT by Arthur Boff	47
A DEATH IN THE FAMILY by Ian Bond	33	KEYBOARD MUSIC by Arthur Boff	48
DEAD MAN'S BLUFF by Mark Morrison	34	THE DELIVERY by Peter Devlin	48
ROADKILL by Mark Morrison	34	WORD FROM ON HIGH by Matt Cowger	49
THE BOX OF G'HYR by Rik Kershaw	35	WHEL by Matt Cowger	50
THE HORROR OF FANG ROCK. by Rik Kershaw	35		
THE VASE OF SANDS by Rik Kershaw	36		
THE MATLOCK FIRE by Rik Kershaw	36		
THE BIBLIOPHILE by Brent Heustess	37		
THE TERROR IN THE FOG by Rik Kershaw	38		
THE FACE OF GOD by Shannon Appel	39		
THE POISONED SAILOR by Ricardo Christie	40		
DANGEROUS PLAY by Mauro Reis	40		
THE HELLFIRE CLUB by Andrew Behan	41		
THE MIRACLE by Ricardo J. Mendez	42		
BAND OF GOLD by Steve Hatherley	43		

INTRODUCTION

by Steve Hatherley

During the course of a *Call of Cthulhu* campaign the constant demands of inventive Investigators can prove to be quite a strain on the poor Keeper. A booklet crammed full of easily adaptable ideas can be invaluable.

Tales of Terror was conceived with this in mind. The „Tales” can be quickly and easily dropped into any game. While preliminary investigations are being conducted the Keeper has time to decide which (if any) of the three possibilities apply. Further details can be created by the Keeper as required.

Many scenarios for *Call of Cthulhu* are too big. Great Old Ones, R’lyeh, Outer Gods, and monsters the size of mountains all threatening civilization as we know it. In the midst of these major conflicts there should be smaller struggles. A nest of vampires, a haunted house, an unexpected death. *Tales of Terror* is brimming with these low key investigations that put saving the world into perspective.

Tales of Terror is also a source of red herrings and associated leads. On the trail of Deep Ones? (Or Lloigor? Or sinister orientals? Or vampires?) There are Tales here with the potential to confuse, illuminate and terrify.

Ultimately, *Tales of Terror* is a booklet of ideas. The situations here each have the potential of being expanded into a full blown adventure. A scenario is often the development of one or two isolated ideas. A vision, spark, or something. *Tales of Terror* consists of these ideas distilled out from the descriptive text.

Use it as you will.



THE WRITING ON THE WALL

by Steve Hatherley

The symbols and half-letters scrawled messily on the wall are not from any recognisable language. They look like the drunken attempts of a lone vandal, and are not particularly remarkable. Except for one thing: they appear elsewhere. On lorries and trains, schools and churches. In the country, in town. On sheds and walls, windows and signs. Usually in paint, and once or twice in blood.

Possibilities

1) The symbols indicate the borders of a small but rapidly growing cult. As they spread alarmingly from town to town the symbols spread with them.

2) The “ley lines” of old are now too weak for the Lloigor to use as energy sources. But, in this age of technology, there are other sources – electricity and telephone cables. The Lloigor have implanted messages into sleeper’s brains, forcing them to daub the symbols across the country. They are eventually translated to form an artificial intelligence algorithm. The algorithm hides in the computer system and “encourages” the construction of new cables. These form circles of power the Lloigor can absorb and begin their return to power.

3) The symbols (written by sleepwalkers) originate from a long forgotten language. Eventually they are translated to form one word. “Rejoice.” What does it mean? Is it a sign from God?

Then, a second word: “for”. Then “He”, followed by “is” and “coming.”

“*Rejoice for He is coming.*” But who?

FORKED TONGUES

by Steve Hatherley

Martin Coleford-Johns is fascinated by dinosaurs. His father worked hard uncovering fossilized skeletons of the giant creatures and passed the bug on to Martin. It was only natural that he should attend Oxford and study the science of paleontology. Now, at the age of 42, Martin Coleford-Johns is the acknowledged leader of the field.

Tall and good looking, many women have fallen for this aristocratic figure. However, Martin has but one passion – dinosaurs. He is distant and uninterested in anything except his favourite subject. When anyone mentions anything to do with the prehistoric world he suddenly becomes lively and alert, almost undergoing a complete personality change.

However, this reclusive man does not like to publicise his work. He lives in the family house set back in extensive gardens behind high brick walls. His two servants, a butler and a maid, aid him. Currently he has only one heir, Justin Coleford-Johns. The boy is at boarding school, his mother having died in childbirth.

Coleford-Johns rarely appears in public, preferring to work either in the field or in the extensive laboratories constructed on his grounds. When he does appear (evening engagements only) he is always impeccably dressed.

Visitors to the house are unwelcome. If the visitors cannot express an interest in either the extensive reptile collection or the study of fossils then they will be shown the door. Otherwise Coleford-Johns will talk animatedly to his fellow devotees on the subject until he grows tired of them.

The Coleford-Johns family has for years been a sanctuary for the Serpent People. With the aid of *Consume Likeness* the Serpent People have taken the place of Martin, the butler and the maid. There are other Serpent People hidden about the house.

The only human member of the family is Justin, and he is kept away from the house as much as possible. Once he has bred and has at least one heir, the Serpent People will kill and replace him as well.

The house is filled with reptiles and dinosaur books. The shelves are lined with anything even vaguely connected to the subject. There are fossils and bones and several scale models of dinosaurs. There are also several Serpent People tomes, but they are well hidden. Lighting in the house is always soft to avoid casting betraying shadows. The Serpent People never go out in bright sunlight and have most of their needs delivered direct from Harrods.

Coleford-Johns has a purpose other than the study of fossils. He is engaged in a programme to return the People as rightful masters of the Earth. In rooms concealed below the house he has several clutches of Serpent People eggs, just waiting to hatch.

His fossil hunting expeditions across the globe conceal a more sinister purpose. Chipping at rock in distant countries is a good cover for his true goal – finding the lost temples of the Serpent People.

The Serpent People were a violent, possessive race and fought many battles with other aliens that wanted Earth for their own. However, their enemies were cunning and powerful and, at the end of the Permian Era, they began the preparations which would preserve their ancient race until such time as they could reclaim the world for their own.

Their preparations consisted of a series of temples scattered across the globe in isolated locations. In each, a number of the Serpent People were placed in a state of deep hibernation, along with much of their (now lost) technology and sorcery. Eventually, when the wars were over they would awaken to reclaim the Earth.

However, something went wrong and the temples' inhabitants never woke. As the Earth grew older its crust moved and shifted, crushing many temples. Others were lost as the land dropped and the sea rushed in, or were found by other races and destroyed. Now, 230 million years after their construction, there are only a few of the temples left. Martin Coleford-Johns wants to find them.

Possibilities

1) Justin Coleford-Johns is troubled by nightmares about reptiles. In them he dreams of giant walking snakes which talk in strange hissing voices. Sometimes, in the really bad nightmares his father turns into one of these creatures. Periodically he runs away from the boarding school, but is always found and sent back.

2) Carelessly, slip Martin Coleford-Johns is photographed in broad sunlight while working on a large fossil in Utah, America. The photographer is a journalist reporting on the expedition and does not notice the strange, inhuman shadow. However, while Martin is still in the USA, the photograph is printed in one of the London papers. The paper has the print in its files, the shadow is much clearer on that.

3) Should reports pointing to a new Serpent People colony reach his ears, Martin will begin to investigate. Stories of dinosaurs, giant reptiles, and samples of shedded skin will stir his interest.

If the Investigators are involved he may try to infiltrate the group by casting *Consume Likeness*. Coleford-Johns may decide to use one of his different forms to avoid attracting attention to his sanctuary.

WHO IS THE MURDERER?

by Graham Theobalds

One of the investigators is contacted by Miss Sarah Spencer. She is convinced that someone is going to murder her but does not know who or why. She needs help and is willing to pay.

Two days ago she received a letter with a local postmark. The letter was typed on a typewriter with a missing "e".

*D_ar Miss Sarah,
Your lif_n_ars its_nd.
My wrath is compl_t_.
D_ath is yours.
S__local pr_ss for d_tails.*

She was going to leave it at that but yesterday found a message in the personal column in the newspaper.

Dear Miss Sarah. Only two days left.

There is another message today.

Dear Miss Sarah. One day left. Vengeance will be mine.

She has left her job and has booked into a hotel.

The messages were telephoned to the paper and paid for by a man giving his name as Robert Cook. Tomorrow's note in the paper is to read: *Rest, dear. Breathe your last.*

Possibilities

1) Miss Spencer is dangerously schizophrenic and quite insane. She is usually Miss Spencer, but at times of stress becomes Robert Cook. Cook is gradually exerting more control and believes that by killing Miss Spencer he will be completely free. He will, but not the way he thinks.

One room in Miss Spencer's fastidiously neat house is messy and unkempt. This is Cook's, and pride of place is an antique typewriter with a missing "e".

2) The letter was written by Miss Jane Marsh, jealous ex-lover of Robert Cook. Miss Spencer is now seeing Cook, and Miss Marsh has sworn to kill her and frame him. She knows where Miss Spencer is staying and has posted an invitation to Cook to visit her there. There he will find the mutilated body of Miss Spencer just as the police arrive.

3) Miss Spencer is a Deep One before the "change" and is luring the investigators to their death. They have been getting too close. The clifftop hotel she says that she is staying in is old and dilapidated and smells of fish.

GRIM PORTRAIT

by Steve Hatherley

Dexter Cauldrose is a mildly talented artist, his technique often crude and composition amateur. Despite this, his portraits are sought after by the fashionable rich. The waiting list is several months long and as a result, Cauldrose has a richer lifestyle than many other, far finer, artists.

He is a success because of his novelty value. Cauldrose specialises in gruesome portraits, revealing his subject in death. Sometimes he portrays his subjects lying in state, but often has them disembowelled and brutally mutilated. In some circles, the more brutal the death, the better.

Then, they begin to die.

Cauldrose is the first to go. His self-portrait showed his body chopped to pieces in a barren room. (It was the reaction to this painting that led him to identify his market.) His body is found in a barren room, chopped and looking exactly as he painted. At first it is taken to be a very sick joke, then others begin to die.

Possibilities

1) Cauldrose's paintings are not so much predicting the future, as creating it. Cauldrose himself was killed by an escaped lunatic. Others will become accident victims, suicides, or mauled by wild animals. Each death is unconnected, except by the extraordinary artwork of Dexter Cauldrose.

The deaths occur at the same rate as the portraits were painted. As the pattern is discerned, worried subjects will be able to determine the time of their demise. There is no way out, except for the destruction of these violent works of art.

2) Before each killing, the subject is approached by a tall black man, elegantly dressed in black. He offers a bargain, a contract. In return for signing a single sheet of paper, covered in indecipherable typescript, the subject will be spared.

At first, the subjects ignore him, only to pay the price. Then, when the first of them escapes the seemingly inexorable murders, the contract is brought into light. Written in an unknown language, the subject has unwittingly signed away his soul to Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos.

But why does the Outer God want their souls? And when will he collect?

3) The real painter is Cauldrose's insane brother, working from crude sketches and photographs provided by Dexter. Locked in the attic, he lived for nothing but to paint. Then, his condition worsened, and he turned on his brother, dressing the body to look like his art. Now he is wandering the streets, hunting for other subjects.

SCARLET FEVER

by Steve Hatherley

It is a rather peculiar disease, liquefying flesh into a thick red jelly, leaving only bones and skin untouched. Bodily functions continue unimpaired until the end. It is so rare that it does not yet have a name, let alone a cure.

Victims are often completely unaware that they carry the disease. Realisation sinks in only when cut: instead of blood, jelly wells out of the wound. Their skin does not heal, and if left unbandaged shrinks and wrinkles as the victim's liquefied flesh oozes out.

Possibilities

1) The disease is caused by a Lloigor. The Lloigor, Clerghh, is able to possess human victims in the course of its evil design. It is so successful at possession, that it has not had to materialise into its reptilian form for many years now.

The unfortunate human is unaware of the possession, which lasts for a maximum of six months. After that the disease, a by-product of the process, causes the human body to fail irretrievably. Clerghh moves on.

2) A vampire is afoot, feeding on predigested human flesh. It has two forms; the first a tall and handsome human, the other a multi-legged maggot-thing with a stabbing proboscis.

The vampire-thing needs to inject its prey with digestive juices some months before feeding. It makes two visits, injecting juices at first and then returning once its victim is ripe.

3) The victims are always men. A cult dedicated to Nyarlathotep offers girls in frenzied ceremonies. Those he rejects are torn apart by the cult, those he fancies (and Nyarlathotep has taste) he proposes to. If a girl accepts, she becomes his bride and resides in the Daemon Sultan's court for the rest of eternity.

Those that refuse are set free and cursed. Every man they encounter for anything longer than a moment will die, afflicted with a terrible disease. At midnight on the night of each full moon Nyarlathotep returns to ask for her hand. If she accepts, the Outer God takes her to Azathoth's court for the wedding and matrimonial bliss. If she declines, more men are consigned to a grisly fate.

Eventually Nyarlathotep becomes bored with his bride, and it is time to choose another.

THE SPIDER MAN

by Steve Hatherley

He is their least favourite patient. Everybody, even arachnophiles, find the presence of so many spiders disturbing. They are everywhere in the barren room: on the floor, walls and ceiling. They infest his bed, scamper across his clothes, and stalk through his hair.

They are ignored by the patient, known to the staff of the Seaview Home for the Insane as "the spider-man". He sits on his chair, head cocked to one side, staring blankly at nothing. He does not speak and needs to be hand-fed, not a popular task among the staff.

The spiders have defeated all attempts to shift them. Steely nerved cleaners used to periodically clean the room, but each time they were back within a week. Now they just don't bother. Besides, the spider-man does not seem to mind.

Possibilities

1) Blown off course by a severe storm, the crew of a capsized tramp steamer found themselves cast on a pacific island inhabited by natives belonging to a spider cult.

In the months that followed, those that weren't killed lost their sanity. Eventually, the cult elected one of the crew to godhood, sacred for the rest of eternity. They cast him adrift in the lifeboat to take the word to the masses, quite unaware that his mind was utterly blank.

The man was picked up by a warship, pronounced insane, and committed to Seaview. There he has attracted the attention of the local spider population. He is their god, and they like being around him.

2) The spider-man is host to the Children of Atlach-Nacha, huge spiders with horrible faces. While exploring the Dreamlands he stumbled across Atlach-Nacha and her web. Atlach-Nacha welcomed the interruption, happily taking the opportunity to inject her young into a suitable host.

He awoke in screaming terror. If it was only a dream, why did he hurt so? Then he saw the neat puncture marks in his abdomen, and felt their presence. It shattered his mind.

Now the spiders are waiting for the joyous day when Atlach-Nacha's brood will hatch from his rich flesh. For beneath the spider-man's tender skin they slowly mature, soon to hatch.

3) The spiders are all one species. The spider-man has been cross-breeding them. His listless, blank periods are interspersed with activity when he is permitted to go into the gardens and catch spiders for his room. There he is breeding a new species.

The spider-man was once a fine entomologist, fascinated by socially organised insects and puzzled over the lack of such order in spiders. The only survivor from an expedition to G'harne that went tragically wrong, he is now conducting his own experiments and trying to create a new arachnoid order.

THE GHOST OF HEDDON MANOR

by Steve Hatherley

THE GHOST OF HEDDON MANOR

The manor of Heddon on the south side of Exmoor in Devonshire, where the winds never cease to blow, is an ancient and haunted place. The moor is steeped in legend and superstition, but none are so well documented as the water-spirit of Heddon Manor.

It was first recorded in 1834 by Lord Poppleford, who then lived in the manor.

Lord Poppleford often dreamt during his sleep and kept diaries of his lengthy (and often highly unusual) night-time experiences. These were kept by his bed and in them he also recorded the water-spirit, as he so described it. He writes:

"May 25, 1837. The Water-Spirit visited again last evening. Once again I was made aware of a great sloshing sound that came as if from beneath the very ground on which the manor sits. Having woken me in the dead of night, I listened for over an hour as the sounds paced to and fro. Eventually, they receded. When I woke in the morning, I found that, as before, there were damp stains on the floor and the kitchens were flooded. There was an unholy smell about the manor, as if something wet had died."

Other effects attributed to the ghost include "sweating walls" and the air smelling "as of the sea." The damp stains were quite a common sign that it had passed, as were the "sloshing sounds" that it made at night. Lord Poppleford never actually saw the ghost.

Since that time the water-spirit has only infrequently appeared. The last documented sighting was in 1895 when it caused the (then current) occupant to move hurriedly. Heddon Manor now stands unoccupied.

OLD COUNTRY HOUSES, T. A. Fleming, 1917

Possibilities

1) The Water-Spirit is an old Deep One that lives in subterranean caverns beneath Heddon Manor. It is trapped there by an ancient spell, only able to escape into the manor and feed from the larder at limited times.

