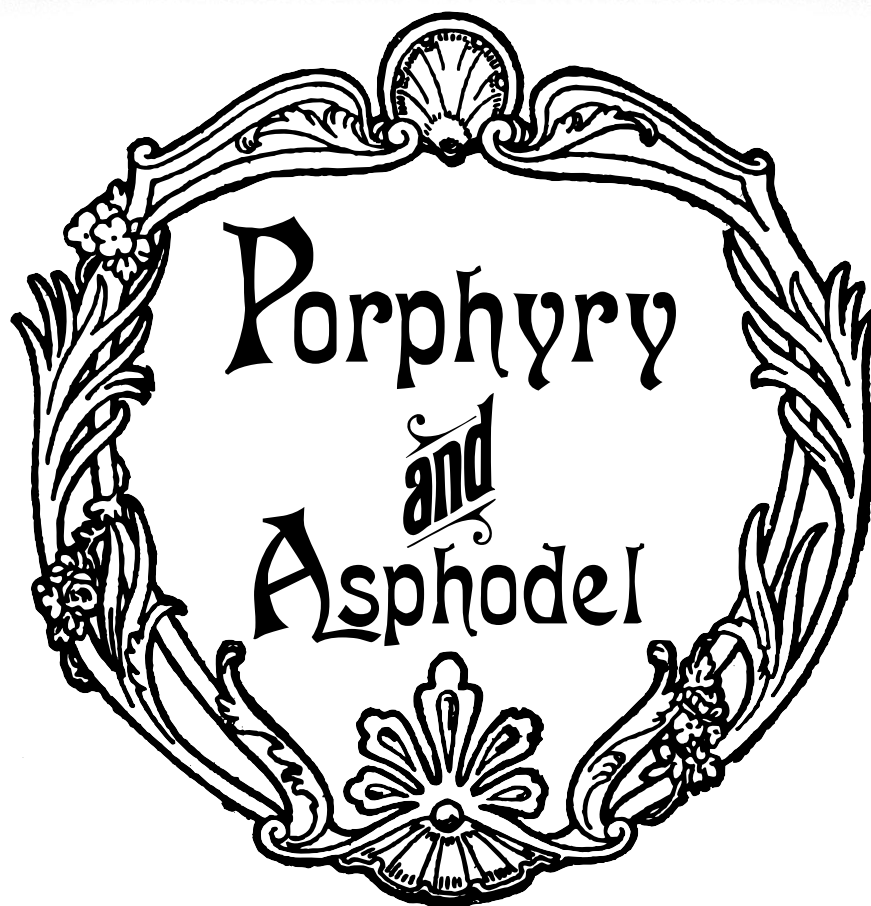


Porphyry
and
Asphodel

A Dreamlands Scenario for
Call of Cthulhu

By

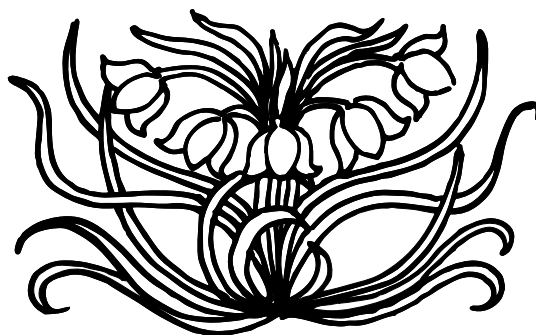
Penelope Love



A Dreamlands Scenario for
Call of Cthulhu

By

Penelope Love





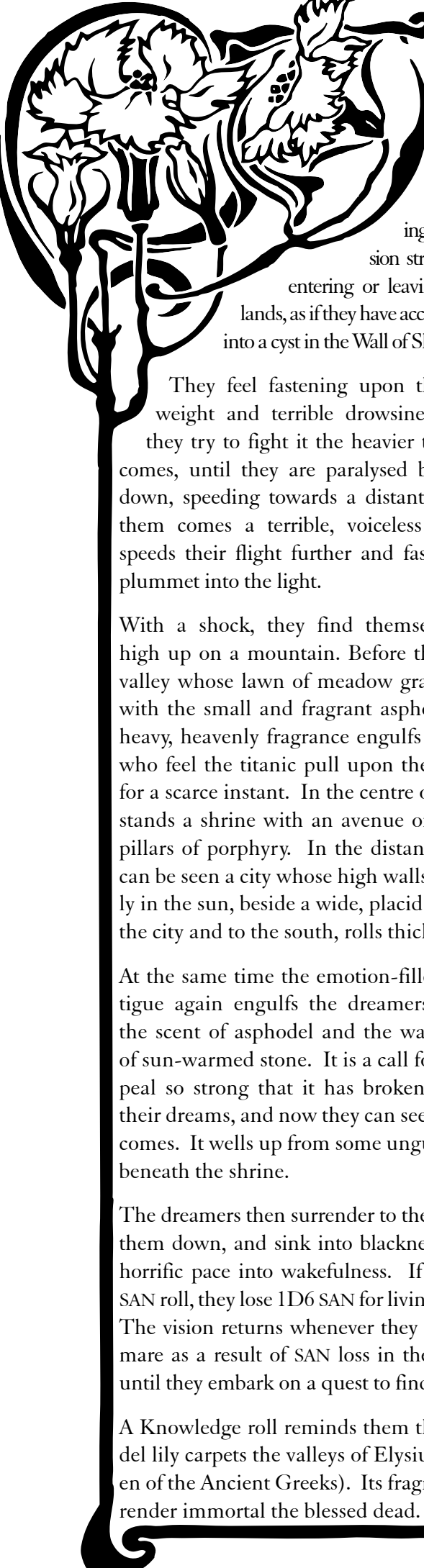
Clear Credit

This scenario was written by Penelope Love
and published in the Chaosium Digest,
Volume 8, number 6 (November 6, 1994).

The PDF layout for this version was designed by
Dean Engelhardt (dean@cs.adelaide.edu.au) in
August, 2011 and published on *Cthulhu Reborn*

This is a copyrighted work but is released for
free distribution under a
Creative Commons License





This scenario assumes the investigators are dreamers. They experience a frightening vision. This vision strikes as they are entering or leaving the Dreamlands, as if they have accidentally broken into a cyst in the Wall of Sleep.

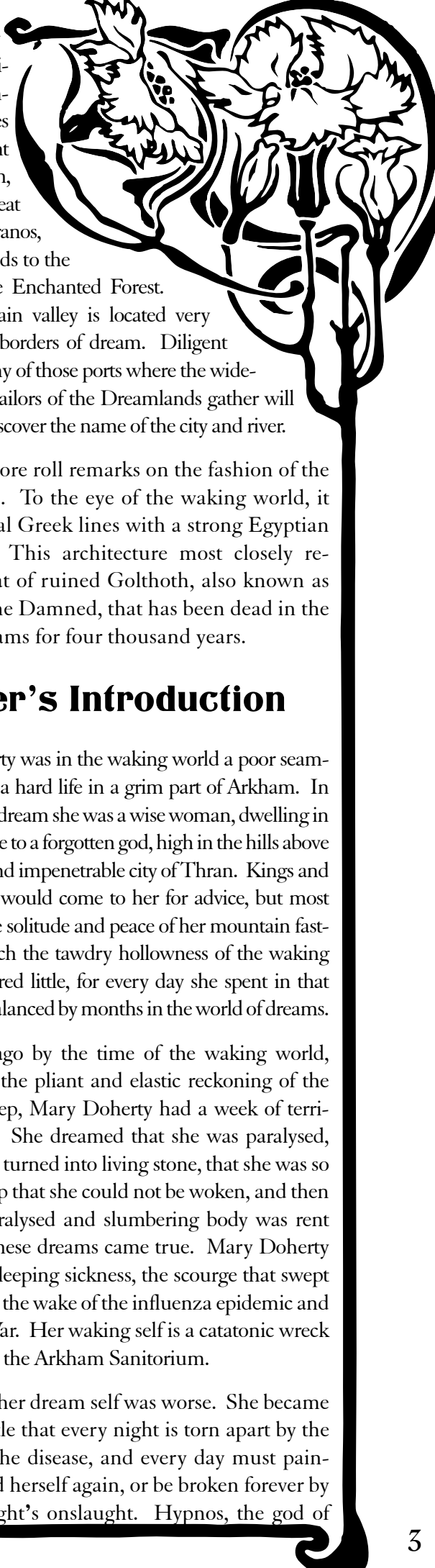
They feel fastening upon them a leaden weight and terrible drowsiness. The more they try to fight it the heavier the weight becomes, until they are paralysed by it and sink down, speeding towards a distant light. Up to them comes a terrible, voiceless anguish that speeds their flight further and faster, until they plummet into the light.

With a shock, they find themselves standing high up on a mountain. Before them spreads a valley whose lawn of meadow grasses is starred with the small and fragrant asphodel lily. The heavy, heavenly fragrance engulfs the dreamers, who feel the titanic pull upon them has abated for a scarce instant. In the centre of the meadow stands a shrine with an avenue of twelve fallen pillars of porphyry. In the distance to the west can be seen a city whose high walls gleam pallidly in the sun, beside a wide, placid river. Beyond the city and to the south, rolls thick forest.

At the same time the emotion-filled wave of fatigue again engulfs the dreamers, mixed with the scent of asphodel and the warm, gritty feel of sun-warmed stone. It is a call for help, an appeal so strong that it has broken through into their dreams, and now they can see from where it comes. It wells up from some unguessable depth beneath the shrine.

The dreamers then surrender to the pull dragging them down, and sink into blackness, falling at a horrific pace into wakefulness. If they fail their SAN roll, they lose 1D6 SAN for living such despair. The vision returns whenever they suffer a nightmare as a result of SAN loss in the Dreamlands, until they embark on a quest to find its source.

A Knowledge roll reminds them that the asphodel lily carpets the valleys of Elysium (the Heaven of the Ancient Greeks). Its fragrance is said to render immortal the blessed dead.



An experienced dreamer recognizes the distant city as Thran, beside the great river Oukranos, and the woods to the south as the Enchanted Forest. The mountain valley is located very close to the borders of dream. Diligent inquiry at any of those ports where the wide-journeying sailors of the Dreamlands gather will otherwise discover the name of the city and river.

A Dream Lore roll remarks on the fashion of the little shrine. To the eye of the waking world, it has Classical Greek lines with a strong Egyptian influence. This architecture most closely resembles that of ruined Golthoth, also known as Golthoth the Damned, that has been dead in the land of dreams for four thousand years.

Keeper's Introduction

Mary Doherty was in the waking world a poor seamstress, living a hard life in a grim part of Arkham. In the world of dream she was a wise woman, dwelling in a small shrine to a forgotten god, high in the hills above the mystic and impenetrable city of Thran. Kings and commoners would come to her for advice, but most she loved the solitude and peace of her mountain fastness, in which the tawdry hollowness of the waking world mattered little, for every day she spent in that world was balanced by months in the world of dreams.

Five years ago by the time of the waking world, rather than the pliant and elastic reckoning of the realm of sleep, Mary Doherty had a week of terrible dreams. She dreamed that she was paralysed, that she was turned into living stone, that she was so deeply asleep that she could not be woken, and then that this paralysed and slumbering body was rent apart. All these dreams came true. Mary Doherty contracted sleeping sickness, the scourge that swept the world in the wake of the influenza epidemic and the Great War. Her waking self is a catatonic wreck immured in the Arkham Sanitorium.

The fate of her dream self was worse. She became a living castle that every night is torn apart by the ravages of the disease, and every day must painfully rebuild herself again, or be broken forever by the next night's onslaught. Hypnos, the god of

sleep, has been attracted by her struggle. The ways of divine love are strange. Hypnos has been unable to totally vanquish her for the illness that has confused her boundaries between waking and sleep also defends her; her torment is her saviour. He has until her waking body dies to overcome her resistance, and is confident of success. When she finally succumbs he shall gather her up in the rest of his train, changing her outward form and soul as suits his whim. She will become immortal, but inhuman.

Only dreamers can find the Silver Key which will release her both from her present and future fates. They have to travel to the location shown by the vision, learn what is happening, then journey to Ilek-Vad and consult with the new King there. Only then can Mary Doherty, the lady of asphodels, be freed.

The Castle Called Sleep

Great is the dreamers' shock on arriving at the valley of their vision, deep in the hills to the east of the deep flowing Oukranos. Nowhere is seen the quiet, desolate shrine, and nowhere lingers the heady scent of asphodels. But from a place deep in the hills, billowing clouds of black rock dust sail, and the deafening grinding of rock on rock can be heard.

