



THE SHADOW IN THE TREE

AN ADVENTURE FOR THE CALL OF CTHULHU
D20 SYSTEM
BY JONATHAN STOUT

PART II IN THE CTHULHU HARDBOILED CAMPAIGN



DISCLAIMER

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GM INFORMATION

This adventure has been designed as the second mission in a campaign centering on a private investigations firm known as Hemingway Investigations. It is intended for a group of 1st-level investigators. It is set in January of 1928, in and around the city of Los Angeles, California.

BACKGROUND

In the last adventure, the investigators were hired to work for a small private investigation firm called Hemingway Investigations. Their section chief is a short, overweight man named Ernie Zulli with a penchant for sarcasm and cigars. In this adventure, the investigators are hired to track down an ape that recently went missing from the Griffith Park Zoo in Los Angeles. Griffith Park, by the way, is a large urban park, apparently LA's answer to New York's Central Park.

HITTING A NEW LOW

Hemingway Investigations Offices, 9:15 am
Monday, January 16th, 1928

“So,” says Ernie abruptly, “how'd you like to go chasing a monkey?”

There's an awkward pause as you turn that last sentence over in your head.

You're sitting, by the way, in your usual table in the back room of Hemingway Investigations. It's been about a week since you finished up your first case; you've spent it lying low, just like Ernie told you to. In all that time, you haven't seen so much as a black hat, let alone have someone shooting at you. All in all, you've come to believe the coast is clear, and what with your landlady starting to look testy, maybe it's time to take another shot at this private investigator thing.

Anyway, you have to admit, that was the last thing you expected Ernie to say.

He takes another puff off of his cigar and continues. “I just got a call from the zoo down in Griffith Park this morning. Turns out one of their exhibits disappeared from its cage last night. They've got the police keeping an eye out for it, but they could use someone actively looking for the thing.” He blows a smoke ring across the table. “By the way, the LAPD is no longer on site. I checked.

“Anyway, I don't have any more details than that. You'll have to go down to the zoo and talk to the director –” He glances down at a note in front of him. “The director, Benjamin Wilson. He's the client.”

He looks across the table. “Case is relatively low profile. If you want to test the waters, this is the best way to do it. Don't think I gotta tell you to watch out for black hats.

“Anyway, get going. They'll be expecting you sometime before noon.”

MUST'VE RUN OUT OF BANANAS

Griffith Park Zoo, 11:34 am

You pull into the parking lot of the Griffith Park Zoo just around 11:30. You might've strolled through here at some point. It's a dingy little affair, basically a collection of cages strapped together with wood and plaster. There's also a small administrative building which apparently doubles as kitchen and dung storage from the way the dumpster behind it smells. That's where you're shown into when you present your card to the guy at the ticket booth.

You end up in a small office. A short, professional-looking fellow stands up from behind the desk as you enters and offers his hand. "Good morning, gentlemen. My name's Benjamin Wilson, and I'm the director of this zoo. How can I help you?"

Q&A Session: Benjamin Wilson

Do you care to describe the crime?

"Certainly. Sometime early this morning, our night watchman discovered one of our exhibits was missing. A large male ape with grayish hair; we call him the Professor. Essentially, the watchman found the door to the cage open at about six-thirty; he called me first, and then the police. We haven't seen any sign of the animal since."

May we talk to the night watchman?

"I already sent him home. With the note, by the way, that Jacob has worked for us for several years, and I would consider him above suspicion of any sort."

Describe the Professor further.

"Well, let's see. As I said, a large male ape, grayish fur. He has a very distinguished look about him; that's why we called him the Professor, you see. He reminded me of one of my biology teachers in college. Anyway, he's long-haired, especially around the chin. Weighs about three hundred and twenty-five pounds. Exactly five feet tall – when he stands up to his full height, of course. Very sedate personality."

What is the Professor like personality-wise?

"Very sedate personality, as I recall."

What species is he?

"Well... the truth of the matter is, we're not quite sure. We thought initially that he was just a very large orangutan. Then we had him in for a physical examination two or three months ago. It turned out his skeleton was much too large for him to be an orangutan – the skull especially was more like a gorilla's than anything else. But gorillas tend to be short-haired, at least as far as we know. In any case, we called in an expert from the university – a Dr. Neil Chalker. He's been doing research on the Professor ever since."

Where did the zoo get the Professor from?

“I’m afraid that’s before my time. I’ve only been here as a director since last year. I do know that the Professor wasn’t raised within the zoo. I think I heard something about him coming from a private collection.”

Do you know anyone who’d know?

