

Wake The Dead

A Call Of Cthulhu Adventure

After returning from a trip to New Orleans Johnny Ryan's uncle gave him a necklace as a gift. A week after the gift is given, the boy's uncle is brutally murdered.

Setting:

I have set this adventure in the 1920s in October, anywhere in America except New Orleans. The play-testing used Arkham as home-base, so minor modifications for travel time to New Orleans may be needed. With very little modification any time period is possible.

Background:

After returning from a trip to New Orleans Johnny Ryan's uncle gave him a necklace as a gift. The item was found in a bazaar in the French Quarter. Johnny's aunt, a devout Catholic, did not like the jewelry, but could not convince her husband not to purchase the item. She staunchly refused to touch it. The 18 year-old Johnny loves the necklace and wears it constantly.

A week after the gift is given, the boy's uncle is brutally murdered by "something," which destroyed the inside of his house and slaughtered him all over his library. This took place around 2 p.m. when his wife was at the beauty parlor. It has become a sensational crime due to the viciousness of the murder. Police speculate it could have been a wild animal which somehow got into the house.

Late one night Johnny visited the grave of his beloved uncle. Kneeling before the tombstone, and crying, he is almost overcome with terror as a corpse's hand rips up through the ground and what's left of his uncle's body began working its way out. The hand reached for the necklace, but Johnny fled and made it home unharmed. He is shaken and contacts the investigators about what has just happened.

Research:

Ryan is a believable kid, and investigators should take an interest in his story rapidly. Make note of which investigators do and don't touch the cursed item. When Johnny tries to remove the necklace to show it around, he finds that it has begun to attach itself to the skin on the neck. It is almost as if the necklace is growing into the flesh. Removing it will cause serious damage.

Some research should bring the investigators to these facts:

Successful Library and Occult rolls yield the belief that this is the legendary Necklace of the Unspoken, a wicked amulet said to be made from a tiny piece of "He Who is not to be Named."

If the first set of rolls are successful, then another library roll will reveal there is legend to be a death curse on any who touch the piece.

Both things are true, however, not really Fortean. It is called the Necklace of the Unspoken, but the death curse is not completely true. This ultra-precious item has been killed for by wizard after warlock, throughout centuries now. Assassination by humans, not something from beyond. Of course, don't let the players know that.

The Graveyard:

Set the grave at a place off the street, and off of the cemetery paths. Set your own map where the grave is for maximum horror effect. If the players visited during the day, the necklace will not be active. However,

visiting at night will find the amulet working quite well. Either way, it is evident something burrowed up from in front of the tombstone. If the players are foolish enough to risk arrest for grave digging, they will find the coffin damaged, and without the body.

Try to get the players to visit at night. Perhaps the weather during the daylight hours is too extreme to venture out in. An intense June thunder storm is just what the Keeper should order. Allow there to be distant thunder and lightning for dramatic effect during the night. However you do it, get them there in the dark, for the next two events.

Event One - While examining the grave site, a dull croaking can be heard. At first players will identify it as a bullfrog, but as it comes closer, suspicions arise. Something is dragging itself across the grass, moaning in pain., and heading towards the investigators. Whether they wait it out or it arrives is up to the players; if they run, have it drop right into their path. It, is the head, neck, upper trunk and right arm of Bill Ryan, Johnny's Uncle. He has come back and is now a zombie, with the necklace as its controlling power. It wants to obtain the amulet, but doesn't know why.

The zombie is dragging itself by its arm at 30 feet per second. Being dead, it never tires or slows down. It doesn't speed up either. Once the thing arrives, it will go for Johnny, grabbing for his feet.

The Crawling Terror

ST: 4 DEX: 2 POW: 4 SIZ: 6

Grab: 30%: 1d.2 damage. Zombie cannot move and attack. If he grabs, no movement on its own is possible.

Bite: 15% 0 - 1 pts. damage. A point of damage leads to an 80% chance of gangrene infection if not treated within 6 hours. San. Loss: 1/ 1 d.8

The Second Event:

During the encounter with the Crawling Terror, players become aware that parts of the earth around them are shaking and things are trying to get out. Only the most foolish player will stick around now. If the players do not think, and wish to slug it out, a couple dozen zombies marching right at them might make them split. Either way, Johnny Ryan, never the bravest kid, high tails it out of the cemetery.

