

No Return Ticket

1 Introduction

A final consolation storyline for a single PC (Protagonist) otherwise about to leave play due to death or insanity. The PC gains ever-more potent abilities at the cost of decreasing free agency. /No Return Ticket/ can serve as a subplot in any scenario where splitting the party can leave a sole survivor for one of the factions.

2 Player's Information

Protagonist alone survives an attack by the Antagonist. Protagonist must overcome injury and isolation to get help and warn their cellmates.

3 Keeper's Information

Antagonist attacked and killed Protagonist without witnesses. Antagonist then cast *Ingest Thoughts*[1] on Protagonist. Protagonist now only exists as a set of stolen memories experiencing intermittent consciousness when recalled by Antagonist[2]. Protagonist initially has no idea of their predicament because the subjective experience of it feels almost exactly like being alive.

Play this as Protagonist returning to consciousness after surviving the attack. The PC has few hit points, but all SAN losses from the attack are restored because the stolen memories omit the victim's death.

Antagonist will pursue its own agenda, starting with hunting down non-Protagonist PCs. It will use *Consume Likeness* or *Body Warping of Gorgoroth* to assume Protagonist's form. Antagonist will use stolen memories to act as if it is the now-dead Protagonist in order to approach its prey. It will sparingly use its other abilities to preserve the stolen memories as long as possible.

/No Return Ticket/ relies on a player willing to ask no questions about PC survival, a player unlikely to guess what happened, or a player willing to go down with the ship. Choose Protagonist with this in mind.

4 Game Mechanics

4.1 Antagonist

Antagonist can be any Mythos entity or personality with an INT at least 18 and a SIZ below 40.

- Dark Young
- Deep One
- Elder Thing
- Formless Spawn
- Ghoul
- Hound of Tindalos
- Human Sorcerer (e.g., Carter, Curwen Mason, or Waite)
- Hunting Horror
- Insect from Shaggai
- Mi-Go
- Moon-Beast
- New Great Race
- Rat-Thing
- Serpent Man
- Servant of Glaaki
- Servitor of the Outer God
- Son of Yog-Sothoth (e.g., Wilbur Whateley)

It must have the spells **Ingest Thoughts** and at least one of **Consume Likeness** or **Body Warping of Gorgoroth**. Optional spells **Cloud Memory**, **Dominate**, or **Resurrection** will add to the fun.

Secretly use Antagonist's write-up in place of the Protagonist. Add Protagonist's Skills to Antagonist. Track HP loss against Antagonist's total. Adjust Protagonist's character sheet to eliminate SAN loss from the Antagonist attack. Do not explain survival.

4.2 Missing time

When Antagonist wants to act, it must overcome Protagonist's INT with its own. If it fails, Protagonist is stunned, but maintains continuity of consciousness. If Antagonist wins, then Protagonist suffers a "black-out" and a memory gap for the entire duration of Antagonist's actions—which may last as long as Antagonist pleases.

After Antagonist finishes, returning to Protagonist's shape if needed, consciousness resumes for Protagonist. Call for SAN rolls as needed and apply losses.

4.3 Adding It All Up

4.3.1 *Temporary Insanity*

If Antagonist actions result in Temporary Insanity for Protagonist, replace the Idea roll with a Resistance Roll of Protagonist INT vs. Antagonist INT. This represents a contest of rationalizations between Protagonist and the Antagonist's host consciousness. A Protagonist loss works just like a failed Idea roll. An Antagonist loss means the usual SAN loss and Protagonist realizes one new fact about their circumstances.

If the new fact describes an Antagonist ability, then Protagonist can use that ability in the future. Using it will have the usual costs, and might cause Sanity rolls in its own right. For example, regeneration or inhuman strength are unnatural, but a higher Skill is not.

4.3.2 *Indefinite Insanity*

If Antagonist actions result in Indefinite Insanity, then Protagonist realizes one new fact about their circumstances in addition to the usual effects.

4.3.3 *Insane Insight*

Each time Protagonist suffers Temporary or Indefinite Insanity, they may have an Insane Insight. This requires the same contest of rationalizations as described in Temporary Insanity. Protagonist realizes one new fact for each Insane Insight.

4.3.4 *Getting Used to Awfulness*

Protagonist may use any known Antagonist abilities at no Sanity cost during the reasonable interval. Spell use still costs Sanity.

4.3.5 *Connecting the dots*

Each new fact learned reveals one difference between Protagonist and Antagonist. These will vary according to the Keeper's choice of Antagonist. Examples follow.

- Physical difference (STR, DEX, natural armor, etc.)
- Altered or missing bodily functions (sleep, hunger, pain, digestion, etc.)
- New Skills (from Antagonist)
- Inconsistent history (bilocation, evidence of death)
- Unnatural abilities (regeneration, Spells)

Learning or acting upon new facts can cause Sanity losses.

4.3.6 Permanent Insanity

If Protagonist reaches zero Sanity Points, then the stolen memories have decayed beyond use and cannot sustain subjective consciousness.

End of the line. Everybody out.

5 Stage One

Protagonist awakens light-headed, heavy-limbed, fading in and out of consciousness, with agonizing intermittent headaches.

Protagonist faces some motivating exigency: escaping a fire, imminent surgery or ECT, cops knocking on the safe house door, etc..

Antagonist will let Protagonist run for safety, hoping to reach other PCs. It will minimize interference at this stage to avoid damaging its stolen memories.

6 Stage Two

Stage Two starts with the first missing time. Protagonist suffers worsening Capgras delusions, apparitional experiences and bilocation, miraculous survivals, etc.. If Protagonist reached cell mates, Antagonist attacks. Cell mates might suspect a doppelganger or possession. Protagonist should have a few facts and possibly Antagonist powers to play with at this point.

Stage Two ends when Protagonist or cell mates find irrefutable evidence of Protagonist's earlier death.

7 Stage Three

Stage Three marks the final decay of Protagonist and ends with either the Antagonist's destruction, possibly via clever murder by Protagonist or by the opposition of Protagonist's cell mates.

More likely, Protagonist goes permanently insane. A last successful Insane Insight (as above) reveals their true nature before merciful oblivion. Failure expands their consciousness into that of Antagonist.

Footnotes

[1] Sammons, Brian M. "Consumption." /Island of Ignorance—the Third Cthulhu Companion/. Queens Village: Golden Goblin, 2013. 52. PDF.

[2] Think of the gods in Julian Jaynes's model of the bicameral mind with the human-divine roles exchanged.