

FOR  
MATURE GAMERS



# ASPIRATIONS

A COMPANION TO *FEAR'S SHARP LITTLE NEEDLES*

A STAB INTO DARKNESS

MOELLER - BARRASS - GAUNTLETT - MCINNES  
YEE - KREIL - ENGELHARDT - MCALEA  
PROCTOR - SHIMMIN - COTRONIS





## Dedications

**Stephanie:** To dreamers, writers, comedians, and other righteous bastards.

### *ASPIRATIONS*

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# ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE

**J**OHN CRAWFORD, AGE 9, IS THE SON OF SHAWNA (LUCK) CRAWFORD AND THE LATE BARRY CRAWFORD. BARRY DIED OF A DRUG OVERDOSE AT AGE 49, SHORTLY AFTER JOHN WAS BORN. THIS WAS NOT A COINCIDENCE.

BARRY WAS A FAMOUS ACTOR/PLAYBOY, A NOTORIOUSLY BIPOLAR PRETTY-BOY SCION OF A FAMOUS ACTING FAMILY. WHILE HE LIVED, HE LIVED THE MOST DISSOLUTE OF LIFESTYLES: OPENLY BRAGGING ABOUT HIS EXCESSES; INFAMOUSLY NARCISSISTIC; OPENLY DABBING IN THE OCCULT; AND THE SUBJECT OF ANY NUMBER OF (TRUE) TABLOID STORIES ABOUT HIS DEBAUCHERIES. UNTIL NEAR THE END OF HIS LIFE, HE NEVER MARRIED AND HAD NO CHILDREN THAT HAD EVER BEEN DEMONSTRABLY LINKED TO HIM. RATHER, HE LIVED WITH A POSSE OF SYCOPHANTS AT A BEL AIR MANSION, AND HAD A ROTATING HAREM OF PORN STAR GIRLFRIENDS.

Barry was never truly happy though. Deep down, he wanted the connections that a family would provide. He became even more distressed when his #1 porn star and long-time harem member, Shawna, drowned in his pool one night (after she, too, overdosed).

Distraught about Shawna's death, but even more afraid that he would be blamed and imprisoned for a substantial period this time around, Barry rounded up nearly every dollar that he could access to have her resurrected. You might think that this proved difficult, but it really wasn't. Barry thought that he was in huge trouble, because he knew that his Bel Air mansion was under near constant surveillance by the paparazzi, in particular the notorious gadflies of the Global News Service (GNS). He did not know what to make of the fact that he was able to keep Shawna's death a secret—he kept expecting the tabloids to run a photo of her floating, face-down, on page 1. But it never happened. Instead, the first occult contact that he went to asked him what he was willing to do, and how much money he had.

The next day, a beautiful, dark-haired woman with an odd sounding, archaic English accent knocked on his door. She introduced herself as Lucretia of the Left Hand, and in exchange for nearly all his wealth, he could have Shawna back. But there was a catch. He would have to settle down, marry her immediately, and start a family with her. Barry agreed, and did not even read what was in the book which he was asked to sign after pricking his thumb.

It worked, kind of. After some mumbo-jumbo and being doused with a bucket of blood that Barry wisely did not ask about, amid an unseasonably violent storm, Shawna sat up and vomited out two lungs full of pool water.

She was back, seemingly most of the way. Her memory and personality seemed intact, but there were, sadly, some differences. She looked a little pale, something that good makeup could easily disguise. She was a little slow when moving, suddenly extremely strong, and much more focused

than she had ever been. She could circulate in public, at least superficially, but she had no breath and no pulse. Finally, her normal, casual swearing abated quickly: she kept stumbling over the word "God," and could not quite get it out. She also stubbed her toe and broke it on an end table, and it just stayed broken.

Barry did a little research when Shawna was not looking, and found parallels to what he saw in Shawna in Icelandic mythology: an afturganga. A walking corpse, fully minded but now singular in purpose, animated by magic and potentially immortal until its purpose was fulfilled.

To make matters worse, on the very night of her seeming resurrection, after being married by and compelled to consummate the marriage right in front of Lucretia, Shawna had immediately somehow come down pregnant with John. Barry couldn't cope with the revelation that his cold, pulseless wife could somehow get pregnant, and he fell into a deep abuse cycle.

Shawna, who is now single-mindedly driven to protect her child at all costs, sensed a threat and deliberately overdosed Barry, making it look like an accident. Lucretia then returned the "resurrection fee" to the trust fund set up for John, providing the initial seed money for what became The Barry Crawford Trust.

## The Barry Crawford Trust

John, now 9, is basically a Mythos antichrist. Conceived through the aid of magic and born of a mother neither truly alive nor truly dead, fathered by a man who had pledged his soul to the service of The Outer Dark, John is a soulless thing, a Moonchild, a demon wearing the form of a quiet but brilliant nine-year-old, possessed of enormous sorcerous potential.

John's really running the show, using Shawna as a puppet and public front. Their plan is to monopolize Mythos magic



and eliminate other Mythos threats, posing as “good guys” in the form of The Barry Crawford Trust. Shawna portrays herself as a reformed addict and reprobate who has been given new purpose by the overdose death of her husband Barry and her duties as a mother. She is now a soft-spoken but relentless crusader for decency and traditional morals. Her work is accomplished through The Barry Crawford Trust, which over the past 9 years has raised and spent over \$500,000,000 on good works.

The Trust is active in supporting mainstream religions of all sorts, interfaith tolerance initiatives, and anti-smut campaigns (through advocacy, not censorship, so that she does not alienate media outlets). The Trust funds research and scholarships, and gives money strategically to all sorts of more left-leaning movements to quell potential criticism. She has a lot of friends in all areas of society and politics as a result.

Publicly, Shawna’s health has been damaged by her former dissolute lifestyle, she admits, so she limits her public appearances. But while she pays out liberally, she is unflinchingly positive. She (purposefully) avoids making enemies, her organization is (purposefully) diverse, and she leads by example and by donation instead of by preaching and criticism. Her finances are transparent, and she takes a flat 10% of donations for marketing, overhead, and staff salaries. What happens to this 10% is considered private, but the other 90% is assiduously and properly accounted for.

## The Black Budget

Part of the 10% taken for overhead goes to the salaries of a staff of six; Shawna takes \$1 per year but occasionally receives honorariums for personal appearances that are paid to her in trust for John. The staff (based in a nice office in a well-secured office building in Los Angeles) includes two marketing professionals, an accountant, a social media assistant, a receptionist, and one Bob Tyler. Everyone except for Bob Tyler are smart, organized Nyarlathotep cultists, who are fully in the know about what is really going on, and who will not hesitate to die or murder to keep secrets.

Bob Tyler has lived an interesting life. He is a former stringer (2005-2006) for the Global News Service (GNS), a notorious, rabble-raising gang of paparazzi with a reputation for going to any lengths to get a dirty story. Bob is known to have been a former war correspondent with several major news outlets, who was fired under vague circumstances before being picked up by GNS. After being with GNS for a year, he “retired” and went to work as a videographer at a court reporting service in Trenton, New Jersey, before relocating to Los Angeles to work for the Trust. The Trust’s website describes him as a “special projects manager” who lost his network career to cocaine addiction before taking several years off to “right his ship” and now handles “emerging causes” for the Trust.

Bob is not a cultist, more of a coercion victim. Although he does not understand the Mythos in detail, he knows that GNS is a front for some kind of evil cult, run by an actual witch with magical powers, and he does what she asks in the hope that this will be the last time she bothers him.

This time, though, what she asked him to do does not seem all that bad; he does not grasp the “big picture.” His job is to monitor occult activity, look for things that might be real, and report suspicious activity to Shawna. If Shawna is convinced that some sort of real supernatural or Mythos activity is afoot, she directs him to contact occult investigators and tip them off to the activity. If necessary, the Trust quietly hires private investigators with occult experience to look into (and eliminate) such threats, providing resources, supplies, bail money and very good criminal legal representation, as needed. The one thing that they ask is that any tomes, artifacts or unusual technology either be destroyed if possible (with the destruction documented) or if not, brought to Bob for sequestration. They greatly prefer that any sorcerers or monsters that hired investigators might encounter be killed. Anyone asking too many questions about the Trust’s motivations for Mythos-busting are dismissed and never contacted again, and the Trust will go to any necessary lengths to discredit them in the public eye. If, in your game, there are government agencies or conspiracies involved in Mythos-busting, the Trust may be known to them as fellow travelers on the right side of the fight.

Bob steadfastly refuses, barring torture or magical coercion, to discuss anything that he ever saw or knew about working at GNS from 2005 to 2006. If approached or questioned, he reports the matter to GNS immediately, and may run, fight, beg, or cower as he sees most fit to get away from the investigators. He realizes that all his former GNS colleagues died or vanished and has had enough force of will, so far, to avoid their fate by staying quiet about what he knows. A **Psychology** roll might reveal that he is deathly afraid of GNS. This is why he has been put in this job: he comes across as a burned-out former Mythos investigator, which, in a sense, he is. He is afraid of his own shadow, seems to know that something is wrong with the world, does not want to talk details, and wants to pay people on behalf of a do-gooder organization to eliminate occult threats.

It is unlikely that the investigators will ever be allowed to have a meaningful conversation with, or even get close to, Shawna Crawford. If John (who is supernaturally prescient) decides that it is in his best interest to give the investigators some access to Shawna, it will come via a call or Skype conversation. In such a case, the explanation that she offers up is this: a sob story about how Mythos-tainted drugs did Barry in, and she’s paying for revenge and to clean up the world. Because that’s how Barry would have wanted it.

In reality, John is protecting himself. He cannot be harmed or killed except through magical means. He is taking out the competition and potential ways in which he might be harmed. It’s that simple. Of course, finding out that John, himself, is a profound Mythos threat is a tall order.

No statistics are provided for John Crawford. He’s a non-combat capable, nine-year-old little boy, normal to all medical examinations. He cannot be lastingly harmed by non-magical means. He can be restrained, imprisoned, shuttled around or kept sedated with little difficulty, but without fail, any harm, damage or detrimental change to his bodily condition is completely healed, as if nothing had ever oc-



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curred, at the next moonrise. He digs himself out of a grave, eventually, none the worse for wear. By contrast, even a single point of damage from a magical or extradimensional source kills him instantly and irretrievably.

John has a **POW** of 125, **INT** of 90, and can hypnotize anyone whose gaze he meets on a **POW vs. POW** check, forcing them to commit suicide or flee in terror to be picked apart by his minions. He is privately tutored by cultists and heavily guarded at his mother's (and deceased father's) Bel-Air mansion on a constant basis and rarely leaves. Feel free to include any number of tropes from "child of the devil" movies such as mysterious packs of wild dogs or crows coming to his aid, assailants being forced to commit suicide, portents about him predicting the end of the world, and evil people just instinctively taking a bullet for him.

## Assignments

Assignments may come to any private investigators who are known (to anyone in a position of authority) as having successfully thwarted the Mythos. They are approached by Bob, who advises that he works for a charity that takes such things seriously and wants to eliminate them. They are offered slightly above their normal rates for the work and advised that the Trust "takes care of its own" if they "bend the rules" in an investigation. The assignments will involve suspicions of magical activity in every case. They will generally be given a broad mandate to "get to the bottom of what is going on" and to "put an end" to it. Anything supernatural should be

destroyed if at all possible; if not possible, it should be brought back to Bob for study and containment.

As long as the Trust is not nosed into, Bob is good to his word. Bills are paid, medical expenses are covered, psychiatric care is paid for, bail is posted, and lawyers are provided (and good ones at that). Connections are worked to keep the investigators out of undue trouble, and they get the feeling that they are soldiers on the right side of a war.

## Digging for Dirt on the Trust

Significant digging may make enemies out of Shawna and by extension, John. But there is some interesting dirt to be dug:

- ✧ For a woman with lurid films all over the Internet, Shawna has (since she married almost ten years ago) gotten extremely modest. This is widely commented on by various online pundits. She stays very covered up and is never photographed without full, but modest and understated, makeup. Successful enough online research (**Library Use**), however, when painstakingly comparing prior photos of her with current photos of her, reveal some interesting evolutions. First, her skin is considerably fairer now than it was. Second, there are glimpses of an elaborate tribal-looking tattoo on her back in certain photos nowadays, where she had no tattoos in her pornography days. Third, she oddly





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never wears open toed shoes; one set of photos has her wearing a modest sun shift, hat and sunglasses at a poolside fundraiser, but wearing steel-toed Doc Martens boots. She endured a bit of mocking on Twitter and Instagram over this event (five years ago), but claimed that she had “a broken toe.”

- ✧ She is still followed by paparazzi occasionally, but not to any great degree, and GNS now leaves her completely alone. The tabloid media has mostly lost interest in her, although there are people who will pay for pictures of her and Barry’s reclusive kid. There are very few pictures of the kid to be had, other than scripted press opportunities. He looks normal but has never been heard to speak, and is home-schooled by tutors.
- ✧ Questioning (i.e., bribing) the paparazzi and asking specific questions might gain the following information: she has not been seen in anything revealing since her marriage, which was a private ceremony to which no one was invited, not even relatives. She never goes out in public without bodyguards, and does not party any longer. She has isolated herself from her former porn-era friends, and keeps a safe distance from everyone, occasionally venturing out to eat with donors, appear at fundraisers, and give speeches. “It’s like she died ten years ago and came back as somebody’s uptight mom,” one might muse. No one has seen her go near a doctor in ten years, either (including when she was pregnant with John, or over any broken toe).
- ✧ Somehow nosing into Shawna’s medical history reveals that she went to a general practitioner in Los Angeles named Dr. Gigi Mulholland, with an office in Century City, regularly until ten years ago. Since then, appropriate snooping into the Trust’s finances or getting a hold of her Social Security number and hacking into health insurer databases reveal that, while she is still a beneficiary of health insurance, she has not used it since her marriage and pregnancy (the onset of which coincided with her marriage to Barry).
- ✧ Enough legwork can disclose that young John has likewise never been to see a doctor.
- ✧ Some long-time tabloid media journalists might recall that the king of the Barry Crawford tabloid beat, a woman named Allison Devitt, disappeared without a trace, the day before reports of the Barry/Shawna marriage came out. (*Keeper’s Note: the day after she drowned, and the day that she was resurrected. Allison would often camp out with a telephoto lens on the hillside above Barry’s mansion and snap pictures of his infamous pool parties, often replete with a variety of porn stars and Hollywood bad boys and girls.*)

✧ Allison Devitt is still a missing person. She was reported missing by her mother, Lizzie Devitt, when she failed to return to their shared apartment after being gone for two days. (*Keeper’s Note: the two days were the night and day after the drowning, and the day and night of the resurrection.*) The case is still technically open, but so stale that the police will allow the public to review the file on request. No real leads were ever developed: Allison’s car was found a day later, parked at a strip mall near her house, but there was no trace evidence or signs of foul play in the car, and her purse, flip phone, and camera were found in the car. The camera was loaded with an empty digital media card, and a variety of uninteresting shots of the Crawford’s last pool party were found on other digital media in a camera bag.

- ✧ Lizzie Devitt likewise disappeared, without a trace and without any sign of overt foul play, about a month later.
- ✧ Nosy investigators who visit the site where Allison Devitt’s car was found find a strip mall which has undergone several tenant changes over the years, but one tenant has remained constant, near where her car was found: a savings and loan with a night deposit box. It will require authorization from Allison Devitt’s next of kin or a court order, but if the investigators get one, the bank does indeed have a safety deposit box in Allison Devitt’s name, and in the safety deposit box is a digital media card. The digital media card, if reviewed, is informative, showing Shawna floating face down in the swimming pool at night (several photos time stamped over the course of an hour); Barry dragging her corpse out of the pool the next morning; and later stamped photos showing Barry and Shawna having sex, taken through a window, the next evening). If the Trust learns that the investigators have these images, they’ll be marked for death at the hands of assassins or possibly other occult investigators being used as misguided cat’s paws.
- ✧ Should the investigators somehow get into the Trust’s offices (past sophisticated electronic and human security systems) and into its accounting records, an Accounting roll reveals that a large portion of the 10% taken as overhead does not go to actual overhead, but to the buying up of various occult artifacts from around the globe. (The investigators, with enough calling around and leg work, can piece together the pattern from the identities of the sellers.) There is no “treasure trove” of such things to be found, however: they are all carefully destroyed.



# ALL FOR A GOOD CAUSE

✦ Pressuring Bob Tyler about his past at GNS (a Mythos-corrupted news agency of which he is the only living former employee, all others having disappeared or died of brain cancer not long after their separation) leads to his death by a sudden, malignant brain cancer if he spills any beans at all. He honestly, however, has no dirt on the Trust other than the anti-Mythos activities he manages.

## SHAWNA CRAWFORD, Trustee and Afturganga

STR 150 CON 90 SIZ 60 INT 55\* POW 05  
DEX 60 APP 80 EDU 55 SAN 0 HP 15

\*Considered and strategic decisions (which she has an opportunity to confer with John about) are made at an INT of 90.

**Damage bonus:** +1D6 (she is not large, but she is superhumanly strong and tough)

**Build:** 1

**Move:** 6 (slightly slower than a normal human)

## ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 95% (47/19), damage 1D3+db. She relentlessly drills in mixed martial arts, now that she does not tire or need to sleep, and has become an incredibly dangerous hand-to-hand combatant.

**Skills:** Own Language (English) 75%, Accounting 25%, Charm 50%, Computer Use 25%, Craft (Acting) 25%, Credit Rating 80%, Cthulhu Mythos 05%, Disguise 50%, Drive Automobile 30%, Dodge 50%, Listen 50%, Occult 25%, Persuade 65%, Pretend to Be Dead 100%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 50%.

**Defenses:** Takes minimum damage from physical attacks.

**Nationality:** American

**Age:** 35 (apparent)

**Spells:** none.

**Sanity Loss:** none under normal circumstances; if she is realized to be an afturganga—one of the living dead—then 1/1D8.