2) It is a genuine ghost. The restless spirit of a fisherman haunts the manor. The Lord of the Manor wronged him, sending him to his death in a terrible storm. He now haunts the great house and those that live there.

3) It is mere legend and superstition. The combination of a damp, old house and some unusual, windswept caverns (which produce the sloshing sounds) caused Lord Poppleford to imagine rather more than there was.

THE RIPPER

by Steve Hatherley

RIPPER NOTES STOLEN

Last night the only copies of the diaries of Doctor Gideon Black were stolen from Oxford University Library. Dr. Black was widely believed to be the legendary killer "Jack the Ripper" when his diaries were found after his death.

The handwritten journals detail many unnecessary experiments that Dr. Black performed. The Doctor was a surgeon at St. Mary's Hospital in Oxford but was living in London during the time that the Ripper was abroad. During this time he performed much surgery that was considered additional to requirements.

Dr Black's diaries have been examined and it is now believed that he was not the legendary London killer.

The Oxford Police are currently looking for a foreign gentleman in his sixties who was enquiring about the diaries just before they were taken.

The last person to see the notes was one of the students at the university. He can be contacted and may let investigators see his notes. Although the diary and "Jack's" handwriting has been compared before, the student has studied them both and concludes that they may have been written with the same hand.

Possibilities

1) Dr. Black was Jack the Ripper, and has been re-animated. He has stolen his own notes and intends to continue his research. A week later the first of a series of ripper murders scorches headlines.

2) The notes are an elaborate fake. They were written by a number of medical doctors to shock one of their fellows. Several "in-jokes" can be found amongst the document, if searched for properly.

3) Dr. Black was not the Ripper, but was engaged in similar studies. Although not of the Mythos, he had connections. The diaries point to where Dr. Black purchased some of his bodies upon which he worked – and notes the poor, almost gnawed, condition of some of them.

A WOLF AT THE DOOR

by Steve Hatherley

One of the players, a doctor, is contacted by Charlotte Langley. She is having disturbing dreams at night and wishes the doctor to prescribe something to stop them.

Charlotte is twenty-three and rather attractive. She has had dreams ever since she was about thirteen. They have almost always been the same – blood, matted fur and a longing to run free through dark, damp forests. Charlotte has no idea where the dreams originate.

Then, about a week ago the dreams started to intensify. They became stronger, more possessive. She has been waking in a dreadful fright every night since. Could the doctor do something about it?

Charlotte is a werewolf. She first contracted the disease when she was bitten by an infected dog at thirteen. Since then, the disease has been slowly maturing. She will shortly develop the full symptoms and turn into a terrifying werewolf and murder several innocent people. Charlotte will have no memory of the incident.

Contrary to popular legend, the disease does not always manifest itself at full moon. However, it does follow the lunar cycle, repeating itself every 28 days.

Curing Charlotte would be a considerable accolade, if any of the player's peers would believe it. A silver bullet will kill Charlotte, but can the doctor justify using one when he might be able to cure her?

Possibilities

1) If the doctor does not suspect Charlotte, he should be guided into believing that she is a clairvoyant. If Charlotte's dreams can predict these terrible murders then perhaps she can be used to solve the crimes.

2) The doctor watches over her while she sleeps, and is present when the physical change of girl to beast takes place. The doctor has only a few moments to act before the werewolf wakes. This could prove complicated if the doctor had grown attached to Charlotte.

3) Charlotte is an unwitting Dreamer in the Dreamlands, and is a werewolf there. During the hours of the disease's climax a terrible, unstoppable beast stalks the streets of Dylath-Leen. Silver is rare in Dylath-Leen and nobody has thought to waste it upon the beast.

There is a physical change as well – in her bed Charlotte turns into a werewolf, but never awakens. She wakes weak and in human form, feeling as if she has just run a marathon. There are several nights of this (each lasting up to eight weeks in the Dreamlands) before the disease subsides. Until next month.

In this case, the dreams may have been taking place over a period of months and Charlotte has only just decided to see a doctor. She does not know of the Dreamlands.

THE MANACLES

by Steve Hatherley

THE MANACLES

The Manacles are a cluster of forbidding rocks jutting from the sea nine miles east-north-east of Lizard Point, the most southerly point of England. Although only a square mile in area, the Manacles have wrecked hundreds of ships and claimed thousands of lives.

The church at St Keverne, a mile away, has more than four hundred shipwreck victims in its graveyard. The sea bed contains many more.

The Manacles get their name from an old and obscure legend concerning a young boy and Satan. The boy hates his brutal father who is always whipping and beating him. Eventually, sick of his father's drunken rages, the boy strikes a bargain with Satan – but Satan's price is high. He wants the boy's soul.

The bargain is sealed and Satan keeps his word. The father is struck insane and hurls himself from a cliff to his death. Stricken with grief, the boy goes to a priest and confesses his sin. The priest forgives and blesses the boy, but cannot stop Satan from claiming his price.

In blind panic the boy steals a boat and rows out to sea, desperately trying to hide from Satan. However, the Devil is not stupid and catches the boy alone at sea. Reaching up with claws the size of hills, Satan claims the young boy's soul. However, the boy is blessed and as Satan's huge claws envelope him, they turn to stone.

The legend has it that Satan is still under the sea, trapped by his stone manacles to that same spot.

The legend is almost entirely forgotten now and in calm weather the Manacles are a popular fishing area.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS IN CORNWALL, G. Hall, 1921

That legend cannot be found anywhere else but in this book. The Manacles derive their name from "maen eglos" which means "stone church" in Cornish.

Just around from Manacle Point (on the nearby coast) is Porthoustock. The cliffs there are carved into grotesque shapes by extensive blasting.

Possibilities

1) The legend is partially correct and a Great Old One is imprisoned beneath the sea bed. The quarrying and blasting at Porthoustock has been started by a small group of dedicated worshippers who wish to free the Great Old One.

2) The legend is a complete fabrication, but there was evil present at one time. Upon the Manacles an ancient Deep One temple, the stone church, can be found. It was abandoned centuries ago and can be found by anyone who explores the Manacles.

3) The stone church is still an active Deep One temple, with their hybrids quarrying away at Porthoustock to free a Star-Spawn of Cthulhu trapped there. They are still a long way from freeing the vast beast.

THE HATCHING ROCKS

by Steve Hatherley

Spherical quartz formations formed when molten rock is cast from a volcanic eruption into water and cools before deforming. Found near Mt. Etna. 1871, J. Castle.

Thus reads the note next to three 10 inch diameter spheres. The museum is small and its geology department smaller. Nobody has properly identified the stones; they gather dust, ignored and unremarkable.

The stones are Cthonian eggs. Professor Castle found them near Mount Etna and brought them to the museum. His theory on their origin is entirely inaccurate, and he did not examine them in more detail before his untimely death in 1872.

Possibilities

1) The Cthonians followed Castle back to the museum after the theft of their eggs. Before they arrived he put the "rocks" on display. His heart failed when they tried to telepathically interrogate him and so never found the eggs.

2) The eggs have been stolen from the museum. As the tiny Cthonians slowly matured their telepathic abilities grew, and were sensed by adults. Human agents stole the eggs and took them through to the Dreamlands.

The Waking Worlds are becoming too dangerous and the Cthonians are infiltrating the land beyond the wall of sleep. The plan is in its infancy; so far only a handful of eggs have been taken through.

3) Before an adult (or human agent) can reach the museum, the eggs hatch. The babies first kill birds and rodents but grow rapidly, demanding larger prey. The initial act of vandalism is not high on the police priority list, but they take more interest when the killings begin. It is only time before an adult appears to reclaim the young.

THE MIDLOCK DRAGONS

by Steve Hatherley

The following copies of 17th century manuscripts gathered from various sources (detailed in attached notes) in the University of Cambridge library detail an interesting legend concerning the village of Midlock in Derbyshire.

The manuscripts detail the battle between a hero named George and a number of powerful dragons whose names include "Gnatonea," "Llorga" and "Clerghh."

The dragons enslaved the population of the village and caused them to sacrifice sheep, cattle and even other humans. The villagers were forced into barbaric acts with disease, inbreeding and disfigurement commonplace.

Then George arrived and in a great battle involving much sorcery vanquished the dragons and banished them to a hidden place, setting the village free. Unfortunately, human agents of the dragons plotted against and killed George.

George was buried beneath an oak tree which still grows today.

The above is the precis to a collection of papers which have come to the investigator, perhaps delivered by a colleague or student. Little more can be gleaned from the papers which require wading through pages of old english handwriting.

It would be a considerable accolade to any scholar to prove that the Midlock Dragons were the original source of the St. George and the Dragon legend.

Possibilities

1) The legend is mostly true, but the dragons were in fact a group of Lloigor. George was an investigator of an earlier century and, armed with considerable magics, vanquished the Lloigor. The Lloigor would like to return, but the stone circle from which they drew their power was disrupted.

2) George did not fight any true dragons, but instead freed Midlock from the tyrannical reign of a local landowner. The description of the battle hints that the “dragons” used magic, and there is still some of this lying around in the old manor.

3) There was a battle of some sort, but no concrete evidence to say whether this is the true source of the legend or not.

AN OUTBREAK OF CANCER

by Steve Hatherley

DISEASE STUMPS WELSH DOCTOR

Doctor Robert Jones yesterday admitted failure in treating the baffling disease which is affecting the villagers of Hodgston, Pembrokeshire in South Wales.

Doctor Jones describes the disease's first symptoms as a number of cancerous growths protruding from the skin. These can be of many different forms and gradually grow worse and worse until the patient is covered with the unsightly marks, and dies.

The cancers have taken on many unusual and sometimes disturbing forms. Doctor Jones has reports of cases where it seemed that faces were forming on stomachs and backs, and rubbery tentacles appear to be quite common.

So far 13 people in Hodgston have died from the disease, with twice that number known to be infected. The disease has not responded to any form of treatment.

The strange disease is not confined to Hodgston and Doctor Jones has patients in several of the surrounding villages. The disease is confined to Hodgston and the surrounding area.

Doctor Jones will eventually require outside help. He might call upon the aid of a medical school colleague of his, perhaps one of the investigators.

Possibilities

1) The cancers are punishments inflicted upon the population of Hodgston and its surrounds by a group of active Lloigor. Their presence is also indicated by the abnormally high number of fatal “accidents” reported in the papers. Inbreeding is common and the local population is generally filthy and unkempt.

2) A War Office establishment is pumping waste products into the sea at Tenby, just along the coast. The currents are bringing this waste around to where Hodgston sends its half dozen fishing smacks. The cancers are a direct result of eating contaminated fish.

3) Several months ago there was a report of a meteor shower above South Wales. However, one of the meteors did not completely burn up and landed in a local river. It is radioactive and contaminating the water supply to Hodgeston.

THE OLD STRAIGHT TRACK

by Steve Hatherley

The publication of *The Old Straight Track* yesterday was greeted with amusement by archaeologists everywhere. The book, written by amateur archaeologist, inventor and photographer, Alfred Watkins, proposes that many Megalithic stone circles dotting our landscape are set out to a kind of geometry.

In his book, Watkins describes the lines upon which sacred sites (which include churches and barrows) are located. He imagines them to be perfectly straight invisible lines of power. In past times early man could sense this power and construct sites of worship where it was strongest.

Watkins' "flash of inspiration" as he terms it came to him as he was riding over the Bredwardine hills in Herefordshire. His conviction was strong enough to lead him to publish his book which has had a critical reception from conventional archaeologists.

Note: This story must take place during 1925 when *The Old Straight Track* was first published.

The story is sufficiently interesting to be followed up. If it is true then maybe it can provide a means to tracking down elements of the Cthulhu Mythos all the more easily. Besides, a newspaper might pay handsomely for proof of other lines not mentioned in *The Old Straight Track*.

By using a map, a compass, ruler and pencil the investigator eventually comes to the conclusion that the small village of Todberry in Dorset is the meeting point of three such lines.

By visiting the village, and carefully working out angles with a compass the exact point of intersection can be found. It is in a churchyard, and a stone cross has been erected at the exact point. Upon the stone is a symbol a Cthulhu Mythos roll will identify – the centre of an Elder Sign.

The five points of the Elder Sign can be found as stones from an ancient circle. All are hidden; built into the church, hidden in the graveyard, used in the wall, toppled in a field, submerged in the stream.

Possibilities

1) The stone circle is protection against an ancient demon which will return should it be tampered with. A legend of strangers coming to disturb "He That Sleeps" is handed down by word of mouth and strangers are closely watched.

2) The circle is an ancient place of worship, but has no other significance.

3) An ancient sorcerer is trying to remove the huge Elder Sign so that he may reawaken "He That Sleeps". The sorcerer has had little success so far, but investigators may unearth the vital clue to breaking the spell.

THE BLACK BOOK OF THE EAST

by Steve Hatherley

The discovery of an ancient book in the belongings of Frank Kirby, Crouch End, has stirred local historians. The book, found in his attic after his death last week, purports to be the Black Book of the East, a tome of quite considerable legend.

The Book is supposed to have been written by a French sorcerer during the 11th century. The sorcerer was an advisor to King William the Conqueror who supposedly carried the tome with him everywhere.

After the sorcerer's death it was rumoured to have been annotated and largely reworked by various other witches and warlocks.

It has a history of curses and is riddled with black magic. The Black Book is supposed to be very dangerous, even reading it can be hazardous. It is commonly believed to be cursed.

Before the discovery by relatives of Frank Kirby, the book was last rumoured to have been in the possession of John Dee, Royal Astrologer to Queen Elizabeth. It has appeared throughout history in the hands of sorcerers across the land.

The book is being auctioned tomorrow, and is expected to reach £500.

The Black Book is eventually sold, after much hard bidding, for over £1000 to an unknown bidder operating through an agent. The book was originally written in French, although that has been largely annotated in a number of languages since.

Possibilities

1) The book is a fake. Kirby was known for his practical jokes, and this was his last. He wrote largely nonsense inside, much of it made up. Despite this, the book contains several passages which appear to be uncomfortably prophetic.

2) The book is not the Black Book, but is an original version of the Bible. However, the Bible has changed much since this was written and its tone is completely different. It tells of the Lord being defeated by Satan and cast to earth in the form of Jesus, only to be crucified by the Romans. It is a blasphemous work, but it is so horribly plausible.

3) The Black Book of the East is a Mythos tome, and an exceedingly rare one, this being the only copy. It was written by the French sorcerer, but when he died his soul was imprisoned in the tome. The book can only be opened by satisfying his hunger and spilling human blood across the covers which is quickly absorbed into the material.

THE HELMSDON MONSTER

by Steve Hatherley

The discovery of the carcasses of several sheep on Helmsdon Moor in Yorkshire has returned memories to the time of the Helmsdon Monster that terrorised Helmsdon village in 1913.

The sheep were scattered across the moor and belonged to several different flocks. They had been torn savagely apart and parts were missing, possibly consumed by the killer.

In April 1913 the village suffered similar losses over a period of a week when something was killing sheep indiscriminately during the night. It too, left partially consumed remains behind and created quite a stir in the press at the time. Several woodsmen tried, without success to trap the culprit.

After a week, the killings stopped as mysteriously as they had begun, but not before 25 sheep and the lives of Robert Jones and his wife were claimed.

Several animal experts are being called in to help catch the creature.

The papers of 1913 are full of stories about the Helmsdon Monster. It is possible that some similarity between the killings can be reached.

Possibilities

1) The Monster is a ghost summoned by some foolish farmers dabbling in the occult. It came up through the caverns that riddle the area and began slaughtering the sheep. By day it hid in the caverns, by night it stalked the moors.

The farmers were terrified by the thing they had unwittingly called, but were powerless against it. However, the stories in the press attracted a sorcerer who came and bound the ghaſt to the caverns.

The ſorcerer has juſt recently died, releasing the ghaſt from its bindings. Once again it is reaching out to the ſurface and feeding on the ſheep it finds. Eventually it will get brave enough to attack individual homesteads.

2) The ſlaughters are the work of one crazed lunatic who roams the moors, killing the ſheep with his bare hands. He is completely insane, and very dangerous.

3) The creature is a large wild dog, a doberman. It is quite canny and will do its beſt to avoid capture. It was a guard dog at a nearby manor, but was ſet free during a drunken party. It will attack unhesitatingly.

SHORT STORY

by Steve Hatherley

*UNREAL STORIES, STRANGE TALES
PRESENT
A SHORT STORY COMPETITION*

To celebrate the publication of the firſt iſſue of the premier magazine of unusual fiction, Unreal Stories, Strange Tales is offering a prize of £25 and a life ſubſcription to the author of, in the editor's opinion, the beſt ſhort ſtory ſubmitted to the addreſs below.

Send your entries to:

*Unreal Stories, Strange Tales
PO Box 52
Wapping
London*

Results will be published in the firſt iſſue of Unreal Stories, Strange Tales which is to be published in June.

