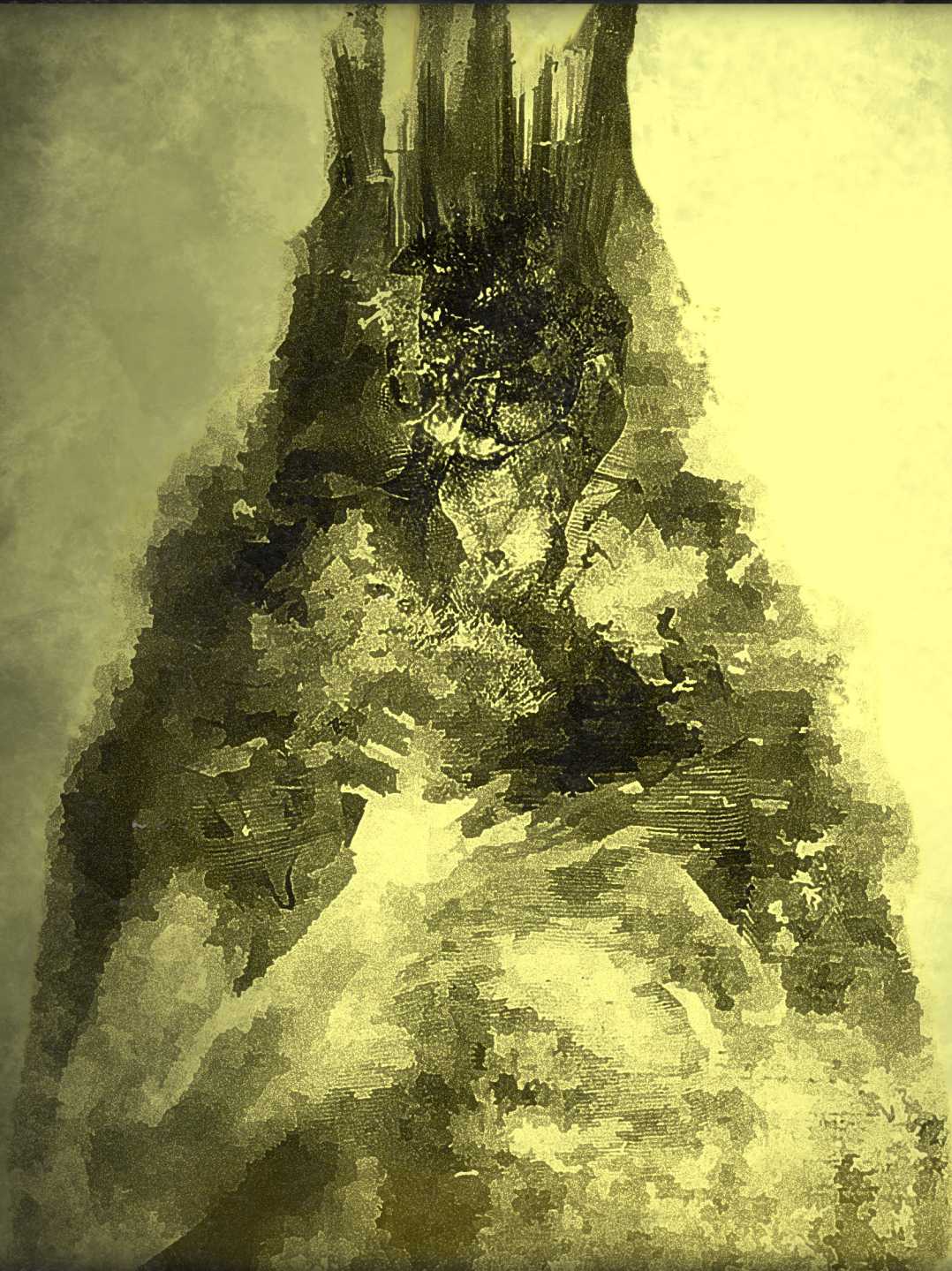


Zgrozy:  
**The Vernissage**

A scenario for Call of Cthulhu 7th edition



## What is The Vernissage?

The Vernissage is an adventure for a group of 3 to 4 investigators, which takes place in a closed-off location, namely the estate of Polish artist Zbigniew Artomowski. It is a classic investigation with an arcane ritual looming in the background. Stopping it falls upon the investigators.

Although this scenario can be treated as a self-contained adventure, parts of its plot threads should remain vague and open following the conclusion of the story.

Artomowski is a man of many talents, who gained notoriety for his unique and often disturbing style, using various means to shock and repulse his audiences. Many critics have called out his methods as cliché and lacking in any deeper meaning. Artomowski's adoration for the macabre permeated his exhibitions for years; until he grew weary of Poland and decided to venture abroad, into the New World. The man was all but gone... until now.

The investigators attend the exclusive preview of Artomowski's newest creations to find out if the journey to the New World inspired the artist as much as everyone claims it has. An eerie aura falls over the event.

The Vernissage is a part of the [Zgrozy](#) series of third party products for Call of Cthulhu 7ed. To use it, only the Starter Set is needed, which can be downloaded [HERE](#).

# Table of Contents

To help the Keeper with running the adventure, *The Vernissage* is divided into several chapters. Each of the chapters contains a variety of ways to spice up the game or adjust the narrative pace, all depending on the Keeper's needs.

**Background** (p. 4) introduces you to the setting of the adventure and briefly describes its most important themes and plotlines.

**Motivations** (p. 5) of the investigators aim to facilitate the introduction of new characters into the story revolving around Artomowski. The foundation, of course, is the letter sent to one of our investigators, which is a perfectly sufficient reason to take part in the adventure.

**Investigation** (p. 6) is the core of the scenario. All of the tasks that the investigators should complete in order to stop the foul ritual... or at least postpone it.

**Dangers** (p. 16), in turn, are all threats and other difficulties that the investigators will face during the vernissage. Depending on the players' experience, the Keeper should present these dangers accordingly.

**Epitasis** (p. 19) consists of a chain of events that will proceed regardless of the investigator's actions. If the investigators prove to be inept, too passive, or simply unlucky, the consequences may be truly dire.

**Epilogue** (p. 22) concludes the adventure. This section can also be used to continue the adventure in the future if the Keeper finds the story engaging or inspiring.

**Subplots** (p. 23) are entirely optional and aim to further flesh out *The Vernissage*. At the beginning of the adventure, multiple guests are mentioned - interactions with them and between them are described in this section.

## Background

*„Fear shall always accompany me. If there is a single feeling that man cannot extinguish, it is fear.”*

- Z. Artomowski when asked about his doubts against journey to the New World

Three years have passed since Zbigniew Artomowski left for America. While abroad, none of his family or friends had heard a word from him. On the one hand, many thought this peculiar, for Artomowski was known to be a sociable man. On the other hand, his decadent and adventurous spirit was responsible for the darker moments of his life.