**Notes:** Passes for human under casual observation. She is slightly pallid (which she covers with makeup) and a little slow moving. Her left pinky toe is obviously broken to any direct observation, and is literally held together with duct tape (for this reason, she never wears open toed shoes). Careful examination reveals that she has no pulse and does not breathe. She can eat and drink, but does not need to. She does not sleep. Any damage to her can only be repaired through sorcery. She is unable to utter the word “God” in any language, so she avoids swearing, and has a tattoo of a Norse “witches’ staff” representing a ward against death on her left buttock. Despite all this, she is still, fundamentally, Shawna Crawford, with all her memories and values, with a superimposed and overriding purpose: protect her son at all costs. If he is destroyed, the magic animating her ends, and she crumbles to dust. She is (distressingly) still able to procreate, but fortunately is not dating anyone.





## THE BLACKTHORNS

**T**HE COMMUNITY OF FAIR OAKS CAN BE PLACED IN ANY METROPOLITAN SUBURBAN AREA. IT WAS FOUNDED IN THE LATE 1800S, IS REGULARLY VOTED “THE BEST SUBURB” IN THE AREA BY A WIDE MARGIN, AND HAS EXCELLENT SCHOOLS, PARKS, AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES. IT IS DIVERSE AND HAS VERY LITTLE CRIME. IT IS WHERE DOCTORS, LAWYERS, AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS PREFERENTIALLY SETTLE, AND ITS PROPERTY VALUES AND HOUSING VALUES ARE HIGH. IT WAS ORIGINALLY A PLANNED COMMUNITY, SETTLED BY ONE JOSEPH DAVID, A VICTORIAN-ERA SOCIAL REFORMER AND URBAN PLANNER. THE ONE BLEMISH ON ITS IDYLIC REPUTATION IS THAT OVER ITS 150-YEAR HISTORY, PEOPLE GO MISSING, WITHOUT EXPLANATION OR TRACE, TO A DISPROPORTIONATE DEGREE. SOME ATTRIBUTE THIS TO THE OLD GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT-PROTECTED FOREST THAT PROVIDES A MILE-WIDE RING AROUND THE COMMUNITY. IT IS FULL OF DEADFALLS, CAVE OPENINGS, FAST MOVING STREAMS, AND OTHER HAZARDS.

There is a reason for Fair Oaks’ prosperity, a dark secret dating back to its founding. At the edge of the city’s park, there is a magical ward of sorts, difficult to access, deep in, a mile-wide conservancy protected from development at the town’s founding, at the center of a huge stand of blackthorns, hundreds of yards thick. The innocent cannot find it without heroic effort, as no path leads into it for them. For the psychopathic, evil, depraved or mentally challenged, the woods call to them, and a path appears. Unfortunately, the path is one way, and such people are lost in the genius loci of the blackthorns, unable to escape or even gain their bearings.

Joseph David was, among his other accomplishments, a wizard, who subscribed to Victorian-era notions about eugenics and population control. The Blackthorn Ward is a killing jar, drawing in society’s morally or intellectually weak (as judged by Joseph David’s standards): psychopaths, bullies, sociopaths, the mentally ill, the depraved, drug addicts, and alcoholics. While it discriminates in who it calls to, it is merciless and does not account for evolving social attitudes, the possibility of growth and reform, or the desirability of second chances.

Bobby Black, an eight-year-old boy, has recently disappeared from the city’s park, without a trace. Bobby was a budding psychopath, who bullied and terrorized the third grade, and had begun to set fires and torture animals. He was laying plans to lure a classmate into the woods to murder for the thrill, and that turned out to be a bridge too far. A sycophantic, eight-year-old follower of Bobby’s, Ron Karpo, was with him when Bobby suddenly disappeared. Ron was not so far gone as to be unable to resist the lure of the Blackthorn Ward, but Bobby has been consumed by it.

## Background

If the investigators are working for The Barry Crawford Trust, they are told that the Trust has reason to believe that something supernatural is behind a long-running series of child disappearances in the otherwise idyllic community of Fair Oaks. They are hired to root it out and destroy it if possible. If destruction is beyond their means, then they are to bring back as much intelligence as possible as to how it works. Other entrees to the scenario might have the investigators being law enforcement officials searching for Bobby Black; private investigators hired by his parents; or well-meaning friends or relatives of the Blacks.

Two weeks ago, Bobby Black, age eight, disappeared at the Fair Oaks city parks. No trace of him has been found. The public story is that he was seen in the company of two other eight-year-olds, Ron Karpo and Becky Rosenthal, classmates of his, at the baseball diamonds. They were (according to Becky) playing *Pokémon Go!* on Ron’s smartphone. The three of them headed into the abutting woods, supposedly looking for a Pokémon, when (according to Becky) they became separated. Both Ron and Bobby went missing initially; Becky found some adults at one of the diamonds after about 15 minutes. A search found Ron about an hour later, muddy, filthy, and severely scratched and bruised. He was catatonic and has remained unresponsive. No trace of Bobby has been found; the news has reported (accurately) that bloodhounds tracked Bobby to where Ron was found, about 50 feet into the woods.



# THE BLACKTHORNS

## Interview, Ron Karpo and Knowledgeable Sources About the Investigation

- ✧ Ron Karpo, age 8, is in a children's psychiatric ward, still mostly catatonic. His parents, Jim and Helen, are taking turns at his side. A successful Psychoanalysis roll might get Ron to babble a little. Between tears, he mumbles about "the thorns" and claims "it's all Becky's fault."
- ✧ If either his parents or the police are cooperating with the investigators, they can learn that Ron's phone did not have a *Pokémon Go!* app installed when it was found.
- ✧ If the police cooperate with questions, the investigators can also learn that a backpack was found at the edge of the woods with some disturbing things in it: a box cutter, a roll of duct tape, and some pictures of torture porn downloaded from the Internet.
- ✧ Talking to people other than his parents turn up unfavorable opinions of young Ron. School officials, neighbors, or classmates describe him as a passive follower of Bobby Black, always with him and doing what he says. Information on people's opinions of Bobby Black follow.

## Interview, Bobby Black's Family or Other Knowledgeable Sources About Bobby

- ✧ Although everyone feels bad for his parents, and appropriate persons have seriously been searching for him, Bobby Black is clearly disliked by all who knew him. Even his parents admit that he was a troubled child with several instances of bullying in his past. They have already given his child psychiatrist, Emily Barris, permission to speak to law enforcement.
- ✧ Dr. Barris, school officials, classmates, or neighbors can tell any number of disturbing stories about Bobby. He was the third-grade bully and Ron Karpo licked his boots. Bobby was always calm, seemed to think that punishment was negotiable, and never visibly lost his temper or cried. At times when Ron was not around, he had been accused of even more serious matters. His neighbors to the left found their cat disemboweled and hanging from a tree. Bobby had been caught throwing lit matches at the cat the week before, but they couldn't prove Bobby did it. The neighbors to the right saw him setting their rose bushes on fire. Many of his classmates have been taunted with racial epithets, attacked in the bathroom, had their butts pinched, or had lit matches

flicked at them. Some more candid classmates admit that they are glad he's gone.

- ✧ None of this is news to his parents, who had him under psychiatric care with Dr. Barris. They were afraid that he was going to hurt someone, but Bobby was devious. He was constantly giving his mother (who had quit her job to be at home with him after school) the slip.
- ✧ Dr. Barris is reluctant to put a firm diagnosis on an eight-year-old, but will not argue that he was showing early signs of psychopathy: bullying, a fascination with setting fires, and cruelty to animals. If that is the case, it was only a matter of time before he began to act out against people.

## Interview, Becky Rosenthal

Becky and her parents are cooperative with reasonable requests for information. Becky has been grounded by her parents, who forbade her from hanging out with Bobby or Ron. However, she is ungainly, socially awkward, and unpopular, so she would accept invitations from them to socialize from Ron, and Bobby would always be there. She was excited to play *Pokémon Go!* in the woods, and thought nothing of it when Bobby asked her if she wanted to play another game. He did not say what it was, but Ron started crying and saying he wanted to go home. They had just gotten a little way into the woods, near where Ron was found (she showed the police). She could not find either of them. She called out and waited for a while, then got scared and went to find grown-ups.

The investigators should be able to surmise that Bobby, with Ron under his thumb, were about to do something depraved to Becky, and they would be correct. Bobby was taken by the Blackthorn Ward.

## The Blackthorn Ward

A half of a mile into the ring of woods from the baseball diamonds is a cave opening in the forest floor. It is surrounded by an old-growth thicket of non-native blackthorns (sloe plums), hundreds of yards thick. They are stout, thorny, and impassable without clearcutting; even people wearing protective gear find themselves snagged, tangled, tripped, falling into shallows, and generally having to crawl, taking 1D3 hit points per 10 yards of travel. They are dark, twisted and for a few weeks in the early spring, very beautiful as they flower.

An **Occult** roll or appropriate research reveals two things of interest about blackthorns:

- ✧ The spines are used to pierce and trap evil spirits
- ✧ Bringing flowering blackthorns inside one's house is thought to bring bad luck. Conversely, flowering blackthorns outside of one's house are thought to bring good luck.



## Historical Research, Vanished Children (and Others) in Fair Oaks

Since its founding in 1887, Fair Oaks has been lauded in the press as an idyllic, prosperous place, a community planned and founded by social reformer Joseph David as a model community. People go missing in every community, but any effort at research soon finds that Fair Oaks has a reputation for people going missing. If the investigators start digging into these disappearances, have them make a **Library Use** check. The amount of information they gain varies with the success of the check:

- ✧ **Basic success:** There is a disproportionate amount of reported and unsolved disappearances of residents of Fair Oaks compared to surrounding areas. This is especially noteworthy given the town's prosperity. This stretches all the way back to its founding. Reports frequently mention the natural hazards in the town's surrounding green space: deadfalls, caves, quicksand, fast streams, and the like.
- ✧ **Hard success:** It is not unusual for a certain amount of people to go missing in any community, especially the occasional unruly child, or people on the edge like addicts, habitual criminals, and the mentally ill. There is a distinct and consistent absence of reports that these sorts of people who go missing in Fair Oaks are ever found. Oddly, this is news to local police. They do not deny any data they are confronted with; rather, they seem genuinely puzzled.
- ✧ **Extreme success:** There is a distinct pattern that the addicts, habitual criminals, and mentally ill who go missing do so shortly after arriving in Fair Oaks—often within weeks. Conversely, the suicide rate is extremely low.
- ✧ Finally, if the investigators do enough leg work in terms of reviewing juvenile records or talking to families or friends of vanished unruly children, they often did something particularly bad, right before they vanished. By way of example, the investigators might find a report of a local college student, Will Johnson, who vanished a year ago and was never found. Asking his family or acquaintances about Will reveals that he had returned home to live with his parents two weeks prior to his disappearance after being expelled from college for cheating on an exam. He vanished in the middle of the night and left his car, keys, wallet, phone, and all other belongings behind. (Again, the police do not argue with any data that they are confronted with, and they seem genuinely surprised at the pattern.)

## Historical Research, Joseph David

Joseph David was an American social reformer, urban planner and occasional author who lived from 1832 until 1902. He worked as an urban planner, mostly in the eastern U.S., and wrote a considerable amount, mostly in right-wing political journals, about the penal system and how he thought it should be reformed. He was a proponent of exile, or even the death penalty, for even the most minor offenses or frailties. He espoused a harshly utilitarian model of society, where people who did not add value to it, as he saw it, should be expelled, and those who threatened it, executed without compunction. He believed that deliberate criminals and the mentally ill could not be rehabilitated, and should be killed. He was particularly fond of writing about addicts, chiefly alcoholics, and toward the end of his life, opiate addicts. Such people he deemed genetically damaged, and advocated for their state-run euthanasia.

Fair Oaks was his grand experiment in urban planning and he lamented that he could not implement a “proper” legal code to govern its affairs. Nonetheless, he encouraged professionals to settle there, welcomed prosperous immigrants, and encouraged the arts to flourish. He extolled the virtues of green space for mental health, and initially, Fair Oaks was a dry community.

## Occult Research, Joseph David

A successful **Occult** or **Hard Library Use** check leads the investigators to conclude that Joseph David was likely involved, as a high-ranking Master, in many Victorian-era esoteric organizations, including the Golden Dawn, known as Ash-Jol-Ra. He is not identified by name, but sufficient familiarity with the occult or sufficiently diligent research notes marked similarities in idea, tone, and word choice between Joseph David and Ash-Jol-Ra.

## Cthulhu Mythos Research

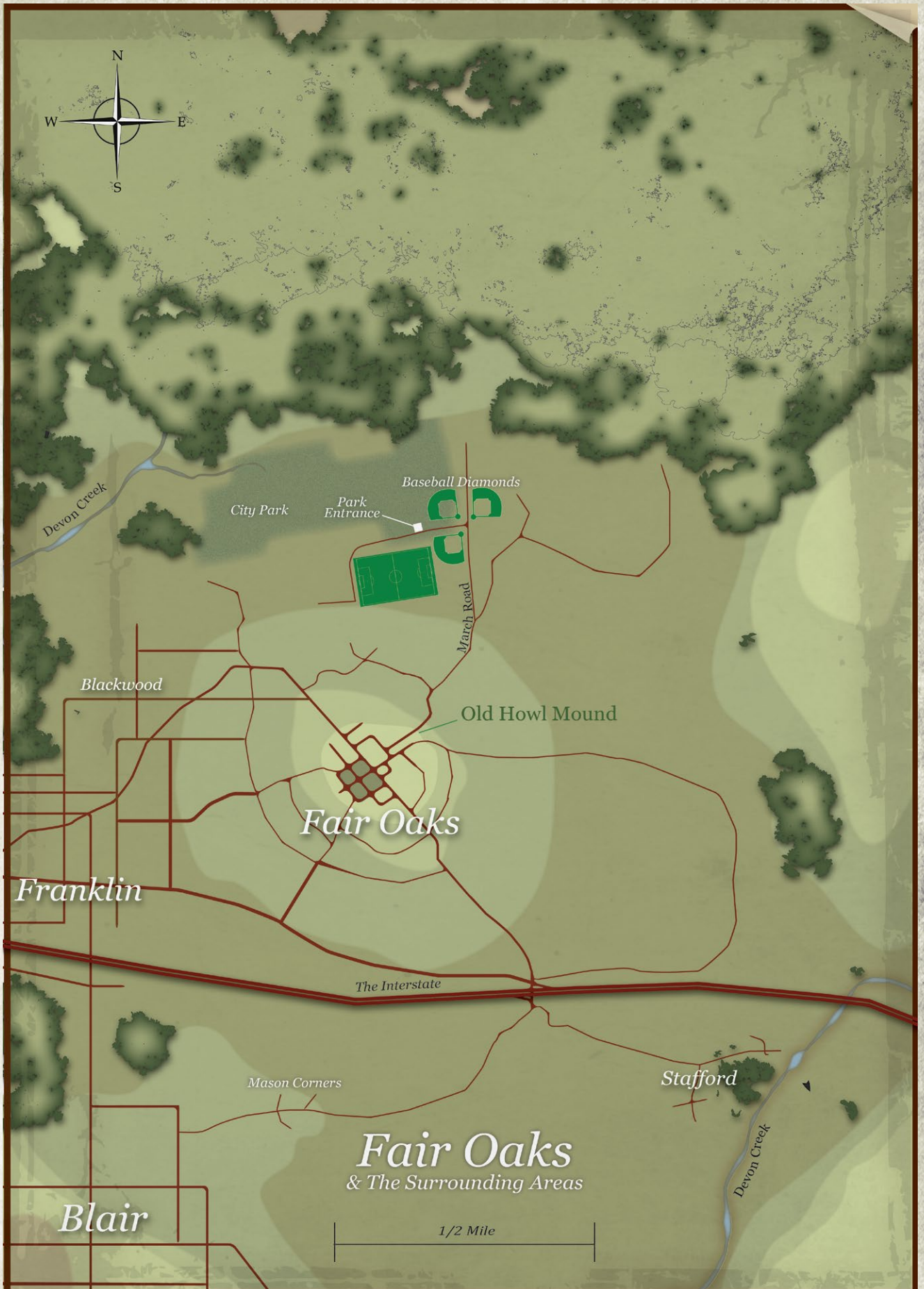
Cthulhu Mythos tomes written subsequent to 1860 might mention Ash-Jol-Ra as a sorcerer specializing in the magic of places. He is said to have worked a protective ward over his unnamed home region, “protecting it” from the “weak and depraved.” This “ward” is described as “the Blackthorn Ward,” but no descriptions of how it works, or how to undo it, are offered.

## Aerial Reconnaissance

Aerial reconnaissance reveals little. There is a large clutch of blackthorns, a couple hundred yards across, a half of a mile from the baseball diamonds. No trails lead into them. At the edge of them, however, is a trail that dead-ends into a clearing where a fire pit has been dug. It is commonly known that this is a teenager hangout, where they go to have parties, drink beer, and have sex. It has been used as such for generations, and any amount of telltale litter can be found nearby. Teenagers who frequent the spot all remark on how comfortable



# THE BLACKTHORNS





it is, and how they feel safe there—like they can have fun, but things will not get out of hand. This is the closest conventional approach to the mass of blackthorns, which start just at the edge of the hangout. Thermal imaging reveals a cave opening near the center of the thicket, however, from above.

## Into the Blackthorns

No path leads into the tangle of blackthorns for most people, and bloodhounds give no indication that anyone missing has ever been nearby. Only people who are targets for the Blackthorn Ward have a path that appears for them. Others not right on their heels see nothing, and it is very easy for mixed groups of people to get separated. The path closes behind a victim, gently herding him forward to the cave mouth.

People trying to move through the Blackthorn Ward move at a rate of 1, taking damage at a rate of 1D3 per 10 yards of travel—and that's with protective clothing and chainsaws. Someone careening through the thicket willy-nilly takes 1D3 every 10 feet, and from an edge to the cave opening is 300 feet at best. There are a few bodies of stray people from over the ages scattered here and there. Parachuting into the center is an option, however.