The advert ſhould catch the eye of any aspiring author wiſhing to make a name for himſelf in the world of ſtrange fiction. It is entirely poſſible that paſt events have gifted the young writer with ſeveral ideas for ſome peculiar tales involving gods, cultiſts, monſters and magic.

The magazine is genuine. At leaſt, there is a ſmall group of people trying to put one together. However, it is deſtined for failure and will not ſurvive beyond the firſt iſſue.

Possibilities

1) The magazine is being uſed by cultiſts trying to gain more Mythos knowledge. This is not a very ſecretive way of going about it, but it may work if other "inveſtigatoꝝ" decide to relate their experiences to the magazine.

2) One of the authors printed in the firſt iſſue evidently knows quite a bit about the Mythos, and writes a gruesome ſtory featuring ſome of the gods. If the players can contact him, he will be a uſeful ally in their battle againſt the dark forces.

3) An author, writing about a location well known to him, accidentally reveals a poſſible Mythos preſence in the locality. The ſtory is a mix of fiction and fact, but there are certain clues and references to things which indicate that things may not be what they ſeem.

by Steve Hatherley

The Artist's Guild of Reading is proud to present an exhibition of paintings at the Archway Museum of Antiquities. The exhibition includes a number of rare and unusual paintings in a variety of mediums by a selection of artists from the unknown to the master. All paintings are for sale.

Should the investigators visit the exhibition then one painting, *The Second Circle*, will catch their eye. Painted about ten years ago by an obscure German artist, the picture is quite ordinary. It shows a peaceful beach with waves lapping at the sand. A bird is perched on a rock in the foreground.

The bird is, as any investigator familiar with the Dreamlands will identify, a varchine. These are birds of prey unique to the Dreamlands. What is one doing in this picture?

The artist has evidently painted a picture of the Dreamlands. Such pictures have the ability to be used as Gates through to the Lands. Experienced Dreamers can dream their way straight to the locality pictured.

It is possible that the artist has painted other scenes, other doorways direct to the world beyond sleep. It is also possible, if the artist was a powerful Dreamer, that she is still in the Dreamlands. Somewhere.

Possibilities

1) The picture leads to a mist covered island. Wandering through the mist eventually brings the Dreamers to a stone circle, the Second Circle of the title. This is an exact replica of a megalithic stone circle which can be found somewhere in Europe. The area is a place where the realities between the two world mix, allowing passage at certain times.

2) The artist is quite mad and is kept in a Bavarian asylum. There she paints scenes from her dreams; gugs and ghaists, Ulthar and Celephais, and more. If the investigators track her down in the Dreamlands they find her lucid and sane.

3) The coastline belongs to a deserted island in the Southern Seas. It is a regular stop for the black galleys that trade with Dylath-Leen and Dreamers waiting there are in danger of being captured by the men that crew such vessels. The circle refers to what appears to be either a dormant volcano, or a meteor crater.

THE OLD CHURCH

by Steve Hatherley

NEW FIND BENEATH ARCHWAY CHURCH

Archaeologists and theologians have this week been examining a new archaeological site in North London. The remains of an old church have been found during renovations to St. Francis' Church in Archway.

Workmen excavating foundations for a new extension to the church found an old flagstone floor. Since finding it last week their place has been taken by students from the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology, University College, London.

The flagstones are in good condition and exhibit excellent workmanship. Research is being conducted to see if records indicate the presence of another church on the site.

The new find has already caused concern when it was discovered that one of the symbols found carved on the flagstones is similar to designs carved on megaliths by Stone Age man.

St. Francis' Church was constructed during the sixteenth century, and it is believed that this discovery predates the church by as much as six hundred years.

Further investigations are continuing in the capable hands of Professor Theodore Johnstone-Taylor. He hopes to have the flagstones out from the excavation within the week but has stressed that much more must be done before construction on the extension can continue.

Possibilities

1) The floor of the church is the roof of a very old crypt. The crypt is full of the remains of bodies, all well preserved in the cool, dry environment. All of the bodies show signs of being bled to death. But one of the bodies is not yet dead, and after such a long sleep it is very thirsty.

2) Further inscriptions begin to come to light in original translations of the Bible. The place is very unholy indeed, devil worship was actively carried out and only after the place was cleansed was the church built. The ward against evil is carved upon one of the flagstones, but they have been taken by the University for study. The church will refuse to visit the place until the flagstone is replaced.

3) The flagstones are the roof of a Deep One temple. At night, when all is quiet, their chanting can be heard. Breaking through reveals a complex network of tunnels and sewers which have given the Deep Ones a complete run of the undercity.

TROPICAL DEATH

by Steve Hatherley

MYSTERY DISEASE KILLS GARDENER

Gardener Martin Smale, 57, died last night in Kew Gardens of a tropical disease. He was found by senior gardener Harry Dean, 64, when he opened the gardens this morning to the public.

Smale was found in the tropical ferns greenhouse which has since been closed by the police. It will remain closed until they are sure how Smale contracted the disease.

The gardens have suffered several cases of vandalism over the last few nights – plants have been kicked over and disturbed but there have been no signs of a break-in. Smale was keeping watch all night to see if he could catch the vandal in the act.

Similar signs of vandalism were found in the greenhouse along with Smale's corpse. Harry Dean had to be taken to hospital in shock after finding the body of his colleague.

Once recovered he described the body: "It was terrible, all covered with sores and dripping with black pus. It was horrible. His face was worse – he was screaming when he died."

Professor Ron White of the Hospital of Tropical Diseases, was unable to identify the disease immediately but hopes to do so soon.

Possibilities

1) One of the plants in the greenhouse is a form of nocturnal triffid and has just reached maturity. Until now it has been crawling around the greenhouse looking for prey before returning to its place.

2) One of the plants in the greenhouse is a four feet tall Very Young Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. Like the triffid above, it has only just reached the mobile stage and has been looking for prey. It was given to Kew after explorer Horatio Barnett returned from an expedition to darkest Africa. He died shortly afterwards and the strange plant was donated by a member of the family.

3) Smale died from contracting an exotic tropical disease. The source of the fast acting disease is the pollen of a particularly beautiful orchid which has just come into bloom. The disease requires a large quantity of pollen to be inhaled before it can overcome the body's defences. Smale had been breathing it for several hours before the swift acting disease took hold. Smale's corpse is a wonderful supply of nutrients and soon it will sprout small green tendrils – new orchids.

DINOSAUR EXPERIMENT

by Steve Hatherley

Professor James Catterall stated yesterday during a press conference at his secluded manor in Hampshire that he hoped to re-introduce the dinosaur into certain parts of the world. Such areas would include

the South American and African rainforests, the Australian bush and maybe even parts of England, such as Dartmoor or the Norfolk Broads.

From discoveries made during his recent expedition to the source of the Congo river in central Africa, Catterall intends to chemically manipulate bird eggs and produce baby dinosaurs.

The eggs will be artificially regressed so that they devolve, rather than evolve according to Darwin's theories. Catterall believes that birds are the dinosaurs' closest living relatives.

Other scientists have denounced Catterall's theories as rubbish.

Catterall is a recluse and works from his secluded manor in the centre of its densely wooded grounds. He is regarded as dangerous by his scientific peers, and has a record of cruelty. During the Great War he was rumoured to have performed much unnecessary surgery.

If any of the others of the expedition to Africa can be found, they will be reluctant to talk about the trip. Many bad things happened there.

Possibilities

1) Catterall is far ahead of his time and has already cloned several dinosaurs from their fossilised bones. The process was a gift from Nyarlathotep in Africa. He already has had some success and intends to display them in a year's time, crediting them as early successes of his fake experiments.

2) The experiments work, but take much longer than anticipated. Eventually, some sixty years after they were started (and twenty years after Catterall's death) the first „dinosaur” is born. It is intelligent – a bipedal lizard man. It is the pinnacle of dinosaur evolution but the dinosaurs died out before it had a chance.

3) Catterall is insane and his experiments are fakes. However, several of his assistants are Serpent People in disguise. They are using Catterall as a cover for their own sorcerous methods for bringing their own kind through from the Permian era, along with some of the proto-dinosaurs of that time.

(Inspired by the novel Carnosaur, by Harry Adam Knight.)

THE DISAPPEARANCE

by Steve Hatherley

A pretty woman approaches a Private Investigator to track down her missing husband. She gives the investigator a thorough description of her husband, Phillip Wainwright, and a key to his study. She has contacted the police, but after their initial interest they do not seem to be very cooperative.

Phillip vanished during the night after working late in his study a week ago. She found him missing in the morning and he has not been seen since.

His study reveals little. There is evidence that Phillip was engaged in much research – lots of cryptic references and what appears to be several attempts to crack a code. However, there is nothing concrete to follow up.

At his place of work, the library, his colleagues display no surprise. A policeman was snooping around several days ago. Phillip had been spending much too much time in the Restricted Access reading room. A check of its contents reveals that one of the books is missing.

Possibilities

1) The missing book was the original *Al-Azif* by Abd al-Azrad. This same copy is possessed by the soul of the author and Phillip, through deciphering sections best left alone, opened his mind to the ancient Arab.

Currently Phillip, under the influence of Abd al-Azrad, is working his way towards the Nameless City in the Arabian peninsula in search of the Arab's last remains.

2) Phillip managed to decode a spell to summon Nodens, the Elder God, from the book (an ancient sorcerer's diary). He foolishly decided to cast the spell and after a few moments Nodens appeared. Phillip

bargained badly and the God dropped him and the diary upon Yuggoth where the Mi-Go have preserved his brain.

3) The book is a hypnotist's workbook and has been taken from his study by the police as possible evidence. They will return it soon, when the case is closed. When Phillip decoded and recited the chants he fainted. Upon returning to consciousness he found his memory had vanished. He wandered out of the house, into the streets and onto the knife of a murderer. His corpse has yet to be discovered.

ENCHANTED WOOD

by Steve Hatherley

Just outside Tunbridge Wells in Kent there is a small wood known just as The Wood by locals. The Wood can be found between Tunbridge Wells and one of the surrounding villages; many people pass by, but few stop.

There are a number of strange stories associated with The Wood – tales of strange beasts and stranger people living there. Sometimes the animals escape and are seen by locals.

None of the locals dare enter The Wood and only talk of it in hushed voices around frothy pints in the local public houses. It is regarded with some suspicion, as are those that seem interested in it. Nothing good ever came out of The Wood.

The Wood barely appears on any map and can be walked around in three hours or so. However, attempts to explore The Wood are usually frustrated, and the curious usually find themselves at the edge again without having penetrated very far.

From a nearby hill, several tantalising views can be seen. Somewhere in The Wood there is a clearing with a tower in the centre. However, reaching the tower is almost impossible as The Wood jealously guards its secrets.

There are several nearby farms and some of these have witnessed some of the things that came out of The Wood. When they hear the strange growlings and snortings they simply close their windows and wait. Eventually the beasts always return to their home in The Wood.

People have also been sighted coming from The Wood, although their manner of speech is always strange and their clothes even stranger.

Occasionally an “Outsider” will move into a nearby farm and take an unusual amount of interest in The Wood. Such people are avoided by locals, considered troublemakers. The Wood is ancient, proud and should be left undisturbed. Stories of “Outsiders” vanishing into The Wood never to return are quite common.

Possibilities

1) The Wood is a gateway to the Dreamlands. It is where the two realities intersect and travellers can cross. However, the gateway is protected and only the very determined can make their way through. Travel is possible in both directions, and the sightings of people and beasts are those that have stumbled through from the Dreamlands.

2) The Wood is haunted by a ghost of a woodsman who lost his girl. She is buried at the tower and he guards her grave jealously. He will try to prevent anyone from reaching her grave, and has strength enough to form long dead beasts from sticks and stones to frighten the curious. His last resort is his unparalleled skill with bow and arrow.

3) This is one of several special places. Dragons, unicorns, elves and the like all live in The Wood protected from outside interference by powerful magics.

(Inspired by the novel Mythago Wood, by Robert Holdstock.)

THE ISLAND

by Steve Hatherley

The seas of the Dreamlands are not as well charted as some would like. The eastern reaches of the Cerenian Sea are infrequently travelled and only vaguely mapped. Sailors avoid these areas, they are filled with horrors that sane men would rather avoid. However, fate sometimes lends a hand and storms whip up from clear skies to blow a ship a long way from home.

Any ship is vulnerable to these storms, all the crew can do is try to hold on and survive until it blows itself out. (Many vanish, sent to the bottom of the sea never to be seen again.) They can then try to find a suitable port for repairs.

The players are on one such ship. They are lucky and do not sink, catching only the edge of the storm. Once the skies have cleared it is obvious that the ship requires extensive work before any major voyage can be undertaken. Worse, most of the supplies have been ruined. If something is not done soon, they will all starve.

Sails in tatters and at the mercy of the currents they drift slowly towards a mist-shrouded island. Dark mountains peep cautiously above the mists but the rest is hidden. However, all does not bode well, the shallows around the island are littered with the deserted hulks of other ships.

The hulks provide raw materials for the repairs, but a boat will have to put ashore to search for food and water.

Possibilities

1) This is the Island of the Cloudbeasts. In deep vents high up the sides of one of the mountains Cloudbeasts are born. The young beasts float gently out of the vents and into the swirling mass of other Cloudbeasts that make up the mists that shroud the island.

There are few legends concerning the Island of the Cloudbeasts, but all mention the great treasures that can be found in a temple hidden somewhere on the island. However, the Cloudbeasts guard their treasures well and do not take kindly to thieves.

2) The mist is not mist at all, it is web. The island is home to millions of spiders. Most are tiny, but some are true giants. They spin their web everywhere and dominate the island. The spiders have consumed every other living thing on the island except the plants. They survive by feeding upon one another, but would rather take fleshier prey.

3) The island is a verdant paradise. There is plenty of water and food to be found in the rich forest that coats the mountainous island.

However, the island is not an island at all, but the back of a huge sleeping Kraken. It is not likely to awaken, but occasionally twitches in its sleep, casually causing earthquakes of cataclysmic proportions.

A deep rhythmic pounding can be heard, or felt, in the larger caverns. The two long ridges and folds reveal strange watery lakes. The animals seem to be enlarged parasites. Perhaps someone will work it out.

THE DEVERE POOL

by Garrie Hall

Many houses in Britain boast a ghost or even a poltergeist, and a few harbour more exotic spirits with manifestations that are as bizarre as screaming skulls and pictures that bleed. However, even these pictorial stigmata are put to shame by the manifestation at the deVere house in the heart of rural Leicestershire.

The house itself does not command any significant interest, being a classic example of a small but luxurious family dwelling built in the years preceding the Wars of the Roses. It sits in extensive gardens, at the bottom of which is the deVere pool. It is this pool which, on several occasions, has changed from water to blood.

The demise of the deVere family is as well documented as many events of the period. During the English Civil War, just before the restoration of the monarchy a small band of common foot-soldiers in the service of the Roundhead army deserted. They ran amok, raping and pillaging throughout the countryside.

Charles deVere had been left a cripple after the Battle of Marston Moor and could do little to protect his wife and daughter from the marauders. The family were slaughtered and their bodies thrown into the pool.

It is said locally that on every 100th anniversary the pond fills with blood in remembrance. However, it has been recorded that the manifestation is sporadic in nature, rather than a regular, repetitive haunting.

Possibilities

1) The pool is haunted by the tormented soul of Charles deVere. A lesser known manifestation is that each time the water turns to blood, the portrait of Charles deVere hanging in the hall cries real tears.

2) The soil beneath the pool is on a clay base and occasional natural movement of the earth's crust brings the clay to the surface, staining the water red.

3) Deep below the deVere house a nest of the Cthonians festers and seethes. It is their burrowing and worming which disturbs the soil beneath the pool.

BLACK ANNA'S BOWER

by Garrie Hall

ANOTHER CHILD MISSING

The Dane Hill Estate was rocked this week when another child, the third in as many months, disappeared from her home. Dawn Smith (3) joins Nicola Johnson (2) and Jason Dawson (2) in what Leicester Police said is "the most baffling and alarming case of its kind we have had."

Local Counsellor Jack North called for more police patrols in the area and visits to local schools by an appointed welfare officer to get over the "don't talk to strangers" message.

This is not the first spate of disappearances in the area. A similar series is recorded in the Parish Records for 1760 when five children disappeared from forest dwellings in an area known as Black Annis Bower Close where the Lord Mayor's celebrations took place each Easter.

Black Annis Bower Close, where Leicester forest once bordered the old city along the Dane Hills, is now covered by the Dane Hill Estate but there are no records of this.

Black Annis is another name for the Celtic earth goddess Danu, wife of the sky god Ludd. She dwelt in a round cave about ten to twelve feet across and five feet high. Known as Black Anna's Bower, she is said to have dug it out of the sandstone Dane Hills with her own fingernails.

There Black Anna waited in the branches of an old oak growing over the mouth of the cave waiting for children to come past. She would then scratch them to death and drink their blood, hanging their skins out to dry.