“Dr. Chalker might. I know he was going through the files a while ago. Let’s see, who else... well, there’s Jack Mosley, but I’m afraid he’s off visiting relatives in Houston this week... I’m sorry. The only thing I can think of is to check the files yourselves. You certainly can if you wish to.”

What exactly do you want us to do?

“Essentially, I want you to track down the Professor for us, wherever he might be. Trapping him would be ideal, but all that’s really necessary is for you to find his location. After that, just call the police, and they’ll send over an animal control team.”

Do you believe the Professor has been stolen?

“Well... to be honest, I hadn’t even considered the possibility. It’s possible, I suppose, but I don’t know what exactly you’d do with him once you’ve got him. He’s too old to be trained for anything, and he isn’t particularly valuable, as far as I know. So... well... I don’t know.”

Anyone else we should talk to?

“There’s Tom Beckett – he fed the Professor this week while Jack’s been away. I’ve sent the night watchman home, but I can provide you with his number if you want to talk to him. And Dr. Chalker, of course. That’s all I can think of.”

Can we see the Professor’s cage?

“Certainly. Take a left once you’re out of the building. The cage is marked with his name; you can’t miss it.”

The Professor’s Cage

Wilson was wrong – it’s very easy to miss the cage. You spot it after doubling back; it’s a small cage, maybe five feet by five feet at best. There are bars on the three sides facing the path; behind that, there’s a plaster wall painted with what looks like a ten-year-old’s conception of the wilds of Africa. The floor of the cage is concrete, and covered with dirty straw and bits of torn-up newspaper. There’s a door built into the back-wall left open. On the front bars of the cage, a faded and weathered cardboard sign reads simply, in barely visible letters, “The Professor. Ape.”

Description of the door:

The door is solid steel, as far as you can tell. The hinges are set inside of the cage, so that the door swings inward. You notice that only the outside of the door has a handle, complimented by a sturdy-looking lock.

Spot, DC 15: Though the lock looks like it could take a fair amount of damage, it actually looks pretty simple as locks go. More to the point, it's definitely been picked.

Inside of the cage:

The stench of the cage hits you as you walk in. You have a feeling that no one's changed the straw within the cage recently; you do your best to watch your step.

Search, DC 15: As far as you can tell, the newspaper was intended to be used as bedding. Most of it is torn up; however, looking over the pile of straw and paper before you, you notice something odd. Lying near the door where you stand, you pick up a piece of newspaper that looks like it was carefully torn out – at least initially. The piece consists of an article and a photograph; half of the photograph has been half-hazardly torn out. Odd.

Article description:

As said, the piece of newspaper consists of a photograph and an article. Half of the photograph has been torn off. What remains shows half of a toddler, a boy maybe a year old or so, and a short, severe-looking young woman in her late twenties.

The article reads as follows:

PULP WRITER MOVES TO LOS ANGELES

News from the literary world: best-selling pulp author Alexander Villepin, formally a resident of France, recently moved into the area. Villepin, 32, best known for his hit gangster book The Dead Only Speak Twice, has signed a contract to write a romance picture for Warner Brothers. "I am very excited and pleased by this possibility," the author told this paper yesterday. "I think the pictures are the way of the future. Also, I am pleased to move here to Los Angeles, as my wife grew up here, and it is truly a beautiful place." Villepin, his wife, Mary, and his one-year-old son Michael, portrayed above, make their home up in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Q&A Session: Tom Beckett

Tom Beckett doesn't have anything to add other than what Wilson's already said. He has only been an employee of the zoo for about six or seven months now. All he can really add is information about the Professor's recent behavior.

What else can you tell us about the Professor?

Well, I can tell you one thing... now, I've been watching him all week, what with Jack gone, and most of the time he ain't no problem at all. Just stick the food in, that's the end of that. But last night when I went to give him dinner... whoo. Looked upset when I first saw him. Soon as he caught sight of me, he just went nuts, you know? Jumped around the cage, thrashed the bars, screamed and stuff... I ended up not feeding him, is what it came down to. I didn't want to get three feet inside that thing. Couldn't even slip the steak through the bars.

Searching the park

Griffith Park in Los Angeles, by the way, is a large urban park. It's logical that the investigators might want to take a look around, at least in the area around the park. This will require a Search check:

[DC 14] You start out by looking around the parking lot, if only because you left your gin bottle in the car. Glancing around, you notice something in a clump of bushes off to the side. You reach in and, after a couple of tries, pull something out. It's a thin cheap leather briefcase, battered and scratched by the bushes. It's marked with the initials N.C. on the handle.

[DC 17] You reluctantly walk to check the area behind the office. The stench coming from the dumpster only gets worst as you get closer to it. But you know, duty calls... and that's probably a good thing. You notice something small caught underneath the closed dumpster door – specifically, a pinkie.