Meanwhile, the news about the artist's return came like a bolt out of the blue, causing disbelief and consternation in his close friends and within society itself. Nevertheless, much enthusiasm surrounded the news that a vernissage was to be held. Artomowski intended to present his brand new works, created while in New York. It was there where he spent the majority of his time.

The exact goal of Artomowski's journey to America is not known. He allegedly contacted Italians, Irish, and later British descendants. The latter, in particular, made quite an impression on the artist. In their eccentric opinion, nights in New York still carried the air of ages past, especially if you knew where to go and what to look for. Artomowski, a shrewd man deeply interested in mysticism and demonology, had to immerse himself in his travels toward the unknown. There is nothing unusual about it - after all, those who long for eternity always have a long journey before them.

His was one of those cases. In his pursuit of the uncanny, Artomowski finally came in contact with the Amber Society. This bizarre organization sought out individuals as peculiar as Zbigniew himself. Most likely, it was under the advice of the Amber Society that he changed his art form.

This time, instead of eerie paintings, he sculpted three statues, calling them "Beings of New World".

Aside from that, nothing else is certain. In the eyes of most audiences, these statues are critiques of emerging modernism or expanding industrialism. After all, Artomowski could observe both happening in America. It's plausible that he witnessed grotesque events on the streets of New York or perhaps it was in one of the countless factories.

Or, maybe, the journey to America woke the specters of racism in the artist? By creating these monstrous statues, he gave form to his hatred of New York's citizens. Surely not everyone there was helpful or friendly to him. If such things happened, he would surely have informed his family. Instead, he kept silent, as if some tragedy had befallen him there.

At the same time, many knew Artomowski as an enthusiast of sarcasm and iconoclasm, spurring them to look for hidden meaning in his works. What if the artist played some sort of game with his audience? What if his bizarre statues were meant to be something more than just art?

What exactly are these "Beings of New World"? What was Artomowski trying to state? Whether they like it or not, the investigators will have to look for answers to these questions.

# Involving the Investigators

The story described in *The Vernissage* isn't very complicated. Introducing investigators into the adventure shouldn't pose a problem for an experienced Keeper.

This doesn't mean, however, that these motivations can be skipped entirely. The simplest of them is creating a personal relationship between Artomowski and one or more of the investigators. They can be, for example, distant family members who attend the vernissage out of concern for their cousin or at the insistence of another family member.

It is a similar situation for the artist's friends, however, it should be obvious these investigators would already know Artomowski and may have been shaken by his silence. Interest in Artomowski's art is a different but equally valid motivation, although the art comes before the artist in such an event.

Sample letters that handily give motivation to characters are included in the Extras.

## Secret motivation

A secret motivation can be an additional challenge for experienced players. It diverges from *Call of Cthulhu's* usual game structure because it allows them to play as an enthusiast of dark forces.

An Adept is a true fanatic of Artomowski's art. Knowledgeable about many blasphemous books, they quickly understood that the artist's works hide something more than merely an intention to shock those of high society. They contacted Artomowski before he left for America, but has no idea how his encounter with the Amber Society went.

The Adept's goal is to gather as much information as they can while secretly furthering the plans of their idol. In other words, the Adept is a saboteur, undermining the efforts of other investigators.

## Destroying evidence

When the Adept finds an item that could shed light on Artomowski's statues, they automatically seize it. This means that when an investigator passes a skill roll, the clues found are incomplete.

Playing as an Adept can be a hard and thankless job, therefore it will likely work only with experienced players.

## Adept's Knowledge

To present an advantage that the Adept has over other investigators, they will need some valuable information. The Keeper can share them at their own discretion, or may ask the player to roll 3d10.

- 1: Description of The Observer
- 2: Revealing a solution to one of the subplots
- 3: Description of the Lord on Amber Throne
- 4: Revealing the location of a piece of evidence
- 5: Description of The Accuser
- 6: Revealing the location of a piece of evidence
- 7: Description of The Speaker
- 8: Explanation of one element of the ritual
- 9: Description of The Seeker
- 10: False lead! Adept gets no additional clue

# Investigation

## Opening

The adventure proper starts with a description of the main hall, the destination of the investigators. The way that they get there varies based on the kind of investigators they are playing.

*The main hall, although rather modest, beams with majesty and dignity. Artomowski was not known for over-attachment to the finer details or concern for interior decorations... but this time, he made an exception.*

*The monumental artworks, hidden beneath opaque cloths, dominate the hall as if calling attention to themselves. There is no doubt that they are something other than paintings. Everybody is eagerly awaiting the unveiling of these new works.*

*In the center of the hall stands a small table showcasing a peculiar music box. A note next to it reveals that it was also created by Artomowski. The music box plays a lazy, even slothful melody that, while it plays softly, appears to fill the entire hall.*

*The corner of the hall is occupied by hired musicians who strum their instruments and watch the guests.*

*A large smorgasbord catches your attention. Ornamental tables are beautifully adorned with dishes of international cuisine and they are accompanied by an array of libations.*

*Damp air carries delicately perfumed fragrances, although none of them match that of the food..*

*Artomowski is nowhere to be seen. Instead, strange servants patrol the hall, keeping guests inside until the unveiling of Artomowski's newest creations.*

This description presents a few elements that the investigators can later interact with. Before the plot moves forward, they should have a moment to talk with the other guests.

## Artomowski's Music Box

When investigators finish talking to the other guests, Artomowski himself will make his presence known.

*As you move on to exchange pleasantries with another group guests, something reaches your ears. The grinding of a mechanism, a creaking of tiny hinges.*

*An uneasy silence hangs in the air. Of course, some conversations can still be heard here and there, but something is amiss.*

*Then, you realize it. The music box has stopped. You turn to where the music box is, noticing that one of the guests has unfurled a small roll of paper that was likely hidden within.*

*"Ladies and gentlemen, it appears that Mr. Artomowski will not be joining us tonight!", announces a nervous man with an old, exhausted face.*

As it happens, the artist will not be present for his own vernissage. His hand-made music box contained an enigmatic letter, in which he apologizes for his absence. He also encourages the guests to remain in the main hall until the unveiling.

Although Zbigniew's conduct will disappoint gathered guests, nobody will leave the estate. From now on, conversations will be focused only on Artomowski and his impolite behavior. A lull in the action will commence, during which the investigators can try to use their skills to gather information or search the hall.