Enter Antoine Le'Bec:

As the players discuss what to do, as they fear the same fate which befell the elder Ryan may be theirs soon enough, they receive a visitor. A large black man with a thick New Orleans accent introduces himself: "My name is Antoine Le'Bec and I am from New Orleans. I am a professor at Tulane and have spent his my life dealing with horrors beyond imagination. I have been tracking down an item you have in your possession. I have tracked it down here meticulously. I can feel its presence. The necklace is cursed and whoever is wearing it has little time left."

If asked how he found the investigator, he will explain he used a Ouiji board to find the state. Then the news of the crime lead him to believe strongly that Arkham was the current home of this wicked item.

Whether they are at home or elsewhere, Le'Bec finds the investigators. Allow players to do all the research they can before introducing the professor. He is also a key to helping "stuck" players. After the introduction, he tells the investigators: "Who among you has touched the necklace - any part of it... Your lives are in danger. There is a death curse on anyone who touches this item. The owner of the bazaar this was bought at is now dead. Mutilated. I understand it was this young man's uncle who was recently murdered. Allow me to say that no human killed him. It is something far worse. It is something best left to the back of your minds. We must act now."

Allow players to question the professor. If asked how to break the curse, he says: "There is a way. This item is not just a necklace. It is a living thing. A piece of something so terrible which this earth thankfully

has never seen. The curse was placed on it by a warlock named Ib. He is buried in an unholy place in the swamps of New Orleans. His grave must have been robbed. But the only way to break the curse is to bury it back into the unholy ground around Ib's rotting neck. One drop of fresh blood is needed then to be dropped onto the head of the dead.

"If not, one by one, much sooner than later, the beast will come and tear you to pieces like it has done many times before. There is a train leaving Boston tomorrow at 9 am, we must be on it, and with God's speed, we will be there in three days. You people have no choice.... And neither do I. I have been running from this beast as well. It is all of our neck's now."

What Le'Bec is really up to: Antoine Le'Bec is a professor of History at Tulane. He is also insane and a devoted wizard of Hastur. Escaping the 1907 LeGrasse raid with the cult's copy of The R'leyh Text, (German version), Le'Bec felt he was now the chosen one to bring Hastur open the planet. The necklace was confiscated at the raid, and Le'Bec has been tracking it since. Only recently has he had success finding it.

Using a copy of The King In Yellow and the R'leyh Text, he was able to contact Hastur. He immediately swore allegiance to the monster, and began tracking down survivors of the raid. Old members recruited, and the new Hastur Cult became a bit larger than the Cthulhu cult. Able to convert some Creoles and bribing officials to grant them ward status over several insane asylum inmates, the cult became a powerful and violent force. Their rituals took place in the swamps, about a quarter mile away from the former Cthulhu worship site, which is now an unholy cemetery. Finally pin-pointing where the item was, Le'Bec went into the swamps and opened a gate to call forth a Dimensional Shambler. This creature was to retrieve the item. However, a crocodile rushed onto the site and disturbed the spell. "Something Else," as Le'Bec calls it, came over from the other side and killed the croc. Le'Bec was able to bind the creature to do his bidding, but the beast has shown to be somewhat ineffective. This will be discussed in the Something Else, section. This beast accepted the command from Le'Bec, but the wizard has no other real control over it. Le'Bec's plan is to bring the investigators to the swamp and kill them as a sacrifice to Hastur. The wizard believes this will allow him to wear the amulet without harm. Although not actually true, Le'Bec is very convinced and will do whatever it takes to bring his plan to fruition. He will do anything he can to keep the players alive until they reach the worship site. Possible heroic acts will prove to players that this man is on the level.

The Train Ride: Johnny Ryan is going with Le'Bec no matter what the PCs may say to him. Anyone who has touched the amulet needs to go to give a drop of blood. If no PCs have touched it, have Johnny bump into a few out of fright, touching them with the amulet. Some players should be uncertain if they were actually touched by the piece. This is even more maddening than knowing for certain.