The entrance to the valley is blocked by a wall of wrought black rock, dressed in blocks too large for humans to have quarried. Scaling one of the neighbouring hills provides a vantage point. Climbing to the east confirms that the valley is that of the vision, for the Oukranos, Thran and the Enchanted Forest lie exactly as prefigured. But all else is changed.

A forsaken castle fills the valley, reaching four wings into the valleys that climb from it. Two domes rise from the centre of the castle, and an odd, triangular tower juts from the lowest end. During the night, the castle is torn down by invisible presences, starting at the outermost ends of the four wings and working inward, to the accompaniment of the colossal groaning of falling and moving stone, until only the lowest part remains (the part with the triangular tower, which blocks the entrance to the valley). All day, the castle is rebuilt, again by invisible presences, until just before dusk. Then, all but the ends of the four out-flung wings are rebuilt. These remain in ruin. At dawn and dusk there is perhaps an hour of hiatus. Then the endless work begins again.

Mary's dream form lies below. She never entirely succeeds in repairing her hands and feet, the outermost extremities. Her body sits with its head at the mouth of the valley, waiting to be reborn. The shrine, her heart, sits close guarded beneath her left breast.

Ginger Meggs and the Zoogs

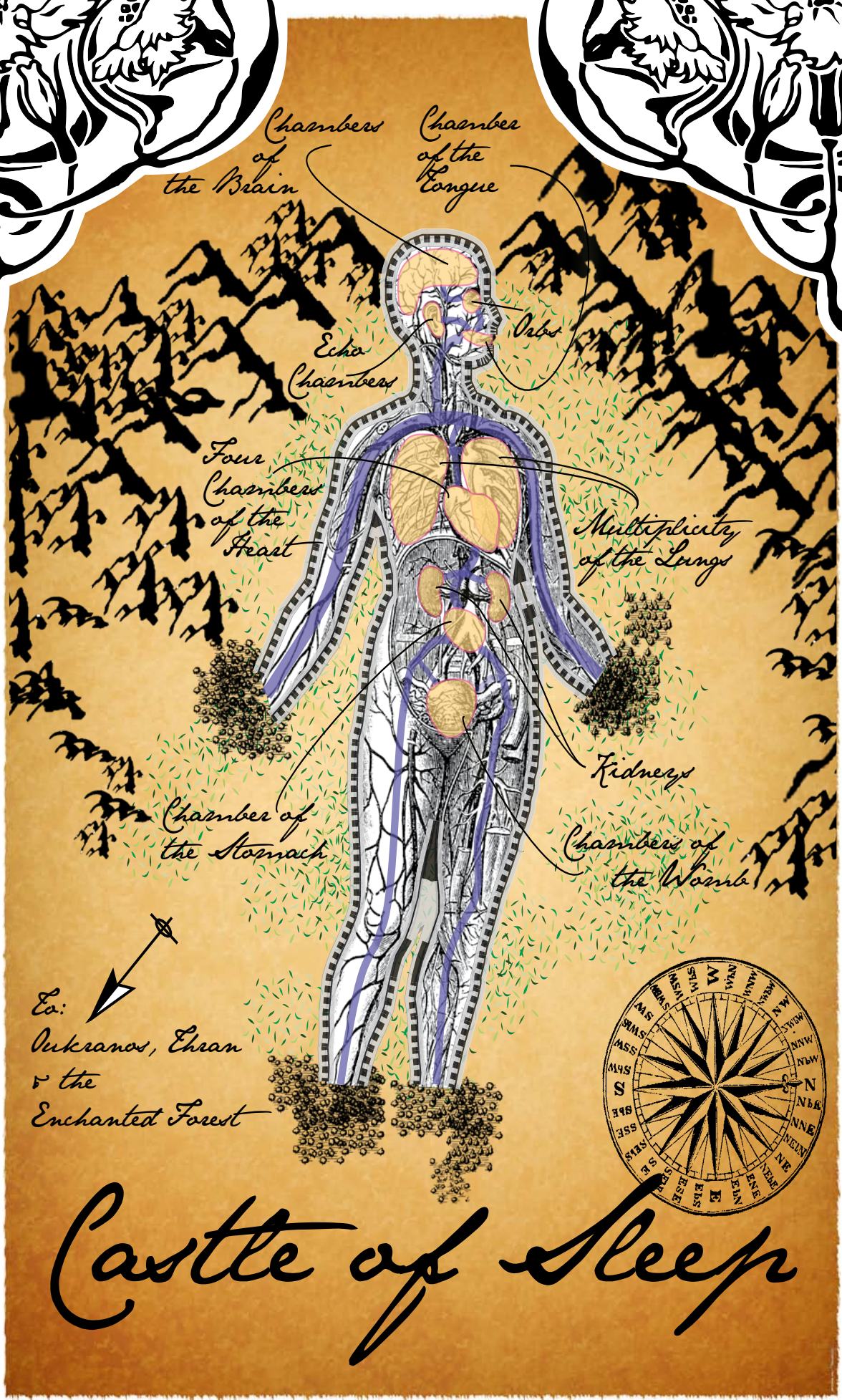
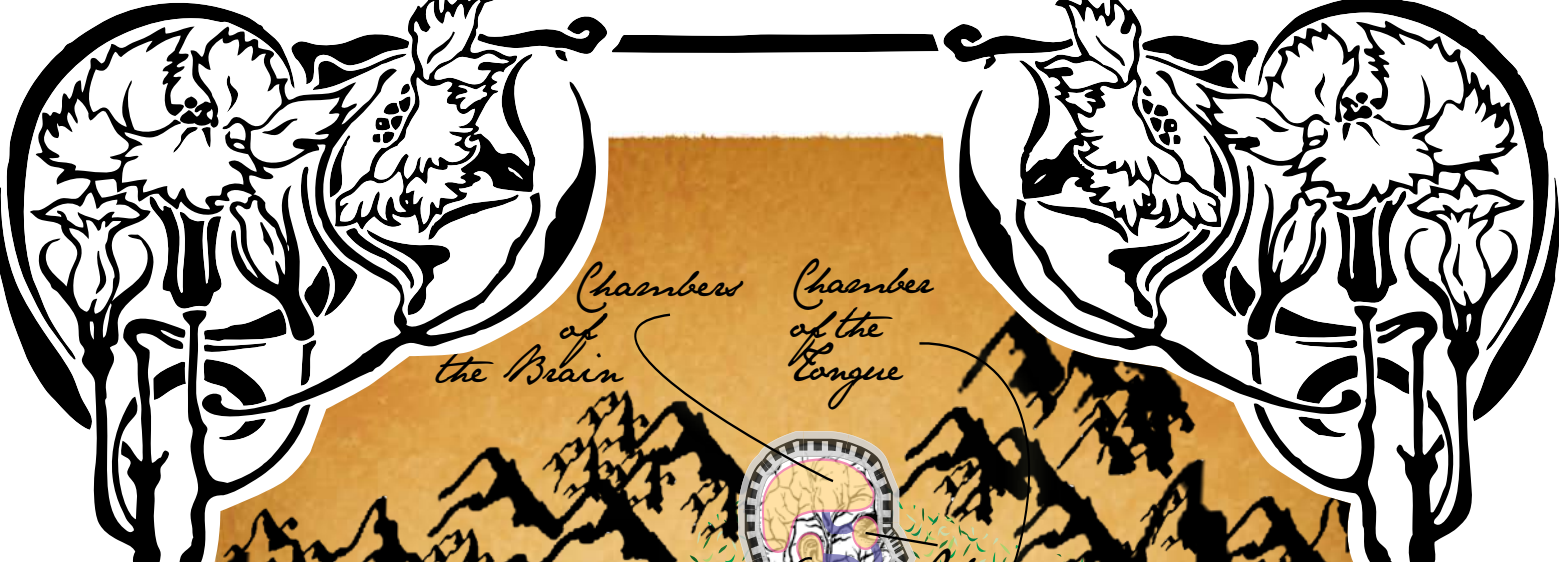
The sentinel of this castle is a starving, bedraggled ginger tom cat called Meggs. At the hour of peace at dusk and dawn, he scrambles from his post at the shrine, looking for something to eat. Unknown to this faithful animal, his movements have been under the scrutiny of a small band of bold Zoogs, whose curiosity has caused them to stray from the boundaries of the nearby Enchanted Forest. Zoogs and the cats of Earth's dreamlands made a truce many centuries ago but this band, seeing a lone cat, succumb to the temptation to attack their traditional enemy.

The dreamers hear the sound of the battle, the yowls of a surprised cat, and the hissing battle-cries of the Zoogs. They arrive on the scene as Meggs is overwhelmed. The victorious Zoogs tie his jaws and paws together, and drag forward fuel, in reparation for the roasting alive of their hated foe.

Zoogs are small and flitting and mean. Their 'weird eyes' can be discerned long before their small, slippery brown outlines can be made out. It has taken six of them to overwhelm one cat, and it would take a dozen to contemplate attacking more than one human. Zoogs like to be sure of these things. The Zoogs flee any attack by the dreamers, but linger resentfully in the nearby woods, and follow them when they depart.

It is assumed the dreamers rescue Meggs. If they do not, ignore all reference to him, and his allies, in the remainder of the scenario. Meggs is very grateful for being rescued. The dream-Meggs is considerably more intelligent than his waking form, but he believes dreamers can understand his speech. He is considerably frustrated when he realizes they do not. Meggs thanks them, then begs both for food and for aid for his mistress. When this fails, he attempts to lure them into the castle, to the shrine, and the folio of paintings that can give them some clues as to the situation.

He travels with the dreamers if he believes they are helping his mistress. Meggs has many contacts amongst the cats of dream and reality, and if separated from the dreamers, can still reach them almost instantly at night, by leaping up to the moon, and then down to earth's dreamlands again.



Chambers of the Brain

Chambers of the Tongue

Echo Chambers

Vals

Four Chambers of the Heart

Multiplicity of the Lungs

Chambers of the Stomach

Kidneys

Chambers of the Womb

Co:
Oukranos, Ebran
& the
Enchanted Forest



Castle of Sleep

Inside The Castle Called Sleep

Major chambers are laid out below. Some organs are left decorously undescribed. The castle lies in the realm of fancy, not biology. They are in the same order as they occur in the body, but not always in exactly the same place.

There are numerous entry points, particularly when the castle is destroyed. Even when whole, entry can be made at the ends of the ruined wings. An hour is barely adequate to explore the castle. Travelling through an area being wrecked requires a Luck roll to avoid falling masonry. If this Luck roll fails, a successful Dodge or Jump is required, or the dreamer suffers 4D6 damage. This area works its way up or down during the time the investigators are exploring. Halls and corridors lie destroyed or whole around this boundary, and any description of the castle must recollect this. All the halls are empty and bare, and the castle echoes with the sounds of the cataclysm, occasionally interspersed with a low but persistent moaning.

The Corridors

There are long, red and purple painted, gloomy hallways that branch off into smaller, pink painted passages at regular intervals, with the occasional entry into ivory halls whose lofty roofs are supported by tapering and fluted columns, and yellow corridors so small that they can only be negotiated sideways. These winding and seemingly endless hallways form a deceptive maze which map-making or Knowledge skills are required to successfully negotiate, if Meggs is not leading them.

The Chamber of the Stomach

The walls and ceiling of this huge and well lit hall are covered with mosaics and frescoes, of feasts; of eating and drinking, making merry; Saturnalia. The light is very yellow. The dreamers feel bloated when they are in the room, and ravenous once they have passed through.

The Chamber of the Womb

This is a chamber with twelve vaulted recesses in its roof. These recesses are covered with a Michelangelo-like painting, of countless cherubs flying amongst brilliant blue skies and stupendous clouds. The walls are of pink-veined marble so thin as to be translucent. The pink-

tinged air is thick, drowsy, and tastes of salt. It seems to flow around and uphold the dreamers, until they feel as if they are floating. This is a strange sensation, but refreshing. Each dreamer gains 1D6 SAN on their first visit to this chamber.

The Multiplicity of the Lungs

This starts as two lofty corridors leading east from the entrance of the head, or very many small and confusing passages leading west from the lower regions. The corridors branch off again and again, becoming smaller and smaller until no human can fit into them at all. They surround rooms that also become smaller and smaller towards the centre of the castle. The chambers are painted a deep, egg-shell blue, and the corridors white. The blue-tinged air is ice cold and feather-light, like champagne. Dreamers are able to move faster than normal — their DEX increases by half. They feel light but fragile. Those who linger long here first act as if intoxicated and then experience severe headaches.

The Chamber of the Tongue

This low roofed, gloomy chamber is floored with a thick, velvet indigo carpet that wriggles voluptuously beneath the investigator's tread. As they pass through the front of the chamber, they have a sour taste in their mouth, through the middle a sweet taste, and through the back of the chamber, a bitter taste. It leads to corridors branching south to the Echo chambers, and west to the chambers of the Giant Crystals and the final Chamber of the Brain. Stairs up lead to the triangular tower.