If they reach the center of the thicket, they find a natural cave opening, about 3 feet across, in the forest floor. There are runes and sigils carved around the lip and a fetid smell comes from the cave. The cave drops out of sight, but powerful enough light shone below reveals a huge pile of decayed or decaying bodies—hundreds in all, stretching back to the founding of Fair Oaks.

Persons with 0 SAN who approach within a mile of the Blackthorn Ward are doomed. They are inexorably drawn toward the cave mouth. The blackthorns part to make a path for them, closing behind them. While they can stop, there is no escape. Eventually, hunger, thirst, or curiosity will propel them forward, and once they are within sight of the cave, they hurl themselves in.

Others who fail the morality test of the Blackthorn Ward locus genii (addicts, cheats, habitual criminals, those who intend to do grievous harm to another) must succeed in a POW check every day that they spend in Fair Oaks or they, too, are inexorably drawn in. Those who realize that they are being punished for what they did get a second POW chance to crawl out through the blackthorns, taking 1D6 points of damage and losing 1D10 SAN from the visions of hell and terror that they suffer. This is what happened to Ron Karpo. Do not forget to make this check for any qualifying investigators.

## Self Defense

Ordinarily, the Blackthorn Ward is completely passive. It calls psychically to its victims, and they are either strong enough to resist it, or not. If they are not, then they can perceive and can follow a path to a cave opening. They soon find that the path closes behind them and eventually, inexorably, they go the only way that they can. They get too close to the cave opening, slip and fall in eventually, and fall into pile of muck and bodies, where they eventually die. Their decaying bodies feed the Ward and matters progress.

If the Blackthorn Ward is overtly threatened however (fire setters that can be reached; people with chainsaws clearcutting a path, etc.), it can defend itself by reanimating and sending forth a veritable horde of its prior victims, hundreds if need be. “The Damned” are rotting, mostly skeletal revenants, with roots entwined around ribs and running through eye sockets, thorns jutting from flowering branches, shambling and inexorable.

The job of “The Damned” is to grapple and haul into the cave mouth anyone posing such a direct, physical threat to the Ward. They are completely at home in the thickets, able to instinctively avoid all the pitfalls and unbothered by the thorns. They are not quiet about it, either, croaking out the darkest things the target has ever done, vowing punishment, confessing their own sins, and knowing any mental weaknesses that the target may have. They drag the victim right through the thicket, ripping flesh and breaking bones as they go. Statistics appear below.

## Decisions, Decisions

The investigators will probably decide, at some point, to try and go into the blackthorn thicket. The police, obviously, have not searched it because it is effectively impassable, and the dogs do not trace a scent into it.

Parachuting into it puts them within reach of the cave mouth, which they may know about from thermal imaging studies. They will take only moderate damage if they get close, and if they do not overtly threaten the Blackthorn Ward, do not have to deal with The Damned. Whether Bobby Black is still alive in the charnel pit is up to you, but there is no SAN reward for rescuing the budding psychopath.

It may be that the investigators figure out what is going on, and press gang a potential target into accompanying them. This could be as simple as promising a drug addict \$100 to walk with them to the edge of the woods. (“You’re weird, dude, but I’ll do it as long as I can bring my friend to watch my back.”) It may be that one of the investigators has done something so awful, or is so corrupted, that he is a target for the blackthorns. (A particularly awful thing to do would be to convince Ron Karpo’s parents to have him “show them where things happened,” in the hope of “snapping him out of it.”) Any of these approaches work: a path suddenly appears through the thicket, which closes behind them as they go.



# THE BLACKTHORNS

Finally, they may try to clear-cut their way through the Blackthorn Ward, which causes it to defend itself. Under no circumstances will the authorities permit a “controlled fire” to be started; the forest is so dense that it cannot be controlled, only put out eventually. And besides, if Bobby Black is in there somewhere, then he would be killed.

Of course, they may well burn the Blackthorns down surreptitiously, disrupting the ward and burning The Damned.

## Rewards and Repercussions

Disrupting the Blackthorn Ward results in +1D6 SAN if the fire is started with a view toward being able to put it out at some point. If the investigators do not destroy it completely, and report enough of the story to the Trust, the Ward is targeted for an “accidental” forest fire in short order.

### THE DAMNED, Rotting Remnants of Those “Lost in the Blackthorns”

STR 50    CON 60    SIZ 55    INT 05    POW 05  
DEX 50    HP 11

**Damage bonus:** none.

**Build:** 0

**Move:** 6 (even in the blackthorns, which slow them down not at all)

#### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 35% (17/6), 1D6+D4 (claws, biting and rending)

**Armor:** None

**Skills:** as per the *Call of Cthulhu Keeper's Rulebook*.

**Defenses:** Take minimum damage from non-blunt attacks. Attacks against them in the thickets of blackthorns take a penalty die; attacks by them in the thickets of blackthorns gain a bonus die.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1D8





## DEAD MALL

**T**HERE ARE TWO HISTORIC SNOWSTORMS WITH THE TOP RATING, EXTREME, ON THE NORTHEAST SNOW-FALL IMPACT SCALE (NESIS): THE BLIZZARD OF 1996 AND THE SUPERSTORM OF 1993. IF THE MOVIE CLUB AT THE DYING DIAMOND ARCADE MALL HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT, THEIR COLD ONE-MEDIATED CATAclySM WILL TOP BOTH.

DIAMOND ARCADE'S LOCATION IS KEPT DELIBERATELY VAGUE AND COULD BE ANYWHERE ON THE EAST COAST, INCLUDING LOVECRAFT COUNTRY. THE PLOT ASSUMES THAT THE SURROUNDING AREA IS SUBURBAN, LOW INCOME, AND HAS LIMITED CONNECTIONS—ROAD, POSSIBLY RAIL, AIR UNLIKELY—TO MORE METROPOLITAN, WELL-SUPPLIED AREAS.

THE TIME OF THE YEAR IS ASSUMED TO BE LATE DECEMBER TO EARLY JANUARY, AND WHILE THE WEATHER AT THE START OF THE SCENARIO IS VERY COLD WITH SOME FROST, SNOW HAS NOT YET STARTED TO FALL.

The weather is a crucial factor to this scenario. The Keeper should plan for increasingly severe weather as the scenario progresses, with damage equivalent to 1D3 (severe storms, and wind chill) progressing to 1D6 (exposure to blizzard or Category 1 to 3 snowstorm), and then to 1D10 (exposure to Category 5 storm) for anyone who gets caught outside. Damage occurs only if a character is exposed to the elements for 8 rounds or longer, or 2 rounds or longer if the character isn't sufficiently clothed or protected against the cold. Damage can be halved by a Survival check. Even within the mall, once things get bad enough, the damage increment is only one level lower than the outside temperature. So, if the outside temperature is worth 1D6 damage, then the Arcade temperature is 1D3, and so on.

## Background

The Diamond Arcade mall was built in the 1970s with Montgomery Ward and Woolworth's as its two anchor outlets. It prospered and expanded in the late 1980s, but in the 1990s, the wheels fell off the wagon as the retail climate changed. Woolworth's and Montgomery Ward were both defunct by the early 2000s, and other smaller retailers moved out or went bust as the Arcade's once busy corridors fell silent.

Since 2003, Diamond Arcade has been going from bad to worse, along with the surrounding suburbs, and although there has been talk of renewal, no new stores have moved in. Currently only two paying tenants survive, Toby Timm's Treasures, a junk store (three outlets statewide), and a Mitchell Porthous low-end department store (the last of four outlets statewide, and on its way out). The Movie Club is not a paying tenant, but so far, the property owners and local law have done little or nothing to deter it.

## Researching the Property

Diamond Arcade is owned by a Texas-based property group that has little interest in developing the land or saving the mall. It would sell if it could, but there are no buyers. A **Library Use** check either on the Internet or through the archives of local newspapers shows that bad luck, disinterest, and neglect have led Diamond to this point, but there's no indication of wrongdoing or Mythos activity.

However, a Hard **Library Use** check turns up tales of the Great Blizzard of 1888. Fifteen people died locally during the "Great White Hurricane," all of them frozen to death and most of them at Shapleigh Farm. This spawned several ghost stories, the best known of which is the "Flint Exorcism". According to this story, a cunning man named Jacob Flint exorcised the ghosts of Shapleigh Farm in a mighty, all-night struggle.

Survey maps show (**Library Use** check) that the Diamond Arcade is located on the site of the old Shapleigh Farm.

## Introducing the Investigators

The investigator introduction occurs when a frozen corpse is found just outside Diamond Arcade. The dead man is Mitch Ross, a local blogger and chronicler of the dying malls of New England. According to news reports, he was found partly undressed, which medical professionals ascribe to hypothermia-induced disorientation. Alcohol is said to be a contributing factor. However, what nobody's clear about is how Ross managed to freeze solidly to death on a 34 degrees Fahrenheit night. If the investigators are dispatched by the Barry Crawford Trust, it openly suspects



some sort of witchcraft, and tasks the investigators to find it and either “eliminate the threat” or quarantine the “technology.”

## Initial Investigation

From this point, there are several likely investigative paths:

- ✧ Find out more about Ross.
- ✧ Visit the place where he died.
- ✧ Find out more about the Mall.

Ross lived alone in a small township several miles away, in the same state. He used to work in retail, but was laid off four years ago. He lives off disability checks and cash-under-the-table odd jobs. His malls blog is his only social outlet and he has been writing it for five years.

Ross’ blog gives an accurate history of Diamond Arcade’s decline and include several links to YouTube video feeds showing Ross’ previous visits to the mall. However, these feeds have been subject to takedown notices and are no longer available. A successful **Computer Use** check indicates that these videos were subjected to community guidelines violations issues on the grounds of privacy and hateful content. Ross was fighting the claims, but died before the issues could be resolved. All the complaints are made by a group calling itself Diamond Movie Club.

A search of Ross’ house finds nothing except that (**Computer Use** check or **Spot Hidden** check) his computer is so riddled with malware as to be unusable, and any external storage devices, or anything that might have contained a video file, have been removed.

Ross died just outside of Diamond Arcade, in the parking lot. When designed, the parking had a belt of woodland screening it from the main road. Over time, this has become a weed-filled, overgrown dumping spot, and there are more garbage piles than trees in the woodland. Police stripped the area of physical evidence, but a successful **Natural World** check notices clear signs that severe cold and frost hit a very localized spot about fifteen feet across, centered on the place where Ross’ body was found. Judging by damage to trees, shrubs, and grass, it must have been at least three times as cold in that spot as it was anywhere else. Such a hyper-localized cold spot is clearly anomalous and not natural.

Visitors to Diamond Arcade find it a quiet, depressing place. Some old folks and teenagers still come here, the old folks because they have nothing better to do but walk the halls, and the kids because they can raise hell in some of the empty storefronts. Only the parts of the mall with paying tenants are cleaned regularly. There are parts of the mall that haven’t been cleaned, repainted, maintained, or touched in years, and some of the abandoned shop fronts are home to squatters and drug addicts. There is major water infiltration damage in several places, particularly the (closed) food court where the grand glass canopy overhead has sprung many leaks.

The staff at the Mitchell Porthous store remember Ross as “quiet, inoffensive. He’d come and go with his phone, asking questions sometimes, but mostly just keeping to himself,

filming.” One of them remembers seeing Ross the day he died, “being hassled by those film freaks. They pushed him around, and I think took his phone. I told him he should call the police, but I don’t know if he did.”

The staff at Toby Timm’s Treasures have the same information, but have more to say about the Diamond Movie Club. The cinema’s right next door to Timm’s, and “the film geeks are a pain in the ass, but we don’t do anything about it anymore. One time this guy, he pulls a knife on my supervisor, makes him get down on his knees and swear on the Icy Flame – whatever that is – that he wouldn’t mess with them again. The police got called but nothing happened. The supervisor switched stores soon after that.” A successful **Cthulhu Mythos** check recognizes Icy Flame as a reference to the Great Old One Aphoom-Zhah, supposedly the entity that brought death and destruction to ancient Hyperborea.

## The Movie Club

The cinema used to be one of the Chinn Family Theaters, a local chain that went out of business a decade ago. Solid metal gates with imposing padlocks and chains block the Arcade entrance to the cinema, but there is evidence (on a successful **Electrical Repair** check) that someone has been stealing power from the grid and running it to the cinema. The currently used entrance is out the back, through what was the fire exit to the parking lot. There are new security cameras and silent alarms which alert the Movie Club if anyone tries to get in that way. A Hard **Electrical Repair** check can bypass the cameras and alarms.

Inside, the cinema is comfortable. The roof still leaks, but the seats have been refurbished, there’s a well-stocked working bar, and even a small makeshift kitchen area where the old main Arcade entrance used to be. All of this is contrary to local building codes (**Law** check) but the police, if called, have more important things to do than break up a nest of squatters, however well supplied they may be.

There are usually three or four members of the Club here at any time, and at night all fifteen are always here, usually watching one of their favorite horror films or planning the next film shoot.

If asked, any member says he or she is just fooling around, because there’s nothing better to do in town. All of them are young—the oldest is 24—and poor. They have good film equipment, most of it second hand. They say that they are working on a film of their own, *The Shapleigh House*, a horror movie about the events of the Great 1888 Blizzard and the Flint Exorcism. They already have some scenes shot as well as a trailer, and are planning to crowdfund production. There’s a shooting schedule and storyboard pinned on one wall of the cinema showing in detail what and when the Club intends to shoot next. Several of the ghost scenes involve disturbing images of mysterious entities made of swirling ice and cold (0/1 **SAN**), and some of the video clips found on the Club’s website and crowdfunding campaign show brief footage of these entities. The effects seem far too realistic, especially given the minimal budget.

They downplay any claim that they might have behaved



violently, saying that the other tenants resent them because they don't play by the rules. "But we just want to get along with everyone!" They deny ever meeting Mitch Ross. They know who he is—everyone has seen the news reports—but they say they never had anything to do with him.

A **Psychology** check indicates that the movie club members are not telling the truth. They did know Ross and, judging by their smirks, they may have had something to do with his death. A **Hard Spot Hidden** check finds Ross' cell phone in the cinema, hidden in a camera equipment box and identifiable because the screen saver is a picture of Ross in happier times. One of the video files on the phone shows Ross having a violent confrontation with members of the Club that ends when Ross' phone is taken.

The movie club members react badly to any mention of the Icy Flame, or any display of **Cthulhu Mythos** knowledge. They instantly turn hostile and demand that the person doing so leave immediately. **Spot Hidden** checks notice weapons stowed all around the cinema, including guns. These are well-armed squatters willing to defend their turf.

## The Cult's Leader

The movie club's leader is a woman named Shanda Dawbey, but she prefers to be called Elizabeth Shapleigh. All the movie club's members have adopted the names and personas of people who died in the 1888 Blizzard, so assign them period-appropriate names. Elizabeth was the matriarch of the Shapleigh

clan and Shanda's adoption of that role puts her in charge. Successful **Psychology** or **Anthropology** checks note that this group is much more cohesive and goal-oriented that might be expected of a group of film-loving kids. It is as if they were more of a military squad or clan than an ordinary social club.

Hacking the movie club's website (**Computer Use** check) finds a members-only message board with a version of the shooting script. However, this version includes extra information, in that it has up-to-the-minute weather reports tied into the shooting script. All the film's big scenes are deliberately timed to take place when the worst possible weather hits.

Any kind of background check on Club members finds that they are all local, from low-income families, economically trapped in this dead-end town. None of them has held a job for longer than a few months, and their academic records are poor. Their equipment is more than they can afford, though **Library Use** (bonus die if the investigator also has Law above base) notes a string of burglaries across the state in which equipment exactly like that found at the Diamond Arcade cinema was stolen.

If provoked in any way, the Club's likely response is to summon one or more Cold Ones to ambush and kill their enemies, just as they did with Ross. This is most likely to happen at or near Diamond Arcade.

If left to their own devices, the Club continues to shoot its film, bringing in Cold Ones to add to the realism. As they do, the Great Old One Aphoom-Zhah's attention focuses on the area, and the weather gets progressively worse. The more the kids shoot, the worse the weather gets, as Aphoom-Zhah





begins to gather its strength and lash out. **Occult** or **Cthulhu Mythos** checks, in combination with the shooting script, realizes the danger: as the shoot progresses, the Great Old One gets more and more restive, until disaster strikes. Disrupting the cult is a straightforward proposition: they must either resort to violence (likely, the cult will start the fight to dissuade persistent investigators), or call in the police once the cult has resorted to serious crime. Making the connection in a way that is convincing to the police about the stolen camera equipment succeeds in provoking a police investigation. The cult loses its composure when faced with arrest and/or the confiscation of its equipment, and then the violence starts.

The climax, if the movie club is not interrupted, is a Category 5 (Extreme) snowstorm that smashes the Northeastern coast, burying the state in a blanket of snow. Thanks to poor local infrastructure and insufficient investment the town is almost completely cut off, and a state of emergency is declared. Cold Ones ravage the Diamond Arcade, screaming their triumph.

By the time the storm eases and things get back to normal, the Mall is extensively damaged. Everyone inside, including workers at Mitchell Porthous and Toby Timms as well as all fifteen Club members, have frozen to death. They aren't the only ones; state-wide, the death toll is over 40, and a further 30 people die in flooding accidents as the snow melts. All told, over 150 people die across the East Coast.

## Rewards and Repercussions

An investigator success means the Club is broken up before the worst of the storms hit, and no innocent lives are lost. This is worth 1D8 SAN. A partial success means the Club is broken up, but some really bad storms cause loss of innocent life. This is worth a 1D4 SAN reward. Failure means either the Club wasn't broken up or it wasn't in time to stop the Category 5 storm. This costs 1D10 SAN, as the investigators contemplate an ever-rising death toll.