Opening the dumpster will reveal the corpse of Dr. Chalker. He is – was – a thin, average-looking man in his mid-forties, dressed in a decent suit. His neck has been clearly broken, and his skull has been bashed in at the back of the head. There are marks and claw scratches across his face and throat.

Examining the files

Examining the files in the office will prove fruitless; Dr. Chalker has the Professor's file in his briefcase. If asked about the lack of documentation, Wilson will recall that Chalker asked if he could go through the records.

Speaking to the night watchman

Calling or going to the home of the night watchman will introduce the investigators to a black man in his late 40's by the name of Jacob Mosley. Mosley will be completely honest with the investigators, and won't have much in the way of information to contribute: he primarily spends his time on the job watching the gate into the zoo. He walks through the zoo itself twice, the first at midnight and the second at 6 am. The night the Professor disappeared, Mosley saw the ape in his cage during his midnight round and discovered it empty on his second trip at 6. He then immediately called Wilson at home and then the police.

All in all, the only real information he can contribute is that Dr. Chalker was in the zoo last night at around midnight or so. When Mosley last saw him around midnight, Chalker was going through files in the administrative building.

Examining the briefcase

This is indeed the briefcase of Dr. Neil Chalker. A Search check is required to look through the files:

[DC 5] The briefcase is filled with papers. You're betting that this is the briefcase of Dr. Neil Chalker, being that his name is scrawled neatly in the upper margin of every page.

[DC 10] You come across a scribbled note early on in the file: “Skeletal anatomy consistent w/ gorilla. But skull size suggests larger brain; also noting some intelligence more consistent with chimpanzee. New species?” The last sentence is underlined twice and backed up with three exclamation points.

[DC 12] One thing sticks out as you flip through the papers: a police report from April 7, 1925. The report details the capture of a “large, grey animal, apparently a monkey or an ape” in the Santa Monica Mountains area. Initially responding to reports and complaints from residents, the police managed to find and trap the ape while it was sleeping in a tool shed. Animal control experts from the Griffith Park Zoo were asked to assist in the keeping and sedation of the ape while the department searched for “the possible owner and/or origin of the animal.” An attached memo notes that the ape has been transported to the zoo for keeping while awaiting word from the owner.

Oh, by the way... both reports are by one Officer Szepasszony.

[DC 15] Another note, around the area of the police file: “Have found possible lead to origin: one E. Ashton. Well known in scientific community, adventurer and animal trainer; known to live in SM Mountains. Prof his property? Knows origin?” Then there’s another note scribbled underneath that, in a different shade of pen: “Ashton dead. Killed in car accident two-three years ago. Pity.”

And that’s all that really can be done at the zoo itself. If confronted with Chalker’s body, Wilson will admit that the Professor may be a danger. He will agree to allow the investigators to kill the Professor if necessary, if only to avoid the lawsuits. Where from here?

LEGWORX

Research check on E. Ashton:

[DC 10] In a phone book dated five years ago, you find a listing for Ashton, Ezekial. The address is, as far as you can tell, in a relatively undeveloped portion of the Santa Monica Mountains.

[DC 14] The city census for the year 1924 lists one Ezekial Ashton as a householder, owning a decently-sized chunk of land in the Santa Monica Mountains. His wife is listed as deceased; he lived with one daughter.

[DC 17] You stumble across an old copy of the Los Angeles Times, dated Sunday, April 5, 1925. The obituary section has a listing for one Ashton. The text reads as follows: “Lieutenant Ezekial Ashton, retired, age 48, served our British allies in Asia during the great war. Was killed this last Friday when he stepped out in front of a moving car near his home. Known to be a great adventurer, explorer and amateur man of science. Spent years exploring the wilds of South America and the Orient, from which he brought back many specimens invaluable to the study of biology. In his later years, served as a trainer of animals for the stage and moving pictures. He is survived by his daughter, Mary. Funeral arrangements to be announced.”

Research check on Alexander Villepin and family:

[DC 5] Villepin is unlisted in this year’s phone book.

[DC 10] But he wasn't last year. He is listed as living in a relatively underdeveloped area of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Yes, the address is the same of that as Ezekial Ashton's from years before.

[DC 15] Checking through the records at City Hall, you come across a marriage certificate for Alexander Villepin, a French national, and wife Mary Ashton Villepin. It is dated Sunday, March 29, 1925.