The Echo Chambers (Ears)

These whorl-corridors lead upwards and downwards, circling outward through 360 degrees. They cannot be circumnavigated by human dreamers. Listen rolls here detect sentences, endlessly re-echoed. The final phrase of each is repeated until it dies below the threshold of human hearing. The words are peculiarly muffled, but distinct, journeying as they do across time, and from the far world of waking.

Man (Deep Irish brogue): "I would expect a dog to be so faithful, but not a cat."

Man (Polish accent. Tenor. Brisk, professional, old): "It is the sleeping sickness. There is no cure."

Man (Irish brogue again): "I shall pray for her soul."

Female (timid, old, Irish): "This is your mother, and Miss Hazelhurst, to visit you, Mary dear."

Female (crisp, old, affectionate Yankee): "Please wake up, Mary. Five years is too long. Five years ..."



The Giant Orbs

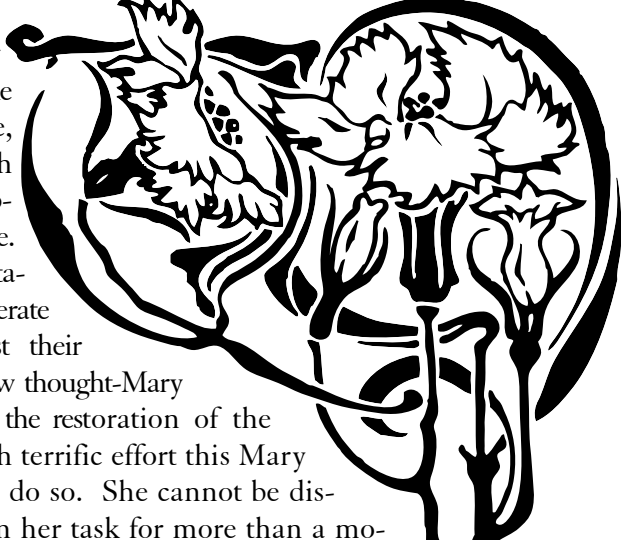
These mammoth, opaque, black crystals sit just beneath the Chamber of the Brain. They are roofed over. Touching them incurs a vision. First is seen the face carved into the back of the porphyry shrine. The face smiles knowingly. Then, as if passing through the thin barrier of stone behind the image, sight falls into a great pit, into blackness plunged beyond penetrating, almost beyond thought. From its very nadir, comes wave after wave of intense and infinite weariness that must nevertheless be fought, fought to the very end, or in this depth the dreamer-castle will not die, but be lost to the thrall of the god of sleep.

The Chamber of the Brain

A putrid stench wafts from this chamber through the rest of the chambers of the head. A low moaning babble fills it.

This vast hall is filled with countless heaped bodies in every stage of decomposition. The floor is slick with rot, the fine draperies and furnishings slimy with decay. This sight costs 1/1D6 SAN.

Each corpse is the same woman, and represents a fragment of Mary's character, thought, intellectual or dreaming resources, that she musters to fight the sleeping sickness. Each decaying aspect is in some measure alive, tortured by the disease that has corrupted Mary's sense of "I", and thrown her separate thoughts onto a ghastly, self-aware, semi-existence. Hence the low and continuous moaning. Even the dust of the hall moves sharply from beneath the investigator's feet.



Each dawn the corpses rise, although without coherent voice. They spontaneously generate from amidst their through a new thought-Mary to supervise the restoration of the castle. With terrific effort this Mary manages to do so. She cannot be distracted from her task for more than a moment (and the result is the same speech as that described in the visit to the waking Mary). At dusk this Mary "dies", to join the rest of the heaped, but definitely stirring, corpses.

The Twin Domes

The southern dome is empty, filled with a dim, supernal light. The northern dome encloses the four chambers of the heart.

The Four Chambers of the Heart

These four lofty, arching chambers are a hall built within the northern dome. Beneath their own roof is a third room, a strong walled, low roofed and heavily fortified vault with only one small, pitch black entrance that humans have to crawl through, one by one. A drowsy blue light plays about the roof of this vault, that contracts into a dense and impenetrable miasma about it when destruction threatens. Within this vault is guarded the shrine.

The Shrine

After crawling through the entrance for longer than they afterwards care to remember, the dreamers find themselves standing in the meadow of their vision, at the end of the avenue of fallen pillars leading to the shrine. The shrine stands before them, surrounded by asphodels nodding in the fresh mountain breeze, and the view is as lofty and pleasant as before.

This view is paper-thin and unreal, held in Mary's heart as a thin thread of return to sanity. Dreamers who stray from the line of fallen pillars and the shrine feel the reality diminishing, and feel the boundaries, the membranes, of dream close about them, thronging thick with unvisioned nightmares. If they do not return at this hint, they wake.

The shrine is built also of the white crystal porphyry, and forms an open veranda with twelve steps leading to it. On the veranda sits a large folio book, its pages idly flapping.

On the back of the veranda wall, facing out over the mountain valley towards the river, is a carving within a round frame very much eroded by weather and age. A Geology roll recollects that porphyry is a very difficult mineral to carve with an exactness, and yet the image is detailed, and without flaw. It is “a beauteous bearded face, a curved smiling face, Olympian brow, and dense locks waving and poppy crowned”.

Beneath the carving, which is so life-like that the dreamers expect the locks of hair to blow in the wind, is a curious thing, a large, key hole. There is no obvious door. The hidden lock cannot be picked. The key hole was shaped by Mary’s subconscious as her only means of escape.

A successful Dream Lore roll decides that the carving depicts Hypnos, the capricious and baleful god of sleep, whose outward guise is “young with a youth that is outside time,” but whose real features are reputed to be born of nightmares.

The Folio of Paintings

Early sketches show details, such as a fallen pillar with grass growing about it, a single lily, parts of the shrine, and views across the mountains and valley. Meggs appears in several of them, at a time when his dream self was fat and full of happiness. A note beneath a view of the shrine reads, “This is the place of which I have first and most remembrance”.

As the book progresses, its sketches become lively paintings. A view of the woods to the south is captioned “the Enchanted Forest”. A view of the city and river has written beneath, “On a clear day, in the distance to the west, can be seen the deep flowing river Oukranos, and the mystic and impenetrable city of Thran, on the fringe of the scented jungle of Kled”.

Another picture depicts two elderly women in black, both beaming. The dress of one of the women is much darned; the dress of the second is of good quality stuff. They sit on a park bench beneath an overcast and sullen sky whose horizon is disfigured by the smoke belched out by sooty, brick mill-piles. A sluggish, black river winds by. The ugliness of the picture shocks the investigators, as they realize they are looking upon the waking world. There is nothing ugly in the land of dreams. The sketch is labelled

with an exactness that strikes the reader as sarcastic, “Mother and Miss Hazelhurst at the delightful Mills Gate Park, Arkham, Massachusetts. Mother has just remarked on the beauty of the day.”

The next painting shows a smiling, bearded man, splendidly dressed in crimson, silver and purple hues. He has set aside his phent-headress, revealing a prematurely bald head. He sits beneath the shade of a damask canopy fringed with cloth-of-gold, down hill from the shrine. Bowls of fruit, wine in a ruby flask, and crystal glasses are laid out invitingly. Behind him, mellow rays of sun fall sweepingly between a glorious vista of clouds. Alongside this sketch is written, “Once a year Aubeg, the king of Ilek-Vad passes by, on his pilgrimage to the temple of loveliness at Kiran over the crystal clear Oukranos. It is he who told me that people can only enter within Thran’s alabaster walls if they tell the sentries three dreams beyond belief.”

The second to last painting is a loving depiction of the carving on the back wall of the veranda. A note beside the painting reads “The name of this god is forgotten, but surely he is all that is good and beautiful, whose worshippers created so lovely a dwelling place”. But there is one noticeable difference. Nowhere is the key-hole depicted. The wall beneath the carving is a smooth, unyielding surface of stone.

The final painting shows Mary sleeping on the sheltered steps of the shrine. The carved face of Hypnos overlooks her, bland and insufferably guileful, and watchful Meggs sits before. Beneath the sketch runs the faint, pencilled phrase, “Watchers till she wakes”. Although this is apparently in Mary’s style, any close examination by an investigator with an Art skill decides it is a cunning forgery. The hand that drew it is undeniably masculine.

Visiting Mary In The Waking World

This section may not come into play, relying as it does on dreamers making the decision to wake and investigate in the waking world. Keepers should judge if their players need, or would enjoy, the investigation, and wake them if appropriate. Dreamers must make a Dreaming roll to recollect their dream on waking.

This investigation is by tracing the waking world picture in the folio book. The folio book does not appear with the dreamers in the waking world as its waking world form already exists.

Mills Gate Park, Arkham, Massachusetts

This is in the heart of the poor, industrial district of Arkham, below Federal Hill. Streets are narrow and filled with a furtive, ragged crowd, both native poor and recent immigrants. A nasty, heathenish sort of church squats abandoned on the hill-top. Decaying houses overhang the sloping streets. Washing dirtying in the morbid haze flaps lethargically between their filthy facades. The winding Mistakonic takes on a sickly stench and nauseous hue, fed by streams of effluent from numerous pipes that jut from the dye-factories and knitting mills.

Inquiry rapidly tracks down the two women pictured in the folio book. Mrs Doherty, Miss Hazelhurst, neighbours, the local doctor or the parish priest can inform the investigators of Mary's fate. A successful Credit Rating or Psychoanalysis roll, or a letter from Dr. Malkowski, admits them to the sanatorium.

Mary Doherty



Mary sits by day in a large, padded chair by an upstairs window. Mary's cat, a large ginger tom called Meggs, followed her to the sanatorium. The staff adopted this useful animal as a mascot and rodent-catcher. When not thus engaged, he waits besides Mary, causing much remark by visitors. Mary's mother visits on the weekends. Father Doherty passes by on his rounds on Sundays.

Mary is twenty-five years old and dark haired, her young face placid and unlined but also expressionless. Her mouth is slack, her neck crooked, and her hands and feet clenched so tightly that they cannot be unwound. Her gaze is fixed on the window.

If investigators succeed in communicating with her, her inward concentration is snapped. Mary, the real Mary, flares a moment in her heavy lidded gaze. As if propelled by a forward motion too great for her to resist, she springs from the chair, and grasps them, her hands unclenching to clutch them. "Help me," she screams, "Find the Silver Key. I AM the Castle Called Sleep. I am destroying me." Then she sub-

sides back into her former stupor, her intense, watchful, absent, alertness.

Mrs Doreen Doherty



Mrs Doherty is a widow, and Mary her only surviving child. She dresses in black. She has prematurely white hair and a lined face that makes her forty years seem sixty. Her husband worked at the mill, but was killed in an industrial accident twelve years ago. If the investigators pose as gentlefolk making inquiries into the disposition of charitable funds they will have no trouble eliciting information from Mrs Doherty, who recommends distribution of alms to the Arkham Sanatorium.

Mary was a quiet, introspective and imaginative child. She did not do well at school, and was often whipped for day-dreaming. However one of her teachers, Miss Hazelhurst, befriended her and encouraged her to sketch. Mrs Doherty could not afford to keep Mary in school after her husband died.

Mary's sketches were of unusual source, her mother says proudly. She would just draw things "from dreams she said". Mrs Doherty lets the investigators look at her daughter's sketches, but refuses to let this precious memento out of her possession. The folio book of their dreams is a tattered, cheaply bound sketch pad, whose pages are already yellowing. The paintings are pencil-sketches drawn with real, although untutored, skill. The drawings are identical to those in the folio, except that the last picture does not exist (SAN 1/1D2).

Mary contracted the sleeping sickness when she was twenty. She complained for the week prior of bad dreams. The nightmares were of paralysis, of becoming stone and being torn apart by forces beyond her control. They terrified her. The last morning she could simply not be roused. Dr. Malkowski said that it was catatonia. Mrs Doherty could not afford to care for Mary at home. Both the doctor and Father O'Brien, the parish priest, counselled that the Arkham Sanatorium was the best option. Mary was a loving daughter and a hard worker. She never complained about the blows life dealt her. Mrs Doherty's eyes fill with tears as she remembers her.

Miss Hazelhurst



Miss Hazelhurst lives in pleasant rooms on College Hill. She is a ferocious, nimble tongued, sprightly spinster who has devoted her life to cramming appreciation of Art into underprivileged children. She has a private, diminishing income to supplement her charitable works.