### TYPICAL MOVIE CLUB MEMBER

STR 60    CON 40    SIZ 55    INT 70    POW 65  
DEX 55    APP 55    EDU 75    SAN 0    HP 9

**Damage bonus:** none.

**Build:** 0

**Move:** 8

### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 40% (20/8), damage 1D3+db

Firearms (Handgun) 45% (22/9), .9mm automatic, 3 of the group have one (damage 1D10)

Firearms (Rifle) 55% (27/11), hunting, 2 of the group have one (damage 2D6)

**Skills:** Art (Film Making) 45%, Charm 25%, Cthulhu Mythos 03%, Disguise 30%, Dodge 35%, Drive Auto 40%, Electrical Repair 25%, History 20%, Occult 15%.

The two with hunting rifles also have Survival 35%, Track 45%.

Shanda / "Elizabeth's" girlfriend Alexis / "Harriet Shapleigh" also has: Locksmith 55%, Stealth 60%, Sleight of Hand 55%.

**Defenses:** none.

**Nationality:** American

**Age:** Teens to low 20s.

**Education:** High School or college dropout.

**Spells:** none.

**Notes:** These kids live to film. Anything they do—everything they do—gets recorded, including the film equipment burglary.

### SHANDA DAWBEY/ELIZABETH SHAPLEIGH

STR 50    CON 70    SIZ 45    INT 80    POW 85  
DEX 75    APP 70    EDU 85    SAN 0    HP 13

**Damage bonus:** none.

**Build:** 0

**Move:** 9

### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 80% (40/16), damage 1D3+db. Has martial arts training, and is fond of using the disarm maneuver.

Firearms (Handgun) 75% (37/15), .9mm automatic (damage 1D10)

**Skills:** Art (Film Making) 65%, Charm 55%, Cthulhu Mythos 8%, Disguise 60%, Dodge 45%, First Aid 50%, History 45%, Occult 25%, Spot Hidden 45%, Stealth 45%.

**Defenses:** Leather jacket (1 armor)

**Nationality:** American

**Age:** 20

**Education:** College dropout.

**Spells:** Summon/Bind Cold One.

**Notes:** Shanda gets her Mythos ability and spell knowledge from her abusive grandfather, a descendant of Jacob Flint. Investigators can figure out her family connection with a Hard Occult check with a bonus die if the investigator has Cthulhu Mythos skill, but only after finding the Shapleigh Farm information. Among the video files on her phone (Hard Computer Use due to encryption) are video files of her and Alexis breaking and entering an electrical goods store, which could get her arrested.

### TYPICAL COLD ONES

STR n/a    CON n/a    SIZ 130    INT 130    POW 175  
DEX 210    HP 17

**Damage bonus:** n/a

**Build:** 1

**Move:** 10 (flying)

### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 45% (22/9), freezing touch, damage 1D3 plus 10 CON and 10 STR loss. Victims who lose more than 30 points of STR and CON must make a Survival check; failure means that the victim can no longer move or resist. Those who fail this Survival check and who are then rescued by others must receive First Aid before they can act again. Lost attributes are regained after a full day of rest in warm conditions.

Wailing Shriek: no damage, but provokes SAN check to all within earshot.

Dodge 45% (22/9)

**Armor:** none.

**Skills:** Stealth in Snow 90%.

**Defenses:** None, but immune to all physical damage. Fire (a torch or its equivalent) does 2D6 damage per strike.

**Spells:** None. An atypical Cold One with POW 160 or more knows 1D3 spells, usually dealing with Aphoom Zhab or weather control.

**Sanity Loss:** 0/1D6, or 0/1D3 to hear one shriek



## BRING ME YOUR SICK

**N**O ONE WANTS TO GROW OLD AND DIE. MODERN SOCIETY TELLS US THAT EVERYTHING WE EAT, DRINK, AND BREATHE IS SLOWLY KILLING US. OUR BODIES ARE ROTTING FROM THE INSIDE OUT FROM MYSTERIOUS TOXINS; A CANCEROUS DEATH IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME. THE KNOWLEDGEABLE HEALTH GURUS ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN SAVE US, CLAIMING THAT SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE LOST TO THE AGES IS THEIRS TO PASS DOWN, PROVIDING A VERITABLE PASS TO IMMORTALITY THAT ONLY REQUIRES TEN EASY PAYMENTS OF \$19.99.

WILLIAM NORTHFIELD HAS BEEN SLOWLY DYING OF CANCER FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS. HE HAS TRIED EVERYTHING, BUT THE CANCER KEPT ADVANCING. AN UNORTHODOX SPANISH “ALTERNATIVE” HEALTH GURU, DR. ENRIQUE BAUM, HAS RECENTLY OPENED A VERY EXCLUSIVE HEALTH SPA, CLAIMING THAT HIS PROPRIETARY TECHNIQUES CAN ARREST A WIDE VARIETY OF AILMENTS.

Willing to try anything, Mr. Northfield has been regularly attending the health spa, along with several other wealthy terminally ill patients.

Though unorthodox, Dr. Baum’s methods have shown signs of progress in all his patients, despite having no discernible medical foundation. Mr. Northfield has pledged his vast resources to support Dr. Baum, as have the other patients. Of course, this is exactly what Dr. Baum wants. Dr. Baum is from a remote valley in the Pyrenees, and is descended from the Miri Nigri. He is also one of the faithful of Chaugnar Faugn.

Dr. Baum’s spa is no mere health clinic. His natural spa is actually a massive Gate that, once complete, will use the energy from the patients to open a doorway for Chaugnar Faugn to be awakened. Dr. Baum’s methods uses small doses of the offal of Chaugnar Faugn and to extend his patient’s lives while gradually corrupting their DNA. While most of the patients are of little more importance to Dr. Baum’s schemes than as eventual sacrifices, Mr. Northfield is the owner of a vast shipping empire. Dr. Baum has been using Mr. Northfield’s resources to smuggle in his relatives.

Now that the Gate is almost done, loose ends need to be tied up. Mr. Northfield will be disposed of and the patients/sacrifices will be gathered. The Gate will open, and Chaugnar Faugn will rise from his slumber.



## Involving the Investigators

The investigators can either be hired by Mr. Northfield’s “concerned” relatives (who are of course, only concerned about where their inheritance is going) or members of Mr. Northfield’s Board of Directors (which might include a representative of the Barry Crawford Trust). The Board will want to know the status of not only the owner’s health, but where he has been for the past few months as well.

Either way, concern will be expressed that Mr. Northfield has been spending a lot of time and money at Dr. Baum’s health spa. They are concerned that Dr. Baum is a quack who has been fleecing a vulnerable sick, old man out of his money. Their concern has grown recently, as Mr. Northfield has not met any of them in person for about three months, and rumor has it that he has fired all his household staff. All recent contact has been through email and a handful of phone calls. They want the investigators to find out where Mr. Northfield has been and who this Dr. Baum is. They will be happy to pay any retainer fees required. If the Barry Crawford Trust is involved, they are openly suspicious that Mr. Northfield has survived this long, despite “Dr.” Baum’s lack of legitimate medical credentials and his suspension of conventional cancer treatment.

## Visiting Mr. Northfield

Mr. Northfield’s house is in a wealthy part of town. Any breaking and entering will end with police being called quickly, unless it is done under the cover of darkness. No one will answer the phone, nor will anyone answer the doorbell. The front door is locked and in excellent condition, so a Hard



**Locksmith** or **Hard Strength** roll with a penalty die will be needed to open it.

Those who enter the house find that it is dark, and that the electricity has been turned off. A strange smell comes from the hallway and is noticeable as soon as the investigators enter. It smells of mold and stagnant water.

A door to the left of the hall leads to a luxurious living room and dining room. The door to the right is locked; a **Locksmith** check, or **STR** check with a penalty die, will open it, leading into a small study/office. A hallway leads to a door which opens into a rather nice pantry and kitchen. A backdoor in the kitchen leads to a small walled in garden. A staircase in the main hall leads up to the bedrooms and bathrooms.

Anyone trying to discern the source of the moldy smell should make a **Spot Hidden** check. If he succeeds, they feel some water dripping on them. Looking up, the investigators will notice a large wet spot that is growing on the ceiling. It is possible that this is the source of the moldy smell, though they can't be sure until they search upstairs.

## Mr. Northfield's Study

The study is rather luxurious, and includes a large oak dresser and leather chairs. The walls are full of books on a variety of subjects. A small desktop computer sits on the desk along with a desk calendar. The drawers are locked, but which can be opened by a **STR** or **Locksmith** check. The key to the desk can also be found on Mr. Northfield.

Opening the desk reveals a variety of shipping documents. An **Accounting** roll can make sense of them. On a successful check, the investigators can determine that Mr. Northfield has been shipping large crates from small ports in northeastern Spain to the United States, and has been trying to cover his tracks to conceal this activity. According to the paperwork, whatever was being shipped is being stored at a warehouse on the docks. The address is noted on the invoices and an extra set of keys to the warehouse are in the same drawer. A checkbook will be found as well. The check registry contains several recent and rather large payments (in the 5 to 6 figure range) to a Dr. Enrique Baum for medical care, along with several equally large donations to Dr. Baum's health spa.

Firing up the computer will discover several batches of medical records. A **Medicine** or **Science (Biology)** roll will be needed to understand them. A successful check reveals that Mr. Northfield was indeed dying of cancer, and stopped conventional chemotherapy a few months ago. The later records nonetheless show that the cancer has not just stopped growing, but has been receding, which is medically impossible considering how much the cancer had spread. **SAN** loss is 0/1.

Checking the desk calendar notes that tomorrow's date has an entry for: "Final Treatment. 9 P.M. Health Spa." If the Keeper wants a tighter timeline, the "Final Treatment" can be scheduled for today's date instead.

## The Horror in the Bathtub

Checking upstairs will find that the master bedroom is empty, though the mold smell is stronger here. Inspecting the sheets will find them drenched in water or sweat. The bed looks like someone had recently tried sleeping here, despite the moldy, wet sheets. The door to the attached master bathroom is open and, as the investigators approach, the smell grows stronger.

Opening the dark bathroom reveals a soft, greenish glow coming from the tub. The curtains are closed, requiring flashlights to see. The floor has been flooded with stagnant moldy water and the bath is overflowing. More horrifying is Mr. Northfield's naked body sprawled in the tub. The strange mold is not only floating in the tub but clinging to his body. His skin is pale and drawn tight across his elderly body. Worse, he seems to have almost mutated, his head being flattened and misshapen, his hands and feet swollen, and his skin thick and batrachian. **SAN** Loss for this horrible sight is 1/1D6. A **Cthulhu Mythos** check suggest a resemblance to the Miri Nigri, semi-human denizens of the Pyrenees in service to the Great Old One, Chaugnar Faugn. (Readily available photographs reveal that this is not at all how Mr. Northfield normally appears).

Inspecting the body will provide several clues, though few pat answers. Under his fingernails can be found more of the mold, which is also the source of the very soft, green glow. A **Medicine** roll will also confirm that his bones have softened and flattened, but this does not appear to have been the cause of death itself. A **Science (Chemistry)** roll, or appropriate blood work, can confirm that the main cause of death seems to be an acute reaction to the toxic mold. A **Science (Biology or Botany)** roll fails to identify the green mold as any conventional sort of fungus.

## Looking into Dr. Baum

A background check can be done on Dr. Baum, using both local records and the Internet. Each successful **Library Use** roll can uncover one of the following pieces of information; a **Critical** roll should uncover everything:

- ✧ Dr. Baum immigrated to the United States 5 years ago from Spain.
- ✧ Originally from a remote region in the Pyrenees of northwest Spain, Dr. Baum graduated from the University of Madrid with a degree in philosophy, not medicine.
- ✧ Dr. Baum has written several articles and books in praise of alternative medicine. Many of the techniques he lauds have been medically or scientifically disproven.
- ✧ Several local, wealthy individuals are known to have gone to him for help with terminal or chronic illnesses.
- ✧ A news article from the Spain blames Dr. Baum's treatments for the death of a local woman, shortly before he immigrated.



✦ A blog post claims that a family of Baums belonged a cult that lived in the Pyrenees in the 1960s. After several mysterious disappearances of hikers, the cult was broken up and arrested by government officials. No sources are given for any of these claims.

## The Warehouse

The warehouse noted in Mr. Northfield's ledgers is easily found. It sits on a rather lonely dock, surrounded by empty warehouses that only serve as shelter for the city's homeless. The warehouse is locked, but the keys found in Northfield's desk can open the rather large padlock. Looking around, the investigators can also find a broken window that can be reached by a **Climb** roll. From there, an investigator can drop into the warehouse.

Inside are several long, wooden crates. Each is marked as arriving from Spain via Northfield's company. Opening the crates finds that they are packed with straw. Inside each of them is a tightly sealed vacuum container, containing what looks for all the world (and is) green, glowing dung mixed with the mold found on Mr. Northfield. A **Science (Biology)** roll will identify this as offal, seeming to be from some living creature, though which one they are from will remain a mystery. Analysis reveals chemical similarity to the peculiarities found in Mr. Northfield's blood.

## Dr. Baum's Health Spa

The health spa is a fancy building, with large frosted windows which let light in but make it hard to see inside. During the day, the investigators are greeted by a receptionist who will not (voluntarily) let the investigators in beyond the double doors that lead to the spa itself. She argues that the privacy of the patients is of the utmost concern of Dr. Baum. Nor will she let them into Dr. Baum's private laboratory and office, without a warrant or a death threat. Dr. Baum will be too busy with patients to meet with the investigators. Should they ask her about any special events tomorrow evening, she will say that Dr. Baum mentioned that he was having a very special charity event for some of his patients. She doesn't have any details, as she was not invited, and the doctor has told her little, saying he would take care of all the details.

If they arrive at night, during the "Final Treatment," the building will be well lit, and several cars are in the parking lot. However, the building itself is locked up tight. A **Locksmith** roll will be of little help here, as the door is designed in such a way to make such burglary difficult without the proper time and equipment. Optionally, if they walk around back, they will find that there is a window in the back alley plus a fire escape door. A **Locksmith** roll will get the door open, and a rock opens the back-alley window. The door opens into a hallway near the bathrooms, and the window right into Dr. Baum's private office.

## Dr. Baum's Office

This room serves not only as Dr. Baum's office but also his laboratory. A desk is here along with his personal computer, bookshelf, a few chairs, and a chemical laboratory. The personal computer is password protected but a successful **Computer Use** check hacks into it. A list of clients can be found on the computer, all of whom are suffering from a wide variety of fatal or chronic diseases. An **INT** roll determines that those who are showing signs of improvement are those who have made rather significant contributions, one of them being Mr. Northfield. Another document, titled "Final Ritual," is a list of all the clients who have shown signs of improvement. The bookshelf contains several copies of his books, medical texts as well as some less savory experimental notes, in Spanish. These take one hour to read and a successful **Read Spanish** check. If successful, the good Doctor's methods are laid bare: his magic ingredient is literally crap, only mutagenic crap from an unbelievably ancient entity known as Chaugnar Faugn. It corrupts and mutates those who serve it, the Miri Nigri, enabling them to live longer to tend to it while it slumbers for years or centuries between feedings. +1% is gained to **Cthulhu Mythos** at a cost of 1D3 **SAN**.

The laboratory has a sample of the glowing dung on hand, undergoing distillation. Distilled fluid dripping from an apparatus is being collected into a vat, and a centrifuge has been hard at work, concentrating the runoff into a glowing green syrup. Several hypodermic needle preparations with the concentrated syrup are also on hand. Injecting someone with this concentrate is rapidly fatal, as they mutate into a Miri Nigri within the space of several seconds and suffer a cardiac arrest from the strain after about five minutes.

## The Final Treatment

The Final Treatment is being carried out in the main health spa at a dramatically appropriate moment. This room is large, about the size of a school gym. Much of the room is made up of a massive, natural looking pool, surrounded by rocks and a variety of plants. The water is clear and kept warm. It is very pleasant looking. A walkway has been built out over it, which is where Dr. Baum will Gate in Chaugnar Faugn and awaken it.

There are 6 patients present. Beforehand, Dr. Baum will give a speech that while this "final treatment" may seem odd to them, it will ensure that they will be healthier than ever before. He will then inject each patient with the concentrated syrup from needles prepared ahead of time. They quickly devolve into writhing, dwarfed, amphibious Miri Nigri (**SAN** loss 1/1D6) and slip into the water, unaware that the strain will soon kill them. Dr. Baum will then walk onto the catwalk where he will start chanting. Dr. Baum will put all but one magic point into the spell. Each patient can only give one magic point, but each of them grants a +5% chance (for a total of +30%) of the spell succeeding.

Dr. Baum, if uninterrupted, stands a 51% chance of successfully opening a Gate and causing Chaugnar Faugn to waken, then arise. Investigators will have about 10 rounds to



stop the Gate from opening, either by killing Dr. Baum or otherwise blocking Chagnar Faugn's arrival. As the spell progresses, the pool starts to fill with the strange, luminescent green mold, and the water starts bubbling. On the tenth round, if the spell was successful, Chagnar Faugn will start breaking through.

If Chagnar Faugn comes through, the entire city is in deep trouble, as it is far beyond the capabilities of a group of investigators to stop. **SAN** loss for viewing Chagnar Faugn is 1D3/1D20. It ignores Baum and its faithful Miri Nigri, and instead chases down and vampirizes the investigators one by one.

An investigator might dive into the pool and, with a Swim check, reach the bottom and cast an Elder Sign on the bottom of the pool, which will cancel the Gate effect. Other, more extreme options are killing the patients to reduce the chance of the spell working, or lacing the building with explosives and dropping the entire thing on Chagnar Faugn. Dr. Baum, sadly, is a bit difficult to kill with gunfire or otherwise due to his Flesh Ward. The Keeper should entertain any clever idea that the investigators come up with.

## Rewards and Repercussions

Preventing Chagnar Faugn from arriving on this side of the Gate gains the investigators 1D10 **SAN**. If the investigators had to kill the patients to do so, the **SAN** reward is reduced to 1D6.