MAISON D'ASHTON

By the time they've finished the research and get up into the Santa Monica Mountains it should be about 6 o'clock in the evening. Searching for the former address of Ezekial Ashton, the players will find themselves at a relatively isolated Victorian farmhouse, built around the 1890's or so. Knocking on the door, they will find themselves invited in by Mary Ashton Villepin, a young woman in her late twenties, her husband Alexander, and their one-and-a-half-year-old son Michael (who is, in his own way, a terror beyond that which the investigators might have ever encountered, especially right before bedtime).

Once the dust settles, the investigators will have a chance to talk to the couple. As Alexander's (spoken) English is still hard to make out, he will probably go upstairs to take care of Michael while Mary speaks to the investigators.

Q&A Mary Ashton Villepin

Was your father Ezekial Ashton?

"That's correct."

This was his house, correct?

"That's right."

Do you have a picture of him?

"Yes." Give them the picture.

Tell us about him.

"I'm afraid that, when all is said, I never knew my father very well. He loved hunting, you see, loved it more than anything, and he had the money to travel abroad. So he was frequently gone for months, and when he left he would usually leave me with my aunt in San Francisco – my mother died when I was very young, you see. When he was home, he was very strict with me. That is all I can really say about him."

Describe his activities abroad.

"He didn't tell me very much about them, I'm afraid. I understand that he tended to go into Asia a great deal – China, some of the southern islands and colonies. I think he went into South America through Mexico once. In any case, like I said, he would come and go. He'd come back after a few months, usually with some new creature or another, and



spent a few weeks training it. Then he'd leave again, and it would be the same thing all over again."

Describe his animal training activities.

"My father liked to bring back living creatures from overseas. He'd put them out in the barn – we used to have a barn out where the garden is now, you see. It isn't there anymore; the wood was rotted through, so Alex and I tore it down when we moved back in. In any case, he would put the animals out in the barn and spent weeks training them to do tricks. He really was brilliant at it – this one time, I think he had this sort of cute little creature. I think it was a monkey of some sort – it was about the size of a squirrel. Anyway, he could make it actually sit down at this old typewriter he had and type out letters. Oh, don't take me wrong, it didn't actually know what it was doing, of course; my father would call out a letter, and it would hit the key. All the letters of the alphabet. It could even do margins properly. It was amazing.

"In any case, my father would have one or two animals at a time in his barn. He'd spend a number of weeks training them, and then sell them to circuses and zoos and things – also to some of the motion picture companies, I think. He made a rather good sum of money at it."

Do you know if your father ever captured or trained an ape?

"I'm sorry, I honestly don't know. My father absolutely forbid me from going into the barn. I suppose some of the animals he had must have been dangerous... I know he had snakes and things like that... I recall him have a monkey at one point. But it had a tail and was about the size of a squirrel. Much too small to be an ape."

May we see the barn?

"I'm afraid that Alex and I had it torn down when we moved back in. The wood was too rotten. It was where my garden is now, if you're interested."

Tell us about your father's death.

"Well... it's a long story, I'm afraid. A number of years ago – five, I think – I went abroad to Paris to go to school. I met Alex while I was there, and we decided to get married. So once I was finished with school, we came home to talk to my father about it.

"My father... didn't react well, I'm afraid. I don't think he liked Alex at all from the start. He absolutely forbid me to marry him. He became... very angry with me. Alex didn't like that. So we left. We then decided that we had waited for too long; we were married at a small church downtown, and then we went to stay with my aunt up north.

"Later that week, I received a telegram for my father. He had apparently heard about my wedding to Alex, and said he was willing to accept it now that it was fact. He wished to make amends for his behavior, and he invited us for dinner that Saturday. Alex convinced me to take the chance, and so we went back to Los Angeles.

"But he didn't pick us up from the train station. We waited for hours, but eventually it was getting dark, so we called for a taxi. When we got to the front door of the house, the door was hanging open, and my father wasn't inside. We looked for him over the grounds, but he wasn't there – the barn was empty. And the library was a mess – books and furniture thrown around, papers anywhere. We were starting to clean it up

when the police called. They told me that my father had died the morning before – he had hit by a car that morning down on the road. It was all very strange.”

How was it strange?

“Well... I’m not sure. Just the small details, I suppose. It was just the library that was a mess – the rest of the house was fine. My father’s journal was sitting out – half the pages were torn out of it. But he had always treated it with extreme amounts of care... he never let me even touch it when I was growing up. He’d always store it in the safe in his room. But there it was. And then there was the picture...”

The picture?

“When Alex and I first came to see my father, I left some of my luggage behind. There was a framed photo of Alex in one of my bags – I had brought it with me from Paris. But when we first came into the library, it was sitting in the middle of the floor, just like that. It was very odd.