Miss Hazelhurst recalls Mary as a bright girl who wanted to be a painter. This was an unattainable ambition “in her circumstances”. Miss Hazelhurst sighs, and mentions that she tried to encourage her towards a more realistic ambition, to go to trade school. But Mary’s talent lay more towards the fantastic. She asks rhetorically if the investigators can see the artist of those sketches drawing the latest fashions for newspaper advertisements

Miss Hazelhurst would like to attribute the sketches to nothing more than a vivid talent for fancy, but has a dim suspicion (perhaps no more than wishful thinking) that something deep and fabled might underlie it. She was deeply saddened when Mary contracted sleeping sickness, but hopes that the inner life that carried the girl through life’s trials sustains her still.

Father O’Brien

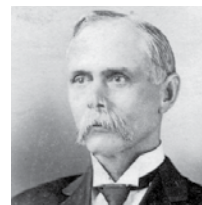


A stout, florid, black-headed and bull-necked Irishman, Father O’Brien visits Mary every Sunday, along with other of his parishioners at the hospital. He has known her since childhood and disapproves of her. He thinks Mary has a pagan imagination. She was a quiet girl, he agrees, but she often said things that disconcerted him, and laughed at him, even looking down at the Church of Rome from some fey, lofty perch of her own. He is concerned that beneath the mask of her disease, her irreligious imagination yet runs riot. He nightly prays for her soul.

Dr. Malkowski

This elderly, discreet and basically decent man wears a dusty, black frock-suit whose collar and cut bespeak an earlier era. He has a wispy, white beard and a strong Polish accent, despite arriving in America a decade before the Great War. Prejudice against him, as an immigrant and a Jew, bars him from any prosperous status, but he is content with his busy practice amongst the poor of Federal Hill.

He is able to give inquirers general details about the sleeping sickness. It first appeared in Vienna in 1917, and is caused by a ‘devastatingly infectious’ microbe, ‘Encephalitis lethargica’. It has a high mortality rate, and distressing after-effects — a form of ‘paralysis agitans’ known as ‘Parkinsonism’ which causes muscular rigidity and paralysis. If convinced that the investigators have a genuine interest in Mary (Credit Rating or Oratory skills), he can be guided to talk of her. Her symptoms were from the first severe, and he now classes her as incurable. He notes that her sickness was prefigured by a week of nightmares, a oft-noted symptom of the disease, and mentions his theory about her (see the newspaper article at the end of the scenario).



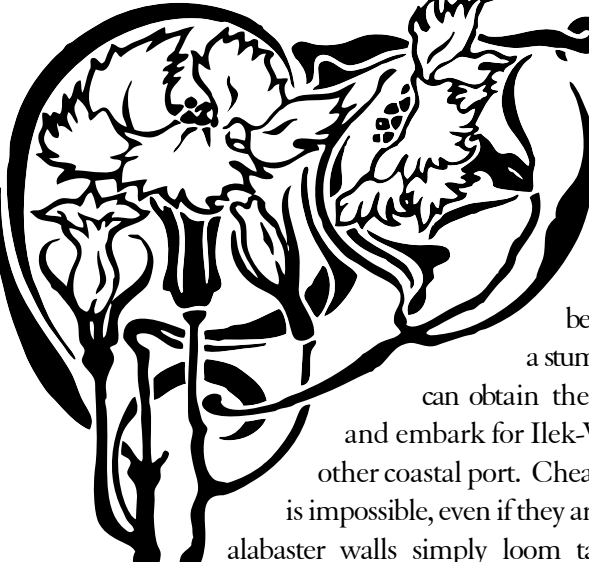
Dr. Malkowski has some unconventional notions about dreams and fevers, born of a one-time patient of his, the late Walter Gilman (see Lovecraft’s *Dreams in the Witch House*). He is tempted to talk about these with sympathetic listeners. He believes that rare dreamers can, intentionally or not, trespass into other realms of existence in their dreams, and that experience of these other realms is not good for the body or the soul.

Sleeping Sickness

Sleeping sickness swept the world in the aftermath of the Great War, following in the track of the influenza pandemic. It started in Vienna in 1917, and disappeared in 1927. It was called ‘sleepy sickness’ in Britain and ‘sleeping sickness’ in the U.S.A. Influenza killed nineteen million, sleeping sickness roughly five million, world-wide.

Most sufferers died during the initial onslaught of the disease, in a wakefulness no drug could end, or asleep in comas too deep to be revived. Those who survived had to wait forty years for L-DOPA, a drug which sometimes alleviated the worst symptoms, but was certainly not a cure. Probably the most frightening aspect of sleeping sickness is that it destroyed the control of the conscious “I” over the body, and disabled sense of time and reality.

Modern survivors of sleeping sickness, and their reactions to L-DOPA, are depicted in Oliver Sack’s haunting book, “Awakenings”. Of particular note is the tragic story of Rosie R., whose nightmares inspired Mary Doherty’s dreams. A second source for this scenario is Kipling’s short story, “The End of the Passage”, concerning the fate of a dreamer who is hunted by ‘a blind face that cries and cannot wipe its eyes, a blind face that chases him down corridors’ until finally he can no longer escape its pursuit.



Dreamers can only enter Thran if they tell the red-clad sentries three dreams beyond belief. If this proves a stumbling block, they can obtain their information, and embark for Ilek-Vad, from some other coastal port. Cheating the sentries is impossible, even if they are slain. Thran's alabaster walls simply loom taller and more threatening, blocking out the rays of the sun until they have blocked all, and the dreamer is rewarded for their duplicity by being returned unceremoniously to the waking world. What exactly comprises a dream 'beyond belief' is open to question, but can be taken as three successful Dream Lore skill rolls if invention otherwise fails.

Within are sun-gilded towers and antique houses. Cobbled streets wend pleasantly but firmly to a harbour where bearded sailors swap yarns of distant shores. Ships set out daily for ports whose names are a litany of the fantastic, to ill-omened Dylath Leen or vapour-built Serannian, or even to fabled Cathuria, said to lie beyond the boundaries of the world.

Inquiries about a porphyry shrine in the hills to Thran's east need to be forwarded with wine, for only the well-liquored dare talk about it. Best in this pursuit is the rare and heady chartreuse of Sarrub. Second best, but considerably cheaper, is the heavier vintage vended by merchants of Dylath Leen, purchased from hump-turbanned and wide-mouthed sailors who fail to give a name to the port from which their sinister, black galleys embark.

Their informant, finally relenting, hiccups that the porphyry shrine is in a distant and untra-

velled part of the hills. It was built so long ago that its use and the god it honours have been forgotten. But the people of Thran are wary of it still, for they know that "all which is forgotten need not necessarily be dead".

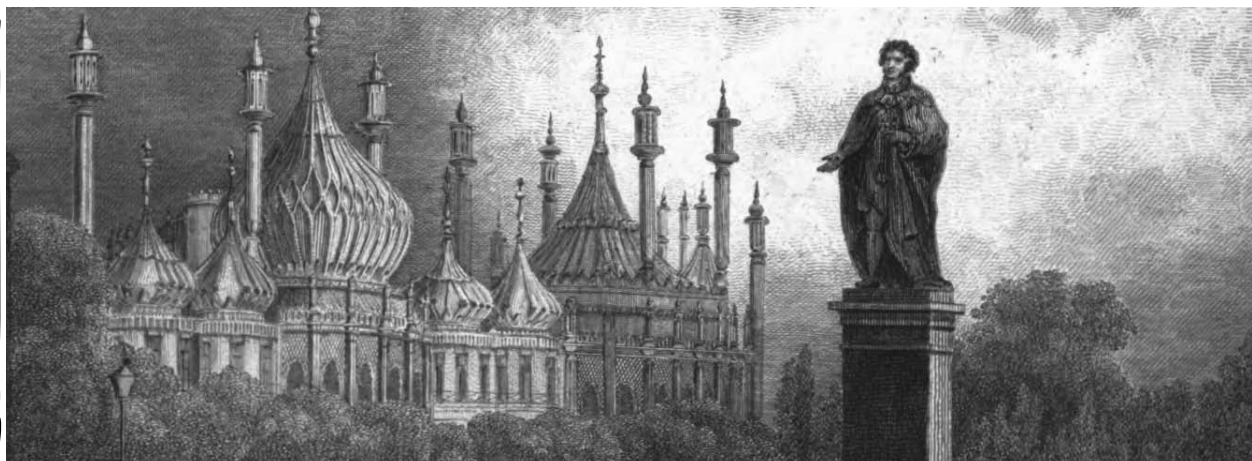
Strange reports have filtered down from the hills in past decades. Rumour says that the shrine has vanished and in its place has appeared the dreadful Castle Called Sleep. Informants fall silent on pronouncing this name. Eyes darting around as if in sudden terror of discovery, they decline any further answers and hurry away.

The common people know nothing of the pilgrimage of the king of Ilek-Vad. Only Thran's priests are able to tell the dreamers of the centuries that have elapsed since Aubeg the Bald travelled along mountain passes to his temple of loveliness in the foothills of Kiran.

Inquiries after a Silver Key draw blank looks from all except those from Ilek-Vad. Citizens and sailors of this city declare with certainty that it is in the possession of their king.

Zoogs and their Malice

The flitting Zoogs, who have their own paths into Thran, follow the dreamers, inspired by anger at their interference. The last time Zoogs followed a dreamer thus, it was into the town of Ulthar. This sparked the war between cats and Zoogs that ended in a humiliating defeat for the Zoogs. The Zoogs therefore limit their activities to setting free several tame magah birds. These flamboyantly coloured birds have a hypnotic song which is of no



danger if kept caged. If freed however, they sing to solitary people, and whilst they are hypnotized, the bird hastily steals a tasty morsel — an eye, or perhaps a snippet of tongue — and flies away. They cause a good deal of alarm in the hitherto placid alley-ways and tranquil taverns of Thran.

Thran's cats become suddenly militant, patrolling in bands at night. Meggs is chief amongst these activities. However none in Thran speak the language of cats, so the exact cause of the alarm cannot be discovered. Thran's cats are less organized and numerous than the cats of Ulthar, and the Zoogs wary and exceedingly low of profile. The cats do not succeed in catching the Zoogs, who embark with the dreamers to Ilek-Vad.

The Zoogs spy on the dreamers. Zoogs understand human language, but cannot speak it. If convinced the dreamers quest involves either the king of Ilek-Vad or meddling with the boundaries between sleep and waking, they spread gossip of this to the ghouls of the Underworld. Several ghouls, alarmed by their exaggerations, visit the dreamers by stealth and at night. Their intentions are basically friendly — which for these rubbery and loathsome creatures mean they will not devour the dreamers out-of-hand. The Zoogs in their spite told the ghouls that these dreamers were as great and as terrible as the king of Ilek-Vad. As the dreamers are unlikely even to understand the glibbering and meeping that passes for speech amongst ghouls, it becomes rapidly obvious to the ghouls that they have been had.

If the dreamer's reaction to the ghouls is shrieks and immediate flight, the ghouls lose their heads and give chase in the excitement. If they come across the dreamer in a particularly isolated place, or the dreamer is particularly plump or otherwise succulent looking, they may decide that the opportunity is too great to miss. Otherwise, after their failed attempt at communication the ghouls — who are in any case wary, for the graveyards of the Upper Dreamlands are traditionally claimed by their rivals, the red-footed wamps — shake their heads in bafflement, and lope off. This communication should include an attempt at miming the identity their source of information, the Zoogs.

Dreamers who repeat the names of "Pickman" and "Carter" earn the ghoul's respect (these names, and their importance to ghouls, can be recollected with a successful Cthulhu Mythos or Dream Lore roll). Repeating such names also ensures that the ghouls cease taking those liberties which even the best bred ghoul takes with human companions, such as nibbling their ears, speculatively pinching

their meatier limbs, or stroking their hair as if in wistful contemplation of their toothsome brains.

Zoogs and ghouls have no separate existence in the worlds of waking and dreaming. They cross from one realm to the other as the whim takes them. They are indifferent to Hypnos, and he is indifferent to them. Both Zoogs and ghouls therefore have certain advantages as allies, if they can be but persuaded to the task.