## The Unveiling

*"It's not an artist's work, it's a deformed spawn of depraved imagination!"*

- one of the first comments

*"Artomowski didn't disappoint. The first hog groaned its anthem to the simple masses. You should feed the ducks, not experience art!"*

- one of the first replies

At last, the statutes are unveiled. It's an immensely important moment of the scenario because the ritual's effects (see **Epitasis**) will start to progress.

*"Ladies and gentlemen, at long last, we will unveil what has so far been hidden", says Fryderyk Zajdler, his voice booming. He gestures to the other servants, ordering them to remove the cloths. The eerie statues are visible for all to see. Twisted into bizarre poses, with bodies distorted beyond belief, they make the guests groan with shock and dismay.*

From this moment on, the adventure is in full swing. The investigators can freely conduct their actions, interact with guests, investigate, try to sneak deeper into the house, or question the guests in the main hall.

If the investigators want to contemplate Artomowski's statues, they have a chance to discover their hidden meaning. To do so, they make a **Cthulhu Mythos** (bonus die), **Occult**, or **History** roll. Thorough inspection, however, requires a Sanity Roll (0/1D3).

If an investigator succeeds at their roll, they will learn that each statue embodies one aspect of a supernatural entity: (1) The Observer, (2) The Accuser, or (3) The Speaker.

If an investigator fails their Sanity roll, they will see the more disturbing and uncanny details in Artomowski's works. They may even feel as if some elements are moving, such as eyelids opening and closing or hands changing the direction in which they point. It all depends on the investigators' general willpower.

## Beings of New World

The following section provides Keepers with a summary of Artomowski's statues. The investigators can gather most of this information over the course of the adventure. In latter parts of the scenario, the information is divided between several sources (see Evidence Table).

Artomowski's statues neither speak of the New World, nor do they represent any real aspects of human symbolism. Lastly, they lack any embodiment of human fate. The guests' interpretations are always invalid and lacking in cohesion.

Each idol (what the statues really are) is connected with an aspect of an entity known as the Lord on Amber Throne. This extremely mysterious entity is only loosely mentioned in a handful of obscure grimoires, most of which have either been lost or outright destroyed.

Zbigniew Artomowski must have found a trace of the old tales about this Monarch - which is what the entity is sometimes referred to - during his studies of ancient demonology and other foul sciences. It is unknown what role the Amber Society played in this event, however, it must have shared valuable information with Zbigniew. Based on their secrets, he recreated "The Invocation of the Lord on Amber Throne". This invocation consists of a direct plea to the Monarch by a servant with the aid of the three idols. In turn, the idols personify and are linked to humans to "relay" a specific aura.

While creating "Beings of New World", Artomowski did not base them on his time in the United States. It should be obvious by now that the "New World" is not America, but something else. The question remains, what New World has plagued the artist's nightmares for the last three years?

# The One Who Observes

Beware of the Monarch's gaze, for his Eyes see all that is. Myriads of them he has and their gaze pierces far away planes, further than we could ever hope to grasp.

*I adored that part of the Book. Yet another feature of the Monarch, so alien to ourselves.*

*We have but two eyes and often-times we are blind to our surroundings. The platitudes, even those put right before us, elude us.*

*Long have I studied this fragment. At last, I understood that the members of the Amber Society were wrong in their interpretation of The Observer – at the very least, they lost the spirit of it. The One Who Observes is also The One Who Guards.*

*Hence, I need someone who will embody this aspect. I think that I might know someone like that already. The human eye will never match that of the Monarch in its vigilance... but it was created for other, simpler tasks. Let the goal of this Eye be to see that the things unfold exactly as I have envisioned them.*





# The One Who Speaks

Many mouths congregate around the Amber Throne to sing of its glory. In this melange of anthems, it is impossible to make out the words, to understand the meaning, to find a single familiar sound. For as many secrets are bound in the cosmos, there are as many sounds floating about the Monarch.

*Against the excellence of the cosmos, we are deaf and blind. However, mute we are not. As such, we doubtlessly need speakers. It is they who take up the burden of calling the Monarch's spirit.*

*So far, the Lord on Amber Throne looks upon us graciously, for he knows that the simpler races need his Word the most.*

*Boundless Secrets, Boundless Realms... Yet I have to start with something as trivial as finding lips suitable to sing the songs. The ritual could be then completed, even without my presence.*



# The One Who Accuses

He pointed his hand at him and froze in such a pose. Then, Charmion dropped dead, out of nowhere. The mere accusation of The Servant was equal to the Monarch's sentence.

*I needed many years to realize how fallible is a man's understanding of justice. By that, I do not mean any pompous thoughts about the laws of nature. The cosmos is deaf to a man's reason, after all. In this single fragment lies gargantuan wisdom out of the Boundless.*

*The Servant of the Monarch is sometimes equal to him in his sentences. Hopefully I, too, am not wrong in my choice. The One Who Guards needs The One Who Accuses. Or, rather, "The One Who Exacts". Again, I see how the books I have studied were simplified and incomplete.*

*The Invocation must commence. Let the songs sound, and may the Monarch's idols siphon power from their surroundings.*

*The Aspect of The Accuser must fall on a spirit wrathful and implacable.*



# Invocation

Artomowski's ritual, although focused on statues and their connected idols, wouldn't be complete without additional preparations.

To create the best environment for the Invocation, the artist took measures to focus the needed energies. If the investigators influence or alter any of the items described below, they will likely slow down the ritual or even prevent it from happening.

- **Buffet** - if the investigators carefully inspect the hall's composition, they will notice that the smorgasbord is triangular in setup. A closer look will reveal that Artomowski used trivial things as energy relays. Under the tables there are arcane glyphs for the investigators to find. Fortunately, they're made with simple chalk, and removing them poses no problem - unless they are noticed by Artomowski's servants. The most efficient way to neutralize this relay is to change the way the tables are arranged. This act, however, will not go unnoticed by security or majordomo Zajdler.
- **Cutlery** - curious thing; Artomowski himself etched symbols on them, most likely associated with the Amber Society. Although it's hard to know if they really have any influence on the guests, more susceptible investigators can experience stomach aches or nausea after using the cutlery. To get rid of these relays, the players could inform the servants that the service set is unclean (which, considering Artomowski's hurry, is true). Slightly embarrassed, the servants will try to change the cutlery as quickly as possible. They will also inform the investigators that using this specific tableware was a last-minute decision by Artomowski himself.
- **Amber** - just a few not-so-sophisticated decorations placed here and there, and yet the aura around them is eerie, to say the least. A closer inspection reveals that these items also contain pentacles that magnify the effect caused by the statues. However, they are located in clearly visible places. Any attempts at removing them may attract the attention of security or the majordomo. The investigators can try to move them openly. If questioned, they can justify their actions with statements such as "the decorations draw attention away from the statues" or "they disturb the synergy of the exhibit"; such attempts

will require a successful **Persuade** roll. If the investigators helped one of the guests before or sided with them in a discussion, they can count on their support if a quarrel with security happens.