Possibilities

1) Black Anna's Bower is an entrance to subterranean caverns inhabited by the descendants of the ancient Druids. They once used the cave for their sacrifices to Danu, and tended to the Children of Danu – Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath.

They normally sacrifice their own young while saving a breeding stock of their hardiest children but, occasionally, run short of sacrifices. They are then forced to risk their secrecy and raid the surface world through Black Anna's Bower which is hidden in the Dane Hill Estate rubbish dump.

2) Black Anna's Bower is located directly under 17 Shakespeare Drive, the home of Stephen Johnson. Since moving in he has been possessed by a malign dryad trapped in the Bower since the tree over the cave was cut down. It has grown weak and forces Johnson to sacrifice children so that it can leave the cave for a new oak in the field beyond the estate. If it is not stopped children will regularly go missing, and their skins found hanging in the branches of the oak.

3) The Bower is a Gateway to the land of the faerie, renowned in legend for stealing human infants for their own. Only the innocent are allowed there, those that have not been corrupted by the adult world of humans. All three children were maltreated by their parents and have been granted sanctuary by the faeries. The Bower is guarded by Black Anna against the evils of the outside world.

by Garrie Hall

It is strange that although the scars of war are healing in our countryside, a place previously untouched by the horrors of the trenches has developed a horror of its own.

The mud sea and trenches that were once the front line of Verdun are now teeming with wildlife and the grass and poppies grow in abundance. But not five miles away there is a small community that has been devastated.

There are but a few houses and two farms that now stand deserted in a remote knoll five miles from Verdun, but few people go there. The majority of Verdun's people do not even know of its existence and now it has become actively shunned.

It is a place of death and desolation. Those who once lived there died slowly and painfully and it is said that at night the whole area glows with a deathly brimstone light. The cause is unknown, the problem confined to the remote area. But can we ignore it?

Something laid waste to fertile ground. In just three years a whole community has died out, killed by something unknown. Just because it does not affect our own well-ordered lives do we not owe the relatives of the dead an explanation?

French translation from JOURNAL DE VERDUN

Possibilities

1) The small community is the victim of a strange, cancerous meteorite similar to the one in *The Colour Out of Space* by H. P. Lovecraft.

2) The knoll on which the community stands was once behind German lines, and its houses used by the German Army as a makeshift headquarters. The entire area was used as a dump for chemical and gas weapons and a large amount of phosphorous. As they were beaten back the chemicals were buried in preparation for a counterattack which never came.

Over the years the containers have corroded, contaminating the knoll with phosphors and a deadly mixture of poisons, causing the yellow glow. Once in the food chain it killed vegetation, animals and eventually humans.

3) The story is very inaccurate. There is no "deathly brimstone light" and no evidence of a plague on the land. The war years left the land in great neglect, the population suffered under the German Occupation and both have left what was once rich fertile land a virtual wilderness.

TURKISH DELIGHT

by Garrie Hall

While on holiday in the Balkans the investigators find that their well-earned rest is not meant to be. As they leave their hotel they are greeted by a detachment of the local militia who ask them in no uncertain terms (despite the language barrier) to accompany them to the station.

The conditions in the jail are inhuman and they are forced to stay in a rancid, overcrowded cell with cut-throats and murderers for two days. Eventually they are questioned by the regional prosecutor regarding the disappearance of a local girl on the night they arrived in the area.

Instructed not to leave the Balkans, the investigators are released without charge. However, during the "interview" the following facts emerge:

There have been several disappearances of young ladies in the Balkan area. The names and descriptions change, but the circumstances are familiar. Two girls have gone missing in Bulgaria, two in Serbia, three in Albania and five in Rumania. Each time the girl is beautiful and disappears at night without trace.

The more superstitious locals are talking of supernatural goings-on and the prosecutor is anxious to put an end to these rumours by making a quick arrest and conviction. As the investigators are the only foreigners in the area (and therefore easy scapegoats) he makes it plain that they are at the top of his list.

Should the investigators look into the disappearances they will discover that the common denominator is a Turkish Circus on the return leg of a European Tour.

Possibilities

1) The Turks are using the girls as catalysts for a spell. The circus hypnotist turns their will to Hastur the Unspeakable and they form the coven of witches needed to call Him to the Nameless City.

2) The girls are sold as part of the white slave trade in Turkey. They are kidnapped in the closest countries to Turkey on the return journey so that minimum of care is needed. They are hypnotised and hidden in false compartments in the lion cages to prevent both their escape and discovery by inquisitive officials.

3) The circus has a freak show in which is featured a cannibal from Africa. His twisted keeper lets out his charge who has a taste for young female flesh.

DREAMFIRES

by Steve Hatherley

Abruptly the investigator awakes. Something is burning, there is smoke in the air. The house is on fire! Opening the bedroom door reveals an angry orange hell. The fire rages fiercely in the hall, the walls and floors are blazing and impassable.

With flames licking at the door, there appears to be only one way out of the house: through the bedroom window. Outside, the street is quiet, nobody has yet noticed that the house is burning merrily. There is nothing to climb down that is not already burning. The only option is to jump.

The investigator leaps out, towards a cold, hard safety. Landing is a sudden shock, a searing pain, and unconsciousness.

Possibilities

1) The investigator wakes up in hospital. There he is recovering from injuries sustained from having leapt from his bedroom window. Returning to the house, it is untouched.

The nightmare is the work of a protective spell in a forbidden book the investigator is translating. Into one of the pages the author has worked a fiendish spell to prey on the fears of those who should not be reading the book.

Each time any investigator studies that book, there is a chance that he will glance at that page, so triggering the spell. Next time the investigator takes a flying leap from his bedroom window he might not be so lucky: he might be on the twentieth floor.

2) The investigator wakes up to find himself in the Dreamlands. He has been summoned, ripped out of normal slumber to appear in the Dreamlands. Whether friendly allies or dangerous enemies have summoned the investigator is not yet known.

In the waking world, the investigator appears to have fallen into a coma having leapt from his bedroom window for no apparent reason. He also has a broken ankle and is currently in hospital.

3) The investigator sits bolt upright in bed. It is night, the bed covers are twisted and drenched in sweat. It was only a dream.

HEADACHES

by Steve Hatherley

It is just like any other day, except for a blinding migraine that doesn't subside until evening. It's one of those crippling, agonising migraines incapacitating the investigator and results in a day in bed, away from work and investigation. As a result it isn't until the following morning that the investigator discovers that two days have mysteriously vanished.

What the investigator was up to during those two days prior to the migraine is a mystery; friends and neighbours are unaware of the investigator's activities. In fact, some may be a little disgruntled at the cavalier way the investigator broke appointments and ignored calls.

Little by little an idea of the investigator's activities may be established. It is strange.

Possibilities

1) The migraines are a result of fragmentary possession by one of the Great Race. Full possession was never achieved, and the creature had to leave.

It is possible that the member of the Great Race was homing in on the investigator. Had he discovered, or read something? Had he recently dealt with the flying polyps? If so, it may attempt to regain possession, perhaps this time it will be successful.

Hypnotising the investigator and sending him back to the time of the memory loss reveals scenes and sensations appropriate to being temporarily housed in the body of one of the Great Race, with the appropriate sanity losses.

2) The investigator has become ensnared in a small but foul Cthulhu cult. Each time the cult meets it uses powerful magicks to possess its victims and draw them to the ceremonies. There they participate in obscene acts, lasting several days. Upon recovering from the magick the victim has no memory and a massive migraine. Also, his clothing is torn, muddy and splashed with blood. His sanity is also reduced by 1D6.

It is possible that the cult have chosen the investigator randomly, but more likely that they have singled him out for treatment.

Unfortunately, one of the victims is sacrificed each time the cult meets. This is random, but eventually it will be the investigator's turn.

3) Nothing else ever happens. Ever.

Some time later the investigator discovers that a small figurine is missing. (The figurine was carved from an oily dark brown stone, and vaguely african in design. Until now it was entirely unremarkable.) It is possible that the investigator never makes the connection, although even if he does he will be none the wiser. It is all a mystery.

SMUGGLER'S COVE

by Garrie Hall

An investigator, an author of weird supernatural tales, is approached by a shifty and suspicious looking man wearing a heavy overcoat and a fur hat. He has a mass of tangled beard and the voice which booms through it is deep and powerful, and Russian.

His English is good but tainted with accent. He explains his predicament – he is a stowaway and a communist. He is also a vampire hunter. Since the revolution his group have found it difficult to pursue their quarry outside of Russian territory due to the attitude of neighbouring countries.

His group had been tracing a vampire, an ex-smuggler, but had lost him across the Baltic. Two of his men had been sent to Wisemar in Germany, the known destination of the vampire. There has been no contact with them in over a month.

Now he is a stranger in a strange land, devoid of friends and allies. He has tracked down this author of strange tales to implore him to go to Wisemar and find his men, if he can. He backs his plea with a small down payment in Czarist gold, with the hint of more to follow.

In the province of Mecklenburg in Germany lies the Baltic port of Wisemar. Close to this busy port lies Vampyre Cove, a dark, gloomy place. Its weather-beaten cliff-face and dank caves set the scene for this book's most recent legend.

High on the cliff stands a foreboding house, grim in countenance and strong in character, which in Rasputin's time housed one of the most vicious smugglers that Germany has ever known. Kurt von Mannheim trafficked in vodka and Eastern Russia's finest cloth and spices, and jealously guarded his hideout to the point of slaughtering everyone who came near it.

Rumours soon spread among superstitious peasants that von Mannheim drank the blood of his victims (although no bodies were found). The band of smugglers were eventually captured and hung by the German authorities but von Mannheim escaped, never to be seen again.

The area was later renamed Vampyre Cove even though von Mannheim had long since disappeared and the house boarded up. Yet still there were disappearances in the area and so they have continued over the many years since. Von Mannheim may be long dead but his curse appears to live on at least in the superstitions of the peasants.

Russian translation of BALTIC LORE, Rushkin, 1930

The house is now in a state of great neglect. It is structurally unsafe and has been threatening to fall down for many years now. The combination of the legend and its isolated location has prevented anyone from developing the site further.

At the bottom of the cliff are several caves which were used for smuggling. A quite extensive cave network runs through the rock including one passage which leads up to the house.

Possibilities

1) Von Mannheim was, and still is, an active vampire. He now lives in a boat, shuttered from the harsh sunlight during the day and free to prey at night. The tunnel from the house is blocked off so that the only access to the caverns is by sea.

Von Mannheim returns periodically and the caves are filled with all manner of stolen items from his victims. Von Mannheim is alone except for a normal human aide – the captain of the boat. The captain is not a servant or slave, he is von Mannheim's friend.

The two vampire hunters had come too close for comfort. Since his earlier discovery von Mannheim has become much more cautious, wary of the strength of his prey.

2) Von Mannheim worshipped Dagon and sacrificed trespassers to a colony of Deep Ones who live in the deepest part of the Baltic Sea. In return for the sacrifices the Deep Ones protected his ship and sometimes destroyed his competitors.

Deep in the cave network, in a cavern with direct access to the sea via submerged tunnels he erected a statue of his ancient god. Here he held his sacrifices and worshipped Dagon with the Deep Ones.

Von Mannheim is now a Deep One himself and now only rarely returns to Smuggler's Cove. The two vampire hunters stumbled in on a ceremony. They found their cloves of garlic a most inadequate protection!

3) The legend has been used as a cover by White Russians in the years since the revolution. Russian nobility are smuggled through Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and then to Wisemar across the Baltic. The house on Vampyre Cove is a safe house and armoury for weaponry smuggled back up the route.

The Bolsheviks have narrowed their search to Wisemar and their agents, the two so-called vampire hunters, tracked the White Russians to Vampyre Cove. Unfortunately for them they were caught and added to the Cove's victims, as will anyone else discovering their secret.

THE THEATRE OF DEATH

by Garrie Hall

It has long been known that Chinese immigrants living and working in London's docklands have imported their own brand of organized crime.

The Tongs control most Chinese businesses in London and the police have identified at least four different Tongs controlling everything from petty crime to prostitution. They believe that drugs, particularly opium, are directly controlled by the Tong known as the Rising Dragon, its leader the mysterious Doctor Cheng.

However, the police are far from making any arrests and have yet to identify Doctor Cheng. While his activities remain confined to the Chinese community they are not pursuing their investigations that zealously.

Dr. Cheng is a woman, a nite club illusionist called Lin May and her hold over her Tong comes from her skills as a necromancer.

Lin May is extremely beautiful and twice as deadly. Cold and cunning, she is the perfect *femme fatale*. She demands absolute loyalty of her companions but in return will help them any way she can. To her enemies, and those that break her loyalty, she is death.

While leaving the mundane world of criminal activities to the other Tong leaders Doctor Cheng offers a highly specialized service to the decadent rich in the shape of her Theatre of Death. To thrill hungry little rich kids, the Theatre is the ultimate decadence. A place of excitement and death not available anywhere else. Once a month a huge warehouse is turned into a great theatre to which the cream of Europe's elite flock. The only way in is by invitation, and invitations are both scarce and expensive. Once there, guests participate in all manners of death, violence and sexual perversion.

The main attraction is Doctor Cheng's illusory performance, but the audience is "warmed up" first by a vicious display of fighting between newly dead celebrity zombies. The zombies are newly reanimated by Cheng, and the more famous the better. Cheng has connections in very high (and very low) places that supply her with corpses.

After Doctor Cheng's performance there are other delights to amuse the guests, including a bizarre game involving taking vagrants from the street and offering them three boxes. In two are death, the other riches. Each box has a glass back so that the audience can ghoulishly watch the poor tramp make his choice.

In other, curtained, sections guests participate in perverse sexual practices both with each other and the staff. Opium taking is commonplace, Doctor Cheng presides over it all. Her guests arrive loaded with money, most of which is spent during the night.

All the staff are dead. Some are almost fresh and barely marked, others are rotting heaps of flesh. All wear simple white aprons and many serve drinks or opium. Necrophilia is common in the Theatre of Death.

Doctor Cheng herself is constantly flanked by two bodyguards: zombie fighters dressed in ancient, ornate armour in the manner of her ancestors. They protect here against her guests, for occasionally in their opium induced haze they forget themselves. Cheng has no real need for the guards, but it helps to impress her guests.

The guests themselves will discourage investigation into the place. All of them have much to lose should it be discovered that they frequent such a place. Curious individuals can make themselves many very powerful enemies in a matter of minutes. The police will never raid the place, Doctor Cheng's guests will see to that. Several Scotland Yard Inspectors and prominent members of Parliament will crush any investigation before it starts. The remains of corpses, those that cannot be re-used, are dumped into the Thames and never seen again.

Possibilities

1) Lin May is the head of a small sect of the Corpse Eating Cult of Leng. After the Theatre of Death has finished, she and her cult fall upon the zombies and feed on them. They chant and worship their foul god for many hours before the Theatre of Death is truly over.

None of the "normal" clientele know of the cult and none would do anything about it. After what they have been doing, are the cult rites that much worse?

2) Lin May's necromantic and illusory skills have their origins in Chinese black magic. She is aware of the power of the Great Old Ones and their followers but provided they do not intrude on her territory she takes no action. Her arcane arts are more than a match for most cults and if recruited she would make a powerful ally against the forces of darkness. However, making her acquaintance (let alone recruiting her) is not easy.

3) Doctor Cheng worships Nyarlathotep. During her illusory act she works her audience into such a frenzy that the Outer God is summoned to the Theatre of Death. From the moment he appears the Crawling Chaos – in the form of the black man – sits by her side. Her dream is to become Nyarlathotep's bride, something which the god has promised many times. He has yet to deliver, but Lin May continues holding the Theatre of Death in his name. Perhaps soon he will make her dream come true.

GRIM JUSTICE

by Garrie Hall

Those of the underworld are not sleeping soundly in their beds. Not while Grim Justice stalks the night.

Tony Scalesi walked free from court last week after a technicality stopped justice from taking its course. Yesterday he was found dead. His body was riddled with bullets but the Coroner determined that the cause of death was heart failure due to a massive shock or trauma.

A calling card was left with the body, a picture of the Grim Reaper holding the scales of justice. Scalesi is the tenth victim of the masked vigilante the papers call "Grim Justice". All have been criminals.

Little is known about Grim Justice. He (it?) seems to be a creature of the supernatural, not least in physical aspect. A thing with no face, just a skull and the ability to appear and disappear into the night.

Grim Justice exhibits an uncanny ability to find his victims wherever they choose to hide. To date no less than ten known gangsters and countless lesser felons have fallen to his "tommy gun".

Possibilities

1) Grim Justice is the ghost of Jim Malone, a cop investigating high level corruption and murdered by gangsters in cold blood in front of his family. His tortured soul has risen from the grave and stalks the city, avenging Malone. He is killing those that he believes set him up, from the hoods that pulled the trigger to his boss, Police Chief Nathan Jordan.

Jordan has guessed the force behind Grim Justice and will covertly hire investigators to "exorcise" this menace.

2) Grim Justice is a highly organised and dedicated group of vigilantes. They have agents placed in all walks of life from the ganglands to the courts and can trace just about anyone anywhere.