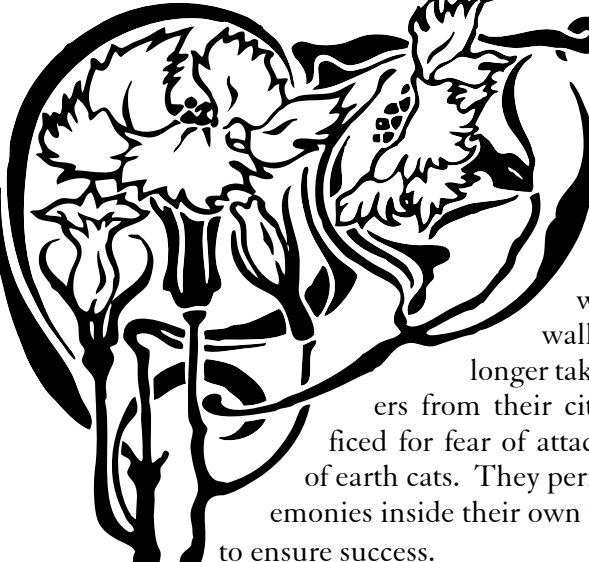
Other Threats

Dreamers whose inquiries are too long-winded, or too open, encounter several of those hump-turbanned merchants from the moon, who have heard of their quest and seek, out of pure hatred of Ilek-Vad's king, to thwart them. These merchants imply that they have travelled in many far lands, and seen many strange things, and that they may have the information the dreamers seek. This is a baseless promise. They seek only an excuse to draw out a ruby bottle of strong-scented, spiced, yellow wine, and in false camaraderie, encourage the dreamer to drink from it.

Being inhuman these merchants can gulp this without harm. Any dreamer foolish enough to even sip this heady liquor, wakens strapped to the back of a zebra whom the tittering merchants are goading across country towards Dylath Leen. There they will board a sinister galley propelled forwards by ranks of oars too vast and mechanical of stroke to be handled by anything sane, and journey across the voids of space, to endure a brief and unscheduled tour of the city of the moon-beasts, on the dark side of the moon. Their folly costs their friends some trouble to rescue them.

Dylath Leen knows of the proclivities of these merchants, but ignores them as long as their evil remains invisible, for this dark litten city loves the rubies the merchants bring, and the heady and potent moon-wine. However, if the dreamers bring an open charge before the city's rulers, they act, reluctantly.

If they fail to recover their friend before the galley disembarks, the dreamers must hire their own bright-sailed sloop and follow (first ensuring the hull of the sloop is well daubed with Space Mead, else they will fall between the Basalt Pillars that mark the end of the world, instead of taking off into space as the galley of the moon-beasts does. The shock of the fall wakes them). If all else fails, they can rely on Meggs and his cohorts to gather them up in their packed, furry ranks, and leap for the moon. Such a journey arrives just outside the city of the moon-beasts, and involves a raid into the heart of the city whilst the moon-beasts are quiescent.



The moon-beasts have learnt since last immuring a dreamer within their walls, and no longer take such dreamers from their city to be sacrificed for fear of attack by an army of earth cats. They perform their ceremonies inside their own walls, in order to ensure success.

But, as said previously, the cats of Thran are less organized and numerous than the cats of Ulthar. They are unable to muster an army, but only a raiding party. The party, be it solely human or accompanied by cats, must sneak through the city, rescue the prisoner from the lightless dungeon in which he or she is incarcerated, and return again, braving at least one moon-beast sentry. Further details of the city of the moon-beasts can be found in “The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath”, or in abbreviated format in the ‘Dreamlands’ source-book.


The last journey through the country to either the boat, or the cats that promise their return, is dogged by a threat from the cats from Saturn, that also haunt the moon’s dark side. The dreamer with the lowest Luck must succeed in a Luck roll, or the cats from Saturn make good their threat, leaping from crag to crag in pursuit.

A BOAT TO ILEK-VAD

Ships from Ilek-Vad are regular and welcome visitors to Thran. A ship from that city docks within a week of the dreamers’ arrival. The saturnine but capable captain agrees to a return passage for a modest payment, and gives them a good meal in a sea-side inn whilst haggling over the exact amount.

A new king rules in Ilek-Vad now, says the captain cautiously, although he is shy of naming him, and shushes any dreamer who does. “A dreamer like yourselves,” his sailors mutter in response to successful appeal (especially if this appeal is well-lubricated with the aforementioned wines of Dylath Leen or better still, of Sarrub). “He created out of his dreams a city so beautiful that the gods stole it from him.”

It is bad luck to talk of their king, or of the twilight city he created, for by evil chance the gods



might overhear such gossip, and visit Ilek-Vad to see if he now dwells in another city as wonderful as the first. These are of course, the meek, mild gods of Earth’s dreamlands, not the Outer Gods, whose soul and messenger is the crawling Chaos Nyarlathotep. The Outer Gods have no interest in merely human cities. Sailors and captain agree that their new king is aloof, but just and fair. The sailors greet display of the folio of paintings with awe, an emotion echoed by all people of their city. Ilek-Vad remembers part of its story.

The lady of asphodels is a legend of long ago. On his last pilgrimage to his jasper temple, built over the rushing Oukranos, King Aubeg found the entrance to her mountain valley had been barred with a wall of rock, the flank of the Castle Called Sleep. Aubeg the Bald ruled centuries before, the sailors explain. But they are positive that the new King will help in their quest, in honour of the long-gone King whose advisor she was, and who sincerely and deeply mourned her strange vanishing.

The Voyage to Ilek-Vad

The voyage is favoured by a brisk and high-spirited wind. The ship sets out of Thran’s harbour with the crew in splendid humour. The sneaky, thieving presence of the Zoogs may mar this. The ship’s cat, initially inclined to resent Megg’s trespass, is soon won over in face of this common threat. Two cats cannot successfully hunt down six Zoogs in a habitation that offers so many nooks and crannies as even the best-made ship. If dreamers aid them with lights and company, the cats are bolder, and perhaps the numbers of Zoogs can be whittled down, although the Keeper should ensure at least one remains to be questioned in Ilek-Vad. Dreamers gain 1 SAN point for each Zoog killed, for the Zoogs have been a persistent nuisance on their journey.

Dreamers can make experience rolls, as well as hit-point and SAN increases, as five weeks pass. When they arrive in port, the ship's cat stands guard on the ship whilst Meggs races off to alert the chief of the cats of Ilek-Vad to the Zoogs. This chief places guards upon all ropes and gang-planks coming from the ship, and then consults with the city's king, politely waiting after until the dreamers have had their meeting.

The people of Ilek-Vad are a reserved but confident race. Once they know of the folio of paintings, they make haste to bring the dreamers before their king.

Ilek-Vad

Ilek-Vad bears more than a passing resemblance to Arkham. The steeply climbing hills are terraced with gambrel peaked houses in varying states of pleasing disrepair, whilst mansions of undeniably Georgian stamp stand proudly rank on rank at the crest of the town, just as they do on College Hill. Cats potter along the roof-trees, and lend the pleasure of their graceful forms to both street-scape and hearth. But Ilek-Vad also boasts a quiet harbour, views of cliff and ocean, sparkling fountains and splendid promenades, as well as monuments, towers and halls too fair — and with too many impossible angles employed in their construction — to be conceived in any but the world of dream.

The light that gilds Ilek-Vad hints at forgotten things, and tactfully glosses over those shadows that are too deep to be sane or healthful. This is particularly true in the cathedral stillness of late afternoon, and from certain vantage points on high and lonely terraces. Then it seems that Ilek-Vad broods not merely over the gulfs of the ocean, but equally over those hoary and immemorial gulfs whose walls touch on eternity. The sweeping light makes visionaries feel that they are “not far, from that fixt mass whose sides the ages are”. On these terraces, and at these times, walks in solitude the city's king, Randolph Carter.

The Gardens and the Banquet

After enjoying the sunset, Randolph Carter leads his new acquaintances into the gardens of the palace for the evening meal. The gardens form a fragrant oasis, shadowed by hoary oaks, saplings of poplar, apple and cinnamon, and bushes of yew cut into cunning topiaries. The ground is carpeted by fragrant grasses and wild-flowers. Innumerable stone walks wind through the gardens, as if beckoning dreamers to explore their delightful prospects, and little

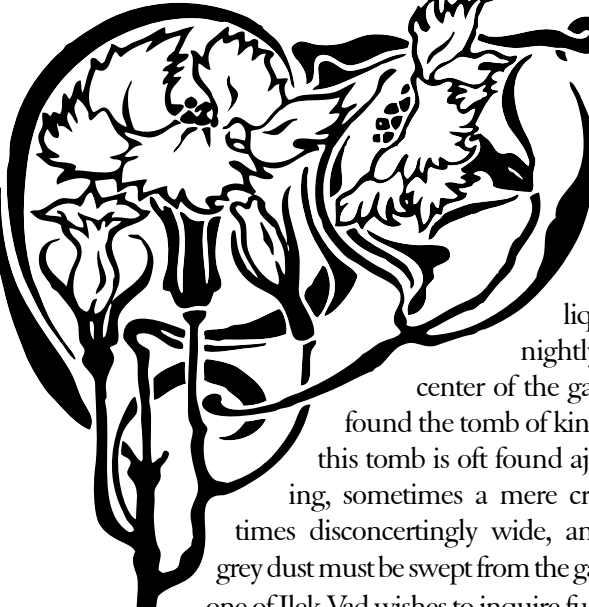
The New King

Randolph Carter sits on the opal throne of Ilek-Vad now, as is rumoured by faithful friends back in the waking world. His face is sallow, long and lantern jawed, his eyes by turns sombre with phantasy, and sparkling with enthusiasm at commonplace things. The garments that clothe his lean body, although of dreamlands manufacture, bear yet a startling resemblance to those of a Yankee gent.

Randolph Carter appears as an ascetic man in his late forties, without any impairment of mental or physical activity. He is an occult scholar of considerable, perhaps matchless, skill. He has a dry and mischievous sense of humour, and a passionate interest in knowledge, all knowledge, be it science or fantasy — indeed he tolerates no distinction between these two equally valid branches of experience. He hides his enthusiasm from casual visitors behind a detached and ironic pose. He is a fascinating companion when this shield, born of diffidence and intolerance of fools, is brought down. Then he converses learnedly on all topics in the realm of dream and waking. Just do not tempt him to poesy with the wines of Dylath Leen. He has tasted them before and, as he says wryly, found the after-taste ‘unpalatable’.

Carter led the Dream Quest in search of Unknown Kadath. He saw the tenebrous chasms of nightmare gape open before and (more disturbingly) behind his embattled army. He also saw service throughout the Great War. He knows which horrors he prefers. His friend King Kuranes, who rules over distant and immortal Celephais where people never age, scorned the waking world when he had a human body with which to explore it, and now bitterly regrets the vanished earth. But Randolph Carter lost his ability to dream at the age of thirty, and spent twenty, fruitless years unlocking the occult secrets of the waking world so he could return again. The price of dreams is to live close to the border of nightmare, but tedium haunts the waking world. Carter values wonder over ‘worship of the real’. “Calm, lasting beauty, comes only in dream” he observes, contentedly.

Carter takes a gentle pride in his lost, twilight city, and no longer longs for it as he once did. He did not create Ilek-Vad, but his presence changes the city by slow degrees towards his ideal. He is careful to ensure that Ilek-Vad will never be as lovely as his first city, else he might tempt the gods a second time. This is his second piece of advice, “Don't trespass on the gods,” he says, “For although you can scorn with impunity the meek, mild gods of Earth's dreamlands, you never know when the Outer Gods might interfere, through their soul and messenger, the crawling Chaos Nyarlathotep.” Before the gods human dreamers are powerless, he warns. The only escape if you find yourself pitted against an outraged god is to flee into the waking world.



stone bridges arch artfully across a splashing stream. A nightingale's liquid song rises nightly from the center of the gardens, where is found the tomb of kings. The door of this tomb is oft found ajar in the morning, sometimes a mere crack, but sometimes disconcertingly wide, and footprints of grey dust must be swept from the garden paths. No one of Ilek-Vad wishes to inquire further into this.

The banquet held to honour the dreamers' arrival is of many courses, none overly rich or ostentatious, and all presented with attention as much to appearance as to the palate. Carter eats sparingly, enjoying the sights and scents of the garden as much as the tastes of the dishes. A sleek, white, elderly cat by the name of Wasp, the chief of the cats of Ilek-Vad, attends him. Tame magah birds preen in aviaries set amid the greenery, and iridescent, carnivorous fish rise in the stream for scraps. In the varied repast there is only one lack, strange to a coastal city. "I don't eat sea-food," Randolph Carter says, shortly, if pressed by impolite inquiry. The meal finishes with a light and frothy confection that tastes remarkably like chocolate ice-cream. The attendants then withdraw, and Carter asks after the reason for the dreamers' visit.

The Quest for the Silver Key

Carter's formidable intellect arrives at the correct conclusion if the dreamers have not yet guessed the history of the Castle Called Sleep and the threat that now hovers over it. The key-hole the dreamers describe to him clinches his supposition. "There can be only one goal for your quest," he says after considerable thought, "and that is the Silver Key".