### DR. ENRIQUE BAUM, Champion of Alternative Medicine and the Great Old Ones

STR 50    CON 60    SIZ 50    INT 70    POW 80  
DEX 50    APP 40    EDU 75    SAN 0    HP 11

**Damage bonus:** none.

**Build:** 0

**Move:** 8

### ATTACKS

Hypodermic Needle 30% (15/6), damage 1D2. The victim is injected with concentrated runoff from Chagnar Faugn and transforms into one of its Miri Nigri servitors, before the mutation strain produces a cardiac arrest a few minutes later.

**Skills:** Cthulhu Mythos 50%, First Aid 50%, Medicine 40%, Natural World 60%, Occult 60%, Science (Biology) 45%, Swim 35%.

**Defenses:** none.

**Spells:** Call Chagnar Faugn, Create Gate.

**Nationality:** British

**Age:** 60s-ish

**Education:** MD and Bachelor's in Biology





## GRANNY'S TALES

**G**RANNY'S TALES (1975) IS A RARE, 12-VOLUME UNDERGROUND SEX COMIC PUBLISHED BY AN UNDERGROUND PRESS, PART HOMAGE TO R. CRUMB AND PART OUTRIGHT THEFT FROM *HIMMLER'S BIBLE*, *THE OERA LINDA*, WITH A HEALTHY DOSE OF PNAKOTIC AND ATLANTEAN LORE. IT WAS PUBLISHED AND PRODUCED BY COUNTERCULTURE LEGEND GARY SPELT, THROUGH HIS TERRYBONE COMMIX LINE. GRANNY'S TALES IS THE ONLY FULL-LENGTH SERIES THAT TERRYBONE EVER PRINTED.

SPELT IS REMEMBERED AS A WANNABE, NOT AN ACTUAL TALENT. HE WORKED AT THE SAN FRANCISCO COMIC BOOK COMPANY FOR A WHILE, WHERE HE CAME INTO CONTACT WITH MANY PEOPLE WHO WOULD GO ON TO BECOME FAMOUS. FEW OF THEM REMEMBER HIM FONDLY. ART SPIEGELMAN ONCE CALLED SPELT A "TALENTLESS A!@#%E," AND MOST WHO REMEMBER THE OLD DAYS CONCUR. SPELT IS THOUGHT TO HAVE DIED IN 1983, AN EARLY AIDS VICTIM.

*Granny's Tales* opens with Granny, a holdover from the 1940s, as the narrator in a sexually explicit riff on the romance comics of the 1950s. Very little is left unexplored, but there is, a heavy emphasis on bondage and pain. R. Crumb's art style is liberally poached for the first few episodes, but by the 6<sup>th</sup> book, Spelt's own leaden and joyless artwork prevails.

From the second comic onwards, it veers sharply towards occultism and hack-mysticism by way of matriarchy and mythology, two themes that feature heavily in its presumed source, the *Oera Linda*. Himmler's Bible is now believed to be a 19<sup>th</sup> Century forgery passing itself off as ancient Atlantean wisdom, but modern underground commix historians concur that Spelt treated its narrative as ironclad fact.

Granny becomes a matriarchal priestess of Freyja, the pagan German goddess of sex and beauty, who rides a chariot pulled by two cats. Granny and her fellow priestesses eschew celibacy—to put it mildly—and a succession of adventures ensue, with mighty warrior penises being brought into eventual subjugation by Granny and her cult.

Throughout the text, Spelt's voice as author becomes clearer, as he presents his views as unassailable psychically-inspired truths. Granny morphs from a 1940s holdover to a font of Atlantean wisdom, as vouchsafed by the oracle between her legs which, by the fourth comic, is an independent character in its own right.

Mythos scholars believe that Spelt must have obtained a copy of the Pnakotic Manuscripts at some point before writing the sixth comic. From the sixth comic on, Granny makes explicit references to the "first men" and their benefactors, the "Great Winged Ones," who Granny says sexually initiate the first men into the "Greatest Mysteries of Atlantis." In this version, the Great Winged Ones are shown as having female sexual characteristics, and create women to be their representatives on Earth.

The twelfth comic is the one that rarely surfaces at any price, and it is the one Mythos scholars most want. It features Elder Thing symbols, a detailed depiction of what may be Ulthar, and the Temple of the Elder Ones. This is also the comic in which Granny reaches sexual epiphany and is taken to paradise, along with her favorite male slave—who bears a striking resemblance to Spelt.

The 1975, 12 volume TerryBone edition is the only one known to exist. In the early 1990s, there was talk of a reprint, but that came to nothing when the San Francisco publishing house which allegedly was going to reprint it burnt down.

The first half-dozen books can be found at most of the larger sci-fi and comic book conventions, with the price varying from \$2 to \$10 per book. The next five are rarer and tend to be valued between \$15 to \$40 per book. The 12<sup>th</sup> volume almost never surfaces. Rumor has it that at least one collector has offered \$1,000 for a copy, with no takers.

According to the Internet, informed sources occasionally ascribe full sets of *Granny's Tales* to a variety of iconoclastic celebrities and counterculture figures, but all deny it. A full set once turned up on a reality television show set around a pawn shop, but the twelfth comic was revealed to be a fake. The would-be seller asked for \$10,000; he settled for \$30.

Though there are several online versions, none of the online versions include the twelfth comic. The cover of the twelfth comic can be found online, but not its contents.

YouTube personality and comic book reviewer NerdRoar, a.k.a. Simon Furnival of Birmingham, England, claimed to have a full set including the twelfth comic, and performed one of its magical rituals for his video feed. While this didn't stay on YouTube for very long, it can be found on other Darkweb sites. Watching it costs 1D2 SAN, and confers no Mythos knowledge or spells. Furnival's channel stopped updating soon afterward and investigators researching him (**Computer Use**) discover that he was involuntarily committed under the U.K. Mental Health Act after being found wandering naked



# GRANNY'S TALES

and dazed across the Yorkshire Moors. After his discharge, Furnival claimed to have no memory of the ritual or shooting the video, and his copy of *Granny's Tales* was nowhere to be found.

Although comic studies are becoming popular in academia, none of the institutions offering this kind of course possess a complete set of *Granny's Tales*. The University of California Santa Cruz has a mint collection of volumes 1 to 11, and its online library also includes a cover to volume 12. Its set is the best available in academia.

It's often rumored that one of the museums dedicated to comic book art, like the Billy Ireland Library and Museum at Ohio State University, either has or is seeking a complete set. However, like most rumors, confirmation is elusive, not least because those same rumors also claim that museums which would have no interest in American comic book art—London's Cartoon Museum, Belgium's Comic Strip Center—also seek it.

Mythos scholars observe that, if Spelt owned a copy of the Pnakotic Manuscript—whichever of the several editions that might have been—Spelt's copy must be out there somewhere. Every so often, a would-be wizard trying to impress his or her disciples says that he has Spelt's annotated and illustrated Manuscripts, but this never proves to be so. One currently prevailing theory is that Spelt's copy was burnt by his landlord after his death, along with Spelt's original art and other possessions.

## Granny's Tales

**Sanity Loss:** 1D2 SAN/1D4+1 SAN/1D8+1 SAN

**Cthulhu Mythos:** +2 percentiles

**Mythos Rating:** 10/15/25

**Study:** 4/8/12 weeks

**Spells Available:** None / Contact Elder Thing [Commune with My Goddess], Brew Love Potion / Contact Elder Thing, Anathema [Dreamlands only, Commandment of the Temple], Ascend the Stairs of Immortality [Sense Pathway to the Realm of Elder Beings], Brew Love Potion, Dream Vision, Enthrall Victim

A 1975, 12 volume sex comic published by an underground press, part homage to R. Crumb and part outright theft from *Himmler's Bible*, the *Oera Linda*, with a healthy dose of Pnakotic/Atlantean lore.

This collectible set is often found partially complete. For this reason, several different stats are given, as follows: Complete to 6<sup>th</sup> comic / Complete to 11<sup>th</sup> comic / Complete, all 12 comics. The condition of the comics does not impact the stats of the collection, although it may change the street value to a collector. The 12<sup>th</sup> comic is, when available at all, often found slightly damaged, though a mint copy may exist somewhere in someone's collection.





## THE TREADER OF THE STARS

LANGHAM CLIMBED ONTO THE CABIN AND FLUNG THE DOOR WIDE, BRINGING SOME MEASURE OF LIGHT TO THE DARK INTERIOR. A SMELL ASSAILED HIM AS HE ENTERED, LIKE SOUR MILK AND AMMONIA, LANGHAM NOTICING WITH DISTASTE THE UGLY STONE BAS-RELIEFS ON THE WALLS--DÉCOR PLUNDERED FROM SOME OLD FORBIDDEN TOMB. THE DARKNESS SHUDDERED BEFORE HIM, SCORES OF UNSEEN MEMBERS RAPPING THE WOODEN FLOOR. IN THE SHADOWS HE DISCERNED PALE, TWISTED LIMBS, THE TWINKLE OF MYRIAD SOULLESS EYES... THEN IN ONE INSANE INSTANT, THE DEITY WAS AMONG THEM. A TWISTED SNAKE-LIKE MASS OF RUBBERY GRAY FLESH, ITS LUMBERING, BLUE-VEINED FORM LAY COVERED IN EBONY TENTACLES AND BLACK, GLOBE-SHAPED EYES. THE EYES BLINKED AS ONE AS IT SURVEYED THE CROWD. IT HISSED AMMONIA AND A VERTICAL GASH FORMED IN ITS MIDDLE, SPLIT OPEN TO LET A CASCADE OF SLIME DROOL OUT. THE MAW WAS FILLED WITH JAGGED WHITE TEETH, A PURPLE TONGUE LOLLING IN THE BLACKNESS BEHIND IT. ACTING AS ITS MOUTH, IT HAD NO NEED TO SPEAK.

— Glynn Owen Barrass and Brian M. Sammons, “Fall of an Empire”

**T**HE TREADER OF THE STARS IS THE ONLY NAME THIS ALIEN ENTITY IS KNOWN BY, AND EVEN THAT IS A MISNOMER. THIS BEING DOES NOT COME FROM OUTER SPACE, BUT FROM A DIMENSION VASTLY DIFFERENT THAN OUR OWN. THE CONCEPT OF NAMING THINGS IS ALIEN TO IT, SO IT HAS NONE. IT WAS EARLY MAN THAT CHRISTENED THIS ABOMINATION THE TREADER OF THE STARS, AND SINCE IT DOESN'T CARE WHAT IT IS CALLED, THE NAME REMAINED.

The Treader's natural form is unknown to man, but it is incorporeal. Some believe it to be a spirit, others an unbound sentience, and still others believe it to be a form of living energy. Whatever the case, for the Treader to manifest itself in our reality, it must create a physical form to inhabit first. It does so by reforming dead organic matter into a desired vessel. To facilitate this, the Treader of Stars will telepathically contact those sensitive to such communication. It whispers secrets of the countless universes that it has traversed into their minds, and promises them untold power and unearthly delights if they swear fidelity to it and help it procure raw organic matter for its arrival. And while any “organic matter” will do, the building blocks that the Treader most likes to utilize are human ones.

Over the centuries, the Treader has built a sizable cult for itself, out of people willing to commit mass murder to bring forth their god whenever the Treader commands them to do so. Luckily, this multi-dimensional being often goes ages without giving Earth and humanity a second thought. When it does visit Earth, it does so more out of desire to experience our reality than with any plans to wipe out humanity or take over the Earth. Instead, it gets quickly bored with the dull

constraints of our realm and returns to whence it came, after having its fill of “fun.”

This horror's physical appearance, once created, is that of a repellent, misshapen, organic mass covered in tentacles, eyes, cancerous growths, and drooling mouths. By and large, it is gray in color, although other colors are present, as are the occasionally recognizable forms of some of the “matter” that went into creating it. A hand, leg, or even the face of a poor sacrificial victim will sometimes be witnessed in the Treader's gelatinous bulk.

### Clashing Realities

The Treader is so utterly alien that when it manifests itself, it imposes its will upon our reality. There is no way that this thing should exist here, and yet, it does. This battle of two realities surrounds the horror in a shimmering field that resembles an intense heat mirage. This tell-tale signature creates multiple shifting images of the Treader and bends light and gravity in chaotic ways. Should anyone attempt to fire a weapon or throw something at the Treader, there is always a 50% chance that the attack misses.

### Rend Reality

The most feared ability of The Treader is to reshape reality as it sees fit in a localized area. To do this, The Treader must match its Magic Points against the Magic Points of the target it wishes to alter and, if successful, spend 10 Magic Points. This way, the more the Treader reshapes our reality, the weaker its ability to do so becomes, until it rests. Success means that it can alter an object or lifeform as it sees fit. Disintegration, spontaneous combustion, turning a body inside out, or even



# THE TREADER OF THE STARS

shredding someone into slivers of flesh and bone are some of the Treader's favorite tactics, but if the mood strikes it, it can be far more creative. The likes of transmuting a person's blood into acid, morphing someone's bones into brittle glass, replacing a victim's lungs with sand, and more are all open to this horror.

## Look Through Time

Time is a universal constant in our reality but not where the Treader comes from. It can see through time with relative ease. Because past events are set in our reality, it can look back in time to see how these events played out, at the cost of 1 **Magic Point** per century. However, future events are not set and are in a chaotic state of flux, so seeing a potential future is far more difficult and costs it 10 **Magic Points** per year. However, the Treader can only see the events that happened or will happen in the area around its physical manifestation.

## Telepathy

While the Treader's physical form is covered with gaping, drooling mouths, it never physically speaks. It communicates through telepathy, which is effective with any intelligent creature. This mental violation is an unnerving process and costs 0/1 **SAN** each time that a telepathic conversation takes place. After 10 such mental communications, a human has become "accustomed" to it, and no longer runs the risk of losing **SAN**. The Treader can speak to all intelligent minds within a hundred yards of it that it wishes to.

## Teleportation

Just as time is an alien concept to the Treader, so is what we believe to be "space." The Treader can therefore impose its will upon our space/time and transport to anywhere in the world that it wishes. This process is costly, as it takes 20 **Magic Points** to move its physical bulk (a form it is not used to) through time and space, and takes 3 rounds of concentration.

## Continued Growth

After the Treader has created a physical vessel for itself, it can continue to absorb dead organic matter into its mass to increase its size, strength, constitution, and hit points.

## Spawning

Once the Treader has absorbed enough organic matter to reach **SIZ** 500, it can divide a portion of itself into a new, separate life form called a facet. These facets are smaller than the Treader and never increase in size or strength, but they have many of the Treader's abilities. All facets are connected telepathically to one another and to the Treader. The Treader will do this to send an emissary to a faraway land. So, while the Treader might be summoned in Arkham, it could send a part of itself to one of its cult outposts in India. This is if it can get there, for facets cannot teleport. There are no limits to the

number of facets that the Treader of Stars can create, if it has enough time and organic matter to consume.

To create a facet, the Treader must sacrifice 200 points of **SIZ**. In addition, it loses half its acquired **STR** and **CON** score in the process. This will affect the Treader's **Damage Bonus** and **Hit Points**, but such stats can be rebuilt by absorbing more dead, organic cells. This spawning takes a full day and is very tiring, so the Treader will only do it in a safe, secure location, usually attended by high ranking members of its cult that can assist it in promptly procuring more organic matter to replace what was been lost.

## Silver Vulnerability

For some unknown reason, silver is the only element in our reality that the Treader cannot transmute, transform, or manipulate in any way. Maybe it's because of its legendary "purity," but more likely it's one of two reasons. Either silver is so alien to the Treader that it just can't figure it out, or it may also exist in whatever dimension the Treader comes from, and being a part of its reality, the Treader's reality warping effects won't work on it.

## Attacks

The Treader can either slap or grab with 1D6 of its long, rubbery tentacles per round. If it has already grappled a victim, it can also draw one such victim to one of its many mouths and begin consuming him. This does 5 points of **CON** damage per round, and once a victim's **CON** hits 0, the target has been absorbed into the Treader's mass. Additionally, the Treader can perform its **Rend Reality** attack. This powerful ability has a range of 100 feet and requires its total concentration, so the Treader cannot take any other action during that round.

**STR** \*      **CON** \*      **SIZ** \*\*      **INT** 250      **POW** 200  
**DEX** 100/30\*\*\*      **HP** varies

**Damage bonus:** varies

**Build:** varies

**Move:** 4

\* The scores for these stats equal half of the total of those sacrificed to give the Treader physical form. For example, if only three bodies were sacrificed (and usually it is much more) that had **STRs** of 50, 80, and 70, the Treader would begin with a **STR** of 100 ( $50+80+70 = 200/2 = 100$ ). As the Treader absorbs more people, it adds half of the new victim's **STR** and **CON** to its existing score. This will, of course, affect The Treader's **Hit Points**.

\*\* The Treader's **SIZ** equals the **SIZ** of all life that it has absorbed. It reduces life to raw organic matter, but doesn't waste an ounce.

\*\*\* The Treader is quick minded, so if it wishes to perform a mental task, spell, or use its **Rend Reality** ability, it acts with a 100 **DEX**. However, it is physically sluggish, and so performs any physical action, such as attacking with a tentacle grab, at **DEX** 30.

### ATTACKS

**Rend Reality** 100% (50/20), damage special, see text.

**Tentacle Smack** (1D6 per round) 60% (30/12), damage 1D6 + db.

**Tentacle Grab** (1D6 per round) 50% (25/10), damage grapple and hold for consume.



# ASPIRATIONS

Consume 100% (50/20) once held, damage 5 points of CON per round

**Armor:** None, but physical attacks do minimum damage; 1 point per damage die rolled. The Treader cannot be impaled, and it regenerates 10 Hit Points per round. Fire affects in normally, but it can regenerate such damage. The exception to this is any wounds created by silver items; these not only affect it normally, but it cannot regenerate the damage.