- **Songs of New World** - from the beginning of the vernissage, a small band of musicians play for the guests. The arrangements they play lazily lead the guests through the hall, from one statue to another and from one table to next. This uncannily subtle and catchy melody affects the audience. In order to stop the musicians from performing their assigned repertoire, the investigators will have to either bribe them or lie that they are acting on Artomowski's orders. As a last resort, they can try to sabotage their instruments or complain that the music is distracting and makes it difficult to focus on the exhibition - just like the amber decorations.
- **Incense** - barely perceptible fragrances hang in the air and must be somehow connected with the magnetic influence that the statues have on the guests. Because the incense is located next to the hallway that leads to the restricted part of the house, attempts at removing it may be met with opposition from security. The investigators will have to solve this problem in a more creative way. For starters, opening the shutters or terrace door will suffice; the guests will not protest if the door is opened. The problem, however, will come back with a vengeance when the fog falls upon the estate. Nobody will allow the investigators to open the door then (see Epitasis) and the smell of incense will start to bother everyone again. A more sophisticated approach will be necessary by then. For example, pretending to faint or "accidentally" bumping the incense on the way to the bathroom. Anything that damages or otherwise renders the incense unusable should be deemed effective.

## Locations

The area of the adventure consists of the following locations:

- **Main hall**
- **Terrace**
- **Artomowski's study**
- **Zajdler's office**
- **Guest room**
- **Bathrooms**
- **Kitchen**
- **Shed**

The main hall is directly connected to the terrace, where guests can get some fresh air and talk in a somewhat looser fashion.

A short distance to the north of the terrace stands a small shed with tools, wood preservatives, and gardening equipment.

The guest room is located to the left of the main hall's entrance. It's open to everyone and several guests can be found there. There's also a small library inside, along with several cabinets full of stationery and blank notebooks.

A group of security guards is always present in the hallway connecting the main hall to Zajdler's office and Artomowski's study. As a result, access to both of these locations is difficult.

The bathrooms are located nearby. There is nothing special about them, except that one of them has a window that opens right next to Artomowski's study. This can, of course, be used to bypass security.

## Evidence and tools

The clues and notes scattered around the house will let the investigators learn what they need to do to stop the ritual.

Additional evidence, such as tomes and grimoires, can serve as a driving force for subsequent events in case the investigators get stuck at any point in the adventure.

Moreover, multiple items can be found on the estate, each useful in thwarting the ritual. This will depend on both the Keeper and the investigators' creativity, but some items deserve specific mention.

Luminal, a phenobarbital sedative, is located in Artomowski's study, and it will no doubt prove useful for creating a diversion.

Ink, which can be found in an ornamental inkwell, will prove helpful in disrupting glyph patterns; the inkwell is in Zajdler's office. Removal of arcane symbols can be done with a solvent, which is located on a shelf in the shed.

In one of the bathrooms, investigators will find perfumes with very intense odors. With it, they can temporarily neutralize the incense.

In the kitchen cabinets, there's an additional set of cutlery - fortunately, unmarked with any occult symbols.

The aforementioned items are only suggestions of tools that the investigators will be able to use during the adventure. However, if the investigators come up with other ideas and solutions, that's even better.

# Dangers

## The Observer

Fryderyk Zajdler is a longtime majordomo at Artomowski's estate, as well as the artist's confidant. He may seem caustic and unpleasant, but hides a heart of gold, being very loyal and dutiful, perhaps even a bit... overzealous.

Despite his friendship with Artomowski, Zajdler doesn't understand his recent travels. He doesn't know what exactly happened in the New World either. Of course Fryderyk has his own suspicions and a bit of information, nevertheless, he's not aware of the gravity of the situation. He also didn't stoop so low as to openly spy on his employer. He has heard a few rumors about the Amber Society. For the sake of his own peace, he decided to stay away from Zbigniew's plans and focus on his duties. Such thoughtless obedience, however, can have dire consequences.

## Behavior

- He greets guests and informs them about the layout of the rooms.
- He closely observes the actions of the guests; reacting nervously to any signs of interference with Artomowski's arrangement.
- Most actions attempted by the investigators will be met with Fryderyk's disapproval. He will argue with them and attempt to restore the decor back to its original condition. As a result, he asks security to pay closer attention to the investigators.

## Conflict

Fryderyk represents The Observer's aspect. If the players start to look into Artomowski's notes, they will quickly learn that it is most likely Zajdler who will take on the role of the All-Seeing Eye during the ritual. There are several ways to neutralize him.

**Synergy** - the investigators can try to distract the majordomo. If they act cohesively, he will not notice their sabotage.

**Subterfuge** - the investigators may also decide that isolating Zajdler is the most effective course of action. They can do this by locking him in one of the utility rooms or drugging him with luminal.

**Rhetoric** - another option is to argue that the actions taken by the investigators are made for the good of the guests or to prove the ties connecting an investigator with Artomowski. Factual, sound arguments (i.e. those that don't sound like the ravings of a madman) may convince Zajdler to refrain from further interventions. However, this will require a successful social skill roll.

**Evidence** - if the investigators come into possession of Zajdler's notes, they may be able to appeal to his personal side by sharing their concerns about Artomowski. By showing that they also care for the artist's well-being, they can gain a valuable ally.

**STR 40 CON 50 SIZ 50 INT 55 POW 60**

**DEX 45 APP 60 EDU 45 S 58 HP 10**

**Damage Bonus:** none

**Build:** 0

**MOV:** 8

**Magic Points:** 12

Fighting (brawl) 35% (Hard 17%/Extreme 7%), damage 1D3.

**Skills:** Dodge 30% (Hard 15%/Extreme 6%), Fast Talk 50%, Intimidate 30%, Law 35%, Listen 60%, Persuade 60%, Spot Hidden 70%



## The Accuser

Zygmunt Wrzodek is a man whose appearance doesn't reflect his character at all. At first glance, trustworthy and amiable, on closer inspection he is a choleric and an outstandingly pesky martinet. He's easily angered and manipulated and there's not a diplomatic bone in his body. Hence, his methods lack refinement but are yet effective.

This makes him an ideal obstacle for the investigators. As chief of security, he doesn't pay much attention to the arrangement of the room; his focus is on the guests. He closely monitors the investigators' behavior and tries to keep calm at all costs. He isn't a fan of such cultural events, because he cannot stand the members of high society. He'd probably feel much more comfortable in the company of people of the lower class.