Randolph Carter does not or rather, cannot, keep the Key in his possession, even though it is his inheritance. It lies hidden in the gulf between the dreaming and waking worlds. He can help the dreamers reach it, but is unwilling to personally retrieve it. He has used the Silver Key already, and feels it is tempting the intervention of the Outer Gods to use it a second time. He has fallen foul of them once before (or rather, of their soul and messenger the Crawling Chaos Nyarlathotep), and blanches yet at the memory. He also has a sneaking suspicion that the so-called meek and mild gods of Earth's dreamland plan to steal this second city from him if

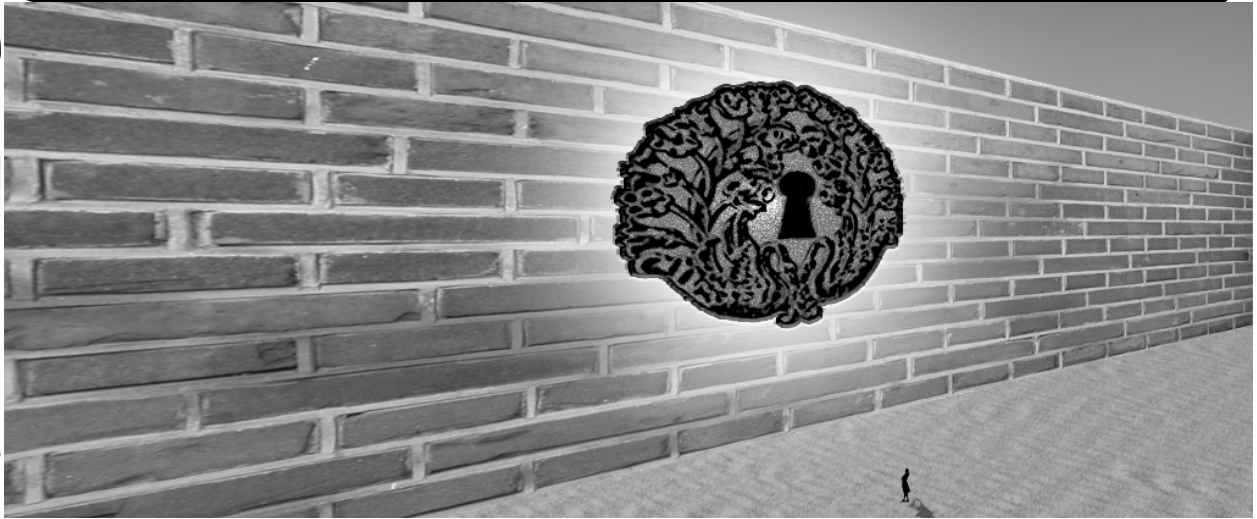
he but once departs it. The king owes it to his people to remain.

Carter also has concerns about the shrine. "That is not dead which can eternal lie," he says, in grim echo of the warning given them in Thran. He recognizes the god of the shrine from the folio painting. He explains that Hypnos is neither of the nameless Outer Gods or the little gods of Earth's Dreamlands, but one of the inexplicable Elder Gods, long thought to have vanished from the realms of dream. Hypnos rules over the boundary between waking and sleep, and has a sinister interest in dreamers. The plight of a dreamer beset with sleeping sickness must be peculiarly perilous. The god can be harmed only by people or weapons that exist in the real and waking world simultaneously, that is only by dreamers. He adds as an afterthought that Hypnos cannot harm dreamers whose waking self is dead.

He asks Wasp to have Meggs brought before him, and the trio have a long conversation. Meggs is extremely relieved to finally find someone who understand him, and has a lot to get off his chest, starting with the strange metamorphosis of his mistress and ending with the Zoogs. Carter loves cats, and is prepared to respect Megg's judgement when Meggs declares his mistress's plight is not entirely hopeless.

He asks if the dreamers are prepared to pay the cost to grasp the Silver Key. It is the key to all knowledge and mystery, but should only be used once by any one person (for the reasons he gives above). The price of ending the siege on the Castle Called Sleep is to deny the dreamer's own desires. Also, the key lies hid in the heart of Hypnos's realm, and the god may make things difficult for the searchers. If they are unable to grasp the Silver Key then death and madness would be a blessing. At the very least the seeker must be 'strong of soul', he says, glancing worriedly at the dreamer with the lowest SAN.

At least one of the dreamers presumably continues to be moved by humanitarian instinct, and still insists on attempting a rescue. Randolph Carter finally relents. The gaze he gives this determined dreamer is admiring. Their courage earns his respect. After this adventure, he offers to teach this dreamer the language of cats.



Randolph Carter has rooms prepared for them at the palace, and assures them of his hospitality. Then he leaves them alone in the scented garden to discuss everything that they have learned.

The Fate of the Zoogs

Randolph Carter modestly admits to speaking the languages of cats, Zoogs and ghouls. He is angry at the Zoogs attack on Meggs, in clear violation of the treaty that he was instrumental in creating, but is also inclined to be amused. No harm has been done, the Zoogs are now trapped on the ship, and he can direct an army of cats on board as he wishes.

The following morning, this army of cats drives the Zoogs from their hiding places. The remaining Zoogs, hating daylight, hating cats, and unable to swim, are driven forwards to cling to the figure-head. There they huddle and shiver, huge-eyed, pleading shrilly for mercy in their own language.

Carter asks the dreamers what they would like to do with the Zoogs. It is their quest, and he feels that they should have control of the ultimate fate of these nuisances. If asked, he offers the advice that the Zoogs should be captured, and returned to the Enchanted Forest as a gesture of good will. Slaying them will only further exacerbate the situation. He admits that the difficulties of returning a cage of malevolently inclined and exceptionally slippery Zoogs are such that the finding of a zebra placid enough to carry them is only the beginning. He acts as interpreter, whatever the decision.

Carter is happy to teach a few useful phrases in ghoulish and Zoog to the dreamers (see nearby box). These languages are the same in the worlds of dream and waking.

Closing Rewards

As a result of conversation with Randolph Carter, and the insights outlined above, dreamers gain an automatic 8% Dream Lore, and 4% Cthulhu Mythos.

The Wall Of Sleep

When all volunteers are ready to embark on this strangest phase of their quest, Randolph Carter takes them into a dimly lit onyx chamber in the oldest part of his palace. Incense burns sweetly, and from some distance beneath comes the murmured chants of priestly invocations.

Randolph Carter warns them that experience of the gulf between sleep and waking is different at every visit, especially under these circumstances, but that those entranced will see a wall. The Silver Key is at the base of the wall. Once it is in their possession they will all wake from the trance. They are cautioned not to climb over the wall, for that will return them to the waking world. They are cautioned not to look at anything too closely or too long. They are then, by means of mystical passes and mutterings, sent further into the realm of sleep and dreams, sinking gently through darkness into a deeper and less human sphere of existence.

The entranced dreamers find themselves standing on a plain flooded with a luminous white dust. The dust continually sifts down from the void above, so all dreamers are soon liberally coated. This is the dust of the ages. In the distance a towering wall sends towards them a titanic shadow. Behind the wall loom other shadows, more diffuse and less explicable. As they trudge forwards they discover the true immensity of this place, for what they took to be a vapour-wreathed sky are the walls of a vast gulf, that ascend beyond their sight. Ask the players to imagine the deepest depth they can, then tell them to multiply it a million times. And the gulf is still unfilled. A SAN roll has to be made, or 1D6 SAN is lost by this incomprehensible perspective.

The dreamers are so small, that they must wonder if they will ever reach even the black line that marks the boundary of the shadow of the lofty



Kindred Languages

The Language of Ghouls, And the Consequences of Learning It

In ghoulish, he suggests three handy phrases. As an introduction, “I am a friend of Randolph Carter, who led an army of ghouls and night-gaunts in search of Unknown Kadath”. He feels this should be in full, as otherwise the ghouls might fail to be enough impressed. In need of help; “Take me to the ghoulish who was Pickman.” Pickman, he explains, still understands English, and can aid in further translation. If all else fails, dreamers should try, “I am extremely tough and stringy, and will give you indigestion.” This gives dreamers an effective 5% in ghoulish.

Carter warns that although ghouls are amongst the friendliest of non-humans once their unsavory habits are set aside, prolonged contact should be avoided. He has learnt from the fate of his friend Pickman, and interacts with ghouls only when absolutely necessary.

Dreamers who befriend ghouls in an attempt to learn more of this language find themselves in a tricky situation. The ghouls take them to their scabrous bosom, and teach them their tongue at a rate of 5% per encounter. Once the dreamer knows the language at 50%, they effectively know the spell, Contact Ghoul. This is not in fact a spell, but represents intimate knowledge of ghoulish psychology and habits, such that the dreamer knows which grave-yards the ghouls frequent, which hollow tomb stones to tap (and more importantly, which not to tap), and where to leave markers of stone and bones, so that the ghouls know that their friend has been by. Once they reach this stage, ghouls no longer cost SAN to see.

Ghouls cheerfully dispose of those incriminating corpses that occasionally come the investigator’s way, but their habits gradually start to rub off on their provider. Their relish is infectious. Their meals, and potential meals, start to look rather tasty. When the investigator goes insane, she or he heads unerringly towards the comfort of the company of these creatures, at first amnesiac of their experiences with them, but gradually coming to recollect and enjoy them even after return to relative sanity. If permanently insane the investigator vanishes “into the fabulous darkness”. They degenerate completely into a ghoulish and, unless they keep in touch with their former comrades, slowly forget their human life. This is not in fact such a terrible fate, if the alternative ends of an investigator into such realms are considered.

The Language of Zoogs

In Zoog, Carter suggests, “Put that (baby, weapon, object) down”; “Drop that”; “Don’t do that”; “Look out! There’s a cat behind you!”, and for extreme situations only, “Desist or I will ritually devour your mother”. This gives the character 5% in Zoog. Talking with captive Zoogs for the duration of the return voyage raises this skill to 25% (5% for each week).

The Language of Cats

The language of cats takes several months of dream time, and one night of waking time, to learn to 50% ability. It afterwards increases only with experience. It differs in dream lands and the waking world. In the dream lands, this language acts exactly as any human language, and cats converse on any topic. In the waking world the investigator is able to instantly gain the trust and affection of any cat. Cats obey simple instructions to the best of their ability, and the investigator is able to gauge the moods of waking cats to a complex level (e.g. is the cat frightened because of a nearby coyote, or is something sinister afoot?).

wall. Onwards they toil, in a climate neither hot nor cold, where time is marked not by day or night, but only by the sifting, spiralling fall of white dust. They go forwards for what they feel to be weeks, months, years, and in that time struggle across an infinitesimal fraction of the mammoth floor. Their mouths are dry with the white dust, their limbs leaden, yet they cannot stop to rest or the white dust will bury them. Eventually the wall will be covered by this white dust, and then there will be no barrier at all between the lands of sleep and waking.

At some point it should occur to someone to use their Dreaming skill to forward their progress. If they do not they will walk for what feels like centuries, and then millennia, and still be no closer even to the tip of the wall's shadow. Whether use of the Dreaming skill propels forward the dreamer, or the wall, is difficult to tell. For each successful application of the skill, it is as if the wall were violently lunging towards them.

With the first successful skill roll, the dreamers find themselves engulfed just within the boundary of the wall's shadow. It is intensely cold. The wall is still too distant to be clearly made out, except that it is now so tall that it blocks out the terrible sight of the gulf wall beyond. If the dreamers linger long, invisible nightmares surround them, first nuzzling with feeble-clutching tentacles, then nipping with what feels like the parrot-beak of octopi, and fumbling with vasty flukes, then tearing flesh from bone and bodies from heads of delaying dreamers. These are Things that are not yet born, or born too late. Experience of them costs 2/1D8 SAN.

With the second successful use of the Dreaming skill, the dreamers find the distance before them halved again. Now the blocks of masonry that comprise the measureless wall can be made out. To call them vast is to diminish their full impact. Now is the time to ponder whether they are travelling towards the wall, or it is travelling towards them, for clearly a third successful roll will bring them together. Shadows press thick and potent around them. If dreamers look closely, they can see within the swarming blackness the rise and fall of countless inhuman civilizations; the births and deaths of worlds; the universe falling in on itself and expanding again. If they have looked this long they must make another SAN roll, or lose a further 1D6 SAN.

The third successful Dreaming roll brings them to the base of the wall. It towers so high and so wide in every direction that their sense of perspective, which for a little while had resumed, is again suspended.

In an act intended to stave off permanent insanity, the human brain shuts down those parts of it that deal with perspective, leaving dreamers to tackle a world in which 'up' and 'down' have no meaning, and angles are impossible to judge.

Fortunately they have arrived at the precise point of the wall where the Silver Key is lodged. It gleams in the bitter blackness. A problem is immediately evident, for the Silver Key is on the same gargantuan scale as the rest of this place. It is several thousand feet high. Things titter in the void behind the dreamers, and galaxies explode.