**Spells:** Knows thousands of spells from across an untold number of dimensions.

**Sanity Loss:** Seeing the Treader of the Stars' physical manifestation costs 1D8/1D20 Sanity Points.

## FACET OF THE TREADER OF STARS

These are small, but otherwise identical looking spawn of the Treader of the Stars. They are in direct telepathic command with each other and with their progenitor. What one sees, they all see, and when one speaks, it is the Treader of Stars speaking through its facet. These hellish offspring have some of the special abilities of the original Treader such as Clashing Realities, Rend Reality, Look Through Time, and Telepathy. They also share their progenitor's silver vulnerability. Lastly, while they have many gnashing mouths covering their surface and can consume victims, they do not increase in mass once spawned, and cannot create offspring of their own.

STR 100 CON 100 SIZ 200 INT 250 POW 100  
DEX 100/30\*

**Damage bonus:** +3D6

**Build:** 4

**Move:** 4

\* The Facets are quick minded, so if one wishes to perform a mental task, spell, or use its Rend Reality ability, it acts with a 100 DEX. However, they are physically sluggish and so perform any physical action, such as attacking with a tentacle grab, at DEX 30.

## ATTACKS

Rend Reality 100% (50/20), damage special, see text

Tentacle Smack (1D6 per round) 50% (25/10), damage 1D6 + db

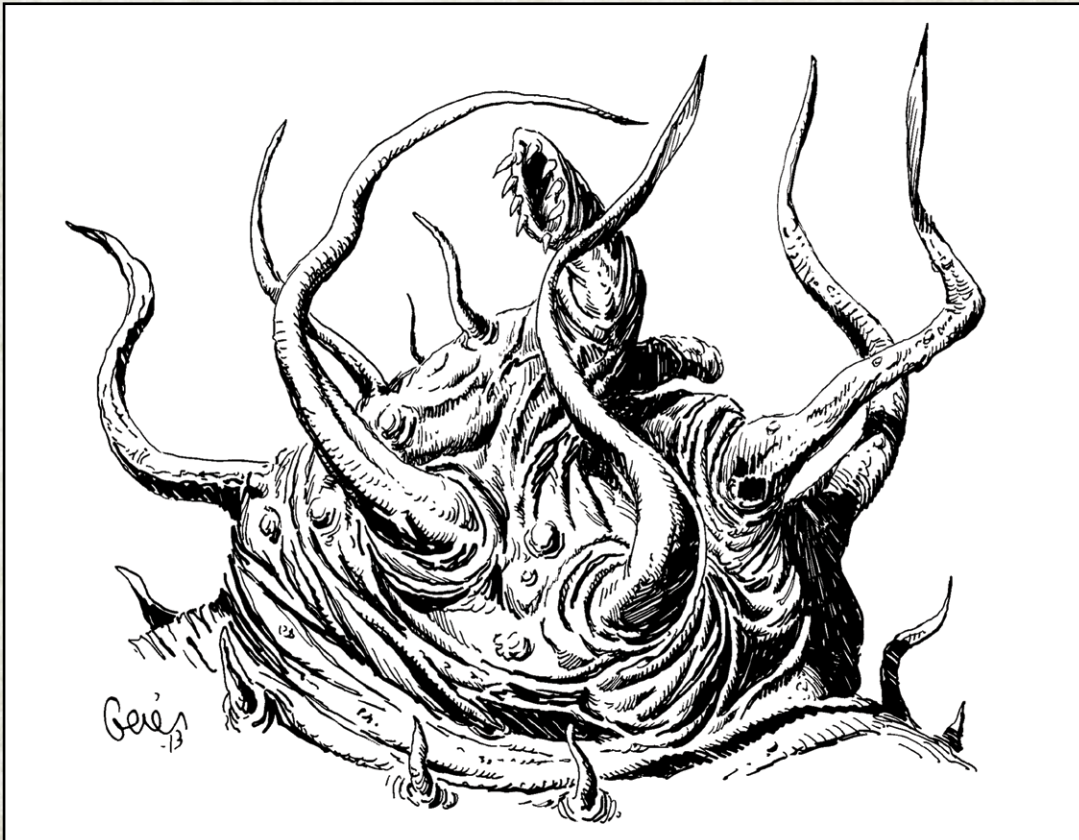
Tentacle Grab (1D6 per round) 40% (20/8), damage grapple and hold for consume

Consume 100% (50/20) once held, damage 5 points of CON per round.

**Defenses:** None, but physical attacks do minimum damage; 1 point per damage die rolled. A Facet cannot be impaled, and it regenerates 5 Hit Points per round. Fire affects in normally, but it can regenerate such damage. The exception to this is any wound created by silver; these not only affect it normally, but it cannot regenerate the damage.

**Spells:** Knows the same spells that the Treader of the Stars knows, so all of them.

**Sanity Loss:** Seeing a Facet of the Treader of the Stars costs 1/1D10 Sanity Points.





# URBAN PENTIMENTO

**T**HE CITY WHERE THIS STORY TAKES PLACE IS QUITE UNLIKE THE REAL ONE, AND EXISTS ONLY IN THE LAND OF THE IMAGINATION. I MADE REFERENCE TO NUMEROUS BOOKS IN TOURING AND WRITING ABOUT THESE DREAM EXCURSIONS, WHICH ARE BECOMING A DAILY INFATUATION OF MINE.”

-Inoue Masahiko, “Night Voices, Night Journeys” (Translated by Edward Lipsett).

COMMON SENSE WOULD TELL US THAT CITIES LIKE ARKHAM, DUNWICH, KINGSPORT, AND INNSMOUTH ARE BUT A FEW PLACES THAT HAVE BEEN TAINTED BY THE ELDRITCH COSMIC HORRORS, WHAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW AS THE CTHULHU MYTHOS, AND THAT EVERYWHERE ELSE OUTSIDE THESE CURSED REGIONS IS A SAFE HARBOR FOR HUMANS TO FROLIC UNSCATHED BY THE SEETHING MADNESS OF ANCIENT THINGS. SEEMINGLY, OUR FRAGILE MINDS AND SOULS CANNOT, OR WILL NOT, ACKNOWLEDGE THE UBIQUITY OF THESE THINGS THAT HIDE IN THE SHADOWS.

We created religions to give meaning to the universal chaos, and we make elaborate cognitive constructs to deny the existence of the Great Old Ones who sit on the brink of humanity’s end. So common sense is not a sense at all, but a clever veil that our primitive ancestors evolved to cover their primordial brains and souls from the forbidden knowledge of the universe. So maybe a better way to look at places like Arkham and Dunwich is to see them as merely places where that unconscious blindfold has slipped, and allowed humans to peek at the abominations and the horrible universal secrets that were never meant to be known.

Unsu is another place in the world where the crack in the conscious veil allowed the horrible things to permeate. A small ward tucked in the eastern shores of Hiroshima prefecture of Japan, Unsu is isolated from surrounding cities by a mountain range and forested area. Unsu is a place that has been forgotten by most of Japan, and is only known to most as a small, isolated town behind the shadow of a mountain.

The current Unsu sits on top of an older city that existed before World War II. During the war, the old Unsu faced a tragic end, decimated by something that melted the brick buildings and scorched the ground. Some people believe that it was caused by fallout from the atomic bomb that struck nearby Hiroshima, or other U.S. bombing raids that came at the end of the war. Secretly, and kept under a code of silence, others from the old defunct military regime and government know that the Imperial Japanese Military bombed its own people. The few people who survived are aware of the true story, a dark secret that the government has long forgotten and never wishes to remember—Unit 808.

After World War II, Hiroshima prefecture was reconstructed from the post-atomic ruins in 1945. During this time, Unsu was also rebuilt over the remains of the old city and its people. Completed in 1955 the Unsu ward slowly repopulated, mostly from Japanese citizens outside the area.

The survivors from the old city could not find their place in the new ward, and were became social outcasts.

## Unsu City

*“It is a mistake to fancy that horror is associated inextricably with darkness, silence, and solitude. I found it in the glare of mid-afternoon, in the clangour of a metropolis, and in the teeming midst of a shabby and commonplace rooming-house with a prosaic landlady and two stalwart men by my side.”*

-H.P. Lovecraft “Cool Air”

Modern-day Unsu is a small town, but has many modern features because of the Hiroshima region’s post-war reconstruction. Many of the roads are wide and spacious, unlike other cities in Japan, which have cramped quarters and roadways. The few buildings in the city have very modern and futuristic styles, with mirrored windows and sharp, angular architecture. Surrounding the city to west is a forest that blankets high into the Oniyama Mountains and isolates Unsu from the rest of Hiroshima proper. A beach cove can be found on the eastern end of Unsu, and a fishing boat dock on the north end.

Getting to Unsu can be tricky. A road from Hiroshima leads into the city from the southwestern end of the mountains, and passes over some of the more treacherous parts known to have periodic landslides during the rainy winter season. The other way to get into Unsu is to use the old transit system, the Bingo railway, which cuts through a good portion of the Oniyama mountains on the northern end. A train arrives every three hours. The railway pre-dates the city and was part of the secret railway system that transported the military secrets, supplies, and personnel during World War II.

The current town is part resort and part corporate busi-



ness center. Because of the secluded nature of the area, some people use it as a short getaway from the busy Hiroshima cosmopolitan area. Because of the poor roadways and transit, most business are more committed to e-commerce instead of actual delivery or manufacturing of goods. There is a small community college that has nurtured the growth of an artists' community. The locals can best be described, in general, as pleasant but somewhat snobby. A good Credit Rating will go far with investigators who wish to bypass social barriers.

## Places of Interest

### Blue Carp Hospital

This is a three-story structure with a west and east wing on each level. There are also two lower basement levels. Each of the hospital floors has been given a name instead of a number, since there is a superstitious fear of numbers among the hospital's board members.

The hospital sits upon the ruined Unit 808's Central Lab area, which was the focal point of the great disaster that happened to Unsu. Some of the staff members have experienced unexplained happenings at the hospital that cannot be explained without having one's sanity questioned. These events have included seeing soldiers from World War II pacing up and down the halls, warning people that they are in a restricted area and must show ID. In the blink of an eye, these apparitions disappear, leaving staff startled in confusion.

The hospital quietly employs some of the residents from the undercity, called the Shiro People because of their unsightly, deformed albino appearance, but restricts their positions away from the public. They are usually kept working in the basement levels of the hospital.

There is a hidden passageway on the lowest basement level, in the generator room, that leads to the old, ruined city underneath and to the Unit 808 Central Lab area. The Shiro People employees use this passage to get home, and deliver food or equipment to the thing in the Central Lab area.

The Chief Hospital Administrator, Dr. Hiroki Shimizu, is under the thrall of a thing in the Central Lab and communicates with it through a psychic link that uses small bodies of water as a transmitter. As a result, some of his personal staff think that he is losing his mind, as they will walk in on him while he is communicating with his glass of water, goldfish aquarium, or toilet. His medical staff nonetheless feel that he is an administrative genius at finding cost effective ways to treat people, ways that have led some pharmaceutical companies to patent some his innovations.

### Bol Tech Innovations

This German company, specializing in computer platforms related to prospective, investment-related decision making, has a satellite office in Unsu's west end. The office manager, Paul Steiner, has been tasked by his superiors in Hamburg to search the undercity for remnant technology left behind by Unit 808. One of the founders of Bol Tech Innovations had been a German officer during World War II, and was involved in a technology exchange between Japan and Germany. The founder had moved a large object, apparently made of pure gold, from Africa to Unsu during the war. The founder has been dead for many decades, but his plans live on.

### Unsu City College

Some faculty in the anthropology department are engaged in researching the Shiro People. These researchers have a tendency of going missing, never to be seen again.

### Our Lady of the Stars

A pseudo-Christian church at one of the entrances to the undercity. While Unsu, like many Japanese wards, is saturated with Buddhist and Shinto temples, there is a small, thriving, pseudo-Christian community within the Shiro People's community. Supposedly founded by either a Dutch or a Portuguese missionary, this church has unusual practices and members seem unusually fascinated with the relationship of the Abrahamic religions with other, pre-Christian godheads, like the Philistine Dagon. Those who successfully infiltrate the church or who gain the trust of one of the Shiro People may learn that they believe (purely as an article of faith, of course) that the resurrected Jesus lives in the ruins of the old Unit 808 Central Lab, and has saved the world. According to this "myth," Unsu was spared from the destruction of Hiroshima by this resurrected Jesus, and now Jesus needs help to save another world far, far away. The Shiro people will point to the night sky, more specifically towards Ursa Major.

## The Undercity

There are only three known entrances into the undercity, but there are several less-known ways as well (e.g., Blue Carp Hospital's sub-basement). The undercity gives the appearance of a dark, foreboding cave, with buildings and residential housing looking like melted stone fixtures in the darkness covered by the city above.

During the day, the city seems barren and inhospitable. The people that live there now are the descendants of the survivors of the horror that happened ages ago at the end of World War II, the Shiro People. The Shiro People are odd looking, with pale skin and bleached white hair. Some outsiders may think they are some grotesque derivative of Caucasian or European stock, but they would be wrong. Some have open sores or healed facial cavities with sagging skin. Dark circles and thick drooping bags under their eyes are a common feature, that makes their eyes seem to bulge



out. Despite their unsightly appearance, these people are soft spoken and polite. Their posture is almost in a perpetually bowed position, as if greeting people who are not there.

## Undercity Yakuza

At night, the undercity is a den of vice, catering to those with money and a taste for the depraved, overseen by a local Yakuza lord named Kenji Aoki. Aoki's main objective is to keep order and maintain the segregation of the people living above and the Shiro People living in the undercity. He understands some of his men and leaders are irrevocably insane and tainted by the sin of the undercity's past, but Aoki actively works with the police department in Unsu to keep things under control. During the day, no illegal operations are run. But at night, the undercity is a free-for-all of vice and depravity, with illicit drugs, prostitution, human trafficking, gambling, and black-market trade in abundance. At night, people go in to find sin, and some never return. The gang monitors the traffic through the entrances into the undercity, and will turn people away who they feel are too vulnerable and who would get in over their heads.

## Undercity Sex and Drug Houses

Throughout the undercity, there are places to fulfill your sexual fantasies for money, no matter your orientation or preference. These places only operate at night. If a patron goes to one during the day, he will find them empty (if a Shiro Person house) or only the skeletal remains of the people who lived at Unit 808 long ago. The locals know that the safest places to go to are the ones where "service" is provided by the Shiro People.

At night, a variety of sex workers, seeming to be normal, non-Shiro Person Japanese, ply their trade. Unfortunately for their patrons, these all work from houses caught in a temporal shift, there at night and gone in the morning. In these houses, the sex workers lure the depraved to spend the night indulging their whims in both drugs and sex, only to find themselves transported at dawn to the past, to participate in the doom that came to Unsu. Curious friends searching for them, if lucky, will only find their skeletal remains, mixed in with those of others, in the days afterwards. Their bones will be inexplicably old and brittle from the passage of time, though still identifiable through DNA or dental records (SAN loss 1/1D6).



## The South Unit 808 Warehouse

What is left of this warehouse (in modern times) consists of several large cargo containers, covered in melted brick and mortar. Inside the containers is a thick gray green viscous fluid, holding several thousand organic human simulacrum which are used by the Immortals in the Central Lab area. At the top of the cargo containers is hatch that can only be easily opened from inside.

The thing in the Unit 808 Central Lab area originally helped the Japanese Imperial Army create these organic simulacrum in World War II, to be used as remotely-controlled soldiers. Nowadays, the simulacra may be recognizable as persons seen around Unsu proper, as the Immortals operate them to carry out missions both in Unsu and throughout Japan.



# ASPIRATIONS

## Unit 808 Central Lab

Despite the destruction of the facility and the surrounding city, this lab stayed intact. Located directly under the Blue Carp Hospital, it was the focal point of all Unit 808 research. The lab is kept up and run by an Elder Thing and the Imperial Army researchers that have worked with it since World War II. These have been dubbed the Immortals by the locals.

The Elder Thing, referred to above as “the thing,” had used a device to transport itself to Earth from its planet somewhere in the Ursa Major system, designated by Imperial Japanese scientists as XR-2034. The intentions of the Elder Thing were to contact other Elder Things on Earth for their help with the doom coming to its planet. Unfortunately, traveling in a time and space distortion machine is unpredictable, and it ended up arriving on Earth, damaged, during the time that the infamous Imperial Japanese Unit 731, Japan’s secret research unit, was discovering the Earth Elder Things’ counterpart machine, near the South Pole.

Unit 731 created Unit 808 as a sub-unit to specifically research the South Pole machine and, soon after the Elder Thing’s arrival, carry out the Elder Thing’s plans. In return for their assistance, the Elder Thing helped the Japanese advance their technology. The Elder Thing help design the organic simulacra as a means of life extension, transferring the psyches of select scientists into them. Those scientists became the Immortals.

In the center of the room is a large, solid gold device that the Elder Thing uses to help transmit the Immortals psychic essence to the simulacra. The Elder Thing had arranged for its discovery and transfer to the Central Lab from Africa, where an ancient primordial civilization had created it, aeons ago, from communications with the Earth Elder things prior to their own devastation from the shoggoth uprising.

As of now, the Elder Thing labors away deep in the undercity, aided by the Immortals. Sadly, its time and space distortion machine is still not repaired, and those in the wrong part of the undercity, at the wrong time, find themselves shunted back in time to the just before the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. While the Elder Thing could shield much of Unsu from the effects of the blast, the further damage to, and fallout from, its time and space distortion machine was sadly unavoidable.





# THE BAY OF NOUADHIBOU

**A** SHIP GRAVEYARD IN MAURETANIA, WEST AFRICA, HOME TO OVER 300 WRECKS, IS KNOWN TO BE A DEEP ONE HAUNT, BUT WHY ARE THE FISH MEN SO EAGER TO ACQUIRE METEORITES FOUND IN THE SAHARA DESERT?

## Overview

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania in West Africa is the eleventh largest country on the continent, and one of the poorest. Bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the West, Morocco and the Western Sahara to the north, Algeria to the northeast, Mali to the east and southeast, and Senegal to the southwest, Mauritania is mainly desert, forcing its 3.5 million people to live in the slightly wetter south and along the coast.