## Behavior

- He keeps to himself as long as he doesn't notice any suspicious behavior.
- He ensures that no one snoops around the estate while keeping an eye on the restricted part of the house.
- Friendly and kind at first, he eventually shows his true colors. As the ritual progresses, he will become increasingly nervous and strict.
- He steps out periodically to smoke cigarettes, leaving instructions with the other security personnel.

## Conflict

Zygmunt represents The One Who Accuses. Artomowski picked his servants very carefully and knew that Wrzodek's impulsive personality would fit perfectly with The Accuser. There are several ways to neutralize him.

**Confrontation** - due to Wrzodek's character it's probable that the investigators will eventually have to confront him. If he decides to take them outside following any incident, he may attack them.

**Subterfuge** - keen investigators will quickly see that Zygmunt becomes an easier target when he steps out for a cigarette. If the investigators can sneak up on him and incapacitate him somehow, he will cease to be a threat.

**Diplomacy** - there's another way out of this situation. Other security personnel isn't as restrictive as Zygmunt. The investigators should be able to convince or possibly bribe them to not cause problems or prohibit them from accessing the restricted part of the house.

**STR 65 CON 65 SIZ 65 INT 50 POW 60**

**DEX 55 APP 50 EDU 35 S 60 HP 13**

**Damage Bonus: +1d4 Build: +1**

**MOV: 8 Magic Points: 12**

**Fighting** (knife) 60% (Hard 30%/Extreme 12%), damage 2k4.

**Skills:** Appraise 35%, Dodge 50% (Hard 25%/Extreme 10%), Drive Auto 55%, Firearms (handgun) 40%, First Aid 55%, Intimidate 65%, Listen 50%, Mechanical Repair 25%, Persuade 30%, Spot Hidden 50%, Stealth 40%

## The Speaker

Antoni Zachowski, while not very attractive, possesses enormous charisma. He is a proud member of Polish bohemianism. He possesses a silver tongue and the ability to lead any crowd. His talent for "reading" any artwork, as well as his gregariousness and directness, make him an ideal viewer of the vernissage.

Antoni is one of the few guests that will speak directly about his feelings evoked by sculptures of Beings of New World. The litany of ghostly expressions and comparisons will not be particularly pleasant to listen to, although Zachowski will find a loyal audience. He will easily join in conversations and continue the metaphysical threads of his previous discussions.

## Behavior

- At first, he is focused on pondering the meaning of the unveiled sculptures.
- Later, he will be more combative as he debates the sculptures' meanings with the other guests.
- He will aggressively go after any negative opinions about Artomowski's sculptures.
- As events unfold, his speeches will make the other guests increasingly more shaken. Becoming more apparent as the fog finally surrounds Artomowski's estate.

## Conflict

Antoni is, without question, the first preacher of Artomowski's vision. He does it unwittingly, of course, but it makes his actions no less effective. If the players want to calm the situation and stop the ritual, they'll have to silence the poet. As with The Observer and The Accuser, there are several ways to neutralize The Speaker.

**Duel** - in the poet's case, of course, it's a verbal duel. In order to subdue Antoni's enthusiasm for the sculptures, the investigators will need to call him out publicly in front of the other guests. This isn't as difficult as it sounds. Observant investigators will quickly realize that his torrent of words are little more than a smokescreen. His inferior observations and reflections cannot hope to compare to a visionary like Artomowski.

**Subterfuge** - if the investigators are not able to out-talk Antoni, they may try to reduce his influence on other guests. A few flatteries and fake interest will be enough to get his attention. A suggestion to take the discussion outside, for example, under the pretense of smoking, should give the guests a much-needed break.

**Alliance** - cunning investigators will recognize Antoni as an ally. As a man truly fascinated by Artomowski, they can ask him for help in finding information about the visionary. The poet may then prove extremely useful, especially with diversions. The investigators should be encouraged to share the knowledge they have gained with him. If they fail to share information, he feels cheated and will turn them in to the security.

**STR 40 CON 50 SIZ 55 INT 50 POW 50**

**DEX 45 APP 40 EDU 60 S 49 HP 10**

**Damage Bonus:** none

**Build:** 0

**MOV:** 8

**Magic Points:** 10

**Fighting** (brawl) 25% (Hard 12%/Extreme 5%), damage 1k3.

**Skills:** Charm 65%, Dodge 27% (Hard 13%/Extreme 5%), Fast Talk 70%, History 35%, Law 30%, Listen 30%, Occult 20%, Persuade 60%, Spot Hidden 35%

## Epitasis

A series of events that will happen, but creative Keepers can use them in other ways to keep investigators motivated and involved in the unfolding story. These events are meant to add a sense of ever-increasing urgency and serve as milestones. Each event moves the story closer toward its climax and should increase the tension.

An alternative (or complementary) solution to the epitasis is the ritual effect table (See **Extras**).

## Apnea

*"Is it just me, or it got unbearably stuffy here, dear?"*

– Anna Czerwinska

At some point, the atmosphere in the hall becomes noticeably more unbearable. It is difficult to determine the cause of this change. Perhaps it is a result of the aura surrounding Artomowski's sculptures.

Observing your surroundings, you quickly release that all of the guests appear to have been equally affected by a sense of anxiety that hangs in the air. As a result, and by some unseen compulsion, some of the guests re-fill their glasses with beverages, while others head for the terrace and some fresh air. You are not immune to the feeling of anxiety; a sense of mental weakness or maybe it's feebleness, but something is affecting you.

You surmise that the guests may have tired of being so close to one another, the event is well attended after all.

Apnea forces the investigators to make additional **CON** rolls whenever they attempt an action that is physical in nature.

It can also be a good time to start one of the random events. Nothing says that the apnea cannot effect the investigators while attempting an important roll. After all, not all things go according to plan...

## Fog

*"What a wretched fog. And I hoped to leave early."*

– Jerzy Czaplinski

One minute you saw the fog looming far beyond the window, then the next, it wrapped itself around the house. Its misty banks obscures your vision and gives the impression of something unnatural. Furthermore, it is preventing the guests from leaving.

Worse still, these simple particles of water hanging in the air are disturbing the other guests. A group of men, just a moment ago were smoking cigarettes on the terrace, they are now hiding inside the hall. They have closed the door behind them, as if not wanting the fog to enter the room. Until now, everyone wanted the terrace door to remain open to ensure air circulation and to avoid further faintings. Now, however, they seemed to ignore the door and longingly stare at their plates, glasses of wine, and even Artomowski's sculptures. However, no one is looking out the windows. No one notices the fog getting thicker.

The fog is designed to introduce a sense of claustrophobia into the scenario. It also serves as a means to cut the investigators off from the outside world. As a result, they are forced to remain within the house for the time being.