In order to touch the Key, dreamers must first make a Dreaming roll. If they succeed, they can carry the key from this place to another where lucid examination is possible. If none succeed, then none of them can carry the Key from this place, and the only way to wake is to scale the wall and drop over onto the other side.

Once the Dreaming roll has been made, the Wall of Sleep fades from view. They awake in the chamber in the oldest part of the palace of Ilek-Vad, to the murmured and repetitious sounds of a soothing chant and the sweet scent of incense. They are covered with white dust, breathless and mad-eyed, starving for sensation of the human world, even if it be the fantastic world of dreams. One of them holds the Silver Key.

Returning To The Castle Called Sleep

It now remains only for dreamers to thank their kind host, and recover any losses. When suffering nightmares, those who experienced the Wall of Sleep endure utter panic when perspective again fails them.

Those who went insane whilst entranced can be cured by the wise priests of either Ilek-Vad or Thran, or perhaps simply by a long and restful sea-voyage. Nothing happens to mar their return journey, although they may meet several, still puzzled ghouls if they arrive in port at night. For now the dreamers must return to the hills above indefinable Thran, there to confront the final horror of the Castle Called Sleep.

As the dreamers approach the Castle Called Sleep, they encounter a large band of timorous Zoogs, numbering several hundred. One of the Zoogs that followed them is the son of a powerful Zoog chief, and this chief has decided to attempt to find out what happened to him. If any Zoogs are held captive by the dreamers, this Zoog-son is amongst them.



THE SILVER KEY

The key is of tarnished silver covered with cryptical arabesques. Although huge it is of human and rational dimensions. It appears the same in both dreaming and waking worlds. The dreamer who holds the Silver Key knows that they hold the key to ultimate knowledge. The Keeper should judge their character's reaction to this, and decide whether they lose or gain 1/1D8 SAN points as a result. This benefit or loss is removed when the Key is used to save Mary Doherty.

The Silver Key works by opening or closing channels between different spheres, in this case between the worlds of waking and dream. Its use is bound about with arcane theories of time and reality. Its ability to unlock other realms remains untapped, for they are encoded in an ancient papyrus document abandoned in the Carter house on earth, twenty years in the future, as waking time is reckoned. Until that time, when Carter seeks the Key out, it does not entirely exist. It cannot be stolen from him in the waking world unless the investigators use Gates to travel into the future and take it from him once he has found it (thus altering his own history). Carter unknowingly summoned it out of the hidden mists of the Wall of Sleep in the desperation of his twenty years exile. He was able to do this because the artefact is an inheritance of his house, and intimately tied to his blood-line.

If dreamers wish to use the Silver Key for their own self-enlightenment, they have to research the location of their own lock, and embark on their own gruelling and personal quest. The key fits this lock. The events of the Lovecraft story, *The Dreams in the Witch House* offer a suitable model for their fate. The collaboration, *Through the Gates of the Silver Key* is another example, but an inferior one. Keepers should feel free to abstract what they feel is interesting and useful from both stories to create their own scenario.

Their mercy is rewarded. The Zoog war-band rejoices at the sight of his safe return, promise fervently that he will be punished for his impetuous violation of the treaty, and provide in thanks several flasks of their moon-wine, an innocuous and pleasant liquor that appears in the waking world as mead enclosed in a gnarled gourd. When drunk before sleeping, this mead ensures automatic entry into the Dreamlands at any point the dreamer desires. The released Zoogs scamper sheepishly for the safety of the trees. The dreamers are assured of welcome whenever they visit the forest.

If the dreamers have no captive Zoogs they must convince this war-band that they know nothing (by means of gestures and their limited Zoog vocabulary, equalling a half-Oratory skill roll). The Zoogs, even if displeased, are wise and level headed. They dare not violate Carter's treaty as flagrantly as the smaller

band did. They leave the dreamers alone, but mutter and scowl violently amongst themselves. The dreamers had best be wary, or they had best not stray, in those places where the Enchanted Forest is known to touch upon certain forests of earth.

Befriended Zoogs and ghouls can also be persuaded to accompany the dreamers into the Castle Called Sleep, although any alliance which includes both cats and Zoogs is likely to be an uneasy one.

Using the Silver Key

When the key is turned in the lock in the shrine, the wall turns first milky and then opalescent, then vanishes entirely, revealing a stair leading down. After travelling an unpleasantly long distance, the dreamers come to a second key hole, set into a rough rock wall. The Silver Key unlocks this, but sticks in the lock. The wall rotates



in a strange and non-Euclidian fashion, revealing a long corridor that leads directly forward, out of sight. The Key vanishes with the wall (back to the gulf between waking and sleep). A SAN roll is now required. Those who fail lose 1D6, and realize it is not a corridor but a pit, the pit of their nightmares.

Those who fail to grab the edge of the pit start falling, doubtless screaming. Those who make their SAN roll manage to convince themselves that the pit is a corridor. This is made difficult by their plummeting companions. Dreamers who make Climb, or Jump or DEX rolls can grab hold of the edge of the pit, and climb out.

The Phantom Face

A white blob becomes visible in the distance, traveling towards them immeasurably swiftly. It metamorphoses as it grows closer into the face of Hypnos, grinning idiotically. SAN Loss: 1D6/1D20. The magic of the Silver Key forces the god to abandon his assault on Mary, but he does so without grace.

Dreamers who fall through this Phantom Face vanish from the world of dreams. Their waking self sleeps for as many weeks as they have POW points. They spend all this time in the thrall of Hypnos, and wake 1D10 SAN points poorer. They must also make a Luck roll. If they succeed, their dream self gains 1D10 points in a three random characteristics. If they fail, their dream self loses 1D10 points in four characteristics. If any characteristic reaches zero as a result of these deductions, their dream self dies. The character remains forgetful of their experience, waking only sometimes with the night sweats, with dim recollection of terrible dreams whose exact nature they do not wish to pursue.

However, if this Luck roll is a critical success or critical failure, then Hypnos becomes enamoured

of them. They never wake (causing an immediate and ironic diagnosis of 'sleeping sickness'). Their dream body becomes alien to them, changed to fulfil the god's inscrutable desires.

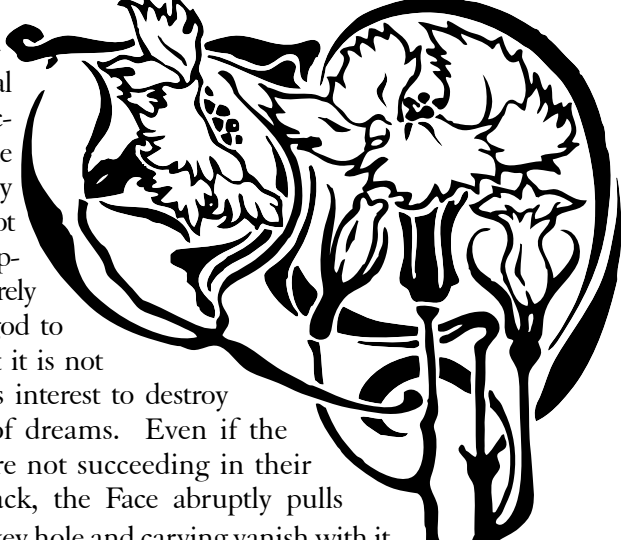
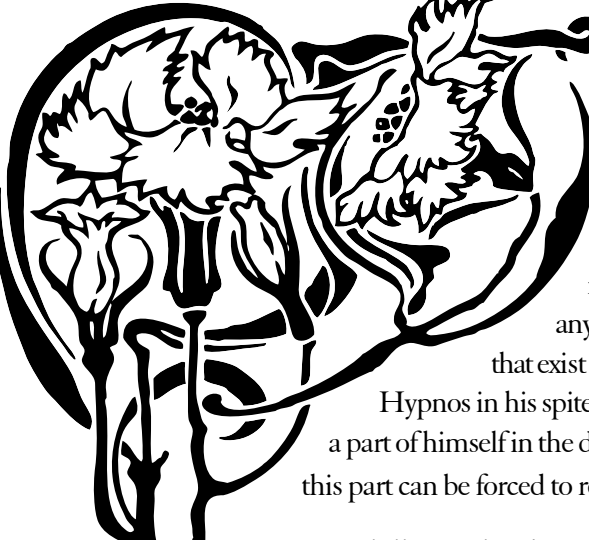
Survivors scramble from the pit and race upstairs, pursued by the phantom Face, which fills the stair behind them. Two Climb rolls or CON rolls must be made to reach the stairs ahead of the Face. The door slams shut behind them, resulting in a moment of false peace.

The Porphyry Face

Then the face carved into the porphyry wall bulges leeringly out. It laughs, an immense and insane laugh that rises up all around them.

The vision of the shrine is wiped away, so that above the dreamers stands the formidable perspective of the heart's four chambers, rising up dizzily far out of sight. Then the laugh hits that note that shatters stone, and the Castle Called Sleep comes tumbling down, its enormous blocks of masonry lost with its bizarre roundelay of tastes, scents and experiences. Shreds of exploded, rotting, corpses rain down all around.

The laughter continues. All the masonry and corpses are swept away on its billows. The shrine alone retains its reality. Dreamers must make DEX rolls to cling on, and DEX vs. SIZ rolls to grab loose colleagues. Meggs, caterwauling, hangs onto several cracks in the paving. The fabric of dream is now threatened, thinning around the shrine. Thran glimmers below, as insubstantial as gossamer; the winding river Oukranos becomes a silver thread that will in a moment blow away. The scented jungle is a child's toy to be discarded when it fails to amuse. Beneath the stuff of dreams the chasm of the limitless universe yawns.



Dreamers can attempt to stop this happening with use of their Dreaming skills, or with any implements that exist in both worlds.

Hypnos in his spite has manifested a part of himself in the dreamlands, and this part can be forced to retreat.

Dreaming skills might destroy the carving (picturing a smooth wall, for example). This robs the god of his purchase in this world. Altering the last picture of the folio book to remove the carving depicted there alters the reality of the shrine, if the remover succeeds in an Art skill roll.

The Face has 11 hit-points (representing a rough one-fifth of Hypnos's total of 56 hit-points), but is shielded by 10 armor points of porphyry crystal, giving the Face a total of 21 hit points. Porphyry armor points are reduced by the appropriate amount with each blow, until the crystal is shattered.

The removal or destruction of the porphyry Face does not destroy Hypnos, merely causes the god to retreat. But it is not in the god's interest to destroy the world of dreams. Even if the dreamers are not succeeding in their counter-attack, the Face abruptly pulls back. Both key hole and carving vanish with it.

The fabric of the dream world reasserts itself. The dreamers stand in a porphyry shrine, in a meadow of asphodels, above the mystic city Thran and the scented jungle Kled (within which are hidden the marble temples of an extinct people, protected by the strange magics of the Elder Gods until there is need of these temples again). A young woman clad in white samite lies sleeping on the veranda, her dark hair spread over the stairs. Meggs approaches, purring and curls up beside her.

The reward for freeing Mary is an immediate 1D20 SAN gain.

ent
ap
ent

92
82
50

374

ed
lin

ep
ous
ce.
se

ry

nic
20
ce.

dy
ess
on
ble

ne
ed
det
tel

or
nic
ite

SAY THE STRUGGLE NAUGHT AVAILLETH?

Sudden Death of Victim of Sleeping Sickness

A Mysterious and Tragic Fate

From Our Special Correspondent

It is your correspondent's sad duty to inform the reader of a recent death amongst those patients supported by public benevolence at the Arkham Sanatorium. A young woman, left a hopeless invalid five years ago as result of the 'sleeping sickness', yesterday breathed her last.

Dr. Malkowski, her physician, took your correspondent into his confidence after this tragic event. Although a charity case, Mary Doherty was a young woman of excellent character who never made any trouble for staff. "It was scarcely possible for her to do so," Dr. Malkowski said, with a melancholy smile, "for she slept since the day the illness struck her." This is hard to believe but true, as your correspondent can attest from other sources.

Dr. Malkowski added that Mary was a great favourite with staff at the sanatorium. "We would often remark on her self-absorption," he said, "It was as if she was concentrating overwhelmingly on some inner battle, that took up all the

will-power and energy that might otherwise have recalled her to 'life'. I would say that in the end this battle was finally lost."

Father O'Brien is the parish priest who supervised Mary's religious instruction, and now has the mournful duty of supervising her burial. When he heard Dr. Malkowski's words, Father O'Brien rebuked him. "Say not that the battle was lost," said this worthy man, "but rather that the battle was finally won."