“In any case. The police eventually decided that the house had been broken into while my father was at home; he had run out to get help, and was hit by the car. But there wasn’t anything missing from the house that I could tell... and my father kept a hunting rifle on the wall in the library. It was the only thing in the room that hadn’t been touched.

“I inherited my father’s money after that. Alex and I went and lived in Boston for the last few years. We moved back here a few months ago when he made the motion picture deal. And that was the end of that.”

May we see your father’s journal?

“I can’t see why not.”

She will go upstairs and retrieve the journal from the library.

the journal

Mary will return with a large hardcover journal, folio-sized, which is quite worst for wear. Nearly half of the pages have been torn out; the first page denotes the book as being “the Journal and Property of Mr. E. Ashton.”

This book counts as a magical tome, but the players won’t be able to find that out until they’ve had time to study it later. For the time being, the only information that might matter to them is a number of words scribbled on the back cover: “MARY wrong

JOURNAL OF EZEKIAL ASHTON

In English, author Ezekial Ashton, explorer, c. 1910’s. This handwritten diary has had many pages torn out, but part of it seems to detail the interrogation of a person referred to as “the old man” by a group of soldiers, including Ashton. The “old man,” apparently under extreme physical torture, talks a great deal about several hunting rituals of his people. Thanks to the damage to the book, the only really coherent account is of a strange and somewhat disturbing technique called “spirit-calling.”

Examination period: 1 week (DC 20).

Contains 1 spell, “Spirit-calling” (*dominate animal*).
Sanity loss: 1 initial and 1d3 upon completion.

Cthulhu Mythos +1 rank.

wrong wrong KILL THE BASTARD the stars were wrong the horrible ocean the tower God MARY MARY MARY help me KILL THE BASTARD MARY MARY KILL HIM MARY.”

DAMNED DIRTY APE

searching the grounds

There are two possibilities at this juncture: one is that the players will get the point and arrange themselves to protect the Villepins . The other is that they will (as my players did) decide to check the grounds of the house for the Professor. In which case they will discover something rather interesting.

Any character with the feat Track can, with a Wilderness Lore (DC 14) check, find a series of tracks through Mary’s garden in the back lawn that they will recognize as being the Professor’s (having most likely seen his tracks or footprints in his cage). The tracks lead away from the backyard out into a forest roughly five hundred feet from the back of the Ashton household. Following the tracks into the woods, the investigators can follow a clear trail another two hundred feet. There, the trail goes around a large tree... and around... and around... and around... and around.

No, the Professor is not in the tree. It is then that you can have the tracker make a Wilderness Lore (DC 16) check to realize the truth: the Professor started out by walking backwards around the tree – and went around the tree several times, apparently practicing the motion. From that point, he’s been walking backwards the entire time. The players had it all wrong – the Professor is still at the Ashton household!

Which would be an excellent time to have a scream break out from the house.

the professor attacks

The Professor has been, in fact, hiding on the roof of the house. Sometime after sunrise, it will attack the Villepins. At that time, Alex will be in the second floor library, Michael will be asleep in room O, and Mary will tidying up somewhere on the first floor. The Professor’s primary targets will be Michael and Alex; it will probably go after Michael first, breaking in through the window in that room. Under no circumstances will it hurt or pursue Mary.

The presence of the investigators will complicate things. The Professor may initially attack, then pull back and attempt to use one of its spells. One excellent possibility would be to use its suggestion power to convince one of the players that another player is in fact the ape itself (in other words, one player looks up and sees the Professor standing right there next to him; pulled this on one of the players on my game. Fortunately for the unlucky guy next to him, he missed). Once this has occurred, the Professor will immediately attack to take advantage of the players’ confusion.

In any case, when the players kill the Professor, he will immediately turn back into his true shape. I would describe the actual transition in terms of shadows falling away from the corpse, or perhaps a simple and momentary blur in the players’ visions. However it happens, the body will abruptly turn into that of a man. If they got the photo from Mary, the players will recognize the corpse as being none other than Ezekiel Ashton. SAN check 1/1d10.

the aftermath

Depending on what happens, the players may either be free and clear or in deep trouble. At the least, they will have to deal with a human-shaped corpse rather than an ape-shaped one. If they call Ernie on it, he will recommend that they bury the body and tell Wilson that they had to kill the Professor in order to save the Ashtons and afterwards disposed of the body.

The worst-case scenario is that both Alex and Michael are killed by the ape before the investigators have a chance to intervene. If Mary sees their bodies, she will immediately go insane and become catatonic. The investigators will have to somehow deal with her and reporting this to the LAPD. Ernie will suggest that the investigators bring Mary to Lubomir's while they try and figure out what to do.