The fog shouldn't appear too quickly, especially if the investigators haven't had the chance to look around the shed. If they have neglected to search the shed for any length of time, let the fog be the price paid for their inaction.

The dense fog itself is harmless to the investigators, but it will play tricks on their minds and sanity. If they look to closely into the fog, they may see moving shadows and silhouettes (**Spot Hidden**) similar in size and shape to Artomowski's sculptures.

If the investigators decide to go outside, they run the risk of injuries from tripping and falling, unsettling visions, and possibly a new phobia – homichlophobia.

## Moths

*"Do you hear it too?"*

- Antoni Czachowski

When it seems you've reached your daily quota for unexplainable phenomena, a weird noise can be heard just outside the house.

The first dull sounds are reminiscent of hail hitting the shutters, but it is something more. At first barely noticeable, becoming more and more distinct and disgusting, they press against the windows of the main hall.

"Moths", mutters one of the guests, as if not believing what they are seeing. A plague of night butterflies has afflicted Artomowski's estate, and they seem to be aggressively demanding entry.

Although bizarre, the phenomena is not unbelievable, and the guests are trying to pay it no mind. One guest approaches the orchestra, asking them to play a livelier tune. Still others, as if shocked, move away from the windows and towards the buffet, pretending to suddenly regain an appetite.

The moths prove to be unbearable and persistent. The swarm presses against the windows, staring inward with a thousand eyes. No one dares to exit the house even for a moment's respite from the oppressiveness that pervades the house.

Moths are the first "conventional" obstacle preventing the investigators from continuing their investigation. If they have not yet been able to search the terrace or the shed, these tasks are now impossible.

If investigators decide to venture outside against the Keeper's advice, there will be a price to pay. Any investigator exiting the house will be swarmed and violently bitten by the moths. They will likely suffer all of the following: get lost in the fog, lose an item they are carrying, and have their sanity challenged. These investigators should also be "rewarded" with a new affliction - mottephobia.

## Ex Machina

*"The heart couldn't take it. Even Artomowski couldn't dream of such horrid finale to his exhibition..."*

- Dr. Stanislaw Korzeniowski

A loud thud can be heard over the guests' conversations. As a result, silence fills the room as the guests cease speaking and hear only the sounds of moths at the windows. From out of nowhere there is a woman's piercing shriek followed by the screams of several men from across the hall.

It turns out that one of the guests - attorney Czachowski - has fallen to the ground unconscious. Several of the guests can be seen trying to resuscitate him to little effect.

Attorney Czachowski died, surrounded by Artomowski's ominous sculptures, to the accompaniment of hideous insects hitting the windows.

Death during the vernissage crowns Artomowski's efforts. If the investigators are unable to stop the ritual in time, someone will eventually perish.

Everyone will quickly begin to rationalize what has just happened. They will begin to connect the issues of the stuffy air in the hall, Czachowski's advanced age, and finally his bizarre behavior during the exhibition. Pushing away all bleak thoughts, they will conclude that the attorney suffered a sudden (but obviously understandable) heart attack that led to his death.

# Epilogue

When the emotions finally subside, the fog will have lifted and the moths dispersed. The exact moment when the air began to be less oppressive escapes the guests' notice, which is not particularly surprising. Keen investigators will now know that the ritual has been completed and that they failed to prevent it. They will now be able to leave and return home. Perhaps they had the misfortune of witnessing a chain of mocking coincidences, or maybe they actually took part in a game of forces beyond their comprehension. This, however, is already a song of the past. The future, on the other hand, is shrouded in secrecy.

For the time being, the danger has been averted and Artomowski's whereabouts remain unknown. It is also unknown how long it will take before he makes his presence felt again and what his next move will be.

Regardless of whether the investigators managed to stop the ritual or not, they should have discovered a letter that Artomowski left in his office, in an unaddressed envelope:

*In the technology race, for far too long we have not been left behind... we are on the wrong track altogether. All these strange inventions, new discoveries, which we proudly describe as tools to cross new boundaries, are false, as is our belief of living in the age of reason. But why? Because we fell in love with the Friedman equation? We might as well "discover" the sky above our heads.*

*There are places far more interesting than New York, Paris, or Berlin...*

*In the end, I also determined an extremely important thing, about which – just as I thought – New Yorkers were terribly wrong. Maybe long ago one of them made a mistake while translating grimoires, or maybe the reason is different. The fact is, however, that due to their negligence, in all books, manuscripts and letters they inadequately used the name "Amber Monarch". Meanwhile, the real title of the one who leads us and shall hold perpetual power is the King in Yellow.*

*There are places far more interesting than Warsaw, Shanghai, or Sidney...*

*Carcosa is one of them. I wish to travel there one day, sooner rather than later. I'd have to see the Great Mystery with my own eyes. Otherwise, I cannot put it in a painting. Carcosa shall be a good start.*

*There are boundless places, as boundless as the mysteries, as boundless as the cosmos... Place where I must go.*

## Extras

### Subplots

As there are many different characters appearing at Artomowski's exhibition, interactions between them are a given. After all, a scenario's backdrop is as important as the other elements. It's worth reminding the investigators that the other guests are there, having personalities all their own.

### Incidents

**Stone Gaze** – one journalist, terror-stricken by the sculptures and imagining that one of them stared directly at him, will scream hysterically and then fall to the floor. This will obviously cause a bit of a stir during the exhibition, drawing security's attention. Investigators will be able to use this opportunity to sneak into restricted part of the house.

**The Disappearance of Attorney Czachowski** – a seemingly insignificant event, attorney Czachowski's quiet exit is a direct result of his viewing and ponder the meaning of the statues. Investigators will find him, troubled by labored breathing, in one of the bathrooms, where he is washing his face with cold water. If helped, he will describe the strange state he fell into after contemplating Artomowski's works. He will share his thoughts and promise to return the favor.

**Sketch** – an editor of a local newspaper, captivated by one of the sculptures, decided to sketch it in a notebook. Of course, he tried to do it as discreetly as possible and acted in a hurry, but nevertheless managed to maintain some resemblance to the original. If the investigators notice (**Spot Hidden**), they can question him about it. The editor admits that he would like to put it in an article describing the amazing exhibition. Investigators can approve of this or – feeling that Artomowski's visions should not be shared – try to convince the editor otherwise. He will insist, however, saying that people should learn more about Artomowski's astonishing works. A good solution to this situation may be a suggestion that publishing the sketch in the newspaper without Artomowski's permission would violate his copyrights.

## The Overheard

Below are but a few examples of conversations that the investigators will be able to overhear while mingling in the main hall. There is a “decorative” value to these conversations, but creative Keepers can use them to slip the investigators some additional tips.