However, the organisation has fascist tendencies and is inclined to target non-WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) individuals. Attempts to breach their security will be met with violent resistance.

3) Grim Justice is a classic case of paranoid schizophrenia. By day he is plain old Harry Brown, librarian and something of an expert in the occult. By night he is Grim Justice.

Brown was driven insane by the sight of his parents gunned down in cold blood by a lone robber. He has remained stable until recently when he witnessed another killing, pushing him over the edge.

As Grim Justice, he uses his considerable occult knowledge to magic his way to his victims. By night Harry Brown is a powerful sorcerer indiscriminately murdering criminals and gangsters.

THE CRAZED

by Garrie Hall

RIOT AT BLACK MAGIC CONCERT

Frenzied yobs rioted to the sound of Satan's music last night. The mayhem, in which two people died, flared in The Hellfire Club. The venue, famous for its so-called "alternative" bands, was playing host to the Punkabilly band Karloff.

Renowned for their songs about the return of the devil and his triumph over the world, Karloff's spokesman said, "The audience just got out of hand during the Howl at the Moon set. The deaths were unfortunate but I blame the organisers. Security was appalling."

This paper condemns all such acts that promote the word of Satan among our young. We call upon our readers to boycott their records and concerts. If we deprive them of their places to preach we can prevent Satanism spreading to our own children.

Possibilities

1) The riot was an unfortunate, but not sinister, event. The paper is owned by an evangelist called Edward Richards. Mr. Richards owns a very profitable business empire and is head of the Cleansing Flame evangelical group. He is not a man to be crossed and can call upon a variety of businesses (including a satellite television channel) to aid his retribution.

The Cleansing Flame has a para-military wing, the Witchfynders. Richards is Witchfynder General and leads them in their cause to destroy evil. However, they will not accept that the Cthulhu Mythos exists as anything other than a form of Satanism.

They believe that they are the only true saviours and that no other organisation has the right to carry the fight. Any alliance with the Witchfynders will be strained at the least as they have a tendency to act before thinking. All traces of Satan must be burnt to cinders, cleansing the Earth of evil.

2) The Karloff's are using voodoo to further their career, swelling their audiences through manipulation and voodoo frenzy. They do not understand the powers they meddle with and cannot fully control them. A riot and the deaths were inevitable.

3) The Karloff's worship Nyarlathotep. Using mass hypnotism they enthrall the audience. Bit by bit they are building a reserve of psychic energy which is saved for Walpurgis Night. During this massive open air concert the audience will be so frenzied that during the final act, *Howl at the Moon*, blood will flow and the Crawling Chaos will descend to earth.

DARK INCAL

by Perry Okerstrom

Famed British Archaeologist Alfred Pennyworth has disappeared in a cloud of controversy over his latest findings at Tell el 'Amarna.

The site is more infamously known for the theft of the bust of Nefertiti by German archaeologist Ludwig Borchardt of the German-Oriental Society in 1912.

Rumour has Pennyworth making an equally significant discovery, the "Dark Incal" a statue in the shape of Anubis, Guardian of the Dead. This piece of statuary, if it exists, is purported to have magical properties.

The professor's jeep was found abandoned in the desert approximately three miles from his camp. No signs of a struggle were found. Speculation proposes that the professor is lost in a sandstorm.

No trace of the statue can be found. The professor is presumed dead.

Possibilities

1) The statue is a representation of the N'Ho, a tribe of sand dwellers making their home in the desert during the time of the Egyptians. A small enclave of the tribe still exists and Pennyworth died at their claws as they recaptured their totem.

2) The statue, with the help of a piece of translated papyrus, was used to summon Anubis. However, without a binding ritual there was nothing to keep the old god at bay. He grabbed the professor and dragged him back to his realm.

3) The professor's jeep overheated in the desert. Unable to re-start it he set out on foot in the direction he thought his camp lay. He perished in the storm, hugging his prized possession to his chest.

FIRE VICTIM

by Perry Okerstrom

MYSTERY FIRES CLAIM THIRD VICTIM

A third inexplicable fire has claimed the life of a Queens area woman. Hedda Johnstone had lived in the neighbourhood for the last thirty years.

Hedda's corpse was discovered when her landlady Marge Addison could smell "cooking" coming from her third floor apartment. She found Hedda's charred corpse sitting in the rocking chair by the window.

With no source of ignition, the NYPD are still seeking the cause of the intense blaze. Fire Commissioner Gordon is pursuing the most unusual matter. "All that was burned was the woman," he stated. NYPD are continuing with their inquiries.

Possibilities

1) Poor Hedda is the victim of spontaneous human combustion, a rare occurrence but not without precedent. Often the victim will be burned beyond recognition, in some cases without disturbing the surrounding environment.

2) Hedda has fallen prey to a cluster of Fire Vampires who find the city of New York populated with easy prey. Prey often too slow or weak to fight back. Investigators will find many such fires in the ghettos of New York.

3) Tesla is in New York demonstrating his new machine. This generator produces immense electrical charges which are then discharged to earth. Occasionally his machine produces ball lightning, which targets victims totally at random. The fires will stop when he takes the machine to Boston. There they start again.

THE TOAST OF LONDON

by Perry Okerstrom

You are cordially invited to the presentation of noted psychic Victor Neuberg at the Seventh Annual Psychic Circle this August, the 23rd. All members of the Golden Dawn and London Occultist Elite are invited to attend.

Mr. Neuberg is noted for his natural talent in the art of spiritualism. Reading will commence at 8:00 pm sharp. Refreshments to follow.

Tomes and herbs to be sold.

R.S.V.P.

Investigators with the right connections will receive the above invitation. At the meeting dozens of London's rich elite will be there. This is an ideal time for the investigators to establish a number of excellent contacts, and new clients.

Note: Victor Neuberg was a medium and conjuror, and a genuine member of the Golden Dawn.

Possibilities

1) Neuberg is a fabulous fake. He is very flamboyant and every spectacle he produces is designed to milk money from the unsuspecting public. His illusions look to be completely realistic but are accomplished using slight of hand and expensive magician's props.

2) The magic tomes offered for sale seem to contain genuine magic formulae but are all flash and no substance. The Psychic Circle does own some dangerous works, but these are kept under lock and key.

3) In his effort to impress, Neuberg accidentally summons something a little too powerful during his act. The demon, happy to be in the material world, pushes Neuberg's mind aside and takes control of his body. Nobody is aware of this fact. Not at first.

NIGHT OF THE LONG KNIVES

by Garrie Hall

The investigators are invited to a revue of Chinese theatre by Professor Charles Ashbourne, expert on all aspects of China. He tells them that it is a social invitation but hints that there is some point to the meeting.

A treat of Chinese culture is in store. Jugglers, gymnasts, dancers in dazzling costumes and paper dragons. The finale is a lady conjuror assisted by two giant Mongols. After an impressive display of magic and muscle flexing the finale, the classic box-of-swords illusion, starts.

Both assistants are too massive to fit into the box so the conjurer calls for a volunteer from the audience. Much to his delight, Ashbourne is chosen from several enthusiastic volunteers. He steps into the box and the door closes behind him.

The two Mongols spin the box then thrust their swords clean through it. The box is rotated again to show the swords protruding right through the box. Then the conjurer screams and faints.

As the house lights go up blood can be seen running down the blades. The swords are withdrawn and the dead body of Professor Ashbourne tumbles from the box. The curtain drops, none too soon.

Possibilities

1) Ashbourne's death was an unfortunate accident, a trap door that should have opened below him malfunctioned. The theatre's insurance company has made a substantial out of court settlement to Ashbourne's widow.

2) Access to Ashbourne's papers will point towards his investigations into Chinese Tongs in London. In particular he seems fascinated by Dr. Cheng, an almost legendary figure wielding absolute power. Ashbourne was getting too close and was eliminated.

3) Ashbourne's wife was having an affair with the son of a peer of the realm. Using his contacts in the Chinese community, they arranged his death. In return they are to pay the Tongs half the insurance money that Mrs. Ashbourne stands to receive from both her husband's and the theatre's policies.

INTO THE DARKNESS

by Garrie Hall

One of the investigators begins to suffer from blackouts. Short at first, they get gradually longer. Each time the investigator cannot account for his movements and can remember nothing except a feeling of darkness and extreme cold.

Any attempt to psycho-analyse the investigator draws a blank. He can only recall the dark and the cold. During these "blackouts" the investigator undergoes a personality change and does not recognise his friends. He is possessed.

Possibilities

1) *The Revelations of Yuggoth* is a rare book that only a few have seen. Supposedly brought to Earth from Yuggoth aeons ago, the book is a translation telling of the ecstasy brought by the Crawling Chaos. The book contains a prayer which binds the soul of the reader to the Haunter of the Dark, who possesses the body for his own means during the blackouts. One of the investigators has been unfortunate enough to read it.

Eventually the investigator is completely possessed, and then the Crawling Chaos loses interest in the body and destroys it.

2) The blackouts are caused by a member of the Great Race locked in an ice cavern in Alaska. It has been unable to flee to the future but can still take over the minds of men. The creature is trying to organise an expedition to Alaska to free itself. Once free of the ice it can build a machine and send its mind into the future.

It has no malign intentions towards the investigators unless they try to interfere with its plans.

3) In a previous year, the investigator participated in an archaeological excavation which uncovered the mummified remains of several corpses. One of these corpses, a sorcerer, is not quite as dead as it seems and is able to mind swap with those who have come into close contact with it.

The blackouts are caused by the corpse slowly exercising control over the investigator. As they get longer it can be predicted when they will be permanent. At that point the sorcerer will be free.

The sorcerer has tried this with others, but their weak constitutions have failed before the mind swap was complete. These deaths are recorded in the papers (the "Curse of the Tomb") and may alert the investigators to the trouble.

THE TERRIBLE OLD BOOKSHOP

by Peter F. Jeffery

The Terrible Old Bookshop is situated on Darker Street. The once green (or perhaps grey) paintwork is peeling, the windows are filthy. Inside, the shelves are stacked high with dusty books, more are in heaps on the floor and in rotting cardboard boxes. It will take several hours of careful searching to realise that there is nothing of interest to investigators. There are, however, plenty of novels by Ethel M. Dell and Marie Corelli, school texts on geometry, latin grammar, and other such.

The proprietor sits on a high stool behind a small counter, bent over a large leather/covered volume. He appears to be in his thirties and is strikingly handsome in a Saturnine way. He has a neat goatee beard and if he was an actor he could make a career out of playing the devil.

As strangers approach he hurriedly stuffs his book under the counter. He will answer no questions about the book and will refuse to let investigators see it.

Breaking into the shop is quite easy and is the only way to gain access to the books. Behind the counter are two books, *Magna Mysteriis* and *Mysteriis Mundi*. They are handwritten in an unrecognisable script. Also behind the counter is a cupboard with a good, strong lock.

The proprietor is very furtive when he leaves the shop, taking a devious and tortuous route that doubles back several times. A careful investigator will be able to tail the man until he lets himself into a house on Coven Lane.

Possibilities

1) The two books are written in English using an alphabet of the shopkeeper's own devising. Given time, it can be cracked. One is a racy, partially fictitious novel, the other a diary and ideas book. The house on Coven Lane belongs to a married lady who supplies him with practical experience to write his novel.

2) The locked cupboard contains hard-core pornography. The books are ledgers containing accounts and the house on Coven Lane is a place where young children are kept after being abducted. The children are sold to various unsavoury individuals throughout the country. They are never seen again.

3) The books are Mythos tomes, rare, original copies. The proprietor is compiling several lesser works (kept in the cupboard) into one big volume. The house on Coven Lane is a meeting for a group of black magicians. Currently they are harmless, with only the proprietor knowing of the power of the Mythos. That might change, in time.

A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

by Ian Bond

For one of the investigators, Florence Hasket is a name tinted with emotion. Their families were very close and the two of them grew up together. They were almost brother and sister. Marriage was on the cards. Then, something happened. Florence met, fell in love with, and married, a soldier. She kept in contact, but eventually the letters stopped altogether. She has not written in years.

But a letter, even one concerning such sad news, is a welcome sight. Her father, Simon Hasket, has died and she invites the investigator to the funeral. It will be an opportunity to meet friends and relatives, and to talk to Florence.

The funeral is a quiet affair, marred by only one incident. An elderly gentleman – by the name of Professor Michaelson – approaches Florence’s brother and draws him aside. They talk earnestly before the man stalks off. At the entrance to the churchyard he turns and shouts “I know how he died! It’ll get you all!” Then he climbs into his car and leaves.

Two years ago Professor Hasket returned from an archaeological visit to Venezuela. His studies have been erratic since then. He became increasingly preoccupied with a number of obscure legends and myths.

His death was particularly bizarre. He was found terribly mutilated in bed, in his room. The corpse was such a mess that it was barely identifiable, as if it had been put through a meat grinder.

Possibilities

1) On the trip to Venezuela Hasket found some notes taken from the *Necronomicon*. From these he was able to piece together enough information to talk to some sort of “strange being”. He tried this and inadvertently contacted one of the Hounds of Tindalos.

Belatedly realising his terrible mistake he visited Professor Michaelson and together they tried to stop the Hound. They failed, but in the process Hasket had a dream – the Hound was talking to him! His attempts to foil the Hound had cost it dearly in time, it would pay the professor back by taking his family as well.

The Hound has taken Hasket. It will return for Florence and her brother one day soon.

2) Professor Michaelson accompanied Hasket to Venezuela and tried in vain to dissuade Hasket from taking sacred Indian relics from the ancient temple. The Indians, upon discovering their loss, cursed Hasket and his family. Finally their vengeance has arrived. Only by returning the relics will the curse be lifted.

3) The two men have pieced together from the fragments of an ancient Venezuelan inscription a spell for calling Nyarlathotep. Unfortunately, Hasket had a mild heart attack during the spell, ruining it. Nyarlathotep was angered by this and, once Hasket had recovered, disembowelled him. The knowledge is driving Michaelson mad.

DEAD MAN’S BLUFF

by Mark Morrison

Greetings,

Word has reached me that you are skilled in investigations of, shall we say, an unusual nature. I am in need of a detective with an open mind, and the recognition that not all the things which walk in our world are easily explained by the more rational amongst us. A detective such as yourself.

I invite you to visit me at my home on the Highbury Road, number 117, this Thursday evening. I do look forward to making your acquaintance.

I am indeed,

Yours sincerely,

Alexander Czeminski

The above letter arrives for one of the investigators on the Thursday of the appointment.

If they check the address they can confirm that Czeminski is listed as the owner. Apart from that, for official purposes, the man simply does not exist. He is not on the tax department’s books, no birth certificate exists for him, no passport or immigration papers, no police record, no phonebook listing. Nothing.

If they go there during the day, number 117 is a dark stone house set away from the road. An unleashed doberman in the yard discourages them from entering the property.

If they go there at night, Czeminski answers the door. He is quite handsome. He does not shake hands. The house is dark and dusty and there is an odd smell about it. He leads them into a well-stocked library, pours them a drink, motions them to be seated, and begins. "My good people, I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet you. My name is Alexander Czeminski, and I am a vampire." He is.

Possibilities

1) Czeminski is a collector of esoteric books and paraphernalia. He asks them to bear him in mind if they ever have anything of that nature. He will pay handsomely. He bears them no malice.

2) He has heard of them and guesses that eventually they might track him down, for being what he is. He has asked them here to strike up a more civilized arrangement: they leave each other alone. If he can't, then he will attempt to kill them; maybe tonight, maybe in the weeks that follow.

3) He wants to make a deal. He lives on the dark side of normal existence and is aware of the dark things that dwell there; be they monstrous creatures, or crumbling undead, or gibbering ghouls, or ancient godlings. He is privy to information, the rumours and gossip that travels along the telegraph wires of the dead, unheard by mortal ears. He offers to fence information in return for their protection against vampire hunters, clergymen, and other investigators. If the bargain is struck, Czeminski will appear in future adventures, giving odd tips, translating old documents, and scaring the hell out of them with sudden appearances.

ROADKILL

by Mark Morrison

This one happens while the investigators are in their car, somewhere out in the country. They are speeding along a shady road, anxious to get from point A to point B to further their researches. Suddenly a man steps out from the trees at the side of the road, directly in front of their oncoming vehicle. There is nothing they can do. The car slams into him.

When they get out to check on the victim's injuries, a terrible smell assails their nostrils. From the decayed and liquescent human debris smeared across the road it is apparent that the man had been dead for a while before they hit him.

Possibilities

1) The wandering dead man was an experiment on the hoof. A Dr. Frankenstein-type has a laboratory in the area, where he is conducting his studies in reanimation in relative seclusion. This one, however, got away. The doctor or his assistants may be in pursuit. The cadaver may have been a one-off, or the first in a series of escapees abroad in the countryside.