Le'Bec says he has enough money, so he purchases tickets for a cabin with a sitting room and sleeping berths. The train leaves at 9 am for its 1,500 mile trip. There is a transfer in Atlanta. If necessary, have Le'Bec hire a car to take them to North Station, (that is, if you are playing a Massachusetts campaign). The 9 am train departs at 9:11 am for a three day journey to New Orleans. The ride is going well enough for hours. The dining car is a bit expensive, and the food is less than average. However, as the train rides on, it cannot beat the sun. Soon it is dark and trouble begins again.

Unknown to everyone in the party is the fact that their car is connected to a funeral car. The body of 44 year old Jean Paul Cam'et is being delivered back to his native soil of Louisiana for services and a burial. Riding with the casket is his son 21 year old Irving and his two cousins Isaac, 19 and Jacob, 22. Close to midnight the players will hear screams for help coming from the next car. The body has been animated, become wildly violent, and is looking for the necklace.

Zombie of Jean Paul Cam'et

ST: 16 DEX: 8 POW: 1 SIZ: 17 HPS: 16 See stats for Zombies on page 186 for COC 5.0

Irving, Isaac, Jacob

ST: 14 DEX: 16 POW: 10 SIZ: 13 HPS: 15

punch: 65% kick: 40%

No Rest for the Hunted:

Once the zombie has been subdued, the players will return to their room. No other help except for the players will arrive to battle the zombie. The wheels, the engine, and the fact most everyone else is two cars away and probably sleeping, made it impossible to hear the commotion. Once players go back to their sitting room to catch their breath, they find there is no time. With one mighty pull a most horrifying beast has ripped the top of their car off and enters the cabin.

Something Else: It is uncertain exactly what this beast really is. A mistake which slipped through the ethereal portals and into this world. Perhaps a dancer in the court of Azathoth, perhaps a living piece of Abathoth, it is not established. The creature is bound to carry out the task of retrieving the necklace.

It has been tracking the item down, but is yet to catch up to it. Something Else can walk through the dimensions and phase in at will. However, it cannot seem to stay in one dimension for very long. Once the beast appears on the scene, it will only be in physical form for 2 + 1 d.12 minutes, before it blinks out. This can save the players hides, and should the beast really have the upper hand in a well-played game, you may want to phase him out at your discretion.

The thing has two attacks. One is its razor like claws. As many as 12 hitting at a time, each doing 1 d.6 + St. bonus damage. On an impale, the victim is hooked onto the claw and runs the risk of being a victim of the second attack, a bite. The mouth attack does 1 d.6 damage. An impaling attack on a bite means a hand or a nose or a foot has been damaged and possibly severed. If the bite does more than 1/4 of the player's total hit points, then an amputation has occurred.

If Le'Bec is present during an encounter, there is a 10% chance each turn that the monster will attack him. Other than that, all damage Le'Bec will take is accidental. To avoid suspicion, Le'Bec will do his best to appear to be in the battle, but will keep well out of harm's way. The wizard does not care if Something Else dies or not. He will shoot the being without thought.

After the Attacks: Needless to say, the train will make an emergency stop. Players are questioned, but train personnel claim something must have been wrong with the bolts holding the roof on. Internal damage must have been caused by things blowing into the cabin. Any employee seeing the creature, will be told by the captain to keep his mouth shut, "Or they'll all think we're off our rocker!" If there are death's, the Keeper will need to play it by ear. If a player was tossed out, the cause of death may be deemed accident, or as a missing person. A mutilation will involve an intense investigation. Either way, police will be involved. Should the players seem to be headed for a long delay, have Le'Bec walk up to them and say: "I've just slipped the officer fifty dollars. He's going to turn his back as we board the new train." He may ask for some financial recompense from the players.

Either way, there will be no more interruptions until the swamps of Louisiana.

New Orleans, Louisiana: Once arriving in New Orleans, Le'Bec will guide them to a nearby parking area where he has stashed his Ford pick-up truck. He has smuggled many bodies wrapped in rugs with this vehicle. The party should all fit, with most of the players in the open-air back. A long, black leather case in the front conceals three shotguns, all but one filled with blanks. There can be a quick stop for food, supplies like flashlights, and toilet. The drive will take about two hours and it is dusk when the party arrives at the mouth of the swamps in Lafourche Parish, right next to Barataria Bay. Le'Bec will park the truck about 100 yards away from a Cajun village, take the leather case, then head toward the village.