*“Indeed, this is Artomowski in all his glory. It is rare for an educated man to be unable to put his feelings into words, and here, it seems, it has affected half of those gathered. How do you describe something so grotesque? Whoever I would ask, they cannot answer what exactly frightened them in these disgusting sculptures”*

- MP Karol Bartel

*“Whether due to his sculptures’ form or due to the subject he touched upon... Artomowski somehow affected everyone, as if he addressed the viewer directly, pointing that he was guilty of negligence that he had no chance to know about”*

- painter Anna Czerwinska

*“I cannot agree with the preceding speakers. Aesthetics reduced to what, in subjective opinion, is nice and tasteful, are the aesthetics of simpletons. Personally, I prefer the ugliness of Artomowski’s works, he is closer to the bloodstream”*

- poet Antoni Zachowski

*“Entering this room, a sea of dreams blew by. And then I remembered how Artomowski once quipped that he wanted his dreams to become our nightmares. I think he succeeded”*

- journalist Kazimierz Karpinski

## Psychotic Episodes

During the scenario, if it turns out that the investigators – even despite the progressing epistaxis – are more eager to engage in dialogue with the guests, use the following list of effects induced by the ritual. It’s a convenient way to subtly redirect the investigators’ attention to more pressing matters. Experiencing one of these episodes requires a Sanity roll (0/1D3).

- **Faint** – the investigator loses consciousness.
- **Feeling watched** – a persistent effect. The investigator won’t be able to focus on small talk; constantly looking over their shoulder as if nervously looking for something.
- **Uncontrolled laughter or crying** – a persistent effect, the investigator will experience oversensitivity and an emotional imbalance.
- **Brief loss of control** – the investigator spouts nonsense or recalls knowledge they shouldn’t possess.
- **Nausea due to bright colors** – the investigators think it might be connected to some suppressed trauma.
- **Moving shadows and lights** – the investigator believes that the sculptures move whenever they look away from them.
- **Echopraxia** – the investigator starts to repeat the motions of another person.
- **Brief blindness** – the investigator loses their sight due to a bright light of unidentified origin.
- **Synaesthesia** – the investigators starts to sense objects’ auras. Some are ice cold to touch, other pleasantly warm. If ignored, they may cause burns, even though the investigator is physically unharmed.

## Motivations

The following pages contain sample messages and letters that investigators can receive before or at the beginning of the game. It is not necessary for each of them to know Artomowski beforehand, especially in a situation where the investigators have been working together for several adventures (and thus are already acquainted with each other).

However, if it is the first game for a new team of investigators, then everyone should have their own reasons for being attending the exhibit. New characters will then easily establish first relations.

## Motivation 1: Family member

*...you have certainly heard of our cousin's return to the country. I know your attitude towards him, and I know that although you have never been overly fond of each other, his fate isn't indifferent to you.*

*It definitely isn't to me. At least not now, when I'm certain he's alive. Over the past year, I have been haunted by the thoughts that Zbigniew died at the hands of a thug in the New World, or that he died of some disease unknown in Europe. You know that masses of people from even the most remote wilderness are traveling to America now.*

*Meanwhile, Zbigniew is alive, apparently well, and will soon return to Poland. I heard that he plans to shock everyone with his exhibitions again. However, this is of secondary importance to me. I would even say that of none importance because I've never liked his art.*

*I don't want to prolong my letter unnecessarily, because I don't like to beat around the bush, nor do you have much patience. I would like to ask you to go to this exhibition and talk to Zbigniew. Find out if he is okay, if the stay in the New World didn't shake him too much. Many of Zbigniew's old friends seem to treat the news of his return with a mixture of fake enthusiasm and a dose of definitely genuine reserve. When it comes to the rest of our beloved family, we are unfortunately no better at all. You understand where I'm going with it, right? Perhaps we are the last to whom Zbigniew's fate is not indifferent.*

*I cannot go to Zbigniew's estate because of my health, although you can count on my financial support. I will cover all your expenses, not to mention the... appropriate proof of gratitude. As you know, I have never been overly skimpy and nothing has changed in this matter.*

*Remember, if Zbigniew has gotten caught up in some shenanigans, I want to know about it. If I can help him, I'll do my best. In the meantime, I'm just asking for a little "reconnaissance". I know that I can count on you and that you are smarter than most of this atrophic family in which I had the doubtful luck to be born.*

*May God keep you safe.*

## Motivation 2: Old friend

*... I know that you have a lot of responsibilities at the moment, and therefore I assume that some interesting news may have escaped your attention.*

*Well, the famous Artomowski (yes, this Artomowski!) is not only alive, but he also returns to the homeland like some prodigal son! I know that you were friends with him years ago, and you exchanged a lot of correspondence. Therefore, I'd like to inform you that soon you'll have a chance to refresh this old acquaintance.*

*Artomowski doesn't waste time and not only shows the whole of Poland that he is still breathing, but that he still has a lot of creative energy up his sleeve. He will emphasize his return to his homeland with an exhibition of works created during his stay in the New World. Specifically, from what I found out, in New York.*

*I myself never liked his art (to be honest, the vast majority of his paintings have been incomprehensibly repulsive to me) and I haven't been overly eager to come to the vernissage, but I think you might quite like it.*

*Many representatives of the high society were also invited to the event, so the company will probably prove to be irritatingly refined and sophisticated. However, I think you can handle it, as always, am I wrong?*

*I hope I gave you some joy with this letter and did not complicate your plans too much. The date is unlikely to change, so try to complete all your current matters as soon as possible. Ultimately, it is unknown when Artomowski will dream of conquering the world again. Maybe this time he will go to the East and will be gone again for years?*

*I wish you health and hope that you will find a moment to meet me shortly. I would like to consult with you about an issue that seems to be of interest to you,*

*I remain sincerely devoted...*



### Motivation 3: Sympathizer

*...among the many things that I cannot comprehend with my little mind or put in my already too-vivid imagination, one still stands out from the others. Namely – your peculiar worship of Artomowski's works.*

*Do I really remain blind to some hidden depth of his work, which is more than just poor attempts to shock the audience with images that are neither oneiric nor realistic...*

*Maybe it's a matter of my blunted sensitivity for the art? Maybe, by remaining faithful to the classic canons that my teachers instilled in me, I'm unable to understand the meaning of his creations, buried deep under the layer of the literal abomination?*

*Or maybe, just maybe, Artomowski creates artistic quackery that I just despise. And it amazes me all the more how we can differ on this matter while agreeing on so many others...*

*You are probably surprised by this extensive introduction, although I hope you will forgive me and show a little understanding when I tell you the purpose of my letter.*