Its political history since winning independence from the French in 1960 consists of a string of authoritarian rulers, military juntas, and a few, brief periods of democratic rule plagued with human rights abuses and threats from the military. Arab nationalism and cults of personality regularly hold sway. The current government is civilian, although Mauritania's military continues to exercise significant power behind the scenes.

Mauritania is home to a mix of Moors, former slaves, descendants of slaves and various West African ethnic groups. Several dialects are spoken, but a foreigner can get by on modern Arabic and French. Though some English is spoken here, a monoglot English speaker will find it tough going. Nearly all Mauritians are strict Sunni Muslims, and atheism is punishable by death.

Dahklet Nouadhibou is an administrative division on the northwestern coast of the country, and most of the people living in that division can be found in the port city of Nouadhibou. Much of the division is desert, and directly to its north is the great Sahara.

The port is Mauritania's economic powerhouse, such as it is, and is the second largest city in the country. There are national road and rail connections here, as well as an airport. Nouadhibou's main economic activity is fishing, though in recent years that has come under threat. Fishing fleets from all over the world sit a few miles offshore, depleting stocks and forcing local fisherman to go further out to sea, risking their lives in small boats unsuited for deep water fishing.

Nouadhibou is also a departure point for African migrants seeking a better life elsewhere. They make their way to Europe via the Canary Islands, a desperate trek that sometimes ends in death.

Nouadhibou features one of the largest ship graveyards in the world. Shipowners eager to get rid of their decaying assets at little or no cost take advantage of corrupt government officials and lax enforcement, and dump their hulks in the Bay. Over three hundred derelicts have been beached at Nouadhibou, with more arriving each year. There they rot until the sea claims them.

Deep one activity has increased markedly in Nouadhibou since 2000. There has always been a deep one presence here; those delving deep into French colonial records can uncover reports stretching back to the early 1900s. At that time, the deep ones and their human hybrids were mainly involved in the slave trade. It was believed that this connection was broken in 1912 with the defeat of the Blue Sultan's forces at the Battle of Sidi Bou Othman, but this proved to be wishful thinking.

The French colonial administrator, Paul-Henry Weiss, left the best records and his papers are now held at the Universite de Haute-Alsace. He pursued deep one cults, which he describes as "a pernicious and cruel tribal band of slavers," from the 1940s to Mauritania's independence in 1960. His papers, if studied, can impart +2% to **Cthulhu Mythos** (relating to deep one activity in Mauritania), possess a Mythos Rating 10, but no spells are available, for a cost of 1D3 SAN.

However, during the modern era of military coups and squabbling civilian governments, the deep ones have been ignored, and continued their long-term business of slave running. Slavery was not a criminal offense in Mauritania until 2007 and even now its effects are felt.

When Mauretanian deep one activity comes to the attention of international law enforcement, it is usually because of terrorism. Islamic militants are very active in the region, although it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between militants and bandits holding hostages for ransom. Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda, and ISIS all have outposts in the Mauretanian desert. deep one slaving groups tend to fare poorly in this conflict; terrorists often clash with the Mauretanian army and other military forces, and deep one proxies caught in the middle end up dead.

Human rights organizations and Mauretanian anti-slavery groups have noted increased activity in the Bay, centered on the ship graveyard. Details are sketchy, but deep one interest seems focused on the derelicts, where they are building





up what can only be described as a militant cult following. Blogger Kamara Ould Mohamed, before his execution for blasphemy in 2013, left the most detailed description of this modern trend and his articles can still be found online. Written in Arabic interspersed with French, these confer +3% Mythos, possess a Mythos Rating 15, and confer no spells at a cost of 1D3 SAN. Kamara describes an “aggressive and dangerous bandit group” with established strongholds on several derelict ships. Heavily armed, this group engages in people smuggling and hostage taking on a small scale, but is also heavily involved in the meteorite trade in Nouadhibou, for reasons Kamara was unable to explain.

The so-called Sahara Gold Rush of Meteorites began in the 1990s and is popularly thought to be over. It began when Bedouins and itinerants familiar with the Sahara realized that collectors would pay good money for what they thought were silly little rocks. The desert perfectly preserved meteorite specimens and over tens of thousands of years, a meteorite bounty had built up. Anyone could bring home camel-loads of the stuff and many did. When the old rock falls began running low on specimens, people eagerly tracked new meteorite falls, whether in the desert or, in one memorable strike, through the roof of a doctor’s office.

North West African (NWA) meteorites swamped the global market, and before long, amateur hunters were driven out of the business by organized groups, chief among them those backed by the deep ones out in the Bay. Thanks to

their ruthless competition, most other meteorite hunters in Nouadhibou have left the trade.

The deep one smugglers seem to have abandoned slave trading almost completely as of late, to build up their meteorite business. However, because terrorists and the military also operate in the desert, the deep ones are reluctant to go after these falls themselves, preferring to let others act for them. Unlike previous meteorite hunters, the deep ones are more interested in recent strikes than historic ones, and they pay over and above the going rate.

Why? Because the deep ones are busily bringing Cthulhu’s dead child back to R’lyeh.

When Cthulhu and the Star-Spawn came to Earth, many millennia ago, they left behind the body of Cthulhu’s spawn by Sk’tai, killed when torn from its progenitor’s womb and ripped to pieces. It is the corpse of that same progeny, Cthulhu cultists claim, that will eventually be used to unlock the secrets of R’lyeh and bring that sunken city to the surface once more.

The corpse has been drifting through star-stuff for countless years, slowly making its way to Earth. Its pieces do not fall in the Sahara alone, but the vast desert is one of the places where parts of it can be found. The deep ones must piece through many otherwise worthless (to them) rocks to get what they want, but they don’t care. If just one meteorite in a thousand contains a shred of Sk’tai’s spawn, it is worth it to them to look for it.



# THE BAY OF NOUADHIBOU

So far, in all their searches, three Sahara meteorites have contained that precious material, making the Nouadhibou outpost one of their more successful meteorite collection operations. Every time another meteorite falls, they search for more.

## Meteorite Shard

Superficially resembles a blend of rock and metal of varying size, but possession of a shard links the holder directly to Great Cthulhu's avatar, Chorazin. This causes extremely troubling dreams, and the loss of 1D2/1D6 SAN per night, until the meteorite is somehow disposed of. If kept long enough for the owner to go insane, the owner's only thought is to fling himself into the ocean, holding the meteorite.

### TYPICAL METEORITE HUNTER/DEEP ONE HYBRID

STR 55    CON 60    SIZ 55    INT 60    POW 55  
DEX 55    APP 30    EDU 35    SAN 0    HP 13

**Damage bonus:** none

**Build:** 0

**Move:** 8

### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 60% (30/12), damage 1D3+db. Always carries combat knife (damage 1D4+2)

Firearms (Handgun) 55% (27/11), usually war surplus or homemade .9mm knock-off (damage 1D10)

Firearms (Rifle) 45% (22/9), usually war surplus or homemade AK-47 knock-off (damage 2d6+1)

**Skills:** Appraise 20%, Credit Rating 10%, Cthulhu Mythos 03%, Drive Auto 35%, Dodge 35%, Intimidate 25%, Listen 40%, Navigation 45%, Natural World 45%, Occult 35%, Own Language (Arabic) 35%, Pilot Boat 25%, Ride 35%, Science (Meteorology) 15%, Spot Hidden 60%, Stealth 25%, Survival (Sea) 40%, Swim 40%.

**Defenses:** none above base.

**Nationality:** West African

**Age:** teens to mid-20s

**Education:** Minimal, with some combat experience.

**Spells:** None, though an atypical Hunter with POW of 70 or more may know one spell, usually Shriveling.

**Notes:** Disheveled, desperate, and dangerous, these cultists know that if they don't deliver, their masters will sacrifice them at one of their obscene revels.

### TYPICAL DEEP ONES

STR 70    CON 55    SIZ 90    INT 55    POW 55  
DEX 55    HP 14

**Damage bonus:** +1D4

**Build:** 4

**Move:** 8 or 10 (swimming)

### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 60% (20/8), damage 1D6+db (claws)

Fighting (Brawl) 25%, damage 1D10+db (bite, only used underwater)

**Skills:** Hide in Water 45%, Listen 30%, Sneak in Water 45%, Spot Hidden 30%

**Defenses:** 1-point skin and scales

**Spells:** None. An atypical deep one with a POW of 70 or more knows 1D4 spells, usually Shriveling and various Contact rituals.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1D6





## THE LUMBER BARONS BALL

**H**ERE WE ARE AGAIN, WONDERFUL FANS! MY NAME IS BRIAN, AND I'VE BEEN A CARTOONIST SINCE 2009. TWO YEARS AGO, I KICKSTARTED *CARCOSA*, MY COSMIC HORROR ADVENTURE WEBCOMIC SET IN THE 1920S, DONE IN THE STYLE OF COMICS FROM THAT ERA. IT FOLLOWS THE "ROYAL" FAMILY OF ALEXANDER "AV" MANN, A REAL-LIFE LUMBER BARON, TITAN OF INDUSTRY, AND PHILANTHROPIST IN THE LAKESIDE TOWN OF MUSKEGON, MI, AS THEY STRUGGLE TO REASSERT THEIR INFLUENCE ON THEIR QUICKLY CHANGING CITY. HOWEVER, A SERIES OF SUPERNATURAL ENCOUNTERS AND STRANGE VISITORS TO THEIR PALATIAL HOME LEAVES THEM WONDERING HOW MUCH OF WHAT THEY'RE SEEING IS REAL, OR IS JUST IN THEIR MINDS....

The Kickstarter for the first book was a huge success! Thank you! Now, the story continues in the second and final book of the series, *The Masquerade Ball*. Cassilda has settled into everyday life, but is plagued by unsettling nightmares. When the annual lumber barons' ball is held, Cassilda is left wondering just how far she's willing to go to end the nightmares once and for all.

The first *Carcosa* book was successfully Kickstarted last year, and thanks to backers, it looks incredible. I want to print the second book with the same quality level as the first, if not higher.

*Carcosa* is full-color and digitally painted. Book 2 was even more challenging than the first—I wanted very much to turn the horror convention of darkness and shadow on its head. Many of *The Masquerade Ball's* scares come from staring into the dazzling displays and excesses of the Gilded Age of American History.

I will be working with the same printing professionals who helped me translate the comics that made up *Book 1* from the screen to the printed page. There are lots of details and subtle colors that I want to make sure the book captures. Plus, these guys are fanatics! Really, truly, like insane in their love for this project. They've definitely seen the sign.

## Background

*Carcosa: Book 1* was a mundane enough affair for the cosmic horror genre, but with a loyal group of followers ensuring funding within 24 hours, *Book 2* is now a Kickstarter staff pick and promises to reach a much bigger group of people. It's already blown through 6 stretch goals: Yellow Sign Stickers for every backer; the lost Doves Type from Cobden Sanderson; Yellow Sign lapel pins for all physical reward backers; an embossed Yellow Sign on the cover of every physical copy; King in Yellow idols (available as an add-on); and Pallid Masks (available as an add-on).

In short, Book 2 promises to be a mass-produced King in Yellow cultist maker, and it's still got three days to hit even more awesome stretch goals! Best of all, since everything is written and sourced already, Brian Carr, its author, just has to send the files to the printer, and it'll be printing and shipping within a week of the Kickstarter ending.

## Involving the Investigators

If you're using the Barry Crawford Trust, Bob Tyler would contact the investigators, as the Trust is concerned that the webcomic and soon to be funded Kickstarter rewards are being used to disseminate Mythos knowledge to the masses. The Trust would like the webcomic taken down, the Kickstarter cancelled, the Doves Type font looked into (how was it recreated? Why was the original thrown into the Thames a century ago by its creator?), and find out if any of the Stretch Goals need to be "neutralized?"

Other ways to involve the investigators can be as simple as the fact that it's a Kickstarter Staff Pick—What's better than Kickstarter sending you a list of projects you should consider backing, and a picture of a Yellow Sign along with it? A concerned friend/family member route could work easily enough—maybe someone has disappeared, and a quick investigation of their home reveals that he followed the webcomic online (and had read the teaser sample of *Book 2* already, as its free online).



## Initial Researching, Internet Research

- ✧ Kickstarter or Kicktraq are both easy enough to use without a **Computer Use** check, and turn up both projects readily enough, Brian Carr's name, and the Muskegon, MI location, along with a brief blurb of him being a graphic artist. He does not have Twitter, Facebook, or other social media sites linked to his Kickstarter. It also shows that he's backed 3 music projects on Kickstarter: Picketape, a guitar effects pedal, and a portable guitar stand.
- ✧ His webcomic is also easy enough to find online. *Carcosa: Book 1* was completed a couple years ago and has a fair-sized online following. Per his website, *Carcosa: Book 2* was completed roughly a month ago, right before the Kickstarter was launched, and will be posted online the same day physical copies begin to ship to backers. From his Carcosa webcomic's page, it's easy enough to find some examples of his past work—a couple of less successful webcomics with a rougher style, updated much more infrequently, as well as a few panels of what will be his next online comic: *The Vale of Pnath*.
- ✧ A successful **Computer Use** check turns up Brian Carr's social media profiles (if they already looked at Kickstarter). His Twitter account is mainly used to tweet about his latest Kickstarter and his webcomic. His Facebook is private, and the profile picture is of the main characters in *Carcosa: Book 1*.
- ✧ A hard **Computer Use** check (or a success with the above check if they specifically mention searching for "photos of Brian" on Facebook) turns up photos in which his friends have tagged him, and their profiles aren't as private, allowing the investigators to get a picture of him.
- ✧ A second **Computer Use** check will also turn up a few fairly mundane articles as well. These include from a class graduation photo on the Muskegon Public Schools website (one can get an idea of just how tall Brian is, as he towers over his classmates in this 2006 photo) to a few gigs, each time with a different local band.
- ✧ Lastly, one can find an event page and blog for the Muskegon High School drama club, called Masques, and the event page lists a production of *Carcosa*, adapted by the students from Brian's "masterful" comic, and the blog for the Masques Dramatic Club detailing, over a period of several months, their process of adapting the webcomic, set design, and the masks they're making for it. One photo shows liter-

### *Carcosa: Book 1*

**Sanity Loss:** none  
**Cthulhu Mythos:** +0 percentiles  
**Language Check:** Regular English  
**Mythos Rating:** 1  
**Study:** one week  
**Spells Available:** none.

### *Carcosa: Book 2 Teaser Sample*

**Sanity Loss:** -1  
**Cthulhu Mythos:** +1 percentiles  
**Language Check:** Regular English  
**Mythos Rating:** 1  
**Study:** one hour  
**Spells Available:** none.

This is a two-page sample, with an introduction and the first page of a new chapter in the webcomic. The lettering is a serif font that is oddly unnerving to look at yet requires a **POW** check to look away from, referred to on the introductory page as "Doves Type". The thickness and thinness of the letters, combined with the angles of the serifs themselves, both draw a reader in yet repulses them. The font is what is responsible for the SAN loss for reading the sample.

ally hundreds of Pallid Masks, with a dozen students showing them off and a kneeling Brian giving the camera a big "thumbs up" in the foreground.

- ✧ A Hard **Computer Use** check will also turn up a YouTube video that Brian's been tagged in. In the video, he and others are rehearsing a set. The space they're jamming away in has rough concrete block walls, painted a glossy black, with lots of names spray painted in the black between haphazardly placed, brightly colored band posters. The ceiling is low enough that at one point, during an epic guitar riff, Brian accidentally bumps into the single yellow incandescent bulb that hangs down from a thick, cord, scattering its baleful-seeming yellow light crazily around, causing everyone's shadows to appear winged and as if they're leaping around, despite the odd stillness of everyone except Brian, before the video freezes. According to the timer on Youtube, there's still over 3 minutes left to see, but it will freeze every time at this point and not load the rest.
- ✧ A Hard **Computer Use** check also turns up a few possible addresses and relatives for Brian in an around Muskegon.
- ✧ Finally, a search of online court records reveals a few different "Brian Carrs" in Muskegon. One such "Brian Carr" has a number of tickets for noise complaints and/or playing in a venue not approved for music. This Brian Carr's address is listed as 816 Washington Ave, Muskegon, MI 49441 (the Temple House).



## Muskegon, MI

If the investigators aren't at least based in the Midwest, their best option is probably flying in. While Muskegon has an airport, investigators arriving by plane would most likely fly into Grand Rapids (30 minutes away) and then rely on a rental car for transportation. Muskegon itself has one rental car company, and one fairly unreliable taxi company with a fleet of very run-down looking mini-vans. Uber isn't an option.

## Interviews

Visiting the addresses that a **Hard Computer Use** check turned up only leads to former addresses, mostly with people having no knowledge of who had stayed there previously. One could be an ex-girlfriend/boyfriend, who probably won't be all that forthcoming without a convincing cover story, but also won't be of much help either as they've not heard from Brian in some time. One such person might mention that he really hopes that Brian got help with his heroin addiction, but for all he knows, Brian may have died from an overdose.

## Temple House

Built in an Italianate style in 1873 by one of Muskegon's many lumber barons, it gets its name from Ansel Temple, a future mayor of Muskegon, who bought the home in 1883. It was converted into 7 apartment units in the 1930s and has, for quite some time now, attracted musicians and weird artsy-types. Its current owner has converted apartment number 3 into a 3-room hostel, able to sleep 8—this is an Airbnb Hostel that is available for enterprising investigators who want to stake the place out from the inside.

Temple House fronts a dirt road that runs alongside an old train track. Parking is available in front of a waist-high, decaying stone retaining wall. Metal headboards and footboards, their paisley paint job flaking off and revealing the rough red rust underneath, mark the location of flower beds in which thick stalks are all that remains, as everything beautiful died off weeks ago when the weather turned cold. Ms. King, the eccentric owner of Temple House and the investigators' potential Airbnb host, always seems to be sweeping dead yellow maple leaves off the steep crooked steps, even though this late in the season, all the trees are bare.