2) As the investigator who was driving surveys the splattered corpse, the horror causes them to swoon. As they lift their head, they see the road rushing by, their white knuckles gripping the steering wheel – the whole scene with the undead pedestrian was a hallucination, an R.E.M. dream as they nodded off at the wheel. They snap awake just as the car starts to drift off the road, heading at full speed straight for a large tree.

3) The man they have just run down was a lot older than he seemed. His life had been extended by magick (see Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*) or surgery (as per *Cool Air*). When he was accidentally killed, his body immediately reverted to its correct state of decay. The players may never learn his old secret.

THE BOX OF G'HYR

by Rik Kershaw

Adventurer and mystic, Ambrose DeBerry returns from an archeological expedition to Jerusalem – during which he stumbled upon an ancient tomb buried deep within the hills under the city. Inside this tomb he found a small 3"x 3" box. The sides of the box are made from some kind of exotic hardwood covered with strange Arabic carvings, whilst the top and bottom are made from obsidian and pottery. There is no obvious way to open the box. A box such as this was mentioned briefly in the *Al Azif*, being the box in which the soul of a powerful demon was kept imprisoned.

Possibilities

1) Ambrose DeBerry, in taking the box, awoke the guardian spirit of the tomb of G'Hyr. This amorphous black creature will seek out and kill all those who have touched the box. Once it has recovered the box it will return with it to the tomb.

2) The box is taken from DeBerry shortly after he has translated the strange writings. The inscription reveals that the box contains a spirit of great evil, and if opened when Xoth is in conjunction with Mercury a great evil will descend. An evil that will last for all of eternity.

3) Ambrose DeBerry has taken away with him, a box containing not the spirit of a powerful demon but instead it holds the Saint Grail. This will make the box extremely valuable to those who wish to exploit it for their own ends.

THE HORROR OF FANG ROCK.

by Rik Kershaw

Five nights ago, the three-man crew of a lighthouse twenty miles off the south Dyfed coast vanished without trace. The St-Davids lifeboat went to see what was wrong with the light, but they never returned. Just what has happened the lighthouse men of Fang Rock? The wives of the missing people seek the help of a number of experienced investigators to answer this question.

Possibilities

1) Fang Rock, which is built on a sea mount, has been over-run with Deep Ones who are using it as the focal point for a ceremony designed to bring about the return of dread R'Lyeh.

2) After a particularly violent storm, a strange ancient glass container was fished from the ocean. Inside this container, which was of elder design, was a Shoggoth. When the lighthouse keepers opened the container the Shoggoth was released and has been prowling the lighthouse ever since.

3) The lighthouse stands at the point where the Dreamlands and the waking world overlap. Five nights ago, the way was opened and a raiding party took possession of the lighthouse so as to wreck the ship carrying Randolph Carter. By stopping these raiders, the investigators will trap themselves in the Dreamlands.

THE VASE OF SANDS

by Rik Kershaw

The investigators are approached by an elderly Egyptian gentleman who says that a very valuable vase containing the ashes of his father have been stolen from his home in Bristol. The man himself is a silk merchant and his shipping business uses Bristol as a port to import his wares. He will pay handsomely for the return of the

vase. But he will warn them not to look into the vase, for that would allow evil spirits to pollute the sanctity of his ancestor's ashes. To retrieve it, the investigators will have to do a bit of classic investigation to find the vase.

Possibilities

1) The elderly man is none other than Nyarlathotep, and the vase contains the Key of Sands, the only way to unlock the secrets of the lost city of Leng. If Nyarlathotep recovers this key then he will be able to return to Leng, and bring the Earth one step closer to being under the thrall of the Great Old Ones. He himself cannot retrieve the vase since it is protected from the eyes of his servants. Only a good person may see the Vase of Sands.

2) Well, it is a vase with ashes, OK. But instead of holding the ashes of the Egyptian's ancestor, it holds the essential salts of the evil magician Kneph-Ra. If the elderly man, who is none other than the magician's great-great grandson, gets the ashes he will attempt to bring Kneph-Ra back to life, but will require a blood sacrifice to do it.

3) The vase contains not ashes at all, but diamonds. The man is a diamond smuggler and will be perfectly capable of killing those who have looked into the vase.

THE MATLOCK FIRE

by Rik Kershaw

DATELINE MATLOCK DERBYSHIRE

The charred body of a man, Mr. John Wilson, is discovered at their home by his wife. By the location, state of the body and surrounding furniture, it appears that Mr. John Wilson was a victim of spontaneous human combustion. His entire upper torso, left arm and right leg have been reduced to ash, but his left leg, and right arm are still intact, as is the chair he was sitting in. A smoking pipe lies smoldering on the floor. Police conclude that the man died from dropping his pipe onto himself. The British Society for the Investigation of Anomalous Activities are looking for a party of investigators to ascertain whether this was SHC or not.

Possibilities

1) John Wilson was the planning clerk for Matlock Municipal Council and was violently opposed to the destruction of a local landmark: the Five Towers. These towers were built in 1798 by Sir Walter Townsend, to stop the biannual earthquakes that rocked Matlock. The towers have recently been sold to Dr. Phillip Greening, who is the leader of a small band of Shudde M'ell worshippers. He has taken over the mind of Mr. Wilson's deputy and is hoping to get the authority to demolish one of the towers and thereby release the great Cthonian who lies pinned beneath the pentacle.

2) John Wilson was attacked and killed by a Fire Vampire, as a sacrifice to Cthugha by a local cult, of which his wife is the high priestess. She required this rather extreme sacrifice as the first step towards bringing Cthugha into this world. She will not be pleased at the investigator's attempts to look into the circumstances of her husband's death.

3) This is a real case of spontaneous human combustion, and the investigators can get themselves mired deep into the lore and mystery that surrounds cases of SHC. Caveat: This idea might mean a considerable amount of research into the topic of SHC if you are to get the tone right.

THE BIBLIOPHILE

by Brent Heustess

He just loved books. He always had. They were his passion. His life.

He could remember the first book his parents had given him. A huge collection of Märchen (fairy tales). It was bound in a dark burgundy leather, with gold-embossed ridges of the spine. And the insides were full of wondrous illustrations. Fairies and goblins and fell monsters galore.

He still had that book of Märchen. He had all the books he had ever been given or had bought. Lovingly organized and shelved upon tall, dark wood bookcases scattered all over his house. He would never give up a book. Never. Not on his life.

His love for books grew and grew. It was natural that at university he studied history and languages. All those tomes full of words and pictures. Those gorgeous books, bound in leather and cloth. He got to the point where he did not care what the books actually said, he just loved the look and feel of them. And the smell... But the best of all was the satisfaction of ownership when he added a book to his collection.

Some friends of his at university had become investigators of sorts. They had learned of a certain dark cult who prayed to dark gods inimical to mankind. In the course of their investigations, they stumbled across an ancient grimoire. They brought it to him to translate. When he saw that book, his soul became inflamed.

The book was bound in a leather he could not identify at first. It was human skin. He was seized with a lust for that book beyond any lust he had ever felt before. He had to wholly possess that book, but he knew his friends would demand the return of the book.

However, his friends never returned to claim the book. Misfortune took them in the night and left only pieces of them behind. He took this a sign that his passion was condoned by higher powers. He began to seek out more books like the grimoire.

He did not want the books for the secret lore or spells they contained. He never really read the books. He would carefully handle the books, but reading might damage the books, so he did not. He wanted the books, because he could then own them. Possess them. Caress them. And shelve them away.

He sought out other investigators of the unknown. He befriended them and wooed them with his knowledge and vast mundane library. They brought him these forbidden book for him to translate and comment on. He then engineered their demise, often by carefully sent messages to the very dark cults from which they had liberated the books.

His collection grew. His secret collection. His lovely books. Tomes not only bound in leather, but in skins: human, exotic animals and skins of unknown species. Tomes with jewels incrusting upon them, or covered in barnacles, or blackened from fires. Books printed upon paper, painted upon vellum, or etched in iridescent metals. Scrolls and papyrus leaves and wax tablets. He collected them all and lovingly placed them on shelves hidden from sight. His, all his.

But he is always looking to increase his collection...

Possibilities

1) You have heard of a reclusive scholar who has a collection of books with just the exact tome you need. You go and talk to him, but he will not even let you touch the book. To stop the evil cultists, you must have that book. So, you sneak back and steal the book. You remove a book from his collection. He pursues with a vengeance, possibly alerting the cultists about your plans.

2) In a small, hidden bookstore you purchase the first edition of a rare volume. The owner sells it to you, but mentions that another gentleman had called about the book. He did not have the funds but mentioned he would be back. The owner just wants to sell the book and you have cash in hand. You don't give it any more thought until you hear about the bookseller's murder. The bibliophile punished the book dealer and he is after you now. You took "his" book and he is coming to reclaim it.

3) During a raid on a cultists' stronghold, you run across some disturbing letters. An anonymous source is telling the cult about activities, names and addresses of some investigators. Investigators whom you knew and who have just been murdered. Someone is informing on your friends and getting them killed. There is an informant somewhere, you just need to identify who it is. You start questioning the murdered investigators' associates for the culprit. Eventually you will come across the innocent-seeming bibliophile.

THE TERROR IN THE FOG

by Rik Kershaw

In the last years of the nineteenth century, something terrible stalked the fog-shrouded streets of London. For about three months in the autumn of 1888, a madman preyed upon the poor women who had through poverty been forced to become prostitutes. But then, just when the terror seemed at its height, the killing stopped.

Why was this? The police didn't have a clue as to the identity of the murderer. The press thought that perhaps he had moved away to America. Others thought that he, filled with remorse did away with himself. But just one man knew what had happened to this madman, and that man was Dr. Forbes Winslow.

Forbes Winslow was the son of a doctor who specialised in lunacy. He followed in his father's footsteps and became a leading alienist. He was a medical theorist, a practical detective and also a noted occultist. Dr. Winslow became engrossed in the Whitechapel murders and after spending weeks living in the slums of Whitechapel he formed a mental picture of the killer.

Armed with this mental picture, he began to track the man whom he believed was the Ripper, and Dr. Winslow is believed to have found him on Friday 9th November 1888, shortly after the Ripper murdered his final victim, Mary Jane Kelly.

However, what transpired on that fateful night, no one knows because Dr. Forbes Winslow was found wandering the streets of Limehouse early the next day. The once-proud Doctor, his clothes in tatters and hair turned white, was taken to the mental institute founded by his father, where he died in jibbering madness some two years later.

During that time he muttered the same statement over and over again. "He lies below us. Do not wake the earth."

And so the matter rested until the spring of 1926 when something terrible rocked the city of London. The killings started once more. Within a two week period three prostitutes were murdered in exactly the same way as the Ripper's victims. London is once more in the grip of a murderer who seems to kill and then vanish without trace...

Possibilities

1) Dr. Winslow, after tracking the Ripper down, rendered the fiend down to his essential salts. He then took these salts, which he had stored in a jar and placed them into a segment of the new Inner Circle Line tunnel system that was opened in 1889. However, when work began on the mid-level District Line extension, the jar was unearthed and passed into the hands of an unscrupulous occultist. The man, George Chapman, not realising who was inside performed the rite of resurrection. The Ripper, after disposing of this fool, has found himself in a world that was so very different yet still the same, and able to begin his reign of terror once more.

2) The being that Dr. Winslow tracked down was a ghoul whose nest had been disturbed by the work on the new underground line. The ghoul, finding itself trapped above ground and having no way to return it had killed to feed itself. However, in a strange twist of fate, the work on the new mid-level District Line has disturbed the ghouls once more, trapping one of their number above ground.

3) The present wave of killings has nothing whatsoever to do with Ripper, but are being perpetrated by Dr. Thomas Neill Cream, a man who needs the parts of his victim to help feed his need for fresh organs to help his search for a serum that would stop the ravages of time.

THE FACE OF GOD

by Shannon Appel

A religious revival has struck a small town that lies far away from the rest of human civilization. Many people there claim to have seen the true face of God. Unfortunately, seeing the true face of God seems to be a traumatic experience; everyone who has undergone this ecstatic experience has emerged blind, some with their faces terribly scarred.

The investigators may be led to the town by any of a number of forces. Perhaps strange omens point them in that direction. Townspeople may beg for their assistance, or an investigator's relative may be one of the blinded victims of this harsh god. For proactive investigators, a simple newspaper clipping may be sufficient. By whatever means, the investigators will arrive, and soon see that something is distinctively wrong.

That old time religion has caught on in a big way in the town, but some of the rites that the people practice seem distinctly odd. After they have been in the town for a night, investigators will very quickly realize that this revival is supernatural in nature. They begin to have strange dreams of the past, imparting ancient knowledge upon them that Man should not know.

Unless they are very careful, investigators will find themselves mindless minions of the town's new god, themselves seeking new followers to bring into the fold.

Possibilities

1) The Great Old One, Nyogtha, has come to be trapped beneath this town. It was accidentally contacted by innocent townsfolk, who soon found themselves practicing its dark rituals in order to preserve their lives. The reluctant cultists are blinded by Nyogtha so that they may better understand The Thing That Should Not Be. At least once a month, they also bring Nyogtha a sacrifice, to sate its dark hunger.

Although most of Nyogtha's worshipers are reluctant, they are too fearful to make any move against the Great Old One. Some townsfolk, however, have grown to love the power that Nyogtha offers, and have thus joined into the cult whole-heartedly. They know secret spells to control the living darkness, and will gleefully use them.

Investigators who enter Nyogtha's town are likely to be inducted into the cult by force, or offered up as a sacrifice.

2) A small band of cultists reside in the small town. They practice secret rites that allow them to look deep into the past, and have been using them for months to rediscover ancient sorcerous powers.

Sometimes, their dreams of the past cross into the consciousness of others. The cultists know when this happens, and they kidnap the unfortunate innocent, and force them to participate in a magical ritual. This ritual causes the victim to forget what they saw, leaving only vague impressions of a brush with divinity. The eyes of the victim must be put out during this ritual. When the investigators arrive in town, and begin dreaming of the past, they have accidentally crossed paths with the cultist's rituals, and are thus marked as the next victims.

These cultists have learned many spells from the past, and should be fearsome adversaries. They can manipulate time and space in many exotic fashions.

3) The people of the town have indeed seen the True Face of a God. It is Hypnos, an Elder God. Although certain legends say that the Elder Gods are benevolent, in truth, they do not care; men are less than fleas to them. Through cosmic accident, Hypnos' true presence lies across this place on the Earth. Those who see it have their eyes seared out, and are sometimes reduced to madness.

Still, due to the basic perversity of the human race, a great cult has sprung up around this god. If an investigator shows the least vestige of interest in the face of god, he will be preached to extensively. Many of Hypnos' followers are great orators. Some have been changed by their nearness to their god, and have gained supernatural means to convince people of their rightness.

If the investigators do not fall prey to the beckoning of Hypnos, they must decide what to do with this situation. If they do not evacuate the town, and mark it forever uninhabitable, it is likely that a trip to the Dreamlands will be required, to somehow cause Hypnos to be moved from his current resting place.

THE POISONED SAILOR

by Ricardo Christie

An investigator who follows a medical profession is awakened in the middle of a rainy night by furious banging at his front door. If opened, a desperate, haggard-looking sailor will storm in, pleading for help. He rolls up his shirt's sleeve, offering his horribly bulging arm for examination. Swelled and blackened, it appears to be affected by necrosis. The man begs for help, claiming he was poisoned by a rival.

"Duh bastar' hates me guts cos my business runs strong, an' he's a lazy, warty ol'drunkar' who can't keep ep. He's poison' me drinks! Help me please, ain't wanna die, oh Gawd!"

The arm responds to no medical treatment the investigator can come up with. Ditto for hospitals. It appears to worsen by the hour.

Possibilities

1) The sailor is telling a half truth. The “rival” isn’t simply jealous because of business competition, he’s seeking something the sailor has: an old trophy from a shipwreck, looking like a copper bracelet with intricate designs. The rival, actually a follower of Dagon, knows that it’s a piece of Deep One jewelry, and badly wants it for his rituals. Since the sailor refuses to part with it, the cultist has cast a slow-acting version of *Shrivelling*, and will later contact the sailor for a bargain. But he certainly won’t want the old sea-dog to get help from the investigators . . .

2) The sailor has tainted Deep One blood, but is also cursed. His now-dead mother found the strength of will (and the help of a deceased stalwart adventurer) to break free of the bonds imposed by her monstrous consort.

Furious by such unprecedented behavior, the Deep One asked Dagon to curse both she and any offspring she might have in the future. Any descendant would come to the world doomed to end his life, transformed into a ravenous human-eating monster, one far more horrible than the most degenerate Deep One hybrid. Unfortunately for the sailor, the onset time for the transformation is over... but perhaps there is a way to reverse it.

3) It is actually poison – of an incredibly potent sort, indeed. A creation of a Serpent Man sorcerer the investigator has dealt with before, and which was supposedly dead. Is it possible that the creature is alive and on the loose?

DANGEROUS PLAY

by Mauro Reis

Wilfred Higgs is an author. A brilliant one. And he’s also a madman.