*So, Artomowski will visit his homeland again! And not empty-handed. He brings new works created during his stay in the New World along with him. A reliable friend told me that they are probably not paintings, but sculptures.*

*Maybe this change of medium will work out for him?*

*PS. Once you decide to send me another letter, please select the fragment in which you fawn over Artomowski, so I will know which part I can safely skip.*

## Motivation 4: Adept

*... I do not intend to waste ink on courtesy or alike, after all, we do not exchange correspondence for such purposes.*

*I am happy to inform you that I have finally reached the representatives of the Amber Society in New York. I am going there soon, hoping that I will finally get to know the answers to the questions swarming in my head.*

*I still can't understand my own art, and I still am haunted by visions of fear and excitement all intermingled. Ideas looming somewhere on the horizon of understanding, clothed in a completely foreign symbolism... Until recently, they belonged to the dominion of Hypnos, but now I feel that they penetrate even our earthly, material reality, as if demanding their due.*

*Now is the time to face our own fears. And I do not mean the fear of traveling to America. I am more afraid of the travel to the real New World. - Zbigniew Artomowski*

## Continuing the Adventure

I suggest that if you want to continue this adventure, use not only Artomowski as the "antagonist" but also the King in Yellows (or Hastur, if you prefer). He should be a challenging opponent, perhaps comparable to Nyarlathotep himself.

To those unfamiliar with the works of Robert W. Chambers, I highly recommend - for inspiration, if nothing else - a book of short stories titled *The King in Yellow*. Perhaps it will give you ideas for your next game.

It was also important for me to not overtly indicate whether the investigators were actually dealing with some avatar of the King in Yellow. Therefore, Keepers of Arcane Lore who decide to develop some of the threads of this adventure on their own, are free to reinterpret the described events and continue them as they see fit.

# Evidence

Item	Description	Details	Location
<b>Artomowski's Instructions</b>	A short letter requesting delivery of the incense for the vernissage.	Artomowski asks Zajdler to obtain a particular kind of incense for the exhibition. In the artist's opinion, it'll create a perfect synergy with the music he selected. Artomowski will stress that this matter is of great importance.	Zajdler's Office
<b>A sheet of paper with occult symbols</b>	Carefully prepared set of symbols, used in magic rituals.	The symbols wouldn't make a useful hint, if not for Artomowski adding a note next to some of them, saying "focusing - bring upon the triangle."	Shed
<b>Waiters' instructions</b>	A short, elegantly handwritten letter, left in the kitchen by Zajdler.	<i>"In accordance with Mr. Artomowski's request, please set the table with decorated cutlery. As it is more exquisite, it'll better capture the spirit of our event."</i>	Kitchen
<b>The Power of Ritual - Forsaken Magic Practices</b>	The work of an anonymous German cultist. It contains descriptions of various magic practices used around the world, including a detailed explanation of their role in rituals.	<i>"In the case of many rituals conducted by way of post-Celtic cults, music, obviously, played one of the most crucial roles. From time to time, its presence or absence determined a ceremony's success, apart from the fact that it made participants enter a state of mystic ascendancy."</i>	Artomowski's Study
<b>The Power of Gemstones. A treaty on preternatural properties of rare minerals</b>	An inconspicuous, softcover tome, full of unsorted notes on margins. Most comments and question marks were written in the chapter about amber.	<i>"Amber as a mineral is mostly associated with the production of ornaments and jewelry. Sometimes connected with luck and wellness. Few people, however, remember that this resin, congealed thousands or millions of years ago, trapped many equally ancient beings. Because of that, amber keeps a history older than the human race's, carrying the might of olden ages. It is used in many rituals, attracting the eldest spirits near the mage."</i>	Artomowski's Study
<b>A note about Yuggoth</b>	A handwritten note with a single repeated statement.	Yuggoth is just a bridge. Yuggoth is just a bridge. Yuggoth is just a bridge. Yuggoth is just...	A bookmark inside of the tome (The Power of Gemstones)

# Evidence

Item	Description	Details	Location
<b>The Art of Reading Symbols</b>	A richly illustrated book which aims to provide an easy beginner's guide to the topic of interpretation of works of culture.	<p><i>Based on the methodology of analyses shown in the book, we can conclude that Artomowski's sculptures don't make any form of comment on the reality of the New World.</i></p> <p><i>They also carry no human symbolism nor shallow reflections of human fate. Most interpretations of the guests are to some extent incoherent and erroneous.</i></p> <p><i>During the creation of Beings of New World, Artomowski never referred to the visit in the United States. It's also evident that by "New World" he didn't mean America.</i></p>	Zajdler's Office
<b>Invocation to The Lord on Amber Throne</b>	Description of an ancient ritual, written by Artomowski, where homage is paid to a deity called the Lord on Amber Throne.	<p>The foundation of the invocation is a direct address of a minion to the Monarch, using three idols embodied and coupled with some kind of conductors (who also may be other minions.)</p> <p>Each idol addresses some aspect of an entity called the Lord on Amber Throne. This incredibly enigmatic personage is merely mentioned in few fantastically rare grimoires that for the most part are either lost or completely destroyed.</p>	Artomowski's Study
<b>A note about The Observer</b>	A note stuck between two financial statements describing the management of the property.	Aspect - The One Who Observes (see: <b>Beings of New World</b> )	Artomowski's Study
<b>A letter about The Accuser</b>	Unsent and unaddressed letter in which Artomowski describes his thoughts on one of the aspects of The Lord on The Amber Throne.	Aspect - The One Who Accuses (see: <b>Beings of New World</b> )	Artomowski's Study
<b>A letter about The Speaker</b>	A small sheet on which Artomowski carelessly wrote several seemingly nonsense phrases.	<p>Aspect - The One Who Speaks (see: <b>New World Beings</b>)</p> <p>The note is inside of a journal, right next to a brief article on Antoni Zachowski - a poet. Next to his photograph, there's a caption "He should prove suitable."</p>	Guest room

# Evidence

Item	Description	Details	Location
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**The Hidden. The history of secret associations in the United States.**

An old yet well-preserved book briefly describing the history of the majority of the secret organizations founded in America, shortly before the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War.

Theoretically, the Amber Society is only over a dozen years old. The truth is, the roots of this organization reach further back, up to the Old Continent. The author of this book didn't care enough to further describe the former cult, though. The members of Amber Society were always characterized by their curiosity of everything that's hidden, unreachable, and reaching far beyond human understanding. Many times they referenced the Boundless Mystery in their treaties. It is unknown whether the continuers of the Society are still there. The last traces of the organization's activity leads to Louisiana.

Guest room

# The Vernissage

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