Mar
this
regi
-pat
The
late
no r

Mr
coul
90 p
Zeb
"I c
disa
Bal

The
revi
"wo
fant
Pro
beli
hiki
up-s
and
Veri

The Five Senses as Interpreted



FRENCH HILL MAN DISCOVERS



Conclusion

The cryptic power of the Silver Key frees Mary's beleaguered soul. She wakes as Meggs settles beside her. But there is no cure for the sleeping sickness, not in all the realms of waking or in all the worlds of sleep. There is only one way the Silver Key can fully release her from Hypnos's attentions. At the same time as the dream-Mary wakes, a hopeless catatonic dies, quietly and suddenly, in a dreary sanitorium in Arkham.

Mary's surprise, her heartfelt thanks, her tears of release, happiness and gratitude, and her belated, joyful greetings are interrupted by Meggs. Spitting, the cat launches himself into a series of impossible jumps at the sky, and then bolts to the back of the veranda. There he vanishes, having woken himself.

Looking up the dreamers see that a rift has appeared in the blue vault above, through which the void of the Outermost Universe leers. From this gap springs a light of that same hellish blue that protected the chamber of the shrine. Spurned Hypnos is taking his revenge.

With her waking form dead Mary cannot be harmed, but the dreamers certainly can. Those who do not succeed in waking themselves are dragged screaming into the sky within a column of blue light, to spend eternity with an angry, vengeful and cryptically inventive god. Pride in their ability to withstand the god gives survivors an additional 1D10 SAN, although they had better delay any further visits to the land of dreams until Hypnos has forgotten them.

Several days later, in the waking world, the investigators' attention is drawn to a two inch column story in the 'Arkham Gazette'. For those who know the full story, this news is both tragic and reassuring. Investigators first lose 1D6 SAN, then gain 1D6 SAN, as they learn it.

Statistics

Ginger Meggs

STR 3 CON 12 SIZ 1 INT 15 POW 13 DEX 35

HP 7 Move: 10 Armour: None

Weapon Attack% Damage

Bite 30% 1

Claw 40% 1

Rip 80% 2D3-1D4

All cats are able to leap through space to other worlds. Meggs can call together a pack of 1D20 Earth cats.

Zoogs

Weapon Attack% Damage HP

Bite 30% 1 n/a

Knife 25% 1 12

Dart 20% 1D6-1D2 6

Skills: Climb 60% Dodge 50% Dream Lore 75% Hide 70%

Sneak 70% Track 50%

SAN: 0/1D3

Ozarg The Zoog Leader

STR 6 CON 12 SIZ 3 INT 18 POW 18 DEX 30

HP 8 Move: 8 Armour: none

Spell: **Passing Unseen**

Zoog Followers

Zoogs hang out in groups of 1D8

STR 3 CON 8 SIZ 2 INT 10 POW 8 DEX 20

HP 5 Move: 8 Armour: none

Ghoul

STR 19 CON 15 SIZ 17 INT 13 POW 12 DEX: 14

HP 16 Move: 9

Armour: projectiles do half damage (round up)

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapon Attack% Damage

Claws 30 1D6+1D4

Bite 30 1D6 + automatic worry

Skills: Burrow 70%, Climb 85%, Hide 60%, Jump 75%, Listen 70%, Scent Decay 65%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 50%

Sanity Loss: 0/1D6

Ghouls appear in packs of 1D6

Magah Bird

STR 2 CON 3 SIZ 1 POW 12 DEX 19

HP 2 Move: 10 (flying) Armour: none

Weapon Attack% Damage

Peck 40% 1D3

All looking and listening to the bird must succeed in a POW vs. POW roll or be hypnotised by the beauty of the magah bird's song and plumage. Its peck automatically hits one hypnotised target.

Turbanned Merchant (Man Of Leng)

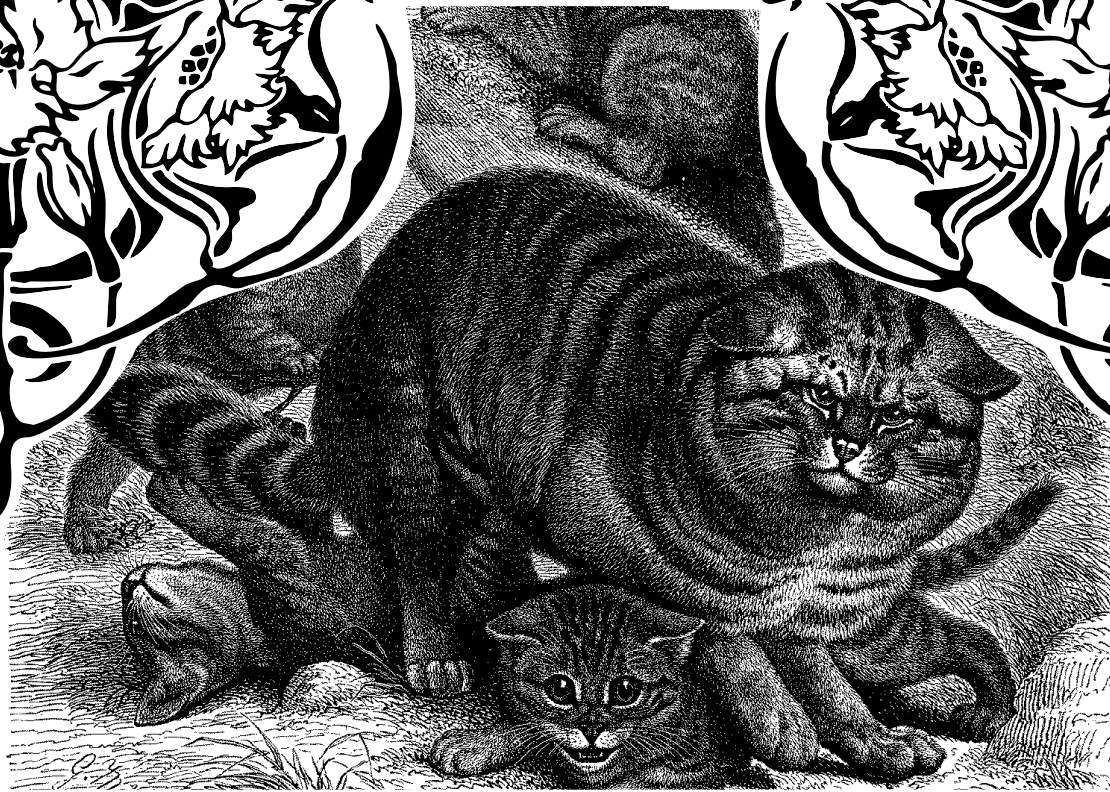
STR 18 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 16 POW 13 DEX 15

HP 14 Move: 8

Weapon Attack% Damage

Spear 25% 1D8+1

SAN: 0/1D6 if clothing, turban and boots removed (revealing horns, hooved feet, and furred body).



Moon Beast Sentry

A “great, greyish-white slippering ... sort of a toad without any eyes, but with a curious vibrating mass of short pink tentacles on the end of its blunt, vague snout.”

STR 20 CON 15 SIZ 26 INT 15 POW 15 DEX 15
HP 21 Move: 7

Armour: all impaling weapons cause minimum damage.

Spells: **The Ravening Madness, Serviceable Villein**

SAN: 0/1D8

Weapon	Attack%	Damage
--------	---------	--------

Tentacles	45%	1D10+1+1D6
-----------	-----	------------

Ship's Cat

STR 2 CON 10 SIZ 1 INT 12 POW 10 DEX 25

HP 7 Move: 10 Armour: None

Weapon	Attack%	Damage
--------	---------	--------

Bite	30%	1
------	-----	---

Claw	40%	1
------	-----	---

Rip	80%	2D3 - 1D4
-----	-----	-----------

All cats are able to leap through space to other worlds.

Wasp

STR 1 CON 4 SIZ 1 INT 18 POW 18 DEX 15

HP 3 Move: 10 Armour: None

Weapon	Attack%	Damage
--------	---------	--------

Bite	30%	1
------	-----	---

Claw	40%	1
------	-----	---

Rip	80%	2D3 - 1D4
-----	-----	-----------

All cats are able to leap through space to other worlds.

Wasp can rally the entire population of cats of Ilel-Vad.

Cats From Saturn

Almost abstract bodies, formed of arabesques and filigrees in many bright hues. Great round multi-coloured heads in a baroque head, and a reticulated tail. Cats from Saturn can unfold two, four or more legs from their complex bodies, each ending in a long whip-like paw.

STR 15 CON 12 SIZ 10 INT 3 POW 12 DEX 17

HP 11 Move: 9

Armour: all impaling weapons do minimum damage.

Weapon	Attack%	Damage
--------	---------	--------

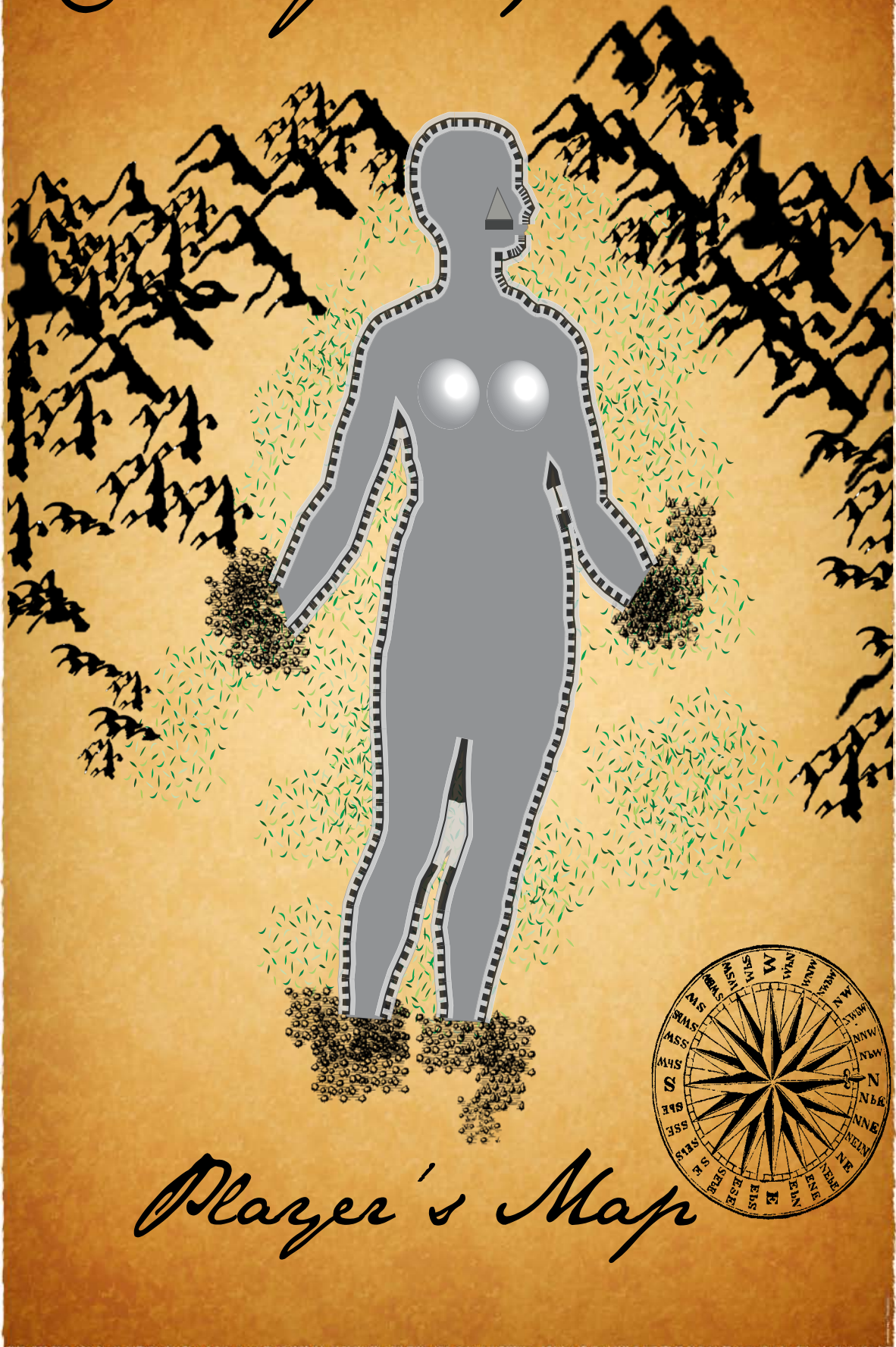
Paw	40%	1D4
-----	-----	-----

Skills: Dream Lore 30%, Hide 50%, Jump 90%, Spot Hidden 70%, Sneak 80%

SAN: 0/1D4

Cats from Saturn attack with 1D4 paws a round. They hate Earth cats, and are allied to the moon-beasts. They appear in packs of 1D6.

Castle of Sleep



Player's Map