The Village: Anyone with an Innsmouth Lore or a Cthulhu Mythos score, may make an attempt at +20%. Successful rolls will allow the player to immediately identify the residents as Deep One hybrids, more ichthyolid than human. Their skin is deep gray and gills are beginning to poke out through the flesh.

Strange faces and eyes peer out of houses. Not a soul is walking around. Le'Bec will guide the players past the twenty homes, and reach the mouth of the swamps. Here he will hand players the two shotguns filled with blanks.

The Swamps of Louisiana:

A tangled miasma of vegetation hang from gnarled trees. The ground is wet and the air is very cold. Swamp gases and steam rise off the ground, limiting visibility to about 10 feet. Flashlights need to be pointed down in order to avoid the light reflecting right back into the investigator's face. The party will walk for about 45 minutes. You may opt to have players make a Dex. roll or two to avoiding falling or twisting an ankle. Le'Bec is quite familiar with this area, and is deft at leading everyone to the grave site safely.

The necklace calls:

Sometime during the walk, the party will pass some carcass of one animal or another. The necklace will animate at least one creature during the walk. To determine what body comes alive, roll a d. 6:

1.Owl 2. Badger 3. large snake 4. bird 5. crocodile 6. medium snake

You may opt to have the animated body be so deteriorated that no physical damage can be done to players. However, a sanity loss can cause a player to run screaming into the woods, possibly never to be seen again. The sanity loss for seeing one of these corpses is the same for that of a zombie.

The barge: The cult built a large raft out of logs and hemp rope, which Le'Bec will guide across the 112 feet of water which the party needs to pass. The craft can hold up to 900 pounds safely. If need be, Le'Bec states he will go back and forth until everyone is across. If more than one trip is needed, the Keeper must decide which trip Something Else appears during. He will come through the water, the top of his head cutting across like a shark's fin.

Whether or not the players discharge firearms, the beast will sink below the surface and out of sight. He will then attempt to push the raft over. Use his Strength as the Active characteristic and the total size of the party/2 as the Passive characteristic. Should he succeed, the boat flips and everyone must make a swim roll to arrive at the shore safely. The water is quite cold and full of leaches. Anyone not making a swim roll is subject to a possible attack by the monster. If so, the monster closes in quickly, but right as the attack is about to happen, it vanishes into thin air. Make sure Le'Bec and Johnny Ryan arrive safely. If everyone swims safely across, or the boat is not tipped over, it will be the last time we see this being.

Hastur's Island: One of the few hills in the swamps, it raises up about 12 feet above sea-level. Le'Bec will lead the party up top the plateau, where nine tombstones have been laid face up, and in the shape of a "V". This is the calling area for Hastur. Le'Bec will tell the players some words to chant as he begins a much longer incantation. He has the players stand at the crux of the "V" in front of an open grave containing a closed coffin, and continue the chanting. He then takes Johnny Ryan into the worship zone and has him look to the sky. Le'Bec then begins to blow a whistle. He is casting Summon Byahkees, and will fail only on a 96 - 00 roll. He will be down to 5 Magic Points after this.

Should failure occur, Le'Bec will command the players to keep chanting as he leads Ryan back through the trees and to the base of the hill. This is where he will do his dirty work. Odds are the Byahkees fly down from he sky, ice still on their leathery wings, and immediately attack the party. Once the party is locked in battle, Le'Bec comes up to Ryan from behind and slices his throat with a large knife he had sheathed and hidden on his person. It will take him three rounds to have the boy's head completely off and the necklace in hand. If the party has defeated the Byahkees in two rounds or less they can apprehend Le'Bec. Any time after that, the wizard has vanished into the swamps. Also remember that the shotguns are full of blanks. If the players fell into the water, there is a strong chance that any fire arm they had on them will not function.

Aftermath:

The players are faced with several dilemmas. Johnny Ryan is mutilated, and no other suspects are around. What do they do with the body? How do they return to civilization? The barge is still there, but can they find their way out of land where one acre looks exactly like the next? This could be an excellent place for a campaign to begin, or for a party to return to New Orleans, trying to track the professor down. Are police looking for them for questioning on the train attack? And what if they were able to kill Le'Bec, what about the necklace's curse? Will they know it is over, or does it drive them to sleepless nights?