Whatever happens, Ernie will inevitably tell the investigators in frustration: "Can't anything normal happen to you people?"

EXPERIENCE AND SANITY AWARDS

typical story goals:

- Stop the Professor from hurting Alex or Michael
- Find Ashton's Journal
- Kill the Professor
- Entire group survives (optional)

bonus sanity rewards:

Saving both Alex and Michael: d4 Sanity

paycheck:

As this adventure should only take about one day, the players will get \$12 for their troubles.

APPENDIX A: NPC STATISTICS

EZEKIAL ASHTON

Large Ape

HD: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

AC: 14 (+2 Dex, -1 size, +3 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +8 melee, bite +3 melee, Winchester M1894 Rifle +5 ranged

Damage: Claw 1d6+5, bite 1d6+2, rifle 2d10 (crit x3, rng 200 ft)

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spells

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14
 Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Climb +11, Drive +4, Escape Artist +6, Handle Animal +10, Hide +8, Jump +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +5, Ride +9, Spot +6.
 Feats: Improved Initiative, Stealthy, Weapon proficiency (rifle)
 Spells: *Dominate animal, hide from the eye, locate creature, suggestion.*
 Note: consider Ashton to be telepathic in terms of the spell *suggestion*.



MARY ASHTON
 1st level Artist (Defense Option)
 HD: 1d6 (6 hp)
 Initiative: +2 (Dex)
 AC: 12 (+2 Dex)
 Attacks: Melee -1, Webley Mark I Revolver +2 ranged
 Damage: Unarmed 1d3, Revolver 2d8 (crit x3)
 Saves: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +3
 Abilities: Str 8, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 13
 Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Craft (sculpture) +9, Diplomacy +4, Drive +5, Forgery +5, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +4, Hide +5, Knowledge (art) +6, Move Silently +6, Sense Motive +4, Speak Other Language (French) +6
 Feats: Weapon Proficiency (pistol), Skill

Emphasis (Craft [sculpture])
 SAN: 59



ALEX VILLEPIN
 1st level Writer (Defense Option)
 HD: 1d6+1 (7 hp)
 Initiative +1 (Dex)
 AC: 11 (Dex)
 Attacks: Unarmed +1 melee
 Damage: Unarmed 1d3 subdual
 Saves: Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +3
 Abilities: Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15
 Skills: Bluff +5, Craft (writing) +7, Diplomacy +7, Drive+4, Gather Information +7, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (philosophy) +4, Listen +4, Performance (reading) +5, Research +4, Sense Motive +4.
 Feats: Skill emphasis (craft [writing]), Trustworthy

SAN: 60

MICHAEL VILLEPIN

Assume 4 hp and a speed of 10 ft. (being a toddler). Otherwise no stats necessary.

APPENDIX B MAPS AND PICTURES

PULP WRITER MOVES TO LOS ANGELES

News from the literary world: best-selling pulp author Alexander Villepin, formally a resident of France, recently moved into the area. Villepin, 32, best known for his hit gangster book The Dead Only Speak Twice, has signed a contract to write a romance picture for Warner Brothers. "I am very excited and pleased by this possibility," the author told this paper yesterday. "I think the pictures are the way of the future. Also, I am pleased to move here to Los Angeles, as my wife grew up here, and it is truly a beautiful place." Villepin, his wife, Mary, and his one-year-old son Michael, portrayed above, make their home up in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Newspaper Article From Cage