He’s written a new play, “The Coming of the Master” and is currently rehearsing it with a troupe of actors. A relative of one of the investigators was part of the cast, until he was committed to an asylum a few days ago, totally insane. Now all he says is: “They’re there! I know that now, I saw them! They know, they wait, and they’re coming!” If the investigators decide to ask around, they will find out that several actors went insane in the last few months. Surprisingly, no one seems to have noticed that. There’s no mention about them working for Wilfred Higgs, either. Contacting relatives of these actors may reveal that they were trying to get a role in Higgs new play.

Higgs is very cautious in the approach of his candidates, conducting private tests and lectures. All the candidates are interviewed on an individual basis. It’s not the usual procedure, but no one really pays much attention to that. Every director has their quirks, after all. All the actors currently on the cast are normal people, without any discernible mental problem.

An investigation about Higgs will turn up that he, himself, had been committed to a mental institution many years ago, but was considered cured a couple of years later.

Possibilities

1) Wilfred has made a deal with a powerful entity he contacted many years ago, just before he went mad from the sight of it. The creature spared him, because it knew Higgs could be useful in the future. Higgs incorporated the spell needed to bring it to our world in his play, and intends to sacrifice the entire cast to complete the spell, poisoning the wine they are supposed to drink during a toast in a certain scene.

2) Wilfred always wanted to present “The King in Yellow” to the public, but the general rejection of the book on the part of the producers proved that impossible. He doesn’t understand why; a book that opened his mind to the truth shouldn’t be repressed like that. So, he tried another approach. He cleverly disguised that play within his own creation. The story changed, but the awful truths he saw are still there, so this new play is as dangerous as the previous one. The sanity of the cast hasn’t been affected too much, as Higgs is presenting the story little by little. But as the work continues, they will probably become more and more disturbed. Higgs hopes that this gradual exposure will make them see the “truth” and join him in his quest.

3) Wilfred is only a madman, and considers his madness to be true freedom. He thrives in “freeing” other people too. To that end, during the interviews he chooses persons who are already unstable, and reproduces the accident that gave him his liberty (he was once trapped inside a mausoleum for several days); he traps the

victim inside a cellar full of dead bodies, without food or water, until their sanity snaps. Sometimes the victims kill themselves, sometimes they survive, eating the bodies. Either way, they're now free from their bonds.

THE HELLFIRE CLUB

by Andrew Behan

The Hellfire Club dominates the summit of Montpelier Hill ten miles south of Dublin city. This substantial ruin was originally built in 1720 as a hunting lodge by William Conolly, the speaker of the Irish parliament. After his death it passed into the hands of the eponymous "Hellfire Club". The club, based on a suppressed English antecedent, was founded in Athy, Co. Kildare, in the 1730s by Richard Parsons (a.k.a. Jack St. Leger), the first Earl of Rosse, and a humorous painter called Worsdale. The members of the Hellfire Club were rakes and rowdy fops. They met in the Eagle Tavern on Dames Street in the city centre. As their name suggests they were rumoured to practice black magic. Reputable historians acknowledge that these stories have a basis in fact.

Possibilities

1) The Hellfire Club did indeed carry out black masses and orgies on Montpelier Hill. However they had no Mythos knowledge and merely used satanic regalia to spice up their bawdy drinking sessions.

2) The Hellfire Club worshiped ancient Cthugha. When Conolly built the lodge a "fairy cairn" was broken. It was actually a huge Elder Sign placed there thousands of years before to trap a swarm of Fire Vampires. When the Hellfire Club (which was at that time a bunch of drunken fakers) encountered these horrific beings they were seduced to the worship of Cthugha.

On one famous visit to Montpelier Hill the clubsmen set fire to the lodge whilst carousing within! Tradition claims that this was a wager to see who could survive the flames of Hell longest. This is incorrect. The fire occurred when the cult summoned their master inside the stone-vaulted lodge.

Though the club disappeared in the 1740s the Fire Vampires are still alive, and hungry.

3) The club was a branch of a suppressed English Nyarlathotep cult. Several times, locals gained small hints of the club's dark deeds. On one occasion, a wandering priest stumbled upon the Club during a macabre Bacchanalia and was forced to look on. The centre of attention was a huge black cat. Breaking free from his captors the cleric grabbed the cat and uttered an exorcism which tore the beast apart. A demon shot up from its corpse. Hurtling through the roof it brought down the ceiling and scattered the assembly. On another occasion, Tom Conolly of Castletown is said to have met the devil in the form of a "black man" in the lodge's dining room.

After the death of its founder in 1741 the club became inactive but the cult continued, with the 2nd Earl of Rosse as its leader. It was with Nyarlathotep's help that William Parsons, 3rd Earl of Rosse built "the Parsonstown Leviathan" in 1845. This huge telescope (which was dismantled in 1908) was the largest of its kind until 1917. Though the Irish climate is completely unsuitable for serious astronomy Rosse discovered the spiral nature of other galaxies, the Crab Nebula and the greater nebula in Orion with this miraculous instrument. It's unknown whether his sons: Laurence, the 4th Earl (an astronomer) and Charles (a British inventor who died in 1931) were involved in the cult, which has today spread throughout the English speaking world.

THE MIRACLE

by Ricardo J. Mendez

A weird character in the news has come to the attention of an investigator. It will most likely be a skeptical and cynic investigator, or one compelled to believe that kind of news.

The news, it turns out, deal with a person that seems to have stigmata that match those suffered by Jesus Christ in the cross, according to Catholic Mythology. The man, one Jacobo Lewis from Haiti, seems to have injuries on his hands, feet and side that match those famous wounds. These wounds keep bleeding, but apparently never get infected. People are told to have healed after he touches them, specially those with blood

diseases, although none have been documented. Also weird is the fact that Jacobo is 30 years old, the same age Jesus was when he started preaching.

What has the religious community in an uproar is that Jacobo is black, and definitely not a Christian but a practitioner of voodoo. He says the wounds were inflicted on him by the Loa of his tribe, as a reminder of his human frailty and so he could spread the word.

Possibilities

1) Jacobo is, of course, a fake. The people he has been said to heal are healed by their own faith, just as a lot of people get sick when they believe they are. Most likely those people weren't even sick.

2) The man from Nazareth was an avatar of the Crawling Chaos. The reason why we don't know anything about his life from his early years until his 30, is because at that point he hadn't been contacted by Nyarlathotep, and therefore wasn't important. The Black Man tried to recruit him when he is said to have been tempted in the desert, but he went mad and believed he was the Messiah. Given his newly found powers, that wasn't hard to do. Now, more than 1900 years after that, Nyarlathotep is willing to try again with a son of mortal woman. Jacobo might dream about "past lives", which are previous avatars, and by those means the players can find out the truth.

3) The Loa did contact Jacobo, and inflicted the wounds. Unfortunately for him and his honfour, the alleged Loa is a vampire, too weak to fully return from his resting place. He was in life a sorcerer, and is trying to attract a cult to the place. Then he will control Jacobo to slaughter the all, so with he strength given by their blood he may return.

BAND OF GOLD

by Steve Hatherley

It's a murky pawn shop with smears on the glass and a stale smell coming from inside. But the ring in the window is eye-catching for all of that. It's a ring, like a wedding ring made from greenish gold with an inscription running around the inside.

Possibilities

1) The inscription is simply the same three-armed symbol repeated: the Yellow Sign. The ring is strangely heavy, and is referred to in a few texts as Hastur's Bridal Ring.

Wearing the ring for any length of time results in two events. The first is that the ring contracts and cannot be removed, and the other is the arrival of a byakhee. The byakhee, summoned by the ring, takes the wearer of the ring (Hastur's Bride) back to Hali. The byakhee only appears when Aldebaran is in the sky, and if somehow dismissed another replaces it on a following night.

At Hali, Hastur's Bride commands all of the Great Old One's attention. When the wedding-night activities are over, Hastur discards the remains of his bride and the ring is eventually returned to the pawn shop and its devoted owner.

2) The inscription is written in Hyperborean and says "Sleep Well, Dream Well". Wearing the ring whilst sleeping allows the wearer automatic entry (barring other effects prohibiting entry) to the Dreamlands via the Cavern of Flame. The ring is otherwise unremarkable.

The ring was sold to the pawnshop by John Montego who used it for some years before his Dream-self was killed, preventing him from returning to the Dreamlands. Through the shop's records, Montego can be

contacted. He knows much about the Dreamlands, but knows nothing of the horrors threatening the waking world. Perhaps he would make a good ally.

3) The ring is slimy and cold, and if worn will not come off – at least not without the finger. The inscription, if translated before the ring is first worn, says “Welcome friend, join us”, in the language of ghouls.

If the ring is not removed (with the finger) then the poor soul’s flesh slowly starts rotting and her appetite turns to rotten meat. She is turning into a ghoul. The ring falls off when the transformation is complete.

The ring was sold to the pawnshop after Laura Black vanished from her lonely city garret. Her family have no idea what happened to her, and found the ring among her belongings. Now, whoever buys the ring may soon be in a position to find out exactly what happened to Laura...

SAGE ADVICE

by Peter Devlin

At some point in their lives, investigators will have to look to a reputed scholar of arcane lore for advice on their current predicament. Jean Le Strange is one such man. But, how do you approach such a man for assistance? And, what will be the price for that assistance?

Born in Paris (or Alsace Lorraine, or Cairo), reputedly during the Revolution, Jean Le Strange is a figure of some notoriety, due mainly to his outré religious and philosophical beliefs. He is said to have inspired works such as “Là Bas”, has given guest lectures to the Golden Dawn, made an enemy of Dietrich Eckhart, has been denounced by the Vatican, and has been studied and debunked by the Society for Psychical Research. Independently wealthy, he maintains elegant homes in a number of cities across the globe, furnished with many rare curios and pieces of art. He is a combination of scholarly recluse and Gallic playboy.

Apparent age 37. Height 6'1". Weight 178 pounds. Slim athletic physique, narrow hips, wide shoulders. Tanned. Short dark hair oiled and combed back. Gallic nose and strong chin. Dresses in dark, rich, sombre, classic, fashionable suits made of silk or wool, white cotton or silk shirts, crimson silk ties, patent leather or suede Chelsea boots, and a dark fedora. Carries an ebony cane concealing a rapier. Speaks many languages with a soft, educated French accent. Smokes Turkish cigarettes and drinks only rich red wines.

Possibilities

1) Le Strange is a sorcerer of considerable power, knowledgeable in the ways of the Mythos and its creatures. He is on intimate terms with the Black Man (Nyarlathotep), who has granted him much of his power and his position on the ruling council of the Illuminati (or whichever organization is appropriate for your campaign). He acts as a lethal lure for those who have enough knowledge to be dangerous. His great age is attributable to both his dark sorceries and his skill as a deceiver and manipulator.

When the investigators contact him he becomes a mysterious, reserved patron, and will aid them for some months. At some point he will unexpectedly enter a scenario to which he is ostensibly unrelated (e. g. as confidant of a certain high priest of the Brotherhood of the Black Pharaoh) and reveal the investigators to the bad guys. He is always guarded by a permanently bound Star Vampire (or two), which has had many years of feedings on foolish investigators during which to wax powerful and become difficult to dismiss.

2) Le Strange is a sorcerer of considerable power who has yet to be seduced totally by the Mythos. When PCs contact him (after establishing a relationship), he is evasive and distant. He is suffering from a severe and odd form of somnambulism. During his “attacks” he cruises the city streets in a large black saloon, engages an escort for the evening, returns to his home, kills her horribly, then dumps the body. He remembers only short fragments which he attributes to nightmares induced by his studies. Astute investigators should stumble across the pattern of slain prostitutes in the world's fashionable cities, e. g. Paris, Venice, London, New York. This is the secret of his great age as his victims’ life force feeds both him and his personal demon. Those who can help him will make a useful friend, but he will then begin to age normally. Those who follow him at night will bite off more than they can comfortably chew.

3) Le Strange is a well-preserved scholar with more than a passing knowledge of the Mythos. His background is a combination of rumour, a pinch of truth, and a lot of fantasy. However, his occult collection is real. His latest acquisition during his travels is an ornate blue crystal bottle (9 inches tall, 4 inch diameter base,

fluted and stoppered, sealed with lead), purchased at an exorbitant price at Sotheby's in London. It is reputed to have once been the possession of John Dee. When investigators visit Le Strange, his extensive house will be empty. In the large parquet floored study is the expected library, with a paper-littered desk and comfy chairs. There is also a wooden pedestal similar to a flat lectern, but with nothing on it. On the floor is a fine sand which will crunch under the investigator's foot. Looking closely will show that it is very fine powdered blue glass. Looking even closer will reveal the "burst" pattern which it appears to have. The floor beneath the wooden pedestal is mainly sand-free. What exactly was in that bottle? Where is the owner? What's that noise?

(Inspired by the novel Dagger, by David Drake.)

A MATTER OF TASTE

by Peter Devlin

Mrs. Jane Crispin is a local character who lives in a little detached house on the edge of town. Although in her 60s, she is still hale and hearty despite the handicap of her blindness (exceptionally near-sighted, she only sees blurred colours through her milk-bottle lensed glasses). She makes a modest living selling the product of her labours in her well-equipped kitchen. All across town her pies are famous for their wonderful pastry and delicately herb-flavoured meats.

However, horror stalks the town at night. Senior citizens are slain in their beds or disappear in the night, never to be seen again. The bodies left at the crime scene are mutilated horribly, missing limbs and organs. The authorities have been unable to keep the murders from public knowledge, but they have been able to conceal the fact that they have been occurring sporadically for over a year!

The glare of the media spotlight has forced the police to institute a manhunt, and they have no manpower to spare to chase a new (although very slim) lead. Their lead comes from Mrs. Crispin, who has reported a strange man hanging around her herb garden. Under normal circumstances such a report from a blind old lady would receive little attention, but with a maniac on the loose, things are different. Independent, discrete and trusted persons may be able to assist the police by looking into the matter.

Talking to Mrs. Crispin brings unexpected results. She is very sorry to have disturbed the police, but she is fine really. The stranger is no longer a stranger, but a new friend whom, at first, she mistook for a potential thief. Her friend George is a shy type not easily traced. She doesn't know where he lives, but he helps her around the house and garden, and does errands for her.

Possibilities

1) Mrs. Crispin is being stalked by George the homicidal odd-job man. His *modus operandi* involves befriending his victims to lull them into a false sense of security. He also gets a thrill from the stalking. George is a genuine gardener (or social worker), real name Henry George Baird. He lives out his twisted dark fantasies by killing the pathetic senior citizens upon whom he depends for his living.

George lives with his innocent Christian wife Mary, an organiser of church fêtes and charities. Mary provides many of his initial contacts. George and Mary are childless due to George's impotence, one of the factors which has sent him over the edge. George has an extensive collection of tools such as scythes, hammers, axes, saws, a furnace, a nondescript van, and a good sized garage next to his rose garden.

2) Mrs. Crispin's new friend George is a ghoul who moved to town in the last year or so. He has been unable to let go of the world of man, and can often be seen raking through garbage bins and scrounging. Unless scrutinised carefully he appears to be just another homeless person. Naturally he is quite sneaky and very good at moving around unobserved. George and Mrs. Crispin met by accident when George was attracted to the smell of her cooking. As Mrs. Crispin couldn't see him, George found it easy to make friends with her. George has started running small errands, but he keeps the money that he should spend on butcher meat and substitutes the best cuts from his victims. Forensic examination of remains has identified odd partly-human bite wounds on the victims, but this has not been made public and will only be divulged after much bureaucratic maneuvering.

Mrs. Crispin's usual butcher Andrew Cross drops the clue that the amount of meat he supplies her has decreased in recent weeks (as the rate of murders has increased). The distributor of her pies, Norman Kent, is most pleased at how well Mrs. Crispin's pies are selling, and is due to call on her to ask if she can increase her output. Norman may unwittingly become the ingredient for her next batch!

3) Mrs. Crispin is a homicidal cannibal who has been doing a nice line in long pig pies for over a year. She is inhumanly strong due to her unnatural diet and, although blind, has the senses of a bat. She is very adept with her old-fashioned razor sharp butcher's knives. The offal from her victims helps her herbs and vegetables to grow rapidly. Mrs. Crispin selects her victims during her bi-weekly visits to the Womens' Guild and senior citizens outings. George is a relative of one of her victims who met her just before his own mother Eleanor Trent was killed. He feels sorry for the blind old lady and is working out his grief (and suppressed guilt at having left his mother alone to be killed) by looking after Mrs. Crispin. He should be looking after himself.

GRAVEN IMAGES

by Peter Devlin

Edward Appleton is a thriller movie director of some note. Despite being an anarchic independent type he has completed three very successful films in the last two years, making him a hot property in the US movie industry.

Now he is in town to shoot his latest masterpiece, a ghost/love story called *Love Conquers All*. The plot revolves around recluse Daniel Graves, a handsome young man who is haunted by the malevolent ghost of his deceased fiancée Celeste Severin; women he meets turn up dead and the police pursue him to a final confrontation where he is burned to death in his mansion.