Units 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 all use a door facing onto Washington, and so those apartment-dwellers may be encountered either at the top of the steps (smoking on the covered porch) or in the shared foyer or hallways of that part of Temple House. The conversion work seems to have left the building with odd proportions, with high steps and narrow hallways, forcing residents to have to squeeze past one another when they meet in the halls. One can never quite shake the impression that "space" is missing. Unit 1 and Unit 7 have their own entrances on the backside of the building, near the entrance to the basement, which houses a washing machine, a non-working dryer, and a common space used for meetings and concerts.

The common area/foyer has a grand staircase that winds its way upwards to the second floor (Units 4-6), while the

left-hand wall is covered in chalkboard paint that someone has taken advantage of to write, over and over, "The shadows lengthen." It starts out large and fancy at the top, but as it repeats, line after line, the chalk writing gets smaller and more cramped, almost manic, with the author seeming to try as fit that sentence in as many times as possible despite running out of space. A 6-panel door, painted white, is on this wall and has a "2" scrawled on it. To the right, curtained French doors have a "3" in faded gold paint stenciled on them, and an old large, empty cork board, well past being serviceable, with many pieces having crumbled apart from all the use it once saw, hangs crooked next to the entrance to Unit 3.

There's one "permanent resident" in Unit 3, Stan, a grossly obese, medical-marijuana-card-carrying, extreme right-wing, concealed-carry gun nut. He's alienated all the permanent residents in the other units with whom he shares a common entry, due to his outspoken views on just about everything. How much of this is an act is entirely up to the Keeper.

Inside of Unit 3, paint colors are bright and somewhat Indian in theme but taken to garish extremes, with cerulean blue walls and gold crown molding and trim. A large mosaic tile inset into one wall depicts a six-armed Shiva, and everything smells of strong incense, probably coming from the elephant idol incense holder that's on top of an old player piano. In the hostel's shared sitting room, a few pieces of 1920s period furniture form a place for hanging out, and a rickety table sits under a large picture window with colored glass panes surrounding it.

There are two rooms off the sitting area. One is Stan's, while the other leads to a room that never seems to get warm. This second room has a futon and a bunk bed in it, and overlooks the parking area out front. A hallway leads further back, and a chest at the back of it has a large tote full a wide variety of blankets, some threadbare, some tasseled and fancy, but all worn, and a second large tote full of pillows and pillow cases. Many of the pillows are stamped with black ink, "Northwood Psychiatric Hospital." A third bedroom with another bunk bed and a twin bed (which can be warmed up with a wall-heater), small bathroom, and kitchen is accessible via the hallway, which can be closed off from the sitting room with a set of very large and heavy pocket doors. Inside the kitchen, cabinet doors are mounted flush to ceilings, while the cabinet doors on cabinets are often not level and don't fit quite right.

The owners before Ms. King never rented out the third-floor/attic apartment (Unit 7), which has its own entrance on the backside of the house, like Unit 1. Instead, they would allow heroin addicts to detox there. Brian was the last to detox there, and during that time the Temple House was sold to Ms. King. Brian has remained, paying rent despite never signing a lease. All utilities for Temple House are in Ms. King's name; Brian has no bills in his name and pays cash for everything. Ms. King lives across the street, which is all very convenient for her Airbnb guests.



# THE LUMBER BARONS BALL





## Strange Happenings at Temple House

✧ The investigators arrive back one night and notice a drying pool of blood on the top step outside the foyer door. Inside the foyer, the door knob to Unit 3 has a bloody smear on it, and the door is ajar. Inside, things look much as they left them, but on the small rickety table that's supposed to pass as a dining table (located in the sitting room), there's a fireproof lockbox and droplets of dried blood lead towards the hallway and back half of the hostel. In the kitchen sink is lots and lots of meat. Racks of ribs, sides of beef. Bloody, raw. Just sitting there, in several cheap plastic grocery bags. Meanwhile, Stan is passed out drunk in his room, having gotten back while the investigators were out, he left the meat in the sink to thaw. The lockbox is where Stan's medical marijuana and a 9mm pistol is.

✧ When one of the investigators flushes the toilet, it gurgles and backs up, smelling of some kind of awful decay. Old pipes and tree roots, maybe. But after a few minutes, a fleshy-colored ooze backs up into the bathroom sink and tub, and reeks of death.

✧ The investigators are either arriving back to the hostel or are awakened by a very vigorous drum practice session coming from above their rooms. Checking it out leads them to Ash in Unit 6, a professional musician who practices at least twice a day and handles the drum side of things for a number of local bands. Ash will at first deny knowing Brian, but a successful Psychology check shows that Ash is lying and nervous. Pressing Ash reveals that Brian is an occasional resident of Unit 7, but probably hasn't been there for a couple weeks. Ash can add that ever since Brian got clean, he's been really weird...he always doodled, but suddenly it was much better and very stylized, and he also started writing his own lyrics and music. His latest music was about as unnerving as his new comics. They had a jam session downstairs a few weeks ago, and things went fine until Brian deviated from the music and went off on his own. Ash can't really explain it, but everyone stopped getting together after that. "Honestly, I think he's shackled up with those high school kids that want to adapt his webcomic to a play or some shit next month."

Someone writes something new on the chalkboard! "No Mask?" is written just once, above the door to Unit 2, nearly 9' up. It's written very neatly, in the Doves Type font. SAN loss is 0/1 for attempting to wrap one's mind around the font.

## The Basement

Checking out the basement is pretty easy to do, as the key to Unit 3 unlocks the basement door and allows access to the low-ceilinged, galley-style laundry room. There's one door

leading further in, but flashlights will be needed, as the yellow incandescent bulb hanging from a thick cord in the center of the room is broken. With the beams from their flashlights cutting through the dust-filled air, the investigators can make out signs of a scuffle in the dirt, a few folding chairs tipped over, and what appears to be the signs of a panicked stampede towards the door that the investigators just entered.

## Unit 7

Getting into Unit 7 requires either a great story and a successful **Persuade** check with Ms. King, or some burglary, potentially involving a **Locksmith** check to open the door from the exterior third-floor staircase. Trying to peer inside from the staircase gives nothing away, as the windows are completely blacked out. Once the door is open, the faint stink of death and decay hits the investigators and the flies that so thoroughly covered the windows take flight and stream towards the open door. Inside, their footsteps crunch on the husks of thousands of hatched house fly pupae as they pick their way through several months of food trash discarded on the floor. Brian's computer can be found, along with his sketches, a box of two-thousand Yellow Sign stickers, a USB flash drive/Byakhee Summoning Whistle combo, handwritten notes on the Pallid Masks—design specifications along with instructions that each one is to have a set of arcane magical symbols and the Yellow Sign imprinted on the inside of them, before being covered up with a soft felt lining.

In a valet tray near the front door are two fancy tickets for the Lumber Barons Ball (tomorrow night), and a Big Reds key fob with no keys are attached (The Big Reds are the Muskegon High School ("MHS") football team). In the bathroom, dead and mostly liquified, are the remains of Gerald Brown, MHS Janitor. He's been there for so long, combined with the unearthly heat that Brian's apartment was cranked up to, that his flesh has started sloughing off of him and down the tub drain, clogging the pipes of Temple House. He's still in his MHS janitor's uniform. SAN loss is 1/1D6.

A Hard **Computer Use** check can grant the Investigators access to Brian's desktop computer, and from there, his Kickstarter account, webcomic admin panel, Facebook, etc. But no Brian Carr is there to be found. Getting into his Facebook account allows the investigators to find out about the "Occupy the Ball" flash mob event and guess that Brian is planning something at it. Getting into his Kickstarter account allows the investigators to shut it down.

If the investigators take the time to read the entirety of the thousands of pages long **Carcosa: Book 2: 2 weeks to study; -1D3/1D6+1 SAN; +5% to Cthulhu Mythos; Regular English check; Mythos Reference 8%. Spells Available: Contact King in Yellow, Dismiss King in Yellow, Summon/Bind Byakhee**. It is a nicely illustrated collection of the ravings of a madman, convinced that a figure called the King in Yellow, along with his masked court, will soon come to Muskegon to lift him up from his lonely existence.



## The Lumber Barons Ball

Posters all over town advertise this year's Lumber Barons' Ball, sponsored by the Lakeshore Museum Center, to be held on an upcoming evening that will give the investigators a dramatic amount of time to get to the Century Club Ballroom. This is the 25th year for this annual fundraising event, which supports the Museum's education programs and exhibits. The theme of the event is a 1920s Masquerade Ball, and guests are encouraged to come in period dress and masks. The event includes dinner, live music by the Tri-Cities Jazz Band, and live and silent auctions. Admission is \$100 per person and corporate sponsorships are available. Call 555-0278 for more information.

The Ball caps the end of the social season in Muskegon, with the wealthiest residents showing up in finely wrought period dress and ornate masks, feasting on wondrous culinary creations that are prepared and catered by the Culinary Institute.

This year, however, may mark the end of Muskegon. Tensions have been high, with two police-related shootings in neighboring Muskegon Heights and just last night, a nearby gas station was robbed and the police shot and killed another young man who they spotted running down an alleyway near the scene of the crime, while CCTV cameras led to the peaceful arrest of the actual robber later that night.

With the seeming breakdown of societal norms and a Global News Service (GNS) crew having been dispatched to the area to stir the pot, the young and disenfranchised of the area have taken to social media, both publicly and, more importantly for this scenario, privately. A private Facebook Group has been setup to organize a protest, with the members of the Muskegon High School's Masques Dramatic Club leading the charge. From there, the movement spread to other local high schools: Muskegon Heights, North Muskegon, Reeths-Puffer, and Mona Shores High School. The Facebook Group's event, "Occupy the Ball," has had almost 500 students RSVP so far....

The twelve Masques members, in their madness from having read both books...like, really, really, read them, in order to adapt them to a musical, started making masks...hundreds of them. Way more than the one mask that their musical needed. All of the silently marching students at the "Occupy the Ball" protest will be wearing Pallid Masks.

The protesters' plan is to meet at Hackley Park with everyone dressed all in black, and there distribute the Pallid Masks that the MHS club members have made for their production of an adapted play version of Brian Carr's *Carcosa: Act 1*. Once distributed, the students will march silently together, down Third and Second Streets, past the Hackley Public Library (HPL) and the Frauenthal Theatre, to Western, and the Century Club. Once outside of the Century Club, the students plan to just stand there—masked faces staring upwards at the yellow glow from the second-floor windows. Silent and peaceful. Hundreds of them...

As the Ball is typically a who's-who of Muskegon's political leaders and wealthy patrons of any cause, two off-duty policemen are there as doormen/security. Once the small,

silent, and masked army is on Western, the "doormen" for the Lumber Baron's Ball will alert their on-duty law enforcement co-workers, who will be promptly dispatched from the police station, four blocks away. Of course, by the time the police arrive, the Century Club will be thoroughly surrounded by the twelve cultists and their hundreds of innocent protest-companions.

Due to recent police shootings, the police are under strict orders to keep a bit of a distance and to not attempt to disperse the crowd so long as they're peaceful, even though they've not gotten a permit for their protest, are blocking traffic, trespassing on the surrounding business' property, etc. Besides, the Global News Service van was on-scene and filming even before the students arrived, and the city's police department isn't interested in any more bad press. In any case, even if the investigators convince the police to disperse the crowd, Brian Carr is not among them.

## When Do the Investigators Arrive?

- ✧ If the investigators arrive before the protesting students, maybe they're walking up to the doors of the Century Club as a chill wind picks up and a faint rustling can be heard in the distance immediately before hundreds of people, all wearing the same pale masks, come streaming down Western (from Third) and around the corner of Second, quickly surrounding the building (as detailed above).
- ✧ If the Investigators are already in the ball before the students arrive, perhaps a random glance out a window shows hundreds of masked faces staring back up at them, or it could be the red and blue flashing lights from police cruisers as they're pulling up and surrounding the silent and masked vigil that's already surrounding the investigators and the masquerade-goers, that alerts the Investigators to the protesters' arrival.

## Inside the Ball

Inside the second-floor ballroom, the ball is well under way. Dinner was served. The auctions have ended. And the 1920s themed masquerade ball is in full swing.

Barring investigator interference, with no sign of Brian still, the masquerade balls comes to an end and the revelers begin to unmask, toasting each other and clapping. If the investigators have the ball staked out from the inside (either by flashing badges or infiltrating the Ball), they see no sign of Brian. (Recall that he is very tall, so they can keep an eye out for him without dispersing the Ball, which the police will not permit).

As the attendees unmask, from across the room, the investigators hear a woman say, "You, sir, should unmask." Heading that way, the dancers who, only moments before had seemed so graceful and choreographed in their movements, now seem slow and in the way. "Indeed, it's time. We have all laid aside disguise but you." A sight is caught of a very tall figure



## Rewards and Repercussions

in pale, tattered yellow robes, Pallid Mask still worn, as he says, "I wear no mask." The beautiful young woman, turns to her companion, terrified, "No Mask? No Mask!" The tall man slashes viciously at the first woman's throat with a straight razor, bright arterial blood spraying her companion and nearby attendees before he leaps at the second woman. If the investigators were well positioned and specifically watching out for a very tall figure acting strangely, give the one nearest to the two women a **DEX** check to tackle Brian in time. Brian fights like a madman to get away and continue slashing Ball goers.

Either way, chaos ensues. Partygoers are running towards the exits, pushing back against any investigators who are probably trying to close the distance fast with the masked psychopath, giving him time to toy with and slash at the second woman and corner her. Her cries of "I'm not Cassilda" have no effect.

As things unfold, one of the off-duty policemen charges into the room, gun drawn, only to be stabbed from behind by a black-robed, pallid mask-wearing high-schooler, as the Masque Cultists make an appearance at the ball. A few of them are armed, while two slowly spread out to far corners of the room, cell phone cameras out, live-streaming it on Facebook and/or Instagram.

The high-schoolers won't interfere in any struggle between their king and the investigators, even if the investigators subdue or kill Brian. If the investigators manage to subdue or kill Brian, the high-schoolers will then start to approach, weapons brandished and ready to attack.

## Behold thy King

The flashing lights from outside seem to slow as a second tall, thin figure wearing yellow and white tattered robes glides into the ballroom, his face obscured in the dark shadow cast his cowl. The two cultists closest to him turn and raise their knives but before anyone can react, his tattered robes strike out, slicing apart the one closest to him as if they were razors, and he turns his gaze to the other teenager, who drops the knife upon gazing upon the visage of the King in Yellow and moves towards him, subserviently.

The players should have a round to decide what to do, before the King in Yellow moves towards them and Brian (whether alive or dead, it matters not). His face is that of a deep, dark void, and they get the sensation that they're falling into the blackness (**SAN** loss 1D3/1D10). The King is beyond the investigators' ability to fight.

While he doesn't speak or look at anyone specifically, they all know what he wants, hearing it inside their heads, "Surrender him to me." If they comply, the King fades away, taking Brian Carr with him. If any investigators don't move away, they too are hauled off to dim Carcosa.

Brian Carr is doomed, but the investigators can minimize the carnage and prevent the Kickstarter project from being fulfilled. Award +1D6 **SAN** if they keep him from killing anyone at the Ball, and another +1D6 **SAN** if they take down the Kickstarter from Brian's home computer. Charge 1D3 **SAN** for every non-cultist killed at the Lumber Barons' Ball.

### BRIAN CARR, Kickstarter Creator and Accidental Cult Leader

STR 60    CON 60    SIZ 85    INT 70    POW 65  
DEX 55    APP 45    EDU 55    SAN 0    HP 14

**Damage bonus:** +1D4

**Build:** 1

**Move:** 8

### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 40% (20/8), damage 1D3+db; carries straight razor, damage 1D4 +db

**Skills:** Art (Cartooning) 55%, Art (Thrash Metal) 25%, Cthulhu Mythos 05%, Dodge 35%, Endure Filthy Apartment 99%, Occult 15%.

**Defenses:** none above base.

**Nationality:** American

**Age:** 24

**Education:** High school

### TWELVE MASQUE CULTISTS

STR 55    CON 55    SIZ 55    INT 55    POW 55  
DEX 55    APP 65    EDU 55    SAN 0    HP 9

**Damage bonus:** none

**Build:** 0

**Move:** 8

### ATTACKS

Fighting (Brawl) 40% (20/8), damage 1D3+db; some may be armed with knives (1D4+db), or 1-2 may have a .9mm automatic.

Firearms (Handgun) 25% (12/5), .9mm automatic (damage 1D10)

**Skills:** Art (Drama) 20%, Cthulhu Mythos 05%, Disguise 30%.

**Defenses:** none above base.

**Nationality:** American

**Age:** Teens

**Education:** High school students







JEFFREY MOELLER  
BRIAN M. SAMMONS  
SIMON BRAKE  
SCOTT DORWARD  
OSCAR RIOS  
DAVIDE COMO  
BADGER MCINNES  
STEPHANIE MCALEA  
DEAN ENGELHARDT

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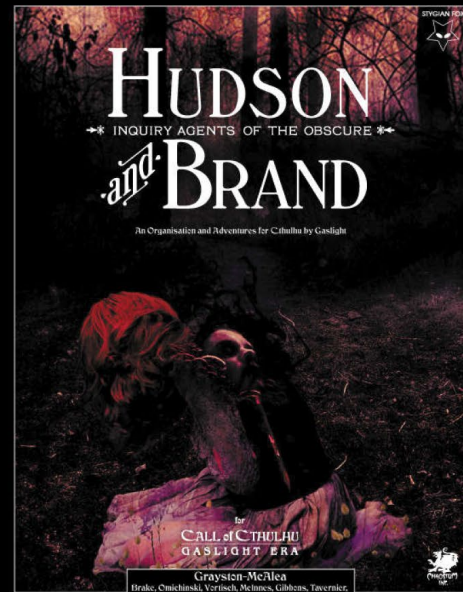


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