Photo of Ezekial Ashton



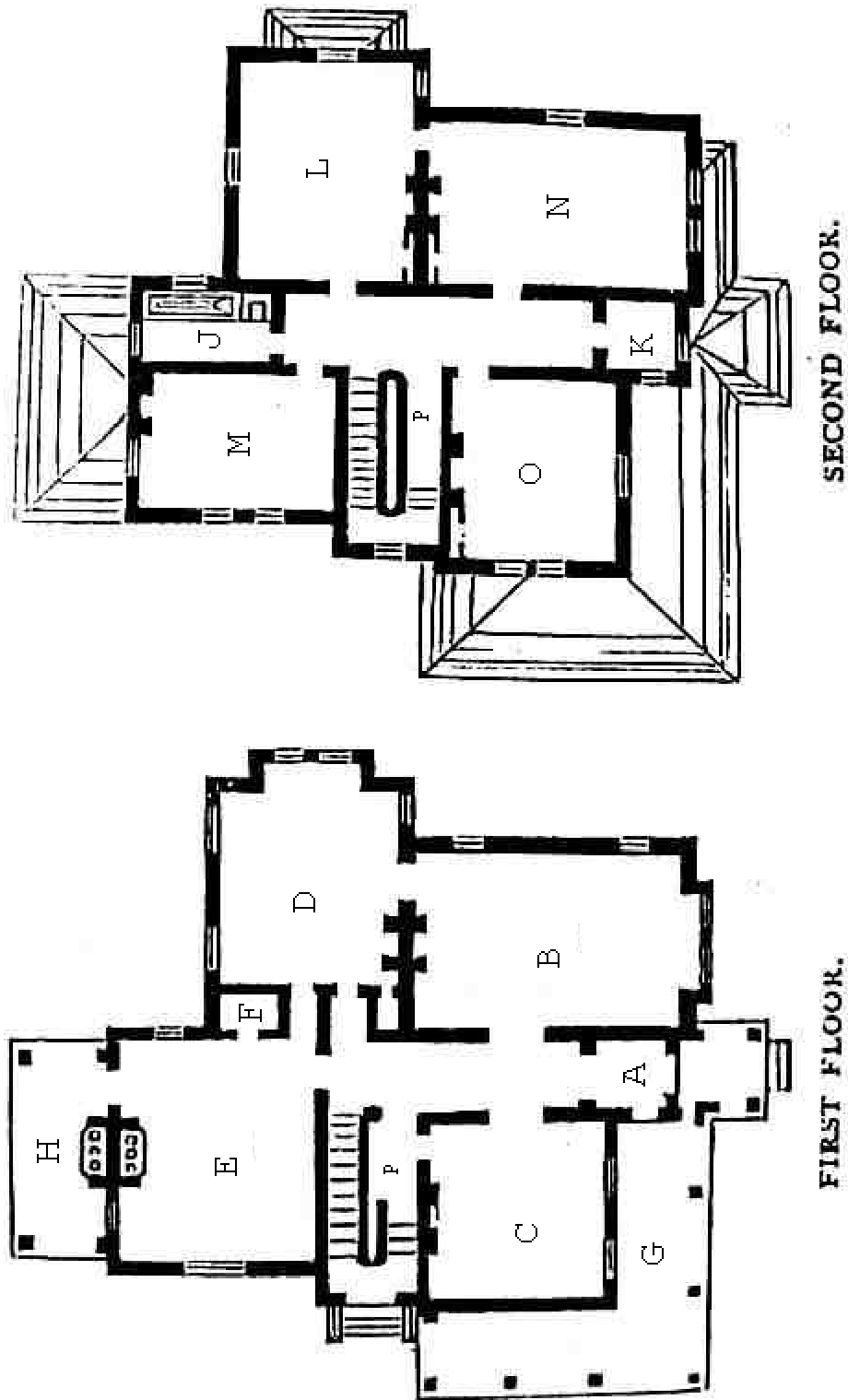
The Ashton Household, overall picture



Mary Ashton



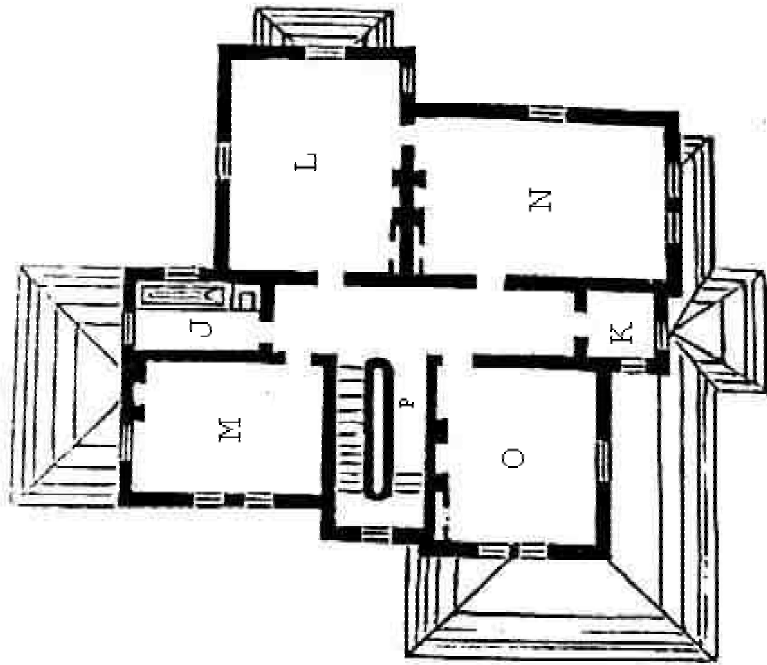
Alexander Villepin



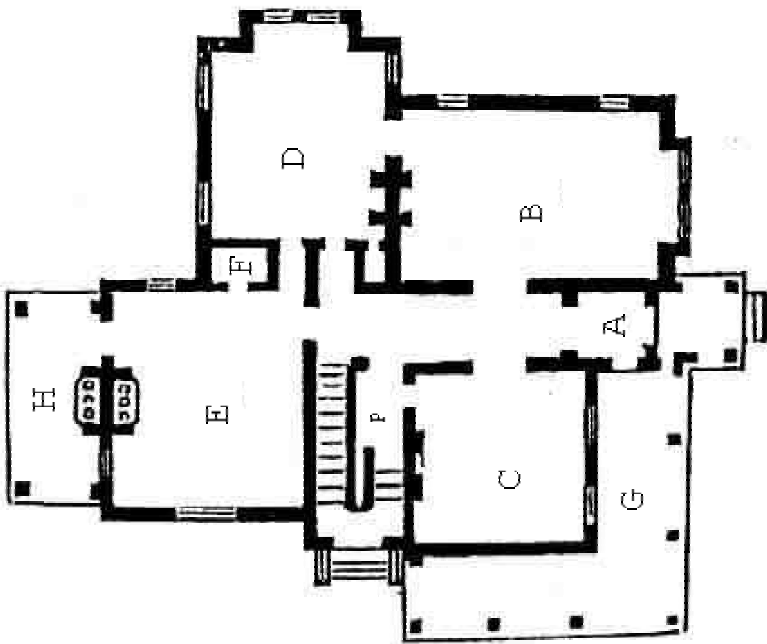
Layout of the Ashton Household. Player's copy.

ASHTON HOUSEHOLD
FLOOR PLAN (GM)

- A - Entryway
- B - Parlor
- C - Sitting Room
- D - Dining Room
- E - Kitchen
- F - China-closet
- G - Front Porch
- H - Back Porch
- J - Bathroom
- K - Closet
- L - Library
- M - Bedroom
- N - Master Bedroom
- O - Bedroom
- P - Stairway



SECOND FLOOR.



FIRST FLOOR.

Ashton Household. GM map.

APPENDIX C: VIEW FROM THE BACKSTAGE

Note: this section contains long-term campaign information and is for the GM's eyes only.

Right now, I'm sure you're asking yourself one question: what the hell happened? I don't suppose you've read the original Lovecraft story "The Call of Cthulhu"? Dealing with the events that occur when Cthulhu briefly awakes on April 2, 1925? According to the story and Cthulhu lore, the awakening sends psychic shockwaves across the world. Artists have strange and unnatural dreams, psychics committed suicide and strange religious activity reached a peak.

Now. What do you think happened to anyone unlucky enough to be using magic on that day?

Such was the fate of Ezekial Ashton. In his travels across the world, he happened to learn the occult hunting secrets of a tribe of hunter-gatherers native to a South Asian island, which he recorded in his journal. These, needless to say, contributed in a large part to his extraordinary abilities with animals.

After his daughter eloped with Villepin, Ashton was resolved to recover his daughter. He needed to do so in a way that would not be his fault. He decided to train a rhesus monkey to bite Alex and contaminate him with a deadly but slow-acting poison Ashton had discovered on his travels. The poison affected humans, but not the monkey, so Ashton could later blame it on a disease.