Appleton has a big budget and has two star actors, namely Nancy Page, a classic beauty ideal for tragic heroine roles, and Robert Hunter, a debonair romantic action-man. Their arrival in town is greeted with much publicity as Appleton has chosen the (infamous) sprawling Schottky Mansion as the set for haunted house which features in the film.

The Schottky Mansion quickly lives up to its reputation as a genuine haunted house. Two days after setting up their equipment the movie crew are in a turmoil. One of the make-up assistants, Mary White, is found horribly murdered in the dining hall.

Possibilities

1) Appleton is a classically disturbed sociopath who wants as much recognition as possible.

He debates with an inner voice which he perceives as his Devil's Advocate. On previous occasions he has listened to this voice, followed its suggestions and as a result made some very clever and disturbing films *à la* Alfred Hitchcock (whom Appleton worships as a movie genius but would probably dislike intensely if he actually met him).

Researching Appleton thoroughly will reveal details of his Svengali-like personality and obsession with detail (not necessarily unusual in a movie director). Researching his recent history will uncover unconnected murders near the locations of his previous movies. All such murders could be seen as dummy runs for scenes from the movies. Some victims are stalked and terrified, others killed outright; methods of despatch include auto accident, stabbing, shooting, strangulation, falling from great height, drowning, bitten by spiders, etc.

Appleton is a master of cinematic tension, playing on common phobias as inspiration. Anyone who attracts his unwelcome attention had better be psychologically stable.

2) Robert Hunter recently rejected the amorous advances of Nancy Page. As Nancy Page considers herself a screen goddess, she did not like her rejection by the up-and-coming Hunter. Then Nancy saw Hunter laughing with Mary White and jumped to the wrong conclusion.

Nancy had a red rose and a letter delivered to Mary, the letter asking her to meet Hunter on the set. Nancy then confronted Mary and stabbed her to death in an identical fashion to that laid out in the script. She hopes to throw the police off the track and more importantly to be around to console Hunter through his grief.

Hunter is a closet homosexual and does not want his promising career ruined by a public scandal; Mary knew his secret but died before she could tell Nancy the real reason for her rejection.

3) The Schottky Mansion is owned by Pennywell Properties who purchased it for a song some 15 years ago. It has had a history of odd occurrences and has never been let for more than three months at a time. The local kids refer to it as a haunted house, nobody seems able stay in it overnight, weird music comes from it at inauspicious times and it has been researched by a number of psychics and mediums.

Pennywell Properties has let the mansion to the studio who plan to burn it to the ground for the climax of the movie. Official permission has already been granted.

The mansion is indeed haunted, by the wraith of Abraham Schottky, its original owner. He was a talented Jewish-Polish physicist far ahead of his time, working in the field of acoustics. His researches accidentally opened a gate through which a Servitor of the Outer Gods passed, killing him and devouring his body before returning to Azathoth. The gate is only fully open at times such as Walpurgis Night.

To end the hauntings the gate must be fully closed, a dangerous process as at least one Servitor will come to interfere.

Schottky's deranged wraith is taking its own illogical steps to ensure that the mansion is left alone. It can possess psychically sensitive humans and cause parapsychic phenomena to occur. It possessed the sensitive Robert Hunter during an innocent assignation with Mary White and he is deeply troubled because of the blackout he experienced and the resultant memory gap. He has no occult or specialist knowledge beyond a talent for empathising with people.

BURN

by Peter Devlin

The growth in the use of information technology in the 1990s has made dissemination of information very easy. However, there is a price to pay for such easy access to information.

On the Internet there are a growing number of computer users falling prey to a new computer virus called BURN. This virus is so new that most anti-virus software companies do not yet know of it. It is also unlikely that anyone will survive to tell the story of its most unusual effects.

Astute students of Fortean lore may note an increasing unusual death rate amongst Net surfers, and there are always going to be upset parents. Media types, always hungry for a new angle on the Internet, will also make much of the rising tide of bodies, linking them to Internet pornography.

Eventually the BURN virus can be traced (via assembly language code headers) to a compiler belonging to the Arkham Sanitarium.

Howard Barker is a deranged hebephrenic psychology postgraduate from Miskatonic University who works as a ward assistant. Lately he has been spending a lot of time with the computers in the building.

Possibilities

1) The two variants of the BURN virus target IBM-PC clones or Apple Mac clones which can handle high resolution graphics (i. e. 98% of all home computers sold since 1993). BURN infects PCs either via affected floppy disk or Internet downloads.

BURN is a Trojan virus which hides itself inside other applications then attaches itself to video card drivers. The next time the computer is booted up the virus causes the VDU to pulse and strobe at a rate which hypnotises unfortunate onlookers or causes epileptic seizures.

Embedded into the strobing is the subliminal text message KILL – ENJOY. After 15 seconds the virus shuts down and is deleted the next time the computer is booted. Victims immediately become mindless killing machines and end up dead, either shot by police as they stroll through a shopping mall armed to the teeth, or take their own lives after cheerily slaughtering their family and friends.

Howard Barker is currently preparing his doctoral thesis on human psychological impulses and is testing a few of his assumptions before he submits his final paper.

2) The two BURN variants target sound card drivers, not video drivers. It causes the computer to produce an odd agglutinous chanting from the attached speakers. If the timing is correct (i. e. night and Fomalhaut is visible) the user will suddenly feel cold and tired, and a glowing ball will appear from the smoking remains of the computer.

The chant is a summoning spell for a Fire Vampire and the user has just lost the requisite magical energy to summon the beast. There are a large number of recent cases of people burnt to a cinder alongside their melted computers, causing the major PC companies to suspect hardware faults; none have been found so far.

The Fire Vampires, being balls of plasma, then run around the electrical circuits in the building causing major fires. In big computer installations the sprinklers/halon/CO2 extinguishers go off and the Fire Vampires usually get snuffed. Surviving security video footage from a nearby college campus may prove illuminating.

Howard Barker is a mad genius who got a number of such spells piecemeal from one of the inmates. Said inmate is John Doe #23 and has an unusual case history.

3) The BURN virus is slow and insidious. It subliminally flashes unpronounceable text messages on screen, essentially a *Contact Nyarlathotep* spell. It also adds a bookmark Internet address to Web browsers (www.starry-wisdom/welcome.html). The address is that of the home page of the Starry Wisdom Brotherhood, a quasi-religious group who hold all kinds of odd beliefs.

Nyarlathotep contacts the unfortunate victim via dreams or e-mail messages from DARKHAUNTER@AOL.COM, an apparently non-existent mail address. The net result is that the victim is seduced by the Mythos and joins the Brotherhood. Eventually the sendings (dream or electronic) command the victim to prepare for a journey to the throne of the Ruler of the Universe and to prepare offerings.

Howard Barker maintains the Web site and there is much circumstantial evidence pointing to him as the leader of the Brotherhood. Actually he is a front man and scapegoat for Dr. Eloise Whateley, a recent addition to the staff roster at the Sanitarium.

KINDERGARTEN KULT

by Arthur Boff

All is not well at the Arkham Day-Care Center. The children who attend seem to have fun at the Centre, but recently they have been complaining of nightmares. The nightmares vary, but they all seem to be about Mrs. Mollse, the Center's nurse.

Possibilities

1) Mrs. Mollse is a member of the Arkham witch-cult. She has recently been given a mind-control spell by the Outer God Yitlicn, the Alterer of Thoughts. She is using it on the children under her care. Whilst under the spell's influence, they think all is normal, not knowing that they are really carrying out unspeakable tasks in the name of Yitlicn. When they sleep, however, the memories of what really happened seep through.

2) About a month ago, Cthulhu visited Mrs. Mollse in her dreams, "requesting" that she become one of her priests. Foolishly, Mrs. Mollse refused. The Dreamer in R'lyeh is now trying to incriminate Mrs. Mollse in a child-abuse case (the abuse is really being carried out by Deep Ones).

3) The nightmares are of Mrs. Mollse being torn up by awful dog-like beasts (experienced investigators will realize that these are the Hounds of Tindalos). Before she came to the Center, Mrs. Mollse was a New Age Traveller. Experimenting with a certain drug, she encountered the Hounds. She fled the New Age camp and became a kindergarten nurse, which she thought would be enough to give the Hounds the slip. The Hounds have not caught up with her yet, as she went quite far in time. The dreams are warnings, sent by a rival species of angular time.

KEYBOARD MUSIC

by Arthur Boff

The radio was jealous of the computer keyboard, the writer could see that now. He had written his radio scripts with the keyboard, and they had been played on radios across the world. Except his own. He didn't want to hear his own plays; they were so much better in his imagination. But, the radio was fed up at not even being able to be a part of its master's success. The writer realized that as soon as the keyboard started playing music.

Possibilities

1) The writer has been doing a lot of work recently, and is just tired. What actually happened was that he left the keyboard by the radio, and due to a trick of acoustics the music seemed to originate from the keyboard.

2) It's true. The radio has developed an evil intelligence.

3) The writer recently was asked to write a censored, non-SAN threatening version of *The King in Yellow*. This is Hastur's vengeance. It is just part of a long campaign to drive the writer insane.

THE DELIVERY

by Peter Devlin

Home shopping, customer credit and home delivery have been with us for many years now. Harrods of London and J. C. Penney have both had such a facility for many years.

Early one morning there is a ring at the doorbell (or possibly the tradesmans' entrance). Once answered it proves to be James Sheridan, the regular delivery driver for Harrods. He has a large wicker basket full of goodies as ordered earlier that week. However, the wrong items seem to have been delivered.

Possibilities

1) The basket contains the expected groceries and a severed human finger (left hand ring finger, female, with engagement ring included). It is neatly wrapped in brown paper and tied with string, in a manner similar to a small parcel of butcher meat. It has only recently been separated from its owner, not with surgical precision but with skill nonetheless.

There is a letter inside a sealed envelope. Composed of letters cut from the *Times*, it says: "*Bring the 1000 to the train station in time for the 19.45 express train to Dover*".

The hallmark and inscription inside the ring allow it to be traced via Herzberg Jewellers to its purchaser Basil Milton, a minor aristocrat living in Belgravia. Basil's intended, Miss Mary Sheldon, was kidnapped two days ago during a walk on Hampstead Heath.

The identity of the kidnapers is a mystery. They have an unwitting accomplice who works for Harrods and it is he who accidentally put the kidnapers' demand in the wrong basket. If apprehended he did not even know the contents of the parcel or about the kidnapping, he was simply bribed to add a package to a delivery.

2) The wrong basket has been delivered. It contains a picnic meal for two (including a fine bottle of claret) and the first sealed clue for a forthcoming weekend treasure hunt. The intended recipient is Clytemnestra Poppelwell, a scatty heiress-to-be. If the baskets are swapped back Clytemnestra will be keen to have her rescuers join the treasure hunt with her.

The treasure hunt has been arranged by Bertrand Fortescue, a simply charming London socialite. He is the bastard son of Arglye Poppelwell, Clytemnestras father. He plans to bump off Clytemnestra during the treasure hunt, faking an accident. Then, when old man Poppelwell finally dies of terminal gout, he will inherit the family estates and fortune. He sees little trouble in doing so as all of Clytemnestra's friends are airheads just like she is.

3) The basket contains a polished mahogany presentation box 4" x 4" x 4". The inside is green velvet lined and contains an odd grey/blue spherical rock formation just slightly larger than a billiard's ball. A handwritten card describes it as "*An unusually hard opaque silicate formation, highly decorative and resistant to accidental damage. The ideal paperweight.*"

The rock is a Cthonian egg, discovered by Ms. Erma Smits, a moderately well known sculptor. She has been supplying small original sculptures to the more exclusive stores for sale as gifts and curios. Erma lives in Yorkshire where she finds natural rock formations to be the ideal starting point for her pieces. She unwittingly found the egg in the effluvium of a flash flood which caused her local river to burst its banks. Some distance upriver from her home is a tributary fed by the Spout, a fast-flowing stream that emerges from the base of a large cliff face.

Someone has chosen the paperweight as a birthday gift for the scholarly recluse in their life. It now represents a good financial investment as the morning papers all contain the tragic news that Ms. Erma Smits,

respected sculptor, was killed just yesterday when her ramshackle cottage collapsed during a minor earthquake. Other articles tell of small aftershocks which have been occurring in the last 24 hours.

WORD FROM ON HIGH

by Matt Cowger

The 21st Day Redemptionist Church is a large and popular religious organization. Led by the charismatic “Dr. James”, the Church’s radio ministry and large tent revivals have attracted national media attention. The revivals are especially popular, featuring the usual speaking in tongues, faith healing, and testimonials, as well as singing and prayer. Dr. James (who claims to have a doctorate in divinity) then concludes his tent revivals with what he calls his “Two Minutes of Meditation on the Word” where he and the flock share two minutes of silence to, ostensibly, meditate on the word of God.

Dr. James’ sermons have taken a different tone of late and his followers have been becoming more insular. The Doctor’s sermons have become more apocalyptic and full of fire and brimstone than they used to be and his revivals have become angry affairs, full of shouting about doomsday and disparaging of those who have not accepted The Word. Popular opinion has turned against the 21st Day’ers because of this, which has only added fuel to the already smoldering Redemptionist pyre.

Possibilities

1) Dr. James is actually a two-bit hustler with a criminal record. He is dodging the law and ripping off his followers. The doomsday bit is an attempt on his part to bolster flagging attendance and bring in some additional revenue. His whole goal is to accumulate enough money to leave the country for South America, a goal he is close to realizing. He has one small problem: his armageddon sermons have particularly inflamed Walter Simms, one of the good doctor’s long-time followers. Simms suffers from occasional psychotic breaks and during his next episode he will decide to leave for heaven a little early, taking his beloved spiritual adviser with him.

2) Dr. James has slipped off of the edge of sanity. He believes that the last days are coming and that he and his followers need to make a bold move to proclaim their devotion to God. During his next sermon at the 21st, the parishoners may notice some odd odors inside the tent.

The whole structure will have a strong chemical smell. This is because the good Doctor and his right-hand man, Walter Simms, have doused the entire structure, as well as the ground underneath the plastic tarps on the floor, with a powerful chemical accelerant. People entering the tent may notice the ground feels a bit muddy, though it didn’t rain the night before. Walter will stand at the back of the tent, closing and tying the flaps after the last attendee enters.

The sermon will be particularly inspired, espousing the congregation to exultations of love and devotion to God. Then, during the final two minute meditation, Dr. James will signal Simms. They will then push the candleholders near them into the highly flammable tent walls. The interior of the tent will become a riot of flames and flailing, panicked bodies. People caught inside will only have seconds to get out before being crushed in the press of bodies, overcome by fumes, or burned alive.

3) Dr. James has fallen under the influence of a diabolic avatar of Nyarlathotep masquerading as Walter Simms, an unemployed auto worker. The Outer God has been slowly turning the 21st Day Redemptionists to the worship of the Old Ones. Simms’ sway over Dr. James isn’t complete and if he can be removed from his position of influence for at least two weeks the Doctor will regain his senses. Simms is pushing the Doctor toward more and more violent and angry sermons. His end goal is known only to him. Perhaps he wishes to start another cult, to push this church to a violent Waco-style end, or to lead the Doctor into performing abhorrent ceremonies that will summon an elder power? These possibilities are left to the creative keeper.

WHEL

by Matt Cowger

A local radio station has just changed their format from country and western to hard rock. They have been wildly successful. Shirts bearing the WHEL logo have spread across town and investigators can hear the station blaring from cars city-wide. During this same period, acts of random violence have increased dramatically during the hours from 1am to 4am. Incidents of beatings, muggings and rape have taken an unbelievable upswing. The police force has been placed on city-wide alert and the media has been in an uproar.

Possibilities

1) The two phenomenon are unrelated. The radio station is just a radio station, the acts of violence are being committed by a gang operating out of the seedier side of town.

2) The radio station is actually a front for a sinister experiment in mind control. A local psychologist and physicist got together to conduct a simple experiment in auditory stimulation and mood elevation. Their results were staggering and attracted government attention. Now under control of a government organization involved with black operations, these two men are being forced to conduct an experiment on a larger scale, the populace of a city. From 11pm to midnight, the station sends out a low modulated tone underneath their regular broadcast. This tone increases propensity for violent actions in individuals with violent tendencies. The government will continue this experiment for another two weeks before moving to a different station elsewhere to experiment with a different series of tones.

3) The station has been acquired by the leader of a cult of Nyarlathotep. This large cult is scattered across the town, throughout the social strata. They have been waiting for a sign for years to begin a concentrated assault against the city, believing that if they can cause riots and mass panic, then their god will appear. Due to certain world-wide events, the cult leader believes the time is now. He is using the station to send coded messages to his followers between 11pm and midnight. The cultists then go out and sow the seeds of discord. The number and level of the atrocities will increase over time, culminating in daylight bombings of several public buildings and the assassinations of civic leaders all occurring on the same day.