On the day of April 2, Ashton was training the monkey in his study, using a picture of Alex he recovered from Mary's bags as a focus. Having only a few days until Alex and Mary returned to his house, he used the contents of his journal. Unfortunately, the occult shockwaves from the awakening of Cthulhu both reversed Ashton's spells upon him and then some. Both Ashton and his subject were transformed, essentially exchanging shapes partway; Ashton did not entirely turn into a monkey, but ended up as a large ape (a compromise, perhaps, between his genetic structure and that of the monkey's), and the monkey looking like Ashton, though with several key physiological differences. Ashton was immediately driven mad by the transformation, and his own programming was reversed upon his own mind: the command to kill Alexander Villepin and defend Mary was burned into his mind. Fortunately, neither were present at the moment, so Ashton destroyed his own library and escaped into the hills, where he eventually captured by the police and brought to the Griffith Park Zoo. The monkey in Ashton's form wandered out onto the road and was hit by an oncoming car.

You know the story from there on out. Ashton languished in the zoo, his madness manifesting itself in a near-catatonic state. He happened to find the article about Alex in the newspaper used for his bedding, and immediately his programming set in. He used his suggestion power on Dr. Chalker, got him to open the door to the cage, then killed him and hid the body. He then used the spell locate creature to track down Mary, arriving at his old house the night after his escape.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the whole story. Any questions?